

Terms of Reference for a Capitalization Study of the LIFFT-Cashew Project: Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau (SeGaBi)

1. Introduction

Shelter for Life International (SFL) is an international, faith-based, relief and development organization with more than 30 years of experience providing sustainable development and humanitarian assistance to post-conflict countries around the world. We are currently operational in Afghanistan, Senegal, the Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau.

2. Background

Under USDA/FAS Food for Progress (FFPr) program, Shelter For Life (SFL) has been implementing a \$29.9 million, eight-year project called “Linking Infrastructure, Finance and Farms to Cashew” (LIFFT-Cashew) in Senegal (Ziguinchor, Sedhiou, Kolda, and Fatick), the Gambia (North Bank, Western and Lower River), and Guinea-Bissau (Oio, Cacheu, Biombo, and Bafata). Under the project, this region is called the “SeGaBi” region. Beginning in 2017, the project was awarded a merit-based extension in 2022, which extended it to December 2025. The goal of the LIFFT-Cashew project is to improve cashew productivity, processing and build the trade linkages for an integrated, regional trade network for the cashew value chain.

The project has had a wide array of beneficiaries along the cashew value chain. It has benefited smallholder farmers (producers), processors, cooperatives, associations, laborers, financial institutions, and buyers, in addition to stakeholders of the broader cashew sector such as potential investors and governmental policy makers. In greater detail the beneficiaries included:

1. **Farmers:** The project has targeted farmers as direct beneficiaries and describes them as those who own cashew trees and produce cashew nuts. Farmers also include those who are members of cooperatives or producer groups, as well as those who are not yet members.
2. **Cooperatives, Associations and Cashew Marketing Associations (CMAs):** The LIFFT-Cashew project has targeted these collective groups to assist them in becoming better established, formalized and organized. The project has also influenced their leaders and representatives, and stakeholders within their networks. The project is currently working with 24 cooperatives, with a total of 37,774 farmer members.
3. **Cash for Work (CFW) Laborers:** Under the LIFFT-Cashew’s construction activities such as warehouses, feeder roads etc., CFW laborers were hired for part-time work from the communities along the targeted roads and regions.
4. **Processors:** The LIFFT-Cashew project has targeted cashew kernel processors to build their capacity to add value to cashews in the region. Processors included regional and international companies. The project has worked closely with 10 cashew processors, adding \$4,000,837 to leverage the project’s Cashew Fund, and has increased the trade - of more than 197,014 tons of raw cashew nuts (RCN) in the region.

5. **Financial Institutions:** The project has engaged financial institutions (banks, microfinance institutions, etc.) and National funding agencies to assist with alternative financing mechanisms, including through the project's Cashew Fund, Warehouse Receipt System, loans and collateral management.
6. **Policy Makers / Governments:** The LIFFT-Cashew project has engaged policy makers, ministries and government representatives to coordinate through country-specific steering committees to assist with promoting and facilitating project activities, and to garner buy-in to ensure more government attention is brought to the cashew sector.
7. **Buyers:** The LIFFT-Cashew project has engaged buyers through contracts or requests of RCN or processed kernels, and encouraged buyers to work with cooperatives rather than with individual farmers. The project has also targeted buyers by bringing the cashews produced up to quality standards for international markets through organic certification, nurseries, and traceability.
8. **Business Owners:** The project has engaged a variety of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) along the cashew supply chain by providing financial assistance and training.
9. **Investors:** The project's Cashew Fund has attracted regional and international investors to bring funds to the cashew sector. The Fund has allowed a variety of spin-off projects for investors, and the project has engaged international investors to build factories.

The LIFFT-Cashew project aimed to achieve three main objectives:

1. Increase or maintain the quality of raw cashew nuts (RCN);
2. Increase the processing of RCN within the SeGaBi region;
3. Promote the collective sale of RCN.

To achieve these objectives, the project has focused on the following five components:

- Component 1: Infrastructure
- Component 2: Access to Finance
- Component 3: Access to Market
- Component 4: Agriculture Productivity
- Component 5: Market Information System

Following is a description of SFL's activities and achievements for each of the components:

1. **Infrastructure Component:** SFL has rehabilitated 136.24 kilometers of agricultural feeder and connector roads, including adding drainage. Road drainage was designed to increase the useful life of the roads and decrease negative impacts of runoff on surrounding ecosystems. SFL has trained community members on how to properly maintain the roads to ensure their longevity and usefulness. In addition to roads, SFL has provided technical assistance and training to assist cashew marketing associations (CMAs) in constructing, rehabilitating and managing cashew storage units and on post-harvest handling of cashews. As a direct boost to the economy, SFL employed Cash for Work Laborers (CFW) from beneficiary communities for all construction work of the project.

2. **Access to Finance Component:** SFL established a Cashew Fund to provide an alternative financing mechanism for investment in small and medium sized cashew businesses in the region. This has included setting up legal, organizational and management systems, and a portfolio structure for the Fund to operate, as well as establishing an Investment Committee. This Fund has enabled cashew value chain actors to produce impact across the value chain and demonstrate the potential to link to regional and international markets.
3. **Access to Markets Component:** SFL has worked with Cashew Marketing Associations (CMAs) and trade associations to strengthen their existing operations and become registered organizations. SFL has also worked with existing producer associations or similar groups to help build their capacity to become registered CMAs. To target capacity building, SFL conducted assessments on these organizations using SCOPE-Insights methodology, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to better design training curriculums. Under this component, SFL has also helped value chain actors to develop networks and relationships between buyers-sellers by bringing international, regional and local buyers together and facilitating interactions. Lastly, SFL has worked with producers, buyers and processors to improve their approach to marketing, branding and selling, which included organic certification and the Warehouse Receipt System (WRS).
4. **Agriculture Component:** SFL has worked with associations and cashew producers to apply Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) at their farms, through the use of demonstration plots, in-kind grants, and cashew nurseries.
5. **Other: Market Information System:** Lastly, to support all activities under this Project, SFL has developed and has managed a scalable database platform that can store and disseminate cashew and market data. The platform has had the capacity to analyze data and create reports and can be accessed in a single website by local governments, USDA, and other key stakeholders of the cashew value chain. The platform has also stored information about potential borrowers, such as farmers and enterprises, and is accessible for the Cashew Fund or financial service providers.

3. Purpose and Objectives of the Capitalization Study

The main purpose of the Capitalization Study is to document LIFFT-Cashew's achievements and overall impact of project activities on the cashew sector of the three countries, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau (SeGaBi). Though not an evaluation and therefore not to be overly critical in perspective, the following objectives of the capitalization study include:

- To comprehensively document the project's successes, challenges, and lessons learned
- To identify and analyze key best practices and innovative approaches employed
- To assess the specific impact on project beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders, and in particular to cashew businesses
- To document the connection, investment and sales to regional and international markets, and in particular to the USA markets
- To develop strategies for knowledge sharing and transfer of learning to future projects
- To present how the achievements, results and impact of the LIFFT-Cashew project could be used in subsequent cashew projects

4. Scope of Work:

4.1 Project Literature Review:

The capitalization study consultant is to consider all relevant documents of the LFFT-Cashew project, including but not limited to:

- Capitalization paper drafted by LIFFT-Cashew that documents project achievements, successes, and impacts in addition to challenges and lessons learned;
- Project proposal, Operational plan, budget;
- M&E documents (indicator table, Performance Monitoring Plan, monitoring data);
- Annual work plan, monthly and semi-annual USDA reports, success story, publications, and the indicator monitoring data;
- Evaluation reports (baseline assessment, midterm evaluation);
- Project research (infrastructure, new cashew varieties, etc.) surveys and case studies;
- Stakeholders mapping (list of the processors, exporters, cooperatives. etc.).

4.2 Questions of LIFFT-Cashew Capitalization Paper:

The consultant will analyze and improve the capitalization paper produced by the project team, based on the following questions summarized by the project activities in the table below.

LIFFT-Cashew Activity	Capitalization Questions
Activity 1: Road Infrastructure and Activity 2: Warehouses Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the economic and social impact of improved infrastructures (road and storage)? Specifically, how did the infrastructures built improve the social and economic condition of the local cashew stakeholders ((reduced losses, better quality preservation, etc.)?) 2. What was the impact of the warehouses on the RCN quality, and prices? 3. How have these warehouses influenced stakeholder marketing practices and income?
Activity 3: Access to Finance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the impact of grants on the collection and marketing of RCN at cooperative level? 2. How has the integrated financing model (linking traders, exporters, and processors) of the cashew value chain developed by LIFFT-Cashew, had a positive impact on the collection and marketing of RCNs?
Activity 4: Cashew Fund	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has the Cashew Fund served as a catalyst for processors' financing in SeGaBi?

LIFFT-Cashew Activity	Capitalization Questions
Activity 5: Capacity Building: Cashew Marketing Associations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have the Cashew Marketing Associations evolved from a history and structure of individual cashew producers, to cooperatives, then to unions and federations? 2. What are the key factors of cooperative success (including governance, leadership, access to financing, and membership), based on case studies of successful cooperatives?
Activity 6: Market Access: Facilitate Buyer-Seller Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does securing the supply of raw materials impact the links of buyer and sellers, and particularly on the competitiveness of processors? 2. What is the impact of buyer-seller linkages on the volume and value of cashew sales in the SeGaBi region? 3. What are the best practices for creating sustainable partnerships (such as ensuring a win-win relationship between producers and processors)? 4. What was the impact of SPS and organic certifications, including HACCP, USDA Organic (NOP), based on success stories of producers who successfully transitioned to organic cashew production, and processors who gained HACCP and/or organic certification? 5. How has LIFFT-Cashew impacted exportation of cashew products, and in particular to the USA market?
Activity 7: Capacity Building: Trade Associations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the impact of commissioning the cross-border cashew trade studies on improving cross-border trade of raw cashew nut in SeGaBi? 2. What is the impact of project institutional capacity building of the Inter-Profession Cashew Senegal (ICAS), the Cashew Regulatory Authority of Guinea-Bissau (ANCA) and the Cashew Alliance Gambia (CAG)? 3. What was the effect of mobilizing trade institutions, such as the Chambers of Commerce to encourage cross-border trade in the region? 4. What was the impact of developing concept notes to steer governments in SeGaBi in the development of sound cashew policies, in particular the relevance to the market and sector governance? 5. What was the impact of developing the Warehouse Receipt System (WRS) in Senegal to enhancing sector governance and growth in production, trade and livelihoods of farmers? <p>What is the potential impact of new cooperative regulation in The Gambia on cashew framers, sector governance, and access to finance, and most importantly the economic and growth trajectories for cooperative development in The Gambia?</p>

LIFFT-Cashew Activity	Capitalization Questions
<p>Activity 8: Agricultural Development: Demonstration Plots and Nurseries</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the impact and best practices of producer capacity-building on good agricultural practices (GAP), such as improving cashew production and quality? 2. How well did producers accept new techniques and technologies proposed by LIFFT-Cashew, (such as using chainsaws for pruning, grafting seedlings, and separating pump nuts with wire, etc.)? And what was the impact of those who adopted the new techniques and technologies? What recommendations can you make to encourage the adoption of these technologies, such as through incentive policies or tailored training? 3. What was the impact on productivity of introducing new cashew varieties? What were the challenges encountered in introducing these varieties? What recommendations could you make to increase dissemination of new varieties to cashew producers?
<p>Activity 9: Management of Information Systems</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the impact of the project’s database platform, designed to store and disseminate cashew and market data for informed decision-making in the cashew sector? 2. How successful was training cooperative members on data use and management to their adopting ICT and digital tools to streamline their operations? 3. What was the impact on visibility and operations of developing websites for each cooperative federation, which were to be made accessible to stakeholders such as farmers, partners, and investors. 4. What was the impact of creating a georeferencing public dashboard that provides real-time mapping of cashew fields, storage facilities, road networks, nurseries, cooperative offices, demonstration plots, etc.? How could this tool have used for scalable, data-driven agricultural development in the region?

4.3 Data collection method:

The consultant is to collect quantitative and qualitative data from all three countries, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau. The data collection methods include:

- Deliberation of achievements and results as documented in project literature, reports, studies, etc.
- Interviews with key project staff, beneficiaries (producers, cooperatives, processors, exporters) and other stakeholders (government agencies in all three countries)
- Focus group discussions

- Site visits and observations
- Review of partner documents such as cooperative agreements, sales contracts and government policies, in particular those facilitated by LIFFT-Cashew such as the cross-border agreement for transport of raw cashew nuts (RCN)
- Review, analyze and improve the capitalization notes produced by the project team

4.4 Analysis and reporting:

- Categorize project achievements and results of each of the activities under the project components
- Analyze LIFFT-Cashew impacts in each of the countries and the SeGaBi region and synthesize key lessons learned
- Identify and document best practices
- Assess sustainability and scalability of project activities and results
- Develop practical recommendations for future cashew sector projects based on findings

5. Deliverables:

- **Inception report:** Outlining the study approach, methodology, and work plan
- **Draft capitalization report:** Comprehensive analysis of project achievements, results and impact, and with a focus on the cashew sector as a business; summaries of capitalization notes with the success, learning lesson and challenge for each note.
- **Final capitalization report:** Incorporating feedback, with clear potential for potential scalability and/or future cashew projects, plus an action plan for knowledge sharing; summaries of capitalization notes with the success, learning lesson and challenge for each note.
- **Presentation slides:** Summarizing key findings for stakeholder dissemination

6. Capitalization Study Ethics

The consultant conducting the study will apply the following ethical practices during the study:

- Ensuring informed consent of study participants: for survey questionnaires and interview protocols, creating a consent form asking for stakeholders' voluntary participation in the study;
- Adhering to strict confidentiality, including ensuring the protection of data collected, reports and communications;
- Maintaining a collegial and respectful relationship with SFL staff and study participants.

7. Timeline of the Capitalization Study

The following schedule outlines the timeline of the Capitalization Study. Please note that the consultant is required to provide weekly updates to SFL, both written and through remote meetings (Microsoft Teams is preferred):

Capitalization Activity	Length of Time	Date
Release of Request for proposal, receipt of proposals, evaluation of proposals, selection, issuing letter and negotiation with consultant	2 weeks	March 2024
Inception phase	2 weeks	April 2025
Fieldwork	4 weeks	Mid-April to Mid- May 2025
Data analysis and draft report	3 weeks	Mid-May to Early-June 2025
Report finalization	2 weeks	Mid-June 2025

8. Dissemination of the Capitalization Study Report

Following the completion of the LIFFT-Cashew Capitalization Study, the consultant(s) will develop a publishable report to disseminate to relevant stakeholders and other interested agencies. The approved report will be translated into local languages (French and Portuguese, if necessary) and published on various websites for knowledge sharing.

9. Capitalization Study Management and Responsibilities

SFL’s responsibilities:

- Mobilize and designate individuals within the organization to lead and manage the process.
- Assist in coordinating logistics based on proposed study activities.
- Assist in coordinating stakeholders to participate in the study and within each country.
- Provide information and relevant project documents about program objectives, operations and beneficiaries, expectations about the study, and any other information.
- Provide input and feedback on study plan.
- Specify reporting requirements in terms of progress.

Consultant Responsibilities:

- Lead all study activities.
- Ensure the study runs according to plan and meets milestones and deliverables on time.

- Report on any challenges and their resolution in which potential issues need to be raised for decision-making elsewhere.
- Attend study meetings and check-ins to discuss progress.
- Implement and oversee data collection.
- Produce study update reports on a weekly basis.

10. Study Consultant Qualifications:

The individual consultant should have the following qualifications:

- Minimum 8 to 10 years of work experience in capitalization studies or similar types of studies of agricultural programs
- Expertise in knowledge management, and development sector practices
- Strong analytical skills and ability to synthesize complex information
- Expertise in the cashew value chains, and preferably the cashew sector of West Africa
- Experience working in Africa, with strong preference for the region of West Africa
- Ability to hire experienced data collectors, and surveyors that are fluent in local languages (i.e. at a minimum French, and Portuguese);
- Excellent report-writing abilities

Proposal submission instructions:

Proposals must be submitted by 5:00 PM Central Time, March 31st, 2025.

Send the proposal to info@shelter.org with the subject line: **“Proposal Capitalization Study LIFFT-Cashew Project - Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau”**

Shelter For Life will notify the selected agent in writing. Other applicants will be informed of the decision by email.

If you have any questions about this RFP, you may send them to the email address listed above.