SeedChange

# 2024: A YEAR IN REVIEW

REFLECTING ON THE MILESTONES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PROGRESS WE'VE MADE **TOGETHER**.





*Photo Credit: Rebecca Ivanoff*

# 2024: A YEAR OF GROWTH AND IMPACT

As we look back on 2024, it's clear that this year has been a defining moment for SeedChange. We've deepened our commitment to supporting rural women and small-scale and organic farmers, fostering resilience in the face of climate change and amplifying voices through the power of storytelling. The partnerships we've nurtured and the programs we've advanced have created lasting ripples of change across the communities we serve.

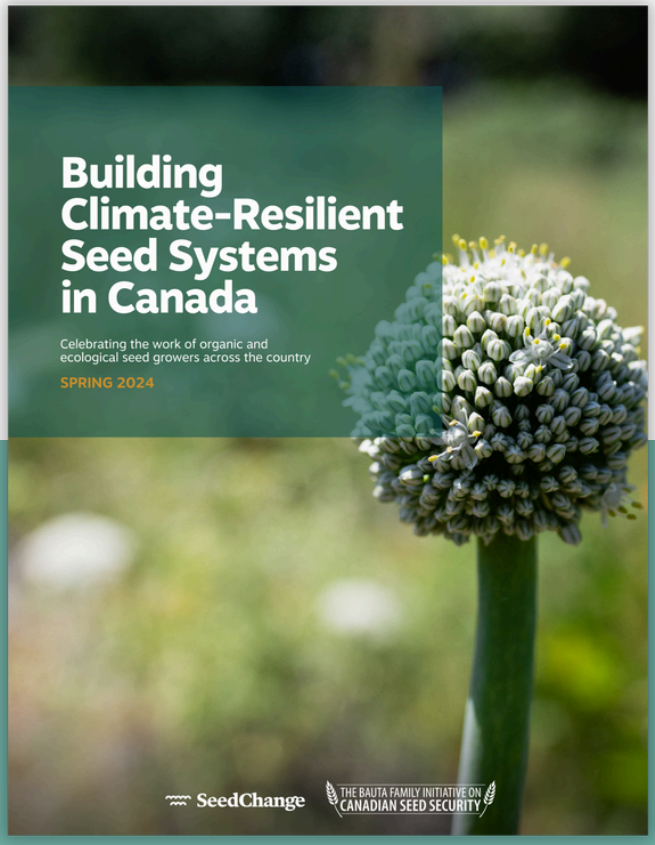
This year, we've seen firsthand the transformative impact of our work, from the strengthening of local leadership to the scaling of innovative solutions in agriculture, gender equality, and climate resilience. As we reflect on the progress made, we are reminded of the importance of collaboration, empathy, and adaptability. Every challenge faced has been met with determination, and every success is a testament to the collective efforts of our partners and the communities we are honoured to work alongside.

Looking ahead, we are inspired by the possibilities for continued growth and transformation. As we enter our 80th year in 2025, we are reminded of the decades of dedication and resilience that have shaped SeedChange. 2024 has been a year of laying strong foundations, and we are eager to build on this momentum, creating even more opportunities for those who are driving change in their communities.

Together, we will continue to grow, learn, and make a lasting difference in the lives of small-scale farmers — and their communities — in Canada and globally.

**THE SEEDCHANGE TEAM**

# BUILDING RESILIENCE: CELEBRATING CANADA'S LEADERSHIP IN CLIMATE SEED SYSTEMS




One of the proudest achievements of our Canadian field program, The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, was the release of the "Building Climate-Resilient Seed Systems in Canada" report.

From 2021–2023, the Bauta Family Initiative supported the implementation of 24 seed demonstration sites across Canada to showcase the ingenuity of organic and ecological farmers and seed growers in Canada. This comprehensive report highlights the work of that project and profiles varieties that are being preserved, adapted, and developed for organic and ecological farming in this country.

This project was funded in part by the Government of Canada through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian Agricultural Strategic Priorities Program (CASPP).

Informed by three years of rigorous research and farmer-led crop adaptation trials, the report celebrates the vital role of regionally-adapted seed in helping Canadian agriculture thrive in the face of climate change.

"Organic and ecological farmers across Canada are creating more resilient seed systems by preserving heritage varieties, producing good quality local seed, and creating seed diversity on their farms through plant breeding. The regional seed varieties featured in this report are tools for growers to become more seed secure, and better adapt to the impacts of climate change," says Aabir Dey, SeedChange's Canadian Program Director.

This important publication serves as a testament to the ingenuity and dedication of the Canadian farmers who are leading the way towards a more sustainable, climate-resilient food system.

# RWCC MIDLINE PROGRESS: ADVANCING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, SGBV PREVENTION, AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

In 2024, the Rural Women Cultivating Change (RWCC) project, a six-year initiative (2021-2027) supported by funding from Global Affairs Canada, reached its midline, demonstrating notable progress across its three core pillars: Women's empowerment and leadership, prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and climate-resilient food systems.




SeedChange, in partnership with local organizations in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania, saw key achievements, including increased women's participation in decision-making and the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices. While SGBV outcomes showed encouraging but mixed results, the project continues to refine its strategies to demonstrate the importance of a gender-transformative approach to agroecology and food system resilience.

For a comprehensive overview, read the full Midline Evaluation Report.

# CANOVI PROJECT: ADVANCING ORGANIC VEGETABLE BREEDING IN CANADA

In 2024, the Canadian Organic Vegetable Improvement (CANOVI) Project reached exciting new milestones in its mission to transform Canada's organic vegetable sector.

Led by the University of British Columbia's (UBC) Centre for Sustainable Food Systems in collaboration with our Canadian program, The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, this innovative project is helping farmers develop vegetable varieties that thrive in organic farming systems.

Since its launch in 2018, CANOVI has partnered with over 100 farmers across the country to test and improve over 50 types of vegetables, including peppers, radicchio, and rutabaga. This past year, the spotlight turned to carrots, with growers evaluating advanced breeding lines of orange and multicoloured open-pollinated varieties.

In October, carrot growers nationwide held selection days, assessing traits like vigor, uniformity, canopy cover, and — most importantly — taste. Crafting the perfect carrot takes skill and patience, as farmers carefully select for the sweet, juicy flavours Canadians love, while eliminating terpene-like, bitter notes. The best roots chosen this year will return to UBC for further breeding and seed production, setting the stage for even greater advancements in 2025.

Beyond these trials, CANOVI continues to train farmers and growers through workshops and webinars, equipping them with the tools to succeed in seed breeding, organic cultivation, and agronomic assessment. Together, these efforts are building a resilient, regionally-adapted food system for Canada.

*Photo Credit: Rebecca Ivanoff*

# EXPANDING REACH: SHOWCASING RWCC ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

SeedChange continues to expand the impact of our Rural Women Cultivating Change (RWCC) project by strategically engaging new audiences. Throughout 2024, we have increased our focus on highlighting lessons learned and sharing best practices. This emphasis on strategic engagement strengthens our relationships with partners and encourages the adoption of effective approaches to supporting rural women in East Africa.

We hope that more organizations will adopt gender-informed partnership models as effective pathways to improved food security and climate resilience. To support this, we are committed to sharing insights from RWCC with a broader network of stakeholders, reinforcing our dedication to collaboration and knowledge exchange. As part of these efforts, we have developed a resource highlighting RWCC's strategies and impact, which you can explore here.



*Amina Agustin Mzelu, Farmer and Chair of the Matumaini Group in Kikundi Village, Morogoro, Tanzania*

# TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS IN HONDOURAS



In 2024, our partner Fundación para la Investigación Participativa con Agricultores (FIPAH) continued to lead efforts under the SoS (Seeds of Survival) program to transform community food systems in Honduras. By promoting agroecology, gender equity, and local seed systems, smallholder families in three regions embraced sustainable farming practices. These efforts were supported by farmer research committees, known as CIALs (Comités de Investigación Agrícola Local), where women, men, and youth collaborated with field technicians and facilitators to address agricultural challenges through participatory research and training.

Over 405 families adopted at least five ecological practices, enhancing soil health, conserving biodiversity, and diversifying crops like corn, beans, coffee, and avocado. Demonstration farms, led by nine women, became hubs for knowledge sharing, empowering dozens of women farmers to transition to agroecological methods.

One inspiring leader is Beida Rodríguez (pictured here, drying coffee beans), a young farmer from the highlands of Intibucá, a rural department in western Honduras. Through her involvement in the program, Beida transformed her farm into an agroecological model, diversifying with fruit trees, spices, coffee, and other crops. Her efforts improved her family's income, food security, and community recognition, inspiring other women to follow her lead.

Participatory plant breeding also advanced resilience. Over 165 families evaluated and selected maize and bean varieties better suited to climate challenges and diseases. Farmers identified new varieties with improved tolerance and commercial value, benefiting hundreds of households.

To bolster seed security, two farmer-led seed companies produced 14,500 kg of quality seeds, while eight Community Seed Banks conserved local varieties and distributed seeds to over 2,500 people. These efforts ensured access to locally-adapted seeds, a cornerstone of smallholder farming.

This year's achievements showcase the ongoing success and impact of the SoS program and how agroecology empowers marginalized groups, strengthens resilience, and fosters sustainable food systems in Honduras.

# ADVANCING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN MALI



In partnership with IRPAD-Afrique (Institut de Recherche et de Promotion des Alternatives en Développement) and the 11th Hour Project on behalf of the Schmidt Foundation, SeedChange supported transformative agroecological initiatives in Mali's Mopti and Douentza regions in 2024.

IRPAD-Afrique, a Malian organization founded in 2004, has built expertise in agricultural policies, food security, food sovereignty, and peasant agroecology. As a founding member of the Coalition for the Protection of African Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN) and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), IRPAD has now integrated operations from the former SeedChange office in Mali, extending decades of support for rural resilience in the Sahel.

This year, the project reached over 38,000 people across 39 villages, continuing to build on previous achievements in peasant seed systems and peasant agroecology, in partnership with a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) and Quality Assurance Team for farmers' seed certification. Women led the expansion of the Ouornion regional seed bank, now conserving 109 varieties of 13 local crops, and a newly constructed women's seed bank improved access to diverse, high-quality seeds, addressing barriers faced by women farmers.

Market gardening initiatives also flourished. In Ouornion, 19 households cultivated crops like okra and tomatoes on 1.25 hectares of newly developed land, diversifying food supplies, boosting incomes, and enabling year-round farming with organic practices.

Training and advocacy efforts empowered communities further. A literacy and management program in Somadougou equipped 26 participants (18 women), while translations of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants into four local languages empowered farmers to advocate for their rights. There is also a continued promotion of farmers' market garden seeds through the farmers' market garden seed sales boutique. In addition, in line with the "IRPAD-Africa" acronym, research is underway with good results for the introduction of taro and yam cultivation in the program's intervention zones.

These initiatives demonstrate how agroecology is driving change, empowering communities, and strengthening food sovereignty in Mali's rural landscapes.

Women farmers of Ouornion are transporting Duguyiriwa variety sorghum for drying on the tarp.

# REVITALIZING INDIGENOUS SEEDS AND TRADITIONS IN GHANA



In February 2024, SeedChange partners Trax Ghana and The Beela Project launched a new initiative, supported by the 11th Hour Project on behalf of the Schmidt Family Foundation, to strengthen local and Indigenous food systems in Ghana's Upper East and North East regions. Within the year, this project engaged more than 8,200 people from 1,540 households across 10 communities to revive Indigenous food practices and secure local seeds.

Six communities conducted Seed Security Assessments and Action Plans (SSAAP), identifying challenges like lost seed varieties and creating roadmaps to restore local seeds. Seed exchanges across all 10 communities facilitated the sharing of 440 seed varieties, rediscovering crops like late millet and Indigenous sorghum. Seeds collected from these exchanges are currently stored in the Bolgatanga Seed Bank.

The first Bolgatanga Local Seed Fair showcased 250 local seed varieties, drawing 186 participants (116 women), including farmers, chiefs, and local organizations. The event highlighted the importance of Indigenous seeds and fostered seed sharing and awareness.

Women-led initiatives took centre stage, including the establishment of a Women's Nutritional Garden in Kambusigo, inspired by SSAAP results. Communal cooking sessions across 10 communities revived 31 traditional dishes and three lost recipes, connecting Indigenous foods with local seeds and inspiring conservation efforts.

Agroecological learning exchanges engaged 252 farmers in sustainable practices like crop rotation and organic inputs. Communities like Gundoug and Kambusigo adopted methods to improve soil health and climate resilience, while farmers in Bolga Soe focused on dry-season gardening to enhance food security and incomes.

These efforts underscore the power of community-driven initiatives to protect biodiversity, promote food sovereignty, and build resilience in Ghana's farming systems.




*Photo Credit: Canadian Organic Growers*

# TRAINING NEW SEED GROWERS: ORGANIC VEGETABLE SEED PRODUCTION COURSE

In 2024, we relaunched our online course on organic vegetable seed production, in partnership with Canadian Organic Growers (COG) and with funding from the Continuing Education and Training Association of BC (CETABC). This unique educational resource addresses a critical gap in Canada's organic farming sector by equipping farmers with the technical skills and tools needed to integrate seed production into viable farming livelihoods.

Our goal with this course is to educate and cultivate the next generation of Canadian seed producers who, like us, envision a future where organic seed security and integrity is increased, and organic farmers have access to resilient, adaptive seeds.

The Organic Vegetable Seed Production Course has officially sold out, and we look forward to welcoming our first cohort of students this February. We are deeply grateful for the strong interest and enthusiasm in the course and are proud to contribute to sharing seed production knowledge, while expanding access to resilient seeds for future generations.



*Photo Credit: Groundswell*

# ADVANCING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS: GROUNDSWELL LEARNING EXCHANGE IN BERLIN

SeedChange is a committed learning organization focused on evolving best practice and building influence through partnership. To this end, SeedChange's Director of International Programs, Jeff de Jong, participated in a Farmer Learning Exchange event in Berlin, Germany, this past September, hosted by Groundswell International.

The event featured workshops, case studies, and insightful exchanges with Groundswell staff, NGO partners, farmers, and allies from across four continents. Taking part in this event provided Jeff with a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about the innovative agroecology strategies being implemented across 11 countries. It also allowed him to explore how SeedChange's partnership network could learn from and strengthen collaborations with Groundswell's dynamic approach to amplifying farmer-led innovation.

Learn more through Groundswell's collaborative publication, Centering Farmers in Innovation and Extension in the Global South.

# LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter the new year, we remain committed to deepening our impact and finding new ways to foster sustainable solutions that empower communities. With imminent shifts in North American governing bodies, we are keenly aware of how harmful policy changes would impact our partners around the world.

In 2025, more than ever, we will stay grounded in our partnership approach — amplifying the voices of those we serve, strengthening our innovative programs, and expanding access to resilient seeds and sustainable farming practices.

This year marks a special milestone for SeedChange (formerly USC Canada) as we enter our 80th year of operation. Founded by Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova in 1945, we carry forward her legacy of dedication to social justice, working alongside communities to build resilience, foster local leadership, and advocate for equitable solutions to global challenges.

None of this would have been possible without you. Together, we're planting the seeds for a brighter future. As we move into 2025, we invite you to stay connected, continue supporting our work, and join us in making a lasting difference. Your partnership is the key to our shared success.

Join us as we continue this journey — because every step forward is a step toward a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable world for all.



*Women farmers gather at a village meeting in Morogoro, Tanzania*

SeedChange

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We are a registered Canadian charity: 11927-6129-RR-0001
SeedChange was founded by Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova in 1945 as the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (USC Canada).

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