



**Rising Above  
the Storms**



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



**The  
brightest  
year yet**

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# Letter from our founder



## Alphonsine Anderson

Founder & CEO

The year 2023 has been a landmark period of breakthroughs and accomplishments for Rising Above the Storms. One of our most significant achievements was the increase in staff salaries in Rwanda. This step was crucial in maintaining the motivation and financial stability of our team, to address the gap caused by inflation.

Additionally, we introduced health insurance for our staff for the first time, recognizing the immense value of peace of mind and well-being for our employees and their families. These advancements underscore our commitment to positively impacting not only the children we serve but also the dedicated team members who make our work possible, along with their families.

RAS also experienced notable growth and success in other areas. We welcomed two new members to our board, bringing fresh perspectives and expertise to our leadership. Our inaugural fundraising event, **Walk to Rise**, was a success, with over 20 teams raising more than \$14,000. With matching contributions, we reached an impressive total of around \$25,000. These funds have enabled us to expand our scholarship program, adding 12 new students from low-income families, while continuing to enhance our programs, furthering our mission to provide educational opportunities to those in need. 2024 will be a year of pushing our limits to align with our growth strategy.

*Alphonsine Imaniraguha Anderson*

# Street Children Program

The street children program offers two pathways tailored to meet the specific needs of each child:

1. Basic needs assistance, which includes warm meals, counseling, and specialized enrichment activities.
2. Educational assistance, providing for school fees, medical care, group tutoring, and vocational training for those students dedicated to furthering their education or skills training.

In the development of the street children program, recognizing that rehabilitation and support require a personalized approach, has been fundamental. Acknowledging the unique challenges faced by each child, the teams in Rwanda deliver individualized support plans. These plans encompass counseling, quality time spent together, and engagements with family members, all while maintaining access to essential basic needs assistance that is critical to their success.



Your contributions go to covering the following for each street child.





# Scholarship Program

The scholarship program is designed to bridge the opportunity gap by empowering high-potential children in Rwanda with the necessary financial support and educational opportunities to excel. Teams are dedicated to identifying children from elementary through secondary schooling who have demonstrated high academic potential. In collaboration with families and teachers, these teams develop tailored financial support plans to foster success based on the individual needs and goals of each student.



Your contributions go to covering the following for each scholar.



**Tuition**



**Uniforms**



**Backpacks**



**Books**



**Transport**

# Soccer Program

The soccer club represents a commitment to broadening the impact and focus beyond just basic needs and educational assistance. A soccer club is provided as an afterschool activity for the street children at the center, allowing them to compete in local matches. This outlet enables children to be active, forge friendships, and connect with a passion, which has proven transformative for both the center and its youth. At the core of the mission is the aim to create a world where children have access to all the tools needed for success, with sports playing a vital role in their development. Soccer has emerged as a powerful catalyst, instilling confidence, hope, and the courage for children to chase their dreams.



Your contributions go to covering the following for each scholar.



Jerseys



Shoes



Equipment



Coaches



Medical support



Field rental

# 2023 Highlights

**2023 was a breakthrough year for the organization. Some key highlights include:**

## **Record fundraising year**

Recognized \$124,000 in donations, a 63% increase year over year, and implemented a new fundraising platform which helped increase the donor database by over 30% in the last quarter.

## **Successful first year of scholarship program**

The first 38 children recruited to the newly established scholarship program completed their school year, with some receiving perfect scores.

## **New website & online sponsorship program**

The website better reflects RAS' updated branding, and makes it easy to sponsor children from each program in just a few clicks.

## **Added more board members and volunteers**

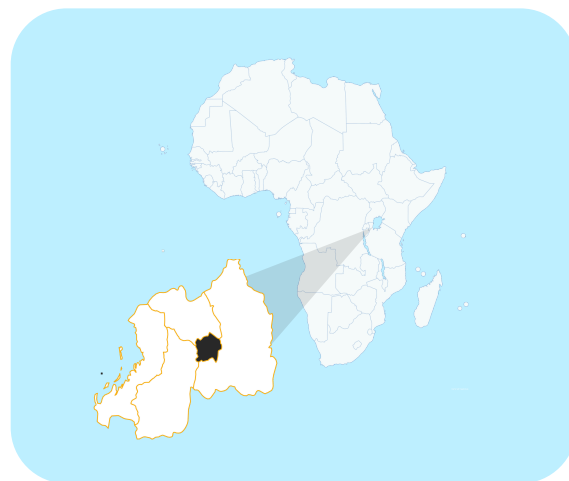
Two new board members have joined the organization, both of whom are respected in their fields of work to drive RAS' growth, as well as a new marketing director to coordinate activities across channels.

## **Expanded Westcon-Comstor partnership**

Expanded corporate sponsorship to RAS' partner in Rwanda, which supports single mothers living in poverty to start businesses (some of them are mothers to our street children).

# RAS communities: supported children

In total, the 92 children supported in RAS programs reside in 11 different districts across Rwanda, spanning 5 provinces: 62 reside in Kigali City, 17 in the Eastern Province, 9 in the Northern Province, 3 in the Western Province, and 2 in the Southern Province.



NO	DISTRICT	CHILDREN
01	KICUKIRO	63
02	GASABO	2
03	KAMONYI	4
04	MUSANZE	2
05	RWAMAGANA	8
06	NGOMA	6
07	BUGESERA	1
08	KARONGI	1
09	GICUMBI	2
10	RUSIZI	2
11	RUHANGO	1
TOTAL NUMBER		92



# Meet the team

Full-time paid employees in Rwanda

7



US board members

7



US-based volunteers

20



## Rwanda staff

The organization has seven full-time employees on staff in Rwanda supporting the children and facility. Over the next 3 to 5 years, the strategy includes growing this number to 30 full-time employees.

## US volunteers

With the 5 new additions in 2023, the total volunteer community, which includes RAS Board members, is now 20 people across the United States, specifically California, Florida, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Illinois.



# Board of Directors



**Alphonsine  
Anderson**

Chief Executive Officer &  
Founder



**Harry  
Cocciolo**

Board Member



**Michele  
Day**

Board Member



**Gwendolyn F  
Turner**

Board Member



**Ken  
Kula**

Board Member



**Anisha  
Sivakumar**

Board Member



**Tschudy  
Smith**

Board Member

# RAS partners

## Cisco Foundation

This philanthropic institution, established by Cisco Systems, is dedicated to supporting programs and projects that address significant social challenges and strengthen communities around the world. Contributions made by Cisco employees to Rising Above the Storms (RAS) are matched up to \$25,000 annually. Furthermore, Cisco employees who volunteer can generate donations of \$10 per hour from the Cisco Foundation to RAS. The Time2Give program, which allocates 40–80 volunteer hours per year to employees, has been of great benefit to RAS.

## Amahoro Builders

As a local NGO in Rwanda, Amahoro Builders plays a crucial role in overseeing operations for RAS. The organization is committed to assisting vulnerable families and serves as the local executing entity for programs and management of the centers in Rwanda.

## Westcon-Comstor

As a global technology distributor, Westcon-Comstor actively supports the programs and youth of RAS through donations and annual visits to the children. The company also assists the local partner in Rwanda by aiding single women with microfinancing opportunities.

## Trans-Expedite

A worldwide transportation and logistics company that has generously shipped over \$10K worth of soccer gear, notebooks, and other educational materials to Rwanda during the COVID pandemic.

**Gratitude is extended to all partners for their generosity and dedication to fostering a brighter future for the youth in Rwanda!**

# Major milestones

**Thanks to partners, staff, volunteers, and donors, 2023 witnessed remarkable achievements:**

## Record fundraising year

The year 2023 marked the largest fundraising year for Rising Above the Storms (RAS), with a total of \$124k raised. New events, expanded sponsorships, and deepened relationships with donors were instrumental in reaching this milestone.

## Expanding team

There has been growth in the team, welcoming 5 new members who bring expertise, passion, and innovative ideas that significantly contribute to the organization's impact.

## New graduates

Five students from the scholarship program successfully completed their primary school education with impressive results. Three scholars achieved perfect scores, while two scored in the 83rd percentile, positioning them well for continued success in secondary education.

## Sponsor a Child launch

With a redesigned website and refined messaging, RAS launched the 'Sponsor a Child' program, facilitating donor support for children through a simple monthly recurring donation process.

## Soccer triumphs

One RAS-supported soccer team earned a place in the Rwanda Football Federation League, the country's national soccer competition, with seven students advancing to league play. Additionally, three youths from the Center are on track to become professional referees, a career path now supported through the Center's initiatives.



# Meet our newest graduates



**Noella  
Yamfashije**



**Acqueline Akaliza  
Iracyadukunda**



**Pascaline  
Niyoyera**



**Marline Heaven  
Ahishakiye**



**Jeanette  
Igihozo**



# Spotlight: Izabayo Jean D'amour



Izabayo is 19-year-old young man from Rwanda, where he lives with his mother and two relatives. His dedication to his studies has been bolstered by the counseling provided by RAS since 2017, which has been instrumental in his academic journey. This support has kept him on the path to Don Bosco Gatenga, where he is advancing his skills in welding.

Upon completing secondary education, he received a welding machine and a sander —tools that serve not only his professional aspirations but also as foundations for self-reliance, allowing him to build his own career. Equipped with these tools, he is on course to earn an income and contribute to a savings group.

Beyond the classroom, his true passion is found on the football field. As an aspiring goalkeeper, he dreams of reaching the heights of legendary football players such as Iker Casillas. He is currently the leading goalkeeper for the RAS youth team.

With a strong desire to uplift his family, he looks forward to a future where his potential football career could provide for them. He dreams of creating a football academy in his province to foster the growth of both academic and athletic skills among disadvantaged youths. His ultimate goal is to ascend to the top ranks of goalkeeping, with aspirations of joining Manchester United. Known for his sociability and team spirit, he actively engages with peers both on and off the pitch. His journey from engaging in game therapy to pursuing professional football underscores his commitment, and he continues to reach new heights.





# Transforming lives through soccer



The soccer program was launched with the vision of instilling values such as teamwork, trust, friendship, and dedication in the children supported by RAS. The program operates on two levels: it includes an after-school program that provides a space for physical exercise and social interaction, quickly becoming a favorite among the children at the Center; and it sponsors youth soccer teams that offer children the opportunity to try out and compete, with an opportunity to advance to the 3rd division of the Rwanda Football Federation.

After forming the first youth team, there was an influx in interest and desire to create a second team catered toward children aged seventeen and up.

This was used as an opportunity to recruit new children to the Center, extending our reach and impact even further into an age group that is typically underrepresented.

In 2023, the newly established 17+ team, named Amahoro Builders Football Club (AB FC), demonstrated exceptional skill and gained recognition following a series of victories. Federation referees, who were also training some youth at the Center to become certified referees, recognized the team's potential. This led to an invitation for the team to apply for a position in the Federation. After successfully navigating the selection process, they secured their place in the league. The players' resilience and drive to improve have been noteworthy.



# The light we spread



“The day my mom shared the news that Peace Builders\*, had accepted me into their scholarship program, was a moment of pure joy. It marked the best day ever for me. Now, I stand as an example at school—topping my class, equipped with all necessary materials, and with tuition fees paid on time—all made possible because of you. I am so grateful.”

Giramata Deborah

**Giramata Deborah**

Age 8

\*our on-the-ground partner in Rwanda



# Fundraising for a cause

## Walk to Rise

Currently, the transportation needs for street children traveling to the Center are an unresolved challenge. Many of these children must walk significant distances, with some journeys extending up to 5 miles each way. To address this issue, the event "Walk to Rise" was organized in October. Twenty-six volunteers pledged to walk 60 miles over the course of the month, mirroring the average commute of a child to the Center (3 miles per trip, 5 days a week, for 4 weeks). Thanks to the participation of over 140 donors, the event successfully raised \$25,000.



## Topgolf Nashville

On October 25th, Rising Above the Storms (RAS), in collaboration with Topgolf, held a two-hour golfing fundraiser at Topgolf Nashville. The event drew 49 attendees and succeeded in raising over \$3,000 in a single evening. Participants had the opportunity to gain insight into the organization's work while enjoying a round of golf in support of the cause.

## Children Wish List

In December, the Rwanda staff shared the holiday wish lists of nearly 100 children from three programs (Street Children, Soccer Club, High Aptitude Scholarship). A giving tree was set up to help bring some holiday cheer to these children. Generous contributions fulfilled these wishes, providing 24 backpacks, 12 Christmas family meals, clothing for 6 children, 10 pairs of shoes, 4 soccer balls, a laptop for the computer lab, a full year of high school education for one child, and a year's worth of meals for two children.



# Fundraising snapshot

## Breakdown of source of funds received

→	Cisco match	31%
→	Board members	23%
→	Fundraising events	15%
→	Corporate sponsors	10%
→	One time donors	8%
→	Recurring donors	6%
→	Corporate matching	5%
→	Child sponsors	3%

# Financial highlights

**\$124,000**

total consolidated revenue in the past fiscal year, compared with \$75K in 2022

## 2023 Investments

**\$91,000**

Rwanda Learning Center



**\$14,000**

Operating expenses



**\$8,000**

Website & sponsorship launches\*



\*part of operating expenses

## Net assets



2023

**\$132,000**



2022

**\$81,000**



2021

**\$78,000**



# Allocation of program expenses

How much are we spending on... (%)

→	Payroll	31%
→	Taxes	16%
→	Groceries	14%
→	Transportation	11%
→	Quarterly school fees	11%
→	Administrative	7%
→	Rent	4%
→	Living expenses	4%
→	Utilities	1%
→	Computer lab	<1%

# Allocation of expenses

**\$77,500**

total expenses



**\$63,700**

Rwanda Learning Center

**\$13,800**

US operations  
admin, marketing, & website



# Donor information

Number of known donors in 2023

**223**

Average total donation

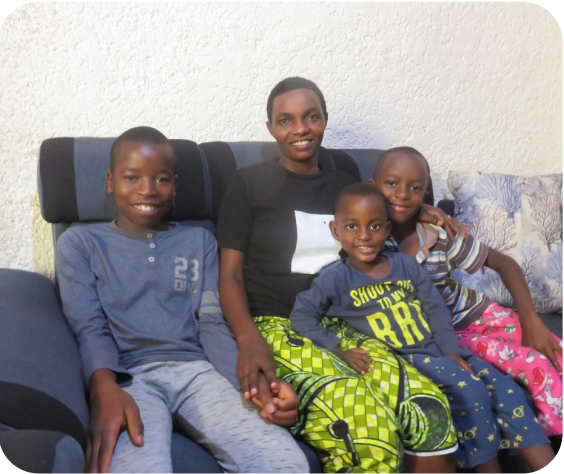
**\$363**

Donor type

Percentage of donors

Average donation

→ First time	<b>64%</b>	<b>\$175</b>
→ Recurring	<b>36%</b>	<b>\$166</b>



**37 donors** contributed 80% of total individual donations

**\$79,000**

**\$45,000**

Total donations from individuals (64%)

Corporate matching donations (36%)

# A look ahead



In 2022, the vision was set to scale programs with even more impact across Rwanda, finance payroll for US-based staff, and extend the mission and services to countries beyond Rwanda. Moving into 2023, there is excitement and pride in the continued advancements made toward these goals.

## RAS 5 year strategy: 2023–2027

- Raise and maintain a yearly operating budget of \$1 million (USD) to support our programs
- Fund payroll for paid staff in the USA
- Expand our services into one country beyond Rwanda
- Establish a permanent facility in Rwanda

The vision for a permanent Rwanda facility

**500**

Capacity in our street children program



**200**

Scholarships per year



**30**

Paid staff members



+ Mobile satellite centers deployed across Rwanda to provide more children with access to the support and services provided by Rising Above the Storms.



# Alphonsine's closing letter



## Thank you for being a part of our brightest year yet

As we reflect on 2023, I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this year truly exceptional. Our success would not have been possible without the steadfast support from our Board, the dedication of our teams in the US, our partner in Rwanda, the generosity of our donors, and the enthusiasm of our fans and followers.

Together, we have celebrated our brightest year yet, achieving a significant milestone by raising over \$120,000.

We have strengthened our support for our teams in Rwanda who assist our children by providing health insurance benefits and salary increases. Additionally, we have expanded our scholarship program to include new students, increased our outreach efforts, and laid the groundwork for even greater impacts in the future.

Our vision remains ambitious as we look ahead, aiming to double our annual fundraising efforts and reach \$1 million by the end of 2027. To achieve this, we plan to pursue grants that align with our objectives and seek strategic partnerships to amplify our mission. This goal underscores our commitment to broadening our reach in Rwanda, deepening our impact, and setting our sights beyond Rwanda while staying true to our mission.

I am profoundly grateful for every individual who has invested their time, resources, and belief in Rising Above the Storms. Our success shines through each of you, and together, we are changing the world, one child at a time.

*Alphonsine Imaniraguha Anderson*



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