
NOURISHING CHANGE

EMPOWERING GHANAIAN WOMEN SHEA FARMERS
THROUGH DIVERSE ENTITY TYPES





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Ghana's diverse agricultural sector, an exceptional group of women serves as the backbone of the shea industry. These women play a crucial role in harvesting shea nuts and procuring shea butter—a vital ingredient in culinary and cosmetic products—to sustain their livelihoods and promise profound social change through women's social mobility. Despite their aspirations for a better life for themselves and their families, the women shea farmers contend with gender inequality, economic hardship, and limited access to resources necessary to create shea butter and achieve social mobility. While societal awareness of the challenges faced by these women grows, the entities dedicated to their assistance continue to grapple with significant financial and resource constraints, even though these entities could significantly improve women's outcomes with lessened barriers.

This qualitative analysis necessitated a multifaceted approach, beginning with extensive online research to establish a foundational understanding of the experiences of Ghanaian women shea farmers and entities operating within this sphere. Subsequent to background research, I conducted an in-depth interview with the Global Shea Alliance to glean firsthand insight and an expert's perspective. Building upon the information from the interview, I designed a survey with questions regarding the entity's involvement in the shea procurement process, the decision-making behind entity type, inherent advantages, challenges faced, and necessary assistance. I disseminated the survey to 38 entities actively involved in supporting Ghanaian women shea farmers and received a total of seven responses (an 18.42% response rate): one cooperative, five non-profit organizations, and one for-profit organization.

Synthesizing the data gathered from diverse qualitative sources provided a nuanced understanding of the landscape encompassing these women shea farmers and the entities dedicated to their empowerment. The Global Shea Alliance interview highlighted that collaboration between entities is essential in the shea value chain. They additionally advocated for a community- and women-oriented strategy for initiatives in the shea industry.

From my survey, I learned more about this industry's cooperatives, non-profits, and for-profit businesses. Cooperatives focus on women's empowerment through shea farming and shea butter production, with the motivation of Ghanaian women's poverty reduction. Non-profits exhibit diverse involvement, addressing various concerns from environmental degradation to enabling women to achieve social mobility by providing resources—each rectifying value chain problems. Lastly, for-profit businesses adopt a comprehensive approach from collection to market, leveraging economic impacts into assets for marketing strategies and women's empowerment.

Many respondents share mutual challenges, emphasizing the need for unity. These challenges include funding disparities, limited resource accessibility, the necessity of proper infrastructure, predatory practices, and Ghanaian gender disparities. Entities consistently expressed a need for assistance, mentioning financial support, equipment, and marketing. Some non-profits and the cooperative require infrastructure upgrades, market access, and sustainability initiatives for growth. Collaboration from external stakeholders is crucial in effectively addressing these needs.

Informed by my qualitative analysis, I provide four critical recommendations for entities in the shea industry to enhance the impact on Ghanaian women. First, it is crucial to prioritize women's inclusion in shea projects, as entities should align their initiatives with the principles of the solidarity economy theory for ethical economic development. Secondly, I advocate for increased awareness and the adoption of the social enterprise entity, which can address funding challenges and promote social missions. Thirdly, industry stakeholders should foster collaborative efforts among cooperatives, non-profits, and for-profits, foreign and local, to further the necessary industry-wide multi-stakeholder approach. Lastly, improving the transparency and accessibility of information regarding Ghanaian entities, encompassing entity structure and contact methods, is essential for reinforcing communication and mitigating power imbalances.

The goal of this research is to initiate exploration into the crucial area of entities supporting Ghanaian women shea farmers. This qualitative analysis reveals these essential entities' unmet needs by providing more information regarding their missions and their impactful role in the shea industry. I invite academics to utilize this foundational knowledge as a starting point for more comprehensive research. Addressing four of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, this study contributes to Gender Equality by empowering women in a patriarchal society, supports Decent Work and Economic Growth by improving socio-economic conditions for vulnerable female farmers, advocates for Innovation, Industry, and Infrastructure to alleviate women's physical burdens while creating shea butter, and works towards Reduced Inequalities by challenging historical disparities faced by Ghanaian women in employment within the shea butter procurement process.



INTRODUCTION

Shea butter, a vital agricultural commodity, occupies a significant place in the growing global market (Dzanku). Derived from the shea nut's fat, shea butter is a versatile ingredient commonly used in food and cosmetics (Moore, 2016). As of 2023, the global shea butter market's valuation is \$2.7 billion (Choudhury, 2023). The United States African Development Foundation's projections show that by 2028, the global demand for shea butter is estimated to exceed \$3.5 billion, indicating sustained growth in the industry (2021). In Kirsty Doolan's article (2023), she reports that Ghana is the largest exporter of unrefined shea butter, boasting the most advanced shea processing sector in the industry. Doolan continues by underscoring that the country contains approximately 94 million shea trees, yielding an annual production of 60,000 tons of shea nuts.

West African women play a prevalent role in the shea butter production process and shea value chain (Dzanku). Over 470,000 northern Ghanaian women serve in this sector, reducing poverty by granting many women the opportunity to lift themselves and their families out of poverty (*Regenerating the Shea Butter Tree*, 2021). Women's social mobility is especially crucial in light of Ghana's position on the World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap Index, where it ranks 100th out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity (*Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, 2023). When analyzing economic participation and opportunities for women, the World Economic Forum places Ghana at 80th out of 146 countries. 77% of Ghanaian women are in vulnerable employment in 2023, which is a stark contrast to the 58% of men who share a similar employment status (Caulker et al., 2023). Despite the physically demanding nature of shea nut collection and shea butter processing, for Ghanaian women, it remains "one of the few revenue-generating opportunities, as shea processing falls within the female sphere of activities and barriers to entry into the trade are relatively slim" (Elias & Arora-Jonsson, 2016, p. 113).

Shea farming commences with the shea tree, which requires ten to 15 years to bear fruit and can take up to 30 years before full production potential (*Harvesting from the Shea Nut Tree*). Shea is only harvestable once a year from May to August (*Regenerating the Shea Butter Tree*, 2021). The women farmers collect ripe shea nuts from the ground, and then, after removing the fleshy portion around the shell, they boil the nut and leave it to dry in the sun (*Picking Shea Nuts*, 2019).



Once dried, the women sort the shea to remove impure black nuts and wash and dry the brown nuts (*Global Mamas*, 2012). Women prepare brown shea nuts for roasting by using mills or pounding them by hand until they are small, allowing the farmers to spin them over low fire (*Global Mamas*, 2012; *How to Crush Shea Nuts*, 2023). The farmers ground the roasted nuts into a paste which the women knead for up to an hour until another woman pours cold water over the kneaded paste, allowing the shea butter to rise to the top of the bowl (*Global Mamas*, 2012). Finally, women skim the risen shea butter, boil the shea butter into an oil, and remove impurities from the oil before it cools and hardens into the final shea butter product (*Global Mamas*, 2012).

Despite the potential for self-sustainment, women still face numerous challenges while pursuing social mobility through shea butter procurement. Currently, climate change has a profound impact on Ghana, leading to unpredictable rainfall patterns that cause severe flooding and droughts (*How the Climate Crisis is Impacting Ghana*, 2023). The climatic challenges contribute to unstable shea yields, the loss of soil fertility, and food insecurity (*Regenerating the Shea Butter Tree*, 2021). The United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (2023) determined that Ghana's temperature will continue to rise one to three degrees Celsius by 2050, exacerbating the already existing climatic issues, causing approximately one million more people to become impoverished and for already poor households, their income will drop by 40%.

In addition to climate change, women struggle with man-made issues driven by economics. One example is the annual felling of approximately 8 million shea trees by men to produce charcoal for commercial use resulting in deforestation, drastically reducing women's access to the trees (*Why Shea Butter Makers in Ghana Are Fighting for Their Livelihoods*, 2022). Gender-specific constraints—including disparities between education and skills, time constraints, unequal access to and control of resources, and competing demands relating to domestic responsibilities—create opportunities for intermediaries to exploit the women farmers' lack of expertise (Elias & Arora-Jonsson, 2016).

The women farmers also have a limited understanding about the international shea butter trade, causing depressed local trade values; simultaneously, middlemen capitalize on the women's unfamiliarity to resell the shea derivatives for significant profits (*Regenerating the Shea Butter Tree*, 2021). Consequently, the women often receive inadequate compensation for their physically laborious efforts.

Throughout the shea procurement process, four main entity types aid women farmers: cooperatives, non-profits, social enterprises, and other traditional, private-sector for-profit businesses. Cooperatives can be non-profits, social enterprises, or for-profits and are democratically controlled and owned by their members (Alvarez & Tremblay, 2022). In the shea sector, and as I discuss cooperatives in this analysis, these cooperatives operate within the West African countries where the vulnerable women reside and grant the member farmers "ownership of the shea nuts[,] as they are paid based on their harvest (*Shea Butter from Ghana*, 2023, para. 10). Ghanaian shea cooperatives are especially beneficial for women, as they earn, save, and have more assets than individual women farmers in this sector (Naa Adoley Mensa, 2022).

Individuals establish non-profit organizations, social enterprises, and other for-profit businesses across various countries, including Ghana. Non-profit organizations are tax-exempt entities that operate for the public benefit, prioritizing societal impact over financial gain (Hoy, 2023). Shea non-profit organizations target different crucial issues within the value chain, including addressing environmental matters, promoting women's entrepreneurship, educating women about creating shea byproducts, and multiple other causes, frequently managing many of these problems concurrently (*Climate Smart Training Programme; Ripples in Africa; Who We Are - A Rocha Ghana; Widows and Orphans Movement*). Social enterprises are "organization[s] or venture[s] that advance[] a social mission through entrepreneurial, earned-income strategies" (Raz, 2017, p. 285). Regarding the shea butter procurement process, social enterprises sell shea byproducts and use some of the gains to invest in shea butter producers (FAQ's).



The well-intentioned entities serving Ghanaian women shea farmers are trying to overcome the challenges hindering women; however, they sometimes face limitations that undermine their ability to provide crucial resources to farmers. A critical issue persists for every entity type: many supporting entities face significant financial shortfalls or the need for more outside support. The entities' needs can contribute to the challenges women encounter, as certain entities may struggle to fulfill their roles within the shea value chain, impacting their ability to provide for and aid the women. Furthermore, a lack of transparency regarding the initial entity type decision, their respective entity type's advantages and disadvantages, and further needs complicates the situation, impeding tailored support and collaborative efforts from stakeholders by hindering informed decision-making. This elusive information may lead to potential inefficiencies, suboptimal outcomes, and challenges in addressing specific needs in the shea value chain. Addressing this financial gap and improving information sharing is essential for empowering Ghanaian women shea farmers and their communities.

Given the necessity for research aimed at understanding the needs of entities supporting Ghanaian women shea farmers, it is pivotal to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by these organizations as they work toward uplifting women. Delving into the entities' needs can bridge the gap in financial support and shed light on how altruistic stakeholders can best aid these entities, ultimately bolstering the effectiveness of initiatives geared towards assisting shea farming.



METHODOLOGY

I began my qualitative analysis with a comprehensive exploration of the global shea industry through preliminary internet research, focusing primarily on the livelihoods of West African women shea farmers and the entities catering to this cause. During my initial research, I learned about the Global Shea Alliance (“GSA”), a Ghanaian non-profit industry association with 919 member entities from 39 countries whose primary objective is to “promote[] industry sustainability, quality practices and standards, and demand for shea in food and cosmetics” (*Global Shea Alliance*). I emailed to request a 30-minute Zoom interview, stating my goal was to learn more about the member entities that aid West African women’s social mobility through shea farming, their strengths and weaknesses, and how to bolster funding for this vital cause. My notes from the GSA interview are in Appendix A.

My preliminary research provided insights into various entities within the shea value chain, the women’s shea butter production process, and some information on West African women’s challenges. I recognized GSA’s unique perspective as a non-profit industry association because they collectively work with 919 different entities across various countries to improve the shea sector—I sought them out because of their broad view of the shea industry. While my exploration and interview helped provide a bird’s eye view of the field, neither provided specific insights into the decision-making processes pertaining to entity type, the advantages and challenges of entity types, and the various entities’ needs that support West African women shea farmers.

I curated a contact database consisting of entities that could aid my understanding. To assemble this repository, I started with online research, identifying entities explicitly endorsing their commitment to empowering West African women shea farmers and providing contact information. I compiled this information into the graph in Appendix B, which includes organization names, entity types, contact information, initial cold email dates, follow-up dates, and the ultimate outcomes of these interactions. As my research progressed, it became apparent that many entities lacked formal communication channels. Consequently, I did not include the entities without accessible contact information in Appendix B. The aggregated list comprises 46 entities: seven cooperatives, 19 non-profit organizations, four social enterprises, 13 for-profit organizations, and three unclear entity types I could not find under Ghana’s Registrar General Department’s entity name search.

Instead of reaching out individually to each entity to ask specific questions, I created a survey as a strategic tool to disseminate to many. This approach aimed to directly glean insights from the entities within this sector, providing a more efficient means of learning their perspectives. To further refine my survey’s structure to ensure it produced helpful baseline data and rectified my continued information deficiencies, I collaborated with the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Center. Their assistance involved tailoring questions to ensure the entities’ responses would be informative, enhancing overall consistency across questions, and adjusting language to better resonate with my target audience. My final survey structure is in Appendix C.

Ultimately, I contacted 38 of the 46 entities in Appendix B because some potential cooperatives and for-profit business respondents lacked publicly available email addresses, some for-profits only had “contact us” boxes on their websites, and several emails bounced back because of non-functional email addresses. My outreach yielded seven survey responses, resulting in an 18.42% response rate.

My respondents comprised one cooperative, five non-profit organizations, and one for-profit business. All respondent entities are Ghanaian, with one additionally having a Canadian for-profit component. I shifted my scope from a broad examination of West African women shea farmers to a narrower focus of Ghanaian women shea farmers to align with the demographic profile of my respondents.

For the entities that answered, I treated the responses of their chosen entity type as accurate indicators, respecting their selections instead of doing further research into their potentially complex entity structures, whether they have subsidiaries, and what they registered as under Ghana’s Registrar General Department or Canada’s Business Registries.

In formulating my qualitative analysis, I systematically summarized GSA’s core findings and identified common themes by analyzing the responses from the seven participating entities. The answers to my survey rectified nearly all of my knowledge gaps, and when reviewing the seven entities’ replies, I aimed to distill the essence of their feedback and underscore recurring experiences. For the responses that were left empty or brief, I proactively supplemented any informational deficiencies arising from the terse answers to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

Name	Entity Type	Incorporation Location
Ajike Shea Centre	Non-profit	Ghana
A Rocha Ghana	Non-profit	Ghana
Baraka Impact Ltd.	For-profit	Canada and Ghana
BRAVE AURORA ASSOCIATION	Non-profit	Ghana
Climate Smart Training Programme	Non-profit	Ghana
Titiakaboressa Organization	Cooperative	Ghana
Widows and Orphans Movement	Non-profit	Ghana

INSIGHTS

GLOBAL SHEA ALLIANCE INTERVIEW

Entity Collaboration

As an industry non-profit association, GSA focuses on bettering the shea sector and women farmers' livelihoods, and its members consist of entities within this industry. The association's dedication to advancing the shea sector's well-being prompted my effort to understand better the dynamics of interactions among these entities to address mutual problems collectively.

The most common theme throughout my GSA interview revolved around the necessity of cooperation between entity types. When creating sustainable and impactful initiatives, in addition to fitting within the market and communities, involving the private sector is crucial for long-term success. For-profit businesses seek to empower women to ensure supply availability and fulfill corporate sustainability requirements, whereas non-profits view shea as an avenue to create jobs in rural communities, empower women, or advance other causes providing much-needed social change. For-profit companies buy shea, process shea, and sell shea butter and other byproducts to consumers for profit. With GSA's multi-stakeholder approach to engagement and decisions, every entity type has an equal voice to solve shared challenges within the non-profit industry association.

Non-profits and for-profits are collectively necessary for programs aimed at improving the livelihoods of the women shea collectors, as the private sector brings the income component, and the non-profits help with capacity-building and connecting for-profits to public funds. When the private sector invests in and sees value in an initiative, the ultimate goal is to ensure their continued financial involvement after short-term projects conclude, thereby continuing to benefit the communities the project serves.

Additionally, GSA characterizes entities based on their position in the shea value chain. Cooperatives are at the first level, with the female owners producing and processing shea butter. Next, there are suppliers, which are aggregators, processors, and ingredient manufacturers. Brands and retailers, which I refer to in this qualitative analysis as for-profits, sell the shea byproducts created by the women in the cooperatives. Non-profit organizations support the shea value chain by leveraging shea to foster social change. Affiliates provide services in the value chain, such as financial institutions and manufacturers, but are not in the shea value chain. This interconnectedness of roles highlights the necessity for entities in this sphere to work together effectively throughout the shea procurement process.



Community- and Women-Oriented Approach

Given GSA's collaboration with diverse entities and its adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach to enhance women's livelihoods, I aimed to understand the most effective ways for entities in this sector to engage in community engagement and best serve women from their perspective. When creating entities or beginning initiatives in the shea sector, GSA emphasized that listening to the community and women impacted is necessary for success. To fit within the targeted community's challenges and business methods, the person assisting must create a model based on the community's needs. Moreover, they must involve local partners and members to define solutions. Women shea collectors actively contribute their insights to the model someone intends to implement, assessing its value and suitability with the women's operational preferences.

In the decision-making process, whether utilizing a comprehensive or targeted approach to remedy issues, it remains essential for one to thoroughly acquaint themselves with the community's distinct needs and challenges. For instance, GSA provided a relevant example regarding a parkland restoration program. Planting shea trees is crucial for parkland restoration and the supply chain; however, addressing the underlying issues, such as men cutting trees for charcoal production and local grievances related to women bothering people's farmlands while collecting shea, is equally important. While it is not possible to address all challenges at once, one must take targeted approaches to fully ground themselves in the lived experiences of community members to approach solving problems.

Even for international entities, local involvement is paramount, as the entities will utilize local staff and partners. To integrate seamlessly, GSA recommends doing a community entry—before any activities occur, one should meet with local chiefs and community leaders to explain the organization's objectives. GSA has published best practices for community engagement, but cultural sensitivity and community engagement are crucial for project success for entities within this sphere.

SURVEY RESPONSES

Entities' Involvement in the Shea Procurement Process

To understand the various roles, functions, and contributions that shape each entity type's involvement in the shea value chain, I sought responses from respondents representing each entity polled: one cooperative, five non-profits, and one for-profit. Unfortunately, the cooperative respondent did not provide a response, which presented a challenge to provide a complete understanding of their role in the shea procurement process. However, it is worth noting that my cooperative respondent did allow Insider Business to create an informative video about them, capturing the women's process from picking the shea nuts to making the nuts into shea butter (*Why Shea Butter Makers in Ghana Are Fighting for Their Livelihoods*, 2022). The video states the cooperative provides cooking pots and training for women to gather nuts and create shea butter, granting the women the opportunity to better their livelihoods and provide for their children.

The non-profit respondents are involved in various aspects of the procurement process, each tailored to their organization's specific objectives. One respondent established distinct segments, such as one division dedicated to shea nut picking and shea butter processing, while collaborating with their social enterprise to source shea products from women cooperatives to create skincare and haircare products. Another non-profit focuses on supporting women in the shea value chain, ensuring that women receive fair compensation and access to markets. Non-profits are also involved in broader community development initiatives, including the planting of shea trees, parkland restoration, training, and consultancy services. These activities align with the non-profit's commitment to empowering women, value addition, and addressing the socio-economic challenges female shea farmers face throughout the shea procurement process.

Moreover, the for-profit respondent utilizes an extensive approach to encompassing the entire

supply chain, from the collection of shea nuts to production and downstream marketing to businesses and consumers in the natural and organic skincare and cosmetics space. They hold the belief that businesses should generate profits while simultaneously creating social value, making a positive impact on society while increasing shareholder value.

Entity Type Decision

I inquired about each entity's rationale behind their choice of organizational structure to elucidate the nuanced motivations behind their decisions. First, the cooperative respondent has a strong focus on reducing poverty among Ghanaian women. The training the cooperative respondent provides helps the women earn money to provide for their children's education and food (*Why Shea Butter Makers in Ghana Are Fighting for Their Livelihoods*, 2022). The International Labour Organization and the International Co-operative Alliance report that cooperatives generally provide means for women to earn a living and achieve autonomy over their work by allowing the women to be an owner of the cooperative (*Advancing Gender Equality*, 2015). Additionally, the publication mentions that a cooperative's primary emphasis is on community welfare and economic development, with the overarching goal of improving the economic well-being of the women they serve.

Non-profit organizations primarily concentrate on empowering women within the shea value chain. Their core objective is to provide women with opportunities to directly sell their shea products without intermediaries that profit gouge, ultimately increasing financial security for these women. Additionally, some aim to address the gaps in women's access to markets and credit, remove barriers, and facilitate women's success as producers.

Some non-profit organizations also seek to rectify environmental concerns, particularly preserving shea trees and combating the alarming deforestation happening in the region. A non-profit respondent dedicated to ecological problems seeks to enhance sustainable natural resource management, emphasizing women's involvement in shea parklands management and tree planting initiatives. Their primary goal is twofold: to

safeguard the environment by ensuring the sustained presence of trees, thereby securing a valuable source of nuts for the women shea farmers.

The for-profit entity chose that entity type because businesses can and should create social value while generating shareholder value. They are committed to balancing profit generation with a substantial commitment to creating positive social impact, particularly regarding empowering women by providing employment opportunities. From my sole respondent, the for-profit business recognizes the potential for companies to enhance women's lives in shea production by earning revenue from the shea production, contributing significantly to their economic empowerment.

Entity Type Advantages

Cooperatives play a crucial role in the shea industry by fostering empowerment among Ghanaian women shea farmers and allowing women to take ownership of their work, leading to social mobility within their communities (*Shea Sourcing in Ghana*, 2022). The cooperative model uplifts women in managing various aspects of the shea value chain, from harvesting to processing, leading to economic empowerment while fostering a sense of community (Naa Adoley Mensa, 2022). My sole cooperative respondent efficaciously wrote "empowerment" to answer this question.

Non-profit organizations within the shea industry operate with a varied approach, rectifying diverse problems within the value chain. These entities can create opportunities for women to sell shea products directly, diversify their income through soap-making, and ensure access to education for their children. Moreover, other non-profits are committed to securing land for shea tree preservation, which ensures the women have nuts to cultivate. By leveraging grants, non-profits can invest in machinery, quality training, and cooperating registration, reducing the physical strain of the work and improving market access for women. They can also emphasize the preservation of shea parklands and the creation of market linkages for shea butter. Sometimes, they collaborate with other entity types to establish processing facilities, eliminate middlemen, offer

premium payment rates, and create networking platforms. These efforts lead to collaborative opportunities that ultimately benefit the women in this industry.

Meanwhile, the for-profit respondent reported that they excel in leveraging their unique ability to translate the economic impacts of the shea supply chain into monetizable assets. This capacity benefits marketing strategies, further extending to the marketing efforts of their customers. By finding the balance between profit generation and their commitment to bettering Ghanaian women's social classes, for-profits can contribute significantly to enhancing the lives of women involved in shea farming (*Empowering Women in the Shea Supply Chain*, 2022).

Entity Type Challenges

Irrespective of distinct entity types, the survey unveiled common threads regarding mutual challenges that bind these entities. These shared experiences underscore a collective commitment to empowering Ghanaian women shea farmers, denoting the shea industry's potential lies in unity while resolving issues. Only one non-profit reported facing no challenges regarding their entity type.

The most prominent overarching issue in the industry pertains to the challenge of accessing much-needed funding and support. At the beginning stages of the shea procurement process, the cooperative reported difficulties with transportation, funding, and the need for protective equipment and water for the women cultivating shea. On the non-profit front, there are various issues, such as financing, marketing, the community expectations of free services from non-profits, and the lack of shea processing machines. Most notably, one non-profit criticizes predatory practices from some non-profit organizations that render services for their gain, like giving credit to women right before the shea harvest to guarantee shea nuts at competitive prices to cover the women's received credit. Additionally, the same non-profit raises the crucial point that some organizations in charge of the shea industry care more for the trees than the women's livelihoods, ignoring the blatant sexism the women experience. Meanwhile, my for-profit respondent must rely heavily on their resources and customer support to sustain operations, as they have not received grant

funding or support in Ghana.

The non-profit organizations brought a significant spotlight to the gender disparities prevalent in the shea industry. Men in the shea sector have access to funds to purchase machines, whereas women do not—this is especially harmful because buyers prefer shea procured by machines. The men are also the buyers of shea nuts, and they fix the prices to buy cheaply because they will machine process the shea nuts. Once women receive credit from institutions, the credit comes with high interest rates and price fixing that women cannot afford, preventing social mobility. Further, the non-profit engaged in parkland management flagged that the traditional role of women in that sphere is almost non-existent, and there needs to be more community engagement and sensitization to increase the number of women in that practice to continue advancing sustainable practices.

Entities' Need for Assistance

Without exception, each survey respondent unequivocally expressed their need for additional assistance. These organizations exhibit a profound understanding of their challenges and the support required to address these issues effectively. Similarly to the immediately prior section, the following themes recurrently emerge within this section.

Financial support is a recurring theme amongst all entity types. The availability of capital with reasonable terms and without bureaucratic obstacles is a fundamental need for my for-profit respondent. Financial support helps entities sustain their operations, including scaling their production, improving marketing initiatives, and purchasing machinery to assist the women physically and produce market-quality shea butter.

The need for equipment and better infrastructure is especially crucial to the non-profits and cooperative respondents. These entities require machinery, facilities such as storage warehouses and shea factories, transportation, and other production equipment. Upgrading infrastructure improves efficiency and contributes to the overall quality of the women's products, providing a net benefit to the communities they serve.

Market access holds significant importance for the non-profit sector. Ensuring consumer visibility, diversifying product offerings, and improving market reach is paramount for my non-profit respondents. The transparency of market dynamics and investment in fortifying these non-profit organizations would provide invaluable support to help these entities thrive.

Furthermore, non-profits have highlighted their need for support regarding sustainability initiatives. One non-profit engaged in parkland restoration requires assistance regarding women's empowerment to diversify that sector and engagement with local women's groups to undertake shea and other native tree planting. Another non-profit organization stated they need assistance with fuel efficiency during shea butter production and using briquettes from shea waste.





RECOMMENDATIONS

CENTER APPROACHES AROUND WOMEN

When entities try to solve issues in the shea sector, whether social or sustainable, women need to be at the forefront of inciting meaningful change.

Despite women's necessity as shea farmers, many projects have excluded women from ecological and social solutions. While shea is one avenue to further important goals, such as parkland restoration or women's empowerment, women remain deeply ingrained in the shea butter procurement process as farmers. Every choice made throughout a solution's development and implementation has a profound impact on these women who tirelessly work to provide for their families. Their unique experiences, challenges, and aspirations must be the focal point and addressed comprehensively.

The entities' ultimate objective should align with the principles of the solidarity economy theory, particularly given the women farmers' susceptible position. The solidarity economy is "an ethical and values-based approach to economic development that prioritizes the welfare of people and planet[] over profits and blind growth" (*What is Social Solidarity Economy*). An article pinpoints that the revolutionary global economic values, practices, and institutions involve egalitarian and participatory economic behavior, encompassing individuals being ethical consumers, workers, or investors, and the presence of worker cooperatives, fair trade businesses, and progressive unions (Allard & Matthaei). The same article states that the solidarity production process includes various forms, ranging from self-employed entrepreneurs and local small-scale businesses to high-road corporations, worker-owned cooperatives, and community businesses. The goal of the solidarity economy is to address the exploitation of laborers and work towards their self-sustainability; in this case, the focal point is women's empowerment and self-sufficiency.

In the shea sector, the solidarity economy theory mirrors the current practices and ideals presented publicly by entities. Many women farmers currently work in cooperatives where they own and manage the production process, and, theoretically, women as members benefit equitably from their labor. Non-profits aid the shea value chain by providing financial assistance, training, and resources to enhance the women's sustainability and economic empowerment. There are many fair trade businesses to ensure women shea farmers earn fair compensation for their efforts, additionally emphasizing ethical sourcing, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility. Community businesses take the form of local enterprises benefiting the communities, focusing on social impact, community development, and the Ghanaian women shea farmers' well-being. Lastly, high-road corporations uphold ethical and sustainable practices, prioritizing social and environmental responsibility in their operations—Mars, Incorporated joined the U.S. Agency for International Development in a 10-year project to better 13,000 women farmers' lives, as they actively use shea butter in their products (*Mars Joins Forces*, 2021).

Despite the seemingly good ideals, the women still experience hardships. The women cannot access financial resources, such as credit, and a non-profit respondent acknowledged the presence of some predatory non-profits within this sector take advantage of this. Moreover, a cooperative aiming to provide fair wages and enable community investments criticizes the fact that shea trading does not lift Ghanaian women producers above the United Nations poverty line and that the shea industry's growth is primarily because of unprocessed shea nuts, not the shea butter the women create (Volz & Naa, 2023). The machine-processed shea butter created from the

shea nuts harvested by women sells for more and has higher demand than the women's handmade shea butter, and since many women cannot use machines to process shea, people fix the price of shea nuts cheaply to profit largely. International and urban companies process the competitively priced exported shea nuts using machines, stripping the women of earning their deserved profits for their labor and the shea butter they create (Volz & Naa, 2023).

The reality of the shea sector reveals persistent challenges that hinder the full implementation of the solidarity economy. While the women farmers often operate within cooperatives, the realization of equitable benefits remains limited overall (Dzanku). Even with the industry's recent emphasis on fair trade, there is no clear evidence that women are earning more (Moudio, 2013). To fortify the shea industry's solidarity economy, comprehensive research into the root causes of these challenges, how to fix them, and targeted interventions are crucial to prioritize these women's economic well-being and empowerment. The suggested research may involve addressing societal financial barriers, scrutinizing predatory practices, involving women in solutions more effectively, and ensuring the sector's current growth translates into substantive change and tangible profits for the women driving its success.

UTILIZE THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ENTITY

Within the solidarity economy's framework, the International Labour Organization actively advocates for promoting social enterprises to effectuate social change instead of solely pursuing profit (*Social and Solidarity Economy*, 2011). Among the various entity types I discovered during my research, social enterprises emerged as the least popular. Social enterprises being a minority in the shea sector is noteworthy due to their distinctive nature, as they possess a dual ability to generate profits akin to traditional for-profit entities while embodying the essence of non-profits by prioritizing the advancement of a social mission (*Social Enterprise*). The entity type may also receive grants (*What Funding is Available*). Many non-profits and social entrepreneurs are trying to make capital generally more accessible to social enterprises (Bugg-Levine et al., 2012).

The scarcity of social enterprises in this context prompts consideration, leading me to hypothesize that the underrepresentation is primarily attributable to a lack of familiarity with the entity type (Creastam, 2022). A corroborating study confirms that "social enterprise as a term is not well known in Ghana" (*Social Enterprise Landscape in Ghana*, 2015, p. 15). Additionally, one article states there is no Ghanaian formal definition of social enterprise, but "the main aim of [Ghanaian] social enterprises is to generate social value" (*The Status of Social Enterprise in Ghana*, 2022, para. 4). The same article reports that without a proper legal framework for social enterprises in the country due to stakeholders and the government's ignorance of the concept, only a few smaller social enterprises have been operating since 2014.

One non-profit respondent also has a Ghanaian social enterprise to sell the women's shea byproducts while simultaneously assisting the farmers. Outside of Ghana, one notable American social enterprise is Shea Yeleen, which sells shea butter byproducts and also utilizes profits to "contribute to the financial empowerment of women in Ghana, which builds stronger communities" (*Our Story*, para. 1). Shea Yeleen began as a non-profit in 2005, later converting to a social enterprise. Another is the American entity Alaffia, which sells cosmetics and body care products while "alleviating poverty in West Africa through the preservation of traditional skills and knowledge in the global market" (*Social Enterprise Model*, para. 1). Lastly, Eu'Genia Shea, which is also American, sells shea butter moisturizers while remaining "dedicated to fair wages and opportunities for [their] female workers in Ghana and donate 15% of [their] profits back ... in the form of an education fund" (*About Us*, para. 3).

The for-profit respondent and several non-profit participants highlighted their funding challenges. From the for-profit's perspective, securing grants and support proves difficult, whereas transitioning to a social enterprise might address these concerns, especially considering the for-profit's commitment to a social mission. Simultaneously, some non-profits faced financial constraints and an infrastructure deficiency in the shea procurement process, which could be alleviated by exploring opportunities to market and sell shea products.

To address this issue, I recommend that entities conduct thorough research into the concept of social enterprises, evaluating its alignment with their specific needs and the varying requirements depending on the entity's country of origin. Furthermore, recognizing the current landscape of the Ghanaian shea sector, it becomes evident that there is a need for increased awareness about social enterprises in Ghana to encourage their contribution to creating social benefits and earning the money necessary to enable this change.

FOSTER ENTITY COLLABORATION

Collaborative Success in the Shea Value Chain

The insights from the GSA interview and survey respondents provide a fundamental truth—collaboration is imperative for success in the shea sector. My GSA interview provided information regarding the diverse roles entities play within this ecosystem, with cooperatives at the ground level, for-profits selling the shea butter the women in cooperatives create, non-profits supporting the shea value chain by fostering social change through shea as an avenue, and various other entities contributing to the intricate, collaborative web. My respondents furthered the concept that the shea value chain functions as a well-oiled machine, with the cooperative reducing poverty by providing employment opportunities, non-profits empowering the women by eliminating intermediaries and addressing environmental concerns, and the for-profit converts the economic impacts of the shea supply chain into tangible assets.

Also, GSA underscored the necessity of a multi-stakeholder approach for initiatives, highlighting that the private sector brings income generation and non-profits have capacity-building capabilities and facilitate connections between the private sector and public funds. The survey respondents share several common challenges, making the multi-stakeholder approach a strategic path to overcome these mutual obstacles collectively. In recognizing this commonality, the multi-stakeholder approach emerges as a strategic method to collaboratively address the shared problems, fostering a unified effort towards sustainable and socially beneficial solutions within the shea industry.

Through the solidarity economy lens, networks are essential. While many organizations have ambitious goals and innovative ideas for women and the communities, the International Labour Organization writes that some cannot independently implement them (*Social and Solidarity Economy*, 2011). The same report mentions these networks “can provide pooled resources and ideas to carry out major initiatives” (p. 65). Market access is a particularly crucial concern within the shea industry. One illustrative example provided by the International Labour Organization discusses a cooperative of 2,884 women members in Burkina Faso that partnered with a Canadian NGO (*Social and Solidarity Economy*, 2011, p. 65). Together, they trained 1,800 women producers to improve the quality and hygiene of their shea butter, and 40 local women facilitators and 596 farmers about harvesting techniques and processing and preservation of shea nuts. In 2007, after the partnership, that cooperative produced 102 tons of shea butter, exporting 95 to Canada and France, whereas in 2001, the cooperative only exported 5 tons.

During collaborative efforts, ongoing efforts must ensure that women are not taken advantage of by unscrupulous actors. A holistic approach must include safeguards to protect the women's welfare in the shea value chain. Further research is crucial to create and implement measures to protect women effectively.

Well-equipped Foreign Entities' Necessary Collaboration

Foreign entities recognizing the importance of furthering this cause should consider partnering with smaller, local entities. The GSA interview and survey responses highlight the constant collaboration between entity types and the need for proper community engagement protocols to guarantee a project's success. Understanding the local context is crucial for any project to be effective, and to understand a community's needs, involving community members and other stakeholders in the shea value chain in projects is paramount.

During my preliminary research, I came across a few Ghanaian non-profits that ceased operations due to the overwhelming competition from

well-equipped foreign entities. These foreign entities had access to substantial financial support and resources, obliterating some local entities. Instead of eclipsing Ghanaian people or existing, integrated organizations trying to empower women, this approach could involve enhancing local organizations' capabilities with specific aspects of the shea procurement process or collaborating with multiple organizations to create an extensive support network. Cooperative efforts could foster a mutually beneficial relationship within the shea industry. This approach emphasizes cooperation over competition, potentially leading to more sustainable and impactful initiatives for all involved stakeholders.

ENHANCE GOVERNANCE INFORMATION

Ghanaian Governance Information

Researching Ghanaian entities proved to be challenging during this project. The scarcity of readily available resources pertaining to Ghanaian entities posed a significant challenge, which hindered the depth of my analysis. When I contacted Ghana's Registrar General's Department to ask questions, I received no response. This information gap highlights the need for improved accessibility to data about Ghanaian organizations for a better understanding of the intricate dynamics within the shea value chain.

In Ghana specifically, there seems to be a lack of clarity regarding the operational dynamics of cooperatives and the specific entity types under which individuals choose to register them, and the only legislation regulating Ghanaian cooperatives is the Co-operative Societies Degree of 1968, National Liberation Council Decree 252 (1968). When I searched for self-disclosed cooperatives on Ghana's Registrar General's Department's name search, people registered cooperatives as sole proprietorships, which are unincorporated for-profit businesses "owned and controlled by one person as the sole owner," (*Forms of Business Entities*, 2021, p. 3) or companies limited by guarantee, which are "compan[ies] set up for non-profit, social[,] or charitable purposes" (p. 5). Given the lack of accessible information, I am unable to

determine whether the cooperatives are doing business under another name, the total business structure, and whether the found proprietorships could be cooperatives in Ghana, as cooperatives include many owners, whereas sole proprietorships typically have one.

Moreover, when I researched social enterprises in Ghana, I had to rely heavily on non-governmental sources, with many leading back to a British Council-funded project (*The Status of Social Enterprise in Ghana*, 2022). The Ghanaian social enterprise landscape denoted a stark absence of official documentation or centralized databases, compounding the challenge for entrepreneurs to learn more about this unique entity. The dearth of transparency complicates understanding of the Ghanaian social enterprise and the pressing need for concerted efforts to continue establishing comprehensive resources.

Transparency is crucial when people choose to donate to non-profits (Harris & Neely, 2018). Unlike in America, where entity type information is easily accessible regardless of state, it is difficult to get the same disclosure information about Ghanaian entities. The lack of transparency can lead to corruption and abuse of power, which is especially harmful in the context of benefitting women already susceptible to vulnerable employment and other patriarchal mistreatment (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2022). I hypothesize that the same transparency required from American non-profits and, by proxy, other American businesses that already provide necessary information because of mandatory disclosures would benefit the Ghanaian sphere.

As a proactive solution, Ghanaian entities themselves should take charge of sharing this pertinent information. By encouraging the disclosure of entity information, these entities can play a pivotal role in promoting robust knowledge for those who ultimately follow. This approach empowers entities to showcase their unique contributions, potentially making it more accessible for entities to partner with each other to continue bolstering the shea value chain. Additionally, making one's entity structure more accessible helps build a more informed, collaborative organizational environment in Ghana.

Entity Contact Information

Addressing the issue of information accessibility is crucial within the shea sector. One of my observations while conducting my research was the scarcity of accessible means of contact, limiting to whom I could send my survey. This deficiency in online presence within the shea sector poses significant implications for entities and their ability to tap into global networks. The absence of basic technological infrastructure, such as websites and email addresses, restricts the sector's stakeholders from participating in broader communication channels and engaging with commodities markets on a global scale. 31.8% of people in Ghana do not have internet access, which underscores the digital divide potentially contributing to a bottleneck in the industry (Kemp, 2023).

The lack of transparency in this sector, especially concerning communication channels and connections to commodities markets, gives more power to predatory middlemen and intermediaries to take advantage of the lack of access. This power imbalance could have far-reaching consequences, which an academic should study further to grasp its full impact. I hypothesize that addressing this issue is fundamental to addressing some of the poignant inequities, including financial access for women, within the shea industry.

IMPACT

My primary objective for this qualitative analysis was to offer an initial exploration into a compelling subject: understanding entities aiding Ghanaian women shea farmers. In choosing this subject, I strove to provide introductory research to help these indispensable entities in their missions. These entities have the capacity to make a tangible difference for countless women and promote sustainable practices in the shea industry. By providing this information, I hope to illuminate the entities' unmet needs. Additionally, I invite academics to leverage this knowledge as a stepping stone for much-needed in-depth research.

This qualitative analysis serves four of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals:



Entities within the shea sector strive to uplift women in the labor market, and their success is instrumental in providing opportunities for the farmers to attain social mobility. Facilitating these entities' prosperity aids the women, allowing them to participate economically and leverage their labor for social advancement in a society that is otherwise patriarchal and inaccessible.



With 77% of Ghanaian women in vulnerable employment, the entities in this sphere act as a catalyst to improve the women's socio-economic status while promoting fair treatment. Supporting the entities in this sector promotes decent work by aiding them in fostering safer employment and further fueling economic growth by enhancing women's economic participation.



Increased awareness of this meaningful cause can lead to more funding for research and equipment, especially considering that many entities within this sphere lack adequate manufacturing equipment, such as transportation, protection, and automation, to lessen the women's physical burden during shea butter creation.



Research in this sector helps empower Ghanaian women who have historically faced patriarchal treatment, including limited access to employment, funding, and fair compensation within the shea butter procurement process. Assisting the entities that aid these women is pivotal in narrowing the gender disparity gap.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely thank the Dow Chemical Company for generously sponsoring the Dow Sustainability Fellows at the University of Michigan, enabling me and other University of Michigan graduate students to delve into meaningful research.

I am grateful to Associate Professor Jen Maigret from Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning for being my advisor for this project and Bridget Gruber, the Education Program Manager from the Graham Sustainability Institute, for her exceptional programmatic support and guidance throughout this project. I am also thankful for the support and encouragement from Ambassador (ret.) Luis C.deBaca, Visiting Clinical Assistant Professor of Law Susan Chase, and Assistant Dean of Student Services Kimberly D'Haene from the Law School for their support and encouragement.

Thank you to Margaret Hudson from the Survey Research Center for helping me tailor my survey.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to the Global Shea Alliance for the valuable insights provided during our interview.

Special thanks to the organizations that contributed significantly to making this information more accessible by completing my survey:

- Ajike Shea Centre,
- A Rocha Ghana,
- Baraka Impact Ltd.,
- BRAVE AURORA ASSOCIATION,
- Climate Smart Training Programme,
- Titiakaboressa Organization, and
- Widows and Orphans Movement.

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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

GLOBAL SHEA ALLIANCE INTERVIEW NOTES

- (I) What are some key factors to consider when establishing sustainable and impactful initiatives for the West African shea farmers, especially regarding long-term viability?
 - (a) The fit in the market.
 - The first question is: how does the cooperative fit the operational model of the different companies that will buy from the farmers?
 - Does your sustainable model of organizing women farmers fit, for example, how sourcing shea is done?
 - GSA offers a recommended size for cooperatives because women aggregate that specific amount of shea into a truck.
 - (b) Whether the private sector is on board.
 - The private sector refers to the for-profit companies that buy shea, process shea, and further sell it to the general consumer.
 - All development projects have a specific timeline.
 - Is the private sector willing to invest, and can you build a partnership between the private sector and the communities so that when the development project ends, the exact impact will still occur and not cease?
 - (c) Fit with the communities' challenges and ways of doing business.
 - For example, if someone wanted to establish sustainable farming, the model promoted must be one adapted to the community's features.
 - If there is conflict in that community, a cooperative may be challenging to establish, and the size might also be impacted.
 - How do you engage local partners and members in defining the solution?
 - Ensuring that women shea collectors have given their input on the model someone wants to implement and whether it provides value to them and is adapted to how they do things there. If not, does the person striving to create the model have a credible behavior change plan to implement?
 - (d) Finding the right balance between whole and targeted approaches.
 - In a program, one cannot address all challenges at once. Otherwise, it is difficult to achieve results. At the same time, there are challenges one must address for their program to be successful.
 - For example, in a restoration program, one should plant shea trees for the supply and restore the parklands. However, if one ignores that people tend to cut trees for charcoal or because the women bother their farms, then the program is unlikely to be successful.
 - At the same time, there are issues like land rights that are still relevant and might be difficult to address in a short-term program.

- (2) Concerning your members, which entity types tend to thrive financially and continually support your organization?
 - What is essential for the GSA is that they are a multi-stakeholder organization. They represent the whole value chain and have a mission to improve sustainability and quality in the sustainability chain.
 - The way GSA characterizes entities regards their position in the shea value chain. Cooperatives as members produce and process shea at the first level. Then, they have suppliers, which are aggregators, processors, and ingredient manufacturers. Lastly, brands and retailers sell the shea byproducts. Non-profits support the value chain. Affiliates provide services in the value chain but are not in the value chain themselves, such as financial institutions and manufacturers.
 - All of them are involved in different ways. GSA involves them by forming public and private partnerships between NGOs and the private sector to develop programs aiming at improving the livelihoods of shea collectors. You need both—without the private sector, there is no income component, and NGOs play a vital role in capacity-building services and connecting them to public funds.

- (3) What are the challenges and opportunities you have identified in the West African shea industry for women farmers?
 - GSA has a sustainability program designed for the multi-stakeholder process described earlier, and this program is tackling two main challenges:
 - Women empowerment, meaning how women can get a fair price for their work and how shea collection can be a healthy and safe occupation; and
 - Ecosystem protection, looking at parkland restoration and how to decrease the amount of wood and water used during shea processing.

- (4) In your experience, between non-profit and for-profit entities, can you explain the differences in how they address the challenges you mentioned?
 - There is a difference in perspective:
 - Businesses have found a pivotal reason to address these challenges, and it is about ensuring supply availability. Shea is a collection activity—women can collect shea but decide to do other activities that generate income. Ensuring women are empowered and can work safely is investing in guaranteeing women will still gather shea in the future. It is the same for ecosystem protection. Businesses also have corporate sustainability requirements necessary to fulfill or want to fulfill depending on the type of companies, which is also why they will invest in the supply chain.
 - Non-profits tend to view shea as an avenue. If they want to create jobs in a rural area or empower women, shea is a great avenue.

- (5) When empowering the women shea farmers, what are the benefits and drawbacks of being a for-profit or a non-profit?
 - It does not relate to being for-profit or non-profit; it relates to their modus operandi. There is a different model for each.

- (6) What are the differences in how the entities interact with your organization to establish sustainability standards and improve women's lives?
 - For sustainability, there is not much difference because the program utilizes multi-stakeholder engagement and decisions, and it is not like one entity type has more say than another.

- (7) How do industry standards play a role in enhancing the lives of the women shea farmers?
 - They are quite important because they set a benchmark. For GSA's sustainability program, they have set up activities and best practices that companies and non-profits can do to improve sustainability in the value chain. It is crucial because it provides people with a way to measure themselves, not just on a per-entity basis, but within the industry to stay involved and relevant.
- (8) Are there any standards that are particularly relevant to the women shea farmers?
 - For shea specifically, the GSA has a sustainability program. Regarding the standard, some private sector companies use external standards, such as Fairtrade and UEET.
 - Otherwise, in terms of extensive sustainability standards, it is usually the UN Global Compact, and for European and American regulation, there are sustainability measurements and reporting.
- (9) How do the different entities approach cultural sensitivity and community engagement when working with the women shea farmers?
 - Many are local, even if they are international companies. They will have local staff and partners.
 - GSA recommends doing a community entry, so before any activities, meet the chiefs and community leaders to explain one's purpose. GSA published best practices for community engagement. It is crucial for project success.
- (10) How does GSA measure the impact of its initiatives on the lives of women shea farmers? Are there any specific metrics that guide your assessment?
 - GSA lists it in its annual report. GSA compiles the members' activities and publishes industry-wide projects. GSA further maps out its program to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY OUTREACH GRAPH

Organization	Entity Type	Contact Information	Initial Contact	Follow Up	Outcome
Eu'Genia Shea	Social enterprise	customerservice@eu-geniashea.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Shea Yeleen	Social enterprise	info@sheayeleen.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Alaffia	Social enterprise	service@alaffia.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Northshea	For-profit	admin@northshea.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Global Shea Alliance	Non-profit	info@globalshea.com	09/18/2023	N/A	No response
Shea Radiance	For-profit	(443) 212-8658	N/A	N/A	Did not contact
Living Shea Butter	For-profit	info@livingsheabutter.com; (208)339-7027; https://www.crexendo.com/store/4075296/contact	Email does not work	N/A	Could not contact
African Fair Trade Society	Unclear	africanfairtradesociety@gmail.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response

Organization	Entity Type	Contact Information	Initial Contact	Follow Up	Outcome
Fair Tale	Unclear	kai@fairtaleghana.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Shea Yeleen	Social enterprise	info@sheayeleen.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Ajike Shea Centre	Non-profit	sales@ajikesheacentre.com	09/07/2023	N/A	Responded
Baraka Shea Butter	For-profit	info@barakasheabutter.com	09/07/2023	N/A	Responded
Bandisuglo Shea Butter	Cooperative	bandisuglo2007@yahoo.com; ritadampson@yahoo.com	09/07/2023; First email wasn't found, but also sent to the second	N/A	No response
Blessed Women Ghana	Cooperative	Ophilia Nubabarre (LinkedIn)	N/A	N/A	Did not contact
Giwaland Women Cooperative	Cooperative	giwalandgroup@gmail.com	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Jilima Co-Op	Cooperative	https://www.jilimacop.com/pages/contact-us	09/07/2023	N/A	No response
Maltiti	Non-profit	info@maltitifoundation.org	09/07/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Pasambra Ghana Ltd.	For-profit	Admamal Trading (LinkedIn)	N/A	N/A	Did not contact
Sommalife	Social enterprise	team@sommalife.com	09/19/2023	09/19/2023	No response

Organization	Entity Type	Contact Information	Initial Contact	Follow Up	Outcome
Teni's Natural	Unclear	info@tenisnaturals.com; sales@tenisnaturals.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Titiaka Boressa	Cooperative	asumdaportia5@gmail.com	09/09/2023	N/A	Responded
Paracreams	For-profit	orders@paracreams.co.uk	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Tiyumtaba Women's Group	Cooperative	mnaabal@gmail.com	09/09/2023	09/09/2023	No response
Tungteiya Womens' Association	Cooperative	Mohammed Adam (LinkedIn); https://instagram.com/tungteiyashea/?hl=en	N/A	N/A	Did not contact
Widows and Orphans Movement	Non-profit	womghana2000new@gmail.com	09/09/2023	N/A	Responded
A Rocha Ghana	Non-profit	ghana@arocha.org	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	Responded
Agrisolve Ghana Nonprofit	Non-profit	info@agrisolvegh.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
ASDEV	Non-profit	info@asdevfoundation.org	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
BraveAurora	Non-profit	info@braveaurora.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	Responded

Organization	Entity Type	Contact Information	Initial Contact	Follow Up	Outcome
Climate Smart Training Programme	Non-profit	climatesmartghana@gmail.com; fachimsah@uds.edu.gh	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	Responded
Footprints Bridge International	Non-profit	info@fbridgeinternational.org	09/09/2023; Email did not work	N/A	Could not contact
Girls to Women Foundation	Non-profit	info@girlstowomenfoundation.org	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
NORDESO	Non-profit	nordeso21@yahoo.com	09/09/2023	09/09/2023	No response
ORGIIS Ghana	Non-profit	orgiisghana@yahoo.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Plan for Change Ghana	Non-profit	info@p4cgh.org	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Presbyterian Agricultural Services	Non-profit	info@presbyagricservices.org	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Pure Trust Social Investors Foundation	Non-profit	info@puretrustgh.org	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Savannah & Sahel Commodities Ltd.	For-profit	Senyo Kpello (LinkedIn)	N/A	N/A	Did not contact
Women of the Savannah Development Project	Non-profit	info@wsdproject.com	09/09/2023; Email did not work	N/A	Could not contact

Organization	Entity Type	Contact Information	Initial Contact	Follow Up	Outcome
Shea Network Ghana	Non-profit	sheanetworkghana@gmail.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Tree Aid	Non-profit	info@treeaid.org	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
54 Thrones	For-profit	info@54thrones.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
Body Basics Absolute Wellness	For-profit	customerservice@bodybasicsaw.com	09/09/2023	09/09/2023	No response
Buck Naked Soap Company	For-profit	https://bucknakedsoapcompany.com/pages/contact-us	N/A	N/A	Did not contact
Dr. Woods Products, LLC	For-profit	https://drwoods.com/contact/	N/A	N/A	Did not contact
Palmer's	For-profit	info@palmers.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response
EOS Products	For-profit	orders@evolutionofsmooth.com	09/09/2023	09/19/2023	No response

APPENDIX C

SURVEY QUESTIONS

- (1) Please provide the name of your organization.
- (2) What is the entity type of your organization?
- (3) Please list the country where your organization is incorporated.
- (4) Which aspect of the shea procurement process does your organization handle?
- (5) What factors influenced your choice of organizational structure in relation to supporting the social mobility of West African women shea farmers?
- (6) What advantages has your organization's entity type brought in terms of supporting the social mobility of West African women shea farmers?
- (7) What challenges has your organization's entity type encountered in terms of facilitating the social mobility of West African women shea farmers?
- (8) Is your organization in need of external support or assistance to further enhance the social mobility of West African women shea farmers?
- (9) Please describe what support would be most helpful to your organization to facilitate the social mobility of West African women shea farmers.