

## **AARHUSUNITED** and UNDP Burkina Faso **Partners Against Poverty Working for Women and Children**

In its value statement, AARHUS UNITED DENMARK emphasizes that all its activities centers around integrity, responsibility and commitment. In Burkina Faso, it is a valued partner of UNDP and making the lives of the people who harvest its raw materials better – putting its values into action.

For more than a century, AARHUS UNITED DENMARK has been one of the leading producers of vegetable oils and speciality fats to the food industry, as well as the speciality oils used in cosmetics and dietary supplements. The shea nut, which grow wild in West Africa, is one of its most important raw materials.

After the media's exposure of child trafficking related to cocoa plantations, AARHUS UNITED set up a task force to investigate whether child trafficking was used in the shea supply chain or not. The investigation showed that mainly women gather the nuts, and that their children help in their spare time out of school hours. However, they decided to still do something to improve the living conditions of the locals. They considered establishing a school in Burkina Faso. However, this project would have been based on 'pure charity' and therefore not sustainable in the long term.



As part of its Nordic Business Outreach, UNDP Nordic Office provided a new angle on the project. AARHUS UNITED and UNDP established for a win-win partnership and cost-sharing agreement for the project entitled “National Multifunctional

Platform Programme for the Fight Against Poverty”. This partnership supports AARHUS UNITED's shea supply strategy and simultaneously alleviates poverty and improves the living conditions for women and girls in the area, as well UNDP's strive to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

### **The Partnership in Principle**

AARHUS UNITED wanted to demonstrate its role as a proactive and responsible corporate citizen by participating in the national poverty reduction initiative and improving the mutually beneficial commercial relationships with the people of the villages through formalizing a partnership with UNDP and the Government of Burkina Faso.

The partnership aims to increase the focus on the economical potential of shea nuts, ultimately freeing up time for increased harvesting in these specific geographical areas through the establishment of a number of multifunctional platforms which reduce the daily workload for women, as well as through establishing closer commercial relations. UNDP assisted AARHUS UNITED in its outreach effort aimed to establish a dialogue with NGOs representing the local women who harvest the shea nuts.

### **The Partnership in Practice**

Practically, AARHUS UNITED has provided multi-functional platforms which generate electricity for the villages. The platforms use a diesel motor to power various tools, which provide affordable, energy-related services such as husking rice, grinding cereals, pumping water and generating electricity for lighting and for powering various electric tools – hence the term 'multi-functional'.

One of the aims of the platforms is to relieve women and girls of some of their daily work duties in their homes. The incomes they are able to generate also improve the women's economic and social status and alleviate poverty in the immediate community. Finally, the platforms also enhanced food hygiene and water quality, which improved the general health of the local community. At the same time, AARHUS UNITED has decided to further optimise the supply chain, thereby potentially increasing the revenues of the locals.

This economic growth and improved living conditions can initiate a positive cycle that motivates women to collect more shea nuts, which can subsequently also increase the amount of shea nuts purchased and ensures a steady supply of nuts.

### **Project Goals (2004-2007)**

Four hundred platform enterprises will be set up of which at least 40 % will be upgraded with a water or lighting network. The majority of these enterprises will be owned and managed by women. The platform enterprises will create at least 4000 jobs and influence the poverty level and access to energy of at least 500.000 people in that area.

NGOs will carry out structured interventions and support new platform enterprises, as well as creating networks between these enterprises, private suppliers of technical, financial and commercial services and public partners.



At the national level there will be a coordinating unit within the Ministry of Economic and Development monitoring and supporting the execution of project activities by NGOs, and promoting the integration of project activities into sectoral programmes and budgets. They will enable the use of platform performance indicators for the strategic piloting of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Ministry will also actively participate in the knowledge network established by the Regional Multifunctional Platform Programme.

### **Sustainable Development – Making Results Last**

AARHUS UNITED's group of companies serve global customers, that have sustainability as a priority and AARHUS UNITED wants its employees to be proud of the company they work for.

In 2002, AARHUS UNITED joined the UN-based international agreement to promote sustainability, Global Compact. To ensure that this work progresses systematically, the group has opted to report on its sustainable efforts via the Global Reporting

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are global targets that world leaders from 189 countries set at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. The goals include: Halving extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and gender equity, drastically reducing under-five mortality and improving maternal health, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing an overall global partnership for development.

UNDP plays an important role in:

- Helping countries achieve the goals
- Monitoring progress on achievement of the goals
- Promoting and advocating the goals
- Developing a better understanding of what it actually will take to reach the goals

The participation of business in achieving and promoting the Millennium Development Goals is critical. UNDP encourages companies and business organizations to join United Nations in supporting the goals.

Initiative and aims to see its involvement produce real, meaningful development results which promote sustainability.

AARHUS UNITED's involvement in the multifunctional platform project is indeed a sustainable situation. It is an example of how international business activities can work hand in hand with local sustainable development. The project offers a mutual benefit situation for Burkina Faso and AARHUS UNITED.

Through the establishment of local partnerships and closer relations with the women collecting shea nuts, other business initiatives beneficial to both partners could develop. The combination of AARHUS UNITED's know-how of the business with the know-how from UNDP working with sustainable issues and the Millennium Development Goals has been the foundation for establishing true win-win result for development and convincingly demonstrates the strength of partnerships versus charity.

#### **For more information**

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# **PARTNERING FOR DEVELOPMENT A NORDIC BUSINESS OUTREACH**



**AARHUSUNITED**



*Partnering to alleviate poverty  
and improve the lives of  
women and children in Burkina Faso*