

COOP Champions: Kelvin Sergeant, ILO office for the Caribbean

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.

Mr. Kelvin Sergeant holds an MSC in economics and has over 20 years of experience both in the public and private sectors, especially in finance. Kelvin spent a number of years teaching University courses in finance, economics, statistics and entrepreneurship. Currently Kelvin is based in the ILO office for the Caribbean at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. As Enterprises Specialist, he engages in various area of work from SMEs, cooperatives, green economy and green jobs to productivity, social finance and job creation issues. He works closely with the Skills specialist, and colleagues in ACTRAV and ACTEMP.

Kelvin became interested in the cooperative sector when he worked as a consultant to provide advice to the Cooperative Credit Union League in the 1990s. He soon began advising financial cooperatives on various issues from the impact of the Free Trade Area of the Americas Programme on Credit Unions in the Caribbean to issues on globalization, the impact of technology and economic development on the movement.

Currently as focal point for cooperatives, he has provided technical assistance for cooperatives in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana and Dominica. He says "Although some of these countries may be

small the ratio of the population involved with cooperatives is quite high. In Dominica for example, over 80% of the population is involved in cooperatives. In some countries, the assets of financial cooperatives rival that of the largest commercial banks in the country." With this view, Kelvin works closely with cooperatives in different sectors as well as cooperative support institution such as government agencies, cooperative registrars and apex organization. More recently, he has been working very closely with COOP Unit on tool development "Begin and Expand Your Cooperative (BE COOP)".

Kelvin sees that there is demand for supporting cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy work in the region. He is committed to the development of new tools for the sector and he will continue to work with cooperatives to strengthen them and to ensure that they remain relevant and competitive as social and economic organization in a context that is profit oriented.

He says "The cooperatives care about people. Cooperatives are where members can get their first loans to buy a house or a car or even to educate their children". He thinks there is an urgent need for advocacy, skills training and the design of new strategies to attract the youths to non-financial cooperatives. In that regard, he considers there are many opportunities for training and research in a number of areas. "For example, should credit unions be regulated by central banks?" He believes that research is needed in this area urgently to counter the prevalent view that suggests that one size fits all.

>> For more information, visit ILO office for the Caribbean website <http://www.ilo.org/caribbean/lang--en/index.htm>



Domestic workers' cooperative launched on Clotil Walcott Day, 7 September, 2014.