

The Villageois Umucyagi is a cooperative of Tea farmers based in Murambi, Giheke Sector in Rusizi District, Western Province. Dating back in 1973, the cooperative was reinvigorated and acquired its new legal status in 2012 under the new cooperative law as indicated on its registration RCA No 003/2012.

With 4,032 registered members comprising of 2,190 men, 1,505 women and 37 other groups/association, the cooperative operates in four sectors of Shangi Bushenge, Ruharambuga and Karengera in Nyamasheke District and six sectors of Giheke, Nkungu, Nyakarenzo, Mururu, Gihundwe and Kamembe Rusizi District.

Marc Musabirema, President of the General Assembly of The Villageois Umucyagi observes that enhancing production of tea both in quality and quantity was the major objective of their union. They sought to improve the incomes and livelihoods of members through commercial farming.

Musabirema explains that to achieve these goals they established three structures headed by the General Assembly composed of 50 members representing 38 collections centers. The second structure is a 5-member Executive Committee and the audit committee of three individuals all elected from the 50 members.

The cooperatives has the potential for poverty reduction by pooling resources together and keeping strong links with external environment to promote the interests of members.

Working together has helped tea growers overcome challenges that arise in their farming activities and welfare of members, the cooperative handles tea from the plantations and supports members pay for them health insurance, savings in Ejo Heza pension scheme and providing guarantee for those seeking loans from bank.

The Villageois Umucyagi has invested in different income generating activities, while it previously has been correcting money from members for its daily operations, as investments start earning money is returned back to members.

Today, members of the cooperative cultivate about 734ha while the cooperative has its own 15ha of planted with tea, 5ha planted forest and has constructed 10 houses for rentals.

The community surrounding the tea plantations have also benefited where the cooperative has created employment for local workforce and the most vulnerable

are paid for community based health insurance as well as built houses for them.

The major achievements of the cooperative has been the dynamic investments to improve services required by members like financial services, health insurance, pension schemes, skills development and enhancing commercialization of agriculture.