In the early 2000s, when the Rwandan economy was starting to recover from the genocide against the Tutsi, Tuyishimire Placide was completing his secondary education and began his journey as an entrepreneur.

Musanze is a city on the move, so are the residents. Arguably the country's second largest city, Musanze has fast become one of the most vibrant cities thanks in part to its tourism potentials and the city is experiencing a construction boom.

Tuyishimire Placide, 41, came to Musanze ten years ago to study but choose to do business when he spotted some opportunities in Musanze and today is one of the youngest billionaires in town.

Born near the Catholic parish in Rushashi Sector, Gakenke District south of Musanze District in Northern Rwanda, Tuyishimire liked to pray when he was still young. This is also explained from a staunch Catholic family and a predominantly Catholic community with close proximity to the parish.

His father, a banana and coffee farmer was also known for brewing the popular banana beer known as 'Urwagwa', a trade that may have inspired the son to start a brewing factory.

During his primary school days, Tuyishimire liked art a lot always making drawings but this interest never materialised because of the circumstances people went through in the country and never had a chance to continue his childhood passion when he joined secondary school he ended up doing accounting and economics which he completed in 2001.

After completion of high school, he didn't join the university right away. As a norm during those days was to look for a job, he made his first attempt at teaching and working at the bank but was discouraged by the salary which was not more than Rwf.30,000, so made up his mind to look for a blue-collar job.

Determined to look for money he came to Kigali and landed his first job as a taxi conductor, with determination to move-on, in a span of one year he elevated into a driver and through this line of work started making shots at business.

Driving a taxi, Tuyishimire realised there was an opportunity where he would make some side cash as an informal trader in food crops like sorghum, Irish potatoes and started building his empire, as they say the rest is history.

Coming to Musanze

Commonly known and referred to as Placide due to his simplicity and younger age, he always wanted to succeed and one way was through education which he had paused for nine years but wanted to go back to class.

Placide enrolled at the INES Ruhengeri, a university known for applied sciences and practical skills but his grand plan to study was short-lived as his eyes were redirected when he spotted some business opportunities choosing to navigate them first.

The entrepreneur he is, started making banana and ginger beer, later built a brewery in Musanze that has grown over the years with very popular drinks.


Production line at CETRAF brewery in Musanze, the manufacturing company started by Placide

Placide notes that when you start something on your own you will achieve something and reach somewhere creating employment for others along the way but you need to save on every earning you make.

“Self-employment has a lot of benefits and luck, all you need is to be confident and determined to start doing something with whatever capital you have,” Placide emphasizes. “I believe self-employment is always better than to think you have to look for employment.”

He observes that self-employment doesn’t only give you financial rewards but is also a satisfying experience because of job creation. “I am most proud of what I do because it has created hundreds of jobs for others.”

Starting the brewery plant was not easy as Placide explains that there was not even enough capital but was determined to make it work and the business atmosphere was promising.

The business environment in Rwanda is another catalyst for people who want to start or invest in any sector as Placide says. The country has a lot of opportunities and encourages investment, this can be shown with the number of businesses that have been born and grown as well as factories manufacturing diverse products that were not there before.

Placide challenges people who say doing business is not easy in Rwanda, saying that those would be lazy to start one or those who feel they can't get their hands dirty will definitely fail to get a breakthrough into business.

He is very proud that his business finally took off and today employees hundreds of Rwandans as a local company and promotes made in Rwanda.

Placide lists creating employment as the top most component in his capacity as an investor and is proud that his investments directly employ about 650 people not mentioning those indirectly benefiting from his ventures and their beneficiary families.

The married father of two loves to spend time with his family, advises that its important to always be there for your family and provide for them, sharing with them whatever you have.

His business successes at a young age have afforded Placide some things that he says many may not have been lucky. He is happy that has been able to build a good family home and embarked on commercial buildings in Musanze.

The important thing is the undertaking of activities that are supporting and will continue to support more people in future. He says that he is building a multi-storied commercial complex in the City of Musanze that will serve a lot of people for years to come.

"The construction project am undertaking will serve a diverse part of Rwandans which makes me proud but again will help my family when am no longer around because its an investment that will outlive me," underlines Placide.

He advises the youth if they are to become successful entrepreneurs will require them to be more confident, determined, work hard and make savings. Importantly is to start working on something with whatever you have instead of waiting for a larger capital.