

The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi adversely affected Marcelin Muhizi's childhood as it led to his separation from siblings and parents at the age of ten. This happened during the peak of the violent massacres in Kibeho and Cyahinda, where he lost them. Amidst the horrors, Muhizi and his elder brother and sister fled to neighboring Burundi where they reunited with some family members.

During the aftermath when the resilient nation was still engulfed by grief and uncertainty, he chose to face life realities, gathering guts to start a new chapter. Despite the scars left behind by the genocide, Muhizi was determined to embrace calls of healing and reconstruction.

He says education gave him hope and saw it as an invaluable solution to the desolation he faced.

Muhizi persevered the hardships that characterized the new life and he zealously pursued education along his job. He went to the Kigali Independent University (ULK).

On graduating, Muhizi never sat back to wait for jobs to come his way and/or engage in job searching like many graduates out there. His self-esteem and confidence made him find a fortune in entrepreneurship.



However, securing startup capital proved a daunting task but not the willpower to create own job.

He started small, offering diverse printing on bags, which helped him establish a client base and later secure funding. He expanded the realm of services beyond traditional printing to selling other goods including woven bags.

Such innovations did not only improve his income but also expanded his clientele, and served as motivation to work hard to achieve his goal.

In 2012, he established Polybags Ltd - an eco-friendly company that promotes safe production practices, recycling along minimizing environmental harm. The company refurbishes and makes bags.



Over the years, Polybags has incorporated several services including a factory that produces packaging materials used mostly in Agribusiness. It designs and produce packaging materials for Agricultural produce like rice, beans, maize, and soya beans.

Muhizi's keen eye for detail and uncompromised love for quality have been instrumental in the company's success. The company swiftly became a trusted destination for other companies and individuals in need of quality packaging woven polypropylene packaging materials.



He witnessed the entrepreneurial spirit that surged after country's liberation in 1994 and spirit of self-reliance among many young entrepreneurs, then.

The interplay of many factors including enabling investment climate in the new Rwanda along a growing capital became a catalyst for the perfect recipe for expansion.

The father of four, was driven by the need to become self-reliant and play a personal role in Rwanda's economic revival. He, thus, focused attention to the needs of an Agriculture based economy and started a one-stop shop for farmers, designing labels on packaging material for the produce.



"In the past, we designed and printed everything by hand," Muhizi recalls.

«It was a breakthrough when Agribusiness firms got empowered to brand their products. Polybags Ltd started to brand not only the products' exterior but also the details inside the packagings.»

## **Market Expansion**

To expand the market, Muhizi did market research in many East African countries to gain a broader perspective and identify new opportunities. This regional exposure proved insightful through learning of best practices along exploring potential markets for high-quality packaging materials.



Thereafter, the state of the art machines Polybas acquired significantly increased production, quality and company's image.

Today, the company fosters a culture of knowledge sharing where skilled employees mentor colleagues to ensure a constant flow of expertise and best practices.

However, a skills gap still exist and they face occasional delays during importation of raw materials from Saudi Arabia, China and Vietnam.

### **Future plans**

Muhizi's forward-looking vision encompasses a commitment to enhancing the skill sets of the youth, fostering increased opportunities, and bolstering Rwanda's economic growth. These aspirations align with his aim to showcase Rwandan innovation and expertise globally while striving to export top-tier products.



Polybags is dedicated to extending the shelf life of packaged goods well beyond the current three-month mark. By combatting spoilage attributed to rot and fungus, this initiative stands to greatly benefit Rwandan farmers and the agricultural sector as a whole.

In expressing gratitude, Muhizi acknowledges the Rwandan Patriotic Front and HE President Paul Kagame for their visionary and people-centric leadership. He views their stewardship as a catalyst for development, particularly through initiatives promoting unity and reconciliation. Muhizi attributes much of his company's success to the conducive environment fostered by such leadership.