

COOP Champions: Grania Mackie, ILO Pretoria

COOP Champions features ILO colleagues from around the world working on cooperatives. It highlights their contributions towards promotion of cooperatives, and shares highlights on their experiences, current work, and future aspirations.

Ms Grania Mackie has over 20 years of experience on small enterprise development, seven of those spent on running her own small business. Currently based in the ILO's Pretoria office, she helped develop many of ILO's support packages for women entrepreneurs, to ensure gender equality and disability inclusion in small enterprise development programmes in East and Southern Africa between 2002 and 2012.



Grania holds a BA (Hons) in business studies and two MSc's, one in development management and the other in environmental decision making.

Currently, as Chief Technical Officer, Grania leads a team working on a Government of Flanders funded

“Public and Private Procurement and the Social Economy” (PPPSE) project. Within the context of the New Growth Path, the South African government has identified the social economy as one of the drivers of job creation and economic growth for the country. The project responds to this national priority by supporting social economy businesses in South Africa to penetrate the regulatory space for the preferential procurement of their goods and services through public and private sector procurement.

It does this (1) with a mix of advocacy and policy advisory services targeted at procurement officials in government and public and private sector corporate business, and (2) through capacity building support for owner-managers of social enterprises, including cooperatives.

The overall outcome of the project is more and better jobs for men and women in sustainable social enterprises. The partners in the project are the Departments of Economic Development in KwaZulu Natal and the Free State who facilitate the project's access to social enterprise development intermediaries at the provincial level. Developing local business development service providers and procurement professionals to tailor services and approaches that support social enterprises is the project's sustainability strategy.

Grania sees that the ongoing global economic crisis coupled with jobless growth has brought about a renaissance for cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy. A wave of entrepreneurial approaches to challenge social and economic

deficits, coupled with an increasingly accessible social media, means the opportunities for creating sustainable cooperatives and other social enterprises that provide decent work and address a social need are expanding.

Grania's experience in enterprise development with a focus on social equity and inclusion leads her to believe that people centered economic organizations, such as cooperatives and social enterprises, are key in socially inclusive enterprise development. She is confident that development agencies will be increasingly recognizing the cooperative and social enterprise model of intervention.

The contribution of people centered economic organizations to promoting gender equality is being well demonstrated, two examples among many are: the role domestic worker cooperatives play in promoting solidarity; social enterprises (enterprise incubators) that are targeting and enabling women to start and grow their own enterprises; and women owned housing development cooperatives which are breaking down gender stereotypes within communities.

However, Grania feels that the social and solidarity economy has the capacity to play a much more central role in achieving gender equality and encouraging diversity in the “mainstream” economy and as the sector develops, the promotion of gender equality and diversity will become a defining characteristic.

Although Grania is leaving the ILO, we look forward to collaborating with her and wish her the best in her future endeavors. We are confident that with her drive, Grania will continue to contributing to real change on the ground wherever she goes.

Go Grania!

>> Visit ILO DWT/CO Pretoria website at <http://www.ilo.org/addisababa/about-us/offices/pretoria/lang--en/index.htm>

>> See brochure on ILO's work on Social and Solidarity Economy: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---coop/documents/publication/wcms_175515.pdf

