

Emmanuel rebuilds his life after tragedy

Emmanuel's journey to Zoe Empowers began differently than most participants.

As a child, he lived a good life with his parents and sister in a small Rwandan village. He attended school and did well. Noting their son's potential, Emmanuel's parents sent him to boarding school, where he continued to thrive academically and began to foster dreams of college and beyond.



However, during his final semester, after visiting Emmanuel at school, his entire family was tragically killed in a car accident. Emmanuel was shocked and heartbroken.

He tried to complete the final months of school through his fog of grief, but his grades dropped significantly, and he lost his opportunity to receive a college scholarship.

Emmanuel eventually returned to his village. He moved into what was once his family's happy home and was overcome by the reality of his situation: An orphan who was completely alone, his life and dreams shattered. He slipped into a deep depressive state and considered ending his life believing he'd never work or amount to much.

It was around this time that Zoe Empowers entered Emmanuel's life. He still remembers the day he was introduced to the empowerment program—October 17, 2019—because now he considers it the best day of his life.

"I remember a Zoe Empowers staff member telling me that I had to keep living and would once again live a happy life," Emmanuel said of his initial meeting. Although he didn't fully believe it then, Emmanuel joined the Urukundo group and immersed himself in the empowerment program.

Meeting his fellow participants made Emmanuel realize he was no longer alone. His



perspective on his situation shifted as he got to know his group mates and learned their stories. He started to see the positive aspects of his life and felt glimmers of gratitude once again. He began to trust God again. These feelings increased as he found his entrepreneurial stride in the program.

Emmanuel was trained to farm crops and rear animals, so he purchased a pig with his first grant. As he cared for the pig, a new business idea bloomed: veterinary medicine. He'd taken a few veterinary classes at school and knew how to treat common illnesses. Conversations with others in the program and community members showed that this service was needed in his area.

Emmanuel began by selling essential products (vitamins, penicillin) from his home and delivering them to his clients. Zoe helped Emmanuel receive more training to be qualified to administer medication directly to the animals, increasing his service offering and earning potential.



By the time he completed the Zoe program in fall 2021, Emmanuel owned his own veterinary clinic. He is the only veterinarian in his entire county and has since stayed very busy.

“Zoe taught me that I could work harder than I ever thought possible,” Emmanuel said. “I learned how to be patient, save money, and invest.”

True to his word, Emmanuel has used his income to strategically diversify his revenue stream. He has started several businesses and provided employment opportunities for others in his community. Below are a few of his investments:

- Three hectares (about 7.5 acres) of forest land for a charcoal business, which employs six people.
- Farmland, where he grows maize, beans, and vegetables and hires others to help tend them.
- A motorbike for taxi services and a driver he pays daily to run it.
- Bulk fertilizer and an employee to haul it from the market to Emmanuel's clinic, where he resells it to his customers.
- Two incubator machines to hatch chickens. (He pays someone to supply the eggs.)



Emmanuel hopes to buy a car and a house across the street from his clinic soon. He's already saved the money for the house and is patiently waiting for it to come on the market. He has also set his sights on opening a second clinic location in a large city.

More important is what Emmanuel, now 25, has gained what couldn't be purchased with money: a family.

Although no one could replace his parents and sister, he considers his relationship with Zoe staff to be like that of a parent and his group mates to be his siblings. He credits them and the grace of God for pulling him out of the darkest shadow of his life and helping him step into a bright and prosperous future.

