

A portrait of a woman with a warm smile, looking slightly to the side. She is wearing a vibrant blue and yellow patterned top, a pink and blue headscarf, and a large silver metal pot balanced on her head. The background is a textured, reddish-brown wall.

Annual Report  
2019–2020

**SKILLS  
TO SHARE.  
FUTURES  
TO BUILD.**

**Cuso**  
International



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Cuso International is a Canadian not-for-profit development organization that works in partnership with governments, civil society organizations, multilateral agencies and the private sector. We develop and deliver programs aimed at advancing gender equality, promoting the empowerment of women and girls, and improving economic opportunities for young people. Each year, we mobilize hundreds of volunteer professionals, who work alongside local partners to maximize their impact and build capacity.



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



We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

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On the cover: Northern Benin  
Photo: Brian Atkinson



Green Earth Centre  
Laongam, Laos

Photo: Brian Atkinson

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## OUR VISION

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

## OUR MISSION

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

## 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.

Ei Htwe, student, Youth Learning Centre  
Hpa-An, Myanmar

Photo: Brian Atkinson



## MESSAGE FROM THE

# CHAIR AND CEO

At Cuso International, we put a lot of thought into tackling poverty and inequality and in achieving demonstrable impact. These principles are built into the strategic conversations we have before we write any proposal, consider any project, or approach any partner. This year, we are pleased to say we had a lot of these conversations.

In addition to running our longstanding programs in 20 countries, Cuso initiated new projects to address our priorities in 2019–2020. We also successfully concluded our five-year volunteer for development program, as well as several other multi-year projects.

While the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic meant we had to adjust some of our plans to help protect the safety of communities, volunteers and workers, it reinforced our mission. We found new ways to operate, forged

new partnerships and identified new opportunities to serve vulnerable communities.

With the support of our individual donors, institutional partners, staff and volunteers over the past year, more than 4.5 million women, men and youth have benefited from our programs to develop their livelihoods, care for their families and become leaders in their communities. In these pages, we provide a snapshot of a year's worth of activities and personal insights about why our work matters—and how Cuso facilitates the process of people helping other people.

We hope you'll be inspired by the work Cuso has done, and the impact our work has had. We look forward to seeing the innovative ways our volunteers, partners and staff will continue to contribute to the communities we serve in the coming year.

Sincerely,



**Glenn Mifflin**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Frank O'Dea**  
Chair, Board of Directors

# CUSO INTERNATIONAL AROUND THE WORLD

Together with our partners, volunteers and staff, Cuso International is solving problems, implementing solutions and working toward eradicating poverty and inequality—one community at a time. In 2019–2020, our programs touched millions of beneficiaries in 20 countries across four continents.



### Benin

- Midwives Save Lives
- Volunteers for International Cooperation and Empowerment (VOICE)
- Women Engaged for Human Dignity in Northern Benin

### Bolivia

- VOICE

### Cameroon

- Innovation Fund: Building Climate Resilience for Women Farmers
- VOICE

### Canada

- Canadian Program
- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Workshop on Truth and Reconciliation

### Colombia

- Sustainable Colombian Opportunities for Peacebuilding and Employment (SCOPE)
- VOICE

### Democratic Republic of Congo

- Midwives Save Lives (MSL)
- VOICE

### El Salvador

- VOICE

### Ethiopia

- Growing Nutrition for Mothers and Children (GROW) (CARE Canada partnership)
- Midwives Save Lives
- VOICE

### Guyana

- VOICE

### Honduras

- VOICE
- Working with persons with disabilities, women and Indigenous peoples

### Jamaica

- VOICE

### Laos

- Ensuring food security in a climate-challenged world
- VOICE

### Malawi

- Southern African Nutrition Initiative (CARE Canada partnership)

### Mozambique

- Southern African Nutrition Initiative (CARE Canada partnership)

### Myanmar

- VOICE

### Nigeria

- B-LIEVER-Building Skills for Livelihood Enhancement for Refugees
- VOICE
- Youth Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Access and Development (YouLead)

### Peru

- Innovation Fund project: Feeding Lima from Within
- VOICE
- Women's Voice and Leadership

### Philippines

- VOICE
- Innovation Fund project: Building Resilience and Adaptability Through Volunteer Organizations

### Tanzania

- MSL
- Tanzania Local Enterprise Development (T-LED)
- VOICE

### Zambia

- Southern African Nutrition Initiative (CARE Canada partnership)



Cameroon  
Photo: Brian Atkinson

BY THE

## NUMBERS



We are proud of our new partnership with World Refugee & Migration Council (WRMC). WRMC is galvanizing the international community's response to refugees through cooperation and responsibility sharing.

## INNOVATIVE

### PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

With help from project donors, Cuso International developed several new bilateral partnerships and enhanced existing ones to advance our programs around the world.

#### Global Affairs Canada

**Sharing Canadian Expertise for Inclusive Development and Gender Equality (SHARE); Benin, Cameroon, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Honduras, Jamaica, Nigeria, Peru and Tanzania**

With the help of skilled volunteers, SHARE will improve the economic and social well-being of the most vulnerable people, particularly women and girls.

#### U-GIRLS2, Ethiopia

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

#### Women Engaged for Human Dignity, Northern Benin

Increasing the participation of women, girls and their communities in the fight against gender-based violence and female genital mutilation.

#### Women's Voice and Leadership, Peru

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

#### UN Refugee Agency - UNHCR

**Building Skills for Livelihood Enhancement for Refugees, Nigeria**

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

#### European Union and CBM International Inclusive and Sustainable Development for Vulnerable Populations, Honduras

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

#### Power Corporation of Canada Canadian Program, Northwest Territories, Canada

Providing educational support to remote Indigenous communities in Canada's North to improve learning outcomes for high school students.

#### Rotary International, District 7070

##### Midwives Save Lives, Ethiopia

Providing life-saving birthing kits for midwives in the Assosa region.

#### Stockholm Environment Institute

**Silver Linings: Transforming Gender Relations through Climate Adaptation, Myanmar**

Supporting Indigenous women affected by climate change in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, in partnership with the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact.

#### International Rice Research Institute

##### Agricultural Program, Laos

Testing approaches and tools for dissemination of climate-smart agriculture, and scale-up of resilient agricultural practices to benefit millions of farmers and their communities.



# VOICE

## SKILLED VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

Our Volunteers for International Cooperation and Empowerment (VOICE) project concluded at the end of March 2020. Over its five-year lifespan, 1,080 highly skilled volunteers and 2,244 e-volunteers helped build the capacity of 377 local partners to address gender inequality, economic vulnerability, marginalized youth, health accessibility and the environment. The financial support of Global Affairs Canada and more than 38,000 donors has enabled the project to affect the lives of more than 2.5 million people in 17 countries. In 2019–2020 alone, VOICE reached 750,579 people, engaged 178 partners, and mobilized 171 volunteers and 466 e-volunteers.

### Agricultural project takes root in Benin

Girls, particularly those from rural areas, face extra challenges in accessing education. Across the globe, only 39 per cent of rural girls attend secondary school, compared to 45 per cent of rural boys.

This is because most rural economies rely on natural resources, with girls shouldering the heavy work of carrying water, seeking firewood and caring for their families. But if an adolescent girl can remain in school, gain valuable skills and stay healthy, she can earn an income, and invest in her family and community. If she quits school, marries early and becomes a young mother, she is less likely to reach her full potential—and is less able to help the global community advance. Her loss becomes our loss.

In Porto Novo, Benin, Véronique is saving for her own plot of land thanks to the Songhai farming project, funded through VOICE. Véronique grows vegetables on her rented plot, using her income to support her parents and 15 siblings. Her dream is to own a plot of land.

“It’s an honour, it’s a big dream. I’ll have my own money. As a woman that’s very important,” she says. “I’m very happy to say this is my job because everybody should have a purpose and earn money ... That’s empowerment.”

# 300

young women farmers received practical training and coaching that will enable their agricultural self-sufficiency.

# 6

months of micro-project support for local partner IDID (Initiatives pour un Développement Intégré Durable) rolled out in three peri-urban communes of Porto Novo.



Participant in the Porto Novo, Benin farming cooperative

Photo: Brian Atkinson



# INVESTING IN INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PERU

Leocadia is a woman entrepreneur from the Chacan Quechua community in Cusco, Peru who took part in ecotourism training with Cuso International partner Centro Bartolome de las Casas (CBC). Through her new business, Leocadia generates her own income by giving tourists a rare chance to experience the rural Andean way of life. Her work also enables Leocadia to share her culture and traditions—a cause close to her heart.

Guests are invited to join Leocadia in her daily activities. They learn how to make traditional medicines from local plants, and try their hand at traditional weaving techniques. “Before we lived only from our land,” says Leocadia.

“We worked with our husbands in the fields and cooked. Now we also live from tourism and this is enriching.” Cuso volunteer Liliana Corella Vargas advised on the development of CBC’s rural community tourism initiatives. She says sustainable tourism is an important way to generate income in Andean communities—particularly for Indigenous women, who gain knowledge and skills in marketing, financial management and tour design. This learning can lead to many benefits, including financial independence, the ability to work from home while caring for growing children, the ability to pay for children’s education, and the opportunity to share cultural traditions with younger generations.

45

Indigenous women are involved in the Chacan ecotourism project, which is bringing revenue to their families and communities.

160

Indigenous women participated in the CBC learning program, which promotes sustainable tourism and income generation with a focus on cultural preservation.

“

THEY LEARN ABOUT OUR WAY OF LIFE AND WE LEARN ABOUT THEIRS. WE TALK AND EXCHANGE POINTS OF VIEW AT THE TABLE. I LIKE WORKING AND LIVING WITH TOURISTS. THEY BECOME MY FAMILY.”

LEOCADIA  
ECOTOURISM ENTREPRENEUR

Photo: Julia Stomal





# MYANMAR: SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Pao Mon, located in Mawlamyine, Mon State, is more than just a restaurant in Myanmar’s third most populous city. And the meals 37-year-old Khamoom Chan prepares are more than just dishes for hungry guests. Every plate of food served is income for Khamoom, a celebration of tradition and assistance for survivors of violence.

Pao Mon restaurant opened five years ago, supported by the Mon Women’s Organization (MWO). Profits from the restaurant support survivors of gender-based violence and programs that empower women and girls. Mon State has the highest incidence of sexual assault in the country, but accessing legal and other services is costly for most—and is limited in scope and availability. Last year, income generated

from Pao Mon and other MWO businesses helped 40 women access the services, health care and legal advice they needed.

Since 2017, Cuso International has partnered with Pao Mon, sending volunteers to provide mentoring and support in business development, marketing and financial management. In 2019, volunteer Angela Baker worked with Khamoom to update the restaurant’s materials, and promote Pao Mon’s catering services and traditional cooking classes. “They realized they could attract broader audiences by enhancing their marketing,” says Angela. “That will increase revenues and feed back into the local organization that champions women-led programs.”

96%

of Cuso partners involved in gender and livelihood programs reported they increased their knowledge, skills and abilities.

72

Indigenous women and girls benefited from Cuso’s gender-inclusive programming, including a safehouse in Mawlamyine.



Mi May Thet Khine, 20, Pao Mon staff  
Photo: Brian Atkinson

“I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MAWLAMYINE AS A PLACE WHERE THERE IS NO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, WHERE WOMEN CAN BE AT PEACE AND WHERE THEY CAN PROSPER.”

MI AYE KRAK MON  
VICE-CHAIR, MON WOMEN’S ORGANIZATION



# MIDWIVES SAVE LIVES

## BRINGING CARE TO DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

Led by Cuso International in partnership with the Canadian Association of Midwives and local midwifery associations and local NGOs, the Midwives Save Lives (MSL) project has assisted more than 1.5 million women, and helped reduce deaths and illness for women and newborns in Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Tanzania. The four-year project, which ended in March 2020, was funded by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada, and Cuso donors.

Pendo Leonard's two oldest children were born at home in Tanzania without electricity or running water. During her third pregnancy, working with MSL-trained community health

worker Clement Nalimi, Pendo sought out early prenatal care. "I had excessive bleeding, but we went to the health centre and they got the problem to stop," says Pendo. "I feel safe in the health centre. My partner escorts me and I trust the midwife." Pendo continued to receive support from Clement during her fourth pregnancy.

More than 800 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth—94 per cent in low resource countries, says the World Health Organization. MSL has enabled midwives and community health workers to work hand in hand, providing maternal and newborn services to vulnerable communities in rural and peri-urban areas.

### DRC

Trained 350 midwives in emergency obstetric and neonatal care, and 250 midwives in respectful maternity care.

### Benin

91.5% of mothers attended by midwives report being satisfied with their care, up from 64% before MSL.

### Tanzania

Women increased their use of pre-and post-natal care. Prenatal rose from 34.7% to 56.4%; postnatal rose from 24.5% to 68.9%.

### Ethiopia

96% of women in target communities reported satisfaction with their care, up from 45.4% at the start of MSL.

“

PEOPLE SAID ONE  
BADLY ASPHYXIATED  
BABY WOULD NOT  
RECOVER; BECAUSE  
OF MY EMERGENCY-  
TRAINING SKILLS...  
SHE DID RECOVER.  
THE MOTHER STILL  
SENDS ME PICTURES.”

SWIBE WILLIAM MONCHENA  
NURSE-MIDWIFE, BARIADI TANZANIA





# YOULEAD

## INVESTING IN NIGERIA'S YOUTH

With 220 chickens, Chinenye Okon cannot keep up with egg orders from Calabar's restaurants, hotels and market vendors. Chinenye graduated from Cuso's Youth Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Access and Development (YouLead) program, training at a local farm to raise and sell birds for consumption. Chinenye intends to grow her flock. She will raise 500 meat birds a month and boost her egg-laying flock to 1,000 birds. "I have big plans," she says. As one of 10,416 participants over the program's four year life cycle, Chinenye is now equipped with the right tools to secure her future livelihood. She has the spirit of a true entrepreneur.

Fifty-five per cent of the country's young people are unemployed or underemployed. "Through YouLead, we have seen a gradual shift in the mindsets of unemployed youth that pushes them towards engaging in small ventures, instead of waiting for something big to come their way," says Ebrima Sonko, Cuso International's Nigeria Country Representative. YouLead has enabled thousands of businesses in agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and renewable energy, emphasizing gender equality and promoting sound environmental practices.

YouLead, which ended in March 2020, was implemented in Cross River State's 18 localities with support from Global Affairs Canada, and in partnership with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada.

# 342

people received entrepreneurship training (173 women, and 169 men) in 2019–2020.

# 309

people received technical training (139 women and 170 men).

# 540

new businesses were created across all 18 local government areas in 12 value chains (199 women, and 341 men).



Photo: Ms. Uche Uduma

**“WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR OWN BUSINESS, YOU CAN MANAGE YOUR TIME AND MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS. IT ALSO EMPOWERS ME THAT I AM FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT.”**

**CHINENYE OKON**  
GRADUATE OF YOULEAD PROGRAM



# SCOPE

## CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL IN COLOMBIA

Even before COVID-19, Colombia had 3 million unemployed people—one of the highest levels in the region. Now, because of the pandemic’s stay-at-home measures, 1.15 million more could be out of work. Cuso International’s SCOPE project has never been more relevant. Recently recognized by the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation as the most innovative project in Colombia for its approach to inclusive employment, SCOPE has been extended for two years with the financial support of Global Affairs Canada, to increase access to economic opportunities for Venezuelan migrants and returned Colombians in the cities of Bogotá, Cali and Barranquilla.

Because of SCOPE, what began as a small, home-based dessert business is now La Vaca Rosada—The Pink Cow—a bustling storefront in Cali, Colombia. Clara Inés Castaño Cortéz began making and selling Arroz con Leche, a rice pudding dish, for friends to tide her over while she looked for a job. “I fell in love with making the pastries, cooking and everything involved in the work.”

SCOPE provided Clara with training in marketing and financial management, and connected her to other small business owners. “I was able to overcome my fears of starting my own business,” she says. “I saw that other people were doing that, and some were in an advanced part of their business, and I just went for it.” Clara is one of the 1,000 women, youth and victims of conflict who participated in SCOPE.

### 1,244

small business owners in Cali and Buenaventura have increased their profitability as a result of SCOPE.

### 925

people (64% women, 36% men, 80% youth, and 28% migrants from Venezuela) found employment through a coordinated effort involving 50 private sector companies.

### 13

private sector partners completed the “Ruta Inclusiva” training, and 97% implemented inclusive policies, such as reducing gender and social barriers.

### 309

small business owners who received specialized training increased their profitability.



Photo: Robert Lawlor

**“WHAT I’M MOST PROUD OF IS THAT I’M GIVING  
A GOOD EXAMPLE TO MY KIDS. I’M SHOWING  
THEM THAT THROUGH HARD WORK AND  
DEDICATION, YOU CAN ACHIEVE THINGS.”**

**CLARA INÉS CASTAÑO CORTÉZ**  
SCOPE PARTICIPANT



# T-LED

## BOOSTING BUSINESS OUTCOMES IN TANZANIA

Young Catherine Shembilu is one of the 1,865 entrepreneurs who enrolled in Cuso International's Tanzania-Local Enterprise Development (T-LED) program to learn new marketing skills for her handwoven basket business, Vikapu Bomba (Swahili for Fantastic Baskets). Catherine works with marginalized and previously unemployed women in rural regions of Iringa and Njombe, southern Tanzania.

"Catherine was already running her business when introduced to T-LED," says Cuso volunteer Christine Leclerc. "She had a plan, a product and great organizational and business skills." Christine and Catherine worked together to create personalized labels for each basket, and develop web content, advertisements and training products. "Through Catherine's hard work, Vikapu Bomba provides women with the opportunity to make their own income and become part of a female-led community."

In its final year, T-LED launched several innovative hubs servicing six regions in Tanzania. The hubs are incubators for entrepreneurs, providing them with a safe space to access investors and new markets. Funded by Global Affairs Canada, T-LED's focus on creating jobs, training entrepreneurs, and empowering women has improved the well-being of thousands of Tanzanians. Co-implemented by Cuso and VSO Tanzania, local partners include Tanzania's Small Industries Development Organization, the Tanzania Women Chamber of Commerce and the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. The program ended in March 2020.

# 504

SMEs were provided with business development skills in various disciplines, including marketing, business management, graphic design and financial management.

# 498

businesses reported an increase in revenue.

# 603

new jobs were created.

# 57%

of the SMEs enrolled over the project life cycle were led by women.

# “

I JOINED T-LED TO  
LEARN MORE ABOUT  
HOW TO MARKET MY  
BUSINESS, VIKAPU  
BOMBA. T-LED  
HELPED MY  
BUSINESS GROW.”

CATHERINE SHEMBILU  
T-LED PARTICIPANT

Photo: Christine Leclerc





# WOMEN OF NORTHERN BENIN

## CHAMPION HEALTH RIGHTS

The World Health Organization reports that 200 million girls and women around the world have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM). Every year, three million more girls are at risk.

FGM is an extreme violation of human rights, and Benin is working to eradicate it. In 2003, the country banned FGM, and the national rate is now 13 per cent. But, in rural areas, FGM is still strongly rooted. In some communities, 70 per cent of women and girls have been subjected to this violation.

Cuso International, with funding from Global Affairs Canada, launched the three-year Women Engaged for Human Dignity in Northern Benin project, which will support tens of

thousands of young girls and survivors of sexual violence. Focusing on community education, supporting young girls and survivors, and engaging men and boys in discussions on healthy relationships, the project will ensure local actors have the resources and connections to become champions of long-term change.

Agnès, President of the Women's Association in her village, says education is the key to stopping FGM. "When they go to school, they are taught that it's not good," she says. "When they come back home, they say, 'Please don't do this to our younger sisters.'" She says she is already seeing an impact of changed hearts and minds.

57,000

young girls have been reached, as well as female survivors of sexual violence, and health and education professionals.

130+

villages are committed to ensuring human dignity for all, and nearly 400 individuals have taken on leadership roles in their communities.



Photo: Brian Atkinson

“IF WE CAN HELP PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND, THEY CAN STOP. WE ARE READY. WE WILL STOP IT.”

AGNÈS\*  
WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

*\*Name has been changed to protect identity.*



# CANADIAN PROGRAM

IMPROVING EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN THE NORTH

Cuso International is proud of its partnership with Power Corporation of Canada. With its support, we are directing resources, knowledge and expertise here at home.



Fort Providence, NT lies along the banks of the Mackenzie River, where herds of bison roam the streets and graze on front lawns. In this community, the Dene and Métis populations are proud and resilient, despite intergenerational trauma from residential schools and colonization. “It’s one of the most beautiful places I’ve ever been to,” says Niroja Thiru, Canadian Program Volunteer Education Assistant. “I found a warmth amongst the community who welcomed me with open arms.” The Canadian Program, which launched in 2017, helps Indigenous communities address low graduation rates, improve education outcomes and promote truth and reconciliation with non-Indigenous citizens. Northern Distance

Learning gives students access to courses and teachers outside their communities. “This was the first time these students had a high school level art course and it quickly became apparent there was real talent and interest,” says Niroja. “Students were so self-critical in the beginning, and then their confidence grew as they worked tirelessly to create beautiful art.” Niroja noticed younger students dropping by and showing interest, so she created an after school art club for them. After her placement, Niroja landed a full-time position with an NGO in Fort Providence to run reconciliation and decolonization programming for youth. To date, Cuso has placed 50 volunteers in 12 communities, providing 7,886 service days.



Photo: volunteer Ching-Lung Huang, Fort Resolution

“ONE GRADE 12 STUDENT SHARED HER DESIRE TO APPLY TO ART SCHOOL. I HELPED HER PREPARE HER ART PORTFOLIO AND UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS. I’M THRILLED TO SAY SHE’LL BE ATTENDING ALBERTA UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS IN THE FALL.”

**NIROJA THIRU**  
CUSO VOLUNTEER EDUCATION ASSISTANT,  
NORTHERN DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM, FORT PROVIDENCE, NT

**11** volunteers placed as educational assistants.

**10** communities supported with volunteers.

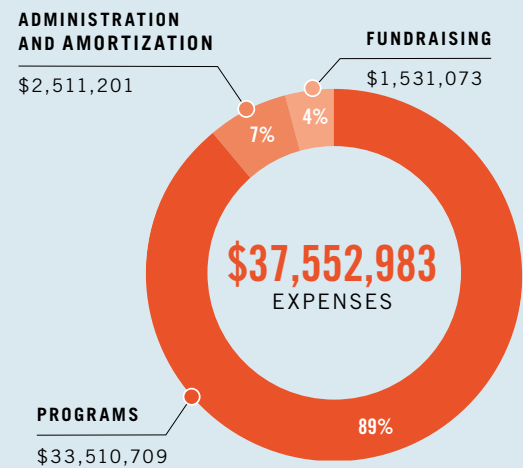
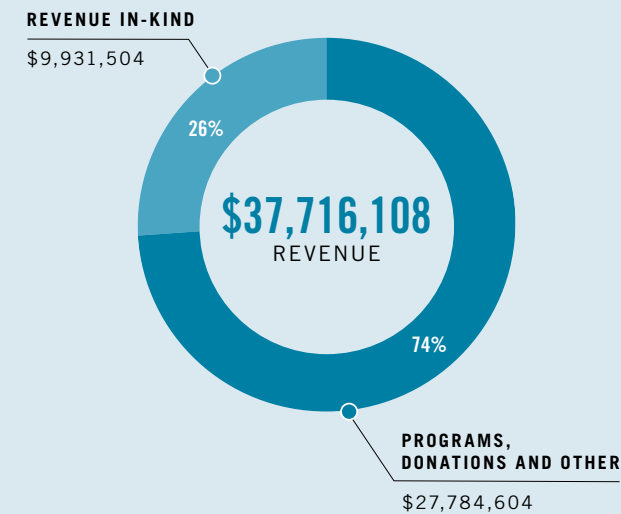
**1** Reconciliation Toolkit Workshop held.



# FINANCES

Thanks to your strong 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 life-changing funds we receive, we ensure that the majority of our money is spent on delivering programs and supporting our volunteers and partners and the communities and families 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.

For our complete audited financial statements, please visit: [cusointernational.org/accountability](https://cusointernational.org/accountability)



Remote village in Northern Benin

Photo: Brian Atkinson

## BOARD OF

# DIRECTORS

**Frank O'Dea, Chair**

Ottawa, Ontario

**Patricia Perez-Coutts, Vice-Chair and Treasurer**

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Vancouver, British Columbia

**Justin Winchiu**

Ottawa, Ontario



THANK YOU

## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

Cuso International is stronger today because of our partners around the world, and those here at home.

Rotary District 7070, located in the Greater Toronto Area, raised \$45,000 to support Cuso's Midwives Save Lives (MSL) program in Ethiopia. The MSL project improved the lives of more than 500,000 Ethiopians by giving expectant mothers access to better maternal and newborn care.

"Our local Rotarians believe in providing this very necessary level of care for a severely under-served segment of the Ethiopian population," said Ian Lancaster, Rotary Chair of District 7070's Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Committee. "Rotary is always looking for effective

partnerships for the purpose of doing good in the world. This partnership with Cuso toward such a worthwhile goal, coupled with the funding match, made the ask for support an easy sell."

Rotary funds have purchased birthing kits for student midwives in the Assosa and Bale regions. These kits include such items as delivery trays, resuscitators, stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs—essential equipment necessary to ensure maternal health. More than half of the district's clubs have contributed to the fundraising effort.

Cuso International would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Rotary District 7070 for its generous financial support.



Members of Rotary District 7070 visit Cuso's Midwives Save Lives program in Assosa, Ethiopia, April 2019.



“

**I'm enthusiastic about the cause, for sure. The experience in Peru for me was on a personal level. It was very enthralling and fulfilling.”**

PATRICIA PEREZ-COUTTS

## WHY I GIVE

Patricia Perez-Coutts is a passionate advocate of women's rights and youth economic empowerment. Originally from Peru, she was drawn to Cuso International's approach to development. Newly appointed as Vice-chair and Treasurer of Cuso's Board of Directors, Patricia visited several Cuso projects and saw the impact firsthand.

"I'm enthusiastic about the cause, for sure. The experience in Peru for me was on a personal level. It was very enthralling and fulfilling," says the long-time patron. "Younger people are at greatest risk because of a lack of economic empowerment and financial support. Women's rights are deplorable in many societies. There are very few people who are really challenging the status quo. Cuso is participating in areas where other NGOs are not even looking."

Her one wish for the organization is for more people to know of its good work, and she's committed to helping spread the word.

"Cuso is doing so much. I come from a country where you've got to be really lucky to have the funds to pursue professional studies. Cuso volunteers share educational tools, knowledge and diverse ideas. I've always believed that education and training have a more long-lasting impact on society because education is something that no one can take away from you. Cuso's impact through volunteering is a lot more long-lasting. I'm proud to support Cuso, knowing I'm making a difference."



We thank all of our generous donors who make our life-changing work possible.



