



Member Survey Results

1- Background

In September 2019, the Global Shea Alliance conducted an online survey to gather member feedback on current and future activities. Over the last eight years, since our last survey, the Global Shea Alliance has grown to over 500 members from 35 countries. To better serve our members and help guide our current and future activities the survey was sent to all 500 members, out of which 285 responded. The survey requested for feedback on which services members found to be most useful in addition to member opinion on five newly proposed services. The full results have been collated anonymously into a full report and serves as the basis for this executive summary.

The Global Shea Alliance serves as a platform for networking, partnership, knowledge and information sharing across the shea value chain. Members revealed very different interests and expectations from the GSA. Overall, members were satisfied with their involvement in the GSA. They outlined the need to improve services related to access to markets, and for the GSA to better disseminate its activities—for example, only 30% of members have received the annual report.

Below is a summary of members' responses to the survey.

2- GSA Assessment

Question 1: Why did you join the GSA?

	Reason	Number of mentions
1	To build stronger networks and partnerships	78
2	To gain knowledge and share information	71
3	To add value, traceability to the whole value chain and improve conditions for women harvesters	40
4	To gain and increase access to markets	36
5	To support the industry	33
6	For technical assistance, capacity building and certification	25
7	To expand my business and get access to funding opportunities	21
8	To connect with suppliers and buyers	17
9	To contribute towards sustainability	16
10	To share experience of best practices and sustainability	9
11	Other	7
12	To get market information	7
13	Passion for shea	5
14	Other	7
15	To contribute to research	4
16	To add credibility	3
17	To assist with local challenges	3

Question 2: Has the GSA met your purposes?

	Yes	No/ Not yet
Members' answers	67% 186	33% 92

The reasons for responding in the affirmative covered a variety of issues.

#	Issue	No of comments
1	Positive experiences	30
2	To some extent	24
3	Yes, in terms of exposure, meeting people and making contacts	14

4	Yes, in terms of promoting womens' groups and sustainability	14
5	Yes, in terms of knowledge , experience and skills	7
6	Yes, in terms of increasing access to markets	7
7	Still learning how to get more	6
8	Still new	4
9	Yes in terms of creating more projects	3

Respondents who selected No/No Yet stated the following reasons.

#	Issues	No of comments
1	Not yet found leads or buyers through GSA	15
2	Has not yet fulfilled my focus	14
3	Technical Issues	14
4	Challenges of being new	13
5	Lack of balance and fairness	4
6	Not yet enough for women	3

Most respondents provided positive comments and examples of improved business in the comments. For many of the no/ not yet responses, there was an understanding that progress has been made but there was room for improvement. Comments from the remaining respondents were related to lack of access to events due to fees and dues, a suggestion for more regional and district level events that collectors and suppliers can attend and issues over receiving information and being contacted after joining or asking for feedback.

3- Participation in GSA Events and Services

The next set of questions asked respondents whether or not they had participated in current activities and how useful they found them. With the exception of the Africa conference, most members do not participate in GSA activities. This was followed by the sustainability program. What is striking is that even though the majority of people had not participated in the other activities, these activities were still seen as very useful by a majority of respondents, with some seen as more useful than others as shown in the table below.

# in survey	Current activity	Have Participated	Have not participated	Very useful to us	Moderately useful to us	Not useful to us
8d	Industry Updates and Information Dissemination	77 45%	93 55%	163 82%	36 18%	1 1%
6a	African Conference: Annual conference held in a rotating West African country	159 67%	77 33%	156 84%	23 12%	6 3%
7b	Kernel Quality Best Practices and Standards	59 28%	152 72%	152 89%	13 8%	6 4%
8c	Annual Report	64 37%	109 63%	147 81%	31 17%	3 2%
8a	Market Linkages: Individualized support for members to find buyers and sellers of shea products	72 33%	147 67%	142 84%	17 16%	10 6%
5a	GSA sustainability Program: Members commit to guidelines, implementations criteria, project Implementation, and annual reporting	86 37%	144 63%	139 82%	26 15%	4 3%
7a	Quality Working Group	48 21%	178 79%	128 85%	15 10%	8 5%
8b	Market Support	49 23%	160 77%	128 83%	16 10%	11 7%

6d	Policy Advocacy:	36 17%	178 83%	117 75%	19 15%	15 10%
8f	National Association support:	40 21%	152 79%	116 74%	29 19%	11 7%
8e	Faces of Shea Campaign:	39 22%	139 78%	115 70%	38 23%	12 7%
6e	ACE (Africa Cosmetics Exhibition)	38 17%	192 83%	107 75%	21 15%	15 10%
6b	European Conference	32 13%	216 87%	105 79%	19 14%	9 7%
6c	U.S. Conference	29 12%	216 88%	93 76%	21 17%	9 15%
5d	Sustainability partnerships	51 29%	122 71%	88 83%	13 12%	5 4%
5c	Sustainability Project Development	30 17%	149 83%	82 84%	14 14%	2 2%
5b	USAID Sustainable Shea Initiative:	42 22%	145 88%	81 82%	13 13%	5 5%
5e	Sustainability Working group:	41 23%	139 77%	78 79%	17 17%	4 4%

The next question asked; what else can the GSA do for you? The responses mostly asked for market linkages, which include more connections to buyers as well as training and business development. Responsive and timely information sharing has come through the survey as something the secretariat can rectify. The other issues will promote the discussion of what is the GSA's core purpose and capacity and how to innovate to meet some of the suggestions given.

	Core issues	Detailed issues	No of comments
1	Create more B2B networking, markets and funding	Overall	95
		Markets	29
		B2B connection	25
		Information sharing	15
		Trainings	14
		Funding	12
2	Training and support for activities		29
3	Timely information sharing and secretariat activities		28
4	More regionally adapted programs and innovation	Overall	27
5	Share more research, information and do more advocacy	Overall	26
6	Circulate market information and assist in pricing		20
7	Supporting women		18
8	Sourcing quality and sustainable shea nuts		16
9	Assist in more high quality sustainable supply chain and training		15
10	Assist in technical trade issues		10
11	In general		8
12	Deepen Knowledge		5
13	Quality control		1
14	Other		7

4- New Services

The GSA proposed 5 new services, and asked members for feedback. While there is a lot of support in principle for the proposed new services, few members are prepared to pay fees for them.

#	Proposed new activity	Very Useful to us	Moderately useful to us	Not useful to us	Would pay fee
10a	Sustainability Seal: Actual # of respondents	61% 153	28% 70	11% 27	59
10b	Monthly Price Information: Actual # of respondents	74% 192	18% 47	8% 22	48
10c	Industry Market Report: Actual # of respondents	73% 189	19% 50	7% 19	56
10d	Online Sustainability Platform: Actual # of respondents	78% 209	18% 49	4% 10	27
10e	Online Markets Platform: Actual # of respondents	83% 222	12% 31	5% 13	31

The responses pointed out that the GSA should initially focus on establishing the online market and sustainability platforms. These aim to establish on-line messaging services to communicate market and sustainability needs and find new partners, using technology to strengthen the GSAs core purposes.

Responses on the sustainability seal and monthly price information showed a deep divide between members, and will need to be discussed to ensure a consensus. Many suppliers would like to have some kind of recognition as belonging to the GSA and applying the sustainability and quality standards. Nevertheless, as raised by some respondents, the third-party monitoring and evaluation needed to maintain the authenticity of a seal and avoid misuse is beyond the capacity of the small GSA office. On pricing, suppliers would like to see some kind of guidance, grading, and uniformity to pricing to ensure predictability and to not be taken advantage of as well as benchmarking against cocoa. At the same time, some buyers are very clear that it is not the business of the GSA to share local monthly pricing across seven countries and that doing so could raise some legal issues.

On the issue of paying for these extra services, some were clear that the GSA must take care not to charge for information available for free elsewhere and to think carefully about how extra charges may exclude some of the members from services.

The next question asked what other services respondents would like to see. The responses emphasized that most people were satisfied with what has already been suggested. Other suggestions included awards, advocacy and faires as well as assisting some respondents to connect with 3rd party certifications.