

In Kigali's Gisozi neighborhood, COPCOM (Cooperative for the Promotion of Construction Materials Traders) represents resilience and collaboration. Established in 2004, the cooperative unites traders, transforming lives through shared resources and a commitment to progress – overcoming early challenges to forge a brighter, collective future in Rwanda's construction industry.

In the heart of Gisozi, City of Kigali, the Cooperative for the Promotion of Construction Materials Traders, known by its French acronym COPCOM, stands as a symbol of hope and resilience. Established in 2004, the cooperative has transformed the lives of its traders through collective effort and unwavering commitment.

Before COPCOM was formed, traders in Nyarugenge's Agakinjira market operated in makeshift and cramped conditions, struggling in environments that lacked essential facilities for their activities. Recognizing the need for a more conducive working environment, these traders united to improve their circumstances.



Jerome Kayitare, the Chairman of COPCOM

By 2004, at least 102 traders specializing in construction materials had come together to create this cooperative, focusing on addressing their primary needs, including access to adequate space.

“When we started, we had no proper place to conduct our activities,” recalls Jerome Kayitare, the Chairman of COPCOM. “Coming together was our only option if we wanted to grow.”

With support from the Rwandan government and a bank loan, COPCOM members pooled their resources. They secured land in Gisozi to construct a commercial building that later became a modern complex housing construction materials.



The Executive Committee of COPCOM

Today, the cooperative boasts at least 295 members and generates significant income, estimated in billions of Rwandan francs.

The cooperative has recently settled a loan of Rwf 1.8 billion owed to Rwanda Development Bank (BRD).

However, the journey has not been without challenges.

Kayitare emphasizes that achieving this level of success required immense effort. “It demanded patience, integrity, and learning from others,” he explains. “Many see COPCOM today and think it’s been a smooth journey, they don’t see the struggles we faced along the way.”

Indeed, COPCOM has encountered significant difficulties, including poor management in the past.

“When members lose motivation, the cooperative risks collapse,” warns Kayitare. This experience prompted the cooperative to reevaluate its strategies and focus on sustainable growth.

Under Kayitare’s leadership, the cooperative has embraced a culture of continuous improvement. “We learn from experience and adapt accordingly,” he says. This proactive approach has helped COPCOM emerge stronger from its challenges.

Today, the cooperative has grown into billions of assets, and its day- to-day activities are profitable, reflecting its resilience and commitment to growth.



A visit to COPCOM’s operations in the Gisozi area, locally known as, “Gakinjiro ka Gisozi”, reveals a bustling environment with big business that generates substantial income as members efficiently manufacture and sell essential construction materials.

The cooperative features a modern commercial complex, including 462 units that generate over Rwf.64 million monthly. This allows each member to receive sizable dividends and a favourable operating environment.

The cooperative’s commitment to safety is evident, with fire hydrants installed between buildings to facilitate firefighting even before emergency responders can arrive.

Beyond financial gains, COPCOM has transformed the lives of its members.

Donatha Niyitegeka joined the cooperative to grow her trade. “COPCOM has been a lifeline, helping me navigate the challenges of the construction materials trade. The

support and growth I have received has been invaluable.”

Sustainability is a cornerstone of COPCOM’s success. The cooperative employs effective asset management strategies to maximize productivity while minimizing waste.



Wooden structures used by COPCOM members when they had just relocated to Gisozi

“Joining COPCOM was one of the best decisions I have made in my life. It provided me with a favorable working environment and invaluable support that helped me grow financially,” Emmanuel Nkeramihito, a long-time member shares. Nkeramihito notes that he has benefited from the collective financial growth and access to a favourable working environment conducive to his professional growth and success.

COPCOM’s long-term goals include clear objectives that guide operations and decision-making, such as paying dividends to members to foster motivation and encourage participation.

The cooperative also supports and elevates construction materials traders through cooperative efforts by providing their members with the necessary resources, opportunities, and support to thrive in a competitive market.

It helps allocate shops from its buildings to new traders where they are able to sell their construction products.

Through experience, the cooperative avoids common pitfalls and ensures the feasibility and sustainability of projects before committing resources. This approach fosters a strong sense of community, enhancing collaboration and commitment to shared goals.

“As a member of COPCOM, I’ve experienced firsthand the power of collective action. The cooperative has provided me with opportunities to network with fellow traders, expand my business, and access financial growth programs. COPCOM’s commitment to supporting its members and contributing to national development is truly commendable.” said Anicet Gatabazi.



Empowering the community through sustainable investment

Looking to the future, COPCOM aims to enhance the financial well-being of its members while supporting the community. Kayitare envisions the cooperative as a model for others to follow.

The cooperative plans to undertake ambitious real estate projects in the City of Kigali, which include constructing apartment buildings to address the housing needs of a growing population.

The cooperative also aims to support members achieve homeownership. Given the high land costs in Kigali, these apartment buildings will allow members to live closer to their workplaces, reducing transportation expenses. Additionally, members will have opportunities to invest in their properties, generating rental income.

To further support the “Made in Rwanda” initiative, COPCOM plans to establish factories to that manufacture construction materials. This will provide traders with access to cheaper, locally made materials.

“These factories will enhance our real estate projects by providing a steady supply of locally produced materials and increase tax contributions,” underlined Kayitare.

The planned investments by COPCOM align with its core business of supplying construction materials. The cooperative members will both serve as suppliers and import materials that cannot be sourced locally.

“Our primary goal is to foster collective financial growth through unity and collaboration while contributing to national development. We understand that our success is tied to the socioeconomic progress of Rwanda,” he emphasizes.

The story of COPCOM serves as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved through collaboration and perseverance. While the path to success is often filled with obstacles, the cooperative’s journey illustrates that unity and a commitment to continuous improvement can lead to remarkable outcomes.

As more members join and contribute to this vibrant sector, the future looks bright for COPCOM and the broader cooperative community in Rwanda. With a shared vision and collective effort, they are not just building a cooperative; they are working towards a brighter future for all.



THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF COPCOM:

Fostering Collective Financial Growth

COPCOM's primary objective is to foster collective financial growth among its members. As a cooperative, they recognize the power of unity and collaboration in achieving mutual success. After establishing the cooperative framework, the next critical task was to secure appropriate locations for the activities. This ensured that each member has access to a favorable working place, conducive to their professional growth and success. By pooling resources and expertise, COPCOM created a supportive environment where every member can thrive financially and contribute to the prosperity of the collective.

Contributing to National Development

Beyond the internal objectives, COPCOM is dedicated to contributing to the development of the country at large. The cooperative understands that its success is intricately linked to the socioeconomic progress of the nation. Therefore, alongside pursuit of financial growth, members actively engage in initiatives aimed at driving positive change on a broader scale. By empowering members and supporting their endeavors, not only does this uplift individuals but also contribute to the advancement of the community and country.

COPCOM believes in the transformative power of cooperation and collective action in shaping a brighter future for all.