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## Women Entrepreneurs in Rwanda: Banana Wine by Coproviba

Christine Murebwayire, a former schoolteacher, tastes her own banana wine as she sits in her office, watching her employees process large quantities of the wine. Murebwayire is the CEO of Coproviba, a banana wine cooperative based near Kigali, Rwanda, and is also a widow with three children. Murebwayire feels proud of her achievements and the success of her business—her banana wine is famous in Rwanda and is starting to receive international recognition as well.

Murebwayire ponders the next steps to take to expand her business. Customer demand is higher than Coproviba's supply, so she would like to increase production. Otherwise, she can pursue other small-scale options like investing more money in domestic marketing. Perhaps she should start an entirely new product line, like items made from banana fiber.

As she sips the wine, noticing its distinct flavor, consistency, and quality, she reflects on how Coproviba has grown over the last few years and evaluates her options for future growth.



### The Birth of Coproviba

Coproviba started in 2004 when Christine Murebwayire and three other people came together to discuss business ideas. Murebwayire preferred to form a cooperative instead of starting a business alone, since she did not have enough capital to cover the start-up costs by herself. Also, the Rwandan government favored cooperatives by giving them more training, often through the Rwandan Development Board.

The co-op founders investigated the competition before deciding on a product. They found that there was only one established banana wine producer at the time, which produced unhygienic wine that could cause stomach illness. Quality banana wine would fill an important niche.

Murebwayire and her co-founders asked six more people to join the co-op, and each of the 10 members contributed at least 90,000 RWF (\$153) as an initial investment. That year, they launched their banana wine business.



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