

A home for all: How Rwanda's model villages are transform lives, giving hope to life

For Clenie Nyiramana, a mother of three, the journey from Abahuje village in the Gisenyi Sector to the [Rugerero IDP Model Village](#) in Rubavu District has been nothing short of life-changing. Previously burdened by the constant struggle of paying rent and frequently relocating, Nyiramana found her and her children's education constantly disrupted. Today, her worries have been replaced with a sense of pride and stability.

"We no longer have to worry about shelter," Nyiramana beams. "In fact, we take pride in going back to our homes every day."

Nyiramana's new home is part of a larger initiative, the Rugerero Model Village, valued at Rwf18.4 billion. Constructed by the Rwanda Defence Force in collaboration with other government institutions, it was officially handed over to 120 families during Rwanda's 29th Liberation Day celebrations. This model village includes residential houses, an Early Childhood Development (ECD) school, a mini-market, Agakiriro (a local crafts center), a health post, and a poultry shed, along with essential infrastructure – the kind of services Nyiramana needed and she's now accessing them easily.

Her story resonates with many similar stories including that of Thonis Uwamurera, a 48-year-old single mother of three. Relocated from a high-risk zone in Gatsata to Gikomero Model Village, Uwamurera expresses profound gratitude for her new three-bedroom self-contained house.

"Here is a house I was given, and I thank the leadership, especially President Paul Kagame, who is consistently mindful of the welfare of the needy and the widows," she says.

Uwamurera's neighbor, [Thomas Ndagijimana](#), once a homeless, disabled father of seven, now has a place to call home thanks to the same initiative.

"Having a place to call home is a priority in life. You have no foundation in life if you don't have a home, and that's why I thank the assistance we got from the President," Ndagijimana reflects.

Rwanda's commitment to improving living standards for its vulnerable populations is evident in its affordable housing programme. The nation's Vision 2050, which identifies urbanization as a key driver for economic transformation, has inspired the development of grouped villages, or "Imidugudu". These are central to the government's Integrated Development Programme (IDP). Since 2010, more than 87 IDP model villages have been built, aimed at resettling vulnerable households from high-risk areas and offering them decent housing.

The IDP Model Village program was designed to promote proper human settlement in rural areas. By 2016, the program expanded to include urban communities across all thirty districts in Rwanda. By 2024, settlements had been constructed in every district, delivering hundreds of thousands of housing units across all settlements.

The IDP model villages, now present in all 30 districts, are characterized by typologies and layouts approved by the Rwanda Housing Authority. The eligibility criteria prioritize vulnerable households in high-risk zones or low-income groups.

These model villages offer residents access to comprehensive health and social services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities, contributing significantly to the socio-economic transformation of rural and peri-urban areas. The villages' well-constructed roads, open spaces, water reservoirs, and the ECDs with classrooms, kitchens, and conference facilities further demonstrate the holistic approach of the IDP model. Sports facilities, including basketball and volleyball courts with stadium-like seating areas, and livestock sheds for animal husbandry, enhance the quality of life for the residents.

The IDP model village program exemplifies an efficient and effective housing value chain, providing valuable lessons for the private sector aiming to target the affordable housing market.

The government of Rwanda remains the largest housing supplier through the IDP Model Village Programme. By potentially extending this concept to a broader market segment and involving the private sector in a hybrid subsidy-financing arrangement, there is an opportunity to enhance the capacity of Rwanda's housing supply sector.

Rwanda's IDP model village program not only provides shelter but also fosters community development and resilience, ensuring that no one is left behind in the nation's journey towards transformation and growth.