A social – economic cooperative of art production of embrodery, APROHADE is celebrating 30 years of restoring human dignity of Rwandan women through mainly economic empowerment. Its programmes align well with the government's efforts to promote social protection to ensure no Rwandan is left behind in development.

The cooperative has facilitated a significant number of beneficiaries to engage in various social economic activities includingembroidery, tailoring, and handicrafts. They train and coach women in skills of their choice and help them to start working with some handouts.

Today, APROHADE as an art production of embrodery is home to 75 dedicated artisans and 20 trainees currently learning skills in their preferred trades. Over the years, hundreds of women have gained valuable skills, enabling them to start own businesses and achieve financial independence.

Members have been support build own houses, educate their children, and foster a strong social bond among them, necessary for building sustainable hope and resilience.

Agnes Mutegwaraba, the Founder of APROHADE.

"It is our desire that none of our members suffers social insecurity and ensure that they have access to the basics of life such as food, shelter, education for their children and health insurance," says Agnes Mutegwara, the Founder of APROHADE.

"APROHADE is more than just a workplace, it has become family," she stressed.

APROHADE dates back September 1994 when three women—including Agnes Mutegwara came together making a pool of different expertise in mostly embroidery and tailoring, to rebuild their lives after the genocide against the Tutsi. What started as a small initiative in their homes quickly became a beacon of hope for many, especially widows and survivors in need of financial stability.

By 1995, APROHADE had expanded, welcoming more women who had artistic talent but lacked opportunities. With increasing demand for their handmade products, the group secured a former nuns' center as a workspace. In 1996, the organization formally registered as a cooperative, allowing it to operate nationwide.

The cooperative’s impact extends beyond Rwanda, with its handcrafted products reaching international markets in Belgium, the United States, and beyond. With the rise of technology, customers now place orders online, allowing the cooperative to thrive in the digital age.

The Art of Handicrafts: Tradition Meets Innovation

Specializing in intricate embroidery and fabric-based art, APROHADE produces a wide array of handmade items, including:

- Clothing for men, women, and children
- Tablecloths, placemats, and decorative linens
- Bedcovers and cushion covers
- Jewelry and handcrafted accessories
- Custom embroidered pieces for international clients

Despite advancements in machinery, APROHADE remains committed to traditional handcrafting methods, as customers prefer the authenticity of handmade products. The cooperative continues to train younger generations, ensuring these valuable skills are preserved.

Beyond craftsmanship, APROHADE champions gender equality and economic empowerment. Historically, Rwandan women were expected to focus solely on domestic duties after marriage, limiting their economic contributions. APROHADE has challenged this norm, proving that women can be both caregivers and successful entrepreneurs.

“When women earn, families thrive,” says Mutegwara. “Men who believe women should only focus on domestic work are limiting not just their wives, but the entire economy.”

Government support, including training and local market opportunities, has further boosted the cooperative’s sustainability. Looking ahead, APROHADE is planning to construct a commercial building on its land, providing a permanent workspace and training center for future artisans. As the founding members age, they are dedicated to mentoring the next generation to carry forward their legacy.

“This job requires patience, but the rewards are immeasurable,” Mutegwara reflects. “We are training the fourth cohort of young artisans who will take our work into the future.”

As APROHADE marks its 30th anniversary, it remains a symbol of resilience and empowerment. From its humble beginnings with three women to a thriving cooperative supporting artisans, APROHADE proves that when women unite with a shared vision, they can transform their lives and communities.

APROHADE is not just about embroidery, it is about stitching together a future where women are strong, self-sufficient, and celebrated.