Kigali Independent University- ULK, popularly known by its French acronym opened doors in March 1996 with a mission to change Rwanda and the region through provision of an extraordinary education that would impact generations to come.

Committed to educational excellence, the university put up an environment to instil the highest moral values, such as integrity, humility, determination, and excellence. These values were to be guided by strong principles of; faith in God, knowing one's mission on earth, strong ethical values and positive thinking.

Prof. Dr Rwigamba Balinda, the Founder and President of ULK revealed that, "the deeper motivation to start ULK was to give my humble contribution to the building of a nation through creation of human resources because many people had been killed in the genocide against the Tutsi and even those who had perpetuated the killings had left the country."

Prof. Dr Rwigamba Balinda, the Founder and President of ULK

Therefore, Rwanda in 1996 was in a great need of human resources. Since education was my field and passion, as Prof. Rwigamba notes, especially a complete education which has three components to rehabilitate ethical principles and values in the system of education and regulation in the module of ethics and culture of the institution, to have people who have useful principles in their heart as the foundation, then give them knowledge, competency, through modules of courses according to different programmes.

The complete education was commenced by giving training and internships in order to open the 3rd component of performance. ULK has applied the components establishing career centres, creating incubation centres, trainings, presentations and internships to ensure that when you have knowledge and values you combine them to create a practical match to be an excellent performer and to be a cadre of development.

Starting at a time when Rwanda had just exited the worst possible crisis of its history, many didn't have the will and means to pursue their higher education. However, with a strong vision of the founder, ULK attracted highly motivated students and qualified personnel.

A scholarship program to salvage those with limited means was started at free

interest and to continue the circle all were only asked was a 10% when they also started earning, the programme has seen today more than 20,800 students benefit.

Now there is a new mechanism of paying in months instalments for those who can’t pay full tuition fees during the duration of the term, this helps many with a choice to continue their studies.

“My inner motivation to start ULK was not about money or to look for popularity but provide my contribution to really have people who are well trained, who are ethical with principles and values,” underlined Prof. Rwigamba.

The university with more than 32,000 cadres of development for the country at different levels including undergraduates, masters level and PHD level, it’s an excellent result and proud achievement that makes the founder very happy.

In line with the vision of the Government of Rwanda to promote practical skills, ULK Polytechnic Institute was established in 2014. It stands out as a remarkable Institute for excellence with hands on skills and highly motivated students endowed with elevated ethical values.

The polytechnic provides the students with competitive, creative, innovative skills which will contribute to finding solutions on the labour market.

Today, every sector of Rwanda’s economy across the country there are products from ULK which is a greater achievement. These achievements have also been able due to the strong political will under the leadership of HE Paul Kagame, who opened the doors.

Nonetheless, there are still more to do in education and the journey continues, but healthcare is another important sector that Prof. Rwigamba wishes to embark on in his contribution to the betterment of Rwanda.

Investing in healthcare

Healthcare as a very important sector to the people and a nation, Prof. Rwigamba is setting out on his second passion and probably his last project. “Healthcare is an

important sector, our country needs it and I love it.” He said.

He is now building a speciality hospital where construction works of the complex adjacent to ULK campus are already in advanced stages. The plan is to have a hospital with high quality services and satisfactory customer care.

This speciality medical facility offering high quality services to the public will complete Prof. Rwigamba’s dream of offering his contribution to his motherland through complete education and excellent healthcare.

“I pray to God that there will be other people who have my philosophy and understanding either in my family as well as others to continue these big projects, when am no longer around,” says Prof. Rwigamba. “I have also been working hard to train others to take over what we have been building.”