

## Working Towards Gender Equity

The sub-cooperative, all-female Ejo Heza group was formed in 2011, with full support of the larger KOPAKAMA cooperative, located in the Rutsiro district of western Rwanda. This is just one of the many ways KOPAKAMA is showing leadership in promoting gender equity in their rural community.

The Ejo Heza group of about 320 female producers were given their own community plot of trees and they hold their own general assembly.



In 2017, the larger, parent cooperative elected its first female president of the board, Marthe Uwiherewenimana.

A micro-credit and savings program was started in 2016.

The Ejo Heza women and their husbands have participated in Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training. On one visit, Therese UWIMANA, president of Ejo Heza, presented the diagrams she and her husband created during GALS sessions.



The Ejo Heza women receive agronomist support and other training from KOPAKAMA. Ruth Church first met their leaders when she was giving a leadership and management training to the cooperative (["Lean at Origin" training](#)). The Ejo Heza president and two other officers were invited to be in this training. The women asked Ruth to see their community plot of trees and some of the experiments they are doing with weeding and mulching to lower their costs. ([See blogpost](#)) The women are running experiments with control plots on growing techniques! Their objective is to lower their costs while maintaining the volumes and quality of production achieved in the past.

On another visit, Ruth interviewed Bette UWIMANA, Officer of Credit Documentation, about the benefits of being an Ejo Heza member and why she, as young farmer, 28 years old, decided to join the group in 2018. [See this blog post](#) for more.

How do the women use the premium Artisan pays them annually? There are a wide variety of uses. Many buy small domestic animals such as goats or chickens. Larger farmers earn enough to buy a cow. Others have purchased the \$15 Mituel health insurance that covers their family for a year.

