

What we've learned so far

Reflections from the Seeds of Survival Scale-Up Program (2015-2020)

SeedChange

SeedChange and our work

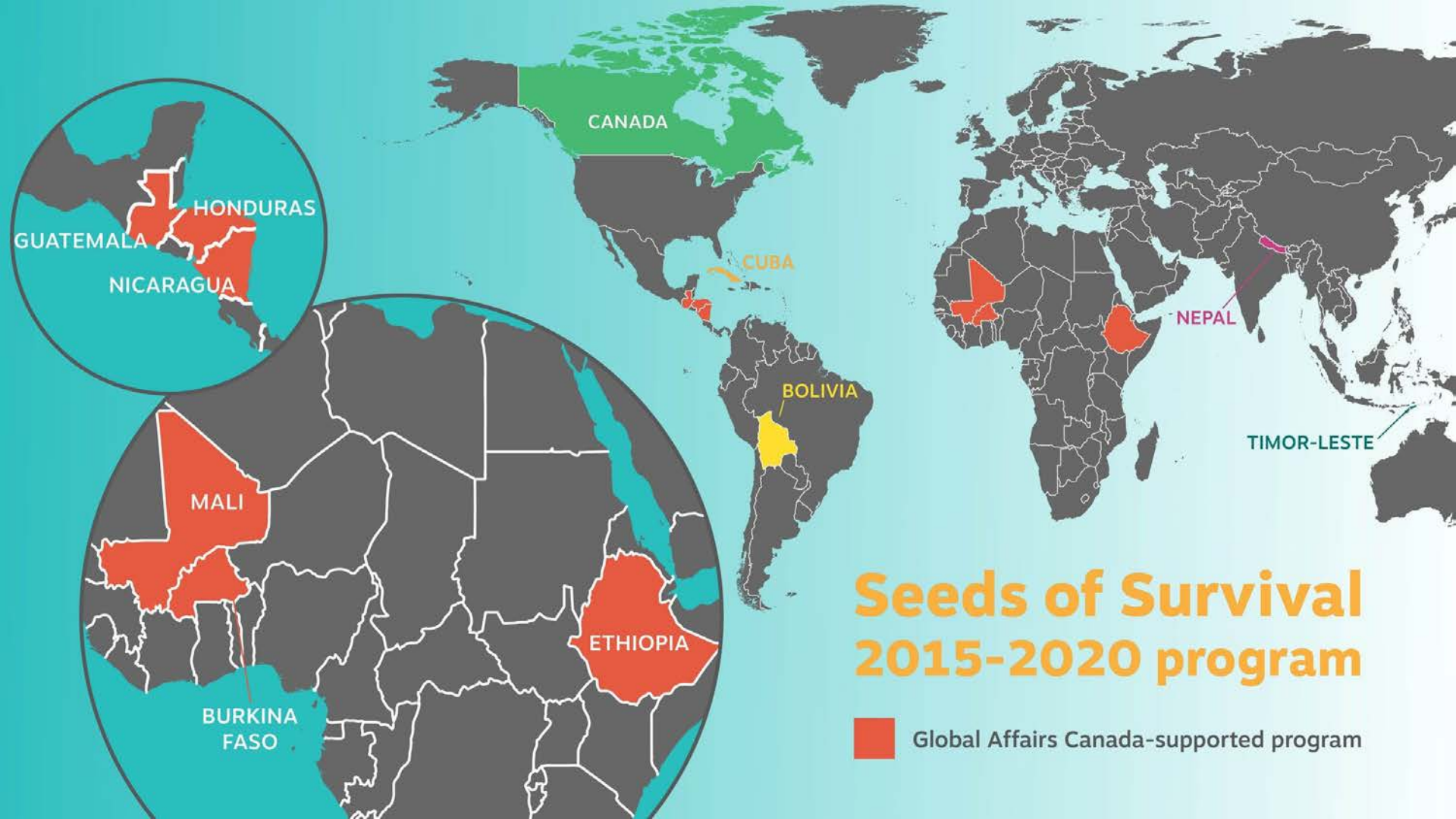
SeedChange and our work

- 70+ years of international cooperation, and more than 30 years of collaboration with Global Affairs Canada
- A global program: Seeds of Survival program initiated in Ethiopia, and currently operates in 12 countries, including Canada



SEID SHIFERAN AND ANSHA SEID, *Ethiopia*

SeedChange


CANADA
CUBA
BOLIVIA
NEPAL
TIMOR-LESTE
HONDURAS
GUATEMALA
NICARAGUA
MALI
ETHIOPIA
BURKINA FASO
Seeds of Survival
2015-2020 program
Global Affairs Canada-supported program

SeedChange and our work

- Food is a powerful vehicle for transformation. And, the model matters. SeedChange builds food sovereignty by working with partners to enhance biodiversity, promote ecological food systems and counter inequity.



USC Mali

SeedChange

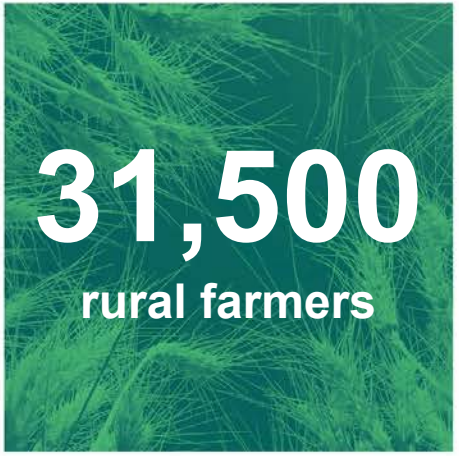
Seeds of Survival Scale-Up Program (2015-2020)

- Scaling-up and out tested biodiversity based strategies and innovations that strengthen resilience and food/seed security of marginalized farm households and Indigenous and non-Indigenous farming communities.
- Five year, $19.5M program (2015-2020) implemented in six countries with leading local partners and two regional facilitators.
- The project has supported over 31,500 rural farmers in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.









SeedChange

CAB
Démé So

APN-Sahel

ETHIO - ORGANIC SEED ACTION

ASOCUCH

FIPAH

Federación de cooperativas para el desarrollo
FECODESA. R.L

PROGRAMME RAYONNEMENT DE L'APPROCHE
SEMENCES DE LA SURVIE D'USC - CANADA - MALI

USC CANADA
CULTIVER POUR L'AVENIR

SeedChange Seeds of Survival Scale-Up Program 2015-2020



SeedChange

Impacts

Program reach

432 communities in six countries

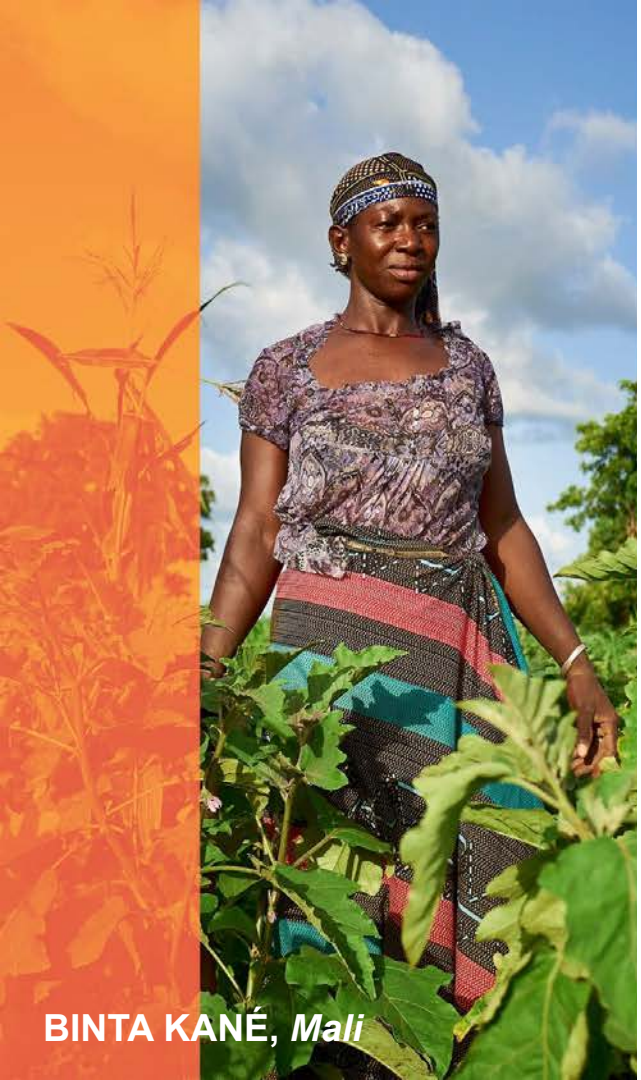
- 524 farmers' groups
  - 187 collective enterprises
- 28,408 participants
  - 48% female (13,603)
  - 30% youth (8,589)
- 21,053 participating households representing 123,628 direct beneficiaries



Key outputs

- **26 Seed Security Assessments conducted in five country programs.**
- 5,669 farmers involved in PVS
- 1,581 farmers involved in PPB
- **4,018 farmers trained in seed production**
- 64 Community Seed Banks and 31 field gene banks supported
- **279 new varieties disseminated in communities**
- 699 events organized to disseminate SoS program experiences and practices
- **253 events attended with the aim of influencing policies and laws**
- 81 multi-media publication resources have been developed and disseminated.





Outcome one

Food/seed security and climate resilience

Knowledge intensive and low cost biodiversity and agroecology based strategies strengthen local food/seed systems, contribute to food and nutritional security, and enhance resilience to climate change

Key results

- Community led seed security initiatives have improved access to 279 locally adapted crop varieties for 432 communities in 6 countries.
- 21,053 households have better access to fruits, vegetables, and a more diverse array of crops and varieties, improving food security and dietary diversity for program households.
- Community organizing for on-farm agrobiodiversity and agroecological practices strengthen the adaptive capacity of marginalized communities.

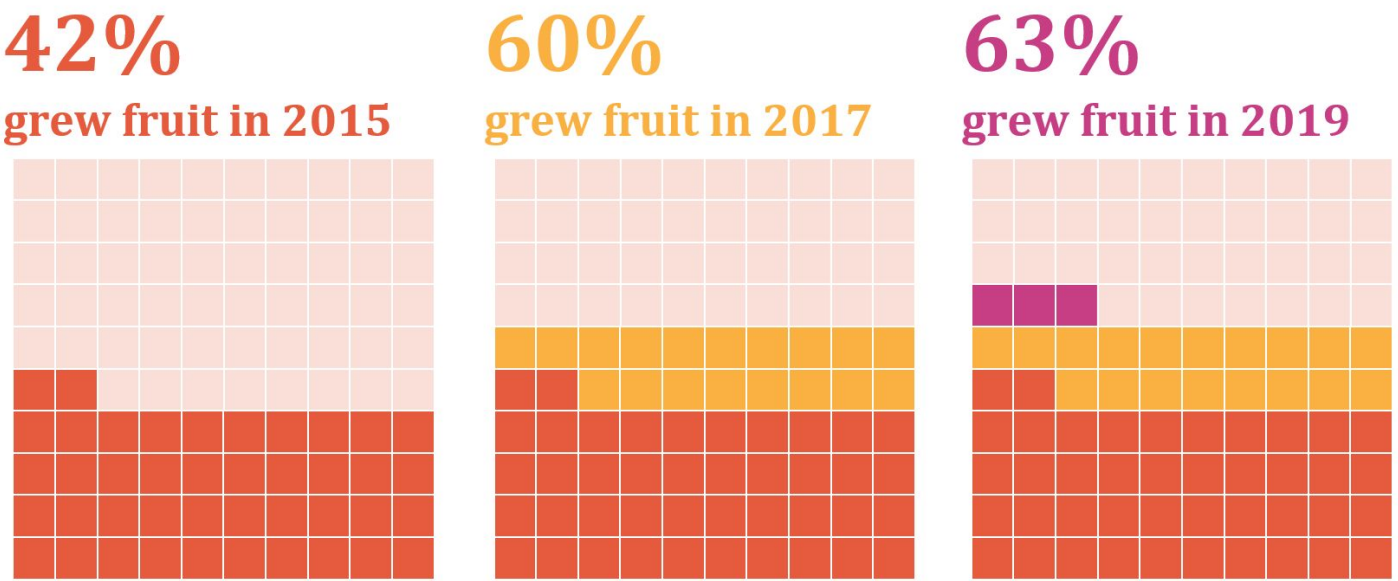
Households that produce vegetables



2.6
varieties grown per HH in 2015

4.7
varieties grown per HH in 2019

Households that produce fruit

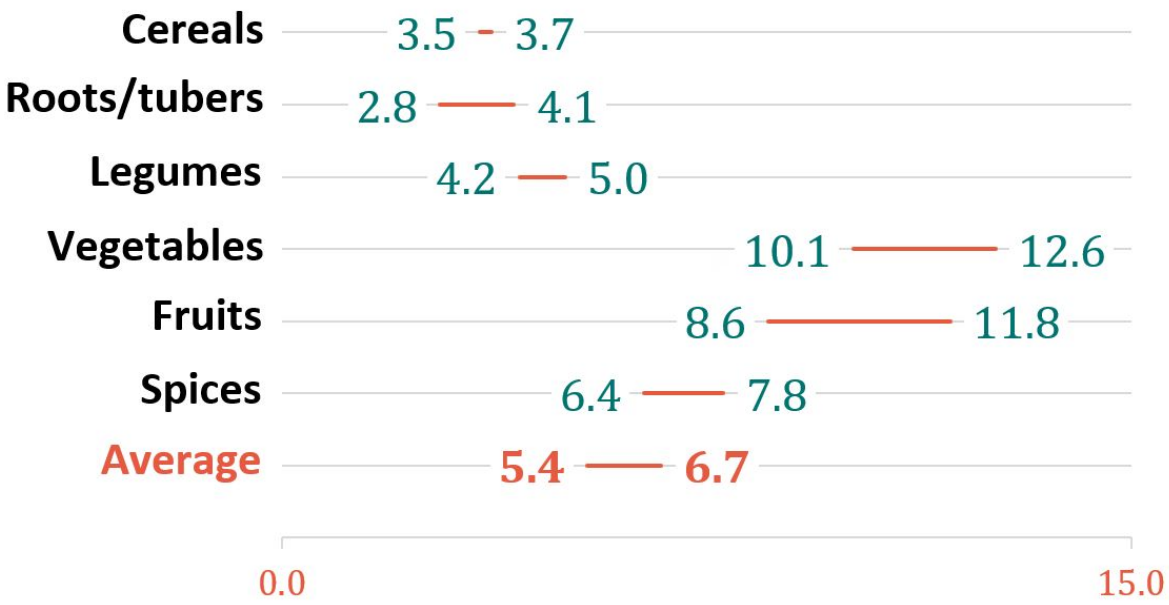


2.3
varieties grown per HH in 2015

4
varieties grown per HH in 2019

Crops cultivated by communities

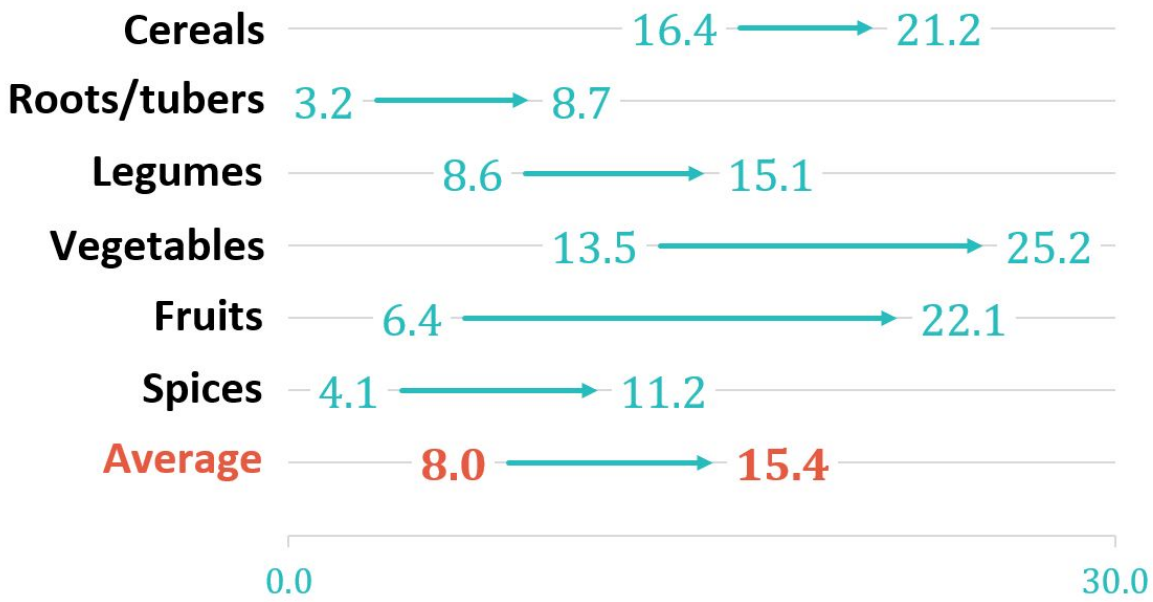
Communities grow more types of all crops now than they did in 2019



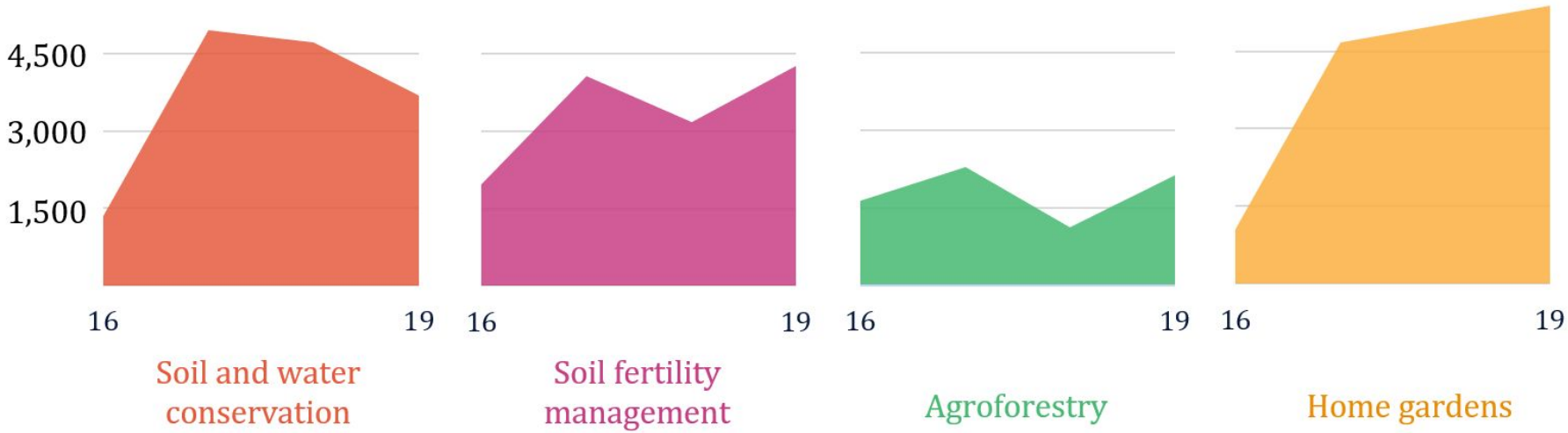
Varieties cultivated by communities

Communities grow substantially more varieties in all categories now than they did in 2017

Overall, there is improved access to 279 adapted crop varieties.



Households supported in agroecological practices



Lessons learned

- Investments in community-led biodiversity practices and approaches need to be accompanied by strengthened linkages with supportive CSOs, research institutions, and government extension services to ensure they are effective and sustainable.
- Communities that are supported to create collective strategies for the conservation and dissemination of diversity see strong results.
- Locally-adapted quality seeds combined with agroecological soil improvements are key to improved food production.



MARINA SERRATO, *Bolivia*

Outcome two

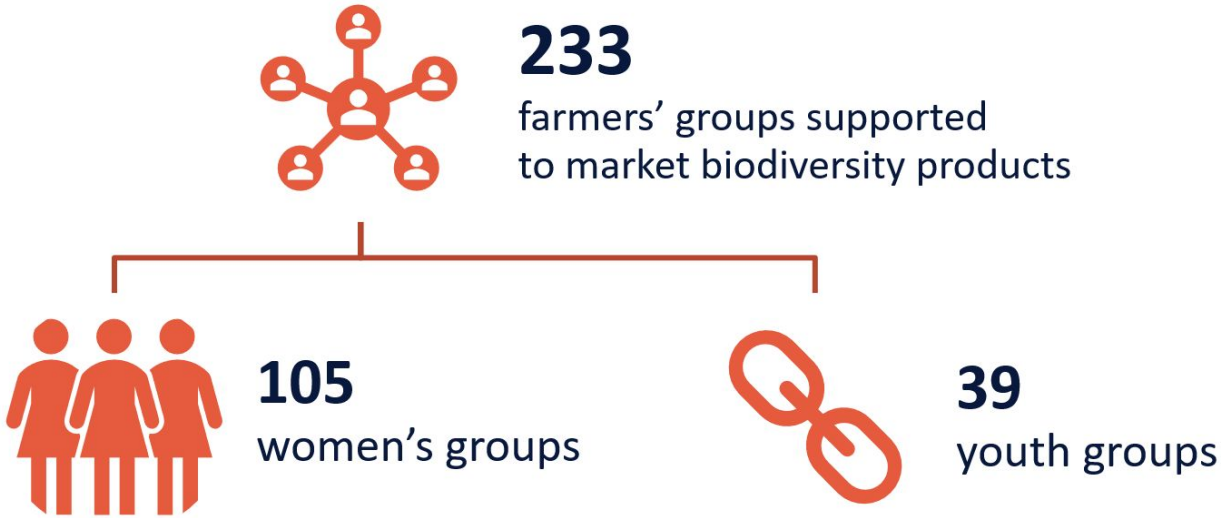
Improved economic security

Investments and support to community-led production and marketing of agrobiodiversity products to local markets under fair conditions contributes to economic security of rural men, women and youth in marginalized rural communities.

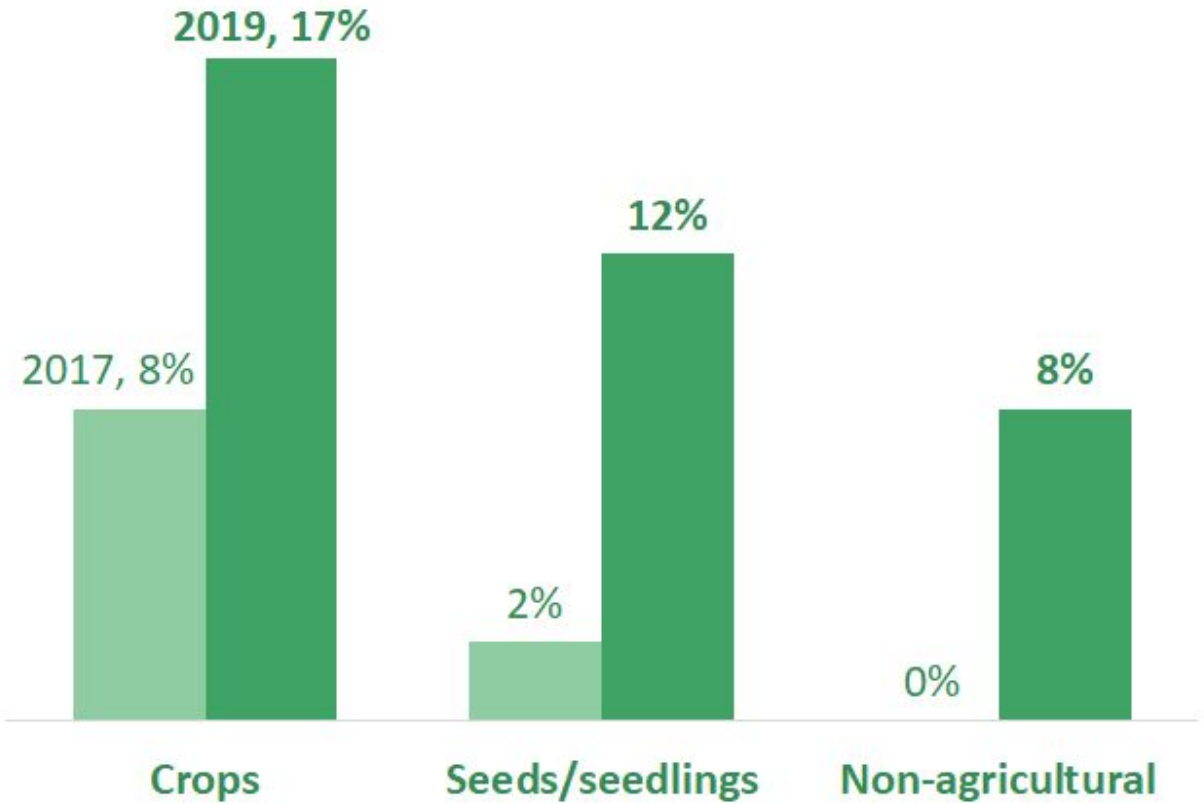
Key results

- Creation and expansion of 39 youth-run microenterprises, such as agroforestry nurseries and bio-input enterprises, support employment for rural youth.
- 105 women's cooperative economic initiatives, such as organic sesame oil (Honduras), and vegetable seed production (Mali), is resulting in greater social and economic empowerment.
- Smallholder-led national bean value chains (Honduras, Nicaragua) led to contracts for sale of beans at better prices.

Agrobiodiversity marketing for groups



People sell more kinds of things through collective enterprises



Lessons learned

- Investment and support to micro-enterprise development, particularly collective marketing approaches, are effective at improving access to resources, income and leadership opportunities for women and youth.
- On-farm agrobiodiversity strategies generate food surplus that can be developed into viable economic opportunities in local markets if properly supported with market assessments, business planning, and advisory support services.
- CSO intermediary support for community led economic initiatives and the establishment of fair markets and sustainable institutional linkages is critical.





ESTER GUTIERREZ, *Honduras*

Outcome three

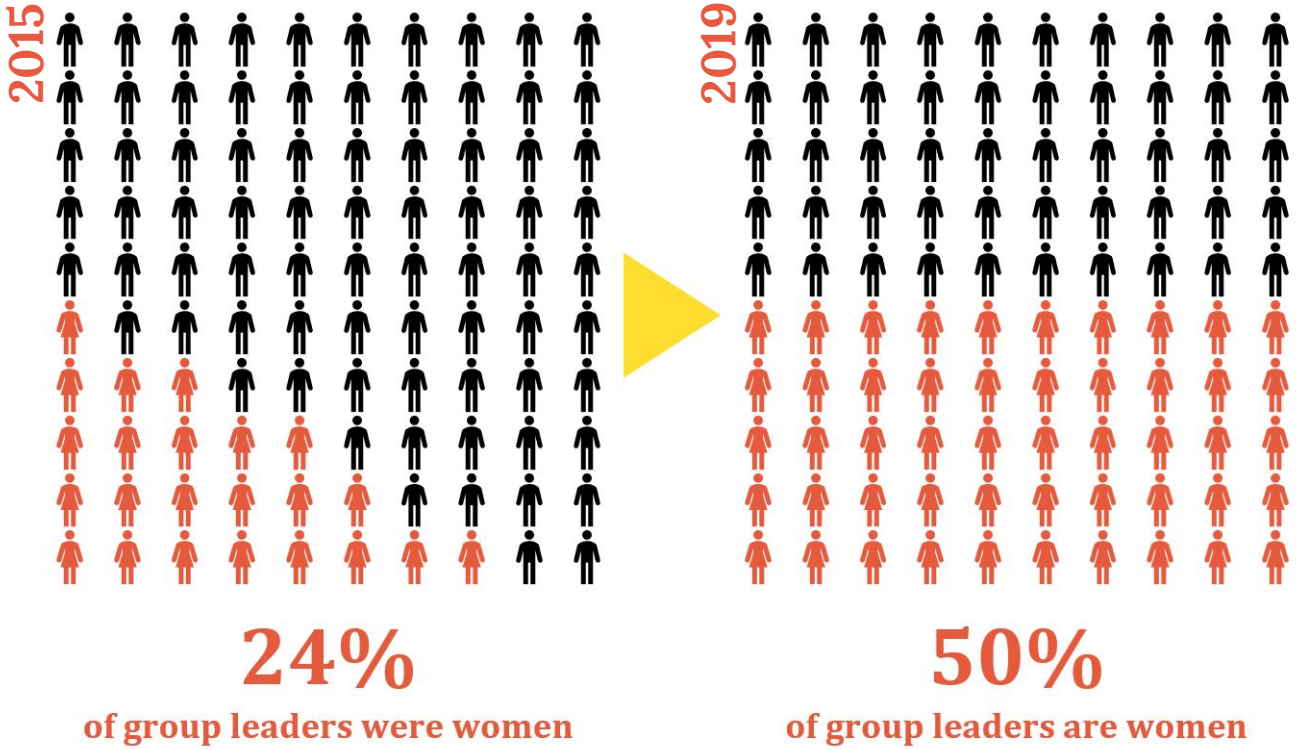
Women and youth empowerment

Investing in agroecological approaches to women's and youth collective enterprise development and resource access contributes to income generation, leadership, agency and confidence building.

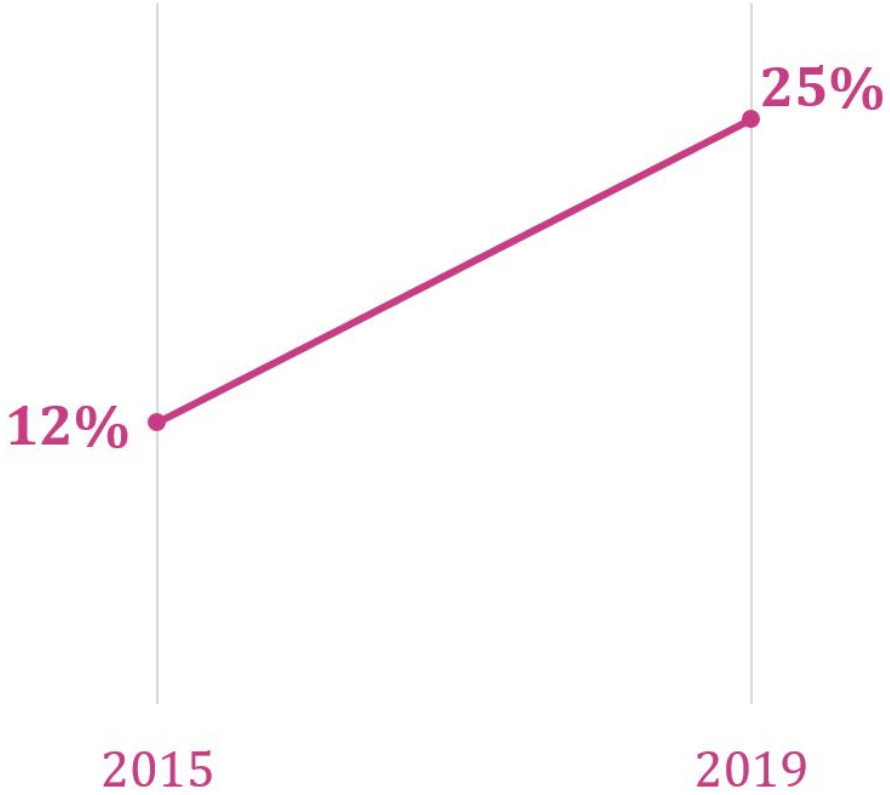
Key results

- Women's leadership in program groups rose from 24% to 49% and they established 179 women-led farmers' groups
- Youth leadership in program groups rose from 12% to 25%, and they established 74 youth-led farmers' groups
- More than 5,000 women and 2,500 youth were supported to access agroecological inputs and land, which are consistent barriers to their participation in agricultural activities in all program countries
- Access to better markets and value chains for women's and youths' products (e.g., coffee)

More women take leadership positions in their communities

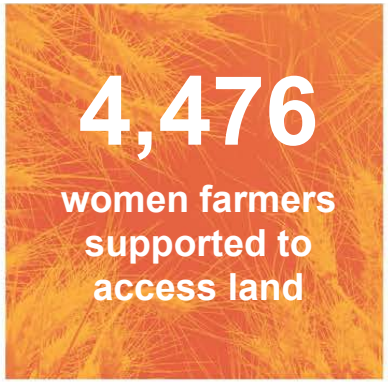


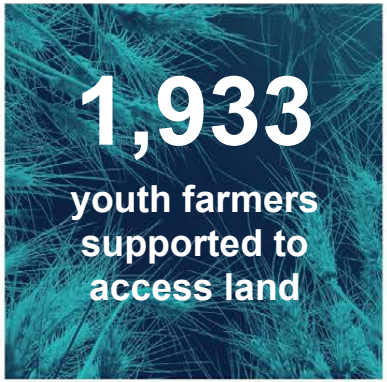
More young people are taking leadership positions in their communities



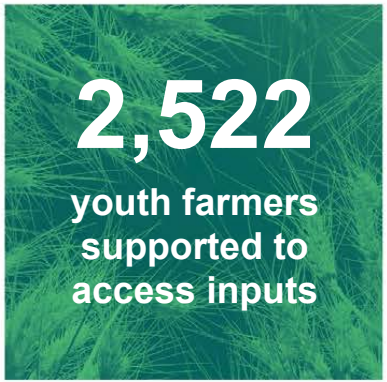
Gender equality and youth empowerment 2015-2019











Lessons learned

- Enhancing women's skills, access to financial resources and opportunities in organizational leadership and business management contributes to women's empowerment and gender equality in collective enterprise and farmer research groups.
- The establishment of collective market-gardens, home gardening, intercropping strategies and cooperative organization assists women to secure greater access to good farming land and opportunities for increased revenues.
- Micro-enterprises and farmer research groups focused on agroecological production and marketing are contributing to youth empowerment and leadership, and reducing youth migration. We saw better, more sustainable results in places with strong farmer research groups than in those without.
- GE strategies were effective in supporting women's resource access and participation/leadership, but the absence of a systematic gender equality analysis and approach meant that more transformative change at the level of power dynamics and resource allocation was not addressed.





Outcome four

Scaling out and up

SoS scaling strategies

Horizontal scaling out

1. Support to the spread of agroecological and biodiverse farming-system practices and innovations to more farming communities through participatory approaches and methods.

Vertical scaling up

1. Collaboration with strategic institutions and change-makers
2. Documentation and dissemination of materials that deepen knowledge, build evidence and attract new support
3. Promotion of an enabling regulatory and policy environment that supports agroecology, farmer seed systems, and farmers' rights



Outcome four

Scaling out and up

Collaborating in the delivery of training and the sharing of information and resources through structured partnerships is an effective strategy to support the adoption (scaling up) of agroecology and biodiversity-based practices and innovations by other organizations as well as communities and individual farmers (scaling out).



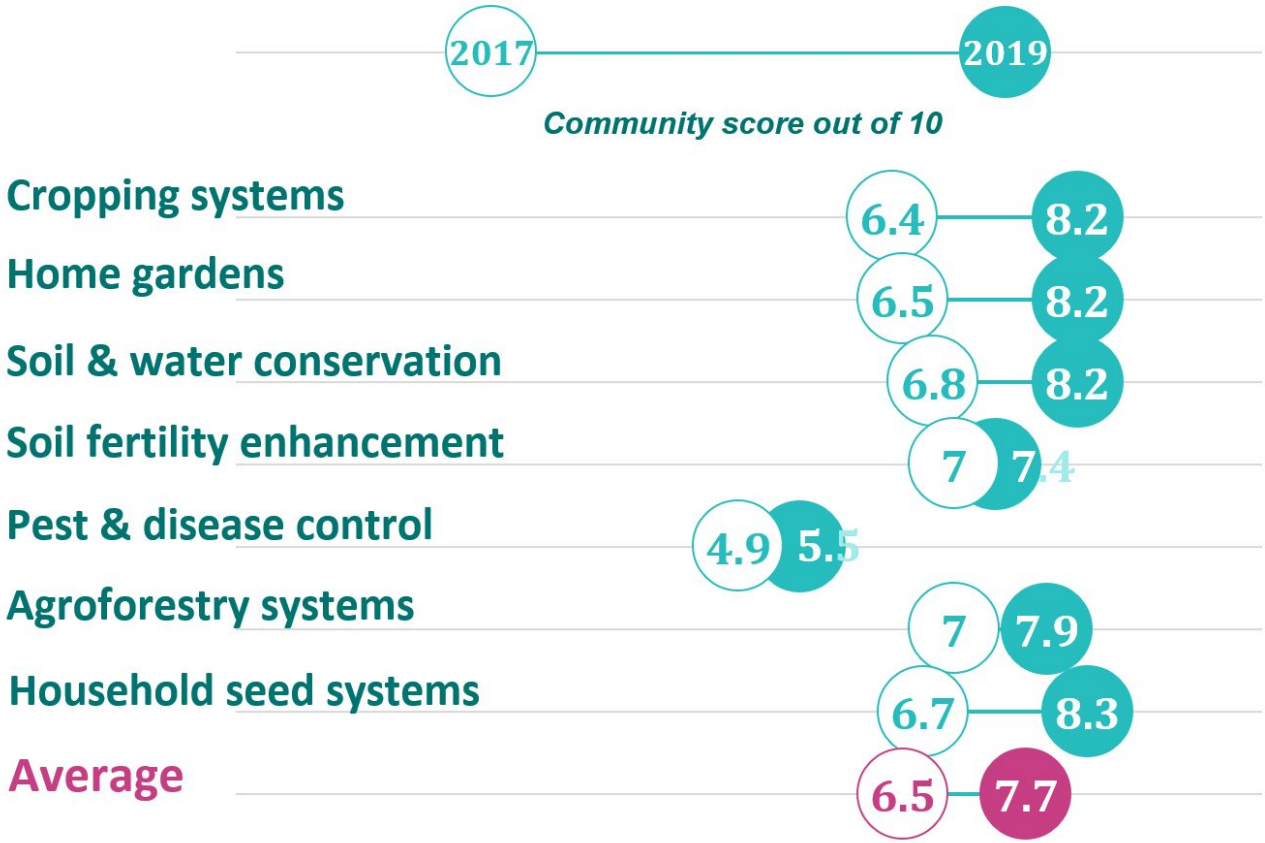
Outcome four

Scaling out and up

Key results

- 432 communities across 6 countries have innovated, tested and promoted the spread of dozens of biodiversity supporting innovations and solutions.
- After 5 years, 95% of SoS households globally say they are using 3 or more SoS practices, and communities feel more confident that they are implementing those practices well.
- 130 organisations have demonstrated interest in, collaborated with and/or received training and information related to the implementation of SoS practices and policies
- 93 government agencies, NGOs, farmer organizations, research institutes, and national, regional and international networks have adopted practices or policies that reflect SoS practices and/or approaches
- 34 collaborative agreements with research institutions and gene banks have been established to assist in the development and dissemination of farmer-bred varieties to hundreds of communities.

Communities feel more confident about how they are implementing SoS practices



Zooming in on Seed Security Assessments (SSA)

- Participatory tool to evaluate access, quality, availability and adaptability, choice and production capacities of seeds at a local level.
- Gives visibility and recognition to the important prominent role that women play within community seed systems
- Identifies intervention need and seed production priorities that translate to for multisectoral action plans that strengthen farmer seed systems.



Cuba

Lessons learned

- New methodologies (such as the Seed Security Assessment) should be piloted on a small scale and well-supported to reduce risk, produce evidence, and support learning prior to scaling out of the methodology.
- Civil society actors like NGOs play an important role in facilitating broad-based engagement among CBOs, institutions, and government agencies in joint activities, which builds ownership and awareness among key stakeholders.



Strengthening the enabling environment

Support for systemic participation by civil society actors in national multi-stakeholder platforms such as plant genetic resource commissions and national seed law committees contributes to important revisions in seed laws and regulations that support farmers' rights

Key results

- 5 SoS partners are leading and/or actively influencing discussions on national seed law revisions with a focus on Farmers' Rights (Burkina Faso, Honduras, Mali, Guatemala and Nicaragua).
- 81 multi-media publication resources have been developed and disseminated providing evidence based support to advocacy and policy initiatives.



Lessons learned

- The inclusion of farmers' voices in policy processes is essential to influence outcomes that reflect farmers' rights and needs.
- Implementation of participatory, multi-stakeholder seed security assessments and action plans are creating ownership of results by community participants and visibility and demand for these services from government, civil society network and NGO actors.
- Wide dissemination of locally adapted farmer seed varieties (through PPB and PVS) is inhibited by policy and legal restrictions that make it difficult for farmers' organizations to officially register and market their seeds.
- Joint stakeholder ownership of pilot projects (such as farmer-led seed certification system pilots in Honduras) that inform policy help to build support for civil society advocacy and policy asks.





Recommendations



FLORA MORALES, *Nicaragua*

1

Increase support for women's rights organizations to collaborate with rural CBO and CSO's in strengthening gender equality, women's empowerment and leadership, and rights-based approaches to farmer food and seed system development.



BONTA HAJJI HUSSAIN, *Ethiopia*

2

Allocate long term funding and support to women and farmer-led research and knowledge exchanges that support climate resilience and promote agroecological solutions



HERLINDA MATIAS RAMOS, *Guatemala*

3

Promote smallholder farmer participation, leadership and voices in public policy by supporting farmer-led networks and decision-making structures concerned with agroecology, seed policy, plant genetic resource management, and farmers' rights.



FANTA TRAORÉ, *Mali*

4

Support the development of seed policy and laws that recognize farmers' rights to develop, sell, and register their seeds.



ALMA YAMARIS HERNÁNDEZ AGUIRRE, *Honduras*

5

Prioritize scale-up opportunities that support government collaboration with community-led models (such as community seed banking, participatory varietal selection, on-farm diversification, agroecology practices, research and action planning) that are proven to contribute to food security and climate resilience.



SALIMATA GONDÉ, *Burkina Faso*

6

Strengthen CSB governance and linkages with broader networks and institutions to foster sustainability and ensure responsiveness to community needs.


Thank you!