



**Rising Above
the Storms**



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**TOGETHER
WE RISE**

Table of contents

→	1	<u>A letter from our founder</u>
→	2	<u>RAS programs at a glance</u>
→	3	<u>Street Children Program</u>
→	4	<u>High Aptitude Program</u>
→	5	<u>Higher Learning Program</u>
→	6-7	<u>2025 highlights</u>
→	8-11	<u>RAS communities</u>
→	12-16	<u>Impact</u>
→	17-19	<u>Fundraising</u>
→	20-24	<u>Financials</u>
→	26-27	<u>Looking ahead</u>

Open letter from our founder



Alphonsine Anderson

Founder & CEO

When Rising Above the Storms began, it was rooted in one belief: that a child's future should not be determined by the barriers surrounding them.

In Rwanda, even the most determined students can be pushed out of school by costs many of us take for granted—books, meals, uniforms, transportation and special school fees. Rising Above the Storms exists to close those gaps so that students with potential can remain on the path of education.

What began in 2017 with 11 children has grown into a structured education pathway supporting over 160 students today, from primary school through university. In 2025, we continued expanding this work, supporting more students across our programs, strengthening our Rwanda-based team, and laying the groundwork for the next stage of growth.

Our theme for this year's report, "Together We Rise", reflects the spirit behind this progress. It reflects the determination of the students we serve, the dedication of our team in Rwanda, and the generosity of the community of supporters who believe education can transform lives.

Because of you, more students are not only staying in school, they are building futures that once felt out of reach.

Together, we rise.

With gratitude,

Alphonsine Imaniragaha Anderson

RAS programs at a glance

Street Children

Children are rescued from the street, rehabilitated through counseling, and reintegrated into schools and their communities.

High Aptitude

Scholarships and financial aid are awarded to high-aptitude children from low-income families, enabling them to attend grade 1 - 12.

Higher Learning

Room and board - and eventually mentorship and internship placement assistance - for bright students from low-income families who are currently attending university.

Together We Rise: Empowering Every Student

At Rising Above the Storms, we know that real change happens when we rise together. "Together We Rise" isn't just our theme; it's the way we support, empower, and celebrate our students every day.

In 2025, we strengthened programs that help learners reach their full potential. Our Higher Learning Program ensures university-bound students have room, board, and resources, so they can focus on excelling academically and chasing their dreams.

We also extend support wherever it's needed most: from annual clothing donations for vulnerable participants to sports teams with updated equipment, and awards recognizing top-performing students. Every initiative reflects a shared commitment: students, families, staff, and supporters rising side by side to overcome challenges and build brighter futures.

Street Children Program

The Rwanda Learning Center stands as a pivotal point for a range of programs aimed at serving two primary groups: at-risk and former street children, and a focal point for high potential students from low-income neighborhoods and families.

The **street child program**, RAS' cornerstone initiative established in 2017, offers two distinct pathways tailored to meet the specific needs of each child: 1) basic needs assistance, which includes warm meals, counseling, and specialized enrichment activities; and 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 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.



High Aptitude Program

The newly renamed high aptitude 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 high school 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.



How does your donation help?



Tuition



Uniforms



Backpacks



Books



Transport

Higher Learning Program

The higher learning program was established to ensure that students from our RAS grade school support programs receive the financial support they need to succeed at university and prepare for the job market. The program is currently being rolled out, with the primary focus being on financial support for room and board. As the program expands, internship assistance and a mentorship program will be included.



Your contributions go to covering the following for each student.



Tuition



Room & Board



Books &
materials



Transport



Laptops



Mentorship

2025 highlights

In 2025, Rising Above the Storms soared to new heights, guided by the spirit of **Together We Rise**. This year, we strengthened our commitment to Alphonsine's mission, expanding programs and opportunities that empower our communities. Our accomplishments reflect not only resilience in the face of challenges but also the collective impact of working hand in hand with students, families, and supporters. The milestones reached this year showcase the power of unity, determination, and hope, and underscore our unwavering dedication to building brighter futures for those we serve.

Some key highlights included:

Record breaking year of support

Thanks to the generosity of our community, RAS raised over \$150,000 in 2025, marking our **third consecutive record-breaking fundraising year**. These contributions directly fuel our mission to expand access to education and opportunity for students across Rwanda.

Expanding opportunity for high achieving students

In 2025, **55 new students** joined RAS' High Aptitude Program, bringing the total number of students supported through the initiative to **130** since its launch in 2022. The program continues to identify and nurture high-performing students, helping them unlock opportunities through advanced academic support.

Growing our higher learning program

Our Higher Learning Program continued to grow, expanding from **three students** in its first cohort to **eleven students** supported in 2025. Through scholarships and mentorship, the program helps students pursue higher education and long-term career opportunities.

2025 highlights continued

Eight students begin their university journeys

In September 2025, eight RAS-supported students began their studies at universities across Rwanda after successfully completing their national exams. These students, from the July 2024 and July 2025 graduating classes, represent the next generation of leaders empowered through education.

National recognition for excellence

RAS graduate Honorine was recognized by the First Lady of Rwanda in May 2025 as one of over 100 high-performing female students nationwide. Her recognition reflects the dedication and academic excellence of RAS students and the impact of sustained support.

Inspiring the next generation

In December, students in the High Aptitude Program gathered for the RAS Annual Retreat, designed to inspire and connect our scholars. Guest speakers that included our own students shared powerful stories of perseverance and opportunity, reminding others that success comes through dedication, hard work, and the support of those who believe in them.

RAS communities: supported children

In total, the 162 children supported in RAS programs reside in 21 different districts across Rwanda, spanning 5 provinces. There are 127 scholarship children supported, and 35 street children supported across the country.



NO	District	High Aptitude Children	Street Children
1	Muhanga	9	0
2	Kicukiro	28	33
3	Gicumbi	1	0
4	Bugesera	10	1
5	Rwamagana	26	0
6	Ngoma	13	1
7	Gasabo	6	0
8	Kamonyi	10	0
9	Rulindo	1	0
10	Nyamasheke	2	0
11	Kayonza	6	0
12	Nyarugenge	2	0
13	Musanze	2	0
14	Karongi	1	0
15	Nyagatare	2	0
16	Ruhango	3	0
18	Rusizi	2	0
19	Huye	1	0
20	Nyanza	1	0
21	Rubavu	1	0
	TOTAL	127	35

Meet the team

Full-time paid employees in Rwanda

7



US board members

5



US-based volunteers

7



Rwanda staff

RAS currently has seven full-time employees in Rwanda supporting program delivery and facility operations. Four of these roles are directly child-facing, meaning staff who work closely with students through counseling, regular school visits, academic monitoring, and family engagement to help ensure consistent attendance and overall well-being.

Over the next three years, RAS plans to grow child-facing staff from four to eight to maintain an approximate 1:50 student-to-staff ratio and strengthen counseling and student support as a core part of the model.

US volunteers

RAS is supported by seven volunteers across the United States, specifically California, New York, North Carolina, and Illinois.

Board of Directors



Alphonsine Anderson

Chief Executive Officer & Founder



Harry Cocciolo

Board Member



Tschudy Smith

Board Member



Michele Day

Board Member



Ken Kula

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.



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

Meet our newest graduates

Congratulations to our eight program graduates from both July 2024 and July 2025 graduating classes who headed to university in September 2025!



Aime N.
University of Rwanda



Danic R.
University of Rwanda



Edige T.
Rwanda Polytechnic



Fabrice N.
University of Rwanda



Honorine I.
Kepler



Isabelle U.
Rwanda Polytechnic

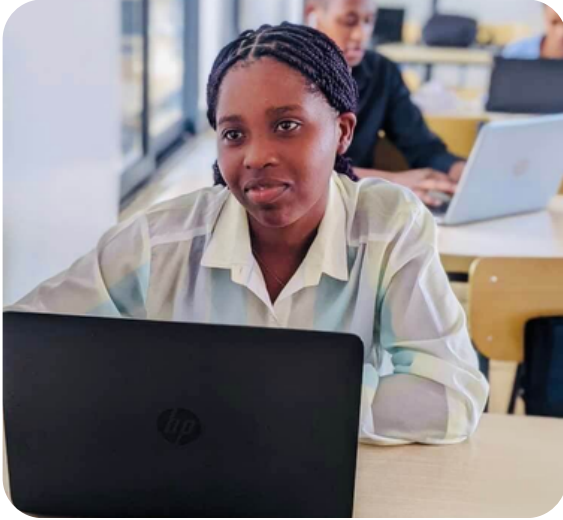


Phionah N.
Rwanda Polytechnic



Sandrine N.
University of Rwanda

Honorine's story



In May, Honorine Irakoze – a graduate of Rising Above the Storms (RAS) – was honored as the best performing female student in the 2024 National Advanced Level Examinations for ICT & Multimedia. The award was presented by Her Excellency Mrs. Jeannette Kagame, First Lady of the Republic of Rwanda, at a national ceremony organized by the Imbutu Foundation.

This achievement reflects Honorine's dedication, hard work, and passion for technology, and the support she received at RAS. She credits the school's mentorship, resources, and encouragement as central to her success, noting that RAS helped her believe in her own potential and rise to meet challenges with confidence.

Honorine's story is more than a personal triumph; it is a powerful example of how investing in education transforms lives. Thanks to donors and supporters, programs like RAS empower young leaders to excel, inspire others, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Honorine's journey embodies the spirit of **Together We Rise**, showing the impact of collective support and the promise of a brighter future.



Danic's story



Danic Rugira's journey is a story of perseverance, determination, and the power of support. When Rising Above the Storms first met Danic in Rwanda, he was struggling to stay in secondary school due to the high cost of tuition. Despite these challenges, he shared a clear dream: to become an accountant.

Thanks to the guidance and opportunities provided by RAS, particularly through our High Aptitude program, Danic was able to continue his education, build confidence, and pursue his goal.

With mentorship, resources, and encouragement from the program, he not only completed secondary school but excelled in his studies, keeping his dream alive even in the face of financial obstacles.

In July 2025, Danic graduated from secondary school, and just a few months later, in October, he began pursuing his dream at the University of Rwanda, studying accounting. His journey exemplifies how early support, access to education, and belief in a student's potential can transform aspirations into reality.

Danic's story is a testament to the mission of Rising Above the Storms and to the impact of donors who make these opportunities possible. By investing in students like Danic, we are helping young leaders overcome barriers, achieve their goals, and rise toward a brighter future. His journey reminds us that with guidance and support, dreams that once felt out of reach can become remarkable realities.



Fabrice's story



There was a time when Fabrice's future felt uncertain, clouded by hardship and limited opportunity. He lived far from school, waking before sunrise to walk dusty roads, sometimes hungry, always determined. At home, he shared a small space with siblings who looked up to him. With no electricity, he studied by the flicker of a kerosene lamp, swatting mosquitoes and fighting sleep.

When his father passed away in 2020, the weight of grief and financial strain nearly overwhelmed his family. Friends began dropping out of school. There were days Fabrice considered doing the same. One rainy season, he walked to school barefoot, his feet muddy and cold, but he kept going.

That's when Rising Above the Storms (RAS) stepped in.

Through school fee sponsorship, basic needs support, and consistent encouragement, RAS became a steady source of hope. "When RAS sponsored my education, it felt like someone finally saw potential in me," Fabrice shares. Their support didn't erase the challenges, but it gave him the chance to keep moving forward.

Despite long walks, household responsibilities, and ongoing hardship, Fabrice persevered. When exam results were announced, he had passed. "I cried that day," he says. "Not just tears of joy, but of relief. All the pain, all the sacrifice... it meant something."



Fabrice's story (cont.)

Fabrice is currently enrolled as a freshman studying Quantity Surveying at the University of Rwanda's College of Science & Technology.

A laptop gifted by sponsors Lynette and Larry Rambo has transformed into his personal classroom and workshop, where he has gained skills in coding, digital design, cybersecurity, and data entry.



A proud member of the RAS Higher Learning Program, Fabrice reflects on his journey: "Storms don't last forever, but the strength you gain by rising above them stays with you."

His story is a powerful testament to how believing in a student's potential can change their future.



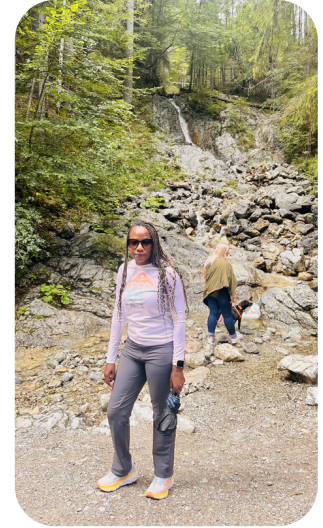
Community-powered impact

2025 was another landmark fundraising year for Rising Above the Storms. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, volunteers, and partners, our community came together across several events to expand opportunity for students in Rwanda.

Together, these efforts raised over \$150,000, helping provide education, stability, and hope for vulnerable children.

Steps toward change

In October, RAS hosted its second annual Walk to Rise, inviting supporters to move with purpose in solidarity with our students. The event generated 53 donations and \$6,500 to support our programs. Walk to Rise continues to grow into a meaningful tradition that brings our community together in support of education.



Cross country impact

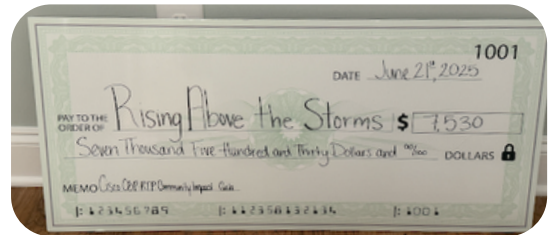
Building on the success of our inaugural Topgolf event in 2023, the RAS Topgolf Series expanded to three cities in 2025: San Jose, Raleigh, and Atlanta. The events brought together supporters for an evening of connection, friendly competition, and generosity. With 105 attendees across all three locations, the series raised over \$40,000—a 33% increase from 2024. The continued growth of this event reflects the expanding reach of our community and the powerful momentum behind our mission.

Community-powered impact

Celebrating community and partnership







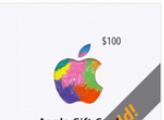

In June 2025, Rising Above the Storms was honored to be selected as the cause of choice for the Cisco Connected Black Professionals Employee Resource Organization's Community Impact Gala.

The event raised over \$7,000 for RAS students and highlighted the strength of our corporate partnerships. We are deeply grateful to Cisco and the CBP community for their generosity and belief in our work.



Launching a new tradition of giving

In April 2025, RAS hosted its first virtual silent auction, organized by the Cisco Federal Networking Sales Team and hosted within the Cisco's Public Sector organization. The three-day auction featured 25 items, including vacation getaways, golf outings, gift cards, and unique experiences. The event raised over \$8K, an encouraging first step that demonstrated the potential to expand this fundraising model across additional Cisco teams and partner networks.

 <p>4-Night Mountain Getaway in Breckenridge \$900.00 value: \$2,000.00 bids: 2</p>	 <p>Big Bear Lake, California. Cabin Vacation Home 3 Nights 4 Days - 4 Bedroom 3 Bathroom... \$800.00 value: \$2,100.00 bids: 11</p>	 <p>Direct Donation Direct Donation via Cisco Benevity Go To: https://cisco.benevity.org/cause/... Buy Now: \$1.00 remaining: 35,940 value: Priceless</p>	 <p>Lunch with Jen Kirkpatrick \$200.00 value: Priceless bids: 6</p>
 <p>New Orleans Vacation Stay with Pool New Orleans: Lower Garden District & It... \$800.00 value: \$3,000.00 bids: 1</p>	 <p>Tee Time for Four - Golf Outing Washington D.C., Haymarket Dominion ... \$320.00 value: \$1,000.00 bids: 5</p>	 <p>\$100 Apple Gift Card \$100.00 value: \$100.00 bids: 5</p>	 <p>\$50 Target Gift Card \$50.00 value: \$50.00 bids: 5</p>

Funds raised help provide school supplies for 90 students, welcome 60 new children into RAS programs, and sustain ongoing support for 160+ current students and six staff members serving on the ground in Rwanda.

Community- powered impact

Turning awareness into action

In February 2025, Rising Above the Storms partnered with Cisco's Connected Black Professionals (CBP) for a Black History Month Launch & Learn focused on global education and opportunity.

With nearly 300 attendees, Cisco's \$10-per-person donation generated meaningful support for RAS programs while expanding our community. The session also helped grow our email network and recruited two new volunteers, further strengthening the base of supporters advancing our mission.



Financials: source of funds

Giving source	Amount	% of Revenue
→ Corporate giving	\$80,148	53%
→ Fundraising events	\$26,287	18%
→ One time	\$25,112	17%
→ Recurring	\$17,460	12%
→ Total	\$149,007	100%

Corporate gifting summary

Corporate giving includes employee contribution and corporate matches. Cisco employees and matches contributed about 50% of total donation revenue. Other corporate giving was less than 1%.

The following is a summary of fundraising statistics for the year:

Fundraising Category	% of total (not mutually exclusive)
Corporate giving	51%
Fundraising Events (via Give Lively)	18%
Board Members	9%
One Time Donors (non-corporate)	34%
Recurring Donors	12%
Child Sponsors	6%

Note: Revenue in this annual report is recognized when payments are processed, not when deposited into RAS' bank account. Some payment sources take up to 2 months to deposit.

Financial highlights

\$150,000

of total consolidated revenue in the past fiscal year compared with \$137K in 2024. Net income for 2025 was approximately \$74K, representing 49% of RAS total revenue.

2025 Investments

\$77,000

Total operating expenses

\$65,000

Rwanda Learning Center (84% of OpEx)

\$7,000

Fundraising events (9% of OpEx, primarily TopGolf events)

\$3,000

Marketing (4% of OpEx, primarily swag)

\$2,000

Other general & administrative expenses

Net assets

Our year-end cash balance increased to \$219K in 2025 as we intentionally strengthened reserves to support multi-term student commitments and prepare for U.S. payroll as we build operational capacity for our next stage of growth (targeting Q2–Q3 2026).

2025

\$219,000

2024

\$154,000

2023

\$132,000

2022

\$81,000

2021

\$78,000

Allocation of program expenses

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

The following expenses are based on the \$65K budget for the Rwanda Learning Center. These do not include costs for operating the fundraising arm in the US.

→ Rwanda payroll	22%
→ Quarterly school fees	22%
→ Payroll taxes & benefits	18%
→ Groceries	11%
→ Transportation	8%
→ Child other	4%
→ Rent	8%
→ Administrative	4%
→ Utilities	2%
→ Medical	1%

Allocation of operations expenses

\$77,000

total expenses (100%)

\$65,000

Rwanda Learning Center (84%)

\$12,000

US operations (16%)
admin, marketing, & website



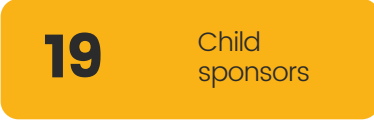
Donor information



Total donations from individuals



Total donations from corporate matches



Median donation amount

Average one-time donation

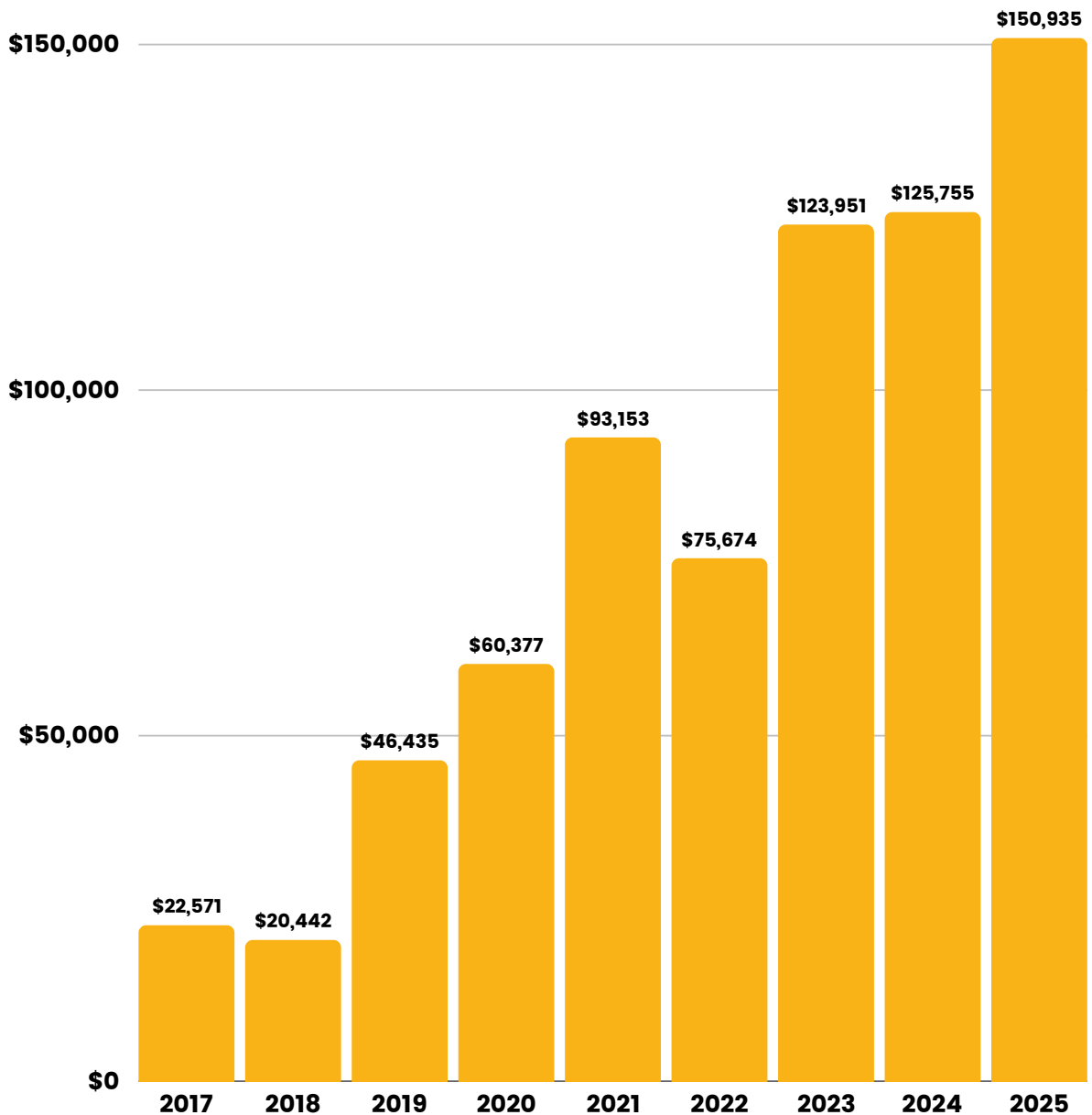


Note: The top 20% of donors contributed 82% of individual donations (\$), with 9% of these donors giving over \$1,000.

8 year revenue growth

The chart below illustrates annual donations since RAS launched the program in Rwanda in 2017, as recorded in QuickBooks. Donations are recognized on a cash basis, meaning revenue is recorded when funds are deposited into RAS' bank account (note that one corporate matching source can result in up to a two-month delay). On an accrual basis, RAS processed \$149K in donations in 2025 and \$129K in 2024.

Total Donations 2017-2025



A look ahead

Our goal is to raise and sustain an annual operating budget of \$1 million (USD) to ensure the continued strength and growth of our programs. This investment will allow us to focus on three key priorities: expanding our impact in Rwanda, growing our paid team in the United States, and launching operations in a new country.

5 Year Strategy

Pillar #1: Growth in Rwanda

- A larger space (\$1K rent a month)
- Expand the street children program
- Exponential growth for the High Aptitude program
- Increase number of staff
- University Programs
- Internships
- Mentorship

Pillar #2: US Payroll

- Operations / Project Manager
- Development Manager
- Communications Manager
- Executive Director

Pillar #3: Future launch in a new country

- Start with the scholarship program
- Focus on education

Target annual increase in number of supported children

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
High Aptitude	127	187	247	307	367
Street Children	40	55	70	85	100
Total	167	242	317	392	467

Alphonsine's closing letter



TOGETHER WE RISE

The impact we made together in 2025 was not incremental — it was foundational. Because of you, Rising Above the Storms now supports **over 160 students** across Rwanda with education access, mentorship, and the steady support that keeps a child moving forward when life tries to pull them back.

This year, we welcomed **55 new students** into our programs, and **eight** of our students started university — bringing our total university students to **12**. Those numbers are more than milestones. They represent doors staying open, futures staying possible, and young people gaining the dignity of consistency — not just rescue.

In 2026, our direction is clear: we are building for sustainability and operational strength. This includes launching a **U.S. payroll system** and bringing on a **part-time Operations / Project Manager** to strengthen execution—so board operations, U.S.–Rwanda coordination, and priority initiatives are managed with clear plans, tracking, and follow-through.

We are also preparing for our **August 1–6 Rwanda trip**, designed to deepen relationships and grow an ambassador community of people who have seen the work firsthand and are committed to carrying it forward. Alongside this, we are focused on growing our donor community and increasing revenue so we can expand our footprint in Rwanda — including securing a larger space and growing the local team needed to serve students well.

At Rising Above the Storms, we don't measure success only by what we give, but by what children become when they are supported long enough to thrive. Every student who stays in school, every graduate who steps into opportunity, is proof that hope can be built — deliberately, consistently, together.

Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for believing that hardship does not get the final word. The work continues — and together, we rise.

With gratitude and determination,

Alphonsine Imaniraguha Anderson

Connect with us



[@RAS_NonProfit](#)



[@RisingAboveTheStorms](#)



[Rising Above the Storms](#)



[Rising Above the Storms](#)



[risingabovestorms.org/donations/](#)

