

USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) grants \$6.5 million to Village Enterprise to support Rwandans living in poverty to become entrepreneurs

- Largest USAID DIV grant for more than a decade will help Rwanda reach their goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030
- The grant will impact over 30,000 households in Rwanda, and empower the launch of 10,000 group businesses
- The innovative poverty graduation program will equip the Rwandan government with the tools and resources needed to scale Village Enterprise's evidence-based and cost-effective model across Rwanda

SAN CARLOS, Calif., 16 November 2023 — Village Enterprise, a nonprofit seeking to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through entrepreneurship, innovation, and collective action, has received a \$6.5 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development's [Development Innovation Ventures](#) (USAID DIV) program. Through DIV, USAID funds breakthrough solutions to the world's toughest development challenges, and their grant will support the scaling of Village Enterprise's poverty graduation model in Rwanda.

The second largest grant in DIV's history and the largest in over a decade will enable Village Enterprise to provide critical resources, training, and skills to people living in extreme poverty and support them to set up their own businesses. The grant will also allow Village Enterprise to train government staff to implement Village Enterprise's poverty graduation model independently, as well as set up a management information system to be utilized by the Government of Rwanda to track and monitor the program's progress.

Under this results-based award, Village Enterprise will also work with the Government of Rwanda to catalyze an additional \$28 million in funding to further scale the program. These additional resources will be used to move more than one million Rwandans out of extreme poverty by 2027 and end extreme poverty in the country by 2030. If successful, this model could be a blueprint for other African governments to eradicate extreme poverty.

Village Enterprise's transformative approach

Through the award, Village Enterprise will use their proven poverty graduation model to empower over 30,000 households in Rwanda to set up, launch, and run their own businesses. Ranging from retail businesses in clothing and produce, to bicycle repair businesses, the new entrepreneurs are mentored by Village Enterprise's specialist staff throughout the year-long program and receive business and financial literacy training.

Supporting Rwanda to eliminate extreme poverty

The Rwandan government has committed to eliminating extreme poverty by 2030 and ratified its National Strategy for Sustainable Graduation (NSSG) in November of 2022. As part of the roll-out of the program, Village Enterprise's specialist staff will work alongside the Government of Rwanda, training government parasocial workers and teaching them how to be successful mentors to first-time entrepreneurs. Long term, this will enable Rwanda to deliver the poverty graduation program without the support or intervention from Village Enterprise or USAID funding. In addition, the grant will be used to develop and deploy a management information system, allowing the Rwandan government to monitor and track its progress as it continues to scale the poverty graduation program.

Dianne Calvi, CEO and President of Village Enterprise said: "Village Enterprise is thrilled to receive USAID DIV's largest grant in over a decade and to work alongside the Government of Rwanda to equip

vulnerable households to break the cycle of extreme poverty through entrepreneurship. It's through collective action and scaling proven solutions that governments, nonprofits, agencies, and the private sector can take on the biggest issues in the world today. This grant and partnership not only have the potential to help end extreme poverty in Rwanda—they can serve as the blueprint for other African governments looking to end extreme poverty."

"Our poverty graduation model has a proven record of success. It has the potential to transform the lives of millions individuals and families living in extreme poverty, and it is with thanks to USAID that we can roll-out our program in Rwanda to foster more entrepreneurship, innovation, and collective action," says Sylvere Mwizerwa, Rwanda Country Manager at Village Enterprise.

About Village Enterprise

Village Enterprise's mission is to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through entrepreneurship, innovation, and collective action. We work with vulnerable women, refugees, and youth who are most impacted by climate change, conflict, and displacement, and equip them with skills and resources to launch climate-smart businesses, build savings, and put themselves and their families onto a sustainable path out of extreme poverty. Village Enterprise has started over 80,000 businesses, trained over 274,000 first-time entrepreneurs, and positively transformed the lives of over 1,656,000 people in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

About USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the world's premier international development agency and a catalytic actor driving development results. USAID's work advances U.S. national security and economic prosperity, demonstrates American generosity, and promotes a path to recipient self-reliance and resilience.

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