

## **Project Update: November 2023**

### **Introduction:**

This report encapsulates the initial phase of the project aimed at fostering grassroots restoration and conservation of the vulnerable shea tree in the Lambussie District of northern Ghana. The focus of this period has been on raising awareness and engaging stakeholders to identify sustainable alternative livelihood strategies, mitigating the current unsustainable harvesting of the shea tree, often referred to as "women's gold."

### **Project Activities:**

The project commenced with extensive community engagement, encompassing men, women, youth, and children, in a series of awareness creation exercises and stakeholder dialogues. These interactions occurred at both the community and district assembly levels, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the local context. The key outcome of these deliberations was the identification of alternative rural livelihood strategies to replace the environmentally detrimental harvesting practices of the shea tree.

### **Chosen Alternatives:**

Beekeeping and soybean farming emerged as prioritised alternatives among community members. The next phase involves piloting these alternatives through the formation of groups, with men and women in each of the three communities participating. The initiative includes constructing beehives for distribution, setting up suitable bases for bee culture, and engaging with radio stations to broaden awareness and education within the larger community.

### **Objectives:**

*Create Awareness:* Successfully raised consciousness about the importance of preserving economic trees, emphasising the pivotal role of the shea tree in local ecosystems.

*Environmental Education:* Effectively educated community members about the adverse environmental consequences linked to economic tree felling, emphasising the long-term impacts on biodiversity and climate.

*Introduce Alternatives:* Facilitated the introduction of sustainable practices such as beekeeping and soybean farming as viable alternatives to the harmful harvesting of shea trees.

### **Challenges and Driving Forces:**

During the awareness and dialogue sessions, it became evident that poverty and a lack of alternative livelihood sources were key drivers of the unsustainable harvesting of shea trees. Participants highlighted economic hardship as a significant factor, with the sale of charcoal providing immediate financial relief, often overshadowing long-term environmental concerns.

### **Interventions:**

*Bee Culture:* Promoting honey production to generate income sustainably, reducing reliance on shea tree cutting for charcoal.

Animal Production: Encouraging livestock farming (goats, sheep, poultry) for diversified income streams and reducing dependence on charcoal production.

Soybean and Cowpea Production: Cultivating versatile crops for both local consumption and sale, providing alternative income sources.

### **Sensitization in Schools:**

The project extended its efforts to schools, sensitising students about the importance of trees, their various benefits, and the potential consequences of deforestation. The session encouraged an understanding of the ecological, medicinal, and economic significance of trees, fostering a sense of responsibility among the youth.

### **Conclusion:**

This initial phase has laid a solid foundation for the grassroots restoration and conservation of shea trees in the Lambussie District. By addressing economic challenges, providing viable alternatives, and instilling environmental awareness, the project aspires to catalyse sustainable change within the community.

In subsequent phases, the focus will shift to the practical implementation of the chosen alternatives, monitoring their impact, and continuously engaging with the community to ensure the success and sustainability of the project.

### **Acknowledgment:**

We express gratitude to the Rufford Foundation, all community members, stakeholders, and participants who have actively contributed to the success of this project's first phase.



Community awareness creation (Dialogue with traditional authorities).



School education and awareness creation.



Women engagement.