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. The drylands populations in these countries rely heavily on natural resources for subsistence, which, when compounded by demographic trends, a weak technological base, and unsustainable production practices contribute to land degradation\(^1\). In 2015, 795 million people globally remain undernourished (over 1 in 9 of the world’s population), with over 220 million undernourished people living in Sub-Saharan Africa\(^2\). This is the community of people targeted by TREE AID’s work.

Poverty and environmental decline are often inseparably linked\(^3\). People in poverty have limited choices and 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\(^4\) and a sustainable resource for building pathways out of poverty.

This is TREE AID’s role. Our mission is to help villagers living in the drylands of Africa unlock the potential of trees to reduce poverty and protect the environment. We offer practical knowledge and policy solutions that support the sustainable use and management of natural resources.

We are currently working with over 1,000 communities in five countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. We also support and advise national governments in our core areas: enterprise, forest governance, natural resource management and food security and nutrition. At the end of the financial year 2015-16, TREE AID will have a turnover of £2.35m (est) and employ 18 staff in its UK office, 33 staff in West Africa and 1 staff member in Ethiopia.

TREE AID’s Board of Trustees is legally responsible for TREE AID, its governance, staff and work. It is a company limited by guarantee and so trustees are also directors of the company. Our constitution allows us to have up to 14 trustees but the board has agreed that around 10 is currently the most appropriate size to ensure efficient and effective governance of the organisation, with scope to increase the number in the future if required.

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\(^1\) [http://web.undp.org/drylands/a-where-africa.html](http://web.undp.org/drylands/a-where-africa.html)
The current trustees are:

Sophie Churchill OBE (Chair)  Carol Mack (Vice-Chair)
Hugh Arthur (Treasurer)        John Collenette
Annie Moreton                 Terence Jagger
Simon Toomer

The Board of Trustees normally meets four times a year. In addition, there are subcommittees including the Finance and General Purpose committee, Fundraising Standards committee, Nominations Committee and Programme Policy Group and a subsidiary Board for TREE AID Enterprises Limited which overseas TREE AID’s trading subsidiary to establish a Social Enterprise in West Africa.

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 ways in which it generates and spends its income 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 strategy.

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 is responsible for:

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

In all this we have an absolute focus on the impact of what we do on the people whom we serve and work with, in the drylands of Africa.

3. Commitment

Trustees are expected to attend three board meetings and a strategy day each year. There may be committees, with authority delegated to them by the board, meeting at other intervals; and staff may seek to consult with you on your particular expertise.

Trustees 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 current and future beneficiaries by:

- Ensuring that TREE AID has a clear vision, mission and strategy , and is aligning all its resources towards achieving these;
- Being responsible for the performance of TREE AID and for its corporate practice;
• 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;
• Ensuring that TREE AID follows best practice and professional standards in its marketing and fundraising.

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 and to ask if she or he needs support in this area.

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 strategy for TREE AID
• To ensure that the operational plan and budget will implement the agreed strategic direction.
• To monitor progress against the key measures from the operational plan and budget.
• To agree and monitor wider, smart outcome measures to track the progress of the charity towards its strategic goals.
• To hold the Chief Executive accountable for the achievement of the organisation’s goals, and to provide the Chief Executive with regular, constructive feedback on leadership, management and overall achievement.
• Through a recruitment committee, 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 for the Chief Executive.
• Where agreed by the board, 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 underpin 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.
• With the Chair, to review regularly 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 work as a team member and support the work of the Board.
• To participate in any annual strategic planning or review workshop.
• To attend board 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, Chief Executive, Treasurer or other trustee.
• 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 Chair or 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/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/352237/The_Companies_Act_2006.pdf

8. Trustee Accountability
As the board is responsible and liable for the governance and functioning of the charity, it is accountable in varying degrees to a variety of stakeholders, including:
beneficiaries, 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.
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):

- International Development, tropical agroforestry and livelihoods (current best practice and strategic developments in the sector).
- Marketing and communications (able to offer a strategic perspective, based on relevant operational experience)
- Strategic leadership and governance
- Financial Management (able to contribute authoritatively to the financial management of a charity)

- Previous service as a trustee or board member of a charity (D)
- Experience of strategy and organisational development (D)
- Change management (D)
- Charity business models (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 (D)
- A willingness to undertake training in areas where this would be useful (E)