

SHE(A) MATTERS (CONSERVATION, WOMEN, LIVELIHOODS)

Name: SHEA INTEGRATED GLOBAL FOUNDATION (SIGF)

Affiliation : UNDP GEF-SGP

Introduction

Shea She(a) Matters empowered rural women in Arikyia, Nasarawa State, to conserve over **1,600 hectares** of shea parkland while transforming their livelihoods. By providing **organic certification (SDG 2 & 8)**, **clean energy access (SDG 13)**, and **training in sustainable harvesting (SDG 1, 8, 13)**, the initiative curbs deforestation, boosts biodiversity (SDG 15), and enables women to participate in the **\$3.2B global shea value chain (SDG 8)**. The program fosters climate resilience, promotes inclusive economic growth, and thrives on multi-sector partnerships (SDG 17) to scale its impact across Nigeria.

Objectives

To empower rural women through sustainable shea value chain development, promote biodiversity conservation, reduce deforestation via clean energy alternatives, enhance climate resilience through organic practices, engage traditional leaders in environmental governance, and build strategic partnerships for scale, certification, and market access—contributing to inclusive, community-driven solutions for poverty, sustainability, and climate action.



Fig. 1: Fire Service Office Supporting the distribution of LPG cylinders and training on its safe use.

Methodology

The project applied a community-led, participatory approach combining conservation with livelihood enhancement. Women were mobilized into cooperatives,

trained in organic practices, and supported with tools, LPG cylinders, and processing facilities. Tree enumeration and mapping covered 1,600+ ha. Traditional leaders enforced tree protection. Certified off-takers ensured market access. Visual data, photos, and GPS mapping validated outcomes. Beekeeping and carbon trading were integrated as adaptive innovations.

Results and Discussions

1,604 ha conserved (160% of 1,000 ha target)

→ Significant expansion of protected land enhances biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

♦ **208,553 trees enumerated and conserved** (39% above target)

→ Boosts carbon sequestration, stabilizes soils, and supports wildlife habitats.

♦ **220 women trained & empowered**

→ Drives local leadership in conservation and improves household income through certified trade.

♦ **220 LPG cylinders distributed**

→ Reduced dependence on wood fuel, leading to a measurable drop in tree felling and household emissions.

♦ **Organic certification achieved (Ecocert via PRI Global Ventures)**

→ Enabled access to premium global markets; builds trust and long-term value chain credibility.

♦ **5 additional communities joined voluntarily**

→ Indicates strong social acceptance and perceived value of the program model.

♦ **300 beehives introduced** (via new European partnership)

→ Enhances pollination, boosts biodiversity, and adds a revenue stream aligned with conservation goals.

Conclusion and Future Work

Empowering women through sustainable shea development offers a proven model for community prosperity and environmental resilience, providing a scalable blueprint for global impact..

Acknowledgements

Funded by UNDP GEF-SGP