SeedChange

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



1945-2025
Celebrating 80 years of impact

CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF SEEDING CHANGE

A message from our Executive Director

As I look back on the last year, I'm deeply grateful for the ground laid by our founder, Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova, in 1945 and for the seeds of change that have continued to grow ever since. This year, we are proud to celebrate 80 years of partnership — a legacy of advancing food sovereignty and social justice alongside communities in Africa, Asia, Mesoamerica and, more recently, across Canada.

As we continue to work for a more just and sustainable future, I'm inspired by the perseverance, leadership, and dedication of smallholder farmers in Canada and around the world. From Dupas, Québec to North Wollo, Ethiopia, farmers are testing, implementing, and adapting new practices that strengthen the seed and food systems that sustain us all.

Alongside our partners and communities, we navigate ongoing challenges — from climate change impacts to threats to human rights. Yet, these challenges only strengthen our determination to advance the meaningful work that we've built together over the past 80 years.

Over the decades, SeedChange has stood with communities to build strong, biodiverse, and just food systems.

From launching the Seeds of Survival program in the 1980s to expanding our work across Canada and in more than 19 countries worldwide, our collective impact continues to take root — improving lives and strengthening the social, economic, and environmental fabric of communities.

Since 2007, our focus on community-led programming has promoted farmers' rights and equitable, locally-informed solutions — and it's working. Through partnership, we have strengthened farmer-managed seed systems, safeguarded agrobiodiversity, and championed farmers' leadership in transforming food systems.

The path ahead demands continued resilience, creativity, and deepened partnerships — and we are up to the task. The seeds we have planted together continue to grow, nurtured by shared commitment, enduring partnerships, and the belief that lasting change is possible when the local knowledge and expertise of farmers is centred and upheld.

Thank you for your continued support.
We could not do this without you.



Jessica Wood
Executive Director



Cover photo: Mwanahawa Salehe, a farmer from Kikundi Village, Morogoro District, Tanzania.







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Produced and designed by SeedChange| **weseedchange.org**



MISSION

Through partnership, we work to enhance seed diversity, promote agroecological food systems, and counter inequality.

VISION

An equitable world sustained by just and resilient food systems.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Seeds are Essential: Climate resilience, sustainable food systems, and equitable community development are all upheld by seeds. An equitable world sustained by just and resilient food systems is reliant on biodiversity of seeds, local seed knowledge, and seed sovereignty.

Partnership & Solidarity: We are invested in building equitable partnerships for program delivery, grounded in respect, inclusive governance, and accountability. There is value in collective work and shared learning. We are collaborators with and supporters of local experts.

Smallholder Farmers' Experience & Expertise: Small-scale and agroecological farmers are the experts when it comes to their work and in knowing what supports and interventions they need.

Equity: Intersectional, feminist, and community-specific approaches to program engagement are the most effective means to achieving equitable, sustainable results.

Growth & Adaptability: We are committed to reflecting, evaluating, and adapting our direction and purpose in response to the changing local and global context, including partners' needs and opportunities for sustained impact.

80 YEARS: DEFINING MOMENTS



1945

The Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (USC Canada) is founded by Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova to support families displaced by World War II. In its first year, Lotta raises $64,000, equivalent to $1.6M today.

1957

Inspired by Lotta's impassioned call to action, volunteers from across the country rally support for those in need. USC Canada expands its reach to Korea and the Middle East.



1968

After witnessing famine in India, Lotta inspires USC Canada to begin agricultural training programs there, later expanding these efforts to Bangladesh.

1983

Lotta receives Rotary's World Understanding Award, affirming "we are on this earth to make it a better, kinder world." She steps down as Director of USC Canada after nearly 40 years.



1989

USC Canada launches the Seeds of Survival program to support Ethiopian farmers in rebuilding their livelihoods and safeguarding local seed varieties after drought and civil conflict.

2007

USC Canada increases focus on preserving seed diversity and promoting sustainable agriculture practices through partnership in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.



2013

USC Canada introduces its first program in Canada, aimed at strengthening climate resilient, biodiverse seed systems.

2019

USC Canada becomes SeedChange, a name that better reflects our work in food systems and honours impact through time.



2025

SeedChange celebrates 80 years, advancing a more just and sustainable world by promoting food systems change that centres seeds, food sovereignty, and smallholder farmer rights.

2024/2025: OUR IMPACT

This year, SeedChange continued to work in partnership with grassroots organizations, research institutions, advocacy networks, and communities as part of the global agroecology movement, addressing intersecting social and environmental food systems challenges. We championed seed and food sovereignty as essential foundations for building a more just and sustainable world.

Globally, our work strengthened local seed systems to increase biodiversity and build resilience to climate change. In East Africa, our focus on a gender-transformative approach to agroecology supported women and men to shift power dynamics and implement sustainable farming practices that promote equity and resilience. In West Africa, Mesoamerica, and the Pacific, we engaged in participatory research, community seed initiatives, and adaptive approaches that help communities preserve biodiversity, improve food security, and respond to changing environmental conditions. In Canada, we continued to foster regionally adapted seed networks and support sustainable seed production that reinforces local knowledge and capacity.

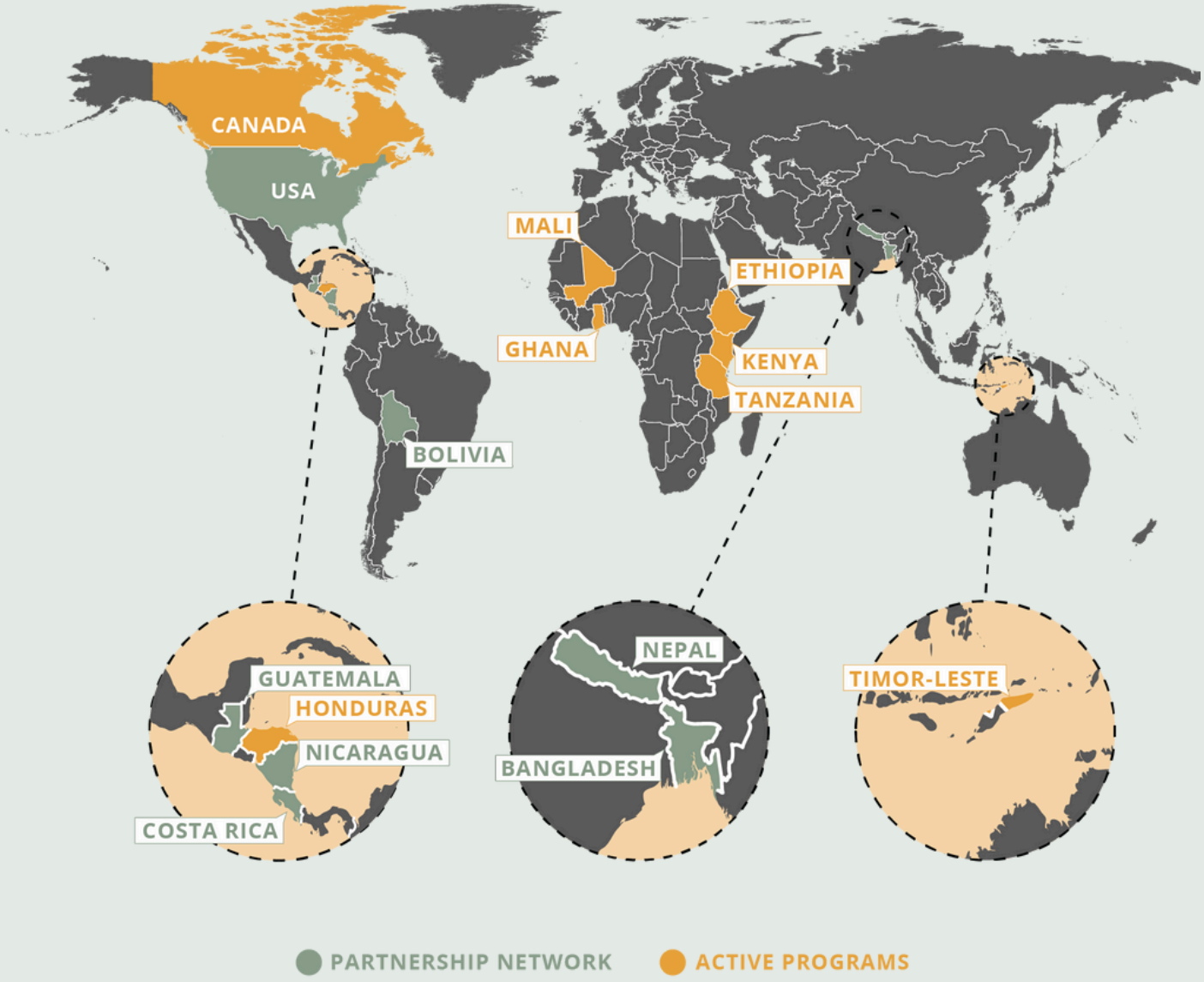
Partnership is at the core of everything we do. Together, we work to foster more equitable and resilient communities around the world by strengthening the agency of smallholder farmers to improve economic, social, environmental, and food system outcomes.







GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP NETWORK



This map illustrates the scope of SeedChange's global engagement. It highlights where our programs are actively implemented, as well as where our enduring partnerships continue to advance shared goals through collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange. This network reflects the breadth of our international connections and the lasting impact of our partnerships worldwide.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DRIVES CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Across East Africa, women farmers are proving that climate resilience grows stronger through their leadership. With support from SeedChange and our partners, women's groups in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania are conserving seeds, protecting biodiversity, and building sustainable livelihoods in the face of climate change.

In **Ethiopia**, women are strengthening household resilience from the ground up. Through Self-Help and Agroecology Groups, they are learning to save seeds, diversify home gardens, and rear small livestock to secure year-round food. By improving soils with organic compost and using water-saving practices like mulching, they're helping their families withstand drought and restore degraded land.

"BEFORE, WE FEARED THE DROUGHTS WOULD TAKE EVERYTHING. NOW, WITH OUR GARDENS AND SEEDS, WE KNOW WE CAN FEED OUR CHILDREN AND EVEN EARN AN INCOME. IT GIVES US STRENGTH."

– FARMER, NORTH WOLLO, ETHIOPIA

In **Kenya**, women are leading efforts to restore biodiversity and protect traditional seeds. After training in agroecology and women's rights, Dina Sikamoi built a seed bank from mud, sticks, and grass — now home to more than 30 local seed varieties. Her leadership has inspired new seed banks across Baringo County, ensuring families can access resilient crops adapted to changing weather.

In **Tanzania**, women are turning leadership into collective enterprise. Under Chairperson Devotha John, the Lukonde Seed Bank has become a community cornerstone — producing, storing, and sharing seeds for local use and markets. Once reliant on external suppliers, farmers now manage their own seed supply, reinvesting profits and knowledge to strengthen food security.

From home gardens in Ethiopia to seed banks in Kenya and collective enterprise initiatives in Tanzania, women across East Africa are showing that when women lead, communities thrive.

Our International Programs team worked with **13 partner organizations** across **seven countries**, reaching over **25,000 farmers** in **148 communities** in 2024/2025 to strengthen local food systems and promote sustainable, resilient agriculture. Through these partnerships, we provide training, resources, and community-led solutions that empower farmers, foster climate resilience, and build lasting impact in rural areas.





In Honduras:

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FARMER RESEARCH GROUPS



In **Honduras**, rural women are leading local farmer research groups — CIALs (Comités de Investigación Agrícola Local) — to advance resilient farming and innovation. Within these groups, farmers test, share, and improve traditional maize and bean varieties, producing locally adapted, drought-tolerant seeds. Over 25 years, these farmer-driven initiatives have increased yields and strengthened food security, showing how community research can expand effective agricultural solutions. CIALs also encourage families to adopt ecological practices like crop rotation and mulching, protecting fragile hillsides and maintaining soil fertility.

Beyond farming, these groups are spaces of empowerment: women who once hesitated to speak are now recognized experts influencing decisions on crops, land, and credit. By preserving resilient seeds, promoting ecological practices, and sharing their expertise, women in CIALs demonstrate that farmer-led research is a powerful path to sustainable agricultural solutions. Their leadership, innovation, and knowledge-sharing are strengthening both local communities and wider food systems.

In Ghana:

SEEDS AND COOKING CONNECT CULTURE AND NUTRITION



In **Ghana**, women are placing work with seeds at the heart of community well-being, to support nutrition, biodiversity, and the strengthening of local food systems. At farmer seed fairs, they display hundreds of varieties — millet, sorghum, beans, and vegetables — showcasing the diversity that sustains healthy, nutrient-rich meals.

Rare sorghum varieties once thought lost have been recovered and replanted, helping communities maintain resilient, locally adapted crops. Reviving these varieties is further encouraged by the opportunity to bring back traditional dishes, creating a direct link between seed preservation and culinary heritage.

These fairs go beyond seeds; they also celebrate food and culture. Women lead communal cooking sessions, reviving 31 traditional dishes. Each dish teaches about biodiversity, showing how seeds carry history, nutrition, and cultural memory. Children taste flavours tied to their heritage, while communities recognize women farmers as guardians of knowledge, culture, and healthy diets.

By linking diverse seeds with diverse diets, women gain visibility as custodians of agrobiodiversity. Their efforts strengthen local food systems, improve nutrition, and preserve cultural heritage — ensuring that farming, culture, and nourishment remain intertwined for generations to come.

RESILIENT FARMING IN A SHIFTING CLIMATE

Climate change is transforming Canadian agriculture. Floods, droughts, and shifting seasons are putting pressure on crops, making locally-adapted solutions essential to protect food security. Across the country, farmers are working with SeedChange, researchers, and local organizations to co-develop climate-resilient practices and crop varieties that strengthen harvests and, by extension, the Canadian food system.

In **Alberta**, grain farmer Frank Bueckert at Woodland Organics is developing his own oat variety through participatory breeding.

"THE FUTURE OF FARMING IS FARMERS ADAPTING THEIR CROPS TO THEIR OWN MICROCLIMATE, AND THEIR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES AND SITUATIONS."

- FRANK BUECKERT

By testing and selecting seeds in northern growing conditions, he is creating an oat variety that can thrive in challenging weather, demonstrating how locally adapted crops can help Canada's agriculture adapt to climate change.

In **Quebec**, farmer Jean-François Daoust is developing a Purple Gorria pepper, blending the smoky flavour of Basque peppers with traits from local cayennes. Careful selection for earliness, hardiness, and flavour ensures this variety can withstand shorter seasons and variable weather, providing reliable, nutritious crops while preserving agricultural biodiversity.

Through participatory research and national partnerships, these examples of farmer-led innovations are more than individual success stories. These efforts contribute to building a resilient agricultural system across Canada.



Our Canadian Program, The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security, works with farmers, researchers, and partners nationwide to protect and strengthen Canada's seed diversity. Through training, research, and collaboration, the program engages approximately **200 farmers in on-farm research projects** and reaches over **2,000 through training and knowledge-sharing events** in 2024/2025. Together, these efforts help build resilient seed systems, advance climate adaptation, and ensure a secure and sustainable food future for all.

ADAPTING CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT CROPS FOR CANADIAN FARMS

Across Canada, farmers are cultivating crops that reflect the traditions and tastes of diverse cultures. These vegetables provide more than nutrition — they carry the flavours and stories of home for diaspora communities. By growing culturally significant varieties adapted to Canadian conditions, farmers ensure these foods remain part of everyday life, connecting families to the traditions they cherish.

Okra: Farmers across southwestern Ontario experimented with okra varieties to create plants that could thrive locally while keeping flavours and textures familiar to families from Asia, Africa, and the Americas. For many, okra is a taste of home and a connection to a shared history.

By cultivating okra that grows well here, farmers enable families to continue cooking the dishes that hold meaning for them.

Amaranth: The grassroots collective Iyé Creative worked with farmers to grow Copperhead amaranth. Valued for its grains and leaves across Asia, Africa, and the Americas, it carries memories of kitchens and celebrations worldwide. By selecting varieties suited to Canada's shorter growing seasons, farmers ensure families can preserve these culinary traditions and enjoy a familiar connection to their heritage.

Eggplant: Gaia Organic Seeds is stewarding Melanzana Rossa Di Rotonda, an Ethiopian eggplant introduced to Italy and later Canada.

Its vibrant orange fruit — with flavours of eggplant, tomato, and sweet pepper — reflects the regions that shaped it. By adapting it to Canadian fields, farmers help keep these distinctive ingredients on local tables, allowing families to continue enjoying recipes passed down through generations.

Together, these efforts show how culturally significant crops allow farmers and communities to maintain meaningful food traditions. They are preserving seeds and stories, ensuring that culture, taste, and memory remain alive in Canadian kitchens.







OUR FOUNDER: DR. LOTTA HITSCHMANOVA



"WE ARE HERE IN THIS WORLD TO HELP EACH OTHER AND TO MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE. THAT IS MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE."

In 1945, Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova — a refugee of war and a passionate humanitarian — founded the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (USC Canada), now known as SeedChange. Her vision was clear: **to help communities rebuild with dignity, self-determination, and hope.**

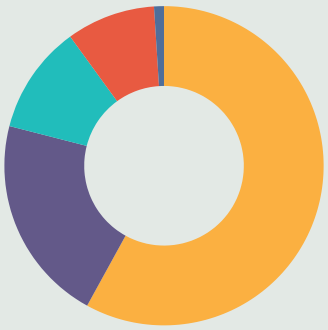
Lotta prioritized local leadership, insisting that those most affected should be at the forefront of solutions. This approach was innovative for its time and laid the foundation for SeedChange's enduring commitment to partnership, solidarity, and equity.

Throughout her life, Lotta remained steadfast in her belief in the power of collective action and generosity. Her values continued to inspire generations of supporters and volunteers, even after her passing in 1990.

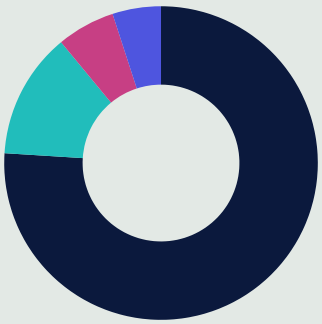
Today, as we mark 80 years since our founding, we honour Lotta's legacy by advancing her vision through our sustained partnership model and approach to solidarity rooted in local leadership and knowledge.

Overview

May 1, 2024 - April 30, 2025



- Global Affairs Canada: **58%**
- Other Foundations: **21%**
- SeedChange Foundation: **11%**
- Support from General Public: **9%**
- Other: **1%**



- Program: **76%**
- Administrative: **13%**
- Fundraising & Communications: **6%**
- Other Program Partnerships: **5%**

2024/2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nicole McDonald, Karim Salabi, Ericka Moerkerken, Cimoan Atkins, Alejandro Argumedo, Boaventura Monjane, Constanza Monterrubio Solís, Emma Kirke, Shelley Spruit

SeedChange Financial Summary for the year ending April 30, 2025

Net assets	**159,727**

Statement of revenue and expenses	
Global Affairs Canada	3,795,522
Support from general public	629,268
SeedChange Foundation	725,000
Other foundations	1,362,787
Other revenue and investment income	72,189
Total revenue	6,584,766
Program expenses	4,897,515
Non-program expenses	1,545,797
Total expenses	6,443,312
Revenue over expenses for the year	**141,454**

SeedChange Foundation Financial Summary for the year ending April 30, 2025

Net assets	**5,448,991**

Comprised of	
Lotta Hitschmanova Legacy Fund	4,714,530
Stewart Moore Endowment	381,809
Manson & Mary Toynbee Endowment	201,325
Kurt & Evelyn (Russell) Haas Endowment	123,514
Rick McTaggart Memorial Fund	27,813
Statement of revenue and expenses	
Bequests	461,387
Investments	494,382
Other	96
Total revenue	**955,865**
Administrative & fundraising expenses	94,248
Contribution to SeedChange	725,000
Total expenses	**819,248**
Net revenue for the year	**136,617**

*For audited financial statements, please visit our website at **weseedchange.org/our-work/financials**.*

A CELEBRATION OF SERVICE

TO OUR FUNDERS, PARTNERS, AND SUPPORTERS — *THANK YOU.*

Your commitment, collaboration, and generosity make our work possible. Together, we are advancing agroecology, fostering equity, and strengthening communities around the world.



In Victoria, British Columbia, volunteers pack clothing for shipment overseas, 1982.

A special 80th anniversary *thank you* to the volunteers who started it all and continue to support us along the way.

For decades, volunteers inspired by Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova built a national network of solidarity — collecting, sorting, and shipping supplies overseas with extraordinary dedication. Their spirit of generosity and collective action continues to shape SeedChange 80 years on.

DECADES OF DEDICATION — *THANKS* TO OUR LONGEST-SERVING COLLEAGUES





Kate Green, celebrating 30 years with SeedChange — with Nasima Khatun in Bangladesh, 1995 (l), and on a field visit, 2014 (r).





Marie Dulude, celebrating 40 years with SeedChange — during a field visit in Mali, 1989 (l) and with Cheick Hamed Haidara, Community Development Advisor for CAB Demeso, 2019 (r).



PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

Join Our Growing Circle

For 80 years, SeedChange's circle of support has sustained and strengthened our shared vision — like the steady rings of a tree.

Rooted in the commitment of our earliest donors, this community has created lasting impact grounded in justice, dignity, and solidarity — and continues to nurture the conditions for growth.

By leaving a legacy gift to SeedChange, you help this circle flourish. Your generosity will seed change that endures far into the future.

A legacy gift is more than a donation. It is a living investment in hope, resilience, and equity, growing quietly and powerfully year after year.

To learn more, visit **weseedchange.org/legacy** or contact us at **fundraising@weseedchange.org**.

SeedChange

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Help us seed 80 more years of change.

Donate Today

Donate online. It's easy, fast, safe, and secure:
weseedchange.org/donate

Call our toll-free number:
1-800-565-6872 ext. 101

Mail your cheque to SeedChange:
56 Sparks Street, Suite 600, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B1

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)