

Mukayiranga leveraged her entrepreneurial prowess to pursue a dream school and her success continues to inspire hundreds of Rwandan women to gain total independence and freedom to determine their destiny.

The hum of hairdryers and the buzz by students at Belasi Saloon School tells a complete story about the power of resilience and ambition. The accredited vocational training center offering mainly cosmetics trades is located in the heart of Rwanda's capital, Kigali. The school is popular for hairdressing and beauty treatment.



All this is common knowledge to dwellers of Kigali City. What is news to a big bulk of Rwandans is the fact that the beauty school is Fanny Mukayiranga's idea, conceived in 2012.

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Dozens of her graduates have significantly improved their welfare by engaging in productive economic activities, and many got jobs.

Mukayiranga the CEO of Belasi Saloon School, a professional training center for hairdressing and beauty treatment after returning from Belgium where she lived after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. She had lived in the diaspora after her family was wiped out in the genocide, harsh memories of her horrible past haunted her. The damage was overwhelming, but recovery brought her a powerful sense of purpose.

"I had a nice job in Belgium," she recalls, "but I was always nagged by thoughts on the kind of contribution I would make towards the rebuilding my homeland."



She sought of practical experience and more exposure from established training institutions to equip herself for the greater roles in the beauty industry.

Amid this situation, Belasi Saloon School was born. "I joined Nyirabuturo, an American school in Gikondo that taught women entrepreneurial skills. My passion

was always hair and beauty, so I felt that would be the best place to start.”

## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Beginning with just six students in a small rented space, Mukayiranga taught practical, client- focused skills. “At the time, there were very few saloons offering professional treatment. I saw a gap and decided to fill it.” She registered her business with Rwanda Development Board (RDB) and eventually awarded her first 18 students with certificates, a moment she describes as one of her proudest.

Today, her school has graduated over 800 women of whom about 90% find employment or start own saloons. Many, she proudly says, are now financially independent and supporting families.

As the school grew, so did her vision. Mukayiranga opened a fully operational saloon at Chic Building, offering clients professional services while giving students real-world experience. “It’s about teaching and practicing at the same time, making sure our services match the quality we promise.”



## CHALLENGES

Mukayiranga’s story will be incomplete if you skipped the challenges her beauty company has faced since its birth. From language barriers, high rent costs to the COVID-19 pandemic and infrastructure disruptions, her resilience was tested.

“Sometimes the road was closed, and no clients would come. But I kept telling my colleagues, if we don’t earn today, tomorrow will be a blessing.”

Mukayiranga’s story is not just one of personal triumph but national hope. “Rwanda is a country where, if you are committed, services are delivered. The environment supports entrepreneurs, especially women.”

Looking ahead, she hopes to open a training center for estheticians and dermatologists and launch an NGO to support teen mothers and vulnerable women. “Women are capable of learning so much. We have the means to build our future.”

To fellow women: “You can become financially independent. You can achieve your goals. We live in a country that gives us the chance, we just have to take it.”