

Rwandan Ex-combatants Succeed in Bakery Project

N&N no. 1 – January 10, 2008

James Habyarimana, is a 43 year old man in Kirehe district and the chairperson of “Tous Ensemble Twisungane” cooperative society. The cooperative society is made up of 30 members whose majority are ex-combatants. As such, they have been associated with the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) which is supported by the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP). They started humbly and today, only a few years later, they boast an investment capital of 9.5 million Rwanda francs.

In 2000, it was an association with fewer members who pooled together their resources and lent to one another on a rotational basis. Each member was engaged in his own business. Some members were involved in the repair of bicycles, others in running restaurants and still others in selling tomatoes in the market.

In 2006, 30 members decided to join their activities into a common business. The association started a bakery project, in which they baked breads and cakes. Along with the member contributions of 35,000 Frs each, they also acquired a loan from Inzira Cooperative Bank in Kirehe district, which they have since fully repaid. However, James Habyarimana explains: *“The interest rates were very high and we later decided to ask for loans from another bank and of recent we received a big loan of 6 million Rwanda francs from Bank Populaire.”* By the end of 2006, the association had an investment capital of 2 million Rwanda francs. On March 16, 2007, the association attained the legal status as a cooperative.

Today, the cooperative society is able to provide health insurance to its members who are now in a better situation. Members are now capable of resolving some of their financial challenges. They are able to pay for their children’s school fees, they are able to buy clothes and food, and can pay for other basic necessities.



James Habyarimana, the Chairman of Tous Ensemble Twisungane Cooperative

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Along with selling sites in five sectors within the district, the cooperative society also has a shop in which its products are sold. Nevertheless, its members' ambitions continue to grow.



Tous ensemble Twisungane shop

"We plan to expand our production and supply to our customers by establishing more selling sites to all sectors in the district and other neighbouring districts" Habyarimana reiterates. They also hope to acquire modern equipments for the bakery. This will help them save fire wood, which along with planting trees, they hope will contribute to improving the environment.

The experience of forming associations or cooperatives indicates a fast growing economic success for both ex-combatants and civilians. The RDRC always encourages mixed associations of ex-combatants and civilians as the best way to join hands and resources for successful socio-economic development. The "Tous Ensemble Twisungane" cooperative society is just one example of the positive results such a collaboration can produce.

- by John Rusimbi, Public Relations Officer for the Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Program (RDRP); and Prosper Ruvusha, Sensitization Officer, RDRP.

For more information on MDRP, please visit www.mdrp.org or contact Bruno Donat, Communications Officer, MDRP Secretariat, World Bank at info@mdrp.org.