Born in the present day Burera District which was under the administrative control of Ruhengeri in Northern Rwanda, Bishop John Rucyahana attended his first school days in the area and his parents left him at school when they were forced into exile in the neighbouring Uganda

He would also follow them in 1963 leaving his beloved homeland for the next thirty one years until Rwanda was liberated. Rucyahana first returned in the country shortly after liberation in 1994 during an Anglican mission sent on a fact finding journey on what had happened to Rwanda.

Finding the country as it was, totally devastated by the genocide against the Tutsi was a turning point for him and resolved to immediately return home to be part of developing the country and breath-in a new hope.

Rwanda had been destroyed socially, economically and infrastructures like schools, health facilities were all in disarray across the whole country. Rebuilding would require, first humanitarian assistance before any meaning development to commence.

Rucyahana decided to return home but with a heavy heart to improve the situation and went directly to Ruhengeri, the present Musanze district, a region that had an insurgency at the time. The situation didn't deter him on commencing the reconstruction of education and health as well as the spiritual healing through evangelism.

"When I returned to Rwanda I immediately went into revival of education, repairing schools everywhere and importantly for this region we repaired Shyira Hospital which had been neglected operating as a dispensary and restored it to the level of a district hospital," explains Bishop Rucyahana.

In June 1997, John Rucyahana was consecrated as the Bishop of Shyira Diocese of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. Starting with humanitarian support to the people of this region the diocese implemented a holistic transformation also elevating the status of the diocese both spiritually and physically.

During his service at the diocese, Bishop Rucyahana pursued developmental activities based on restoring the human dignity, unity and reconciliation, health and education among other things, mainly to vulnerable groups.

He built St John Baptist Cathedral restoring it to its glory and to make the diocese more self-sustainable constructed Ishema Hotel, a splendid hospitality facility.

In Musanze town, he built the popular Sonrise School that became a model catering for all kinds of orphans. Survivors who had lost parents in the genocide, orphans of the perpetrators and children who lost their parents in different circumstances all found their way to the school.

According to Bishop Rucyahana, it was a mixture of orphans very innocent, who needed rehabilitation, character development and trauma healing to have focus and emphasise on their future in academic excellence.

The school personally inaugurated by President Kagame turned into an exemplary educational excellence and in a period of four years became the best. The school became a model where many other schools in the country copied a leaf and are prospering because of the philosophy.

The school had an educational mission to set the standard for academic excellence and servant leadership, while at the same time, demonstrating that with love and education, even the country's poorest of the poor children are redeemable and can be developed into future leaders of Rwanda.

Studying together at Sonrise but from different backgrounds, the students bonded together because of the teachings and the care they received. All were treated the same, feed together and similarly clothed.

Still calling them 'my children' Bishop Rucyahana attests that the students from Sonrise became friends to each other up to this day and are responsible citizens, loving without any trace of hatred because they were the first seed of reconciliation.

While these interventions were being done many people couldn't comprehend saying it would not workout given the circumstances that the country had passed through, many seeing reconciliation and social cohesion as farfetched but he reasoned them and pushed his reconciliation agenda.

According to Bishop Rucyahana, "the work they did was not only education its

parenthood, not only parenthood its patriotism and not only patriotism its development.”


Hotel Ishema was built by Bishop Rucyahana as the Bishop of Shyira Diocese

With the return of many Rwandan exiles from the neighbouring countries, a housing crisis soon ensued. Rwandans exiled in the late 1950s and 1960s had returned and occupied houses of those who fled or run away in 1994 were mobbed by Ex-far soldiers in fear of RPA’s victorious move, they could have stayed in safety.

When the 1994 exiles returned, to avoid another crisis the diocese of Shyira was among the first to set an example in handling the problem by building 650 houses, at Shyira 150, Nyiragikokoro 150, Ruhengeri 200, and Kidaho 150.

Bishop Rucyahana notes that as a religious leader you can’t just preach that God saves but do other things that shows God’s grace support people spiritually, socially as well as physically.

He emphasizes that this was done irrespective one’s religious beliefs because as Rwandan were the same people who needed healing from the past events of the country’s history.

Bishop Rucyahana’s interventions in leading reconstruction efforts led him to yet other responsibilities when he was nominated to head the unity and reconciliation processes of the nation, duties he still undertakes.

Contributing to the development of Musanze never stopped after retiring as the Bishop of Shyira but continued through Transformational Ministries which supports historically marginalized people and private investments in the construction sector.

Retiring from the diocese, he started supporting historically marginalized people in Musanze through a non-profit organisation called Transformational Ministries Inc that extends support through evangelism, capacity building and reconciliation.