

RWANDA, UGANDA & MONGOLIA: Promoting Economic Cooperation in Collaboration with Rural Small Holders

Worldwide, the rural poor face similar constraints to generating income. Livelihoods are predominately based in small-scale, low productivity agriculture and farmers often lack the resources and knowledge to improve productivity and access more lucrative markets.

Global Communities has been working to support cooperatives for over 60 years. Our vision and mission are to promote and develop cooperatives that are community-based, drive economic growth, increase member incomes and promote inclusive, democratic practices. Our objective is to facilitate strong, market-oriented cooperative development programming that responds to cooperative member needs and serve their members. Our strategy is to engage with communities to facilitate economic cooperatives – while observing the principle of independence - based in member needs and rigorous value chain analysis to promote market driven success and raise incomes.

Started in October 2010, Global Communities' *Enabling Market Integration through Rural Group Empowerment (EMIRGE)* is an institutional learning grant, funded under USAID's Cooperative Development Program that aims to develop, test and disseminate cooperative approaches to economic development. Based on analysis of high-potential agricultural value chains, EMIRGE integrates groups of marginalized economic actors into the mainstream economy by linking them to the services and markets that will drive growth in productivity and income.

The project catalyzes early-stage economic cooperation by responding to local market-based incentives and a member-driven agenda, gradually strengthening social capital and productive and organizational capacity to advance group enterprises. In doing so, EMIRGE confronts the challenge of rural poverty commonly faced by millions of marginalized farmers by designing and employing methods to collaboratively mobilize rural resources toward attainable market opportunities.

In **Mongolia**, EMIRGE focuses efforts on farmers who have had no prior experience working together. Through value chain analysis and an animal husbandry assessment, EMIRGE helped farmers identify opportunities to raise productivity and income. Training and exposure to improved practices have led to innovation and visible results, with the secondary effect of creating solidarity among farmers through the learning process. These new relationships have led to formation of producers' groups which



Mongolian cooperative dairy farmer members slice cheese for local production



Members of a Rwanda bean cooperative work together on their fields

collaborate on joint production of fodder crops and silage, shared labor in shelter construction and lower-cost access to veterinary services. In little over a year, producer group members have seen significant increase in milk yields and animal health resulting in an average of 25% increase in income from on-farm activities.

In **Rwanda**, EMIRGE is working with both fledgling and established cooperatives comprised largely of poor farmers in remote rural areas, many of whom are People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). Global Communities conducted a value chain assessment of the fruit and vegetable sectors in order to assess in which value chains access to inputs and services would most dramatically impact livelihoods. EMIRGE is leveraging the cooperative network, disseminating improved cultivation techniques including creating test plots and farmer field schools, while providing the management guidance to strengthen cooperative business acumen and governance. Meanwhile, the project maps sources of inputs and technical assistance with the aim of establishing sustainable commercial linkages between

cooperative farmers and key market actors.

In 2013, Global Communities was awarded the *Developing Economic Strengthening Interventions for*

Group Production (DESIGN) cooperative development and learning innovations program by USAID. The objective of DESIGN is to develop and institutionalize a new and innovative method for working with cooperatives and seeing them thrive. The program works in Bushenyi, **Uganda**, with the newly formed Kyeizooba Twimyuke bean cooperative and, in collaboration with Primary Investigator J.L. Morrow of Birmingham-Southern College, is testing a new tool to understand the factors that drive cooperative members' willingness to cooperate and attitudes towards cooperation. While still maintaining our community focused approach, the research has informed the program about what those critical motivating factors are in Bushenyi community members' lives that drive them to cooperate. This understanding allows the program to reintegrate those factors into program activities and has allowed Global Communities to achieve a tested and customized approach to cooperative development that incorporates the individuality of every community.

For more information contact:

Kristin Wilcox, Program Manager, Cooperative Development Programs,

kwilcox@globalcommunities.org

8601 Georgia Ave. Suite 800

Silver Spring, MD 20910



October 2014