

The L'OCCITANE Group and Burkina Faso: A Long-term Commitment to Improving the Lives of Burkinabe Women

GENEVA, Dec. 01 /CSRwire/ - The L'OCCITANE Group has been working to improve the lives and working conditions of Burkinabe women for more than 30 years. To measure the impact of its ongoing support, the natural cosmetics and well-being products group conducted a study with Business Call to Action (BCTA), a global inclusive business platform hosted by the United Nations Development Programme.

Through this study, the L'OCCITANE Group is now able to better understand the status of these women. These are females with whom the group has been working for more than 30 years through its collaboration in Burkina Faso. BCTA's Impact Measurement Services (BIMS) provided the support required to conduct a study across 1,890 women, representing four different regions of Burkina Faso. The study has revealed the following core results:

- 84% of these women are now able to contribute to family finance management, thanks to their increased income.
- 43% of women farmers participated in the literacy program provided by L'OCCITANE. In Burkina Faso's rural areas, the general literacy rate is under 15% for women, and L'OCCITANE aims to address this challenge by offering its literacy program.
- 75% of women in Burkina Faso now enroll all (or most of) their under 14-year-old children in school, regardless of their gender.

For Charlotte Jonchère, Philanthropy Manager at the L'OCCITANE Group: "It was important for us to measure the results of the initiatives that we have been driving for many years now. We are glad to observe that much has already been achieved and we look forward to what the future has in store."

BCTA Programme Manager, Paula Pelaez, added: "Through our Impact Measurement Services, the L'OCCITANE Group is able to use impact data to strengthen training modules for shea producers; to reach a larger number of women producers located further away from the union centres; and to improve its strategies for joint programming with the women producer unions."

L'OCCITANE Group and Burkina Faso, a fascinating story:

The relationship between the L'OCCITANE Group and Burkina Faso started in the 1980s when Olivier Baussan, the founder of the L'OCCITANE en Provence brand, discovered the properties of shea butter during a trip to Burkina Faso. Since then, the company has been working with the women who produce shea butter in Burkina Faso with a genuine objective of positive and sustainable growth for both parties.

Through its goal to support the shea producer women's union, the L'OCCITANE Group works with its partners to:

- Protect the shea tree and achieve 100% organic production in 2018.
- Improve working conditions and quality thanks to mechanisation.
- Decrease environmental impact during the process by developing eco-technologies adapted to shea.

Encourage the diversification of incomes in order to limit women's dependency by helping them to developing their portfolio of clients and enable the development of other profitable activities.

L'OCCITANE en Provence created the L'OCCITANE Foundation in 2006 in order to drive the brand's philanthropic initiatives. Through the Foundation, two major projects have been carried out to support the communities where L'OCCITANE works, thereby promoting women's independence and improving their socio-economic status:

- Project 1: Strengthening women's basic knowledge and skills (literacy).
- Project 2: Social micro-financing training to increase women's access to credit, whilst reinforcing their knowledge about financial and economic management, as well as important health issues such as hygiene and sanitation.

About The L'OCCITANE Group

The L'OCCITANE Group is a leading natural ingredient-based cosmetics and well-being products company. A global leader in the premium beauty market, L'OCCITANE produces and retails high quality products that are produced using cutting-edge technology. The Group has four brands: L'OCCITANE en Provence, Melvita, Erborian and L'OCCITANE au Brésil, and offers products that are rich in natural ingredients of traceable origins, while also respecting the environment.

About Business Call to Action (BCtA)

Launched at the United Nations in 2008, BCtA aims to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by challenging companies to develop inclusive business models that offer the potential for both commercial success and development impact. BCtA is a unique multilateral alliance between key donor governments including the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UK Department for International Development, US Agency for International Development, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Finland, and the United Nations Development Programme — which hosts the secretariat. For more information, please visit www.businesscalltoaction.org

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