



GSLERP / DUTCH SOROPTIMIST UPDATES January 2025

Introduction

The Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reduction Project (GSLERP) is a 3.5-year initiative led by the Ghana Forestry Commission in collaboration with the Global Shea Alliance (GSA), UNDP, and funding from the Green Climate Fund. As a member of GSA, Tree Aid contributes to the project's implementation, specifically in Activity 2.1—Shea Parkland Restoration—and Activity 2.2—Cooperative Development. The funding for the project includes private sector contribution, with Ecosia supporting parkland restoration and the Dutch Soroptimists contributing to cooperative development. This report focuses on the activities financed by the Dutch Soroptimists in 2024, which include:

- Cooperatives setup and development
- Construction of warehouses
- Provision of shea butter processing equipment
- Procurement of tricycles
- Training on warehouse receipting systems
- Provision of shea nut picking and processing equipment

Key Milestones Supported by the Dutch Soroptimists

1. Cooperatives Setup and Development

The project team has worked closely with communities to strengthen their groups and support legal recognition. A total of 18 primary cooperative societies have been registered with the Department of Cooperatives in Ghana, enabling the formation of four secondary cooperative unions that are awaiting their legal certificates. This achievement was made possible through the support of the district cooperative officer, who trained and guided the groups toward attaining legal status.

2. Construction of Warehouses

With the support of Soroptimist, architectural designs for the warehouses were created, and community consultations were held to select suitable locations. The assessment criteria included factors such as land availability, willingness of the community to allocate land to women's cooperatives, access to electricity, and centrality to the various groups. The Manyini community was selected to receive the warehouse. After following the procurement process, a 75-ton capacity warehouse was constructed and equipped with pallets and other necessary items. A warehouse management committee has been established and trained to oversee its operations, ensuring it is managed efficiently on behalf of the cooperative union. The second warehouse, funded under the Dutch Soroptimists' additional Year 3 support, has been successfully completed in the Mafudo community. The facility is fully painted, equipped with essential tools such as weighing scales, stitching machines, pallets, and tarpaulins, and is now ready for commissioning.



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Figure 1 Manyini cooperative warehouse

3. Provision of Shea Butter Processing Equipment

The project team worked with communities to identify suitable locations for installing shea butter processing equipment. Factors such as access to land, electricity, water, and centrality were carefully considered. Following the due procurement process, two sets of shea butter processing equipment were acquired. Each set includes six motors, two kneaders, two millers, two crushers, two boilers, two roasters, and other essential accessories. The selected communities, Manyini and Mafudo, contributed land and labor toward the construction of facilities to house the equipment. However, when construction delays occurred, Tree Aid stepped in to provide additional support, enabling the completion of the structures. The equipment has since been installed, connected to electricity, and is now fully operational. To ensure proper usage and sustainability, management committees for the two processing centers were established and trained in basic maintenance tasks, including cleaning, powering the machines on and off, and operating them efficiently. Under additional funding, plans are underway to establish a third shea butter processing center. Communities have begun constructing the facility, after which the equipment will be installed and connected to electricity, ensuring it is fully functional and ready to support their activities.



Figure 2 shea butter processing centre

4. Procurement of tricycles

The Dutch Soroptimists allocated funds to support cooperatives by providing tricycles for transportation, aimed at enhancing enterprise activities. These tricycles are primarily used to transport produce, such as shea nuts and butter, but also serve other purposes like transporting group members to meetings and generating additional income for the cooperatives. Due to price escalations, only two of the three initially budgeted tricycles were purchased, registered, and licensed for the Manyini and Mafudo communities. Women operators received training on the proper use of the tricycles, and basic tools and safety equipment were also provided to ensure smooth operations. Under the additional Year 3 funding, the purchase of two larger tricycles has been approved. The project officer is actively working to acquire these new tricycles to further support the beneficiaries and strengthen the cooperatives' operational capacity.

5. Train cooperatives on warehouse receipting system and general management

All warehouse and shea processing management committees have been thoroughly trained to ensure effective operations and sustainability of the cooperatives' enterprises.

The warehouse management committees, comprising seven members per site, were trained on key aspects such as general cleaning, record-keeping (e.g., goods received and issued), fee-per-bag systems, produce quality checks, aggregation strategies, and proper storage techniques. Similarly, the shea butter processing committees received training on essential skills, including machine cleaning and maintenance, operation, oiling, power management, and fee-setting. This comprehensive training has equipped the committees to efficiently manage their respective



facilities and support the cooperatives' long-term success. Everything is now in place to ensure the smooth continuity of their enterprise activities.

6. Support cooperatives with simple shea nuts processing equipment

In December 2023, the procurement process for various shea nut picking and processing equipment was successfully completed. Items procured included safety boots, basins, hand gloves, and metal pots, which were distributed to the various groups. These items were provided to enhance the efficiency and safety of shea nut picking, reducing the risk of reptile attacks, and to support the primary processing of shea nuts.

7. Legal Status: 18 societies across the project communities have secured certificates. Efforts are ongoing to help 4 cooperative unions move towards legal status, supported by the Ministry of Local Government in the Yendi District. An initial assessment of these unions was completed in September-October 2024 to meet legal requirements.

8. Management Committees: Seven management committees representing the two processing centers have been formed and trained. These committees are responsible for day-to-day factory management, with oversight provided by the cooperative union executives.

9. Additional income-generation: Operational since their commissioning on 20 November 2023, the centers not only produce shea butter but also offer income-generating services like grinding flour and processing other food commodities for local and neighboring communities.

Upcoming Activities

- Capacity building on warehouse management, auditing, and receipting.
- Ongoing refresher training for management committee members at the warehouses and processing centers.
- Exploring marketing opportunities and securing contracts for shea butter and shea nuts with cooperative unions and buyers/investors.
- Continued follow-up on the legal status certification of the unions.

Relationship Between Women and Men

The relationship between men and women in the project communities is strong and collaborative. Women have been given equal opportunities to take leadership roles, with men supporting women's involvement in sensitive positions (e.g., chairpersons, treasurers) within societies and cooperative unions. This has allowed women to develop leadership skills and contribute to the effective management of community resources. At the processing centers, 5 out of 8 management committee members are women. Women operate the shea butter machines, while men assist with manual tasks. Additionally, women have been trained to operate tricycles that transport goods to and from the centers.



Photos





Grinding mill operator (Nubi Ndinnsi *physically challenged person*) for Sug-Gnang cooperative union in Gmanfudo community in action



Shea butter management committee in Nsuidom cooperative union at Manyini members in position



Committee members at Manyini



Committee members at Gmanfudo community with Chief



Meeting with committee members and cooperative union executives on management strategies/protocols for efficiency



Meeting with committee members and cooperative union executives at Manyini