

## SEEING **BARRIERS** AS OPPORTUNITIES

A resounding message at the 2016 UCBC Graduation



**Y**ou are our heroes,” proclaimed Dr. David Kasali, Rector of the Christian Bilingual University of Congo (UCBC), as he turned and looked over at the graduates sitting next to a stage draped in silky, Congolese colors. The echo of his words rang through the outdoor air, catapulted from loud speakers across the University’s campus. “You are our *raison d’être*, the reason we exist and are here today,” he continued.

On July 30, 2016, UCBC celebrated its 6th graduation ceremony. A community of students, staff, faculty, families, local leaders and distinguished guests gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the class of 2016 and the completion of another academic year. Thanks to our supporters, the 2015-16 academic year came with its own set of highlights: the installation of a solar power system providing 24/7 energy, the completion of four classrooms in the burgeoning University Chapel and Community Center, and national and international recognition of UCBC’s Integrated Research Institute’s *Sharing the Land Project (STL)* - a project that is poised to impact local and regional government policies about land rights.

These exciting developments throughout the year culminating in the momentous occasion of a UCBC graduation capture and illustrate the reason Congo Initiative and UCBC came into being: to raise up a generation of leaders committed to transforming Congo. This is a generation of heroes, resilient in hope and faith in God, that see barriers as opportunities to change the world.

**“Great men and women who changed their world were just like you. They faced challenges that seemed insurmountable to others, but not to them. Where others saw barriers they saw opportunities. Their vision, confidence, and love for a better future for their people were forces that inspired them to sacrifice and actions that changed not only their nations, but the whole world.”** ~ Dr. David Kasali, Rector of UCBC

As the ceremony unfolded, two central messages became intelligible, weaving through the speeches like the melodies heard earlier in the distinctly Congolese processional music. On the one hand, a message encouraging our graduates moving out into a challenging world, with words that remind us all to approach challenges not with fear, but with expectation. And on the other hand, a message of reassurance that our graduates do not go forth alone. They are supported by an ever growing community of alumni.

Uganda Christian University’s (UCU), Vice Chancellor for Development of External Relations and keynote speaker David Mugawe echoed the words of the Rector:

*“I would like to encourage you to look for opportunities in your life as you move out of this university, opportunities to serve. Often, we are blinded by fear: fear of innovation, fear of creativity, fear of thinking outside the box. . . .But, I encourage you to look out and make use of the opportunities presented to you.”*



As these graduates continue on their journey, they join a community of more than 350 alumni that are already turning challenges into opportunities, finding ways to incorporate learned skills and a passion for a reimagined Congo into their daily lives and work. Together, these alumni represent a transforming generation that is growing and establishing itself as a force committed to serving their communities and working towards a more hope-filled, peaceful, and just society.

Mugawe expressed the crucial role alumni play not only as ambassadors of the university and the values instilled, but as key actors in strengthening the university, whether through the contribution of resources or as potential employees of the university itself. He expressed joy in discovering that UCBC is in the process of organizing an alumni association. As a sign of good will and to everyone's delight, Mugawe announced that UCU will offer UCBC alumni discounted tuition fees if they choose to pursue graduate studies.

Partnerships like these between like-minded institutions play a key role in strengthening UCBC and making the vision of Congo Initiative become a reality. You, too, play a crucial role! When we speak of Congo Initiative, we are talking about a community of like-minded people that spans the globe; an ever-expanding network of staff, students, alumni, families, volunteers, mentors, and supporters like you; a global community that is learning to see barriers as opportunities.

## WOMEN RISING

### Meet UCBC's top graduate of 2016: Clarisse Ngoyi

#### What brought you to UCBC?

I grew up in Beni, and I wanted to study communications. I also heard about UCBC, its values, and the absence of corruption.



#### How has UCBC impacted you?

I learned to work and serve regardless of who I am serving and working for. UCBC has increased my sense of humility by being an institution where there are no big or small people. We all get along together without considering our differences, so I learned to cultivate that humility. We feel at ease regardless of the region of the country or part of the world where we come from.



#### What role did UCBC play in your achievement?

It is a university where there is scientific rigor and things are well-organized. I was able to focus seriously on my studies and achieve those positive results.

#### What are your future plans?

For now, I plan to get a job, even though my greatest desire is to pursue further studies. But, there are circumstances which don't allow me to do this now. But, I want to deepen my knowledge in my domain of communications so I can work effectively and help my country. I chose communication, thinking how can I benefit my country and people in need.

#### What advice would you give future students?

Choose your field and give yourself to it seriously. Nothing is too difficult. And for women, do not be discouraged or underestimate yourself, thinking you are inferior compared to men. We are equal and women should be able to go to university and choose any field because it's critical for women to study!

## SHARING THE LAND PROJECT

### STL receives national & international attention

**S**haring the Land (STL), a project of UCBC's Integrated Research Institute (IRI), is gaining national and international recognition as it works beyond Beni Territory.

With continued support from UN-Habitat, Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), and Texas A&M Center for Conflict and Development, STL uses GIS and GPS technologies coupled with community organizing principles, to address land conflict, improve urban planning, and develop transparent and effective land management systems. The goal of STL is to promote land rights for all land owners, tenants, and squatters in eastern DRC.

In April 2016, the IRI team and Academic Dean for Research, Professor Felix Katimika, met with North Kivu's Governor and Minister of Land Affairs in order to discuss land reform and how STL's methodology and techniques can develop a modern, transparent land management system. In partnership with North Kivu's government, STL is now piloting its methodology and process in Goma, eastern Congo

### STL's partnership with North Kivu's land administration has the potential to influence the policies and practices of Congo's central government!

Moreover, STL was awarded an invitation to the TechCon Innovation Marketplace at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This prestigious event will be held in November 2016 and is co-hosted by USAID's Higher Education Solutions Network and MIT. This exciting event is a competition between selected projects, and winners are eligible to receive additional project funding, training, and mentoring. We are thrilled that STL Project Manager, Archip Lobo, will attend this event to represent UCBC!

## CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

### Four new classrooms completed and dedicated for the 2016-17 academic year



"I came to discover what the building means for the people here, how valuable it is, that it's not just a building. It's like we're designing spaces different from just designing a building. So the space is like a platform for transformation."

-Mathieu Lembe  
Construction Administrator



Left: Students, families and guests visit the new classrooms and Dr. Kasali receives the keys to the new classrooms during the dedication ceremony.

Below: Kwetu Partners construction workers enjoy a break after putting final touches on classroom windows.



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## WHY WE ARE HERE...

### UCBC alumni respond to recent attacks in Beni

**O**n August 13, 2016, over 40 people were killed in attacks near Beni. In the last two years, we have witnessed an increase in these acts of sporadic violence in the territory. The Congo Initiative and UCBC community join in solidarity with the people of Beni, lamenting and crying out for peace and justice.

Amidst such challenging realities, UCBC students, faculty, and alumni are responding out of their commitment to be a beacon of hope and transformation. This is why we are here...

**"It is important UCBC continues to train a transforming generation for this reason. Our impact will shape positively the future of eastern Congo."**

~Archip Lobo, Alum 14'

**"We are all facing this situation and learning from it. UCBC exists to prepare leaders who are ready to bring change, to transform Congo. We are living by Christian faith that believes we need to act and respond differently than current reactions."**

~Adelphine Angemito, Alum 13'

**"UCBC matters because the philosophy and the approach used to equip students is based on understanding our context, including the challenges, and it helps students to use the good to change Congo."**

~ Dieudonné Agaba, Alum 15'



## BEING TRANSFORMED TO TRANSFORM

**A**s you have read, the UCBC community is choosing to see barriers as opportunities to bring about transformation in their nation. Whether it is land conflict, gender disparity, or the overall challenge of leadership, students are responding to these barriers with innovation and hope-filled commitment to the flourishing of Congo.

However, one barrier that remains a significant challenge for students and families is the cost of tuition. UCBC provides a uniquely holistic model of education to deserving young men and women, regardless of their financial circumstances. But, like any university, this is a costly endeavor.

**That's why we need your help!**

Every gift counts to **GROW** and **SUSTAIN** UCBC. Your gifts will assist the next generation of students to transform barriers into opportunities. Thank you!



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