

2025

TUMAINI LETU

MAGAZINE

Writers

Kensomah Magombo
Triumph conaniah Nota
JR Wikkerink

Photo credits

Elegant photography
Triumph conaniah Nota
Alvin , GR Pictures
Moving Minds

Chief editor

Bryce Chawiya

Editor

JR Wikkerink

Designer

Triumph conaniah Nota



TUMAINI LETU



Introduccion

Tumaini Letu Magazine serves as a platform that highlights stories, talents and achievements of refugees and impact of Tumaini Letu's year round programs.

While the Tumaini festival brings global attention, the magazine goes further revealing the organisations broader mission to empowering refugees, promote coexistence and advocate for refugee rights.

Through stories, art and inspiring profiles We invite you to Journey with us as we celebrate the lives of refugees who are not just recipients of aid, but active contributors to society. Be a part of honoring their diversity, perseverance, and creativity, and discover how Tumaini Letu is making a lasting difference.

Table of contents

01

Transforming lives
creatively

P Formidables journey

07

Cultural Connections

**Hospitality at the Heart
of Survival**

11

Innovation and Impact

**From Electrician to
Fashion Designer**

15

Advocacy for Change

**A Call to Action for
Refugee Rights**

The Tumaini Festival

**Transforming lives
creatively**

03

Celebrating Refugee
Contributions

A Young Entrepreneurs Journey

**Finding Her Voice:
Nyota's Journey Through Poetry**

09

Voices of Tumaini

The Debates

13

A Decade of Tumaini

Letu

Jay-Extra

P FORMIDABLES JOURNEY



To many, art is simply an aesthetic, colors and brushstrokes arranged to please the eye. But art is much more for Aksanti Murhebwa Florybert, also known as P Formidable, a young painter in Dzaleka Refugee Camp. It is his voice, his tool for strength, and his way of giving back. Every brushstroke is an act of defiance against hardship, a proof of survival, and hope for those around him.

When P Formidable arrived in Dzaleka at just 16 years old in 2018, the future was uncertain. He had little more than his passion for art, yet that passion has since shaped his journey. Now, at 23, he has become a mentor, guiding young artists within the camp. They meet at the community gallery, a space where he pours his energy into teaching children who have nowhere else to go. “A lot of kids here don’t have a place to go and spend their time, a lot of them just roam around the camp with nothing to do” he explains, “I have 15 students under my direct mentorship just a portion of the 30 who regularly attend my art lessons. I’m only trying to transform lives creatively”.



But he also dreams bigger. “Young artists need more than one event a year. We need exhibitions, showcases beyond the camp, spaces where we are seen for our talent, not just our circumstances.”

His work speaks of revolution, transformation, and the rich, untold stories of Africa. With oil paints, acrylics, and pencil, he brings emotion to the canvas. One of his proudest moments was meeting Malawian music legend Lawi at the Tumaini Festival 2024. Inspired by the musician, P Formidable created a portrait of him and later had the chance to present it in person. “That moment,” he recalls, “proved that art has the power to connect people in ways nothing else can.”

Through his talent, P Formidable has carved out a space for himself. But his story is far from over. His vision? A future where refugee artists are not just given a stage but real opportunities to thrive. Tumaini has played a part in his journey by providing him the space to be known and to be able to make his talent flourish.

Dzaleka, being a place of refuge, has its limitations. Opportunities are scarce, and for many, self-expression is the only outlet. But even with that being so, it is hard for young artists like him to be recognised and to sell their art.

A turning point in his journey came with the Tumaini Festival, the camp's only major cultural event and a platform that amplifies refugee voices. Since 2019, Tumaini has provided him with opportunities he never imagined. Last year alone, he sold three paintings and stole the show with his face-painting skills. “Tumaini is more than just a festival,” he says. “It's a chance to be seen, to connect with people who can change our lives.”

A YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS JOURNEY



At 20, Ndugu Steven is already rewriting the rulebook on what it means to be an entrepreneur. A second-year student at Jesuit Worldwide Learning studying business and computer science, Ndugu is determined to build a future on his own terms and that means embracing both ambition and opportunity with the wisdom of someone far beyond his years.

Growing up in a household of eight children, Ndugu's financial reality was always a challenge. But rather than waiting for things to change, he took matters into his own hands. "I've always wanted to bring money home," he says. "When you're not financially stable, you don't wait for things to improve you make them happen."

Determined to find his footing, Ndugu joined Tumaini Letu's entrepreneurship training program, a game-changer that gave him the tools to turn his passion into something far more sustainable. "The training was everything," Ndugu says. "I learned how to build a real business, not just a side hustle."



But in a place like Dzaleka refugee camp, where Malawi government policies prevent refugees from seeking work outside the camp, Ndugu, like many others, has had to rely on his skills, creativity, and drive to make a living. Before his leap into entrepreneurship, Ndugu's hustle was unconventional. He sold donuts, chips, and even clothes, hoping to turn small profits into something bigger. But like many first-time entrepreneurs, he learned the hard way. "I'd sell donuts, and with the profits, I'd buy clothes to sell. But I ended up losing more than I gained" Ndugu admits with a smile, even though failure was not always part of the plan.

Today, Ndugu's business is thriving and it's not donuts or clothes. He's now focused on livestock, specializing in both local and hybrid chickens as well as rabbits, a venture that's not only profitable but one that also allows him to share with his fellow youth. "I've been able to give some livestock to my friends, so they can start their own businesses too," he shares. "It's about building a community of entrepreneurs, not just working for myself."

But it is not just the money that drives him. Ndugu's entrepreneurial journey has allowed him to support his family, cover household necessities, and ensure that his education continues without interruption. "Everything I do is for my family," he says. "My goal is to make sure we all have a better future."

With his sights now set on expanding into online business, Ndugu is just getting started. "There's a lot more I want to learn and do," he says. "The world is changing, and I plan to change with it." With plans to expand into online business and further invest in his ventures, Ndugu is already setting his sights on the future "None of this would have been possible without Tumaini Letu's entrepreneurship program." He said. The entrepreneurship program's focus on equipping refugees with practical, applicable business skills has been a game-changer, allowing Ndugu to not only start his own business but also empower others in his community to do the same



FINDING HER VOICE: NYOTA'S JOURNEY THROUGH POETRY

In Dzaleka Refugee Camp, where daily struggles range from food insecurity to limited education, 18-year-old Nyota Ephrasie has found strength in poetry, using her voice to challenge stereotypes, share her experiences, and dream of a future beyond the camp.

Nyota has spent the last 7 years in Dzaleka since she and her family fled from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Life at the camp is difficult. Challenges such as a lack of quality education with minimum hours for learning and insufficient resources are compounded by the unique issues that face young girls in the camp. These limitations weigh heavily on girls like Nyota, who often feel deflated under the burden of stereotypes and unequal opportunities.

For Nyota, the Tumaini Festival has meant a reprieve from these day-to-day challenges and an opportunity to express her story and those of the others in the camp through her poetry. 2021 was Nyota's first chance to perform at the Tumaini Festival, where she performed at the Poetry Corner. Fast forward to 2024: Nyota was the first poet to perform on the mainstage. She was nervous—surprised even—but stepping onto the stage marked a powerful moment. It was important not just for her growth but for what it signaled to other young girls watching from the crowd.

Nyota credits Tumaini with opening doors to new connections, friendships, and performance opportunities. Through the festival, she sees poets learning from each other's styles, healing from trauma, and finding hope together. At Dzaleka, Tumaini Festival brings together refugees from diverse backgrounds, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, creating a loving community that celebrates different cultures.



al
ice poverty among refugees
wi and to promote social cohesion
n refugees and host communities
transforming Dzaleka Refugee Camp
community-based tourism de

ectives

ing the capacity of refugees in areas
rism and hospitality, creative skills,
preneurship

ing the economy within Dzaleka
ee Camp by creating employment and
es opportunities

Since starting at the Tumaini Festival, Nyota has also participated in the Tumaini Talent Shows in 2023 and 2024, as well as performed at Kaza Kitchen and Poetry Day in Lilongwe in 2024. Moving forward, Nyota would like to see more international artists and poets coming to Dzaleka for Tumaini to bring a greater awareness of the camp and those who live there. For herself, her dream is twofold: to become a biomedical engineer while continuing to write poetry that speaks to the hearts of those who've lived through displacement.



Contacts: info@tumaini
www.tumaini.net

HOSPITALITY AT THE HEART OF SURVIVAL



Amos Espoir is only 21, but he already knows the hustle better than most. Growing up in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, he's had to find ways to make things work, ways that go beyond the limitations of his reality. For Amos, survival isn't just about scraping by. It's about stepping up, even when the odds aren't stacked in your favour.

Last year, Amos joined Tumaini Letu's Homestay Training Program, where refugees learn the ins and outs of hosting visitors. Think of it as hospitality with a purpose. Tourists and festival goers who come to Dzaleka can stay in the camp, paying a small sum of money to experience life from the inside, real, unpolished, and deeply personal. The program isn't just an economic opportunity, it's a cultural exchange that reshapes perspectives on what it means to live as a refugee.



For Amos, it was also a chance to change his own story. As the third-born of eight kids, Amos has responsibilities that would overwhelm most adults. On top of paying for his own Form 4 education (the equivalent of senior year), he covers his six-year-old brother's primary school fees and contributes to other household needs, helping his parents where they can't. "There's no one else to do it," Amos says. "If I don't make it happen, no one will."

And he has. During the 2024 Tumaini Festival, Amos hosted two visitors through the Homestay Program. That week of hosting earned him enough to pay for both his and his brother's school fees. "It's not just about the money, though," Amos says. "You share your home, your food, your stories and in return, you get something more than just a payment."

One of those guests didn't just come and go. They've become regular visitors, almost like family now. Amos smiles when he talks about them, the connection is clearly deeper than a transactional relationship. "It's funny how someone can come into your life as a stranger and end up staying for something more."

For Amos, this is bigger than a way to just make ends meet. It's a statement that people in Dzaleka, himself included, are not just surviving. They're creating, hosting, and finding ways to thrive despite circumstances most can't imagine.

A key component of this change has been the Tumaini Letu Homestay Program. The initiative, which aims to empower refugees, gives them hospitality skills and facilitates cross-cultural interactions. The camp life is experienced by visitors through the tales, friendliness, and tenacity of its residents. It's an opportunity for hosts like Amos to change the perception of what it means to be a refugee and more likely a refugee from Dzaleka camp.



But Amos doesn't just see this as an opportunity for himself. He encourages others in the camp to join the training that Tumaini offers. "We don't know what tomorrow holds," he says. "What you learn today might help you and

With the program's support, Amos has been able to fund his education, help his family, and create connections that transcend borders. The future may still be uncertain, but one thing for certain is Amos is building it on his own terms and encouraging others to do the same.

THE DEBATES

In 2024, Tumaini Letu launched a series of debates for the youth of Dzaleka Refugee Camp. As part of Tumaini Letu's broader mission to empower refugee youth, these debates aimed to create a space where young minds could explore complex issues that affect their lives.

These debates focussed on issues such as borders in Sub-Saharan Africa, the use of contraceptives and the role of traditional gender roles in a stable society. These debates were meant to go beyond these topics, and develop skills and self confidence for refugee youth

Onette Gueliuthi, Johary Bamikwa and Ketia Pululu were three of the young women who joined each and every debate that was held. Originally from Burundi and DRC, they have each spent more than 10 years living in Dzaleka. Because of their status as refugees, they are forced to live under the encampment policy in Dzaleka where they are unable to be employed, face security concerns, and have an unknown future.



Onnet Gachutti -Right
Johary Bamikwa -Left
Insert Ketia Pululu



For Onette, Johary and Ketia, the debates were an opportunity to share different perspectives while meeting new people, cooperate with others on their team and develop the discipline to have respectful conversations with those they disagreed with. Outside of the debates, they noticed that the debates increased their confidence in themselves and their public speaking, their critical thinking skills and also their ability to hold eye contact with their peers.

These debates have made a positive impact in their lives and those of other youth who participated. While these debates have been transformative, the young participants hope for more initiatives like this; opportunities that not only develop skills but also open doors to education, employment, and a brighter future beyond the camp.



FROM ELECTRICIAN TO FASHION DESIGNER

Ntawigane Mushagalusa, also known as Black Ntawi, is a 28-year-old entrepreneur who arrived in Malawi in 2017 from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With no family and only his skills as an electrician, he struggled to find work due to Malawi's encampment policy, which limits employment opportunities for refugees. Despite these challenges, Black refused to give up.

With no formal training or prior experience in fashion design, he decided to take a leap of faith and pursue his passion. He started small, opening a tiny shop with just one tailoring machine. "I knew I could do something, which is why I decided to start with the little inspiration I had," he recalls. His shop quickly gained recognition for its unique designs, which include backpacks, customized T-shirts, jackets, hats, ponchos, and more. He spends time in the market at Dzaleka searching for inspiration, buying second-hand clothes, and blending ideas to create designs rooted in African traditions.

Finding a platform to showcase his work was another hurdle until he discovered the Tumaini Festival. "I had no place to showcase my designs until I started attending the Tumaini Festival," Black explains. His first participation in 2020 marked the beginning of his journey as a recognized fashion designer in the Dzaleka refugee camp and beyond. Through Tumaini Letu

His involvement with Tumaini Letu extended beyond the festival. He also attended the Tumaini Cocktail Night, where his designs were auctioned to help fundraise for the festival. The exposure he gained through these events propelled him forward, allowing him to expand his reach and impact

Black Ntawi's passion goes beyond personal success—he is committed to giving back to his community. Recognizing the lack of fashion design opportunities in Dzaleka, he offers free training to young mothers and aspiring designers. "I know that one day I might have to relocate, but I want to leave a legacy," he says. His training initiative is open to both refugees and Malawian citizens, and he is actively seeking funding to expand his efforts and reach more people

With determination and creativity, Black Ntawi has transformed his life from an electrician struggling to find work to a thriving fashion designer and mentor. His journey serves as an inspiration to many, proving that passion and perseverance can turn even the toughest circumstances into success.



Black Ntawi: In blue



A Decade of Tumaini Letu Jay-Extra





Egide Bikurimana - or Jay-Extra as he is known at the Tumaini Festival - has lived in Dzaleka for the past 18 years. Originally from Burundi, his parents were forced to flee due to ethnic tensions, and he was born in the Mtabila Refugee Camp in Tan-

Throughout his life, he has dealt with the reality that there is “no this is my home”. Despite not knowing anywhere else, Jay-Extra and his family are not citizens of Malawi. For him and others, that lack of belong-

In 2018, Jay-Extra tried out for the Tumaini Festival at the annual Tumaini Talent Shows, where up-and-coming acts from Dzaleka are allowed to audition to be featured during the Festival. His first year, Jay-Extra did not get selected to move forward. Over the next year, he went to different events across Malawi to practice and put in the effort and work to improve.

The next year, Jay-Extra was chosen to participate on the Quizera Stage, which was the first of his five performances at the Tumaini Festival. For the last three years, he has been one of the main acts at the Festival performing on the Eliyeka Stage. For Jay-Extra, being able to perform on the main stage is a massive accomplishment but also a relief as it allows him to live in the happiness of the moment.

Beyond the music, Tumaini opened doors—his 2024 performance led to sponsorship by a local driving school, a stepping stone toward financial independence and opportunity. Jay-Extra believes Tumaini could do even more by teaching young artists how to transform their creativity into sustainable livelihoods as the artists in Dzaleka need to learn how to turn talent into business.

Leading up to the 2024 Festival, Jay-Extra had been selected to resettle in Canada through the World University Service of Canada. Knowing this would be his last year, Jay-Extra was emotional going in but he acknowledges that there is exciting young talent in Dzaleka who will be taking his place. He is looking forward to returning for the Tumaini Festival in the future and, hopefully, seeing the Tumaini Festival expanded to other refugee camps.

A CALL TO ACTION FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS

Refugees are not just statistics. They are people with dreams, ambitions, and potential human beings forced to leave everything behind in search of safety. For too long, the policies governing their lives have kept them in a state of limbo, limiting their opportunities and stifling their potential. This needs to change. Now.

At Tumaini Letu, we believe in a world where refugees are seen not as burdens but as contributors. Refugees are educators, entrepreneurs, artists, and advocates, enriching the communities where they live. Yet, in camps like Dzaleka, they face restrictions that prevent them from working, owning land, or moving freely. These policies don't just harm refugees; they rob host countries of the immense value refugees can bring.

It's time for policymakers, leaders, and citizens to rethink how we engage with displaced people. Refugees need rights, not just resources. They need platforms to innovate, create, and thrive, not hand-outs that keep them dependent. Change starts with advocacy. It starts with action. And it starts with you.

Let's work together to dismantle barriers and build a world where refugees are embraced as equal participants in society. Advocate for policies that empower, not exclude, create an inclusive world. Because refugees are also people and when refugees thrive, we all thrive.



The Tumaini Festival Advocacy Through Art

In 2014, something extraordinary began at the heart of Dzaleka Refugee Camp. What started as a bold idea to hold an international festival within a refugee camp has since become a global phenomenon. The Tumaini Festival is more than music, dance, and culture, it is a powerful advocacy tool that has transformed how the world sees refugees.

Each year, the festival brings together thousands of refugees, Malawians, and international visitors to celebrate diversity, creativity, and unity. Beyond the performances, the festival amplifies refugee voices, telling stories that challenge stereotypes and foster understanding. It creates economic opportunities for refugees, generating income through stalls, performances, and tourism. Most importantly, it showcases the determination and talent of displaced people, and this in return helps in shifting public perceptions about refugees.

By drawing international attention to Dzaleka, Tumaini has opened doors for conversations about refugees and inclusion. It proves that art and culture are not just entertainment; they are advocacy tools with the power to spark change.

The success of the Tumaini Festival shows what's possible when refugees are given the chance to lead and create. It's a reminder that advocacy doesn't always happen in conference rooms or courtrooms. Sometimes, it happens on a stage, under the Malawian sky, with music as the universal language of change.



TRANSFORMING LIVES CREATIVELY

At Tumaini Letu, our mission is clear: to promote refugee inclusion and empowerment through arts, culture, advocacy, and economic development. Founded in 2012 by Trésor Nzengu Mpauni, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tumaini Letu is more than an organization. It's a movement. A vision. A call to action.

Through programs like the Tumaini Festival and the homestay program, we've shown that refugees are not passive recipients of aid. They are changemakers, innovators, and leaders. Our work proves that inclusion is not just morally right; it's transformative for societies as a whole.

But we can't do this alone. Join us in advocating for policies that support refugees' rights. Partner with us to create opportunities that unleash their potential. Together, we can build a world where everyone regardless of their status has the chance to thrive.





2025

TUMAINI LETU

MAGAZINE

Organization Background

Tumaini Letu (Swahili for “Our Hope”) is a non-profit organization based within the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi. The organization is registered with the Malawi government under the Trustees Incorporation Rules (Reg. No. TR/INC7454), Tumaini Letu is also a member of the Council for Non Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA), Reg. No. C1836/2024. It was founded in 2012 by Trésor Nzengu Mpauni, widely known as Menes la Plume a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Cogo (DRC).

Tumaini Letu exists to promote the economic, social, and cultural inclusion of refugees in Malawi by enhancing refugees’ skills through workshops and training. Tumaini Letu also creates business and outreach opportunities for refugees by opening the doors of Dzaleka to visitors from around the world. Its flagship project is the annual Tumaini Festival, which transforms Dzaleka Refugee Camp into a touristic destination, attracting tens of thousands of domestic and international tourists. The festival boosts economic activity within the camp and offers a platform for the refugee community to sell their goods and services and improve their standards of living.

Tumaini letu. All rights reserved

Tumaini Letu
P.O. Box 1459
Lilongwe

TUMAINI LETU
TUMAINI FESTIVAL



contact us at info@tumainiletu.org or call us on
+265 881 642 990 or +265 987 587 841

Copyright (C) 2025