

The governments of Rwanda and drone and logistic delivery specialist Zipline have announced on Thursday an expanded partnership to triple delivery volume nationwide.

The idea is to use Zipline to shore up Rwanda's healthcare supply chain, address malnutrition and support the country's eco-tourism industry, according to Rwanda Development Board CEO Clare Akamanzi, who touted this as a "national drone service."

Deliveries will now include medicine, medical supplies, nutrition and animal health products.

In addition, it also will give any government agency access to Zipline's services, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, the Ministry of Information Communication Technology, the Rwanda Development Board, the Rwanda Medical Supply and the National Child Development Agency.

Under Zipline's new \$61 million partnership with Rwanda's government, its drone network founded in 2016 focused specifically on delivering blood supplies will be tripled in volume, and extended to cover the entire nation.

Objectives in the effort seek to reach 11 million people by making 2 million on-demand UAV drop-offs by 2029, using autonomous flights expected to rack up 200 million airborne kilometers.

The government of Rwanda believes that the potential economic and social benefits of expanded drone deliveries will make the service available to all government entities- including those overseeing finance, tourism, and e-commerce.

At the same time, Zipline will continue overseeing its on-demand; automated transportation of a wide range of medical supplies - only now within what's being touted as world's first UAV nationwide delivery network.

According to Clare Akamanzi, CEO of the Rwanda Development Board, this new agreement will be incorporating Zipline into many aspects of Rwanda's national operations, from providing a reliable healthcare supply chain, to addressing malnutrition, to creating an unforgettable eco-tourism experience.

"Rwanda is an innovation hub and we're thrilled to be the first country in the world to launch a national drone delivery service." She said

In Rwanda, Zipline drones now deliver 75% of the country's blood supply outside of the capital, Kigali, provisioning 400 hospitals and clinics with rapid, on-demand service.

Recent research by the University of Pennsylvania identified that activity as responsible for an 88% reduction in Rwandan hospital maternal deaths due to postpartum hemorrhaging.

Since its 2019 start, the company has branched out into supplying other medical products around Rwanda, and initiated and grown new aerial networks across Africa, in the US, and Japan.

While healthcare has always remained a main focus of its activity, Zipline has also gotten involved in rapidly expanding commercial drone deliveries with Walmart in the US, and with Africa's e-commerce giant Jumia.

With the expanded drone delivery operation soon also available to the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Ministry of Information Communication Technology, Rwanda Development Board, Rwanda Medical Supply, National Child Development Agency, and many economic and business agencies, Zipline officials believe their success supporting improved healthcare services will be shared with other aspects of the nation's life.

Daniel Marfo, senior vice president and head of Zipline's Africa business and operations said, "Instant logistics has saved thousands of lives and is solving some of the world's most important problems - hunger and malnutrition, road congestion and environmental pollution, and lack of access to healthcare,"

"We are honored to expand our relationship with our first customer to support additional sectors of government and create more impact together." He added