



Trustee Role Description

1. Background to Tree Aid and its work

Africa's drylands are home to 350 million people. 75% of these people live in rural areas, where their main source of livelihood is smallholder farming. This is a group that the United Nations Development Programme describes as the '*the global epicentre of extreme poverty*'. More than 50% of this rural population are living in chronic hunger and on the constant edge of a food crisis. This is the community of people targeted by Tree Aid's work.

Poverty and environmental decline are often inseparably linked. Poverty limits the choices of poor people and they are often forced to over-exploit their environment simply to survive. Over time, this leads to even greater hardship. But it doesn't need to be this way. With the right approach and timely support, Africa's dryland forests can serve as a safety net for the poor and a sustainable resource for building pathways out of poverty.

This is Tree Aid's role. Our mission is to help communities living in the drylands of Africa unlock the potential of trees to reduce poverty and protect the environment. We work to break the vicious cycle of environmental degradation and increased poverty for some of the most vulnerable rural communities in some of the poorest countries in the world. We offer practical knowledge and policy solutions that support the sustainable use and management of natural resources.

Tree Aid has a Board of Trustees which is legally responsible for Tree Aid, its staff and its work. It is a company limited by guarantee and so trustees are also directors of the company.

The current Board members are:

Elizabeth Davis (Chair)
Hilary Allison (Vice Chair)
Tristram Hilborn
Nick Pride
Alexander Simuyandi
Philip Songhurst-Thonet
Henry McLoughlin
Defrim Dedej
Roger Davies

The Board of Trustees normally meets four times a year. In addition, there is a Finance and Audit committee, a People Committee and a Fundraising Standards Committee. The Committees meet between 2 and 4 times a year.

More details on the charity can be found at www.treeaid.org

2. Overall Purpose of the Trustee Role

Trustees take ultimate responsibility for the work that Tree Aid does, and the way in which it spends money given by donors, to achieve its aims. It is a big responsibility, focussing on the strategic direction of the organisation, agreeing plans and budgets, and holding the Chief Executive to account for the delivery of the plans.

It has a legal dimension too, with trustees legally responsible for ensuring that the organisation operates to standards set by Parliament and the Charity Commission.

Specifically, the Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity;
- its financial health;
- the effectiveness of its activities; and,
- ensuring the organisation's aims, objectives and goals are in accordance with its governing document, and legal and regulatory guidelines.

3. Commitment

The trustee role is one that takes commitment. Trustees are expected to attend three Board meetings and a strategy day each year. There are sub committees, with authority delegated to them by the Board of Trustees, meeting at other intervals; and from time to time staff may seek to consult with you on your particular expertise.

You may be asked to represent Tree Aid at outside meetings with potential funders or influencers, and to attend or work alongside Tree Aid staff at events and receptions.

4. Main Responsibilities of a Trustee

With other trustees to hold Tree Aid 'in trust' for donors and current and future beneficiaries by:

- Ensuring that Tree Aid has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction, and is focused on achieving these;
- Being responsible for the performance of Tree Aid and for its 'corporate' behaviour;
- Ensuring that Tree Aid complies with all legal and regulatory requirements;
- Acting as guardians of Tree Aid's assets, both tangible and intangible, taking all due care over their security, deployment and proper application;
- Ensuring that Tree Aid's governance is of the highest possible standard;
- Working in partnership with other trustees, the Chief Executive and other senior staff.

All trustees should be aware of, and understand, their individual and collective responsibilities, and should not be overly reliant on one or more individual trustees in any particular aspect of the governance of the charity. For example, a Trustee is

expected to be able to read the financial accounts to a level that they can ask questions and comprehend answers of a general nature.

All trustees will undergo an induction upon appointment and should seek ongoing training to remain alert to, and aware of, their duties and responsibilities, and of the environment in which they operate.

It is essential that trustees avoid any personal or professional conflict of interest.

5. Key Duties and Activities of a Trustee

- To agree the vision, mission and strategic plan for Tree Aid
- To ensure that the operational plan and budget reflect the agreed strategic direction and are appropriate
- To agree the measures for objectively monitoring the progress of the charity towards its strategic goals
- To monitor the achievements of Tree Aid against the key measures from the operational plan and budget
- To hold the Chief Executive accountable for the achievement of the organisations' goals, and to provide the Chief Executive with regular, constructive feedback on both management and overall achievement
- To appoint the Chief Executive, to set their terms and conditions and to ensure that the organisation and the appointee invests in ongoing professional development, and considers succession planning
- To provide appropriate professional support to the executive team in areas where the trustee has particular experience or skills
- To agree and monitor the implementation and review of Tree Aid's policies and ensure that they will assist in the achievement of the strategic and operational plans
- To ensure that Tree Aid's organisational values are upheld in the delivery of its objectives
- To ensure that Tree Aid has satisfactory financial control systems and procedures, and to review the level of risk annually
- To safeguard Tree Aid's reputation, and other intangible assets
- To promote and develop the charity in order for it to grow and maintain its public benefit
- To reflect annually on the Board's performance and your own performance as a Trustee.

6. Main Tasks of a Trustee to enable effective fulfilment of the role

- To participate in any annual strategic planning or review workshop
- To attend tri-monthly Trustee meetings, having read relevant papers and be prepared to make a contribution
- To respond promptly when at all possible to email and telephone communication from the Chair or Chief Executive

- To support the staff when requested, sharing expertise, as a member of a working group or in other appropriate ways
- To be prepared to act as a spokesperson for Tree Aid when asked by the Chief Executive, and to work within an agreed brief
- To attend events as an ambassador for Tree Aid, to network and promote the work of the organisation
- To assist with fundraising by speaking, networking and otherwise seeking donations in conjunction with staff and volunteers as appropriate

7. Statutory Duties of a Trustee

The following is a brief outline of the legal duties charitable trustees must fulfil:

- Duty of trust;
- Duty to comply with the charity's governing document;
- Duty to act in the best interests of the charity, present and future beneficiaries;
- Duty to avoid conflicts of interest;
- Duty to safeguard assets;
- Duty not to benefit from their position;
- Duty of care;
- Duty to act personally;
- Duty to act collectively; and
- Duty to keep accounts.

Since Tree Aid is a company limited by guarantee, trustees (directors) also have specific legal duties under the Companies Act 2006. Information on these is held by the Tree Aid Director of Finance and Resources but can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/running-a-limited-company>

8. Trustee Accountability

As the Board are responsible and liable for the governance and functioning of the charity, they are accountable in varying degrees to a variety of stakeholders, including: project stakeholders, funders, the Charity Commission, Companies House and other regulators.

Furthermore, there is a growing demand within the sector and the wider general public for charities to be open and accountable for their actions and inactions. Trustees need to consider the wider implications of the decisions they make, and to communicate widely the formal reasons behind such decisions or actions. Above all else, trustees must adhere to any legal and regulatory requirements applicable to the charity's activities.

The Chair of the Board of trustees leads in appraising the performance of the Board and its individual members.

PERSON SPECIFICATION FOR NEW TRUSTEES

(E= Essential and D = Desirable)

Knowledge or experience

To have strong experience, skills and / or knowledge in at least one of the following areas (E):

- Strategic management of a commercial enterprise preferably in an international environment
- Finance and Audit,
- Marketing,
- Fundraising,
- Corporate Social Responsibility,
- Media and communications.
- People and Leadership

Experience as a Trustee or Board member of a charity (D)

Other requirements

- Commitment to Tree Aid's vision, mission and values (E)
- Sufficient time available to contribute effectively (E)
- Ability to engage in committees and / or other support activity (E)
- Willingness to use skills and contacts for Tree Aid's benefit (E)
- Prepared to assist fundraising through personal introduction and influence (E)
- Ability to communicate effectively with staff and stakeholders (E)
- A basic level of financial literacy (E)