
The Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program

Overview

In 1964 an experimental and modest self-help program began in Togo to assist communities with development projects. This program soon grew to cover the entire continent and has become one of the most visible and successful assistance programs in Africa.

The Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program (SSH) is a grass-roots assistance program that allows the U.S. Embassy of Togo to provide financial assistance to small, community-based development projects. Special consideration is given to projects that have the potential to generate income. Examples of successful projects include projects that produce employment and marketable skills (e.g. dressmaking, livestock-raising), acquisition of equipment for technical schools or training programs. All revenue generated by the project should be deposited in a community account to benefit all members of the association.

Project funding is limited to US\$5,000. However, the usual grant amount is significantly lower. Requests for smaller grants are encouraged and often have a better chance of obtaining funding.

General Principles

Every project submitted for Self-Help funding is expected to:

- Improve basic economic or social conditions at the local community or village level;
- Support high-impact, quick-implementation activities that benefit a large number of people within one year without requiring further SSH assistance;
- Involve a significant local contribution in cash, labor, or material, and be within the ability of the local community to operate and maintain;
- Be in direct response to the initiative and aspirations of the local community (the local sponsors of the project, who will also be its prime beneficiaries);
- Not initiate, continue, or supplement technical assistance programs;
- Whenever possible, contribute to income-generating or self sustaining activities.

Selection Criteria

Each year, the U.S. Embassy receives many more requests for assistance than it can fund. The goal is to fund projects throughout the five regions of Togo depending on that year's Self-Help Fund budget. Only proposals that *strictly* meet the fund's objectives and criteria will be considered. The most important criterion is the one that gave the program its name: *Self-Help* activities should include participation and contributions from community members, such as:

- Volunteer time and labor
- Medical equipment for health clinics
- Donated land
- Sand, gravel, water

SSH funds cannot be used for:

- Construction activities.
- Projects that directly benefit only a very limited number of people.
- Projects that would take longer than a year to complete.

The Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program

- Remodeling or renovating an existing facility that is in disrepair due to neglect or lack of money.
- Activities with unmitigated and negative environmental consequences (such as dams or roads through forest lands).
- Religious or military activities (including those relating to police, prisons or other law enforcement activities).
- Surveillance equipment.
- Sports equipment or uniforms for a national sport team.
- Musical instruments or uniforms for a national orchestra or dance company.
- Salaries
- Ongoing needs for education/training.
- Computers and office supplies such as pencils, paper, forms, or folders.

Application Process

Every proposal must include:

- A completed SSH application available in English or French.
- An estimated budget
- Land title or authorization of land usage, if applicable
- A list of members of the community/organization and the community/organization charter
- A copy of the identification card of the community project manager
- Proof of community funds (bank statement) and previous community contributions (purchase of materials and labor cost)
- Map to the site

Submission Period: Proposals are accepted through *June 30th* yearly to be considered for that year's funding and can be emailed to sshlome@state.gov or sent to:

**U.S. Embassy
Development Office
B.P. 852
Lomé, Togo**

Selection Period: Grantees are selected around August of each year. If your proposal is accepted for consideration, a representative from the U.S. Embassy will visit your project site to discuss your proposal with you and the association and to verify the details represented in your proposal. *A visit to your project in no way guarantees that it will be funded.*

Questions?

Interested parties may email the Development Office anytime or call to speak with a Development Office employee during the office hours listed below. By previous arrangement, you are invited to visit the Development Office with any questions you may have on the last Tuesday of the each month from 2pm – 4pm. ***It is imperative that you make an appointment in advance via email or telephone; otherwise you will not be on the access list and will not be allowed to enter the U.S. Embassy compound.***

Email: sshlome@state.gov

Telephone: 22 61 54 70 (Available hours: Mondays and Thursdays 10am – 12pm)