

Kanzayire Theopita Higirow is the Founder of Divine Garments Ltd, which is defined by high-quality textile products, women's economic empowerment achieved through mostly creating access to job opportunities. Her success story continues to attract attention locally and beyond for her role in development of the Rwanda's textiles, previously a male-dominated industry.

Kanzayire's inspiring journey is one of resilience, hard work, determination, and passion to make a difference by being part of the players in the community's progress.

Kanzayire's dream of transforming the living standards of young women through creating jobs is fast becoming a reality. Over the years, Divine Garments Ltd has expanded in production and in terms of economic significance. Its staff grew to 21 permanent employees and at least 70 casual laborers (during peak seasons) up from only two pioneer workers.

Social background



Kanzayire hails from a humble social background, was born to a trained teacher and an educationist. She pays tribute to her father for instilling in her the values of education and independence, which were critical in pursuing her dream against all odds. The father always encouraged her seek knowledge and skills and this background is a bedrock for her excellence in education and later in business.

From a tender age, Kanzayire defied societal norms that place men above women, and the traditional Rwandan society presents them as inferior. She grew up when girls were expected to focus on domestic duties in preparation for marriage.

From Public Service to Business Leadership

After the liberation of Rwanda in 1994, Kanzayire returned to her homeland, determined to contribute to its rebuilding. She initially joined the revenue collection authority, playing a key role in the country's economic revival. However, her true passion lay in empowering women and creating sustainable job opportunities. Even before her own child started nursery school, she had already begun sponsoring eleven girls, staying true to her belief that women's empowerment starts with education.

Despite a stable and highly rewarding job, Kanzayire took a bold step to leave public service to venture into entrepreneurship, and her printing business quickly flourished, allowing her to support more women and girls.

However, her entrepreneurial journey was not without its challenges. When medical complications forced her to step away, she looked for a partner and delegated most responsibilities and setbacks were inevitable.

After recovery, she was determined to rebuild, with no business she was briefly employed. Although she got another good job, she could not ignore her dream in business. When Rwanda enacted and enforced the 'Made in Rwanda' policy, an initiative to promote locally produced goods, Kanzayire saw an opportunity. With limited resources but an abundance of innovative ideas, she created a fashion company entering into textiles.

In its infancy, the company boomed, but unforeseen problems like Covid-19 pandemic affected it. However, working with other women entrepreneurs they started manufacturing facemasks. Due to the unpredictability of the health crisis, this initiative also had setbacks and losses were inescapable.

However, Kanzayire was never discouraged by the challenges in her business journey. Passionate about fashion, Kanzayire established Divine Garments Ltd.

With the support of government's recovery initiative following the pandemic, Divine Garments Ltd was able to get back to its feet. Since the end of Covid-19, the textile firm has come up with many initiatives, reshaping the sector.

Achievements

Today, Divine Garments Ltd has established a strong brand, supplying textiles to the Rwandan market while exploring the European market especially Belgium and Denmark.

The company creates jobs mostly for women, Divine Garments Ltd started with only two workers but today it employs 21 permanent staff and at least 70 casual laborers during peak seasons. This is a significant contribution to national economic development.

In her work, she has fostered a sense of national pride and independence by promoting locally made products.

Her story is one of resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to progress. She has paved the way for countless women, proving that gender should never be a barrier to success. Today, Divine Garments Ltd stands as a testament to her vision, empowering Rwandans and strengthening the country's textile industry.

"When one door closes, another opens," Kanzayire says, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and hard work. Her entrepreneurial journey has been marked by challenges, including businesses that failed for various reasons. However, she believes that by continuing to create and innovate, more success awaits.

Company's Future

Divine Garments Ltd plans to build a textile factory in Rwanda to increase production and meet growing market demand. The founders believe that the company's commitment to quality and attention to detail are strengths in pursuing maximum growth, and factory in the offing will help solidify its legacy.

Kanzayire's journey inspires mostly the young entrepreneurs particularly women - encouraging them to break barriers and create lasting change in their communities.