



COMMONWEALTH

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF UGANDA



# ALUMNI **SPOTLIGHT**

## AUGUST 2025

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# A LONG WALK TO EDUCATION



Collin's **early life was shaped by political exile and struggle**. His father, once a technician at UTV and Radio Uganda, fled the country during Amin's regime. A video had been played on one of the stations, of the former President Obote addressing the nation, and within 15 minutes, all staff of UTV and Radio Uganda were arrested and taken to Luzira prison for a week. When Collin's father was released, he fled to Kenya, and the rest of the family joined him the following year in 1975. The family lived in Kenya until 1986, when they returned to Uganda and settled at the Uganda Trypanosomiasis Research Organisation (UTRO). Collins started his O'levels at Manjasi High School, completing them at Tororo Standard High School.

The community land where they **lived was plagued with sleeping sickness**, yet it became the ground where Collin's determination took root. When school fees became impossible to raise, Collin turned to farming. He grew rice and supplied it to his school in exchange for tuition. This creative solution kept his education alive through Senior Two and Three. Later, his elder brother was able to pay for Collin's fees, and this support carried him through A-Level. His brother took Collin all the way to Kampala and enrolled him at Namirembe Hillside High School for his A'levels.

**Collin's entrepreneurial and leadership skills began to show as early** as his secondary school years. During his Senior Four vacation, he partnered with his Mathematics teacher to start a secondary school. They rented rooms at UTRO, and soon the school was thriving. For Collin, it was never just about business. He did not want other young people to struggle through school the way he had. By keeping tuition affordable, he hoped to open doors of education for many. However when he later moved to Kampala for his A'levels, the management he left behind could not sustain the school, and it eventually closed. Yet this setback did not deter his determination. His excellent academic performance soon earned him a government scholarship for his degree.

Step by step, doors opened. He completed **a BA in Social Sciences at Makerere University, followed by a Master's in Development Studies**. His quest for knowledge took him further afield – a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship at the University of Liverpool, and eventually, a Master's in Community Health. Today, he is pursuing a PhD in Humanities at Makerere University, supported by an IDRC grant.

## CAREER JOURNEY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Collin's work life has been nothing short of remarkable. With more than 18 years of experience in gender-responsive research and monitoring and evaluation, he has built a career that influences both policy and practice.

**At FAWE Uganda, Collin leads research and resource mobilisation**, designing national studies that shine a light on the barriers girls face in accessing education. His work has included:

- Leading a national study on girls' access to education in the wake of COVID-19.
  - Designing evaluations on violence against children in schools.
  - Developing protocols for mentorship studies and school re-entry programmes for teen mothers, including those in refugee communities.
  - Building an online monitoring and evaluation system for FAWE Uganda.
- Beyond FAWE, Collin has worked with organisations like NARO, African Rice, DNDi, and TASO Uganda. He has presented research internationally, published widely, and trained research teams across Africa in advanced qualitative analysis.

**Collin is also a skilled resource mobiliser.** In just over a year, he raised over 30 million USD for FAWE Uganda, securing funds from leading global partners such as Mastercard Foundation, UN Women, LEGO Foundation, and the EU. His leadership extends beyond the office. He co-founded the Commonwealth Alumni Association Uganda Chapter in 2014, and serves on boards of local NGOs dedicated to children and male engagement.

## TURNING PAIN INTO PURPOSE

Looking back, Collin **recalls the uncertainty of his youth, wondering if he would ever complete school, wondering if education was only for children from wealthier families.** Today, he carries those memories with pride, because they remind him of how far he has come. He delights in mentoring young researchers and building opportunities for vulnerable learners, and continues to champion education as a tool for transformation. A husband and family man, Collin balances the demands of his professional life with the quiet joy of knowing his journey can give hope to others who may feel trapped by circumstances.



# CELEBRATING HIS LEADERSHIP

**The Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Alumni Association of Uganda (CSFAAU)** is proud to celebrate Collin's outstanding leadership as our current President, a role he has carried with humility and vision. His term, which comes to a close at the upcoming Annual General Meeting next month, has been marked by servant leadership that empowered others rather than seeking the spotlight for himself.

Instead of centralising leadership, Collin created space for every committee member to take the lead in different aspects of the association's work. He nurtured their growth, ensuring their active participation. He encouraged shared decision-making and always signed messages as "the Presidency," underscoring his unity with the Vice President. He was committed to collective leadership. His style of leading from behind has strengthened the association, helping members find their voices and step confidently into leadership. CSFAAU celebrates Collin not only for what he has achieved, but for how he has led – with grace, wisdom, and generosity. His presidency has left a legacy of inclusivity, teamwork, and empowerment that will continue to shape the association long after his term ends.

## ONWARDS, UPWARDS

**From bartering rice for school fees in rural Tororo to leading multi-million-dollar research projects,** Ogara Collin's life is a reminder that adversity can build resilience, and resilience can fuel greatness. He continues to dream of a Uganda where every child, especially every girl, has the chance to thrive in school and beyond.



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