

Men and women in hundreds work ignoring ear piercing sounds hovering over as they turn thousands of imperfect pieces of timber into smoother perfect objects. One will not notice that this excellent woodwork has been perfected by a group of artisans for over thirty years.

Excelling at the craft of woodwork has been the core of operations for Action pour le Développement de l'Artisanat au Rwanda, a cooperative best known from its French acronym as ADARWA.



Cyatwa Ngarambe, the Chairman of ADARWA emphasizes that their core business is the selling and value addition of timber to deliver excellent products as well as related products and services.

He revealed that they started as an association of only 15 furniture dealers who were operating in Gakinjoro, Cyahafi sector in Kigali central district but their activities picked pace after Rwanda's liberation in 1994.

Working from the central district had its challenges including lack of space to expand and the city authorities advised and gave furniture dealers land in Gisozi where they set up workshops and relocated in 2004.

The new place had more spacious space where furniture dealers expanded their workshops and thrived while attracting other dealers with related businesses to the new location in Gisozi. Having grown in number and size they finally registered ADARWA as a cooperative in 2010.

Most of the members in the cooperative started by selling wood but proceeded to value addition, bought machines to prepare wood for construction and for other different uses. With the increase in business they continued to make furniture for serving various needs and markets.

Once in the new location, the cooperative bought more land and started building a four-storey building for their businesses with a plan to have a commercial structure that could have all the value chains in one place.

Today their growth is vast, first from members who have increased to 157 persons and resources have skyrocketed from a mere Rwf500,000 capital to multibillion ventures with diversified portfolios in real estate, machinery and workshops.

“Members of the cooperative are now starting to harvest what they sow,” underlined Ngarambe. Adding that, although they borrowed while building the commercial complex much has already been cleared and even undertaken other ventures.

Installing a state-of-the-art wood drying equipment



The new installed state-of-the-art machine dries timber to recommended standards to improve quality

To enhance value addition and improve the quality of wood produced at Gisozi, ADARWA has procured and installed a state-of-the-art machine for drying timber. The machinery which has so far cost a whopping Rwf.284 million will improve the quality of timber in the country as well as for export market.

“Our new machinery will be a game changer in the industry, it’s the first of its kind in the country and will help us as well as others seeking quality wood because it dries wood at the recommended degrees,” says the Chairman of ADARWA.

The new equipment will further boost locally manufactured products by improving the quality and this cooperative wish for every Rwandan to buy local products which are of good quality and durable.

Members of the cooperative appreciate working together which has led them to many achievements and now want to diversify into other projects.

Ngarambe revealed that during a retreat members decided to invest in forestry where they could collaborate with a certain district and plant a forest. This long term project is intended to benefit the cooperative in at least three ways. First as people who are in the wood business will harvest timber for their own usage, they are also looking at selling carbon credits to offset greenhouse gases and want this project to continue to bond members as they continue to undertake projects together.

Working as a cooperative has benefited many and also changed and improved life for members as the Chairman boasts, “Many of our members are now driving and have become landlords.

ADARWA has also shaped Gisozi market where its numerous wood workshops

continued to attract thousands of furniture buyers and other interests related to this industry with clients from around the city and across the country.

Members of the cooperative are not the only beneficiaries but thousands, more than 3,000 are employed by the numerous workshops at Gisozi market. Besides creating jobs for carpenters, several others have indirect jobs created for instance the transport sector.

Ngarambe attributes the achievement to the visionary leadership of the country and the City of Kigali which has supported them in different ways. Furniture dealers were given a good location to start with and over the years developed infrastructure around the place.

However, as activities at Gisozi market grow old infrastructures like roads pose a challenge that ADARWA calls for the intervention of authorities to improve infrastructure that accommodates the growing needs.

To move the wood industry to another level, ADARWA requests the concerned authorities to help set-up internationally accepted standards in the sector which will help improve quality and locally made products compete on international markets.