

VOLUNTEER REPORT FORMAT

To be submitted to CRS at the end of volunteer assignment and shared with the Host

1.1 Assignment information

- a) Volunteer Name: Katherine Cassidy
- b) State of Origin: Maine
- c) Host Organization: Kabondo Sweet Potatoes Marketing Cooperative Society
- d) Assignment: Business Development Planning
- e) Dates of Assignment: May 14-May 29, 2017
- f) Number of days worked -- 12 days (May 16-27)

1.2.1 Objective 1 in your SOW -- Prepare five-year strategic business plan.

- a) Progress with the objective: Written document not yet completed, and a work in progress to be completed in immediate, continuing coordination with the Cooperative's chair, secretary and treasurer.
- b) Expected impacts/results: The first year may be the hardest year -- overcoming the very challenges that have kept the Cooperative from putting a value-added flour product. Board members believe strongly that "marketing" is their biggest challenge. However, that is an oversimplification that has kept them from taking on the smaller pieces of their barriers. Business materials (annual statements, working papers) were not made available during the assignment for the volunteer's review; once these key figures in the business are identified, the Cooperative will have some annual expectations and financial goals for increased incomes derived from serious marketing -- but only after KEBS-certification is achieved.
- c) Recommendations: The Cooperative needs to have patience in its first year, taking care of several internal steps that are aligned more with facility upgrades and product development, than with marketing, before sales of considerable volume can be achieved.

1.2.2 Objective 2 in your SOW -- Prepare first-year action plan.

- a) Progress with the objective: Discussions have identified four key actions. Written document will be completed by end of June.
- b) Expected impacts/results: This is a group that has been held back because they have not been able to break down and specifically identify steps toward moving forward. They have been seeking financial grants and assistance from county-level sources, to no avail. They believe that their progress has been inhibited by the failure of these outside resources to appear; now after this assignment, they understand that there are numerous steps they need to take internally first, in order to benefit from outside attention.
- c) Recommendations: The formation of a Women's Committee is a first step to fully appreciating all that has kept the Cooperative to date from achieving some of its goals. The women are committing to seriously changing the way the Cooperative approaches its problems. Meanwhile, the men's leadership can take on the task of formulating a membership drive that will produce much-needed cash (100 shillings per member can raise 10,000 shillings, if 1,000 members make a commitment to paying dues) fairly immediately. This new cash can cover the expenses associated with upgrading the flour-processing facility, physical changes necessary to meet KEBS

standards. Further, the Cooperative needs to identify, through an information-gathering process on paper, its 200 or so strongest farmers -- the ones who will be the Cooperative's steadiest suppliers to meet big-volume orders. Additionally, the Cooperative has learned in this assignment about "community suppers" as capacity-building opportunities for increased communications and face-to-face time with farmers in the field. These suppers can be held two, three or four times a year, perhaps after sweet potato harvests. Finally, the introduction of the Kabondo Sweet Potato Festival has established the Cooperative as community-based promoters of the orange-fleshed sweet potato as a tremendous nutritional product for families and children.

1.2.3 Objective 3 in your SOW -- Present training on business management.

- a) Progress with the objective. Completed. The Cooperative board spent two hours listening to marketing experts Nick and Liz Odero, who live locally in Kabondo.
- b) Expected impacts/results: The Oderos, newcomers from Nairobi who have been watching the Cooperative's work in Kabondo for the last two years, are sympathetic with the farmers' inability to date to achieve their sales goals. They expressed a willingness to work alongside the Cooperative leadership, helping as needed.
- c) Recommendations: It is imperative that the Cooperative's board members take the initiative to maintain contact with the Oderos. The board has been offered this chance to be guided in all aspects of bringing the flour-product to its potential. But any lapse in communication with the Oderos will likely result in the Oderos losing faith and interest in helping the Cooperative move forward.

1.3 Recommended future volunteer assignment: Bring in a foods-development specialist (food-products scientist) who can walk farmers through hands-on development -- once the Cooperative has attained its HACCP- and KEBS-certification for its value-added flour. The Cooperative has the possibilities to identify additional value-added products using the orange-fleshed sweet potatoes (such as a porridge mix, even sweet potato juice) -- all of which are marketable after new sales and distribution lines (to supermarkets in Kisumu, Kisii and Kericho) have been established.

1.4 Action Plan

Recommendation	Specific Action	Responsible person	By when
1. Women' Committee	Form a women's committee	Jane	Begin by July 1, 2017
2. Membership Drive	Recruit 1,000 dues-paying members	Joseph	Begin by August 1, 2017
3. Membership Assessment	Identify 200 farmers with best capacity to supply	Tobias	Begin by September 1, 2017

4. Festival Review	Review 2017 event; set plans for 2018	Board members	Finish by August 1, 2017
5. Community Suppers	Hold second round of 5 suppers	Board members	Finish by September 30, 2017
6. KEBS Certification	Achieve certification for flour product	Women's Committee	Begin application process by December 1, 2017

1.5 Number of people Assisted

- Through formal training (meetings) -- 31 farmers + 7 board members
- Through direct hands on practical assistance -- 200 attending community suppers
- Out of these above, number of host staffs -- 7 board members
- Training/assistance by field -- 66 farmers attending festival

Category	Total	Males	Females
Members/ owners	304 farmers	122	182
Employees			
Clients/ Suppliers			
Family Members			
Total	304 farmers	122	182

1.6 Gender

- What gender roles did you recognize in your host community? Did these roles play a part in your assignment? How? Women were key organizers in all aspects of the assignment's elements -- in meeting contributions, in arranging community suppers, in food preparation for the festival. The suppers and the festival would not have been successful, if not for the women's organizing, preparations and very beneficial contributions in all respects.
- How might CRS or the host organization improve opportunities for the women in this host or host community? The Cooperative board members have agreed to the formation of a Women's Committee that will be tasked to take on what has been the board's biggest challenge to date -- achieving KEBS certification for its value-added flour product. Several women acknowledged that the women are ready to work together and steadily to achieve that primary goal. Even the men agreed that women may be very capable of doing what the Cooperative board as a whole has so far been unable to do. Additionally, the introduction of both Community Suppers and a Kabondo Sweet Potato Festival prompted many more women than men to step up and be involved with these new features of Cooperative outreach.

1.6 Value of volunteer contribution in \$

- Hours volunteer spent preparing for assignment -- 15 hours.
- Estimated value of all material contributions volunteer contributed to host during assignment -- Approximately \$600. This divides between Festival expenses (\$400) and community supper expenses (\$200).

1.7 Value of hosts' contribution in \$ (Please consult the host as well)

- a) Meals - none
- b) Transportation - arranged for vehicle to take board members to five community suppers, plus material-hauling for Festival. \$60 cost was paid by volunteer (reimbursable by CRS).
- c) Lodging -- none
- d) Translation -- Translation was provided every day for our business meetings in the mornings (seven) followed by five special occasions (five "community suppers").
- e) Other (Specify)

1.8 Host Profile Data:

Did you obtain any data that supplements or corrects the data in the existing host information as detailed in the SOW? Yes ... that managing to work online (connected with the Internet) in Kabondo is extraordinarily difficult. In spite of having a "stick modem" for my laptop, I could not connect effectively from the hotel where I stayed, the Diakonia Resort. There is another, newer hotel about 10km from the Cooperative office which does offer Internet connectivity, although weak.

1.9 Recommendations for CRS: That the volunteer be given the choice of the two hotels, each of which has its benefits and shortcomings.

1.10 Press Release

1.10 Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VOLUNTEER CONTACT: Katherine Cassidy,
207-215-4952, katherine.cassidy@gmail.com

Senior Communications Manager
susan.walters@crs.org
443-955-7103

CRS CONTACT:
Susan G. Walters

Former Maine Legislator Works with Sweet Potato Farmers in Kenya

Farmer-to-Farmer program promotes economic growth and agricultural development in East Africa

Lubec, Maine, June 1, 2017 -- Katherine Cassidy, formerly a Maine state legislator, traveled to Kenya for two weeks to share her technical skills and expertise with sweet potato farmers seeking bigger markets for their value-added products. Cassidy's assignment is part of Catholic Relief Services' Farmer-to-Farmer program that promotes economic growth, enhanced nutrition through access to healthy food, and agricultural development in East Africa.

It was Cassidy's second time working with the farmers of the Kabondo Sweet Potatoes Marketing Cooperative Society. She had previously traveled to Homa Bay County, Kenya, in June 2015.

"Americans think of sweet potatoes as a special holiday food," Cassidy said. "But for thousands of subsistence farmers in western Kenya, sweet potatoes are a source of both daily nutrition and a daily income. The nutritional value of the Vitamin A-rich orange-fleshed variety, for example, has only recently been appreciated and promoted within Kenya. That's what this region of farmers have been growing only since 2013."

Farmer-to-Farmer matches the technical expertise of U.S. farmers and professionals in agribusinesses, farming cooperatives, and universities with farmers in developing countries to assist them in improving agricultural productivity, accessing new markets, and increasing their incomes. Farmer-to-Farmer is funded by the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID).

In a world where 80% of food is produced by farmers working on small farms or fisheries, the movement to share proven farming and business skills can improve the quality and quantity of the world's food supply. For communities in the developing world who often struggle to produce enough food, this can improve access to a reliable source of food and better nutrition. For the farmers, it can strengthen their path to prosperity.

The goal of Cassidy's assignment was to assist the Cooperative to develop a five-year business plan and identify potential markets for its sweet potato flour. She worked with dozens of farmers who harvest sweet potatoes three or four times a year, yet have trouble realizing steady incomes for lack of bigger markets beyond the roadside. Most of Cassidy's time was

spent in Homa Bay County of western Kenya working with the Kabondo Sweet Potatoes Marketing Cooperative.

One of the assignment's outcomes was the establishment of the first Kabondo Sweet Potato Festival, staged on May 27 for the community and local schools. The inclusion of a "Sweet Potato Cooking Contest" highlighted more than 25 ways that sweet potatoes can be prepared, from traditional foods to healthy snacks for children.

This was Cassidy's fifth volunteer assignment with Farmer-to-Farmer and is one of nearly 500 assignments that focus on improving approaches to local agriculture practices, expanding production of quality food crops and nutrition in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. The program, funded by the U.S. government has been running for nearly 30 years.

CRS is partnering with five U.S. institutions to tap into the rich diversity of the U.S. agriculture community: the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Foods Resource Bank, National Association of Agricultural Educators, American Agri-Women, and the University of Illinois' College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

The volunteers travel to East Africa for anywhere from one to six weeks.

"We are certain that this program will be beneficial not just to the farmers in East Africa but also to the volunteers from America," said Bruce White, CRS' director for the program. "It's going to make the world a little bit smaller and a whole lot better for everyone involved."

For more information, visit farmertofarmer.crs.org

#

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. The agency alleviates suffering and provides assistance to people in need in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality. CRS' relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response, HIV, health, agriculture, education, microfinance and peacebuilding. For more information, visit www.crs.org or www.crsespanol.org and follow Catholic Relief Services on social media: [Facebook](#), Twitter at [@CatholicRelief](#), [@CRSnews](#) and [@CRSnoticias](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#) and [YouTube](#).