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W+ VERIFICATION REPORT 2025

Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project (GSLERP)



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Summary

The Green Climate Fund financed Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project (GSLERP), implemented by the Ghana Forestry Commission, in partnership with the Global Shea Alliance (GSA) and UNDP, aims to enhance women's economic empowerment by addressing structural challenges in the shea value chain across northern regions of Ghana. The aim of the verification report is to confirm the results contained in the Monitoring Report of W+ Standard application, for measurement and quantification of Education & Knowledge, and Income & Assets domains and its impacts on women's lives. The measurement period is May 2023 – May 2025.

The verification exercise conducted confirmed that the project strengthened Education and Knowledge through targeted training and capacity-building initiatives. These efforts enhanced women's technical skills in shea parkland management, improved organizational capacity, and supported the development of entrepreneurial skills. In parallel, income generation was improved through increased production as well as expanded employment opportunities in nurseries and shea butter processing units and access to quick financing through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VLSAs) and Rural Banks. Together, these interventions significantly boosted women's economic resilience and strengthened their confidence within the shea value chain.

The GSLERP is being implemented in Ghana's Northern regions encompassing the following regions and districts:

- Northern region: Savelugu, Kumbugu, Tolon, Yendi, Gushiegu districts
- Savannah region: Damongo, Buipe, Salaga, Central Gonja, Doboaya districts
- Northeast region: Walewale, Langbensi, Yagaba districts
- Upper West region: Wa West, Wa municipal, Gbollo and Nadowli Kaleo districts
- Upper East region: Talensi, Garu, Kassena, Nankana East, Builsa North districts

For the verification exercise, a targeted sample was selected, consisting of four cooperatives across two regions, as outlined below:

- Northern region: Tunteitiya and Suglo Mbori Buni Women cooperatives
- Northeast region: Tusuntaba and Suguru Nye Boobu Women cooperatives

The verification was carried out in November 2025 using a combination of methods, as outlined below:

- Document review: W+ Project Idea Note (PIN), W+ Project Design Document (PDD), W+ Monitoring Report, July 2025, including interview data sets, survey questionnaire and appendices.
- Virtual interviews and discussions with the Project Developer team.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): A total of 4 FGDs were conducted with 72 women beneficiaries.



- In-person interviews conducted with randomly selected women who had participated in the monitoring survey
- Data analysis to verify the calculations of W+ Income and Assets, and Education and Knowledge results in accordance with the W+ methodology.

Based on the information and evidence reviewed, the verification confirms that the GSLERP achieved significant positive outcomes for women in the project area. The project delivered measurable improvements in women’s income and assets, as well as enhanced knowledge and skills. Unintended negative effects related to health, workload, and exclusion, as identified in the W+ monitoring report, have been effectively addressed through corrective project actions.

Results from the verification survey confirmed the validity of the positive trajectory observed during the monitoring phase. While the t-test indicated that the shift between periods (monitoring and verification survey) did not reach the threshold of statistical significance, the data maintained a clear and consistent upward trend across both the Income and Assets and the Education and Knowledge domains.

On this basis, the verification team concludes that the project meets the W+ Standard requirements for effectiveness and impact and recommends the certification of 58,144 W+ credits under Education and Knowledge and 64,674 W+ credits under Income and Assets.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objective

The independent verification of the GSLERP project was carried out in November 2025 in Tamale and Nasia. The assessment aimed to confirm the project’s results against the W+ Standard criteria and determine whether it delivered the intended positive impacts for women within the Education & Knowledge and Income & Assets domains.

1.2 Scope and Criteria

The scope of the verification included the W+ Education & Knowledge and Income and Assets domains and considered the following indicators as evidence of successful implementation, as outlined in the Project Development Document.

Result Level	Knowledge & Education Indicators	Income & Assets Indicators
Impact	% of women reporting confidence in processing, health safety, and decision-making	% of women reporting decision-making power over income
End Outcome	% of women applying improved shea processing practices % following health and safety protocols	# of women with secondary livelihood sources
Intermediate Outcome	# of women using energy-efficient, ergonomic tools # of women engaged in cooperative discussions	# of assets, they acquired # of cooperatives with market linkages % of income, they save % of Price increase % of transactions done collectively # of alternative income activities initiated
Immediate Outcome	% improvement in post-training test scores # of women completing safety and business training	# of training sessions on pricing, negotiation, and adaptation % increase in price awareness % increase in average income # of women in cooperatives
Outputs	# of health/safety trainings held # of toolkits distributed # of manuals developed	# of formalized groups # of market intelligence updates shared # of women trained in diversification
Inputs	# of ergonomic tools, deployed availability of water/shade/rest breaks during processing	# of mentors assigned # of climate-smart materials distributed # of pricing bulletins disseminated # of Partner with key organizations specialized in strengthening collective action and cooperative governance to enhance sustainability and scale of women-led groups.



In addition to the above indicators, the Project’s Intentionality for women’s empowerment and Do-No-Harm indicators were determined based on the mechanisms in place to strengthen gender equality and women’s empowerment. To this end, it was noted that the project features a comprehensive Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy supported by a Gender Action Plan (GAP) that mainstreams gender across all activities. The GAP allocates dedicated budget resources for gender-responsive interventions and is implemented by a designated Gender specialist. It also sets clear targets, including ensuring that women constitute at least 50% of participants in consultations and trainings, and prioritizing selected farm sites for women. All activities are intentionally designed to address barriers faced by women, such as scheduling, accessibility, and the provision of women-only groups where appropriate.

Women across the value chain face a range of challenges that, if not addressed, could expose them to harm or limit their ability to participate fully. Processors in particular reported health and safety concerns linked to heat exposure and smoke at the facilities. In response, the project has implemented concrete mitigation measures, including the provision and promotion of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cooperatives are being encouraged to acquire improved, safer processing technologies. GSA and partners are also providing refresher trainings on safe processing practices, and taking steps to reinforce and encourage consistent use of protective gear such as goggles, masks and uniforms. The technical trainings for beneficiaries meet the Intentionality requirement, as they are providing guidance on proper positioning at the roasters to reduce heat impact. GSA and partners are also promoting and encouraging the use of shea cake briquettes to help lower heat intensity. In addition, any damaged or outdated roasters are being replaced with improved versions to enhance overall safety and improve working conditions at the processing facility.

Given women’s longstanding concerns about physical drudgery, the project has prioritized mechanizing nearly all key stages of the value chain—from transportation, where tricycles now collect shea kernels directly from homes, to the introduction of improved technologies throughout the processing chain. These interventions have significantly reduced physical strain and the many hours previously spent on shea work, ultimately improving efficiency and making the entire production process far less demanding.

To improve women’s access to financial resources for their daily needs and household shea-related activities, the project introduced Village Loan and Savings Associations (VLSAs). Although limited access to finance may not immediately cause harm, leaving this challenge unaddressed can restrict women’s participation and, over time, create conditions that could lead to negative impacts. The VLSA model provides a practical, community-based solution that strengthens women’s financial resilience and supports their full engagement in project activities.

1.3 Level of Assurance

The verification was conducted at a reasonable level of assurance in accordance with the W+ Standard. This level of assurance is supported by evidence of significant and consistent positive outcomes across the two verified domains: Education & Knowledge and Income & Assets.



To ensure the integrity of the reported progress, an independent verification survey was conducted, focusing on the Northern and North-East regions. By interviewing a sub-sample of 34 women beneficiaries, we compared verification findings against original monitoring results to validate the accuracy and percentage of change in these areas.

Our statistical analysis confirms that the project's data collection and analysis of W+ credits is robust and according to the W+ Standard guidelines. The two-sample t-test was conducted to compare the monitoring and verification datasets. The verification results confirm that the project's data is reliable and reflects consistent progress. Statistical testing shows no significant difference between the monitoring and verification phases, proving that the reported gains in both income and knowledge are accurate.

These findings validate the original results and highlight the sustained success of the beneficiaries. The continued growth evidenced in the verification phase is largely attributed to adaptive measures implemented by the project to address challenges identified in the initial Monitoring Report¹.

Key drivers for these sustained increases in both income and knowledge include:

- The provision of additional specialized training and support for new income-generation projects.
- The delivery of refresher trainings, which reinforced core competencies and ensured the long-term retention of knowledge among beneficiaries.

In summary, the verification results validate that the project's interventions are not only statistically sound but are successfully driving meaningful, upward progress for the target beneficiaries.

The detailed results of the verification survey are presented in the subsequent subsections.

a) Income and Assets Domain

Verification results showed that the change in income reported during the monitoring phase is valid, positive, and trending upward. The data confirms that the economic progress of project beneficiaries remains on an upward moving trajectory through the verification period.

The verification results indicate that the income change for women beneficiaries is higher than initially observed in the monitoring data rising from a 129% change to a 152% change.

However, the t-test ($t = -1.5219$; $p = 0.1293$) indicates that the change from monitoring to verification is not statistically significant, the movement remains consistently upward.

¹ Source: FGDs conducted with project team and beneficiaries.



Table 2: Income and Asset domain: Main and Verification Survey

Monitoring Survey				Verification Survey		
	Average Income (Both seasons)			Average Income (Both seasons)		
Region	Before	After	% Difference	Before	After	% Difference
Northern	216	554	156%	313	842	169%
North-East	337	648	92%	305	650	113%
Total	256	585	129%	311	785	152%

This continued progress is a direct result of the "adaptive measures made by the project team to solve earlier challenges. The verification findings suggest that these include:

- **Improved work conditions:** Adding protection against heat and dust.
- **Better Organization:** Adjusting roasting times and separating groups to reduce overcrowding.
- **Targeted Support:** Providing specific technical training and better technology to help beneficiaries succeed.

b) Education and Knowledge Domain

Table 3: Knowledge module monitoring and verification results by region

Monitoring Survey				Verification Survey		
	Average Knowledge Score			Average Knowledge Score		
Region	Before	After	% Difference	Before	After	% Difference
Northern	27	61	126%	8	23	188%
North-East	21	63	200%	9	30	233%
Total	25	62	148%	9	25	178%

The descriptive results from both the monitoring survey and the verification survey indicate substantial improvements in knowledge scores across regions. In the monitoring survey, average knowledge increased markedly from baseline to endline, with percentage changes of 126% in the Northern region and 200% in the North-East region, resulting in an overall increase of 148% (Source: Monitoring survey 2025).

Similarly, the verification survey shows strong gains, with knowledge increases of 188% in the Northern region and 233% in the North-East region, and an overall increase of 178%. These patterns suggest consistent and substantial improvements in knowledge outcomes across regions



and data sources, although the magnitude of change appears slightly higher in the verification survey.

Taken together, the summary statistics and the *t*-test results suggest that while the verification survey reports somewhat higher percentage increases in knowledge, these differences fall within normal sampling variability. The two-sample *t*-test yielded a *t*-value of 0.54 and a corresponding two-tailed *p*-value of 0.59, indicating that the difference in knowledge percent change between the monitoring and verification surveys is not statistically significant. This finding supports the conclusion that the knowledge change reported in the monitoring survey is consistent with the verification survey results.

1.4 Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report Summary

The project applied the Education & Knowledge and Income & Assets domains of the W+ Standard to assess the impact of its activities on women beneficiaries and their communities. Through targeted training and capacity-building initiatives, the project has helped address structural barriers within the shea butter value chain across the project areas.

Education and Knowledge

In the application of the Education & Knowledge, women were equipped with practical technical skills in sustainable shea parkland management to enhance production, shea butter processing, key aspects of marketing and branding and market linkages among other relevant subjects. These efforts have significantly improved the way women select, sort, and process shea nuts, enabling them to produce higher-quality kernels that command better market prices and attract bonuses. In addition, women were introduced to improved processing technologies, including energy-efficient cookstoves, crushers, roasters and kneaders designed to reduce labor, enhance productivity, and create safer working conditions.

The Knowledge & Education domain assessed changes among 370 surveyed women beneficiaries, showing a 96.9% improvement from baseline, resulting in the generation of 58,144 W+ credits.

Income and Assets

The application of the Income & Assets domain indicates notable increases in both income and assets among women beneficiaries, many of whom now have more stable and predictable sources of earnings. The project expanded employment opportunities within nurseries and shea butter processing units, creating additional avenues for women's engagement. Women also reported improvements in production, reflected in both the quantity and quality of shea kernels and shea butter. Collectively, these gains have strengthened women's economic empowerment, increased their self-confidence, and deepened their participation across the shea value chain.

The average annual income domain assessed changes among the 370 surveyed women beneficiaries. The average increase per beneficiary was 237 Ghanaian Cedis (GHS), equivalent to USD 23, representing a 107% increase from baseline conditions and resulting in the generation of 64,674 W+ credits.



2. VERIFICATION PROCESS AND APPROACH

The verification process was designed to assess and validate the results contained in the monitoring Report of GSLERP. The verification focused on the Education & Knowledge and Income & Assets domains. The approach combined a rigorous review of documents with observations and direct engagement of project stakeholders to ensure accuracy, credibility, and alignment with W+ requirements. This approach ensured flexibility and enabled the verifier to gain insights into the reported experiences of the women.

2.1 Method and Criteria

The study followed the following approaches and methods:

- Examination of the data collection process as presented in the Monitoring Report and accuracy of the W+ calculation approach.
- Virtual and in-situ interviews and group discussions to:
 - Verify the information from document review and interviews and discussions with the stakeholders
 - Gain an understanding of the level and nature of the impacts on women who have participated in the project
 - Gain an understanding of the project developer's purpose and processes of implementing the activities and plans to address the challenges outlined in the gender analysis component of the PDD

2.1.1 Document Review

A detailed examination of relevant documents was conducted to ensure consistency of reported results and accuracy of the W+ calculation methodology. The documents reviewed included the Monitoring Report, PIN and PDD. The data collection process as presented in the Monitoring Report and accuracy of the W+ calculation approach was also examined.

To verify the results of the Income and Assets domain; and Education and Knowledge, the following documents were reviewed:

- a) W+ Project Idea Note (PIN)
 - Background of the project
- b) W+ Project Design Document (PDD)
 - Stakeholder Analysis



- Gender Analysis
 - Women's Empowerment Plan (WEP)
 - Project's Intentionality
 - Do No Harm Indicators
 - Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
 - Benefit Sharing Mechanism
 - Survey questionnaire
- c) Monitoring Report, July 2025, including:
- Summary and Analysis of W+ Results (Including calculation of the percentage of change)
 - W+ unit calculation approach
- d) GSLERP's Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), 2025 which provides a framework for managing environmental and social risks, strengthening community benefits, and promoting gender inclusion, while ensuring compliance with national regulations and UNDP social and Environmental Standards (SES). It was developed as a follow-up requirement to the 2023 ESIA and 2021 ESMF processes.

Each document was cross-checked against the others and compared with insights from the interviews and stakeholder consultations (See Annex 2) to ensure consistency and accuracy. This comprehensive review of documentation provided strong support for the findings presented.

2.1.2 Interviews and Consultations

In-situ verification interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with women beneficiaries were conducted between 18 and 21 November 2025. The purpose of these consultations was to deepen understanding of the types and extent of outcomes experienced by women engaged at different stages of the value chain. Stakeholder interviews and consultations included the following steps:

i. I. Engagement with Project Staff

Engagements with project staff focused on clarifying project interventions and understanding how identified challenges were being addressed in practice. Verification interviews with key stakeholders included an initial meeting with UNDP on 29 October 2025, followed by an in-depth, in-person verification meeting with the project developer (GSA) on 17 June 2025. These discussions aimed to gather perspectives on achievements and challenges, validate information presented in the July 2025 Monitoring Report, and assess how the project was aligning with the *do no harm* principle, particularly in response to women's concerns related to heat exposure and drudgery (physically demanding manual labor) in processing units.



ii. Surveys

A total of 34 (Tentatively 10% of the monitoring survey) surveys were administered to individual women beneficiaries to capture their perceived benefits from the project. Data collection was conducted by trained local women enumerators under close supervision. Completed surveys were submitted daily and reviewed by survey supervisors to ensure data accuracy and quality.

iii. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

FGDs were conducted with four women's cooperatives—two in the Northern Region and two in the North East Region—representing different points along the value chain. These discussions gathered qualitative insights on changes in knowledge and confidence, as well as improvements in income and asset accumulation. Women also shared their experiences of the project interventions. Regions were selected purposively, while beneficiaries were randomly selected. The Northern Region was chosen due to its high concentration of beneficiaries, while the North East Region was included because of its proximity. FGDs were conducted in English with simultaneous translation into local languages and provided collective perspectives that complemented the individual survey findings.

2.1.3 Observations

Direct observation was carried out to validate reported outcomes and gain a clearer picture of how activities were implemented in practice. This included watching women perform key tasks along the value chain, assessing the working environment, and noting any visible changes in skills, efficiency, or organization. It also helped to confirm reports of interventions introduced to address heat and smoke challenges at processing facilities, and to understand the types of technologies deployed to mitigate these issues. These observations provided an independent, real-time perspective that complemented the interviews and surveys.

2.1.4. Triangulation of Evidence

Findings from the document review, interviews, surveys, FGDs, and observations were triangulated to ensure consistency and accuracy. This analysis strengthened the reliability of the conclusions regarding the project's contributions to women's Education & Knowledge and Income & Assets outcomes. The insights were then consolidated into a clear and coherent report that reflects both the evidence gathered and the patterns identified across all data sources.

Discussion Questions for the Women Beneficiaries

During the document review, the verification team developed data-collection checklists to validate information in the Monitoring Report and to better understand women's experiences within the project. The questions outlined below were organized as broad guiding prompts for both the project developers and the women beneficiaries, intended to steer the discussions rather than function as strict or prescriptive directives. The following key questions guided the discussions:



Domain	Key questions
Monthly income from Shea related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent do you feel your income has increased as a result of the shea project, and which specific project activities contributed to that improvement? ● To what extent have your assets grown, and which assets can you attribute directly to the project's support? ● Are you currently part of a savings group? If yes, how much have you saved so far, or what is your average monthly contribution?
Education and Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What new understanding or skills have you gained in shea management, and how does your current knowledge compare to what you knew before the project? ● In what ways have you put this new knowledge into practice? For example, have you trained others, improved production or processing, strengthened market access, or experienced greater confidence in your work?
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have you encountered any challenges while participating in this project? If so, please describe them. ● In what ways has the project helped to resolve or respond to these challenges? ● What challenges have women encountered when trying to negotiate for better prices or improved terms in the shea value chain?
Project staff	<p>What actions have been taken to address women concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exposure to heat and smoke ● Access to affordable and sustainable finance ● Reduce drudgery ● Access to improved technologies ● Address pricing of the shea kernels/seeds and shea products



2.4 Site Inspections

The site visits were conducted between 17 and 21 November 2025, during which 34 individual verification interviews were carried out. These interviews addressed each of the identified indicators as evidence of change. Observations and discussions during the site visits indicated that the project successfully achieved its intended objectives, thereby supporting the delivery of the stated project outcomes (Annex 3).

The site inspections also confirmed that the health and safety challenges identified in the W+ monitoring report had been addressed. The project and its partners actively encouraged women to prioritize workplace safety through the consistent use of protective equipment. Depending on their specific tasks, women were provided with items such as boots, goggles, uniforms, and masks. In addition, the project introduced mechanized solutions to reduce physical workload and improve working conditions across the value chain. A gradual transition from traditional three-stone cookstoves to more efficient concentrated-heat chimneys at processing facilities was reported and verified during the inspection. Unlike traditional cookstoves, which result in significant heat loss, the improved systems conserve energy and enhance overall safety and operational efficiency. Issues related to water supply for washing the seeds remain a concern, as they continue to take up a significant amount of women's time.



Figure 1: FGD- Suglo Mbori Buni Cooperative



Figure 2: FGD-Tusuntabia Cooperative



Figure 3: Improved roaster installed at GUBDANDA Shea Butter Processing Centre





Figure 4: Semi-mechanized processing and packaging at GUBUNDA Shea Butter Processing Centre:



Figure 5: Tusuntaba Shea tree nursery

Record keeping

Review of the available records showed that groups maintain clear sales registers documenting each member's quantity of shea seeds each member brings to the center. These records enable the tracking of individual sales and overall production trends. Depending on the group's capacity, the records are kept either manually in notebooks or typed and printed for easier reference. This system ensures transparency, supports accountability, and strengthens the groups' ability to monitor progress over time.



Photo: A: Record Keeping

name of cooperative: Tusuntaba Shea cooperative

BUNGE

Kindly Note- Create New Lots when 100 BAGS equivalent to \$500 are reached if 1 bag is 85 kg

Date [yyy-mm-dd]	Time	ID Card Number of woman collector	Name of woman collector	Card Type (Ghana Card, Voter's ID Card, National Health Insurance)	Weight of Shea presented in kg	Number of Bags	Price sold (thus Amount of money paid to collector)	Name of Officer Receiving Shea	Receipt Number	Lot Num	Fong	Moisture
2025-07-05	8:00 am	71465 38 41-1	Dahamata Aihassan	GHANA CARD	1.70	2	1.700	Juliana Anirah	1	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	715 15 7737-9	Dakurigu Alimatu	GHANA CARD	3.40	4	3.400	Juliana Anirah	2	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	724438718-2	Mariam Inusah	GHANA CARD	1.70	2	1.700	Juliana Anirah	3	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	726 29 2279-6	Baako Mawuda	GHANA CARD	1.70	2	1.700	Juliana Anirah	4	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	7145 261 24-4	Musah Fatima	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	5	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	724014415-0	Dr ahmani Abiba	GHANA CARD	3.40	4	3.400	Juliana Anirah	6	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	7147305 15-7	Nantomah Tiposa	GHANA CARD	1.70	2	1.700	Juliana Anirah	7	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	71454 25 71-4	Tia Zenabu	GHANA CARD	1.70	2	1.700	Juliana Anirah	8	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	714600240-0	Nzoni Sanatu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	9	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	71454 2402-1	Abdulai Rahinatu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	10	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	71454 4086-9	Haruna Samira	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	11	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	7148 25341-3	Issah aku Zelia	GHANA CARD	2.55	3	2.550	Juliana Anirah	12	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	724186243-7	Salifu Nimatu	GHANA CARD	2.55	3	2.550	Juliana Anirah	13	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	71468 7153-6	Salam Salifu	GHANA CARD	3.40	4	3.400	Juliana Anirah	14	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	724241907-6	Kala Shetu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	15	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	71454 25 31-3	Saidu Latifa	GHANA CARD	1.70	2	1.700	Juliana Anirah	16	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	71454 46 45-6	Issah aku Afrinwa	GHANA CARD	2.55	3	2.550	Juliana Anirah	17	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	724 24 2156-0	Issah aku Lukaya	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	18	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	726 255554-6	Fataw Afishe	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	19	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	724 2406 94-8	Samari Fatima	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	20	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	8:00 am	714 45 86 47-6	Samari Belawu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	21	TUSU070001	Gasaba dan fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	7146 15 287-0	Issifu Aminu	GHANA CARD	1.70	2	1.700	Juliana Anirah	22	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	724014760-9	Tahidu Rafatu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	23	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	71466 78 45-8	Osumanu Dahamata	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	24	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	724014847-4	Abdul Samied Aminu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	25	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	7146 35 230-7	Yahaya Laimatu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	26	TUSU070001	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	724186142-1	Baasima Nayina	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	27	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	724186559-9	Zenabu Nasigre	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	28	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-05	9:30 am	724 45 755-3	Ahassan Kande	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	29	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:30 am	724 240 76 4-8	Baba Rashida	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	30	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:30 am	71458 3255-9	Issifu Lahari	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	31	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:32 am	724186400-2	Kasim Jayira	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	32	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:35 am	71469 7402-2	Tia Marjama	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	33	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:37 am	724186494-9	Issah aku Shamsya	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	34	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:37 am	71454 2257-5	Wuni Zowera	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	35	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:38 am	724 478 205-9	Meljida Rafia	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	36	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:38 am	71510101-8	Ibrahim Zenabu	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	37	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	
2025-07-07	9:39 am	71466 26 19-2	Issah aku Rahina	GHANA CARD	4.25	5	4.250	Juliana Anirah	38	TUSU070002	Achiri fong	

Figure 6: Sales records

No	Name	Weight (kg)	Price
1	Ayi Takubu	31 27	55
2	Fadimate Idd	27 23	57
3	Zainab Mohammed	32 31	63
4	A.P. Abukari	31 32	63
5	NS Shata Alhassan	31 36	67
6	Samata Bukuru	25 32	57
7	Lubabu Saifu	34 35	67
8	Ababu Abukari	33 31	64
9	Salomatu Abukari	30 26	56
10	Samata Alhassan	24 34	68
11	Adamu Ima	30 28	58
12	Azardu Mohammed	27 30	57
13	Shahada Abdulai	34 25	62
14	Sadia Alhassan	32 30	62
15	Ababu Alhassan	34 34	68
16	Ababu Andani	33 31	64
17	Azardu Abdulai	27 31	58
18	Abiba Idrisu	32 31	63
19	Ashaka Abdulai	29 28	57
20	Maima Saifu	28 25	57
21	Madi Abukari	32 32	64
22	Kakar Issakatu	32	62
23	Alima Amadu	31 32	64
24	Baba Abukari	34 31	65
25	Fadi Idrisu	29 32	61
26	Abiba Abdulai	25 29	57

Figure 7: Suglo Mbori Buni Cooperative sales record, 2025



2.5 Resolution of Findings

The benefits of the shea project to rural livelihoods and overall community development—particularly for women, who are the primary actors in the value chain—are significant and widely recognized. The project has contributed to women’s empowerment through improved incomes, strengthened skills, and enhanced agency, enabling women to participate more effectively in economic decision-making and community development processes. The Monitoring Report, July 2025, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) revealed that while the project has brought important opportunities, some unintended negative effects particularly related to health and workload had emerged. Women expressed concerns related to heat exposure in the processing units and demanding manual labor across the value chain. These insights presented a valuable opportunity for the project to align more with the **do no harm** principle, that ensures efforts to empower women and ensure their well-being is not compromised. In response, the project implemented a number of interventions to mitigate and prevent effects on women as follows:

- i. **Refresher training on safe and healthy work practices:** Women received updated training at the processing centers to promote a more comfortable and secure working environment. This included renewed guidance on the proper use of roasters and practical instruction on positioning themselves at angles that reduce heat exposure during roasting. They have also been trained to make shea cake briquettes for roasting, which are now in use and have significantly reduced heat exposure.
- ii. **Reorganization of activities to prevent overcrowding:** For example, at the Gumo Gubdanda Processing Center, where 65 women are employed, it was observed that having the boiling and roasting areas too close together especially when both tasks were happening at the same time created excessive heat. To improve conditions, the workflow was reorganized and the women were divided into smaller groups to reduce congestion and heat buildup.
- iii. **Use of PPEs:** The project is strengthening the emphasis on protective gear. Although goggles and uniforms were provided, it was noted that some women do not consistently use them, prompting renewed efforts to reinforce these safety practices.
- iv. **Improved technology:** The project is promoting a shift to mechanized processing and is replacing worn-out roasters to reduce heat exposure and improve efficiency. Combined with support like tricycles, mechanization has significantly reduced women’s workload, physical strain, and time spent on transporting shea products, especially kernels.
- v. **Affordable Financing:** Identified as a key challenge during the monitoring exercise, in response, the project promotes VSLAs and women’s engagement with rural banks and other financing options. FGDs indicated high satisfaction, with women using VSLAs for shea activities and broader household needs, including school fees.
- vi. **Pricing and access to market:** In July 2025, Ghana’s Tree Crops Development



Authority set a minimum producer price of GH¢ 9.01/kg for raw shea kernels, protecting women collectors by guaranteeing a baseline income, reducing buyer exploitation, and strengthening bargaining power. FGD participants reported conducting their own market research to guide negotiations and expressed increased confidence in rejecting exploitative prices.

2.6 Forward Action Request

To sustain and strengthen the verified gains in women's income, assets, and knowledge, it is recommended that the project continue its systematic monitoring and ongoing adaptive management approaches to address emerging constraints such as market access, water availability for processing, price fluctuations, and supply consistency. Priority actions already in place should continue to ensure that all women beneficiaries across the shea butter value chain have access to appropriate, affordable, and safe technologies, and that production environments remain healthy and secure. Continued strengthening of women's leadership and decision-making roles within the value chain is also recommended, as these measures further enhance negotiating power, operational effectiveness, and the long-term sustainability of project-initiated outcomes.



3. VALIDATION FINDINGS

3.1 Project Description Deviations

There are no deviations from the project description.

3.2. Project Eligibility of any new activities initiated during monitoring period

The project qualifies for the consideration under the W+ Standard's eligibility criteria. The verification team has thoroughly examined the method (Income and Assets and Education and Knowledge). After reviewing the method documents and conducting wider consultations, the team confidently affirms that the project activities and implemented methods align with the project's stated purpose and have been effectively applied and verified.

3.3 Method Deviations

There have been no method deviations applied to this program.



4. VERIFICATION FINDINGS

4.1 Project Implementation Status

The project implementation has been in accordance with the project description and monitored effectively using appropriate sampling techniques, as well as group and individual interviews. No significant material discrepancies have been found between the implemented monitoring system, the project description, and the W+ methods applied. The verification team can confidently confirm that the project was implemented as outlined in its description.

4.2 Accuracy of Calculations of Women's Empowerment Benefits

To ensure the highest standards of data quality, the following verification methods were applied to address the overall questions:

i) Were the steps for the W+ calculation followed?

Verification: Yes, the steps for the W+ calculation were followed according to the guidelines when generating W+ units.

ii) Does the sampling method follow the W+ data collection methods?

Verification: Yes, the sampling method adheres to W+ data collection methods. The sample size was calculated in accordance with W+ guidelines, achieving a 95% confidence level (Source: Ghana monitoring report), which exceeds the minimum requirement of 90%.

iii) Is there reasonable assurance that the data collection methods being used do not produce systematically biased data?

Verification: Yes, there is reasonable assurance that the data collection methods do not produce systematically biased data. The verification team examined the selection process of sample beneficiaries and found no evidence of biased selection. The respondents were chosen randomly from the list of beneficiaries.

iv) Does the information collected measure what it is supposed to measure?

Verification: Yes, the information collected measures what it is supposed to measure. The knowledge and income domains collected data following the guidelines from W+ with program-specific contextualization.

v) Are mechanisms in place to prevent unauthorized changes to the data?

Verification: Yes, mechanisms are in place to prevent unauthorized changes to the data. The data



was collected using Kobo Collect on mobile devices. Once submitted, enumerators do not have the authority to edit it. Meanwhile, the data analyst performs real-time data checks to identify any inconsistencies.

vi) Has the data analysis method/W+ calculation been documented?

Verification: Yes, the data analysis method and W+ unit generation have been thoroughly documented. The verification team reviewed the documentation and double-checked the data used for the calculations. We reran the provided syntax file and found no inconsistencies, confirming the accuracy and reliability of the documented procedures. It was confirmed that the following formula is used as of the W+ guidelines.

W+ Results Calculation for Income and Assets

Calculation of the percentage of change =
$$\frac{(\text{Beneficiary average income} - \text{Non beneficiary average income}) \times 100}{\text{Non beneficiary average income}}$$

Calculation of the number of W+ Credits

- 1 unit = 1 % improvement in one woman's life, in relation to one domain over the monitoring period.
- Total number of units = percentage of change x number of woman beneficiaries

W+ Results Calculation for Education and Knowledge

The total increase in Education and Knowledge for women benefiting from project interventions is calculated by comparing the increase in their knowledge after the project intervention compared to before it.

Calculation of the percentage of change =
$$\frac{(\text{Beneficiary average Knowledge score} - \text{Non beneficiary average Knowledge score}) \times 100}{\text{Non beneficiary average Knowledge score}}$$

Calculation of the number of W+ Credits

- 1 unit = 1 % improvement in one woman's life, in relation to one domain over the monitoring period.
- Total number of units= percentage of change x number of woman beneficiaries

In conclusion, the verification process confirmed that all aspects of data quality assurance were followed, ensuring the integrity and reliability of the collected data.



4.3 Quality of Evidence to Determine Women's Empowerment Benefits

The verifier used various sources of evidence to determine the women's empowerment benefits.

- The Monitoring Report for July 2025, including the explanation of data flow from data generation to data aggregation and unit calculation.
- Interview with the Project Developer.
- FGDs with women participating in GSLERP project.
- The survey data derived directly from women beneficiaries collected and analyzed following the W+ measurement standards.

Testimonials and Examples from Women Beneficiaries

Increased Income and Assets

"Before the project, I never collected shea kernels because there was no reliable market. You could walk to the nearest village looking for a buyer and still return home with everything unsold. Now, there is a reliable market for shea kernels."- Women beneficiary, Tunteiya Cooperative.

"I now save up to GHS 200 per month through the VSLAs, compared to nothing before. With these earnings, I can pay my children's school fees, buy new clothes, and hire ploughing services."- Women beneficiary, Suguru Nye Boobu Cooperative.

"Before the project, I had no clear sense of my earnings and rarely had any cash of my own. Now, I save GHS 100 each week. Since the system allows deposits of only up to GHS 50 per week per account, I opened an additional account in my daughter's name to manage the extra savings." Women beneficiary, Suglo Mbori Buni Cooperative.

These testimonies illustrate increased and more predictable income, improved financial management, and the conversion of earnings to household assets and services.

Improved Knowledge and Self-Confidence

The project has fostered greater self-confidence and social acceptance among women, helping to reduce both structural and psychological barriers to their participation in the shea value chain.

"In the Suguru Nye Boobu Cooperative, we can now negotiate shea kernel prices with confidence. When a buyer offers a low price, we simply refuse and state our own price. Buyers know they must meet our terms if they want to buy from us."



“We now feel confident in our production skills and believe we can compete with any producer in the market. We have improved skills to consistently produce high-quality shea butter. Even if our packaging is not yet as advanced as some products on the market, the quality of our butter is unmatched.” - Suguru Nye Boobu Cooperative.

Across focus group discussions, women emphasized that cooperative membership has strengthened unity and collective confidence, enabling them to act together, assert their value, and engage more effectively with buyers and markets.

The verification exercise confirms the following

The verification data demonstrates positive changes in the domains of Income and Assets and Education and Knowledge among women beneficiaries.

Women have experienced significant improvements in earnings, savings, and financial autonomy. They report being able to save from 50 and 150 Cedis per week, pay school fees, negotiate loans with rural banks, and make household and business-related expenditures. These gains have enhanced their confidence in financial decision-making and increased their freedom in spending and investing.

Improvements in knowledge and skills were supported by targeted training and technology transfer introduced following the July 2025 monitoring exercise. Enhanced social capital, leadership, and confidence were evident, with women demonstrating improved abilities to negotiate prices, establish small-scale enterprises, and transfer learning within their families, cooperative peers and communities.

The verification results confirm that the project’s data are reliable and reflect consistent progress. Statistical testing shows no significant differences between the monitoring and verification phases, demonstrating that the reported gains in both income and knowledge are accurate. These findings validate the original reports and highlight the sustained success of the beneficiaries.

In conclusion, the field findings are robust and dependable, accurately capturing the experiences and perspectives of the women beneficiaries of the GSLERP project.



5. W+ RESULTS

5.1 W+ Domains

Method (W+ Domain)	Income and Assets	Education and Knowledge
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased income • Increase in assets acquired • Increased perception of well-being/confidence • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved skills in collective bargaining, market intelligence, and adaptation • Functioning cooperatives • Confidence to apply and share acquired knowledge in safe, productive, and sustainable ways
Indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of women users perceiving increase in income levels. • # women generating additional income and assets. • # Women perceive improved well-being. • # of cooperatives with market linkages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of women reporting confidence in processing, health safety, and decision-making • % of women applying improved shea processing practices • % of women following health and safety protocols • # of women using energy-efficient, ergonomic tools
Situation	<p>Women's incomes have increased across the shea value chain from an average of GHC 256 to GHC 585 as per the initial survey and to an average of GHC 311 to GHC 785 as per the verification survey. This increase is supported by higher kernel volumes and expanded employment opportunities in nurseries and processing units. Improved skills in selecting, sorting, and processing kernels have boosted product quality, enabling women to secure better prices and bonuses. Additionally, access to finance has been enhanced through VLSAs and rural banks that provide women with quick loans to manage their shea activities, pay</p>	<p>The project significantly enhanced women's knowledge and skills across the shea value chain through training and capacity building. Knowledge score recorded a change of 96% during the earlier survey, and a change of 189% during the verification exercise. Women were equipped with knowledge and skills in parkland management, improved technologies, and cooperative governance, with the goal of increasing their income which enabled them to produce higher-quality kernels and shea butter while reducing physical labor and improving working conditions.</p>



	<p>school fees and do savings. In the current year 2025, Bunge, one of the project partners, absorbed the rural bank’s interest charges on behalf of women, providing them with important financial relief.</p>	
Justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study confirmed the significant increase in income and assets among women participating in the project. women are now able to access finances to buy food, pay school fees. They reported increased savings in VLSAs and rural banks. With mechanization and improved technologies, production has significantly improved, and also women are enabled to reduce drudgery, improve health and save time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is clear and consistent evidence of increased technical understanding and application. Women reported substantial improvements in their ability to manage their roles in the shea value chain starting from nursery management, production, processing and marketing. Their products effectively adhere to international processing standards. The training empowered women to become more confident actors in both economic and civic spaces, unlocking greater agency and long-term resilience.
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Report FGDs and Surveys results Discussions with the Project Developer team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Report FGDs and Surveys results Records Discussions with the Project Developer team. Observations

5.2 Direct Payment Mechanism

Revenues from the sale of W+ units can be disbursed to women beneficiaries through the Global Shea Alliance (GSA) using existing cooperative payment channels. As women are already organized into cooperatives with established payment mechanisms, these structures offer an efficient and familiar benefit-sharing pathway. However, differences in partner operating models may result in varying arrangements across groups, limiting standardization and increasing tracking complexity; therefore, clear coordination and transparent monitoring systems are essential to ensure accountability and traceability.



6. ANALYSIS OF W+ RESULTS

6.1. Current Performance

The verification focused upon the Income and Assets, and Education and Knowledge domains.

The score reflects a comprehensive verification of all evidence provided to the verification team, including interviews with women beneficiaries, project developers, and feedback received. This evidence supports the conclusion that the project has successfully achieved its immediate, intermediate, and end outcomes (+2). However, limited risks remain related to water access/availability, market price fluctuations, and insufficient production to meet market demand. While these issues do not currently affect the outcomes, they could pose greater risks if not addressed. Consequently, the overall score remains at +2.

W+ Domain	Desired Outcome	No Change (0)	Somewhat Better (+1)	Much Better (+2)	Very Much Better (+3)
Income and Assets	Increased income			X	
	Increase in assets acquired (increased saving, buy/own processing equipment)			X	
	Increased perception of well-being/confidence				X
Education and Knowledge	Improved skills in collective bargaining, market intelligence, and adaptation			X	
	Functioning cooperatives			X	

6.2. Non-Permanence Risk Analysis

No major risks to project continuity or overall sustainability were identified. However, limited water access, market price fluctuations, and insufficient production could affect the gains made by women and the long-term sustainability of the women's shea butter enterprise should be addressed.



7. VERIFICATION OF (AUDIT) CONCLUSION

The project meets the verification criteria for projects and women's empowerment benefits as outlined in the W+ Standard and Program Guide. The verification team confirms that the project has been implemented in accordance with its project description.

During the verification period, the project achieved **122,818 W+ credits**.

Women's Empowerment Benefits	W+ Credits generated in Verification Period 1.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Significant increase in income reported● Increase in assets acquired● Increased perception of well-being/confidence	Income and Assets 64,674 W+ Credits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Improved skills in collective bargaining, market intelligence, and adaptation● Functioning cooperatives● Confidence to apply and share acquired knowledge in safe, productive, and sustainable ways	Education and Knowledge 58,144 W+ Credits
Total	122,818 W+ Credits



8. W+ VERIFICATION – STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

During the W+ project verification, the team observed significant improvements in women’s wellbeing and gender relations, both within households and across the community, as a result of project participation. These changes are well documented and referenced in the monitoring records. The verification focused on the impacts of increased income on material wellbeing—including health, education, and asset accumulation—as well as on social status, intra-family decision-making, and women’s roles within the community.

Based on the extent of these observed changes and their potential sustainability, the verification team concludes that the project “Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reduction Project” warrants a reasonable level of assurance.

Signed, 23 December 2025

Integrity Verifiers LLC

Reviewed, 15 December 2025

Barun Gurung
Integrity Verifiers



Annex 1: Consultation Schedule

Date	Sub-group	Proposed Consultation activity	Virtual/In person
October 29, 2025	UNDP	REDD+ and Gender Specialist	1 participant, virtual
November 17, 2025	Enumerators and project staff	Training & of Enumerators	5 participants, in person
	GSLERP/GSA staff	Project Manager, Global Shea Alliance (GSA)	1 participant, in person
November 18, 2025	FGD-Tunteiya Women Cooperative	In person group interview	12 participants, in person
	Individual Interviews with women beneficiaries	Individual surveys by the enumerators	In person
November 19, 2025	Suglo Mbori Buni Cooperative	In person Focus group discussion interview	15 participants, in person
	Individual Interviews with women beneficiaries	Individual surveys by the enumerators	In person
November 20, 2025	FGD- Tusungtaba Women Cooperative	Focus group Discussion	13 participants, in person
	Individual Interviews with women beneficiaries	Individual surveys by the enumerators	In person
November 21st	Suguru Nye Boobu Women Coops-(Bunge)	Focus group Discussion	13 participants, in person -
	Individual Interviews with women beneficiaries	Individual surveys by the enumerators	In person
72 participants in the FGDs			



Annex 2: List of Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) Participants

Suglo Mbori Buni Cooperative	Tusuntaba Women Cooperative
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abdul Rahaman Fatimata 2. Abdulai Azaratu 3. Abdulai Adam 4. Adam Memunatu 5. Alabira Amira 6. Alhassan Awabu 7. Dantini Sanatu 8. Dokurugu Alima 9. Iddi Mariama 10. Iddi Mohammed 11. Iddi Zulaiha 12. Issah Rabi 13. Mohammed Ayishetu 14. Shahadu Amina 15. Sulemana Salamatu 16. Yahaya Bamunu 17. Alhassan Awabu 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fuseini Maria 2. Tia Jahanatu 3. Fuseini Adisa 4. Tia sanati 5. Fuseini Mariama 6. Fuseini Adamu 7. Fuseini Abiatu 8. Amidu Belawu 9. Ibrahim Rashida 10. Yakubu memunatu 11. Issahaku Maria 12. Bukari Aisha 13. Ibrahim Sanatu 14. Bukari Hawabu 15. Abudu Zaara
Tunteiya Women Association-Bulung Cooperative	Suguru Nye Boobu Cooperative
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abubakari Hawawu 2. Alhassan Fishata 3. Amaru Alima 4. Muhammed Azara 5. Alhassan Asana 6. Mohammed Zainab 7. Awaabu Damba 8. Asia Yakubu 9. Fatimata Iddi 10. Abukari Afi 11. Memunatu Alhassan 12. Yahya Bamunu 13. Iddi maryama 14. Fatimata Abdul Rahman 15. Alabira Amira 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wumpoa Abdulai 2. Ayi Alhassan 3. Mayama Iddrisu 4. Salamatu Mahama 5. Rahi Issah 6. Shida Mahamadu 7. Rahi Sulemana 8. Jahanatu Salifu 9. Fusheina Haruna 10. Wasila Abubakari 11. Muhana Seidu 12. Kande Mahami 13. Meiri Sumani 14. Wumpoa Abdulai 15. Ayi Alhassan 16. Mayama Iddrisu 17. Salamatu Mahama



	<ol style="list-style-type: none">18. Rahi Issah19. Shida Mahamadu20. Rahi Sulemana21. Jahanatu Salifu22. Fusheina Haruna23. Wasila Abubakari24. Muhana Seidu25. Kande Mahami
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Annex 3: Summary of Responses

Cooperative	Number of members			Year of establishment	Age of members
	Total	Female	Male		
Tunteitiya Women Cooperative	56	55	1	1993	32 - >70
Suglo Mbori Buni cooperative	65	62	3	2013	30 - 70
Tusuntaba Cooperative	150	150	0	2021	30 - 70
Suguru Nye Boobu	250	250	0	2022	20 - 70

Observations From the Field

Cooperative Membership: Membership is predominantly female, with a few males in specific roles such as record keeping, management, or machine operation.

- *Tuntieiya Cooperative:* The male member serves as secretary and manager.
- *Suglo Mbori Buni Cooperative:* Three male members serve as machine operator, security officer, and branch manager (also handling records). Women noted that machine operation is physically demanding and more suited to men.

Benefits of Membership: Participants reported key benefits from cooperative membership:

- Improved market linkages: More reliable and consistent opportunities to sell products.
- Access to financial resources: Savings through VSLAs and loans from rural and other banks to support personal and household needs.
- Access to technology: Semi-mechanized equipment improves efficiency and reduces physical workload.
- Strengthened social capital: Supportive network of women sharing knowledge and experiences.
- Enhanced partnership opportunities: Increased interest from external organizations in supporting group activities.



Support Received from Partners: Participants highlighted support in several areas:

- Financial access: Bank loans supplementing VLSA savings for larger capital needs.
- Equipment and tools: Boiling pots, tricycles, wheelbarrows, standpipes, and infrastructure like storerooms and work shades.
- Training and capacity building: Business management, energy-efficient stoves, plant care and grafting, and product quality improvement.
- Extension services: Ongoing technical support and advisory services.
- Life skills development: Personal development, financial planning, and livelihood resilience.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE): Boots, goggles, gloves, and masks for occupational health and safety.
- Free seedlings: To support shea tree regeneration and expand production capacity.

Family Participation: FGD participants reported meaningful support from husbands and other family members, including:

- Picking and transporting shea kernels (e.g., using bicycles).
- Household chores that free up women’s time for shea-related work.
- Collecting fuelwood and water, and occasional financial assistance.
- Co-wives and children also contribute; children support activities mainly during school holidays and weekends.

Family Involvement in Shea Butter Processing

Activity	Children	Men	Co-wives
Picking	X	X	X
Sorting	X		X
Crashing	X	X	X
Grinding	X		X
Roasting			X
Kneading			X
Boiling	X		X
Boiling and decanting	X		X
Collecting water	X		X
Collecting wood	X		X
Grafting	X		X



Increased income

A number of interventions have facilitated improvement in income and assets. Improved knowledge on plant care practices through training and capacity building has enhanced product quality resulting to increased crop yields and better prices, including quality-based bonuses for those who meet standards. Members also highlighted improved access to markets, noting that in the past they often harvested shea but were unable to sell it due to limited market information and linkages.

Across the shea value chain, picking and kernel production largely remain manual and are carried out by women with support from family members. However, the project has introduced tricycles to facilitate the transportation of kernels to agreed common collection points, reducing the burden on women and enabling them to sell larger volumes than before, when transportation was done entirely by hand. At the processing facilities, the project has introduced complementary technologies such as nut crushers, roasters, and kneaders among other equipment. These technologies have significantly improved efficiency, reduced women's workload, and lowered both energy and water consumption.

How the money is used

With the increased income earned from shea-related activities, women reported that the additional earnings are primarily used to meet essential household and livelihood needs. Key areas of expenditure include paying school fees, purchasing agricultural inputs and farm tools, and covering costs for ploughing or tractor services. Women also noted that the income helps them meet personal and family needs, contributing to improved household welfare and greater financial stability.

Increased knowledge

Through the project, shea farmers have gained practical knowledge and skills across multiple areas that strengthen both production and livelihoods. This includes training on selecting high-quality nuts, as well as core financial skills such as budgeting, saving, and marketing. Farmers have also been supported to form and strengthen cooperatives, which has played a key role in enabling better resource pooling and stronger collective bargaining power. In addition, the project has raised awareness on health and safety to improve safer working conditions at various points of the value chain. Beyond shea-specific activities, farmers received life-skills training focused on income diversification, helping them develop alternative income streams to manage the seasonal nature of shea production.