

Photographic Report  
August 2023

by  
Laura Gotti

# first move



*A photographic report  
on the chess training  
organized by Turi  
Kumwe at Iramiro  
Centre, managed by  
Inshuti Z'abakene  
nuns.*

# IRAMIRO



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## Longevity

*The Iramiro Centre in Busanza offers a safe place and support system for children and teenagers born with HIV, abandoned, or with unknown parents, or with very poor families. Its name, Iramiro, means longevity in Kinyarwanda, reflecting its mission to provide these young people with a chance for a longer life. Many of the centre's guests come from backgrounds of extreme poverty and are subjected to discrimination by their own families. At present, 21 children and teenagers reside at the centre permanently, while 24 attend for meals and after-school activities before returning home in the evening. During holidays, all guests stay at the centre.*





## HIV in Rwanda

*Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a significant global public health and development issue caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). This virus weakens the immune system, leaving the body vulnerable to secondary infections and opportunistic diseases. If left untreated, HIV infection can progress to AIDS, which is a fatal illness. Sexual contact is the most common way that HIV is spread, but it can also be transmitted through unsafe injections, contaminated blood transfusions, and from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.*

*In Rwanda, around 230000 people are living with HIV, and among them, 7100 are children aged 0 to 14.*

*Efforts to diminish stigma are fundamental for HIV/AIDS prevention and control initiatives. Such negative attitudes can dissuade individuals from seeking testing and adhering to their prescribed treatment plans. Mitigating these barriers is crucial for promoting comprehensive health and well-being among affected populations.*

*As per the latest report of Rwanda DHS 2019-20, 4% of both women and men aged between 15-49 believe that children living with HIV should not be allowed to attend school along with those who are HIV-negative. Additionally, 12% of women and 11% of men would refuse to buy fresh vegetables from a shopkeeper who has HIV.*

*Based on the latest Rwanda DHS 2019-20 data, it was found that only 64% of women and men aged 15-49 have sufficient knowledge about HIV transmission and prevention. However, young adolescents aged 10-14 years still lack awareness about how to protect themselves from HIV, while older adolescents (15-19 years) and young adults (20-24 years) - collectively referred to as young people aged 15-24 years - are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours and have less frequent contact with healthcare services. It is crucial to focus on HIV prevention, access to testing and treatment, and achieving Viral Load Suppression in these age groups for long-term epidemic control, which is particularly challenging (RPHIA 2018-2019).*





INSHTI  
Z'ABAKENE





## FRIENDS OF THE POOR

*Inshuti Z'abakene translates to "Friends of the poor" in English.*

*The congregation was founded by Sister Catherine Nduwamariya, who belonged to the Religious community of the Assumption. However, Sister Catherine realized that her calling was not wholly aligned with the Religious of the Assumption, as she wanted to help even more underprivileged individuals. Despite establishing the Inshuti Z'abakene congregation, she remained a member of the Religious of the Assumption until her passing, as they provided her with care and support.*

*The Inshuti Z'abakene community is dedicated to serving others and is practical in its approach. They prioritize helping those in need and keep their prayers short. As a new congregation, they invest most of their earnings to benefit disadvantaged communities.*

*They work closely with people living with HIV, disabilities, teen mothers, poor children, and elderly individuals whom their families have abandoned. The majority of the Sisters are from Rwanda and are fluent in Kinyarwanda.*







# LEARNING CHESS DURING SUMMER

*In July 2023, around 38 kids, including boys and girls from Iramiro centre and the neighborhood, had the opportunity to attend a one-week basic course of chess. They were introduced to this art by two young chess trainers, Elyse and Monique. The week ended with a demonstration of the acquired skills to their parents, friends and neighbours.*

*After the intensive one-week training, some of the most passionate kids created a chess club which meets once a week in the premises of the Iramiro Centre. One of the trainers, Elyse, kept visiting the club activities until mid-October, to keep motivating them and sharing his knowledge.*

*The club members are still meeting every week and have the hope to keep improving their skills and get a chance to compete with other young people and schools in Rwanda in the near future.*



# THE KNIGHT

Elyse



*Elyse, who is 29 years old, is one of two trainers who taught the children at the Iramiro centre how to play chess. He considers his job more of a mission than just work because he shares a similar past with the children. During a training session, Elyse shared his personal story with us.*

*"I cannot recall the exact details of my birth or early years, but I was fortunate enough to grow up in the Agahozo Shalom Youth Village located in the Eastern Province. This Village was established as a response to the orphan crisis that resulted from the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda. The name Agahozo-Shalom embodies the essence of this place, which serves as a refuge where vulnerable youth can find solace and healing. Indeed, Agahozo-Shalom is a combination of the Kinyarwanda word "agahozo", meaning "where tears are dried", and the Hebrew word "shalom", meaning "peaceful" or "live in peace". I was privileged to spend four years there, from 16 to 20.*

*One day, a group of volunteers from Israel came to our Village to teach us how to play chess. Among them was a kind and knowledgeable man named Shimon, "to be heard" in Hebrew, now the Ambassador of Angola. I was immediately captivated by the knight piece and eager to learn its movements on the board. After the training started, different volunteers kept training me and the other orphans at the Village for two years at least once per week."*

Chess is life for me: I cannot live without it.



*“When I turned 20, I finished high school and left the Village. I enrolled at the University of Kigali, where I began pursuing my passion for business and information technology. While studying, I worked part-time as a data collector to make ends meet. But that was just the beginning of my journey. In my second year of university, I became a chess trainer. After attending a chess trainer seminar in Uganda in 2017, I was awarded the title of National Chess Instructor by the International Chess Federation. To this day, only two people have received this honour, and I am proud to be one of them. I have been a trainer for six years, working with both individuals and in various schools. Typically, I teach at private primary and secondary schools during weekday afternoons and public secondary schools on weekends.”*

# Despite its reputation as a game of pure intellect, chess is "eternally social".

Gary Alan Fine (2015), *Players and Pawns: How Chess Builds Community and Culture*, University of Chicago Press.



*"Chess is a game that I am deeply passionate about. Its complexities are endless, and I am constantly learning. No one can genuinely master chess. It is much broader and more complicated than we think. Chess has been more than just a hobby for me; it's been a "life vest" in times of trouble. In 2017, I faced a challenging situation that left me feeling lost and disconnected from the world. For six long months, I struggled to accept my past and find a way to move forward. Playing chess has helped me reconnect with others on a deeper level. When you're sitting across from someone on a chessboard, you can't help but engage in human contact and interaction. This is especially true when playing with an actual board rather than on a phone or computer. Through chess, I have found common ground with people from all walks of life and formed lasting connections that transcend the game."*

# Chess benefits

*Apart from providing an opportunity to socialize and expand your network, chess offers a plethora of benefits that extend beyond the board. One of the most valuable aspects of playing chess is the potential to gain insights into other people's emotions and develop skills for navigating social situations. As a player, you learn to anticipate your opponent's moves and consider their thought process, which can translate to better communication and conflict resolution in everyday life.*

*Moreover, chess is an excellent tool for honing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are highly sought after in the job market. Players can improve their cognitive skills and decision-making abilities by constantly analyzing the board and predicting outcomes. This can translate into better job prospects and a more competitive edge in the workforce. Many employers view chess as a symbol of intellectual prowess and appreciate the strategic thinking skills that it fosters.*

*Lastly, chess can help develop visualization skills and cultivate a more open-minded approach to problem-solving. As players must constantly visualize the board and anticipate potential outcomes, they learn to think creatively and outside the box. This can lead to more innovative ideas and a willingness to consider alternative perspectives.*









If you wonder which chess piece I am, it's a knight.

*"I used to love knights as a child because they looked like horses, but now I appreciate their strategic value. When a knight is in a centralized position, it can control up to eight squares at a time, making it difficult for the opponent to defend."*



## Chess is for life

*“When I was told about the kids at the Iramiro Centre, I saw it as an opportunity to give back what I was given. As an orphan myself, I know how difficult it can be. My dream is to one day fund or partner with an orphanage center and teach these children how to play chess. I truly believe that chess can help them on an emotional level by directing positive thinking and keeping them busy with changing things. Of course, improving their academic results is important, but what's most important is that they have fun and are happy. I also hope to train some of them so that they can work part-time as trainers, as we don't have many trainers here in Rwanda.”*

# THE QUEEN

## Monique

*Monique is the second trainer who taught the youngest kid at Iramiro how to play chess and shared her story about her first encounter with chess.*

*“When I was growing up, my family was quite large, and my uncle was a chess player. As a teenager, I often watched him play, fascinated by the strategic moves and decision-making involved. It wasn't until I turned 24, while studying finance, that I began to take an active interest in the game myself. My uncle saw potential in me when I started competing in 2013 and soon began training me to improve my skills. The following year, I had the opportunity to participate in the Olympiad, which led me to Tromsø in 2014.*

*Following the successful competitions held in Rwanda for women players, I was honoured to be chosen among the top five players to represent the Rwandan women's team at the Olympiad in Norway. This was a remarkable achievement for our team, marking the Rwanda women's team's first participation in such a prestigious event. As a first-time traveller to another continent, I was thrilled with the opportunity to explore a new culture and meet new people. Despite my initial concerns about the weather, I was pleasantly surprised that it was not too cold, given that we were in Norway in August.*

*During the Olympiad, I had the chance to interact with players and coaches from different countries, and we quickly formed lasting friendships.”*



*“We still keep in touch thanks to social media and sometimes reminisce about our experiences in Norway. Overall, the opportunity to represent my country and compete in a globally recognized event was an unforgettable experience I will always cherish. After competing in the Olympiad, I continued participating in chess competitions but eventually left the Rwanda Women's team due to work commitments. Unfortunately, it's impossible to make a living from chess in Rwanda, so I gradually decreased my participation and began working as an accountant for various NGOs, including ActionAid, VSO, and Humanity and Inclusion. My goal now is to become a bank agent and work as a freelancer.”*



# Chess is fun, first of all, and presents a new challenge with every opponent.

*“Playing Chess has always been a source of immense pleasure for me. It’s a game that I enjoy playing with anyone, as each person presents a new challenge that helps me sharpen my skills. Over time, however, the game’s competitive aspect has taken a backseat. Nowadays, I devote my time to training children, leveraging my certificate in chess coaching.*

*I collaborated with the Rwanda Federation of Chess and participated in many exciting projects. One of the most recent was “Mini Chess,” which involved teaching Chess to the Gikondo Primary School kids. Our efforts bore fruit, as some of the children I trained in Gikondo emerged victorious in the Inter School Chess Tournament held in 2020, organized by the Embassy of France in Rwanda and the Institut Francais du Rwanda. The event witnessed participation from seventeen teams representing nine schools, making it an incredible achievement for the young chess players.*

*However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the Rwandan Chess Federation. The organization had been incredibly active, with numerous events and activities occurring regularly. Sadly, the pandemic has thrown a wrench in the works, making it particularly challenging for the Federation to regain footing and resume operations.”*



## Queening through life.

*“As a child, I felt like a pawn in the game of life. But as I grew older, I became like a queen, able to move in all directions and make all the other pawns' moves, apart from the one of the knight. I admire the queen because it is strong, and I also feel strong because of what I've been through.”*



# There are many possibilities but only one best move.

*“Playing Chess is not only a fun activity for children but also significantly benefits their growth and development. One of the primary advantages of playing Chess is that it enhances their decision-making skills. As they engage in the game, they must analyze various possibilities and determine the best move. This process helps them to develop critical thinking skills and teaches them the importance of making informed decisions. Moreover, Chess teaches children to prioritize their goals and objectives. When playing the game, they need to consider their opponent's moves and anticipate the outcomes of their decisions. This skill is transferable to real-life situations, where they must evaluate the pros and cons of different options and make choices based on their priorities. Chess is an excellent tool for children to develop their cognitive abilities and maturity. By playing Chess, they learn to think strategically and develop an analytical mindset to serve them well in their future ambitions.”*



# Chess teaches you to focus and think quickly

*“Concentrating on a game for a few hours is a valuable skill that can translate to other tasks that require focus, such as reading a book or completing homework. This is especially beneficial for children, as it can improve their school performances, particularly in science, math, and geography. Chess, in particular, is highly logical and requires players to orient themselves in space, making it an excellent tool for developing spatial skills. Additionally, when children play Chess, they must understand concepts like diagonals and counting, further enhancing their cognitive abilities.”*









## Failing is part of the Game.

*“Playing Chess is an excellent way to learn the value of perseverance and the acceptance of failure. Losing a game doesn't imply that you are weak but that you need to improve your skills and train harder. It's a reminder that even the strongest players can be defeated and that there's always room for growth and improvement. Chess reflects our daily lives in this way, as it teaches us to embrace our failures and learn from them.”*

# People think that Chess is complex, but Chess is for anyone: youth and elders.

*According to a study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health in 2019, there is evidence to suggest that playing Chess may provide cognitive benefits for the elderly and could serve as a form of protection against the onset of dementia. Moreover, a pilot study conducted by Geriatric Nursing in 2021 found that chess-training programs can improve cognitive ability, mood, and overall quality of life for older adults. These findings suggest that engaging in chess-related activities may be valuable for promoting cognitive health and well-being in later life.*



# I dream of a world where every child can enjoy the game of chess.

*Chess has a profound impact on a child's mind. When children engage in this game while having fun, it unlocks a whole new realm of thinking that can significantly benefit them in school and life. By learning and practising the strategies required to succeed in Chess, children can enhance their critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. This not only helps them excel academically but also equips them with valuable tools for navigating life's challenges.*



# TURI KUMWE

We are together

*"Turi kumwe" means "we are together" in Kinyarwanda. It is said when parting to convey the idea of staying united in thought and love despite physical separation. The phrase is also used in football to mean "pass the ball". It thus symbolizes contact and collaboration, two fundamental aspects of this organization joining Rwanda and Italy. Turi Kumwe Onlus is a volunteer organization based in Novara that was founded in 2008 by Jerome Rugema, a survivor of the genocide against the Tutsis, and Ilaria Buscaglia, a cultural anthropology student at the time. Their friendship led to the creation of an association between Italy and Rwanda, which aims to support small local initiatives, among which the Sisters Inshuti z'Abakene and the Iramiro centre.*



Zugzwang at chess means 'being forced to make a move'.



## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

The Chess activities at Iramiro in 2023 would not have been possible without the support from il Circolo Scacchistico Pistoiese and David Dolci, Le Due Torri Shop, the online magazine Unoscacchista, Amici Sumus, and Scuole Filosofica Website.

The biggest acknowledgement goes to Andrea Maffei for thinking about this already in 2018 and coordinating all the fundraising.



TURI  
KUMWE



[tkonlus.org](http://tkonlus.org)