

# Japanese-funded Musanze Innovation Centre launched



Masahiro Imai, Ambassador of Japan to Rwanda toured the center with Dancilla Nyirarugero, Governor of the Northern Province during the launch of the Musanze Innovation hub in Musanze district on January 26, 2022. Dan Nsengiyumva

By Patrick Nzabonimpa

**THE** Government of Rwanda and their Japanese counterparts have launched Musanze Innovation Centre which is part of the ICT Innovation Ecosystem Strengthening Project.

The project aims at elevating Rwanda's status as a premier ICT innovation destination in Africa.

The innovation centre was launched on January 26 in Musanze district and is expected to boost already existing innovations and attract more youth in the field of innovation.

This facility is equipped with 3D printers, laser cutters and CNC, among other machines that are used to make different products.

Speaking at the launch, Masahiro Imai, the Japanese Ambassador to Rwanda said that the two countries are not rich in terms of natural resources and thus rely on human capital to develop.

This, he said, led to the creation of innovation centres in different parts of the country.

He said that the centre established in Musanze will inspire creativity and critical thinking among the youth, adding that his government will continuously provide not only machines but also software updates, training, coaching and management of the facility.

He added, "Generating innovation and value added services and products is vital to create knowledge-based industries and achieve Rwanda's aspiration of becoming a "knowledge based economy."

Apart from Musanze, the ICT Innovation Ecosystem Strengthening Project has seen innovation centres set up in other secondary cities such as Huye and Rwamagana at Agahozo Shalom Youth Village.

It is being implemented by the Ministry of ICT and Innovation and Japan, through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Dancilla Nyirarugero, Governor of Northern Province said that the project brings much value to the province's residents, especially the youth.

*Dancilla Nyirarugero, Governor of the Northern Province, Masahiro Imai, Ambassador of Japan to Rwanda cut the ribbon during the launch of Musanze Innovation hub in Musanze district on January 26, 2022.*



According to her, the centre will not only help the youth trained there to create jobs, it will also ensure they send the best among their people to compete on the international market in the area of ICT.

She noted that the centre will also be utilised by institutions of higher learning in the area since they will be able to send their students for internship, among other advantages.

For over a decade, JICA has provided support towards the country's ICT sector through provision of ICT advisors, establishing incubation centres such as Fablab and Klab in Kigali, besides the ICT Innovation Ecosystem Strengthening Project which was implemented from November 2017 to October 2020.

Jade Mukakagame, the coordinator of Musanze innovation centre said that the project

is supporting youth to create jobs using ICT, adding that it is mainly targeting the youth in Musanze and neighbouring communities.

She revealed that beneficiaries are selected basing on criteria including having technical background and being able to easily learn how to use ICT applications.

She noted that the centre currently has the capacity to receive 80 people at a time, adding that members will be enrolled in cohorts.

## Beneficiaries speak out

Janvier Nsoro, one of the trainees at Musanze Innovation Centre said that he has already gained skills to understand what innovation means and has been shown how he can turn his ideas into finished products.

"Through this centre, we have acquired advanced skills that an innovator needs to achieve his dreams and it has greatly boosted our critical thinking. Before this centre, it was hard to settle and do something," he said.

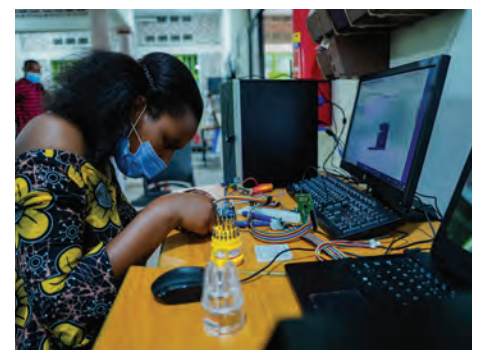
Claudine Iradukunda, another trainee at the centre said that she has been learning about job creation and how to use different machines to innovate.

She said that for girls like her, the centre will turn them into entrepreneurs and will become a source of employment instead of being job seekers.

Desailly Mupenzi, another trainee from IPRC Musanze said that the centre will make money through selling different products they make by using the available machines.

He said that since the centre is located in a touristic district like Musanze, it can generate a lot of money since the products are produced within a short time and with low-cost raw materials.

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Official group photo during the launch of the Musanze Innovation hub in Musanze district on January 26, 2022.