

CASA Hotel and Horizon Express are some of the flagship businesses of the Bihira family based in Huye District. Before the family ventured into the hospitality industry, it operated one of the most effective and reliable local transport agencies codenamed Horizon Express.

The transport agency started operations in June 2006 as a response to the high demand for public transport created by inadequate public buses. The shortage in public transport affected many in the Southern Province particularly the university community and businesses that depended on Kigali for trade.



Gertrude Uwizeye, the Managing Director of CASA Hotel explained that the family ventured into transport because it aids other sectors and interdependency between transport and hospitality was a factor that motivated them to expand into hotel business.

Meaning a “Home”, CASA was established as a home away from home in December 2016 and has had a great impact on the development of Huye City.

Uwizeye noted that its location in the heart of Huye City largely accounts for its steadfast progress. The facility takes advantage of the presence of key public services in its vicinity.



Gertrude Uwizeye, the Managing Director of CASA Hotel

Visitors to the hotel have easy access to the City’s biggest market, hospital and pharmacies, banks, police post and transport means. It is a walking distance from the hotel for the visitors to access these essential services, and the hotel management says locality on the prime land of the city’s Central Business District (CBD) is one of the factors that make the facility more competitive.

“We give the transporters the hotel clients and some of the passengers that travel with Horizon Express end up becoming our customers,” Uwizeye explains.

### **Historic background and services**

The family used its limited resources to start a hotel of their dream. Steadily, they began with the basics to provide accommodation, catering, bar and restaurant

services. At the time, the site that was later to serve as the premises of CASA Hotel Ltd, hosted a spacious parking yard and car-washing bay.

At the infancy, they had only 24 rooms, three conference rooms and reception area.



Over the time, CASA Hotel Ltd, which is currently graded as a 2-STAR boasts of 37 modern rooms and two well-furnished apartments.

Uwizeye says they have since opening massively invested in infrastructural development and services expansion to catch up with the ever-growing demand for hotel services in the fast growing hospitality industry in Huye City and country at large.

### **How CASA Hotel Ltd rose to fame**

The hotel started with vigorous publicity after arriving on the market when competitors had won most potential markets. However, the district administration has on many occasions variously supported the facility.

“They direct visitors to our hotel and whenever they need our services we’ve always felt honoured to serve,” observes Uwizeye. “Surely, our relationship with the district administration is healthy and has been strengthening over time,” she observed.

Justin Rutikanga, the Hotel Manager says that despite lack of tenders the demand for their services has steadily been growing with a bulging clientele from all walks.

Besides the public service sector community, they have received continuous support from the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who love to use CASA hotel services.



The hotel management attributes growing popularity and progress to qualified and permanent staff plus the reliable mobile catering services the hotel offers.

The competitive prices and provision of an international menu with Indian cuisine distinguishes the hotel from many. Dishes from across the Continent and Europe are some of the attractions that make the hotel enjoy a growing demand.

The conducive climate, Albertine forests, Nyungwe forest, fascinating countryside views as well as Kibeho, a pilgrim place for the Catholic Christians altogether make the city a potential gateway to tourism destinations.

### **Horizon Express Connects the Southern Province's public transport**

To connect different routes with public transport, Bihira family established Horizon Express in June 2006. This was a response to the high demand for public transport created by inadequate public buses.

Gilbert Bihira, the Managing Director of Horizon Express Ltd says they operate all routes in the Southern province and connect it to the Capital Kigali.



Gilbert Bihira, the Managing Director of Horizon Express Ltd

“We are the first Public Transport Company to operate in all regions of the Southern Province Districts,” Bihira said.

The transport agency that started with Huye-Kigali route has rolled out operations in all the districts in the Southern Province and reaches all areas that were formerly remote.

Among some of the most popular routes that Horizon Express operates are Kibeho as a religious tourism destination, and Mukindo wa Makwaza, a historic site in Gisagara District.

Horizon Express partners with the government in uplifting livelihoods by creating employment for over 400 Rwandans working as drivers and cashiers among others.



The company contributes in the coverage of Community Based Health Insurance (Mutuelle de santé) for its vulnerable clientele as well as supporting sports and entertainment as a way of promoting youths' talents.

The arrival of the transport company helped users of public transport save time since it has uncompromised time schedules for its buses. The company is no longer Public Transport only, it also has Courier and Parcels Delivery Services operating nationwide through its sister company Horizontal Ltd.