



PHOTO: USAID/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

LISTENING LOCALLY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ALONG THE DOMINICAN-HAITIAN BORDER

THE LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

Living conditions and economic opportunities along the Dominican/Haitian Border are among the least developed nation-wide, posing enduring challenges for local communities and for government and donor efforts that seek to improve these conditions. For the [Local Works](#) Program, USAID/Dominican Republic staff prioritized listening to local voices - communities, associations, civil society, the private sector, and local and national governments - to identify and support sustainable development efforts in the region. As a first step, USAID launched a listening process along the border, from September 2018 through June 2019. During listening visits, USAID staff spoke with approximately 3,000 community members about local priorities, needs, and innovative ideas for shaping their communities. Over time, USAID also connected with other donors, non-government organizations (NGOs), private sector actors, and government representatives.

PAUSE & REFLECT: A CASE STUDY APPROACH

A case study conducted by USAID’s Locally Led Development Initiatives from September - October 2019 sought to better understand and reflect on this listening process from the perspectives of participants, including community members, regional stakeholders, and USAID staff. Throughout these conversations, the [Locally Led Development Spectrum](#) provided a common framework for understanding how USAID might engage with community stakeholders. Locally led development is the process in which local actors – encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private

entities, and governments – set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality. A range of actors – from USAID staff to community members along the border – were asked to consider *how* locally led USAID’s engagement had been to date, and to place it on the Locally Led Development Spectrum. These answers were then compiled into one graphic for reflection and action planning. The case study also identified enablers and barriers to working in locally led ways, as well as lessons learned for future adaptation.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

A range of stakeholders were asked to place USAID’s engagement with local communities during the listening process on the Locally Led Development Spectrum. Their anonymized responses, shown below, identified several key trends.

- Local leaders felt like they were working much more closely in partnership with USAID than the broader community members. This learning led the Mission to reflect on how they could expand their engagement and form deeper relationships with communities to move their engagement closer to “consultation” rather than just “informed”.
- Given the focus on listening at this stage, rather than on partnering towards implementation, it made sense that most responses fell in the “Consulted.” This validated the Mission’s initial approach of conducting in-depth consultations with communities to lay the groundwork for future locally led partnerships.

Where would you place USAID’s engagement with local communities on the Locally Led Development Spectrum?



ABOUT | The Locally Led Development Spectrum and Checklist were adapted from Oxfam America and Save the Children’s [Local Engagement Assessment Framework](#) by USAID’s [Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships \(LFT\) Hub](#). The spectrum, and its related tools, are currently being pilot tested across various contexts, sectors, and programming in which USAID works. We value your feedback and invite you to share your questions, experiences using these tools, and suggestions for improvement with us at localsustainability@usaid.gov.