

Sources Sought # 75N93022R00014

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)

Submitted electronically (via e-mail) to Kristel Ruch at kristel.ruch@nih.gov and Gabriel Contreras at gabriel.contreras@nih.gov

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International Business Express, Inc. (IBEX)

7826 Eastern Avenue, NW, Suite 211

Washington, DC 20012

Certified Minority Owned Small Business, HUBZone Point of Contact: Ronda Kane,
Director of Government Solutions

rkane@ibexusa.com | Tel. 202-726-8761 | www.ibexusa.com | DUNS 093560626

International Business Express, Inc. (IBEX) is pleased to respond to the government's Sources Sought notice 75N93022R00014, in search of qualified contractors to assume responsibility for daily operations and management of the MSC in order to facilitate and support the research of the NIAID, as well as ultimately expand the infrastructure and core capacity of the Center.

In business since 1997, IBEX is an award-winning Minority-Owned Small Business Disadvantaged (SDB), HUBZone-certified business, and a successful provider of mission-critical services and solutions to the Federal Government, serving agencies in the Continental United States and abroad. IBEX has worked in Sub-Saharan Africa for 25 years in 28 countries providing technical assistance, workforce development and information technology solutions. We apply industry best practices and procedures to define customers' goals. We offer complete in-country service center support, through a full range of planning, design, implementation, operations, financial and personnel management, and other support services. IBEX has been successful because our team delivers on trust, quality, and innovation. With a local satellite office in Bamako, Mali, our subsidiary IBEX Africa supports IBEX's multiple IQC and Direct Award contracts for technical assistance services.

NOTE: As referenced in our transmittal, IBEX recommends the NIH NIAD consider making this project an SBA HUBZone set-aside.

We understand the successful contractor for the proposed effort will be required to provide support for the operation of NIAID-funded activities in Mali to include the disbursement of payroll for Malian staff at USTTB (funded under a separate NIAID contract); the disbursement of payroll of staff working under NIAID extramural grants; the payment of expenses in support of field studies; the payment of expenses related to the operations of laboratory facilities; the facilitation and payment of travel of ICER scientists; procurement support, and assisting in the management of operations of ICER activities in Mali and other West African countries, as requested. IBEX is capable of supporting the Mali Service Center (MSC), a Malian entity through which we will be able to provide guidance and oversight in the administration and disbursal of NIAID grant/contract funds, and material and travel expenses for NIAID-sponsored activities within Mali and West Africa.

IBEX has over twenty-five years of experience providing highly skilled programmatic support services in Mali and other African nations. As we have demonstrated in past performances, we have the staff and processes necessary to ensure that the NIAID operations in Mali Africa meets their operational objectives of facilitating investigative and collaborative research in emerging infectious diseases. IBEX, for 20+ years, has worked in 28 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa — IBEX has the experience and knowledge from successfully executing similar efforts for USAID and multiple organizations. We have personnel in Mali to support the requirements from “Day One” — and we know how to recruit, retain, and motivate the staff needed to build out these service centers. For example, IBEX has over 20 task orders in process or recently completed in Mali, alone. We’ve supported several NGOs in Mali, Abt Associates, Chemonics and AED (Raise Plus IQC, USAID SWIFT/SWIFT IQC, Mali Health IQC, and others).

IBEX has spent two decades building trust in communities in Mali, Liberia, Guinea and Democratic Republic of Congo, which will greatly enhance our ability to deliver on this effort. We maintain a licensed local office in Mali (under the entity, IBEX Africa) which is fully staffed to manage in-country personnel (human resource management, payroll, recruiting, and technical support). We have included a summary of select CVs of on-staff personnel — IBEX is able to deploy multi-lingual personnel upon award of a contract, and we know how to find the best people to meet the government’s staffing requirements.

IBEX has provided assistance to scientific, technical, and administrative staff in Mali and other African countries, including assisting with preparation of administrative reports; maintaining the roster of scientists, technicians, and administrative and support personnel required by our customer agencies; providing staffing with appropriate subcontracts between government agencies such as USAID and the US Department of State, and individual employees; and ensuring compliance with salary scales, payroll, and concomitant work effort is consistent with the needs of the client.

Technical Approach

IBEX has been supporting federal agencies’ operations in Africa for more than 25 years. We will transfer our experience and knowledge to assist NIAID speedily stand up operations with various Service Centers in multiple countries — all of which IBEX has personnel, offices, and expertise operating in. We will facilitate this by templating operations for the Mali service center, and rolling out similar operations at the other centers. We will differentiate between service elements based on the unique needs of each country operation. Our program manager will oversee all operations and take a proactive approach to problem management so as to ensure a smooth deployment for each .

Mali Service Center Program: IBEX has experience with documenting and putting place a procedural system for the disbursement and accounting of monthly operating expenses for NIAID projects conducted at USTTB and the associated ICER field sites. We will apply the processes and

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outlined in our Management Approach for all service center operations.

We will use our technical model as a template to implement similar service centers for the nine (9) units in Mali: International Center for Excellence in Research; Laboratory of Immunogenetics; Laboratory of Malaria Immunology and Vaccinology; Laboratory of Malaria and Vector Research; Laboratory of Immunogenetics; Laboratory of Malaria Immunology and Vaccinology; Laboratory of Malaria and Vector Research; Laboratory of Parasitic Diseases; Laboratory of Virology; and, Laboratory of Malaria and Vector Research. We understand the Liberia and Democratic Republic of Congo service centers are autonomous from the Mali operation, but our technical approach leverages the expertise and resources needed for the larger effort, to streamline implementation of financial and other oversight services in the other countries.

Guinea Service Center: As we have successfully done in the past 25 years, IBEX will establish a Guinea Service Center (GSC) to provide financial management capacity for research projects conducted in Guinea. We will use as a template the same policies, principles, and practices utilized at the MSC, with the GSC functioning independently. IBEX has the personnel, process, and resources in-country to furnish all necessary services, qualified personnel, material, equipment and facilities not otherwise provided for by the Government. Our vetted and trusted staff will manage funding and associated transactions when funding is transferred (i.e., for acquisition of supplies, materials, hire of professional staff, service and lease agreements, training, and travel expenses). IBEX has the credentials and staff to manage the financial resources of the GSC, such as operating costs for salaries and benefits of staff of the Guinea Service Center; managing accounting and disbursement of NIAID intramural and clinical research funds; managing grant and contract funds; and, assist with management of other third party funding needs.

Liberia Service Center: Similar to operations in Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo Service Centers, IBEX will implement the necessary policies, procedures, and processes to support financial oversight of funds dispersal. For example, IBEX trained financial managers will assist with funds disbursement to Clinical Research Collaborators, to maintain the functioning of the service center. As funding for new collaborations is received, project funds will be debited for indirect costs. We will track advance accounts, ensuring that all funds advanced are accounted for with valid, and appropriate receipts. Once they are approved, IBEX accountants will then categorize and code the expenses.

Democratic Republic of Congo Service Center: IBEX has the expertise to establish a Guinea Service Center (GSC) to provide financial management capacity for NIAID and non-NIAID funded research projects conducted in Guinea. As shown in our past performance, IBEX is capable and ready to facilitate the research activities of NIAID and/or other collaborative research partners in Guinea. We will apply the same policies, principles, and practices utilized at the Mali Service Center (MSC); we understand the MSC and GSC will function independently of each other.

Management Approach

The IBEX management approach for in-country operations calls for a single point of contact between our organization and the Government. IBEX processes and organizational structure provide exceptional communications channels. This ensures any issues, problems, or concerns anticipated or encountered are immediately communicated to the COR and Contracting Officer (CO). Our quality assurance methodology provides for issue identification, corrective action, and proposal of resolutions, so that problems can be corrected expeditiously.

An integral aspect of the IBEX approach to a project of this scope and scale is to employ a Risk Management model. For example, at US Agency for International Development, IBEX embraced

the agency's Forward reform process, where new attention was being given to the Agency's policies and systems for addressing risks that might undermine the achievement of in-country priority development goals.

The first phase was an assessment of the risk landscape in which the government agency operates, beginning with a review of existing grant and contract management practices including Sustainability Analysis, Organizational Capacity Assessments, Pre-Award Surveys, and the impact of the agency program cycle. IBEX has put together a comprehensive risk training course offered to our team via our employee portal which summarizes definitions and our recommended approach to risk management. This approach proposes a conceptual framework for understanding how client practices map against contemporary standards and practices. Such knowledge transfer from the private sector to the public is a hallmark of IBEX innovation.

IBEX takes a performance management approach — many acquisitions are structured around the “what” service or quality level is required, as opposed to “how.” IBEX structures our in-country organization around performance of the work (i.e., results, not just ticking boxes). Performance management rests on developing a capability to review and analyze information generated through performance assessment — and it is this audit-ready model we use to ensure the Government has the ability to make decisions based on the analysis of performance data. This analysis yields information that indicates whether IBEX is achieving expected outcomes for the project.

Management of Financial Resources

IBEX personnel have worked with agency staff to assist in complying with legal requirements necessary to establish and management the administrative and financial capacity of various in-country operations. Our team has developed portfolio management processes and established methods of proper accounting practice, such as electronic record keeping and auditing, and to assist with development of centers to support research and country aid distribution. IBEX has in place standardized practices to report on various elements of program financial and operational statuses, such the government may reliable account for the expenditures of funds. We are well able to provide legal services, as necessary, for the interpretation of local laws or regulations related to employment and other legal matters.

For example, IBEX established bank accounts for receipt of U.S. deposits so that we could oversee receipt and disbursement of funds distributed to grantees, using our own DCAA- compliant accounting system we are able to institute accounting methods consistent with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). At the end of every engagement, IBEX provides audible records to ensure funds are accounted for and disbursed according to grant, contract, and subcontract approved budgets. We have set up bank accounts with local banks in foreign countries for operational purposes, as well as utilized established banks in the United States.

Once we have determined whether an agency's partners are sub-recipients or vendors, we establish a plan for providing oversight over the sub-recipients. This plan includes how we will oversee that: the costs are in line with the budget, and all financial documents are on file; we conduct regular status checks (monthly, quarterly, etc.) to ensure activity targets are being met; and, we communicate the monitoring plan with sub-recipients and provide technical assistance to ensure they have all information needed to be successful.

An important aspect of financial oversight is measurement and reporting of scheduled performance, IBEX's field representative and Home Office Project coordinator for the contract take the lead in accomplishing this function. In addition, IBEX assigns a dedicated Home Office Project Manager to oversee progress in the performance of the contract. Some of the functions performed by the Home Office Program Manager include reviewing work plans of the field

technical team, administering logistical and technical inputs into the project, monitoring costs incurred by the budget (in coordination with IBEX Accounting), working with our in-country technical team to update performance schedules whenever appropriate. We use *Cost Variance Analysis*, a basic element of any cost management system that is a regular comparison of budgeted (planned) costs with actual costs incurred, and taking whatever actions are appropriate in the event of variances. We believe that every (or nearly every) contractor performs this function. IBEX stands apart from many of our competitors because of our transparent accounting and management structure — and the trust we have built up in Mali and other African nations.

Initial Transition of the MSC

IBEX has developed and executed transition plans to assist the Government in implementing a strategy for transitioning work incumbents. We are experienced at locking in key personnel prior to contract cut-over, so on-boarding goes smoothly. We also have handled transition of government-furnished equipment, as well as knowledge transfer and physical transfer of relevant files and records. For this effort, IBEX would draft an initial transition plan that will be revised at contract award, upon approval of the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). As we have successfully performed over a dozen times in the last decade, IBEX will ensure the final initial transition plan is followed to maintain an orderly, efficient, and expedient transition of all contract activities lasting no more than 30 days after contract award.

Personnel — To fulfill the staffing requirements, IBEX will first offer employment to all qualified incumbent employees IAW the SCA and IAW Executive Order (EO) 13495 and FAR Subpart 22.12, which mandates “Non-displacement of Qualified Workers under Service Contracts.” IBEX will also utilize our proven hiring processes, which include generous benefits, transferring seniority for employees, providing opportunity for professional growth and career advancement, and efforts to recruit and hire new employees. Additionally, IBEX will cross-train and cross-utilize our employees across multiple disciplines to ensure that all PWS areas are covered, particularly during times of heavy workload or unscheduled absences. All IBEX personnel who interface with NIAID management and technical personnel will be able to communicate in English with excellent oral and written communication skills. As Mali is a Francophone country, our team facilitates collaboration with the locals and other partnering countries and agencies by having fluency to communicate orally and in writing in English and French. IBEX accepts responsibility to maintain a satisfactory standard of employee competence, conduct, appearance and integrity and we will be responsible for taking such disciplinary action with respect to any employees as may be necessary.

Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Personnel — IBEX possesses significant bench strength to meet “short fuse” or surge requirements to staff the requirements outlined in the proposed scope of work. IBEX has access to hundreds of technical and subject matter expert personnel CONUS/ OCONUS who are mission ready and available to deploy in short order; we can meet all of the MSC operational requirements including any future and/or optional requirements upon award of a contract. IBEX brings a host of human resources management capabilities to a project of this nature — specifically in Mali, Liberia, Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

IBEX will establish and maintain policies and procedures for hiring, training, and retaining employees, as appropriate, for the management and service activities of the MSC. Our human resources experts will help the MSC Director develop evaluation tools for measuring the progress of the MSC staff in gaining the expertise necessary to manage, operate, and expand the MSC as the research infrastructure in the country grows, using a Management By Objectives (MBO) approach, a strategic management model that aims to improve organizational performance by clearly defining objectives that are agreed to by both management and employees. Our plan ensures fair, equitable, and market-competitive compensation and fringe benefits; employee development; job growth; and

promotion opportunities to attract and retain high-end talent; encourage staff to fulfill personal objectives; and enable staff to focus on NIAID missions. As part of a training feedback loop, this process includes applying lessons learned from similar contracts in a multi-tiered approach to optimize staffing. We fill each position with the most qualified candidate from: incumbent staff at NIAID; employees from Team IBEX and, new hires, as necessary.

Training — As we provided for USAID and other agencies' operations, IBEX will put in place a Learning Management System (LMS) to support training for Malian scientists and administrators on MSC's policies and SOPs so as to support implementation of NIAID's collaborative research projects in Mali. The LMS provides automated reminders to staff and managers about expiring credentials, required courses, and other educational context. IBEX recognizes employee training is an important aspect in enhancing our staff's motivation levels, performance, and retention.

These factors are the main reasons why we set aside budget and other resources to improve the skills of our team. Our LMS records the number of employees who complete the online courses, review materials, and learn skills to implement on the job.

In-Country Experience — Members of the IBEX team have experience developing clinical research infrastructure in Mali, Guinea, and other African nations. We have shown the ability to support rapid response of clinical research activities in support of priorities as set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and other government agencies for emerging diseases. Our team has the ability to network with other clinical research collaborators whose interests align with and further NIAID's mission. With existing "boots-on-the-ground," IBEX has the resources to provide highly skilled programmatic support services in-country. IBEX has supported multiple international development projects funded by the US Government to address the need to conduct collaborative scientific research in African nations. We have worked to build ongoing programs of a collaborative nature that have also incorporated the surge capability so agencies may respond to emergencies. Relevant Past Performance

Recent past performance demonstrates our expertise. IBEX has supported USAID missions for the Mali Trade IDQ, RASIE PLUS IQC, and SWIFT II (Ghana, Mali), and USAID ICT project in (Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, and Tanzania), and the European Union's Embassies throughout Africa providing Voice/Broadband and Private Network Solutions. IBEX has worked on more than 20 notable projects in Mali providing Technical Assistance. For USAID Mali Health, IBEX was tasked with providing Administrative and Technical Support for the project staff.

For the USAID Sahal Project in Mali, Guinea, and Niger, the team at IBEX was tasked with providing Grant and Financial Support Services. As a subcontractor to Chemonics International, IBEX delivered services under USAID SWIFT II in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We were tasked with providing Administrative and Technical Assistance for the SWIFT II Staff. On another effort, for the Office of Science and Technology (S&T), our team is tasked with leading the Agency's work on Grand Challenges for Development through its use of science and technology, as partnerships are expanded, increasing USAID's technical capacity and its ability to collaborate and apply domestic scientific research and technologies to areas of interests. With a need for institutional support within S&T, IBEX provides technical services on reestablishing S&T's scientific and technical capacity, as well as, supporting its expansion of innovative and groundbreaking use of science and technology at USAID. Specifically, IBEX supports S&T with organizing conferences, events and speaker series; providing peer review support for evaluating research proposals; communications, logistics with diverse stakeholders in scientific, academic, developmental and foreign policy communities; research and analysis; Marketing and event logistics; administrative and surge capacity support.

For administrative support, consider that IBEX supports GSA FAI ACMIS creating training and outreach sessions with 152+ user agencies and groups, including NIH stakeholders. Our team was tasked with developing end user training videos; holding end user training seminars at GSAExpo; and, developing SOPs and Policies.

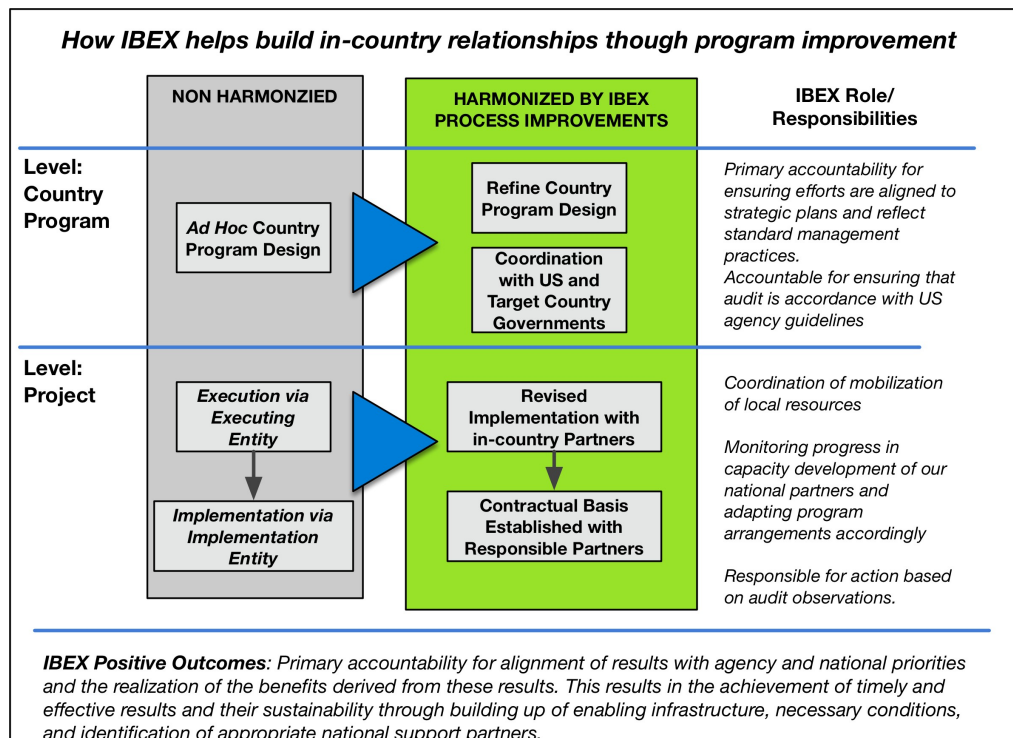
IBEX has provided substantial financial and administrative management for AVOIR — where we provide procurement services, logistics support, and custom clearance, in six countries simultaneously — this showcases our ability to work in multiple countries providing technical assistance. We also have a robust line of credit with several banks and a strong understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements for Mali, Liberia, Guinea, and DRC, as we have worked in these countries since our inception in 1997. We have also provided program personnel to the USAID "The Lab" to support *Scientist on Fellowship*. We providing administrative and programmatic support professionals, and provided grants and financial management for USAID. IBEX also worked with seven (7) universities in Africa to provide training and best practices.

For the Ministry of Finances of Mali, in Bamako, IBEX developed a web portal for one of the key ministries that shares sensitive and important data with international financial institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, other foreign financial entities, etc. With a deadline of only a few months to develop and deploy the website, IBEX worked with multiple entities to address the requirements, including the ministry's IT and communication department to come up with a design adapted to their vision.

Another technical project in Mali centered on the Ministry of Mines wanting to communicate more information to the general public about its mission, and general information about the mining sector, the different types of regulations, permitting, and jobs related to the sector. This required a website that was bilingual and mobile friendly. Another goal of this project was to create professional email templates for all employees of the ministry. We developed the French version of the website with the information at hand and deployed an English translation as part of ongoing maintenance.

Our project execution resulted in synergies between project components. The program was a cooperative created and run by young Malian agribusiness people. One “win” was the marketing of local organic fruit and vegetables, with: an online sales channel facilitated via a website; regularly scheduled collection/distribution points; and, markets set-up to deliver local fruit and vegetables at affordable

prices. One example of the innovative approach we bring is the success IBEX found in the Mali Agricultural Production Initiative. This was a climate-smart agriculture



initiative that relied on a diversified micro-market farm to produce and consume locally to improve the quality of life of people in West Africa. The following exhibit depicts the IBEX framework for program and project enhancement.

Select Staff Summary CVs

The following abbreviated biographies summarize the skills and experience of a selection of the IBEX team, available immediately to support the efforts in Mali, Liberia, and other Sub-Saharan locations. Our team members are multilingual, particularly the staff in Mali, who are native French speakers.

Staff Person: Abdoul Karim Ouattara

Role: Financial Expert

Location: Mali

Highest Degree: Masters Professionnel Economie et Gestion des Risques Financiers, Université de Rouen, France

Notable Experiences: *Responsable Financier et Comptable* — Put in place the management procedures and indicators necessary for monitoring activities and reporting to management. Guarantee the reliability of bank accounts, financial and accounting documents in accordance with the legislation. Supervise the accounting teams in respecting deadlines and procedures. Supervise management control in its missions and the preparation of results. Develop the budget and the business plan in accordance with the strategic choices of the shareholder and the general management. Validate tax choices with experts, ensure relations with tax services.

Staff Person: Kadiatou-Ina DIALLO

Role: Technology Expert

Location: Madagascar

Highest Degree: Maîtrise + Licence Economie Internationale, Université Paris Dauphine, France

Notable Experiences: Digitalization and Banking Transformation Manager — Definition of the general orientation and leadership within the framework of the banking and digital transformation project of the Institution in coordination with the General Management. Ensure proper compliance management of the various digitization initiatives. Contribute to the development of new digital financial products. SAMA MONEY SA - Mobile Transfers and Payments: Executive Director. Definition of strategy and budget (reorganization, upgrade). Establishment of strategic partnerships, team management.

Staff Person: Saratha Doumbia

Role: Accounting, Control and Audit

Location: Bamako-Mali

Highest Degree: Master's Degree - Université de Rouen, Rouen – France

Notable Experiences: Graduated in Master 2 Accounting Control and Audit, with significant experience acquired in the United Kingdom, France and Mali. An adaptable and flexible approach, able to work in a team or independently, using its own initiative. Integrity and discretion used at all times when dealing with confidential matters. Used to meeting strict deadlines, maintaining precision and transparency.

Multilingual speaker: French, English, Bambara

Staff Person: Fatoumata Houma BA

Role: Project Management

Location: Bamako-Mali

Highest Degree: Masters in Public Administration, Strayer University, Philadelphia, USA.

Bachelor degree in Private Law at National Administration School of Mali Bamako, Mali

Notable Experiences: Project administrative and financial assistant at Youth and Stabilization Program of PROJES/GIZ. Administrative management : drafting of reports, internal notes, budget and administrative

documents, meeting minutes, quality control of correspondence, allocation and processing of correspondence, preparation of meeting support documents. Planning, organization and monitoring of project activities, staff missions, short and long term experts. Management of program operations with support to colleagues in charge of finance/administration, HR and logistics manager. In charge of public relations, ensures communication flow with the GIZ office, PROJES collaborators, with partners, providers. Participation in the organization of events (Launch of the projects, 2 Steering Committees, Niger Festival, and team meetings). Review of terms of references of activities to implement by the PROJES in the field. Security Focal Point of the PROJES and Corporate Sustainability Handprint of the PROJES at GIZ level. Marketing and Administrative Manager Ebony Oil and Gas Mali. Representative of the company in Mali, interface with oil companies and external organizations; Identification and development of marketing strategies. Responsible for debt collection, and financial transfers in dollars to the headquarters in Ghana.

Staff Person: Moussa KOUYATE

Role: Accounting and Finance

Location: Mali

Highest Degree: Licence Professionnelle en Technique Comptable et Financière (LP-TCF) à l'Ecole Supérieure des Hautes Etudes Technologiques et Commerciales (HETEC)

Notable Experiences: Accountant at the NGO IntraHealth International/Mali. Advisor for the KOICA Project in the health district of Yorosso, at the NGO Save the Children. Advisor for the CS-20 Project in the health districts of Bougouni, Kolondieba, Yanfolila, Yorosso, at the NGO Save the Children.

Investigator in the implementation of the malaria project monitoring children from 0 to 5 years old treated with CTA at the NGO Save the Children. Advanced training as Administrative and Accounting Assistant at IntraHealth International/Mali. Accountant at the Civil Engineering Study Office (BEGEC). Langues: Français, Bambara, Anglais

Staff Person: Moctar BOUKENEM**Role:**

Location: Bamako, Mali

Highest Degree: State Engineer in Agronomy, Agro-economics, Agronomic and Veterinary Institute Hassan II (IAV Hassan II) - Kingdom of Morocco

Notable Experiences: Analysis of the economic relevance of innovations in agricultural sectors (Rice, Mango and Potato) promoted by Green Innovations Center (CIV). Analysis of agricultural value chains and proposed upgrading plan; Evaluation of production potentials, particularly in arboriculture (case of mango in Mali); Support for the registration according to the Agricultural Orientation Law of actors in the agricultural sectors: creation of an inter-profession; Capacity building needs assessment.

Staff Person: Négoueta DIARRA**Role:**

Location: Bamako, Mali

Highest Degree: Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie (D.U.T) série Finance comptabilité session de juillet à mars 2008 à l'Institut Universitaire de Gestion.

Notable Experiences: Chargé De Finance Et Trésorerie Amifa Mali (Atlantic Micro Finance For Africa). Monthly reporting for the holding group Société AMIFA SA. Prepare the consolidated financial statements: monthly, quarterly and annual of the subsidiary. Management of end-of-period and year-end work. Annual financial reports. Verification of salary status. Responsible for the analysis of the accounts and financial analysis of the subsidiary. Oversight of the different partners (auditor, GE, suppliers, purchasing etc.). Manage accounting in PERFECT financial management software. Extraction of financial statements in USGAAP version (income, balance sheet; financials). Draft the monthly and annual financial monitoring report, financial analysis. Management of fixed assets. Initiate various transfers abroad. Keep audit trail of service points with decision making recommendations.