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To express interest in this assignment please email emily.keast@crs.org

**CRS Farmer to Farmer Program
Volunteer Assignment Scope of Work**

Summary Information	
Assignment Code	BJ291
Country	Benin
Country Project	Cashew
Host Organization	Dassa-Zoumé Communal Cell of Territorial Agricultural Development Agency/Pole 4 (Ccom Dassa-Zoumé /ATDA4)
Assignment Title	Cooperative management and association life of Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) groups in cashew sector
Assignment preferred dates	May 2022
Objectives of the assignment	<p>Strengthening the management systems of SILC Groups for sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh participants of some basic SILC operating rules • Define roles and responsibilities of leaders and members • Improve participants' knowledge of association management and results-based management (RBM) • Train participants on financial management and develop tools for reporting • Train participants on conflict resolution
Desired volunteer skill/expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural advisor or Proleader of BeninCajù project • Expert in the farmers' network services • Solid experience in association life knowledge and competence in human resources management and administrative management of associations • Abilities to train and work with cashew farmers and cashew cooperative • Speak the local languages of the department of hills (an asset for the local volunteer)
Type of Volunteer Assistance	Business/Enterprise Development = E
Type of Value Chain Activity	Information and Input support services (S)
PERSUAP Classification ¹	III

¹ USAID precisely classifies PERSUAP in four categories; **PERSUAP Type I** assignments directly related to pesticides recommendations, **Type II** as assignments with indirectly related with pesticides, **Type III** assignments related to curriculum review and designing, business plan development and strategies development and **Type IV** as assignments associated with other USAID projects and collaborators.

A. BACKGROUND

The Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) program is an American initiative that provides technical assistance from highly qualified volunteers to farmers, farmer groups (cooperatives and associations), agribusinesses, research institutes and other organizations in the agricultural sector in developing countries and countries in transition. The supports are usually provided by American volunteers but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, currently, the missions are carried out by pairs of volunteers; a volunteer recruited locally and an American volunteer. F2F project has been implemented in Benin since September 2018 by CRS, to support the cashew and soybean value chains over 5 years, both approved by the USAID mission in Benin.

The Dassa-Zoumé Communal Cell is a para-public institution under the supervision of the Territorial Agricultural Development Agency (ATDA) Pole 4 (ATDA pole 4 is one of the seven regional institutions of the Ministry of agriculture in charge of agricultural subsectors promotion). The Communal Cells are the operational arms of the ATDA and as such they are responsible for operationalizing the agricultural development plan at the level of each commune. The principal crop for this pole and the commune is cashew. The vision of the agency is to make "driving and diversification crops, competitive, attractive, resilient to climate change and creating wealth and jobs, responding equitably to the economic, social, food and nutritional security needs of all segments of the population by 2022 ". Thus, the mission of the Dassa-Zoumé Communal Cell is to develop and implement the annual work plan for the operationalization of the agricultural development plan of pole 4, to monitor the services offered by organizations to their members for the promotion of agricultural value chains. More precisely, the cell

- Provides advisory assistance to the municipality on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural projects
- Ensure the promotion of agricultural sub-sector value chains and
- Facilitates access to credit, establishment, and animation of agricultural clusters
- Ensure the follow-up and advisory support of agricultural advisers
- Transmits information / activity reports on service providers.

Since the implementation of the BeninCajù project by CRS and Technoserve in Benin in ATDA4 areas, the Communal Cell of Dassa-Zoumé has been supporting the SILC groups with the aim of bringing together cashew producers in village savings/credit cooperatives, facilitating them in establishing structures through which they can draw their statutes and regulations to enable them to manage their cashew plantations. Each group has about 30 members, and has an office is set up to ensure the administrative management of activities.

B. ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Since the implementation phase of the BeninCajù project came to an end, the SILC communities which were formerly supervised by the Proleaders trained by the project can only benefit from minimum follow-up services from the technicians of Dassa-Zoumé Communal Cell. The Proleaders who were supported by the project are no longer operational in the field. They played a major role in conflict resolution,

advocacy, and the creation and support of SILC groups. Organizational and management difficulties have started to emerge within most SILC groups. These include dysfunctional groups, poor leadership and mismanagement of human and financial resources. This is a great threat that has the potential to erode the positive impacts from the project. The safeguards put in place to secure savings and avoid embezzlement no longer give members confidence. As a result, some groups are experiencing disengagement of their members with the result of the cessation activities that allowed them to maintain their plantations and engage in income-generating activities.

Currently, the commune of Dassa-Zoumé has 11 SILC groups with about 253 members, mostly women. For their sustainability and that of the achievements of the BeninCajù project, the Communal Cell is active in the accompaniment and support to these groups.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The main objective of this assignment is to strengthen the management system of the cooperative through building the capacity of the leadership, members and staff in organizational, financial and technical capacity, in order to improve their technical and financial decision-making processes for effective management of their associations.

Specifically, this assignment is going to:

- Refresh participants of some basic SILC/cooperative operating rules
- Define roles and responsibilities for leaders and members
- Improve participants' knowledge of associative management and results-based management (RBM)
- Train participants on financial management and reporting tools
- Train participants on complaint and conflict resolution and managements techniques

D. HOST CONTRIBUTION

The contribution of Dassa-Zoumé Communal Cell of ATDA4 to this assignment will consist of mobilizing participants for the assistance ensuring their transportation, meals and lodging through all targeted villages. In addition, it will provide conference room and video projector for the training sessions.

E. ANTICIPATED RESULTS FROM THE ASSIGNMENT

Through this assignment at least 125 farmers staff and members of SILC groups are reinforced in cooperative management, life of association and financial management. The staff of the involved SILC groups will have improved their skills in basic financial analysis, conflict management and will have good command of results-based management techniques. In addition to the new knowledge, the SILC groups will increase in number as new members join. With improved management of the SILC groups, members will mobilize more resources as savings and value and number of loans increase. Overall, the organizational development index (ODI) will improve.

F. DELIVERABLES

- Volunteer's final report due BEFORE departure
- Group presentation with local stakeholders at the end of the assignment in country
- Volunteer outreach activities in the US and in country
- Training Manuals and tools/guide principles will be developed by the volunteer.

G. SCHEDULE OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Days (not dates)	Activity
Day1	Volunteer's welcome and orientation at CRS office in Cotonou and signing of administrative documents. Travel to Dassa-Zoume and checking at Jeco Hotel
Day2	Introduction of the volunteer to the host organization General orientation with the host, first-hand briefing on the main objectives and modality of the assignment and adjustment of the agenda for the coming days (work planning session).
Day3-13	Complete assignment related activities with and for participants
Day14	Prepare reports and recommendations for the host and participants. Debriefing with CRS Benin F2F staff and host. Submit volunteer reports, training attendance sheet, assignment report. PPT presentation and any reference materials to CRS F2F team.
Day15	Volunteer's return

H. DESIRABLE VOLUNTEERS SKILLS

As described above, the desired volunteer for this assignment must have relevant professional skills and practical experiences in farmers linkage to other organizations, especially processing factories. He/she should have/be:

- Agricultural advisor or Proleader of BeninCajù project
- Expert in the farmer's network services supply
- Solid experience in management of cooperatives, with core competencies in human resources and administrative management of associations/cooperatives
- Speaks the local languages of the department of hills (an asset for the local volunteer).

I. ACCOMMODATION AND ANOTHER IN-COUNTRY LOGISTICS

In Dassa-Zoumé the volunteer will stay at JECO hotel and will be going to the SILC groups villages for the assignment activities. The volunteer will also be providing communication airtime to cover he communication needs during the assignment. The host organization will contribute to the volunteer 'commuting as well as mobilizing and supporting its team for training sessions and field work with the volunteer. The management will also work closely with the volunteer, during the preparations and the implementation, to ensure that the assignments goal is achieved.

J. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENT PREPARATIONS

▪ Targeted trainees' Description

The participants for this assignment are members and staff of the SILC groups from diverse villages of the commune of Dassa-Zoumé. Most of the participants are semi-literate or illiterate, and mainly speak the local languages, *Idaasha and Nagot*.

▪ Training Materials

The volunteer should prepare documents that can be printed at the CRS office in Benin prior to arrival. Flipcharts, markers, masking tapes can be obtained from CRS offices in case the volunteer wishes to do illustrations. If possible, for the mission, the volunteer can bring a laptop with them, but it is possible to get a spare on site. For PowerPoint presentations, Dassa-Zoumé Communal Cell can provide a video projector. The translation of handouts to the local language can be done in the locality of the assignment, if required.

▪ Electricity, internet, cellphone signal, key security, health issues

In general, electricity supply, internet connectivity and cellphone signal are stable in Dassa-Zoumé. The hotels and the cooperative headquarter have stable access to electricity and internet connectivity even though the internet becomes very weak sometimes in Dassa-Zoumé. The cellphone reception is good for both mobile networks (MTN and Moov) available. About security, even though the security level in Benin and in Dassa-Zoumé is high, the volunteer will be instructed about security measures and safeguard before going to the host organization. It is advised that volunteer take necessary precautions like coming along with their usual medicines, to prevent health issues.

▪ Working Environment and culture

The city of Dassa-Zoumé (Chief town of the Hills Department) is in the Center of Benin. Volunteer will work at the cooperative and in some villages and will interact with staff and cashew farmers members of SILC groups. The main local language in Dassa-Zoumé is *Idaasha* and most of the people are Christians, but volunteers may also meet Muslims and animists. Other spoken languages can be recorded, like *Mahi*.

▪ Recommended Reading

CRS strongly recommends that the volunteer become familiar with this SOW, read documents on farmers organizations in cashew sector in Benin or west Africa. It is also recommended to read about Cashew cooperative management and agricultural organization's success stories. The volunteer can read materials on the different topic (in other sectors) in Benin, West Africa, Africa and somewhere else. Some materials may be found in the [CRS' F2F Digital Resource Library](#).

▪ Weather Appropriate Clothing

The weather appropriate clothing is light and not dark clothes. In the center of Benin, the weather is a bit hot and humid with some temperatures varying between 23 to 36 Celsius degree. It is also a sunny weather with some rains fall from March.

K. REMOTE/LOCAL VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Both volunteers participate in a call to discuss objectives and collaboration approach at the start of the assignment. Collaboration platforms vary depending on the assignment and connectivity. The most frequently used platforms are MS Teams and WhatsApp. The volunteers are highly encouraged to visit [CRS' F2F Digital Resource Library](#), and search for resources that they could use or customize for training. Upon completion of your assignment, volunteers are requested to send any resources they would like to contribute to the library (whether created or found) to farmertofarmer@crs.org.

The local volunteer is responsible for assignment design, preparation, training, developing assignment reports, conducting action planning with hosts and outreach in country, and achieving the assignment objectives. The local volunteer works directly with the host with assistance/input from the US volunteer. Assignments usually last up to 2 weeks; Sometimes extending beyond two weeks due to pending follow up visits, emails etc. Local Volunteers are asked to track assignment hours per day, to stay under 112 hours (14 days x 8 hrs).

Virtual support from a paired US volunteer helps provide supplementary training resources, fill in the gaps for technical areas, and share creative ideas and solutions. Two specific responsibilities are to: (i) complete the outreach component of the assignment and (ii) support the in-country volunteer as needed. US Volunteers typically put in 4-8 hours per week, depending on the nature of the assignment and collaboration.

L. KEY CONTACTS

To express interest in this assignment, please email the CRS Baltimore contact listed below. To find out additional information about the host, issue description or field conditions, please email the country contact provided below, copying the CRS Baltimore contact.

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