

# 2023 Impact Report



**SeedChange**

Formerly USC Canada

# Better lives for farmers Better food for all Thanks to you!

**Esther Wanjiku, Kenya**

Together, we've been helping farmers around the world grow resilient farms and communities in an increasingly challenging climate. Esther Njuguna's training in climate-resilient and sustainable farming has transformed the way she farms and the results speak for themselves. She now grows more food with less water.

"When the climate changed here, we lacked water and hunger was the order of the day and we could not farm because we did not have water. We were taught about climate resilient farming, and you can see, even now, I have food. We were taught how to grow food with minimal water".



**Growing a better world**  
Since 1945

### **Our Vision**

An equitable world sustained by just and resilient food systems.

### **Our Mission**

To build food sovereignty by working with partners to enhance biodiversity, promote ecological food systems, and counter inequity.



# Thank you for your generosity!

Your generous donations help farmers around the world tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time: climate change, injustice in the food system, and the loss of agricultural biodiversity.

With your support, we work with farmers in Canada and globally to grow just, healthy, sustainable harvests. By keeping seeds in farmers' hands and strengthening farmers' knowledge, we help communities thrive.

In the past year, **over 25,000 farming households around the world were empowered by your generosity.**

**We couldn't do this work without you! Thank you for growing a better world with SeedChange.**

## This is where your support went in 2023

### **Ethiopia**

200 self-help groups were formed to help thousands of women access agroecology training and take action on gender-based violence cases. More women are accessing the justice system thanks to these formal organizing supports.

### **Kenya**

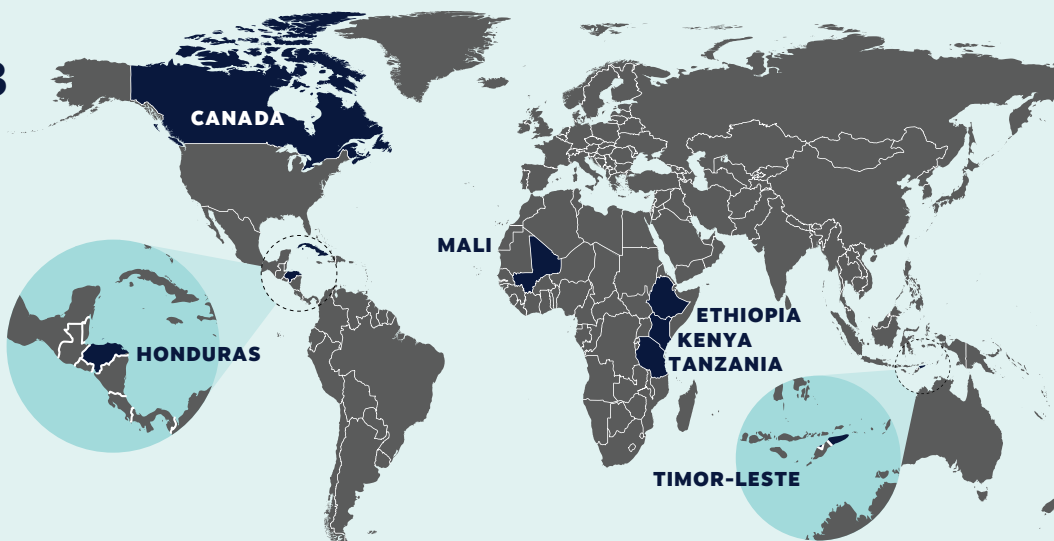
In 31 communities, men and women are pushing for change so that women can access agroecology resources and justice when gender-based violence breaches, such as land rights transgressions, occur.

### **Tanzania**

Hundreds of women are learning agroecology skills through training projects sponsored at knowledge centres in three different regions. These centres provide access to information and farm exchange visits to reinforce skills learned in training.

### **Timor-Leste**

Over 400 families, linked to small community seed banks, have



increased access to vegetable and wild food varieties. The network of community seed banks has helped six highland communities achieve a 20% increase in the varieties of vegetables they can grow.

### **Honduras**

Our partner FIPAH's network of hundreds of local agriculture research committees are active in 60 highland communities. Over 6,000 people are involved in assessing maize and bean varieties, which can grow in increasingly extreme climatic conditions.

### **Mali**

SeedChange's partnership with IRPAD-Afrique has strengthened the production and expansion of local seeds and conservation of critical food crops in the rural regions of Douentza and Mopti.

### **Canada**

Over 80 farms across Canada tested climate-resilient vegetable varieties on their farms. The program continues to work with farmers across the country to build their capacity to save and breed their own seeds.

# Rural women cultivating change across East Africa



Around the world, women farmers play a critical role in growing food and saving seed for their families and communities, usually with minimal formal support and limited access to resources.

**Thanks to your generosity, SeedChange has been**

**supporting women farmers around the world for decades to help them defend their rights and reduce the barriers they face, by seeking equal access to land, credit, and training in the ecological farming practices that help them most.**

But women farmers also face barriers beyond the farm, including cultural norms that prevent girls from reaching their full human potential. Or, the risk of violence, including harmful traditional practices.

The Rural Women Cultivating Change (RWCC) project seeks to shift the attitudes, systems, and structures that limit the potential of rural women smallholder farmers, particularly female heads of households and survivors of gender-based violence. By doing so, the project contributes to poverty alleviation through reduced personal and collective vulnerability to socio-economic challenges and other shocks.

The link between personal safety and farming is clear:

***“If women and girls can’t walk to market due to fear of violence against them and can’t make decisions on matters that affect their existence and farming enterprises, then their hard-earned efforts at growing food are useless, and they are prevented from realizing their rights and earning a normal living”. —Anna Marwa from PELUM, one of our partners in Tanzania***

In 2023, despite political instability in Ethiopia and climate challenges across East Africa, RWCC was able to continue its work with thousands of farmers in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania, confronting multiple barriers they face, both on and off the farm. Since its inception, 7,208 women and 2,593 men have worked to advance women’s leadership opportunities, organized to combat gender-based violence and tested innovative farming practices.

Global Affairs Canada is the key funder of Rural Women Cultivating Change, but it’s your donations that have made it possible for us to invest in facilitating this exciting new initiative.

**Thank you for your powerful support!**



6 years      3 countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania      7 local partner organizations      32,500 rural farmers      488 self-help and community action groups      75 communities mobilized      145 high-level institutions in government, education, and research

# Your generosity grows...

## Justice



Thanks to community action groups established in East Africa through the RWCC project, women and men learn to advocate for their neighbours. When abuse or injustice occurs, they act.

In July 2023, a widow lost her land when her husband died and his siblings took it from her. Without land, she struggled to provide for her children. Her local community action group worked closely with her to launch a case and win the land deeds to which she was entitled by Ethiopian law. She can now resume farming and make a life for herself on her own land.

In Maherri village in Tanzania, an average of three women were raped every month between their farms and homes, but after training from our partners, women took charge and demanded justice for victims and protection for their rights.

Addressing the link between farming, justice, and personal safety means more women can participate in food production, provide for their families, and contribute fully to their communities.

## Independence



With the death of her husband, Belaynesh Yimer (at left) became the head of her household. As a lead farmer in the RWCC project, she had

experience growing vegetables and was therefore selected by her self-help group for additional training in vegetable production and fruit gardening.

Among the crops Belaynesh now produces are lettuce seeds. She said, “I produce the lettuce seed, save and grow it during seedling production. I don’t buy seeds of lettuce from the market now, instead I sell surplus seedlings and earn additional income. In the future, I will also try to produce the seeds of other vegetables from my own garden, save them, and grow them to produce the seedlings.”

## Innovation



Despite the challenge of temporary land availability, Sellina Sewando and Monica Patrick (at left), participants in our RWCC project in Tanzania, have found an ingenious

way to cultivate a thriving vegetable garden that is both flexible and resilient. Their secret? “Movable” gardens that can be set up in temporary locations for a season or two.

Work on the building of the home (above) paused for a few months—so Sellina and Monica set up three gardens there with good sun, adequate moisture, and protection from pests and adverse winds. These small but mighty gardens grow peas, tomatoes and managu—a popular and nutritious fast-growing local green, leafy vegetable. This small but innovative solution allows these women to not only add additional crops to their families’ diets, but to overcome their constraints to land access.

## Conservation



Public seed and food fairs are essential to conservation efforts and the reintroduction of varieties that might have otherwise been lost due to climate issues, storage loss, or the promotion of imported

commercial varieties. SeedChange staff and our partners, above, had the opportunity to attend a Seed Fair in Mkobwe, Tanzania earlier this year.

Farmers have the opportunity to observe seeds and plants at different developmental stages, while also talking with other farmers who grow them. This is an essential part of the human-plant-knowledge interaction that is fundamental to food security in challenging conditions.



**“I am so happy because I cannot eat all these vegetables, so I am selling them to my neighbours.”**

## **A new climate and new ways of growing**

**An interview with Esther Wanjiku, 63, farmer from Mbegi village**

### **What is your name and family background?**

I am Esther Wanjiku. I live here in Mbegi, I am married, I have four children, three daughters and a son with several grandchildren. I am a farmer. I plant various vegetables and fruits of different types. I am benefitting from this farm.

When the climate changed here, we lacked water and hunger was the order of the day and we could not farm because we did not have water.

When we went to Seed Saver’s Network (SeedChange’s partner in Kenya), we were taught about climate-resilient farming and now I have food. We were taught how to grow food with minimal water.

I used to plant crops and they dried up. I thought of how, when it rains, there is a lot of surface water run-off, so I decided to divert the run-off water to my farm and dig trenches to spread the rain water into this shallow pit and the rest of the farm when the pit is full.

I use the water from the pit to water the vegetables I have planted in sacks. They do not consume a lot of water and all this is because of the lessons from SSN.

### **How has this way of farming improved your life?**

I am so happy because I cannot eat all these vegetables, so I am selling them to my neighbours. If you look at the banana trees, I sell both the cooking bananas and the fruit bananas, so this climate-resilient farming has improved my income at home.

### **Where do you get seed?**

I save my own seeds and we exchange with other farmers. We do not buy seeds and, when we plant, we don’t use chemical fertilizers; we use organic manure.

### **How would you like to be supported?**

I would like us to be supported because not everyone knows about climate-resilient farming and, this being a dry area, most people have problems because there is no water. **I would like every farmer here to gain this knowledge. If I am the only one who knows about this, and my neighbours don’t, isn’t that a problem?**

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**The generosity of SeedChange donors allows us to support more farmers like Esther so that they can face the challenges of climate change with knowledge and resilience.**

Fatuma Athuman



# EmpowHER: Transformative training for women's economic success

In Kisungo village, Tanzania, Fatuma Athuman and Eva Ibramimu were discussing the difficulties they shared earning enough income to support their families. They simply didn't have enough, and their families' needs were not being met. They depended on their husbands to sell their crops in order to make their household purchases.

The two neighbours came across an agroecology training program hosted by SeedChange's partner, PELUM in Tanzania. After attending the agroecology training, Fatuma and Eva were able to identify new, local economic activities to generate income for their families, without their husbands.

Their training focused on different agroecological techniques, such as the use of ash and compost manure instead of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and ways that women could support themselves while also contributing to the economic needs of their families. Alongside this training, participants also learned about the challenges related to sexual and gender-based violence, which is often sparked by tensions that arise from difficult financial circumstances.

**“I now have a good house, no family conflicts, and can also contribute to the family income. Other women should join the groups, do agroecology farming, and increase healthy food for their incomes.”**

Eva Ibramimu



The two women started to diversify their farms and grow different varieties of higher value vegetables, including cabbage, tomatoes, and amaranth. At first, one of their husbands resisted this new farming activity, but once the women were earning a certain amount of money per week, his attitude shifted. The money they have generated has allowed them to *use half and save half* to invest in the next season. Expenses are covered and less pressure is placed on men to be the sole financial support.

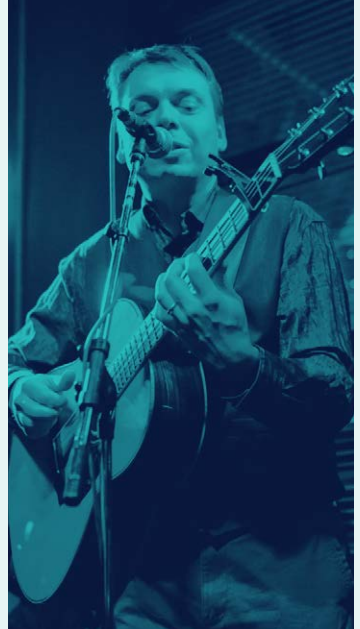
Anna Marwa, Program Officer at PELUM, leads the training and shared what she observed in the communities:

*“In the Same district, there is a patriarchal tradition, but now women are starting to shift these norms, where women are becoming more engaged in the decision-making in the communities.”*

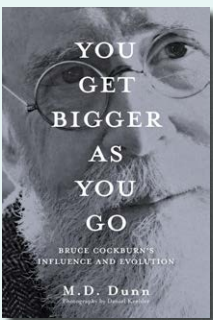
Before involvement with these agroecology projects, everyone depended exclusively on men to feed their families and take care of food needs. Many women had to travel 40 km to get to the market, but are now able to sell their extra produce at the local markets instead of having to buy vegetables.

One participant of the training described how the approach contributed to changing her household dynamics:

*“I can do some of the economic activities without relying on my husband. Through the training, I now share the decision-making roles.”*



Singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn in Mali



# Mark Dunn–Donor Story

Mark Dunn (top right) is the author of *You Get Bigger As You Go*, a book on the influence and evolution of musical artist and fellow SeedChange donor, Bruce Cockburn.

## When did you first hear about SeedChange?

I first heard of SeedChange decades ago through Bruce

Cockburn's USC Canada commercials. That Bruce endorsed the organization made it stand out for me.

## What inspired you to first donate to SeedChange?

Food security is one of the most far-reaching humanitarian problems. Without access to sustainable food and water, people are forced into mass migrations that cause population pressures and lead to civil unrest. As we know, vast amounts of food is wasted in North America. It seems that SeedChange is positioned to have a lasting influence on the future of food production in developing nations. These programs could help promote peace and generational well-being.

## How did Bruce Cockburn influence your decision to become engaged with SeedChange?

The documentaries 'River of Sand' and 'Return to Nepal' were inspirational. It was a rare opportunity to see SeedChange's work in action. More generally, Bruce's engagement with organizations that promote change is a good model. I think that everyone can contribute to the greater good by direct action, but also through supporting the work of people directly engaged. Looking deeper into SeedChange's practices and successes, I could see why Mr. Cockburn has championed the organization.

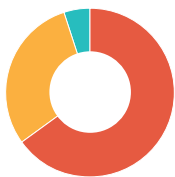
## You have frequently given a portion of the royalties of both your music and your writing to SeedChange. Why?

Because I could. Playing one's own music and expecting people to listen is perhaps the height of hubris. I am not motivated by money or a desire for recognition. I just want to write and play music. Aligning with organizations such as SeedChange, and local-to-me agricultural groups like Harvest Algoma, provides me with further motivation. I often travel and perform solo. Knowing that these organizations (and others) receive a small portion of the proceeds helps me to keep going and takes my focus off the anxiety-inducing prospect of live performance. I also try to tithe as part of my personal practice.

## If you could wave a magic guitar through the air, what change would you most like to see in the world today?

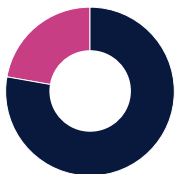
I would remove the human obsession with money, the delusional devotion to the fantasy of infinite growth, and replace it with an understanding of the fragility of life. If I could, I would have people focus more on the quality of life, the process of things, rather than the quantity of production. Biology teaches us that all life is connected and interdependent. Cooperation, not competition, seems to be the natural rhythm of the planet's biological system(s). Why are human systems of organization so focused on the individual? I would rid the human mind of zero-sum assumptions.

## Summary May 1, 2022–April 30, 2023



**Revenue: \$7,625,918**

- Support from general public and foundations: **65%**  
(including SeedChange Foundation)
- Global Affairs Canada: **30%**
- Other (including investment income): **5%**



**Expenses: \$8,173,867**

- Program: **78%**
- Non-program: **22%**



### SeedChange Board of Directors 2022–2023

Nicole McDonald, Karim Salabi, Bernard Ndour, Ericka Moerkerken, Padmapani Perez, Alejandro Argumedo, Sarah Crocker, Kim Delaney, Boaventura Eugenio Monjane, Constanza Monterrubio Solis, Priscilla Settee.

### SeedChange Foundation members 2022–2023

Bruce Lourie, Bernard Ndour, Troy Mitchell, Darcy Ferron, Robert C Kamp, Catherine Rowe, Jessica Wood.

### Staff 2022–2023

Leticia Ama Deawuo (Executive Director), Crystal Arsenault, Sophie Bourdon, Lauren Brander, Katie Breen, Aabir Dey, Marie Dulude, Teresa Garavito, Kate Green, Sandra Hines, Stephanie Hughes, Helen Jensen, Virginie Lavallée-Picard, Victoria Machakaire, Elodie Mantha, Hugo Martorell, Marta Monaghan, Tadiwa Muradzikwa, Beatriz Oliver, Denise Paradis, Norbey Perez, Brent Preston, Sheila Rao, Andrew Rushmere, Pratap Shrestha, Gabriela Warrior Renaud, Tara Scott.

## SeedChange Summary Financials for the year ending April 30, 2023

**Net assets (368,898)**

### Statement of revenue and expenses

Global Affairs Canada	2,283,668
Support from general public	595,554
SeedChange Foundation	600,000
Other foundations	3,783,209
Other revenue and investment income	363,487
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>7,625,918</b>

Program expenses	6,407,799
Non-program expenses	1,766,068
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>8,173,867</b>

**Total net expenses for the year (547,949)**

## SeedChange Foundation Summary Financials for the year ending April 30, 2023

**Net assets 5,587,566**

### Comprised of

Lotta Hitschmanova Legacy Fund	4,878,368
Stewart Moore Endowment	361,789
Manson & Mary Toynbee Endowment	201,245
Kurt & Evelyn (Russell) Haas Endowment	118,401
Rick McTaggart Memorial Fund	27,763

### Statement of revenue and expenses

Bequests	323,055
Investments	173,996
Other	4,665
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>501,716</b>

Administrative & fundraising expenses	180,411
Contribution to SeedChange	600,000
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>780,411</b>

**Net revenue for the year (278,695)**

*For audited financial statements, please visit our website at [weseedchange.org/accountability](http://weseedchange.org/accountability) or contact us.*

**Donate today**

**You make this life-changing work happen.**

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Call our toll-free number: **1.800.565.6872** and press 1

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

**SeedChange**

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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