

Community Development Internships – Microfinance with CRACYP for Progreso Verde (“Green Progress”) 2013



Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the Internship Information Pack available at www.progresoverde.org/internship.html

CRACYP works in numerous communities in the Cotopaxi, Bolivar, and Los Rios provinces of Ecuador, an area of extreme poverty where most people rely on agricultural crops for income, which is therefore sporadic. The nearest commercial banks are over an hour's journey away, and many people here have neither the education to fill in loan forms, nor anything against which to secure a loan. CADO, CRACYP's organic sugar cane farming project, is setting up a community bank which will allow members to borrow against their sugar cane crop, recognising the value of their organic and fair trade certification. There is also an emergency loan program in development. A women's group is being set up and this will potentially also include a savings/microloan component.

Objectives

We need a microfinance intern(s) to continue the work of developing the community bank and/or emergency loan programs. This will include training members of the new bank and helping them adapt the proposed plan to their local situation, working with them to resolve implementation issues as they arise. The plan is to have a central administration, with local “branches” in each community, so there will be many small adjustments needed to help each remote community adapt the model to their unique situation. Education levels are generally not high, and many people are functionally illiterate, so microfinance interns will need to work closely and patiently with each community.

Another possibility, depending on the length of the internship, is to work with other small, local community banks (of which there are a significant number in the wider area) to convince and help them to develop a joint database. Currently, community banks do not share information, so prospective borrowers are able to apply to different banks, without declaring existing loans or defaults with other banks, and this leaves the banks exposed to higher credit risk. By developing a simple database (probably in Excel, rather than anything very technical), each small community bank could check prospective borrowers' credit status with other banks in the area and so avoid serial defaulters and the costs and risks they create for genuine borrowers in real need.

As the women's group develops, microfinance interns may be able to offer advice on a simple savings/loan program within the group.

Location

You will be based in the picturesque little village of Jilimbí in Bolívar Province, close to the border with Cotopaxi Province. The nearest town you might find on a map is Moraspungo, about an hour's journey up into the mountains from the main road between Quevedo and Ventanas. You will work in various communities near the border between the Bolívar and Cotopaxi provinces.

Requirements

Microfinance interns should have studied or be studying microfinance at university level, and will need to either be fairly independent or else have access to advice by email from their university or other sources (e.g. previous employer), if needed. CRACYP's Intern Coordinator will be available for support via translation if needed, but has not worked in microfinance. Spanish language skills are extremely relevant, as is a good rapport with people, especially those with limited education. Interns should be prepared for working in a somewhat physically demanding environment with very little public transport (i.e. will often need to walk) and should be aware that this challenge will require patience and cultural sensitivity.



How to Apply

Read the Internship Information Pack for details of how to apply.