Karongi District is set to host a new Zipline long-range distribution center aimed at expanding access to essential medical supplies for underserved communities in western Rwanda, including areas beyond Nyungwe Forest and along the border with the DRC.

The development was announced on February 4, 2025, during the official signing of an expansion agreement between Zipline and the Government of Rwanda in Kigali. The new hub will strengthen Rwanda's national medical delivery network and improve public health service delivery in hard-to-reach regions.

The new hub will complement the two existing Zipline hubs in Muhanga and Kayonza and is expected to be fully operational by August 2026.

Located near the Rwanda–DRC border, the hub is projected to serve more than 200 additional health posts and 60 major health facilities, extending services to an estimated 2.8 million people.

"This collaboration will enable us to reach areas that have previously been difficult to serve, including parts of Rusizi and Nyamasheke districts and other regions in the Western Province," said Jeanne Umuhire, Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC).

Jeanne Umuhire, Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC)

She said that although Rwanda is a relatively small in size, some communities have remained challenging to access.

Umuhire added that Zipline's decade-long presence in Rwanda has significantly strengthened the health sector by introducing innovative, real-time solutions, particularly in medical supply chain management.

According to Zipline, the expansion agreement is the first milestone under Zipline's recent $150M pay-for-performance award received from the U.S. Department of State.

"Rwanda pioneered autonomous logistics for the world, proving it to be more

reliable, more responsive, and less wasteful than traditional logistics systems. With the addition of a third hub in Karongi District and service in Kigali soon, Rwanda is creating a single, seamless system that serves all Rwandans equally," said Pierre Kayitana, Country Director, Zipline Rwanda.

According to Caitlin Burton, CEO of Zipline Africa, the U.S. government backed the expansion because of the existence of bold leadership in Rwanda and is in alignment with the U.S. ambition of establishing mutual partnership in Africa rather than providing aid.

Caitlin Burton, CEO of Zipline Africa

"As we look ahead, Zipline remains deeply committed to Rwanda, not just as a partner but as a co-creator of what comes next. We are celebrating a shared vision where innovations serve people; infrastructure reaches everyone, and bold leadership turns possibility into reality. She said.

With this expansion, Zipline's nationwide network in Rwanda will cover over 11 million people and create over 350 local jobs.