

## Seeds of Survival

The Seeds of Survival (SoS) program was launched in Ethiopia, in 1989, to support famine recovery and the conservation of farmers' varieties, led by efforts of the Ethiopian Institute of Biodiversity Conservation in collaboration with SeedChange (then USC Canada). SoS was subsequently expanded as a global program (in 19 countries) to strengthen farmers' seed systems, working with organizations and institutions in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, particularly in centres of crop origin and diversity. It was supported through several funding cycles from Global Affairs Canada and other agencies and public donations.

SoS methods include strengthening access to diverse seeds and planting materials (with both intra- and inter-specific diversity) through conservation on farms and in [community seed banks/houses](#), participatory plant breeding and varietal selection, gender equality and women's access to productive resources, [cooperatives for local/territorial markets](#), and policy advocacy for farmers' rights. The program promoted the complementarities between *in situ* (on farm) and *ex situ* (gene bank) conservation approaches.<sup>1</sup> South-South and South-North knowledge exchanges and international training workshops (13 thus far, including [one online](#)) have been key to sharing methodologies.

Program evaluations showed important results for food security and farm resilience through these methods.<sup>2</sup> The co-design and sharing of methodologies led to expanded use of methods that have strengthened seed security.<sup>3</sup> Together with gender equality training, action research as part of the SoS program in Honduras has been shown to improve gender relations within and outside the household.<sup>4</sup> The training workshops led to the expansion of methods such as community seed banking around the world.<sup>5</sup> These results have been documented through program monitoring and evaluation methods, as well as methodologies such as assessments on seed security and community seed banks; however, there is an important gap to translate this data into publications and articles for sharing. For example, the [Seed Security Assessment and Action Plan methodology](#) has been carried out in over 35 locations by community organizations and local researchers, documenting the importance of [farmers seed systems](#), but this data is not available for other researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> Dalle, S.P.; Walsh, S. USC Canada's Experience in supporting community seed banks in Africa, Asia and the Americas. In *Community Seed Banks: Origins, Evolution and Prospects*; Vernooy, R., Shrestha, P., Sthapit, B., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2015; pp. 212–229.

<sup>2</sup> The final evaluation revealed significant results in strengthening resilience (summary: [What we Learned 2020](#)).

<sup>3</sup> See case studies in SeedChange (2020), *Seed Security Assessment and Action Plan Guide*, available online: [https://weseedchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SSAAP-Guide\\_SeedChange\\_En.pdf](https://weseedchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SSAAP-Guide_SeedChange_En.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Humphries, Sally, Lauren Classen, Jose Jimenez, Fredy Sierra, Omar Gallardo, and Marvin Gomez 2012 *Opening Cracks for the Transgression of Social Boundaries: An Evaluation of the Gender Impacts of Farmer Research Teams in Honduras*. *World Development* 40(10):2078–2095.

<sup>5</sup> Follow-up interviews by SeedChange with SoS training workshop participants. Over 12 international training workshops were organized (e.g., in Ethiopia, Mali, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia, and Honduras), with a total of 200 extension workers, scientists, farmers, and government and non-government representatives.