

# UPDATE



2020 ISSUE 17



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- **BOULIS - A SOLUTION TO WATER SCARCITY IN BURKINA FASO**
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## Highlights in this issue



Dear supporters,

I hope you are in good health; the past few months have been extraordinary for all of us. As the Director of West Africa Operations, I've led on TREE AID's response to coronavirus across the five countries we work in. It has been an exceptionally busy time, keeping track of the daily developments, different restrictions and adapting our work as necessary. For the communities you support, we are continuing our work where it's safe to do so while making public health interventions, encouraging social distancing and implementing hygiene measures. I'm pleased to let you know, that there are no known cases in the communities we work. With the introduction of measures such as social distancing, some activities have changed but your support is still ensuring that communities have food, a sustainable source of income and are able to protect and nurture the natural resources that they depend on for survival. In this edition, we're sharing more detail on how our work has changed over the last few months on page 4. We've also got a special feature on the She Grows UK Aid Match project which is now underway – see pages 6-9. At a challenging time for all of us, your support has never been more important. Thank You.

Regards

Georges Bazongo  
Director of West Africa Operations

Front cover image: Sitan from Ouolodo village, one of the women being helped on the She Grows project.



How our work has been affected by Coronavirus



Boulis – a bold solution to water scarcity



The She Grows UK Aid Match project in Mali

Get the latest news and insights about our work on our website  
[www.treeaid.org.uk](http://www.treeaid.org.uk)

Sign-up to receive TREE AID email updates for the latest news, insights and information on how to get more involved.

[www.treeaid.org.uk/subscribe-to-our-email-newsletter/](http://www.treeaid.org.uk/subscribe-to-our-email-newsletter/)

Please get in touch if you would like to stop or change the information you receive from us.



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Website: [www.treeaid.org.uk](http://www.treeaid.org.uk) | Twitter: @TREEAID | Instagram: @tree\_aid

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# NEWS



## SUPPORTING sustainable livelihoods in Ghana

Since June 2019, TREE AID has been working on a new project in Northern Ghana, supported by the European Union and in partnership with ActionAid Ghana. The project has just finished its first year and is developing agricultural practices that support sustainable livelihoods for rural communities. At the same time, it is conserving biodiversity, and improving resilience to climate change. Smallholder farmers in Northern Ghana are at particular risk from land degradation, the climate crisis and environmental shocks such as floods, bushfires, and droughts. In total 12,000 farmers across 15 districts are being helped. TREE AID is working in four of these districts, supporting 3,600 people, including 3,200 marginalised women and 400 young people and individuals with disabilities.

## TREE PRODUCTS ON SUPERMARKET SHELVES



With your support, enterprise groups across West Africa are receiving help to access larger markets. This helps ensure that Village Tree Enterprise (VTE) groups get a fair price for their tree products. In a first for enterprise groups in Burkina Faso, they've received support to get non-timber tree products on sale in local supermarkets and kiosks. 26 different outlets are now selling tree products and discussion is underway with 37 more. This helps our enterprise groups reach a mass market outside of their rural communities while increasing local demand for high-quality tree products.

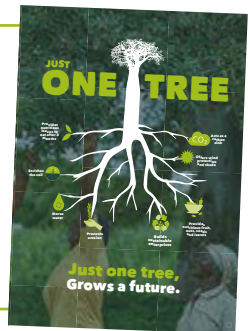


## ANNUAL REVIEW 2018-19

The full Annual Review for 2018-19 is available on our website at

[www.treeaid.org.uk/annual-reports](http://www.treeaid.org.uk/annual-reports)

You can also get in touch to request a copy of the full report to be sent to you. To do so email [info@treeaid.org](mailto:info@treeaid.org) or by calling 0117 909 6363.





## HOW OUR WORK HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS

**As the spread of coronavirus continues around the world, it has affected how we carry out the work that your support makes possible.**

The governments in our countries of operation have taken broadly similar measures to the UK to restrict movement and promote self-isolation. Working across multiple countries means adhering to a variety of restrictions and guidelines. Our priority has been to continue supporting the vulnerable communities we work with where possible, while ensuring we don't risk their health.

The communities we work with across the drylands live rurally. The remoteness of their villages protects them, but it does mean that our staff present a risk of unintentionally bringing the virus into their communities. Working with local partners has helped to ensure that work can continue without unnecessary travel from our country offices. Partners live and work close to the communities you support. This means they only need to travel short distances to visit them and conduct work. Many of our staff are based in the country offices in capital cities. Ensuring that no unnecessary travel is made from those offices is one of the steps we've taken to protect the rural communities we work with.

The communities you support are

vulnerable, they are amongst the poorest people in the world, suffer from malnutrition and hunger, live remotely and have little access to healthcare. Health systems generally are not equipped to deal with the strain of the virus spreading rapidly. On top of this, health systems in Mali and Niger have been weakened by conflict and insecurity. At the time of writing the outbreaks in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Ethiopia have been modest. But testing capability varies hugely and other factors mean the real number of cases could be much higher.

Many of the people we work with had not heard of COVID-19, because of the remoteness of their communities. A lack of technology and the reliance on word of mouth gives the potential for misinformation to spread easily. To combat this TREE AID has been dedicating time to explaining the situation to farmers during any sessions they have with them. You can read on page 8 how we've adapted household surveys. They now include ten minutes dedicated to explaining COVID-19 to participants and answering any questions they have about the virus.

Project staff are trusted in the communities they work with. Intervening with hygiene and social distancing interventions are a vital way to help protect communities from coronavirus.

# A bigger and bolder solution to water scarcity

In the drylands of Africa, water shortages in the dry season mean that the land struggles to support plant life. But an innovative solution is helping to conserve water all year round – bouldis.

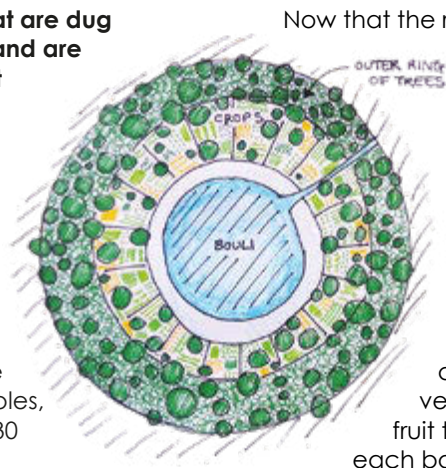
Burkina Faso receives almost as much rainfall as the UK but in just three months – typically mid-June to September. When the rain does arrive, the climate is so hot, it doesn't remain on the land for long. A lot of water simply evaporates into the air. The arid conditions also mean that the soil has dried out and formed a near impenetrable crust. As a result, instead of rain being absorbed into the ground, water simply runs off the surface of the land. All this water merges into central water systems such as rivers and lakes. Denying the land and vegetation the water they need and causing rivers to burst their banks. Floods wash away nutrient-rich top soil. This fuels an endless cycle of further erosion and degradation, year on year until the land can no longer support life.

**Bouldis are large pits that are dug deep into the ground and are able to hold significant amounts of water throughout the year,** despite the high temperatures and limited rainfall during the dry season.

Building bouldis is no easy feat; it is a labour and machine intensive process to dig these holes, which stretch roughly 30 meters across and are

3 meters deep. **This year, we have built 145 bouldis across Burkina Faso, each of which will hold on average 2,500 cubic meters of water.** Work began in March and was able to be completed safely by May despite complications caused by coronavirus.

Over time, as the soil quality around the bouldis improves, life begins to thrive and communities can use the surrounding land to grow fruit and vegetables as a source of nutritious food all year round. Planting an outer ring of trees around each bouli further helps to improve the environment and provides shelter from the wind for the crops growing within. Not only is water conserved for the community to use but the whole surrounding environment is transformed.



Now that the rainy season in Burkina Faso is underway, the completed bouldis are quickly filling with rain water. For the hundreds of communities across Burkina Faso who will benefit from the newly constructed bouldis, it is wonderful to see. They know what a benefit the bouldis will bring and are busy planting the vegetable gardens and fruit trees that will surround each bouli.

# The *She Grows* Project in Mali

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Many of you will remember our *She Grows* appeal that ran from 1st April to 31st June 2019.

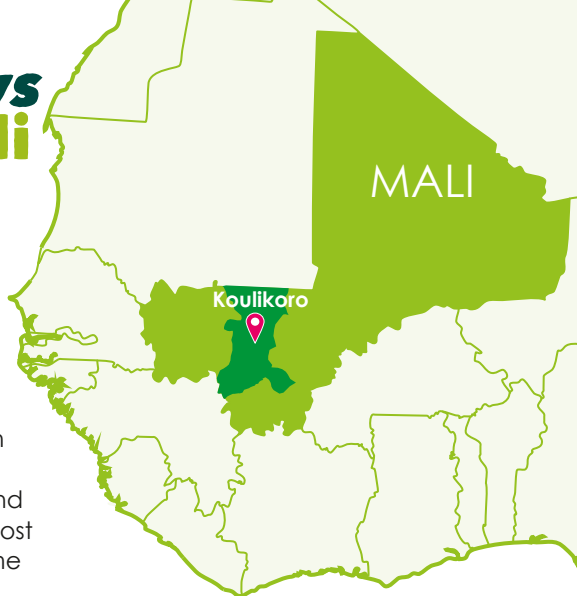
Thanks to you and all of our incredible supporters, the appeal raised £343,542 and with the addition of match funding from the UK government, reached a grand total of £638,091. This makes it our most successful appeal ever by quite some margin.

The project started in February and is taking place in the Koulikoro region of Mali.

## Why Koulikoro?

While planning the *She Grows* project we visited the Koulikoro region to visit an existing project. It's one of the world's poorest places and the need for further projects was apparent. We spoke with the women most affected and saw that decision-making power at the household and community level lies almost entirely with men. The majority of women depend on the land for survival but deforestation and frequent droughts are making this even harder. Clearing land for agriculture and cutting trees to sell as firewood is very common as it is a ready source of cash in a country with few employment opportunities.

**This is having a devastating effect on the land and people who depend on it. And while it is women and their households that rely on forests for income, food and firewood, those same women are prevented from managing the few trees that remain.**



## The project sets out to:

- 1 Support and strengthen 10 women's cooperatives to ensure they have a voice at community level.
- 2 Provide training to empower members to negotiate with local authorities in order to secure their long-term access to land and trees.
- 3 Train the cooperatives on soil and water conservation, how to look after existing trees, and how to plant trees.
- 4 Support cooperative members to form small village tree enterprise groups. These groups will be trained in key business activities such as planning, financial literacy, business registration and market information gathering.
- 5 Provide women with the tools they need to make shea butter, harvest honey and earn an income together as a group. The tools will help them process more efficiently and improve the quality of the tree products produced helping to increase their income.

By empowering women to gain financial independence through the project, women will increase their ability to support their children and with it, their status in the home. When you support a woman to start earning an income from trees, she is able to send her children to school and help lift her family out of poverty.

What's more, when a woman learns how to grow trees to protect her fragile environment and keep the soil fertile, the positive effects of this are felt by the whole community.



## CASE STUDY: Sitan



Sitan is one of the women who is taking part in the project, she lives in Ouolodo with her husband and children.

Every year she and her family struggle to find enough food during the rainy season.

*"When things are in short supply, there is no one to turn to and there is nowhere to go. I therefore try to do what I can with limited resources".*

Engrained gender inequality in Mali makes things particularly difficult for women like Sitan. They have less access to healthcare, education and jobs. Women are often reliant on the forests for income but they are prevented from managing the trees and land they depend on. Sitan knows first-hand how this is holding her back:

*"Women have the biggest responsibility of the family. But they don't have access to the means of production. If there is a lack of rain before the harvests, the women and children are those who suffer the most. Women who are pregnant, those with babies and the elderly all suffer more during the lean season."*

With all the responsibility of raising children, women then have to carry out physically demanding work. Men control access to production equipment and processing equipment. And that's where the *She Grows* project is making a difference; it's supporting women with the training and access to the equipment they need to earn an income from trees and grow a way out of poverty.

Now the project is underway we're excited to report back to you on the progress that has been made.



# **SHE GROWS** Progress so far

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**The She Grows project got underway in February 2020.** The first part of any TREE AID project is a baseline survey where we measure participants' living standards. The survey focuses on indicators such as household income, fuel-wood usage, dietary diversity, use of trees and forests, natural resource management techniques and women's decision-making powers.

Conducting a thorough baseline survey is vital to being able to effectively measure the impact of our projects on beneficiaries' lives. A survey at the beginning and end of each project ensures we are able to learn, review and adapt our work to maximise impact. And that also means we can report back to you more accurately on the impact of your support.

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on 11th March, just as the baseline study was underway. This meant we were able to adapt the survey to include a ten minute section providing participants with essential information on COVID-19. In rural communities in Mali, knowledge on the coronavirus is low, and misinformation can spread easily.

It was vital to use the time we had with households conducting the survey to explain and answer any questions they had on the virus. We've been providing information on how it spreads, who is vulnerable, and what hygiene and social distancing measures communities can implement.

Ten existing cooperatives are being supported and strengthened, one in each of the communities taking part in the project. Each cooperative is made up of around five smaller Village Tree Enterprise (VTE) groups. The groups have a democratic structure with community control, where members vote on leadership roles. Each cooperative has around 100 members. Profits are shared equally between the cooperative members, and they support each other by running saving and loans schemes.

Partners have been trained on the management of cooperatives and village tree enterprise groups. With this training, staff can support the ten cooperatives with confidence helping them to produce better quality non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and helping them to increase their incomes.





# NEXT STEPS

Now that the baseline study has been completed we've begun implementing the next phase of the project.

The ten communities will be planting 5,000 seedlings out during the rainy season which started in June.



Each woman is being given the training and tools she needs to propagate her own seedlings. This means women can choose which trees would be most beneficial to them and their families. And it means they have the ability to grow more seedlings in the future. We've found this approach can be particularly effective in helping communities feel ownership of the seedlings they plant.

Training and workshops are underway shortly, project staff have adapted the way they conduct these sessions due to coronavirus. In the past, some larger workshops would involve the whole community at once. Now with social distancing measures in place, project staff are working their way more slowly through communities to deliver training. Although this takes longer, there are many advantages to the smaller groups. Women are responding well to the smaller groups; sessions are more engaging and they have more opportunities to ask questions.

# FANTASTIC

**Love a tree day** – On Saturday 16 May it was 'Love a Tree' day, and to celebrate TREE AID asked supporters to create an artwork featuring their favourite tree and display it in their window. We received lots of responses as supporters created pictures of their favourite trees in a variety of formats. As you can see from the entries we received some were drawn, others painted, some featured real leaves and we even had one that was sewn!



## Give as you live

Another way you can support TREE AID from home is through online shopping platform Give as You Live.

With many of us doing more internet shopping over the last few months, Give as you Live is a simple way of raising money while doing your usual online shopping. All you have to do is set up an account, search for the retailer of your choice and start shopping. A percentage of your spend is donated back to TREE AID from the retailer at no extra cost to you. With over 4,000 retailers including major food and homeware stores such as; John Lewis, Tesco, Debenhams, Waitrose, B&Q, Argos, Dunelm and Abel & Cole it's easy to raise money as you shop.

To set up an account and start raising money for TREE AID today go to [www.giveasyoulive.com/charity/treeaid](http://www.giveasyoulive.com/charity/treeaid)



Give as you Live®  
Online

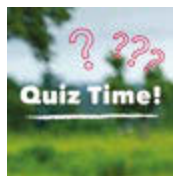
# FUNDRAISING

## Virtual fundraising

With so many events cancelled this summer and beyond, there's a lot less fundraising going on to support communities across dryland Africa.

If you'd like to help out, we're asking supporters to consider virtual fundraising to ensure we can continue planting trees and supporting communities to grow a way out of poverty. You can go to [www.treeaid.org.uk/virtual-fundraising](http://www.treeaid.org.uk/virtual-fundraising) to find a range of ideas to get you started.

You can download a guide to help you with the following ideas:



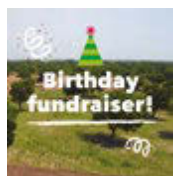
### Holding your own virtual quiz!

Who doesn't like a quiz? It's easier than you might think to host your very own virtual quiz with friends and family.



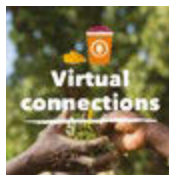
### Tea for Trees

What better way to fundraise than hosting your own virtual tea break?



### Set up a Birthday Fundraiser!

You could ask friends to donate instead of getting you a card or present. It's easy to set up a virtual fundraiser online through JustGiving or on Facebook.



### Virtual Connections

Lots of other ideas on the small things you could do every day to support some of the poorest communities in the world.

**Do get in touch for further information or to let us know if you're planning any fundraising activity. You can email [info@treeaid.org](mailto:info@treeaid.org) or call us on 0117 909 6363.**

## COMPANIES CORNER

**TREE AID works in partnership with a number of companies who support our work across dryland Africa.**

Nova Tissue began supporting TREE AID's work in May 2019. The company are donating 10% of the sale of their Soft on Nature toilet tissue packs. This will enable us to grow and protect trees across the African drylands. Trees are vital to communities living in poverty in Africa's drylands – they provide a source of food and a means of earning an income. They enrich degraded land and increase biodiversity.



**So look out for Soft on Nature toilet tissue, which is being sold online at Amazon. Every pack sold will help to empower communities to grow their way out of poverty through the power of trees.**



***“Now I feel happiness every day. I am proud and I feel strong.”***

**These are the words of Zalissa Congo, a 25 year old mother of three from Passimtenga village in Burkina Faso.**

Six years ago Zalissa had nothing – barely any food to feed her family and no means of earning an income. But thanks to TREE AID supporters, Zalissa's life has been transformed.

The TREE AID project she joined gave her the tools and training she needed to protect the trees in her village. She also learnt how to harvest and sell tree produce to earn a much needed income for her family. The tree is vitally important in Zalissa's village.

Trees offer hope to so many families living in poverty – they provide nutritious food to eat which can also be sold to earn an income.

Leaving a gift to TREE AID in your Will ensures you leave a lasting legacy. You can change a family's life with the generosity of a truly transformative gift that will be felt for many generations to come.

*“I want to thank TREE AID and all its supporters. I hope they can give other communities the support they have given to us. It has changed our lives.”*

## **How to remember TREE AID in your Will.**

By giving a gift to TREE AID in your Will, you can give trees and hope to some of the world's poorest people. If you would like to receive a free information pack please call **0117 909 6363**, email **info@treeaid.org** or write to us at **TREE AID, Brunswick Court, Brunswick Square, Bristol, BS2 8PE**