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OFFICE OF LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Journey to Self-Reliance Begins with Locally Led Development



OCTOBER 2020

PHOTO CREDIT: EQUAL EXCHANGE

IN PERU, COOPERATIVE MEMBERS TAKE PART IN AN ORGANIC FERTILIZER TRAINING, PART OF A PEER EXCHANGE ORGANIZED BY EQUAL EXCHANGE

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**CHAMPIONING LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT:
MEET JELENA AVRAMOVIC**

When Jelena Avramovic worked on Serbia's [Local Works](#) application back in 2014, it was in a different context than today. "Serbia was actually on a very good path towards European Union (EU) accession, things were looking positive, and the Mission was looking to wind down, and was decreasing its resources and its presence."

But Jelena and her colleagues also saw an opportunity. They wanted to change the ways citizens engage with the ongoing reform process in Serbia. "We felt that Serbia's path towards the European Union was very much an administrative, tick the box process, and that it really wasn't giving people a sense as to what it means for them. We sensed that because of that, any reforms that happen won't really be locally owned and won't be sustainable." Today, through Local Works, Jelena is at the forefront of, in her words, "mobilizing citizens to take an active part in shaping their lives and in shaping Serbia's road to reform and EU accession."



By trying new approaches, like facilitating public-private dialogue and connecting with citizens at the local level, Jelena and her team learned important lessons about citizen engagement: "We started with a premise that citizens in Serbia were not very engaged and did not really care about these things," she said. "And luckily, we were actually proven wrong. And it's that citizens do engage, and they do care, they just don't call things the same way that we call them."

PHOTO CREDIT: USAID/SERBIA

MICHELLE BEKKERING, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC ECONOMIC GROWTH, EDUCATION, AND ENVIRONMENT (E3), MEETS WITH MEMBERS OF USAID'S EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY YOUTH NETWORK TO DISCUSS THEIR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF SERBIA

As the context in Serbia has changed, with democratic backsliding and closing civic space, this work has become even more important. "If it wasn't for the Local Works program that we have, I think that Serbian civil society would really be in a much, much worse place than it is now," Jelena said. "We were so well-placed because we had empowered all of these local actors already and mobilized all of these resources that they were much more resilient and ready than if we had not had any of this programming."

"To me, locally led development is about empowering local actors to be the main leaders of not only their development, but their life. Empowering local actors to be the drivers of change that they want to see happen."

Jelena Avramovic, USAID/Serbia

Her advice for other development professionals looking to advance local ownership and civic engagement? "Being grounded, being patient, being honest, and really looking to local partners as partners. Not as grantees, not as contractors - as partners. We're in this together, so let's help each other."

USAID/Serbia is part of the [Local Works](#) program. The [Office of Local Sustainability](#) recognizes individuals from USAID Local Works Missions for their exemplary work in advancing locally led

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH!

In honor of [National Cooperative Month](#) — an annual opportunity to raise awareness of the [cooperative business model](#) — the [Office of Local Sustainability](#) is spotlighting stories from our work with cooperatives around the world.



BUILDING RESILIENCE: COOPERATIVES AND COVID-19

PHOTO CREDIT: VENTURE37

A MEMBER OF A DAIRY COOPERATIVE IN RWANDA DELIVERING MILK

As the pandemic continues to disrupt businesses and supply chains around the world, understanding the impact on specific sectors is critical. That's why U.S.-based cooperative development organizations [Equal Exchange](#), [Global Communities](#), [NCBA CLUSA](#) and [Land O'Lakes Venture37](#) decided to study agricultural cooperatives in eight countries. Their research found that government restrictions on mobility and decreased consumer spending had profound effects on cooperative businesses, including operational delays and reduced revenue. Individual cooperative members have also seen a decline in their household income and food security due to market disruptions. In Rwanda, for instance, the price of maize dropped by 33%. One cooperative member noted that this drastic change reduced his family's income, impacted their food security, and caused him to default on his bank loan.

The findings weren't all bad: high levels of social capital between cooperative leaders and members enabled these businesses to be a trusted source of information and services. Health and safety guidance and small loans are just a few of the ways cooperatives have minimized the impact of pandemic-related stressors for cooperative members and contributed to their ability to overcome these challenges. Read the [full study](#), and check out this [interview](#) with Land O'Lakes Venture37's Chief of Party, Kari Onyancha, to learn more.

USAID supported this project through the [Cooperative Development Program](#).



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: A STRONGER BLEND

PEACE CORPS/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
A MEMBER OF THE COFFEE COOPERATIVE DISPLAYING COFFEE GRAINS

In a vibrant, rural community in the Dominican Republic, a small-scale coffee cooperative was selling bulk, unrefined coffee - and earning very little revenue as a result. The cooperative had long aimed to sell ground, ready-to-brew coffee, which would make them more competitive and increase revenue. Through their partnership with the [Peace Corps](#), and with support from the [Small Project Assistance Program](#), the cooperative provided a broad array of training for members: from processing and packaging the coffee with a coffee grinder and package sealer, to branding and marketing their coffee. Now, more than two years after this initial training, the farmers have seen an increase in both profits and productivity. Using local resources, the cooperative has also expanded the project with a new community store featuring other products made by local members. The result is a stronger and more resilient community. Even with the challenges due to COVID-19, this cooperative has continued to see success in sales, with more than 320 pounds of coffee sold since May of this year.

USAID supported this project through the [Small Project Assistance \(SPA\)](#) Program.



PHILIPPINES: SETTING UP SHOP

Lilibeth Baldisimo and Teresa Coronado are two women in the Philippines who, like so many others, lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic. In response, Lilibeth and Teresa decided to set up shop, literally! Lilibeth and Teresa each opened a "TiTaStore" - a neighborhood food stall, often run out of a person's home. Through the [Coops4Food](#) initiative, cooperatives have banded together to maintain food supply chains, ensuring farmers have a market for their products and that consumers can access food supplies. "TiTaStores" are now a critical part of the initiative: the food stalls provide an alternative livelihood for displaced workers, while also giving consumers access to fresh produce and other food products. Within just a few weeks, both Lilibeth and Teresa had earned additional income and a set of regular clientele. As Coops4Food continues to expand, more people will be able to do the same. [Read more.](#)

USAID supported this project through the [Local Works](#) Program.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Bitter Cassava for Sweet Milk: USAID/Colombia's partnership with the Colanta dairy cooperative supports the lives and livelihoods of more than 6,000 dairy farmers. [Check it out.](#)

Locally Led Development in Action: Through [Local Works](#), the USAID/Timor-Leste team is finding creative ways to engage the country's sizable youth population. [Check it out.](#)



COVID-19 Response in Kenya: Through [Local Works](#), USAID/Kenya is supporting conservation of key areas that many communities depend on for their livelihoods. Last week, Acting Administrator John Barsa visited Kenya to [announce](#) an additional \$7 million for the program. [Learn more.](#)



Delivering Financial Services To Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) During the Pandemic: The [World Council of Credit Unions](#), a [Cooperative Development Program](#) (CDP) implementing partner, discusses the economic impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in Kenya and how credit unions can help them manage financial risk. [Read the article.](#)

Navigating the Gendered Pandemic in Kenya: In a three-part blog series, [Global Communities](#), a [CDP](#) implementing partner, unpacks the role of gender as it both impacts and is impacted by COVID-19. Read the [first](#) and [second](#) blog.

The Impact of COVID-19 on European Cooperatives: A recently published report by [Cooperatives Europe](#) assesses the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on cooperative businesses across Europe. [Read the report.](#)



Introducing USAID's Forthcoming Local Capacity Development Policy: A Conversation with the Development Community (11:00 AM EDT): Join USAID for a public webinar on its new local capacity development policy that is currently under development, including details on the drafting process and a timeline for providing feedback. To learn more, [visit the event page.](#)



USAID New Partnerships Initiative (NPI): NPI is hiring for two positions.

Application deadline: October 19, 2020. Details:

- [Senior Mission Support/Program Specialist](#)
- [Senior Mission Support/Data Management](#)

USAID Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment (E3):

The E3 Front Office is hiring Front Office Staff Assistants. Application deadline: November 2, 2020. [Learn more.](#)

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