



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

**CRS Farmer-to-Farmer Program
In Person Volunteer Assignment Scope of Work**

Summary Information			
Assignment Code	BJ2115		
Country:	Benin		
Country Project:	Cashew		
Host Organization:	Agbara-Oluwa Women’s Cooperative		
Partner:			
Date of baseline data collection:	2/4/2022		
Date of host agreement signing:	01/11/2022		
Number of previous volunteer assignments:			
Volunteer recommendations given (Total):	9	Volunteer recommendations applied (Total):	4
Assignment Title:	Strategic plan designing for agri-food processing cooperative		
Objectives of the assignment:	Facilitate the design of a five-year development strategy plan and tools for Agbara-Oluwa, and thereby strengthen the capacity of the cooperative’s leadership.		
Assignment preferred dates:	End of March – Early April 2023		
Desired volunteer skill/expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in strategic plan design for SMEs in developing countries. • Knowledge and experience in organizational development management. • French speaking skills are desired but not compulsory. 		
Type of Volunteer Assistance	Organizational Development = O		
Type of Value Chain Activity	Information and Input support services (S)		
PERSUAP Classification ¹	III		
Number of people to be trained	Men	Women	Youths
	2	15	8
Will the assignment address gender gaps?	No		
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.

Agbara-Oluwa Women's Cooperative mainly processes cashew apples, nuts, and pineapple, but also processes other agricultural products such as soybean, mango, tamarind, baobab, and ginger. Soybean processing started recently after a Farmer-to-Farmer assignment that trained the cooperative in processing soy into different products. The juice from those products is the cooperative's main production, but they also produce pre-cooked rice as well as enriched gari (from cassava). The coop is made up of 17 members and is a member of the Union of Cashew Apple Processing Cooperatives of Benin. Located in the commune of Dassa-Zoume (in central Benin), Agbara-Oluwa has been operating since 2013. Through the leadership of the cooperative's chairperson, Agbara-Oluwa has made significant contributions to the diversification of value-added products contributing to improved incomes for the producers of the raw materials, preserved produce through processing, and available diverse food products to meet the food and nutrition needs of the rural community. They currently have five types of products:

- Fruit juice: cashew apple juice is the main product. Other juices include baobab, pineapple, tamarind, ginger, mango, and watermelon.
- Cashew almond nuts, which are primarily roasted and salted nuts.
- Pre-cooked rice: a rich meal that is enriched with mixed vegetables.
- Gari: a ready-to-eat cassava derived meal.
- Soybean products: the host is introducing soybean products into the market. They received F2F technical support on soybean product development, and have started processing soya meat, soya yoghurt (which is enriched with coconut), soya biscuits, and roasted soybean.

B. ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Agbara-Oluwa has an established presence in the Dassa area of Benin and supplies markets in the Dassa region, Cotonou, and surrounding areas. They also have access to markets in Niger for cashew juice. The demand for their products is increasing, but this also comes with other demands. For example, in the case exporting to Niger, the company is planning to switch its packaging of cashew juice from bottles to cans to meet local demand. The main production season for cashew apple juice is during the harvest period. The leadership has a network of farmers as suppliers and is currently using formal contracts signed during the production season. This also comes at a time when the company is planning to expand its volume of production and to this end it has already acquired a new site built with the support of some partners.



Since inception, Agbara-Oluwa has managed to develop its business without a proper and formal strategic plan. The coop occasionally plans for annual production in terms of quantity but not in terms of strategies to achieve other development objectives such as which new equipment to invest in, resource mobilization, partnership development, community development, and income level. At its current stage, Agbara-Oluwa recognizes the need to develop a strategic plan that will guide it through the next few years of growth. The strategic plan is also a common tool that is requested by most of the partners supporting the coop. The staff of Agbara-Oluwa do not have the necessary skills or expertise to develop this and have therefore requested F2F technical support.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The objective of this assignment is to facilitate the design of a five-year strategic plan and tools for Agbara-Oluwa, and thereby strengthen the capacity of the cooperative’s leadership. The plan will focus on each type of product the coop is developing.

D. HOST CONTRIBUTION

Agbara-Oluwa will mobilize its members and other participants to work closely with the volunteer. It will then support the participants’ commuting, transportation, and meal costs. The host will also provide the necessary materials and inputs for any practical training sessions.

E. ANTICIPATED RESULTS FROM THE ASSIGNMENT

Through this assignment, Agbara Oluwa will use its strategic plan as the framework for all activities in the next five years. It is anticipated that this will attract more partners, bolster its volume of marketed products, boost annual gross sales, increase annual net incomes for the members of Agbara Oluwa, and also improve earnings for the farmers who are the key suppliers.

F. DELIVERABLES

- Five-year strategic plan.
- Volunteer 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.

G. SCHEDULE OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Days (not date)	Activities
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel from the US and arrival at Benin International Airport, pick-up and check-in at Livingstone Hotel



Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer welcome and orientation at CRS office in Cotonou for assignment and security briefing and signing of administrative documents. Any necessary hand-outs will be prepared at CRS offices. • Travel to Dassa and check in at the Jeco Hotel
Day 3	<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 4 to 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the design of the five-year development strategic plan and tools.
Day 15 to 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare reports and recommendations for the host. • Debrief with CRS Benin F2F staff and host. • Submit volunteer reports, training attendance sheet, PPT presentation and any reference materials to CRS F2F team.
Day 17	Volunteer travels back to Cotonou
Day 18	Debriefing with CRS and USAID Testing for COVID (if required) and material release, submit final documents
Day 19	Travel back to the USA

H. DESIRABLE VOLUNTEERS SKILLS

As described above, the desired volunteer for this assignment must have relevant education, knowledge, and experiences in SME strategic design and management. In particular, he/she must have the following:

- Relevant experience in strategic plan design
- Expertise in organizational development
- French speaking skills are desired but not compulsory

I. ACCOMMODATION AND ANOTHER IN-COUNTRY LOGISTICS

In Cotonou, volunteers will stay at the [Livingstone hotel](#), near the CRS office and not far from the airport. In Dassa, the volunteer will stay at Jeco hotel and will be going to Agbara-Oluwa's factory near Dassa town. In Dassa, CRS will hire a local translator for the volunteer's work. Agbara Oluwa will contribute to the volunteer's commuting as well as mobilizing and supporting its members for training sessions. The cooperative's leadership will work closely with the volunteer during the preparation and the training sessions themselves to ensure that key personnel participate in the assignment and that the goals are achieved. Travel arrangements, adhering to COVID-19 safety precautions, will be made by CRS. Volunteers are encouraged to bring N95 masks and Covid-19 TDR tests with them if possible.

J. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENT PREPARATIONS



- **Targeted trainees' Description**

The President is well educated and will be the volunteer's point of contact. Other participants for this assignment are the staff and cooperative members who have the education level to effectively understand and implement tools and knowledge to be received from the assignment. The volunteer will also interact with other technical and support staff most of whom have a low educational level.

- **Training Materials**

The volunteer should prepare documents that can be printed at the CRS office in Benin prior to travel. Flipcharts, markers and masking tape 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 him/her. However, if that is not possible, CRS will provide a spare laptop for the volunteer to use during the assignment

- **Electricity, internet, cellphone signal, key security, health issues**

In general, electricity supply, internet connectivity and cellphone signal are stable in Dassa. The hotels have stable access to electricity and internet connectivity even though the internet signal is sometimes weak. However, the host has moved to a new site where there is no electricity for now (and this is where the assignment will take place). Cellphone reception is good for both mobile networks (MTN and Moov) available and volunteers will be provided with a cell phone with a local sim card that can be used to access internet when needed.

Although security levels in Benin and Dassa are good, the volunteer will be instructed about security measures before going to the host organization. The volunteer is advised to bring with them (in hand luggage, not checked luggage) any regular medications they take to prevent health issues.

- **Recommended Reading**

CRS strongly recommends that the volunteer become familiar with this SOW and read documents on SME management and operating in Benin and West Africa. We also recommend reading about national policies regarding agricultural processing unit development. The volunteer can read some books or reports on related areas, especially in agri-business subsector.

- **Weather Appropriate Clothing**

Appropriate clothing is light (not dark). In central Benin, the weather is somewhat hot and dry with temperatures varying between 28 to 42 degrees Celsius. It is currently the dry season and rainfall may start in the region during April. Daily weather conditions in the department of Collines (Hills) can be found [here](#).



K. 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.

CRS Baltimore	
<p>Emily Keast Farmer to Farmer Specialist Farmer to Farmer Program 228 W. Lexington Street Baltimore, MD 21201 920-265-0491 Email: emily.keast@crs.org</p>	
CRS Country Program:	
<p>Joel Angelo Houndjo Country Director, CRS Benin F2F Email: angelo.houndjo@crs.org Tel: (+229) 62188707</p>	<p>Adédédji Innocent Labiyi, Ph.D. Country Coordinator, CRS Benin F2F Email: innocent.labiyi@crs.org Tel: (+229) 61263194</p>
Host Organization:	
<p>Adelaide LAOUROU President of the Cooperative Agbara-Oluwa Tel: (+229) 95953825 Email: lademond@yahoo.fr</p>	