



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

**CRS Farmer-to-Farmer Program
Paired Remote Volunteer Assignment Scope of Work**

Summary Information			
Assignment Code	BJ2106		
Country:	Benin		
Country Project:	Soybean		
Host Organization:	Agence le Phoenix Consulting (AP-Consulting)		
Partner:			
Date of baseline data collection:	11/24/2021		
Date of host agreement signing:	11/24/2021		
Number of previous volunteer assignments:			1
Volunteer recommendations given (Total):	4	Volunteer recommendations applied (Total):	3
Assignment Title:	Capacity building of young agro-entrepreneurs in financial education, including accounting and financial management of small and medium enterprises.		
Objectives of the assignment:	Improve farmers and agribusiness entrepreneurs' capacities in accounting management and financial education.		
Assignment preferred dates:	November 2022 (paired remote volunteer)		
Desired volunteer skill/expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant education in agribusiness and rural enterprise management. • Solid experience in SME accounting and financial management. • Specialist in the agribusiness sector in West Africa. • French language skills (desired but not compulsory). 		
Type of Volunteer Assistance	Business/Enterprise Development = E		
Type of Value Chain Activity	Information and Input support services (S)		
PERSUAP Classification ¹	III		
Number of people to be trained	Men	Women	Youths
	35	15	40
Will the assignment address gender gaps?			Yes
Will the assignment address climate change?			No

A. BACKGROUND

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.



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 support is usually provided in-person by American volunteers but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, currently, some missions are carried out by pairs of volunteers; a volunteer recruited locally paired with an American volunteer remotely. The F2F project has been implemented in Benin since September 2018 by CRS to support the cashew and soybean value chains over 5 years.

Agence le Phoenix Consulting (AP-Consulting) is an advisory and support organization for micro, small and medium enterprises, farmers' organizations, and decentralized and local government organizations. It was created with the main objective of offering quality business development services to enterprises and organizations. AP-Consulting contributes to the promotion of self-employment and sustainable businesses and works with farmers, processors and other agribusiness entrepreneurs in several communes of Benin. The organization is strongly involved in the agricultural entrepreneurship for young people in Benin. It is headquartered in the commune of Natitingou (Northern part of Benin).

Since February 2021, AP-Consulting has been working to create the Network of Young Dynamic Entrepreneurs of Benin (ReJED-BENIN), which is made up of members from seven communes (Natitingou, Tanguita, Djougou, Bassila, Malanville, Kandi and Parakou) in four departments. Members of ReJED are mostly food processors (pineapple, cassava, soybean, cashew nut and cashew apple, mango, an ancient grain called fonio, and cashew), soybean farmers and poultry farmers. Though the network has a leadership team, elected by members, it is not yet officially registered. With AP-consulting's support, ReJED promotes sustainable agricultural economic growth, employment, and better working conditions and benefits. It promotes and improves the employability and empowerment of women and young people through the promotion of entrepreneurship and capacity building. The host received its first F2F assignment in January 2022 to train ReJED's members in the first two departments of its intervention area in accounting and financial management including financial education.

B. ISSUE DESCRIPTION

AP-Consulting supports ReJED's members in the trainings and the follow-up of their activities. ReJED has more than 400 young entrepreneurs who are mainly working in the crop production, food processing, and animal production sectors. All have established their own businesses which are fledgling enterprises (farms or food processing units) with limited financial capacity to recruit and retain an accountant. They also lack knowledge in the concepts of financial management. Even though these entrepreneurs want their businesses to grow, most have not developed the right financial mindset to achieve their objectives. As an example, the enterprise's profit and the promoter's pocket are one, and there is no difference between profits and personal income. This lack of knowledge and poor management of finances has the direct effect of destroying businesses, as there is no longer any



traceability of private and business transactions. It becomes very difficult to assess business profitability and, above all, it is difficult to file tax returns, which is a requirement for all business enterprises. Poor financial management also limits the enterprises' ability to access finances to support business growth, since financial institutions require accurate accounting and financial documents before they can provide funds to these enterprises.

A-P Consulting received training for ReJED's members in financial education and accounting in three communes in the departments of Atacora and Donga. Follow-up with the host revealed that 61% of the 74 agricultural entrepreneurs trained (including 35 women) are applying the recommendations given to them by using the management skills they acquired. This has helped some of the entrepreneurs to avoid tax problems and has improved their business performance. These entrepreneurs are now keeping records of their expenses, sales and investments to more easily determine the progress of their business.

As with the first region, in the departments of Borgou and Alibori, the failure of SMEs to maintain accurate financial records is hampering the development of the entrepreneurship sector. As a result of this mismanagement, many projects or enterprises (especially those led by young, inexperienced entrepreneurs) cannot survive in the market and end up closing down within two or three years. ReJED's members in this region also need to be trained in the basics of accounting for micro, small, and medium enterprises and introduced to useful accounting tools and practices.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The main objective of this assignment is to strengthen the capacity of some of the ReJED's business owner members in SME accounting, strengthening their financial education to improve the performance and the development of their enterprises.

Specific objectives:

- Train participants in basic, relevant accounts management tools and help entrepreneurs discover and use simplified accounting tools.
- Train participants on the key principles of accounts management.
- Help participants start developing some accounts management tools.
- Bolster participants' financial education.

D. HOST CONTRIBUTION

AP-Consulting will mobilize its staff and all the participants to work closely with the volunteer. They will provide transport and meals for the participants, as well as the necessary materials to be used for the assignment.

E. ANTICIPATED RESULTS FROM THE ASSIGNMENT



Through this volunteer assignment, at least 120 agribusiness entrepreneurs will gain knowledge and skills on SME accounts management and start using basic financial tools to improve their business practices. This will contribute to the success rate of new businesses.

F. DELIVERABLES

- Volunteer final report due AFTER the assignment.
- 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 accounting tools developed for participants.
- Debrief with USAID and F2F country staff.

G. SCHEDULE OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Days (not date)	Activities
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and orientation at CRS office in Cotonou and signing of administrative documents. • Travel to Parakou and check in to hotel.
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the volunteer to the host organization by F2F team. • General orientation with the host. • First-hand briefing on the main objectives and modality of the assignment. • Detailed Work Plan covering all activities required.
Day 3 to 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions in Parakou. • Travel to Kandi and check in to hotel.
Day 7 to 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions in Kandi. • Travel to Malanville and check in to hotel.
Day 11 to 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions in Malanville.
Day 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of reports and recommendations for the host. • Debrief with CRS Benin F2F staff and host. • Submission of volunteer reports, training attendance sheet, PPT presentation and any reference materials to CRS F2F team.
Day 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief with USAID. • Volunteer returns home.

H. DESIRABLE VOLUNTEERS SKILLS



As described above, the desired volunteer for this assignment must have the relevant knowledge, skills and experiences in SME management. He/she must:

- Have relevant education in agribusiness and rural enterprise management.
- Have solid experience in SME accounting and financial management.
- Be a specialist in the agribusiness sector in West Africa.
- Have French language skills (desired but not compulsory).

I. ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER IN-COUNTRY LOGISTICS

In Parakou, Kandi and Malanville, the volunteer will stay, respectively, at the following hotels: “[Soleil d’Afrique](#)”, “Saka Kina” and “Sejour du Sahel”. CRS will pay for the hotel accommodation. The host organization will contribute to the volunteer’s commuting as well as mobilizing and supporting its members and entrepreneurs for the training sessions. AP-Consulting’s director will work closely with the volunteer during the preparations for, and duration of, the training sessions to ensure that key persons are trained and that the assignment’s goals are achieved. Communication networks and security are very good in each commune. Travel arrangements, adhering to COVID-19 safety precautions, will be made by CRS.

J. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENT PREPARATIONS

▪ Targeted trainees’ Description

The participants for this assignment will be composed of the staff and members of ReJED-BENIN; young agribusiness entrepreneurs. They have a basic educational level which will allow them to follow the training and use the tools. However, translation in local languages may be needed sometimes; translators will be found among the participants.

▪ Training Materials

The volunteer should prepare documents that can be printed at the CRS office in Benin prior to travel. Flipcharts, markers, masking tapes can be obtained from the host’s office in case the volunteer wishes to do illustrations. If possible, the volunteer should bring a laptop with them, but it is possible to get a spare one on site. For PowerPoint presentations, AP-Consulting can provide a video projector.

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

In general, power, internet connectivity and cellphone signal are stable in Parakou, Kandi and Malanville cities and nearby. The hotels have stable access to electricity and internet connectivity even though the internet signal is sometimes weak. Cellphone reception is good for both mobile networks (MTN and Moov) available.



Although security levels in Benin and Parakou are good, the volunteer will be instructed about security measures and safeguarding before going to the host organization. The volunteer is advised to bring along any regular medications they take, in order to prevent health issues.

- **Working Environment and culture**

The localities are located in the north part of Benin, about 700 km from Cotonou. In each locality, the volunteer will meet mainly *Muslims* and *Christians*. Some local languages are spoken (see the table below). People are very nice and respectful, especially towards foreigners; they are social and open to collaborating with foreigners.

Departments	Communes	Place of accommodation	Local Languages
Borgou	Parakou	Soleil d’Afrique hotel	Dendi, Nagot/Yoruba, Bariba and Fon
Alibori	Kandi	Saka Kina Hotel	Dendi and Bariba
	Malanville	Sejour du Sahel Hotel	Zerma and Dendi

- **Recommended Reading**

CRS strongly recommends that the volunteer become familiar with this SOW, read documents on SME management and operations, and on pineapple and cashew processing/marketing in Benin and West Africa. We also recommend reading about the different actors and stakeholders in the agricultural sectors (cashew; soybeans). Some additional orientation may also be given by the host before the assignment starts. The volunteer can visit the [farmer-to-farmer digital library](#) for relevant documentation about similar work.

- **Weather Appropriate Clothing**

Weather appropriate clothing is light (not dark) clothing. The weather will generally be hot during the assignment period and dry with temperatures varying between 77 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. It will be very sunny. Daily weather conditions in the departments can be found [here](#) and on <https://meteobenin.bj/alibori/>.

K. REMOTE/LOCAL VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Both volunteers participate in a call to discuss their objectives and collaborative 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, training, assignment reports, action planning with hosts, outreach in-country, and achievement of the assignment objectives. The local volunteer works directly with the host with assistance/input from the US volunteer. Assignments usually last up to two weeks, sometimes extending beyond two weeks due to pending follow-up visits, emails etc. Local volunteers are asked to track assignment hours per day and to stay under 112 hours total (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 dedicate 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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