Three decades ago, Ngoma District was largely overlooked, marked by rough roads and few schools. The scars of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi were still evident, casting uncertainty over its future. Despite the pain, the people of Ngoma demonstrated remarkable resilience, finding strength to rebuild their homes and nurture hopes for a better life.

From the ruins of the past, Ngoma began to change in ways that once seemed impossible. Today, Ngoma has smooth and well-paved roads, successful coffee farms, modern healthcare centers, and new businesses that bring life to the district. Above all, Ngoma is home to a fresh generation of educated, empowered citizens—ready to shape the future with hope and ambition.

Before the genocide, Ngoma—then part of Kibungo Prefecture—was a rural area with limited infrastructure. “The district had only two schools, and the roads were few. Most people had little access to essential services,” recalls Cyriaque Mapambano Nyiridandi, the district’s Vice Mayor for Economic Development.

At the turn of the millennium, Rwanda embraced a bold national vision: Vision 2020, which aimed to lift the country to middle-income status. This vision laid the foundation for Ngoma’s rapid development, especially in education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

“Today, Ngoma, which has a population of around 404,048 people, has 48 schools, including secondary institutions and a polytechnic,” says Mapambano with pride. “This is a huge leap from just two schools a generation ago. Education has become the cornerstone of our growth.”

Agricultural reforms have also played a key role in the district’s transformation. With land consolidation, irrigation systems, and modern farming techniques, Ngoma’s local economy has been revitalized. “Farming has always been at the heart of our community,” Mapambano explains. “But with better tools, training, and support, our farmers have become much more productive.”

Furthermore, the introduction of the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) in 2017 gave Ngoma a clear path toward sustainable development. The district set its sights on four key pillars: agriculture, infrastructure, education, and health. “With

NST1, we weren’t just rebuilding anymore—we were building inclusively and sustainably,” the Vice Mayor explains.

This shift in approach has led to remarkable improvements. Over 45 kilometres of tarmacked roads have been completed, with another 54 kilometres currently under construction. “We had only one tarmacked road in the past. Now, 180 kilometres of feeder roads connect our farmers to markets,” he adds. These roads are not just about improving market access; they also strengthen Ngoma’s connections with neighbouring districts, fostering broader economic growth and development.

Access to clean water and electricity has also improved drastically. “When we started, only a small fraction of our population had access to clean water. Now, 84% of people have it, and we’re working toward full coverage,” Mapambano notes.

Healthcare has also made impressive strides. Ngoma once had only one poorly equipped hospital. Today, the district boasts an upgraded Level 2 Teaching Hospital, and the number of health centers has grown to 17.

Education and vocational training have flourished, helping youth transition from traditional farming into a more diverse economy. Ngoma’s polytechnic school now equips students with practical skills for the job market.

As of May 2024, 52 per cent of households in Ngoma district had access to electricity, including 32 per cent connected to the national grid and 20 per cent using off-grid solutions. Electricity now reaches 70% of the district.

Economically, Ngoma has diversified. Once reliant solely on agriculture, the district now supports industries that process maize, pineapples, and rice. Ngoma leads in the production of pineapples with an annual average yield of 16 tons per household. This has opened new opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs.

Tourism is another emerging industry, with three picturesque lakes-Bilira, Mugesera, and Sake. The district is developing a master plan to boost tourism around these lakes, which will create jobs for the community.

However, climate change remains a challenge with the reliance on agriculture which makes it especially vulnerable but the district is tackling this issue through projects like the Transforming Eastern Province through Adaptation (TETA) initiative and the

Green Fund, which aim to restore ecosystems and rehabilitate land.

District officials also encourage households to plant fruit trees as a way to improve food security and mitigate climate change. Climate-smart farming techniques and irrigation systems have made agriculture more resilient, helping farmers thrive even in dry seasons.

Mapambano revealed that they are ready for even more growth under the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2). “In the next five years, we want Ngoma to become a thriving hub for agriculture and tourism. New projects, like a fishing venture led by a Chinese investor, are expected to bring in more jobs, adding fresh energy to the district’s already impressive transformation.

In light of these opportunities and the Ngoma’s resilience, the Vice Mayor calls upon local residents and investors to consider investing in Ngoma, emphasizing that together they can foster growth and innovation.