

Tanzania to use drone network to deliver critical medicines

August 24 2017, by Rodney Muhumuza

Drones soon will be used in Tanzania to deliver medicines to health facilities across the East African country, continuing a trend of African governments embracing drone networks to deliver critical services.

Tanzania's government is working with U.S. logistics company Zipline to launch what they call the world's largest [drone delivery service](#) for emergency medical supplies.

In the first quarter of 2018, Tanzania's [government](#) will begin using drones to make up to 2,000 deliveries per day to more than 1,000 health facilities, Zipline said in a statement Thursday.

The service will be crucial in times of unexpected demand or bad weather and for small but critical orders, said Laurean Bwanakunu, director-general of Tanzania's national medical stores.

Since October 2016, Zipline has been operating a similar drone delivery service in Rwanda for emergency blood deliveries to transfusion clinics.

With its harsh landscapes of desert and rain forest and extremes of rainy seasons and drought, Africa is burdened with what the World Bank has called "the worst infrastructure endowment of any developing region today."

Rural highways, often unpaved, disintegrate, and in many countries access to electricity has actually declined.

The speed and limited space of drones have focused aid groups and businesses on how to deliver small, sensitive and potentially life-saving cargo on a continent facing some of the world's most severe humanitarian crises.

In Madagascar another U.S. company, Vayu, has completed drone flights to deliver blood and stool samples from rural villages with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

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