

SHEANE GROW'S

Project Progress Report

(2023–2024)

Reengineering for Resilience

1.0 Introduction: Holding Ground with Limited Means

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the SHEANE Project advanced climate-resilient shea restoration in Northern Ghana, powered not by grants or external investment, but by the unwavering commitment of our communities. With **less than \$3,000 USD** in total support across the period, we planted trees, lost fields, reimagined systems, and sparked something deeper than data: **a cultural and ecological shift**.

This report documents the journey: the experiments, the setbacks, the reflections, and the early signs of transformation that position SHEANE as more than a planting project, it is becoming a people-powered movement for ecological justice.



2.0 Planting With Purpose: 2023 Field Activities

Coming off the success of 2022 pilot planting trials, we began 2023 with hope and a modest but ambitious target: expand our dispersed shea tree planting approach across four new field sites totaling approximately 12 hectares. Our methods remained natural and locally resonant:

- Seeds germinated in homes
- Planted in dispersed patterns (not linear

rows) to preserve the familiar landscape

- Approximately **800 seedlings planted**, with an observed **67% survival rate**

“We didn’t use chemicals. Just what we know, what we have. And still the trees grew.”

– Community youth participant, Ahmed

Community involvement expanded: **41 women, 10 men, and 27 youth** contributed manual labor, seed preparation, and observation activities across **11 sub-communities**. These efforts were complemented by informal climate education and storytelling in both **Dagbani and English**.

3. Loss and Learning: The 13-Hectare Flood Disaster

Later in 2023, disaster struck. Our largest field, **13 hectares of newly planted seedlings**, was completely **wiped out by flash floods**. Over **2,000 seedlings** were destroyed within days, and others deteriorated due to waterlogging and unstable soils.

This loss was more than physical—it tested community morale and exposed the limits of our existing model.

“I even lost the majority of my groundnuts, the water just washed everything away. We just stood there. I can’t believe I lost my farm this year too.”

– Women farmer, Sadia

We realized our approach, though grounded in tradition and low-cost implementation, lacked **resilience design**, no soil bunds, no runoff modeling, and no strategies for early-stage seedling protection.

4. A Shift in Strategy: From Trials to a Five-Fold Model

In response, we entered a strategic design phase, co-developing what would become the **Five-Fold Shea Restoration Model**. It builds on community wisdom, ecological observation, and systems thinking. The five pillars are:

1. Resilient Planting Systems

- Mapping terrain for water flow and planting accordingly
- Adding bunds and soil infrastructure to protect roots
- Creating a tagging system to monitor growth

2. Secure Land & Policy Integration

- Advocating for indigenous women’s land access
- Community land-use agreements
- Engaging local chiefs and leaders in conservation

3. Clean Fuel & Circular Alternatives

- Piloting briquettes from unused shea by-products
- Training youth to create and sell clean energy
- Reducing tree-felling for firewood

4. Community Climate Education

- Peer-led trainings on how tree loss affects rainfall and farming
- Integrating storytelling and local myths to shift beliefs
- Hosting sessions in 20+ communities

5. Technology & Data-Driven Planning

- Using simple GPS tools to map fields
- Community reporters tracking seedling survival
- Aggregating data to adapt the model yearly

This model is still **in development**. 2024 was spent piloting elements and gathering feedback to strengthen each area before scaling.

5. Community-Driven Momentum, Despite Setbacks

Despite our pause in formal operations in early 2025 due to lack of funding, **community members continued planting independently**. Women planted **between 10 and 100 seeds** on their own farms, without supervision or pay. This behavior shift signals the emergence of long-term community ownership.

“Now when I see a shea seed, I don’t walk past. I plant it. It’s part of my work.”

– Young farmer, Bushiru

We also documented important stories like that of a woman who planted **30 mature shea trees** on her husband’s land. Today, she fears losing them if the land is sold or reallocated. ([WATCH STORY HERE](#))

“They are my children. I grew them. But I don’t own the land. So I may lose them all.”

– Woman farmer, Memuna

These stories reinforce why land rights are not a side issue—they are **central to ecological resilience**.



6. What We've Achieved (2023–2024)

- Designed the **Five-Fold Restoration Model** through field insight
- Engaged over **21 community groups** and built new alliances
- Captured field loss data to inform flood-resilient planting
- Initiated designs for pilot testing of shea-based clean fuel
- Documented community-led stories of change and innovation
- Built informal cost frameworks to guide 2025–2026 fundraising

7. What We've Learned

- Community ownership is growing, but needs support to scale
- Climate resilience must be built into planting from the start
- Women's land access determines whether trees survive beyond infancy
- Cultural context shapes planting behaviors, linear farms may alienate community stewardship
- Policy engagement must now go beyond awareness to active advocacy

8. Looking Ahead: 2025 Design, 2026 Deployment

As of early 2025, we are in a **deliberate pause**, using this period to:

- **Refine our model fully**, especially around seedling protection and flood-proofing
- **Identify learning partners** with expertise in hydrology, agroforestry, and shea ecology
- **Develop a realistic \$200,000 pilot fund** to stabilize and test at scale
- Build out our **governance structure and conservation partnerships**
- **Equip indigenous youth** to engage in global policy forums and lead advocacy

Our intention is to **enter 2026 ready to deploy**: with data-informed systems, stronger funding, and deeper community embeddedness.

Conclusion: A Future Rooted in Resilience

The SHEANE project is no longer just planting trees, it is **restoring knowledge, reclaiming land**, and redefining what climate resilience looks like when led by the people most affected. What began with seeds and dreams is now becoming a model of action that blends cultural integrity, gender justice, and ecological wisdom.

“This is not for SHEANE alone. It is for all of us. If the trees live, we all live.”

– Elder, Seidu

