

New Partnership to Empower Women in Burkina Faso

ACCRA GHANA, July 2017 – L'OCCITANE, USAID, RONGEAD, and the Global Shea Alliance (GSA) are teaming up to empower women shea collectors and protect shea parklands in Burkina Faso.

Over the course of three years, L'OCCITANE will construct 10 warehouses, train 8,500 women in business development, environmentally-friendly shea processing and parkland management, as well as plant 45,000 new shea seedlings in six rural communities of Burkina Faso. These activities are aimed at maximizing value for women shea collectors and butter processors involved in the L'OCCITANE supply chain. These actions will improve their market access, as well as safeguard the shea resource and biodiversity in the African savannah. GSA President Badie Marico explained, "strong and profitable women groups constitute the root of the commercial and environmental sustainability of the shea industry."

L'OCCITANE has been working in Burkina Faso since 1980, supporting the cooperatives from whom they source shea butter as well as implementing literacy programs and the promotion of entrepreneurial projects. More than 10,000 Burkinabe women have gained autonomy thanks to these programs. Jean-Charles Lhommet, Sustainable sourcing manager at L'OCCITANE describes this new partnership as, "innovative for its extent and its numerous great partners, as well as expected, for its ambitions that relate perfectly to our engagement towards Burkinabe women."

The public-private partnership enables L'OCCITANE to compound the benefits brought to shea women collectors and butter producers. It is made possible through the Sustainable Shea Initiative, a U.S. \$13 million, five-year agreement to promote shea markets worldwide and improve sustainable production in Africa signed between the GSA and USAID.

More than 16 million women work in the shea industry across Africa as collectors or processors. These women rely on shea as a source of income, nutrition, and food. The goal of the agreement is to help women collectors and processors organize into cooperatives, obtain equipment and training, improve the financial benefit from the sale of their products, and protect the shea resource for their livelihoods. USAID/West Africa Mission Director Alex Deprez said, "We know well the benefits of increased trade for rural communities across Africa. GSA is pioneering efforts to grow markets and improve the livelihoods of rural women and their families that stand at the base of the shea value chain. We are proud to partner in these activities."

About L'OCCITANE

L'OCCITANE en Provence and commonly known as L'OCCITANE, is an international retailer of body, face, fragrances and home products. "Sustainable Communities" is a set of programs to support and develop the Group's sectors, which aims to fully integrate sustainability issues.

Among these programs, L'OCCITANE and the women producers' unions have been working, since 1980, in a spirit of co-development to ensure maximum added value for women in Burkina Faso. They can thus promote a label with international customers and emancipate themselves durably.

About the GSA

The GSA is a non-profit industry association with 430 members from 31 countries including women's groups, brands and retailers, suppliers, and NGOs. Through public-private partnerships, the GSA promotes industry sustainability, quality practices and standards, and demand for shea in food and cosmetics.

About USAID

The USAID/West Africa regional mission's goal is to promote social and economic well-being advanced by West Africans. Spanning 21 countries, USAID/West Africa designs and implements programs with West African partners to strengthen systems of non-violent conflict management, support economic growth, and expand quality health services. The American people, through USAID, provide economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries worldwide. For more information please visit <http://www.usaid.gov/west-africa-regional>.

About RONGEAD – ETC TERRA

The RONGEAD – ETC TERRA, established in 1983, is a non-governmental non-profit organization (NGO) based in Lyon whose activities cover the areas of agricultural industries, agro-industrial and NTFPs to facilitate market access for value chain actors, to strengthen producer organizations capacities, to reduce environmental externalities in the process of transformation and promote adapted agricultural policies in developing countries.