

Shea Business Empowerment Program II (SBEP II) Request for Proposals – Improved Kernel Processing Cooperatives

1. Background

The Global Shea Alliance (GSA), in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, is implementing a five-year program in collaboration with the International Trade Centre, Light for the World, and EmpowHer. This initiative builds on the success of the Shea Business Empowerment Pilot Program in Ghana and seeks to expand its impact by connecting financially disadvantaged young women across West Africa to dignified employment opportunities within the shea value chain.

The program is designed to strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity and climate resilience of young women engaged in shea production. Phase I will focus on Benin and Ghana, while Phase II will extend to Nigeria, Senegal, and Burkina Faso.

Overall, the initiative aims to create dignified and sustainable work opportunities for 374,865 financially disadvantaged young women—including persons with disabilities (PWDs) and internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the targeted countries. This will be achieved through the strengthening of businesses along the shea value chain, from primary processing cooperatives to higher-value addition enterprises.

The implementation of the program is guided by four core objectives:

- Increase productivity in shea collection and primary processing
- Empower women-led enterprises engaged in secondary and tertiary value addition
- Strengthen market linkages among shea cooperatives, SMEs, and private sector actors
- Advocate for national policies that support the preservation and sustainable management of shea parklands

To support the delivery of this initiative, the Global Shea Alliance (GSA) is inviting its members and Sustainability Partners in Ghana and Benin with demonstrated capacity to operate in hard-to-reach communities and mobilize financially disadvantaged young women in rural areas to participate in shea kernel production.

Selected partners will be responsible for identifying target rural communities and supporting **young women aged 18–35** to establish and manage fully youth-led shea cooperatives. These cooperatives will be integrated into dignified employment opportunities in shea kernel processing, in alignment with the program's broader objectives on value addition and enterprise development.

Interested applicants are required to download, complete, and submit the application form in accordance with the provided guidelines.

2. Objective of the Call

The objective of this call is to engage with qualified partners to formalise **20 shea kernel cooperatives in Benin** and **80 shea kernel cooperatives in Ghana** operating within shea-producing communities by **mobilizing 100% financially disadvantaged young women (aged 18–35) in hard-to-reach rural areas, with the aim of transforming informal shea kernel processing activities into dignified and sustainable employment opportunities**. This will be achieved by strengthening participants' technical expertise and business management capabilities in shea kernel processing, while also supporting them to effectively coordinate and manage community-based processing facilities using environmentally sustainable practices. In addition, the program will promote commercially viable value-added production to enhance incomes and foster long-term economic resilience among participating young women.

3. Scope of Support

The program will prioritize the capacity-building needs of financially disadvantaged young women by delivering structured training and targeted technical support to enhance their knowledge and skills in shea kernel processing. This will be implemented through engagement in centralized post-harvest processing centres, enabling participants to transition from informal activities to organized and commercially viable shea kernel production.

Roles and Responsibilities of Parties

a. GSA Member & Sustainability Partner

Selected partners will be responsible for the following:

- i. Identify target locations and communities, including compiling a list of financially disadvantaged young women aged 18–35.
- ii. Identify existing structures in the target communities to set up centralised processing centres
- iii. Lead community entry processes and stakeholder engagement to support the establishment of cooperatives and centralized post-harvest processing centres.
- iv. Conduct training needs assessments for participating young women.
- v. Organize participating young women into shea cooperatives of no more than **300 members each**, ensuring inclusion targets of at least 5% persons with disabilities (PWDs) and 5% internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- vi. Adapt GSA training materials for technical capacity building on Aggregation, Business Management and Cooperative Development, quality, financial literacy for young women and their cooperatives.
- vii. Provide business coaching to support cooperatives in establishing effective management structures for centralized processing centres (with four cooperatives expected to jointly operate and manage one centre).

- viii. Facilitate linkages between cooperatives and financial institutions, including supporting account opening and delivering financial literacy and planning training.
- ix. Support the establishment of market linkages for cooperatives to ensure sustainable commercial engagement.
- x. Report on the progress of young women-led cooperatives, including training activities, management and operations of the centralized processing centres, and related financial and accountability reports.

b. Global Shea Alliance (GSA)

As part of its support to young women-led cooperatives, GSA will:

- i. Provide funding to cover technical training for financially disadvantaged young women.
- ii. Develop and share training curricula to support capacity-building efforts.
- iii. Supply essential working tools to enable post-harvest shea kernel processing, including tricycles, personal protective equipment i.e.; (PPE), dehusker and cook stove etc.
- iv. Facilitate the formal registration of cooperatives to strengthen their operational structure.
- v. Deploy young graduates to undertake business internships and coaching with the established young women cooperatives.
- vi. Monitor, track, and evaluate systemic changes and the overall impact of the intervention on cooperatives and their communities.

4. Eligibility Criteria

Interested applicants must meet the following criteria to be considered:

- Be a registered and paid up GSA member and Sustainability Partner.
- Demonstrate proven experience in mobilizing and engaging young women, particularly in hard-to-reach rural communities.
- Possess the capacity to identify suitable communities with accessible or leasable infrastructure for shea processing activities.
- Demonstrate the ability to effectively engage community leaders and women's groups to secure land documentation and facilitate lease agreements where necessary.
- Show experience in engaging commercial and rural financial institutions to support young women-led cooperatives.
- Have a strong understanding of shea kernel processing, with the ability to provide technical mentorship and guidance.
- Demonstrate capacity to deliver practical, hands-on training and skills development programs in rural contexts.

5. Application Criteria

Applications will be assessed based on the following:

- Compliance with eligibility requirements
- Demonstrate potential for social impact, particularly for disadvantaged young women
- Consideration of environmental sustainability
- Geographic inclusion, with priority given to underserved areas
- Budget clarity and reasonableness
- Successful completion of due diligence assessment

6. Partner On-boarding Process

The process for engaging GSA Members and Sustainability Partners is outlined below:

- Publication of the Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Virtual information dissemination session on 20th May 2026 at 2 pm GMT ([Meeting link](#))
- Close of application submission ([SBEP II RFP Kernel Application Form](#))
- Initial review of applications
- Due diligence process (including desk reviews, in-person visits, and / or phone interviews)
- Final review and selection of partners
- Issuance of selection confirmation emails to successful partners
- On-boarding webinar for selected partners
- Contracting and agreement execution

7. How to Apply

In Ghana, interested applicants are required to complete and submit the SBEP II Application Form to the GSA Secretariat by May **28, 2026**, at 5pm GMT Applications should be addressed to **Prince Nunoo, Senior Programs Manager (Projects)** and submitted via email at p.nunoo@globalshea.com and copy **Edwin Zuta, Partnership Manager**; e.zuta@globalshea.com