

Climate Smart Practices: Shea Co-operatives Learn Tools for Sustainable Water and Wood Resource Management

High water and wood consumption remain a major challenge for shea co-operatives in West Africa. To address this, climate smart practices are being promoted as part of the project *Towards Climate Resilient Shea Communities in Togo and Burkina Faso*. The project includes a strong focus on conservation, to reduce the amount of wood and water used during the processing of shea kernels. Activities include identifying practical, locally adapted solutions and training co-operative members to implement them effectively.

Between April and July 2025, 15 co-operatives supported by the project were introduced to sustainable alternatives and good practices to help lower their resource use and improve environmental outcomes in the shea value chain.

“By opting for sustainable water resource management, co-operatives are improving the productivity of shea processing whilst reducing their environmental footprint in the context of climate change. In addition, the solutions are simple and accessible ecological innovations based on nature,” explained Dr

Armand Kingbo, trainer for 8 of the co-operatives benefiting from the project in Burkina Faso. He explained further, *“the materials used to build the water filtration system are simple, accessible and adapted to the local context: gravel, sand and activated carbon.”* Using an interactive approach that combined discussions, peer



exchange and practical workshops, co-operative members worked with the trainer to learn each stage of manufacturing an ecological filter. The system enables them to re-use water from washing the kernels during the later stages of shea processing.

“I never imagined that we could make our own filter. Before, the water used to wash the kernels was useless to us, now, with this training, we can filter the water and re-use it in another stage of the kernel processing process, such as cooking other kernels,” says Awa, a member of the Benkady Co-operative in Burkina Faso.

In Togo, using a similar approach, co-operatives are being trained to use shea shells (the hard material that protects the kernel) as fuel for cooking. They also learn to repurpose dried churning residue (sometimes known as cake) as a fuel source for roasting kernels.



Co-operative Members during a practical workshop on how to make fuel from shea shells

Kparkpaka Alia, President of the Sourou Co-operative, said: *“Previously, we dried the churning sludge and used it directly as fuel. Thanks to this training, we understand that it’s more efficient to transform the churn sludge into briquettes using manual equipment. By using the briquettes, we manage the processing residues better, but we also consume less firewood.”*



A briquette made from shea shells

The project ‘Towards Climate Resilient Shea Producing Communities in Togo and Burkina Faso’ implemented by the Global Shea Alliance and funded by the African Development Bank through the African Climate Change Fund, aims to increase the climate resilience of 7,500 women shea processors and their communities. This series of capacity building activities on climate smart practices not only contributes to strengthening community resilience but also to the ultimate goal of improving transformative development in terms of gender equality, low carbon emissions and climate change resilience in certain vulnerable communities, particularly women, girls and young people in Africa.