



THE NEXUS NEWSLETTER

An Interview with a Former Nexus Alumni : Jean Aime Musangamfura

Introduction

Today, we have the pleasure of speaking with Jean Aimé Musangamfura, a dedicated advocate for sustainability and children's rights. He is also a RUG alumni and a past active member of Nexus. We are so happy to connect back with you and hear your story. Welcome, and thank you for joining us today.

Could you tell us more about your background and what drives your commitment to these issues?

Jean Aimé Musangamfura was originally born in Rwanda but grew up in the northern Netherlands, which provided him with a unique cultural perspective. With an extensive background in environmental health consulting and telecommunications, he embarked on a journey that led him from his hometown of Rotterdam in the north of the Netherlands to pursue an LLB in Groningen. Following his undergraduate studies, he furthered his education in Paris before continuing his academic pursuits at the University of Amsterdam (UvA).

Here he studied Public International Law, International Trade and Investment law with a focus on migration law. His professional endeavors took him to Brussels, where he immersed himself in environmental health consulting, while also gaining valuable experience in the telecom industry. This role allowed him to engage deeply with critical issues at the intersection of health and the environment. Currently, he is working at a telecom company, and he is deeply passionate about sustainability and committed to supporting unaccompanied minors, striving to make a positive impact in these areas. Throughout his career, his unwavering commitment has been to address the refugee crisis and advocate for guardianship for adolescents, channeling his wealth of knowledge and passion into these pressing societal issues.



How has your education in LLB International and European Law, along with your involvement in Nexus committees, influenced your perspectives and career trajectory? Do you believe that your LLB program and involvement in Nexus committees have influenced your current career path and activities?

Jean elaborated how studying for his LLB in Groningen was a truly enriching experience. One of the key highlights was the exceptional guidance from his study coordinator, who played a major role in shaping his, and other fellow students' academic journeys. The program was heavily theoretical, which laid a solid foundation in legal principles. However, it also offered practical insights, particularly into how international law operates and how change can be effected within international institutions. This blend of theory and practical application was very interesting and gave him a good understanding of the field of law. Further, the LLB program and his involvement in the Nexus Committee provided him with a solid foundation to understand the international legal structure. He gained insight into the limitations of what can be achieved within the legal framework but also learned how to apply this knowledge to real-world problems. While he was disappointed by the lack of coverage concerning immigration law within his

his bachelor's degree, this experience motivated him to further his studies in this area at the University of Amsterdam.

Why did you decide to pursue the external affairs position in the NEXUS association?

Jean pursued the external affairs position because he wanted to connect with more people and expand his network. His time in Groningen provided him with a solid understanding of legal structures and the limitations of what can be done within those frameworks. This knowledge was crucial for applying legal principles to current global issues.

Jean also studied migration law at the University of Amsterdam, which further deepened his understanding of these topics. All this experience set a strong foundation for the role in external affairs. Additionally, the skills he developed in these areas continue to be useful and relevant in his work today.

You mentioned several issues like migration, sustainability, man-made poverty, and climate change. How do you plan to tackle these interconnected problems?

Primarily, he states that there should be more attention to why these minors have to move. He believes that we, as a society, need to understand the root causes behind their migration.



In order to address interconnected problems, Jean believes we need to start by understanding why minors are unaccompanied in the first place. We should question whether it's necessary for people to be separated from their parents. Often, it seems like these issues persist not because they're unsolvable, but because there's a lack of willpower to make real change. Many of these problems are man-made and tackling them requires a concerted effort to protect children in general, both boys and girls. It's crucial to focus on the root causes and work collectively towards sustainable solutions.

Could you further elaborate on what you mean by understanding the root causes?

Absolutely. For instance, man-made poverty is a significant factor. He emphasizes the need to assess whether these children truly need to be separated from their parents. Is this separation a necessity, or is it due to an institutional lack of willpower? He highlights that many of these issues are man-made, suggesting that they can be addressed with the right policies and actions.

Where does an unaccompanied child even go for help? And why are they unaccompanied in the first place?

He underscores that unaccompanied children often seek assistance from local

authorities, non-Governmental organizations, or community centers. He explains that these children may find themselves unaccompanied due to various reasons, such as fleeing conflict, escaping abusive situations, or losing their families. He stresses the importance of understanding and addressing the root causes behind why these children are unaccompanied, emphasizing that doing so is crucial in providing effective support.

So, what do you see as the most important step in addressing these issues?

The most important thing, he asserts, is to protect children and ensure they are not discriminated against, regardless of whether they are male or female. He acknowledges migration as a natural phenomenon but emphasizes the need to address the underlying problems that compel people to migrate.

How do you propose we tackle these root problems?

By focusing on sustainability and directly addressing man-made poverty and climate change, he advocates for the implementation of comprehensive policies that promote economic stability and environmental health. He believes that such measures can help reduce the need for migration and ensure that when migration does occur, it happens under safer and more equitable conditions.



How did your personal experience as an unaccompanied minor affect your passion?

His personal experience as an unaccompanied minor deeply influenced his passion for this cause. He realized early on that the issues affecting us weren't always addressed directly, and it was challenging for young children to advocate for themselves. As a child, he had little understanding of international law or his rights. This experience made him determined to ensure that no unnecessary harm comes to children in similar situations. Jean is passionate about empowering children, making sure they are aware of their rights, such as those outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Learning about these laws and rights has been a significant motivator for him and his field of work.

What role do you think technology plays in this sector?

Jean believes that technology plays a vital role in this area, because with the internet, it's easy to find information and connect with others. Nevertheless, he highlights how it is frustrating to see that either a lack of resources or people not wanting to help can still be big obstacles. He believes we should use technology to help children know and access their rights, but we also need to be careful because there are dangers, like misinformation and online threats. The issues he faced as an

unaccompanied minor are still relevant today, even though technology has advanced. The same core problems exist. Technology can give us reliable information, but it can also give us too much information. He believes that people want to help and that the key to this is to turn this willingness into real action, using technology in the right way.

But, in our technologically advanced society, do you think we are still lacking in some areas?

He reflects on the paradoxical nature of our technological advancements, noting that despite the ease of accessing individuals in positions of power and influence worldwide, significant challenges persist. He speculates that the persistence of these challenges may stem from a lack of resources or perhaps a lack of commitment from individuals. He concurs, offering an example to illustrate his point. He notes that while conventions outline different rights, their implementation varies greatly. He further observes a generational difference in how technologies and resources are utilized. Despite the plethora of technological tools at our disposal, he remarks that persistent issues such as poverty, inequality, and inadequate support for vulnerable populations persist.

So, even with technological advancement, the same issues persist. Why do you think that is?

He emphasizes that technological advancements alone are insufficient to solve



systemic problems. He stresses the importance of coupling these advancements with strong policies, effective implementation, and genuine commitment from people at all levels. He underscores the critical need to utilize technology for good, aiming to bridge existing gaps and ensure that advancements benefit everyone, particularly the most vulnerable members of society. But in the end, he expresses unwavering optimism, affirming that he does have hope. He highlights the immense potential for technology to drive positive change when used responsibly. By prioritizing inclusive and equitable solutions, he believes that technology can be leveraged to address persistent issues and pave the way for a better future for all.

What can people do to educate themselves about these issues?

He states that one crucial thing people can do is read up on the issues surrounding unaccompanied minors and how the system is set up. He emphasizes the importance of educating yourself on children's rights and the various legal and social frameworks in place. Moreover, he underlines that it's important to read up on these topics and share the information within your community and get engaged. He believes that many people tend to rest on their laurels, but it's essential to bring

everything into alignment—whether it's criminal law, abuse of power, or other related issues. He believes that people need to put their hands on resources and take action in order to make an impact in their own communities. He also states that without active engagement, no change will happen. It's about moving beyond just reading to actually participating in advocacy and support efforts.

Because of the overkill of information online, so many people are posting their opinions. Can this overkill of information cause issues in society?

Yes, he acknowledges, the overkill of information can indeed cause issues. He explains that while having access to a wealth of information can be beneficial, it can also be overwhelming and lead to confusion. He points out that many critical issues remain unknown to people because they get lost in the noise of excessive information. He emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between valuable information and mere opinions. He adds that while it's true that you can never have too much information, the challenge lies in finding reliable sources amidst the abundance of data. He notes that reliable information can often be found through academic journals, reputable news outlets, and official reports from organizations dedicated to research and policy. He stresses the importance of cross-referencing information from multiple trusted sources to ensure its accuracy especially in this area of unaccompanied minors.