

Kigali's vibrant nightlife keeps Jean Marie Ndikuriyo on his toes. By day, he manages the bustling Martidabi bar and restaurant, a popular spot known for its lively atmosphere and the smoky aroma of Igiti, a local roasted meat delicacy hanging heavy in the air. But Ndikuriyo's ambitions extend far beyond the bar.

As a child in Rusororo, Kabuga, Ndikuriyo dreamt of a soldier's life. Fate, however, steered him towards hospitality, leading him to study Leisure and Hospitality at the University of Tourism, Technology and Business. His career began in 2009 at the luxurious Tennis Club in Nyarutarama, where he honed his skills in catering to discerning clientele.

Now, Ndikuriyo faces a different kind of challenge. "My biggest hurdle is transportation," he says. "My salary doesn't quite cover the costs of getting to and from work, especially late at night after the bar closes at 2 am because of curfew. Finding a safe motorcycle taxi at that hour can be difficult."

This echoes the Rwandan proverb, "Umugabo arigira yakwibura agapfa," which loosely translates to "A man who tries will succeed, but the one who gives up will fail." This proverb reflects Jean Marie's determination. He has no desire to be part of the diaspora, working for low wages in a foreign land. He wants to make it in Rwanda.



Life's struggles are real, and even job loss wouldn't be the end for Jean Marie. He was raised in Gasabo district, and as the saying goes, "Home is the place where when you have to go there, they have to take you in." This quote motivates him to pursue his dream of one day owning a hotel in Rwanda, a venture that would propel him into the country's bourgeoisie.

To survive Kigali's fast pace, he loosely juggles his main job with a variety of side hustles. He works as a real estate agent for upscale houses and apartments in Gaculiro and Nyarutarama, leveraging his local knowledge to connect potential renters with their dream homes. He also takes on enumeration jobs, meticulously collecting data to contribute to local projects.

"You can't afford to enjoy Kigali's nightlife and spas with just one job," he explains. "You have to be sharp and juggle a salaried income with side hustles to make a decent living. Sometimes, the options for affordable entertainment after dark are

limited, so you have to be resourceful.”

“The hustler struggle is real,” he adds with a laugh. “Sometimes, I have to ask for leave to work as a data collector or show a client an apartment. As with all good things, you have to earn them. The monkey sweats indeed,” referring to the African proverb about hard work,

Ndikuriyo has a clear message for Rwanda’s youth: “gukora bakareka gukorakora,” which means they should work hard and avoid the temptation of easy money through illegal means like burglary.

This is Jean Marie Ndikuriyo’s story – a story of ambition, perseverance, and the hustle it takes to make it in Kigali.