



**Skills to Share.  
Futures to Build.**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2021–2022**

Cuso International 2021–2022 Annual Report  
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Cuso International (Cuso) is a Canadian charity committed to ending poverty and inequality. Cuso works with local partners around the world to improve economic opportunities for all, enhance women's and girls' empowerment, and advance gender equality. By sharing skills, we are building sustainable futures. Each year, we amplify our impact by mobilizing hundreds of professionals who volunteer their time and share their experience.



# Canada

Cuso International gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada, as well as its donors and supporters.

Established in 1961, Cuso International is a registered charity in Canada and the United States.

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**On the cover:** Volunteer Marcelina Lubuva, Morogoro region, Tanzania, 2022 **Photographer:** Pevil Albert



Maria Daniel, Harvesting of habanero chillies, Morogoro region, Tanzania. **Photographer:** Pevil Albert

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# Our mission

Reduce poverty and inequality through the efforts of volunteers, partners, and donors.

# Our vision

A world where all people are able to realize their potential, develop their skills, and participate fully in society.

# Our values

## Partnership:

We believe in the power of people. We employ a people-centred approach to development and the challenge of overcoming poverty and inequality.

## Respect and Integrity:

We value diversity. We recognize and care about the rights and dignity of others.

## Accountability:

We take responsibility for our actions and proactively demonstrate that we work with and on behalf of others. We seek to achieve and inspire excellence.

U-GIRLS 2 grade 12 student Sewsan Abduljelil, Assosa, Ethiopia | Photographer: Biniam Enkuselassie Workagegnehu



# Message from the Chair and CEO

A cornerstone of Cuso's development model is that we strengthen the capacity of partners and institutions to make a sustainable difference in the communities we serve. In this way, Cuso is a catalyst for change that improves the lives of some of the world's most marginalized people.

This year, many issues competed for our attention, not the least of which were the restrictions and effects of COVID-19, geo-political transitions, and the ever-present mantle of climate change. In this report, you will read about some of the most important initiatives we undertook:

- Our partners and volunteers' efforts in Colombia and Cameroon to restore ecosystems and improve economic empowerment for rural women farmers
- Economic development efforts that are helping build resilient livelihoods in countries such as Tanzania, Honduras, and Colombia
- A commitment to bring young people hope for a secure economic future, which has resulted in new programming in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia
- The success of a long-running program to connect vulnerable migrants with employment in Colombia, which is being replicated in Ecuador and Peru
- The impact of our distance learning program in remote Indigenous communities of Canada's Northwest Territories

We're still here 60 years on because we want to help build more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable communities. In 2021, thanks to you, our donors, supporters, volunteers, and partners, Cuso's work touched hundreds of thousands of lives across several continents. As we develop our new strategic plan, we will continue to advance our work by building on our strengths and impact.

As always, we are grateful to you for joining us on this journey.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Perez-Coutts'.

**Patricia Perez-Coutts**  
Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Moyer'.

**Nicolas Moyer**  
Chief Executive Officer

OUR REACH:

# Cuso International around the world

## Latin America and the Caribbean:

- 1 Colombia
- 2 Jamaica
- 3 Honduras
- 4 Peru
- 5 Dominica
- 6 Ecuador
- 7 Grenada
- 8 St. Lucia
- 9 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

## Africa:

- 10 Benin
- 11 Cameroon
- 12 Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 13 Ethiopia
- 14 Nigeria
- 15 Tanzania

## Canada:

- 16 Northwest Territories

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14

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# Year at a glance

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**658,805**  
PARTICIPANTS



**159**  
VOLUNTEERS



**125**  
PARTNERS



**40**  
E-VOLUNTEERS



**16**  
COUNTRIES



**23,802**  
VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS



**120**  
STAFF



**192,556**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS



**16,159**  
DONORS



**\$31,692,973**  
REVENUE



Maura Ramos (left) and Liz Polanco Ramos, participants in the Mujeres Unidas por la Seguridad Alimentaria y Ambiental (MUSA) project, Lima, Peru | Photographer: Marlon Flores

# Innovative Program Partnerships

With support from our institutional funders and our generous and loyal donors in Canada and around the globe, Cuso developed several new partnerships and enhanced existing ones to scale our impact around the world.

Thank you!

## **Departamento para la Prosperidad Social**

Providing employment and business training to Colombia's vulnerable populations, including youth, women, and victims of conflict.

## **BMZ**

Providing targeted technical assistance to organizations and municipalities in Honduras to strengthen disaster systems so people with disabilities can better manage risks associated with natural disasters.

## **CBM International**

Addressing the social and economic rights of people with disabilities and marginalized communities in the Dry Corridor of Honduras.

Providing targeted technical assistance to organizations and municipalities to strengthen disaster systems so people with disabilities can better manage risks associated with natural disasters.

## **Education International**

Through technical support, promoting access and addressing barriers to higher education for adolescent girls, including girls with disabilities, in Ethiopia.

## **European Union**

Addressing the social and economic rights of people with disabilities and marginalized communities in the Dry Corridor of Honduras.

## **Global Affairs Canada**

Increasing the participation of women, girls, and their communities in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) and female genital mutilation (FGM) in Northern Benin.

Providing technical training to four leading women's rights organizations in Peru to improve their long-term sustainability, strengthen their programming, and advance gender-equality initiatives.

Improving the economic and social well-being of the most vulnerable people, particularly women and girls, across 10 countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Promoting access and addressing barriers to higher education for adolescent girls, including girls with disabilities, in Ethiopia.

Supporting safe, inclusive, and equitable economic growth for vulnerable youth, particularly young women, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Providing technical assistance to Caribbean governments in the Eastern Caribbean States of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The assistance improves the integration in these countries of gender equality and social inclusion into policies, strategies, programs, and services for the poorest and most vulnerable women and girls, including young women, women with disabilities, Indigenous women, and the LGBTQI+ community.

### **Manitoba Council for International Cooperation**

Providing financial support to Cuso volunteers in the Tanzania Small Business Hubs project. Volunteers are helping women and youth-led small and medium sized enterprises overcome barriers to growing their businesses.

### **Power Corporation of Canada**

Providing educational support to remote Indigenous communities in Canada's Northwest Territories and helping improve learning outcomes for high school students.

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Supporting Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria with business-management training, instruction in agriculture, livestock and fisheries production, and access to start-up capital.

Supporting the socioeconomic integration of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, including providing skills training to enable access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

### **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency**

Supporting safe, inclusive, and equitable economic growth for vulnerable youth, particularly LGBTQI+ youth, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### **World Food Program**

In Honduras, responding to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 and the effects of climate change on livelihoods and food security in the Gulf of Fonseca region and communities impacted by Hurricanes ETA and IOTA.

Providing sustainable and resilient entrepreneurship, and capacity-building, to increase the resilience and food security of potential migrants and returnees.

### **World Refugee & Migration Council**

Coordinating the international community's response through cooperation and responsibility sharing.



Eramilda Oyarce Ruiz, Participant in the Mujeres Unidas por la Seguridad Alimentaria y Ambiental (MUSA) Community Kitchen project, Lima, Peru  
Photographer: Marlon Flores

# Women's rights are human rights

Women's rights are among the fundamental human rights enshrined 70 years ago by the United Nations. They include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination, to be educated, own property, have access to health care, vote, and earn a fair and equal wage. Working with our partners, Cuso continued to build gender-responsive programs in 2021 that support these basic rights, in alignment with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy.

## Strengthening women's skills in Jamaica

Cuso partner Multi Care Youth Foundation collaborated with Child Protection and Family Services Agency, South Camp Juvenile Correctional Centre, Dress for Success, and our volunteers to provide life-skills sessions to at-risk young women. Cuso volunteer Cadienne English mentored these women to strengthen their personal and professional competencies, and access psychosocial support and practical work readiness skills.

### What the project has achieved:

- 85% of youth trained have reached their personal and career goals.
- 85% of youth report positive change in attitude and behaviour.

## Ending female genital mutilation in Benin

Cuso concluded its three-year project, Women Committed to Human Dignity, with the goal of reducing the prevalence of FGM in Northern Benin. Behaviour change at the community level is possible only if governments, institutions, and leaders educate and engage the population. Our project has recruited women and girl leaders to act as advocates and agents of change. We are now working with partners to expand the project to other regions as well as bordering countries such as Nigeria and Burkina-Faso.

### What the project has achieved:

- Reached 91,491 people, including 42,530 girls and 4,330 women.
- Conducted 4,775 community dialogue and sensitization sessions.
- 100% of targeted traditional and religious leaders are working with grandmothers, local dignitaries, and community leaders to combat FGM.
- Reached more than 2.5 million people through radio campaigns.



**“We used “image boxes” as tools to raise awareness in households and villages. For each meeting we organized, we chose a different topic to discuss. These community dialogues and neighbourhood awareness-raising activities have increased community understanding of the harmful consequences of FGM.”**

— Woman leader combatting FGM | Benin

FGM change maker, Northern Benin | Photographer: Brian Atkinson

## Championing women's rights in Peru

Cuso delivers programs in Peru that address issues such as policy, legal, and social change. Highlights include the following:

- Our Women's Voice and Leadership project advanced gender equality by providing training to four national women's rights organizations to strengthen their organizational capacity; they in turn supported 140 women's organizations across 14 targeted regions. Through this program, we funded and helped implement research, training, institutional strengthening, and advocacy projects.
- Our volunteers provided technical assistance to our partner Kallpa, which is working with young people, including those with disabilities, and migrants, to improve labour rights and reproductive health services, as well as prevent gender-based violence.
- The Mujeres Unidas por la Seguridad Alimentaria y Ambiental (MUSA) project, which links women farmers in Lima with larger women's networks, strengthened access to food systems for women living in poverty through Community Kitchens.
- Cuso project partner DEMUS (Study for the Defence of Women's Rights) fought for and won a legal protection that enables the state to prevent and investigate attacks against human rights defenders.



Somos Feministas, Lima, Peru Photo: courtesy Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (DEMUS).

## Ending child marriage in Cameroon

Working closely with our partners Queens for Peace and Women in Alternative Action, Cuso built community awareness in Cameroon with the goals to end child marriage and gender-based violence. Canadian volunteer Odette Kamanzi and national volunteer Manuela Anagho trained 18 queens—spouses to chiefs and kings—to combat these issues by sharing survivor testimonials and using other awareness-raising tools.

The Queens were trained on the causes and consequences of child marriage, as well as strategies for advocating to decision-makers to end child marriage. Queens sensitized 116 people against child marriage in rural communities where the practice continues. Eight marriages of young girls under age 18 have been stopped following these interventions.

“I love this tradition,” says Odette Kamanzi when referring to the respect that female community leaders command in Cameroonian society.

“The Queens educate the men and women and young girls about the consequences of child marriage. There are so many problems with these marriages... the girls can’t finish their studies, they have no financial autonomy, there are unwanted pregnancies, and many young girls die in childbirth... Women have a strong place in society, and they can make a very big impact.



**“Women have a strong place in society, and they can make a very big impact.”**

— Odette Kamanzi, Cuso International Volunteer,  
Gender Specialist | Cameroon

Volunteer, Odette Kamanzi, At Foumban, West Cameroon | Photographer: Frank Nzokou

## MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:

# Leaving home in search of a better life

Behind every migration statistic, people are starting a new life in a new place. Cuso, working with governments and partners, helps integrate and empower migrants and refugees so they can contribute to their new communities.

## Connecting migrants with employment in Colombia

In Colombia, our long-running Sustainable Colombian Opportunities for Peacebuilding and Employment (SCOPE) program helps vulnerable groups such as youth, women, victims of conflict, and Venezuelan migrants find formal employment. By focusing on gender equality and social inclusion, the program works closely with public and private sectors, as well as civil society, to ensure migrants are included in Colombia's labour market in ways that help protect these workers. For example, the project is implementing Ruta Inclusiva—an initiative that provides training and tailor-made technical support to private companies, so they can create inclusive workplaces and hiring practices. This reduces xenophobia in the workplace and creates safer environments for all workers.

Cuso's Partners include the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Colombia's Ministry of Labour, municipalities, chambers of commerce, private companies, and other organizations. The partnership with UNHCR was key to linking more than 335 Venezuelan refugees and migrants, as well as local vulnerable populations, to a formal job. In 2021 alone, SCOPE linked more than 1,300 participants to formal employment. And Cuso partner Fundación Vogáigne produced a long-form journalism book, *Comenzar de Cero*, which chronicles the resiliency of 10 participants in the project. SCOPE's success in Colombia is paving the way for similar initiatives in Ecuador and Peru.

### What the program has achieved:

- Trained 16,300 vulnerable people and linked 8,100 individuals over the course of the program to formal employment (60 percent women).
- 285 migrants have participated in our business-strengthening program.
- More than 70% of participants have lasted three months or more in their jobs.



Maureen Etern, Oban in Akamkpa 2, Cross River State, Nigeria Photographer: Diana Ginika



Mariana, Medellin, Colombia Photographer: Ximena Plaza

## The legacy of education

Mariana wishes only that her two daughters can avoid the circumstances that kept her out of school as an adolescent. A victim of armed conflict in her home state of Chocó, Mariana was forced to do domestic work in Medellin at a very young age. After participating in *Trabajamos por la Migración*, a Cuso project in Colombia that encourages migrants to find formal employment, Mariana is now living her dream. She works at a food company, which pays her a mandatory, livable minimum wage. This means she can not only send her daughters to school, but also afford the pencils and notebooks they need to attend. Mariana believes that these initiatives are opening a path for more women to access a decent job and stable income.

## Entrepreneurship project offers new opportunities for families in Nigeria

After Theresa Enare Obi was trained in the principles of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, she had the knowledge she needed to start her own fashion design business. The project enabled Theresa to improve her already strong tailoring skills with more knowledge of the craft, giving her the tools she needed to focus on building her business, which now supports her family. Today, Theresa provides for her three younger siblings, and all three children have been able to return to school.



Theresa Enare Obi, Etung Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria | Photographer: Diana Ginika

Having received support, she is now giving back by training other refugee tailoring apprentices who are making their way in Nigeria. Theresa plans to purchase a new sewing machine with the funds she has earned.

## Helping refugees reclaim their livelihoods in Nigeria

Since 2017, refugees have been fleeing conflict in northwest and southwest Cameroon in ever-increasing numbers. Today, more than 67,000 are living in Nigeria's Cross River, Taraba, and Benue states, hoping for a better life.

Cuso's Skills for Improvement of Lives and Livelihoods for Refugees (SKILLS) project, funded by UNHCR, trains refugees and members of the host community in agricultural, fisheries, vocational/technical skills, and small-business skills, and supports them as they work to reclaim their livelihoods. The project also provides participants with digital literacy training and access to start-up capital. In 2021, Cuso created a training hub that provides a safe space for refugees to build and hone their skills.

"Refugees need support to become self-reliant," says Anna Squier, Cuso's Head of Programs in Africa. "With access to education, health services, and labour markets, they can take care of their families and give back to the local communities hosting them."

SKILLS reached 2,000 women and men in 2021, 1,800 of whom are new project participants. Two hundred were existing participants supported through business strengthening.



“Refugees need support to become self-reliant.”

— Anna Squier, Cuso’s Head of Programs in Africa | Nigeria

Divine Asu, Adagom1 settlement camp, Ogoja, Cross River State, Nigeria | Photographer: Diana Ginika

#### SKILLS has achieved:

- 1,100 individuals have been trained on entrepreneurship and have been given business start-up kits.
- 1,098 received starter packs to set up businesses in trading and technical and vocational trades.
- 75% of refugees have new employment and 6% have registered small businesses.
- 88% own their own businesses and 55% are making profits.
- 98% of SKILLS households in agriculture were supported to have access to arable land.
- By the end of the cropping season, 85 percent of those participating in the agricultural program reported high crop yields.
- 1,300 refugees received financial literacy training for sustainable livelihood opportunities.

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES:

# Reflecting Indigenous voices and aspirations

Although Indigenous Peoples make up approximately 6 percent of the global population, they account for 19 percent of the extreme poor. Improving security of land tenure, strengthening governance, promoting public investments in high-quality and culturally appropriate services, and supporting Indigenous systems for resilience and livelihoods are critical to reducing the multidimensional aspects of poverty. Cuso's programs support Indigenous Peoples and communities in ways that reflect their voices and aspirations.



Lima, Peru | Photographer: Robert Lawlor

## Amplifying women's voices in Peru

Through the Women's Voice and Leadership program in Peru, Cuso and partners launched a literary, audiovisual, and artistic research project called "Our stories: the fights of Peruvian women and diversities in resistance." Forty-eight LGBTQI+ and Indigenous Andean and Amazonian women's organizations submitted 53 works and received 35 awards.

## Fighting for river rights in Peru

For the Kukama people in the Amazon region of Peru, the Marañón River is a living, breathing being wholly connected to every aspect of their lives. But decades of contamination have destroyed its fragile ecosystem. Cuso volunteer Stephanie Boyd is supporting the Huaynakana Kamatahuara Kana (Kukama Women's Federation)—which represents 28 Indigenous communities in the Marañón river's Parinari district—in its work to restore the river to its natural state.

As media advisor with the Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL), a legal aid organization based in Lima, Stephanie helps the federation tell and film its stories. Since her work began in 2017, the federation has successfully filed three legal demands related to protecting the Marañón.



**“We would not have been able to present the legal cases without IDL. Stephanie’s film work has empowered us because now all the women on our board speak well and can defend themselves in public.”**

— Mari Luz Canaquiri, President of Kukama Women’s Federation | Peru

Huaynakana, Kukama Women’s Federation, Peru | Photographer: Stephanie Boyd

## The Canadian Program: Hands-on work with students

Kim Quy Nguyen understands firsthand how hard it can be to reconcile the past with the present and heal traumas that have devastated people for generations. She recently immigrated to Canada from Vietnam, where citizens continue to struggle with divisions created by the Vietnam War. Kim believes strongly in progress and healing.



Volunteer Kim Quy Nguyen with her students, Fort Resolution, Northwest Territories Photo: Cuso International

“There is the trauma of the past but there is also progress,” she says. Kim, who has a PhD in education, began work as an education assistant with Cuso’s Canadian Program in 2021. She is living in Fort Resolution, Northwest Territories, working with teachers and students in the Deninu Kue First Nation community. In 2021, six volunteers worked at the Canadian Program’s five partner schools across the Northwest Territories.

As one example of her work, Kim formed a bond with a student who was struggling with organizational skills. After some focused attention, the student began to complete assignments and passed her classes, scoring high in biology. “You feel elevated, lifted up,” says Kim of her experience with First Nation cultural traditions and the unique beauty of the North. She hopes other communities in the North will receive similar support.

## Truth and Reconciliation

Cuso commemorated the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2021. This was a day to stop, reflect, and learn more about the painful history of residential schools in Canada. “This day is meant to educate and remind Canadians about the history of residential schools, honour the victims, celebrate the survivors, and ensure that all Indigenous peoples are supported in reclaiming their language, culture, histories, and legacies,” said Canadian Program participant Lynne Beck, Principal of Diamond Jenness Secondary School in Hay River, Northwest Territories.



Karen Guadalupe Izaguirre (right) with her daughters Alejandra and Alexa, Catacamas, Honduras. Photo: Cuso International

## Helping vulnerable populations work and live sustainably in Honduras

Cuso's Inclusive and Sustainable Development for Vulnerable Populations project supports start-up micro and small businesses in the Dry Corridor of Honduras frequently impacted by natural disasters. The program is designed to deliver gender-responsive business development to vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous women and people with disabilities.

For these groups, training often involves workshops that help them understand their social and economic rights. Cuso's volunteers also work with communities and municipalities on ways to manage resources sustainably. This includes the Model Forest approach, where large landscapes are created with many different uses, including economic development, and managed in sustainable ways. "Our work in Honduras is giving

vulnerable people access to sustainable income-generating activities," said Karen Pavon, Cuso's Country Representative in Honduras.

### What the program has achieved:

- 1,113 people have benefitted from the full training package (44% women and 56% men).
- 71 entrepreneurship groups are operating with the benefit of seed capital.
- 5 local partners supported.
- 5 local environment units trained.
- 3 committees created to help vulnerable populations better understand and recognize their social and economic rights.
- 2 value chains supported.
- 1 Model Forest platform reactivated.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

# Building resilient livelihoods

Robust economic growth is the most powerful instrument for combatting poverty in developing countries and improving people's quality of life. With a targeted focus on women and vulnerable populations, Cuso works with partners in communities across the world to strengthen their economic empowerment and help create sustainable livelihoods.

## Promoting the Kizimba Business Model in Tanzania

In Tanzania, lack of financing holds back agricultural development. Cuso has partnered with the Sokoine University Graduate Entrepreneurs Cooperative to unlock opportunities for women, youth, and people with special needs through the Kizimba business model. Kizimba refers to a block of land equipped with necessary infrastructure and facilities, divided into small units, and leased and later transferred to individual farmers.

In Tanzania's Morogoro region, Cuso volunteer Marcelina Lubuva has been teaching farming skills and good agricultural practices to Kizimba participants. She says the model, which focuses on crops like mango, soya beans and chili peppers that have strong market demand, will enable participants to generate more profit and income and improve their livelihoods.

"Each person who learns these skills is like a seed sown that grows and flourishes," says Marcelina, who grew up in a farming family in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania and studied agriculture at Sokoine University. "The people who are building their expertise and skills bring this knowledge to their entire communities."

The farming creates employment for casual labourers, delivery people, and retailers in the markets, most of whom are women and youth. It is critical for filling gaps in the agricultural sector in Tanzania. To date, more than 1,000 hectares have been allotted to the Morogoro project. The harvests will be incredible," says Marcelina.

## Enhancing food security for women with disabilities in Jamaica

In Jamaica, Cuso supports the Abilities Foundation, which helps women with disabilities create greater food security for themselves and their families by training them on sustainable hydroponic farming.

The project has supported participants by enabling them to buy gardening equipment, hydroponics system inputs (hydroponic farming is done without the use of soil), and seedlings. It has also given them hands-on sales and marketing experience by training them to



Volunteer Marcelina with Kizimba Business Model students, Morogoro region, Tanzania. **Photographer:** Pevil Albert

participate in farmers' markets. They are now equipped with the skills they need for either employment or entrepreneurial pursuits in the agricultural sector.

Three Cuso volunteers assisted the Abilities Foundation in this project, which in 2021 was awarded first place in the Jamaica 4-H Agriculture Technology Innovation Competition. This project is now being expanded through Jamaica's 4-H Clubs to reach even larger school populations.



Students participating in the Kizimba Business Model project, Morogoro region, Tanzania. **Photographer:** Pevil Albert

## Supporting women entrepreneurs in Colombia

Nieves is a typical woman entrepreneur in her community. At age 56, she works seven days a week—some days as a seamstress in Bucaramanga, Colombia and other days at her family’s bakery in the countryside. She also dedicates much time to her community, attending community meetings to discuss social projects and public service improvements.

“I hope one day the bakery can guarantee good living conditions for my family and I don’t have to work so hard,” says Nieves. “Still, I will continue to look at the needs of the community and search for ways to help.”

Two Cuso volunteers, Laura Martinez and Javier Restrepo, are inspired by the hard work of Nieves and many other Colombian women. They have developed a training program and toolkit in partnership with Fundación Mujer y Futuro (Women and Future Foundation) to support women in becoming economically independent. The toolkit, called Women Walking Towards Economic Autonomy, includes six modules that support women as they develop businesses—from conceiving new ideas to building sustainable, profitable business ventures.

Laura led workshops in 2021 to share the toolkit with community trainers, who work with 300 rural female micro-entrepreneurs through Fundación Mujer y Futuro. In the next few months, the trainers will share the toolkit with the micro-entrepreneurs, including Nieves. “The toolkit will help women improve the performance of their businesses,” says Javier. In turn, their self-confidence will grow, and they can further build and develop their businesses and future ideas.

## Gender-responsive business training in the Honduras Dry Corridor

In the Gulf of Fonseca region of Honduras, Cuso responded to the sometimes-devastating socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and climate change through the Economic Prosperity, Food Security, Climate Change and Resilience project.

Funded by the World Food Program, and supported by three Cuso volunteers, the project provided gender-responsive business training to small producers in the Dry Corridor—many of whom are organized in associations or saving and credit groups—to improve their food security and overall livelihood, and boost their local economies. Gender-responsive training considers the specific learning needs of female and male participants. The project also improved people’s skills, with a focus on including youth, to help meet local demand for labour.

### What the program has achieved:

- 39 small producers and entrepreneurship groups have received entrepreneurship and business management training.
- 700 individuals trained, including 100 youth, on COVID-19 health protocols.



**“I hope one day the bakery can guarantee good living conditions for my family and I don’t have to work so hard. Still, I will continue to look at the needs of the community and search for ways to help.”**

— Nieves, Entrepreneur | Bucaramanga, Colombia

Nieves, centre, and fellow rural female micro-entrepreneurs, Bucaramanga, Colombia Photo: Cuso International

EMPOWERING YOUTH:

# Changing lives through the power of opportunity

With opportunity, there is hope. And offering hope can change young people's lives. Our youth-focused initiatives in 2021 provided education and employment services for disadvantaged, marginalized youth—in particular, by educating and training adolescent girls.

Two important new youth-focused projects were launched this year. In Cameroon, in partnership with the Cameroon Youth School Tech Incubator, TechWomen Factory

will reduce the gender digital divide by creating a local digital industry that trains and employs young women. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Talents Pluriels project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and Global Affairs Canada, will address the inequalities facing young women, LGBTQI+ youth, and other vulnerable groups.

## U-GIRLS 2: Keeping girls in school in Ethiopia

Cuso's five-year U-GIRLS 2 project continues to improve access to higher education for high school girls in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region. U-GIRLS 2 tackles the challenges that keep girls out of school, or that force them to quit. The project raises community awareness about the benefits of attending high school, provides the required books and uniforms, and delivers gender-sensitive training as an extra-curricular activity for boys and girls.

U-GIRLS 2 also works with families and communities to ensure participants have the social and home support to continue their education. This year, the program worked with teachers, administrators, district school boards, and regional education bureaus to increase their capacity to deliver gender-responsive education.



Betelhem Nebiyou, 18, was born in Assosa town, capital of Benishangul Gumuz Region. She is a 12th grade student. Photo: Biniam Enkuselassie Workagegnehu



**“I want to become a medical doctor and help women in rural areas who die needlessly while giving birth.”**

— Sebrina, domestic labourer & student | Ethiopia

Sebrina Yimam, 19, is a grade 12 student at Assosa Secondary School, Assosa town, Benishangul Gumuz Region Photo: Biniam Enkuselassie Workagegnehu

## Sebrina’s story of work and study

For more than a year, 19-year-old Sebrina has been working as a domestic labourer and taking care of her two younger brothers in the western Ethiopian town of Assosa. She is also working to finish high school so she can pursue a university education. To help with her education, Sebrina receives assistance through U-GIRLS 2.

“Every day, after I go to school, I go to work cleaning and cooking for other families to get a bit of money to feed and shelter my brothers,” says Sebrina, whose family lost their home in late 2020 as a result of conflict between ethnic groups in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. “I want to become a medical doctor and help women in rural areas who die needlessly while giving birth,” she says.

### What U-GIRLS 2 has achieved:

- Enrolled 765 schoolgirls.
- Engaged 390 teachers and 60 school directors.
- Hosted entrepreneurial training program for 224 partners.
- Delivered agricultural innovation training for 60 parents to diversify family incomes.
- Affected 7,000 family members and created 100,000 indirect participants.

CLIMATE ACTION:

# An equitable and environmental approach

Many communities Cuso works with rely on the land for their sustenance. As climates shift, the challenges of sustaining local ecosystems increase. By approaching challenging issues in equitable ways, Cuso is helping communities navigate environmental changes and thrive despite them.

## Restoring mangroves in Colombia

Cuso volunteer Sebastien Martinez Silva has combined his background in biology with an ability to work with communities toward environmental and social change. When Sebastien's work began, mangrove forests near the fishing communities of Isla Fuerte and Tolú, Colombia were in dangerous decline. Working with Cuso partner Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia, Sebastien convened 50 women and men, documented their traditional knowledge of the area and worked with them to find alternate economically viable and environmentally sustainable solutions.

Today, overfishing and harmful logging practices in the area have ceased and the community participates in a yearly mangrove plantation effort. And Sebastien has worked with communities to create a beekeeping micro-enterprise that helps support the communities by selling honey in cities such as Cartagena.



Beekeeping in Parques Nacionales, Colombia  
Photographer: Sebastián Martínez Silva



“Rural farmers now have weather information for their area or village, and are able to better plan their agricultural activities by taking into account the weather forecast.”

— Paul Ghislain, Cuso Volunteer | Cameroon

Maman Sylvie, Mbalmayo, Cameroon Photographer: Ginette Sindeu

## Supporting farmers in Cameroon

Rising temperatures and decreasing rainfall are just one manifestation of climate change in Cameroon. Among the most affected are the country's mostly women farmers, who produce 80 percent of Cameroon's food.

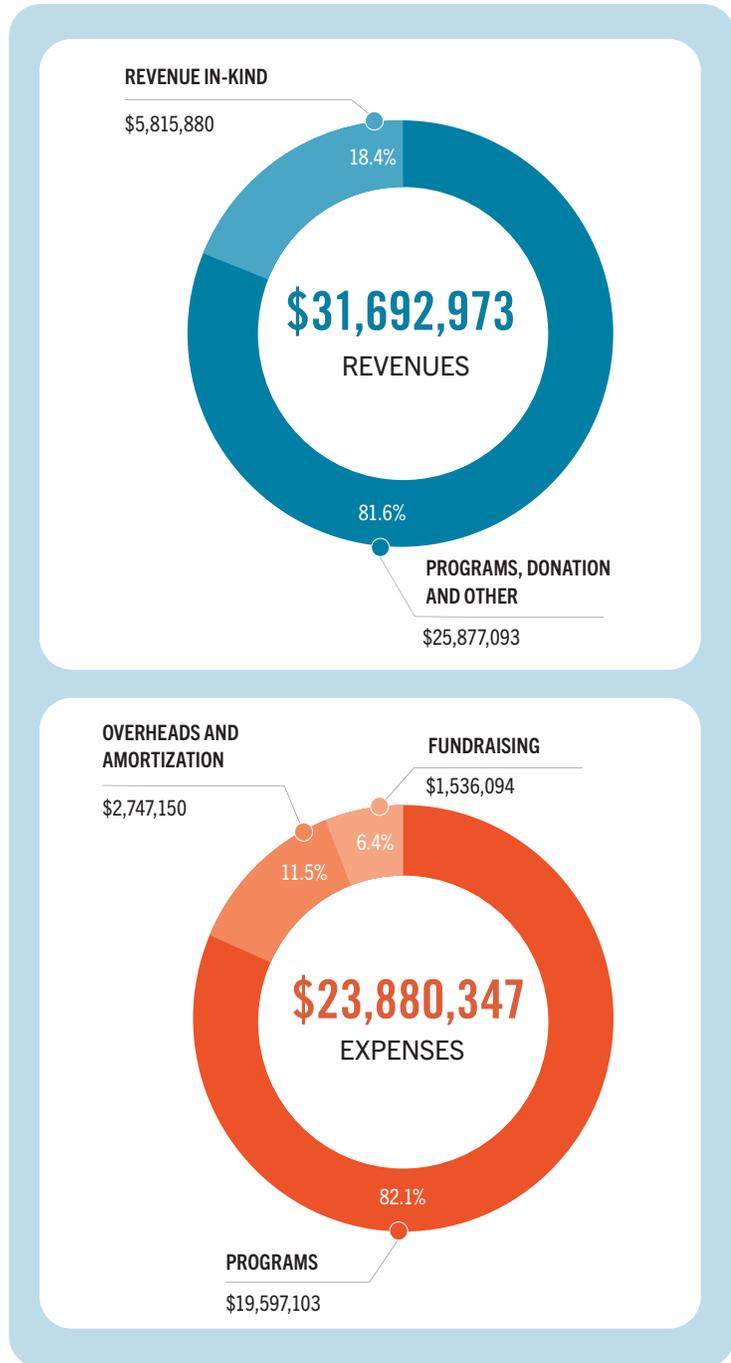
Cuso volunteer Paul Ghislain is using his background in mathematics and computer science to provide farmers

in 213 rural districts with high-quality weather information via a web application that helps farmers plan and manage crops hard hit by the impacts of climate change. Paul's application includes daily, weekly, quarterly, and bi-annual forecasts and charts annual temperature variations and precipitation levels. For farmers with no internet access, the information is shared weekly through 40 community radio stations in multiple languages.

# Finances

Thanks to your support and generosity, Cuso International’s financial position provides us with a secure basis for our work. Through efficient operations and careful use of the funds we receive, we ensure the majority of our money is spent on delivering programs and supporting our volunteers, partners, and the communities they work with. We will continue to use our resources with great discretion.

We are proud to abide by Imagine Canada’s Ethical Code for fundraising and pleased that our fundraising investments are consistent with the charitable sector’s best practices. Cuso is also accredited by the Imagine Canada Standards program.





Participant in the Mujeres Unidas por la Seguridad Alimentaria y Ambiental (MUSA) Community Kitchen project, Lima, Peru. Photographer: Marlon Flores

# Board of Directors

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With our partner Women in Alternative Action and advocates from Queens for Peace, Cuso has built community awareness in Cameroon with the goals to end child marriage and gender-based violence. Photo: Queen Mariana (centre) surrounded by fellow members of Queens for Peace, Cameroon Photographer: Maya Services

# Why I Give

Before graduating from university, Lynn Graham knew she wanted to experience life in another part of the world. At a Cuso International (then CUSO) information session, she learned about requests from countries overseas for teachers. In 1964, she travelled to Ghana, West Africa, to begin her assignment at Techiman Secondary School, not long after the country's independence. As she says, "It was a life changing two years."

Today, Lynn is a committed donor and champion of Cuso's mission. "I'm particularly inspired by Cuso's work in Cameroon, where it is partnering with the organization Women in Alternative Action through Queens for Peace to advocate for change in the fight against child marriage, and in Peru, where together with partner Movimiento Manuela Ramos, it continues to advance the women's movement." Lynn is a member of the Cuso International board, current Vice Chair, and former Chair of the Program Committee.

As Cuso looks to the future, Lynn's wish is that it, along with other INGOs, continues to recognize the importance of advocacy to ensure Canadians are aware of the challenges facing countries in the global south. "The Covid pandemic has made it abundantly clear that we are all in this together. Working with partners has been very important to Cuso, and how we work. I'm proud of that."



Lynn Graham, Cuso Donor since 1963 | Ottawa, Ontario  
Photographer: James Park

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