



**Skills to Share.**

**Futures to Build.**





**Front cover (top):**  
Mekides Alemu, 18, is a Grade 12 Natural Science student at Assosa Secondary School, Ethiopia.

**Front cover (bottom):**  
Program participants, Mbalmayo, Cameroon.

Cuso  
International  
2022–2023  
Annual Report

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*Pictured here: Kidist Samuel, 18, is a Grade 12 Social Science student at Bambasi Secondary School, Ethiopia.*

Cuso International is an international cooperation and development organization that works to create economic and social opportunities for marginalized groups. Together with our partners, we are focused on efforts to advance gender equality and social inclusion, improve economic resilience, and deliver progress on climate action. We believe that by sharing skills, we can build better futures.

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

Founded in 1961, Cuso International works in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Canada.



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*Pictured here: Aleida, program participant, Honduras.  
Photo: Quione Navarro*



# Our Vision

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

# Our Mission

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.

**Courage:** We embrace change and seize opportunities to exercise thought leadership in our key priority areas.



# Message from the Chair of the Board and Chief Executive Officer



## Looking back, the past year has been an extraordinary journey, brimming with success and hope.

Thanks to the unwavering support of our dynamic partners, dedicated volunteers, and generous donors, as well as the resourcefulness of our teams around the globe, we persisted in delivering innovative programs to marginalized groups and individuals, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 restrictions. Today, we stand proud, having officially emerged from the pandemic, and we continue to draw valuable lessons from this global crisis that impacted the most vulnerable among us. As we adapt and strive to enhance collaboration across our organization, we are filled with confidence that together, we are forging a brighter future.

We invite you to read about some of the key initiatives we undertook this year to address those priorities:

- We fostered economic opportunities, improving safe, inclusive, and gender-responsive work environments, and building community awareness of the situation of marginalized communities **in the Democratic Republic of Congo**.
- We supported young girls and women with resources, trainings, and a financial stipend so they can focus on their studies **in Ethiopia**.
- We assisted young women who are jobless or underemployed by adding a high level of digital competency to their existing credentials, as well as helping with work placements and mentorship **in Cameroon**.
- We provided marketing and legal advice and delivering workshops about sales and customer service to

migrants who want to start their own businesses **in Peru**.

- We transferred technical knowledge to partner organizations that are either raising awareness of human rights and inclusion of people with disabilities, or working on a climate change project, **in Colombia**.
- We strengthened the entrepreneurial knowledge of women who are small agricultural producers to increase food security and combat climate change **in Honduras**.
- We helped to address school attendance and boost students' self confidence in remote communities **in the Northwest Territories**.
- We engaged with our Indigenous partners at Videa and Moose Hide Campaign, part of our commitment to learn and take tangible steps on the road to reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples **in Canada**.

In 2022, thanks to you,  
Cuso's work touched  
hundreds of thousands  
of lives across  
several continents.

As we embark on our 62<sup>ND</sup> year, we are determined to help build even more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable communities. Now, energized by our new Strategic Plan, we are filled with courage and optimism for the year ahead.

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

Sincerely,



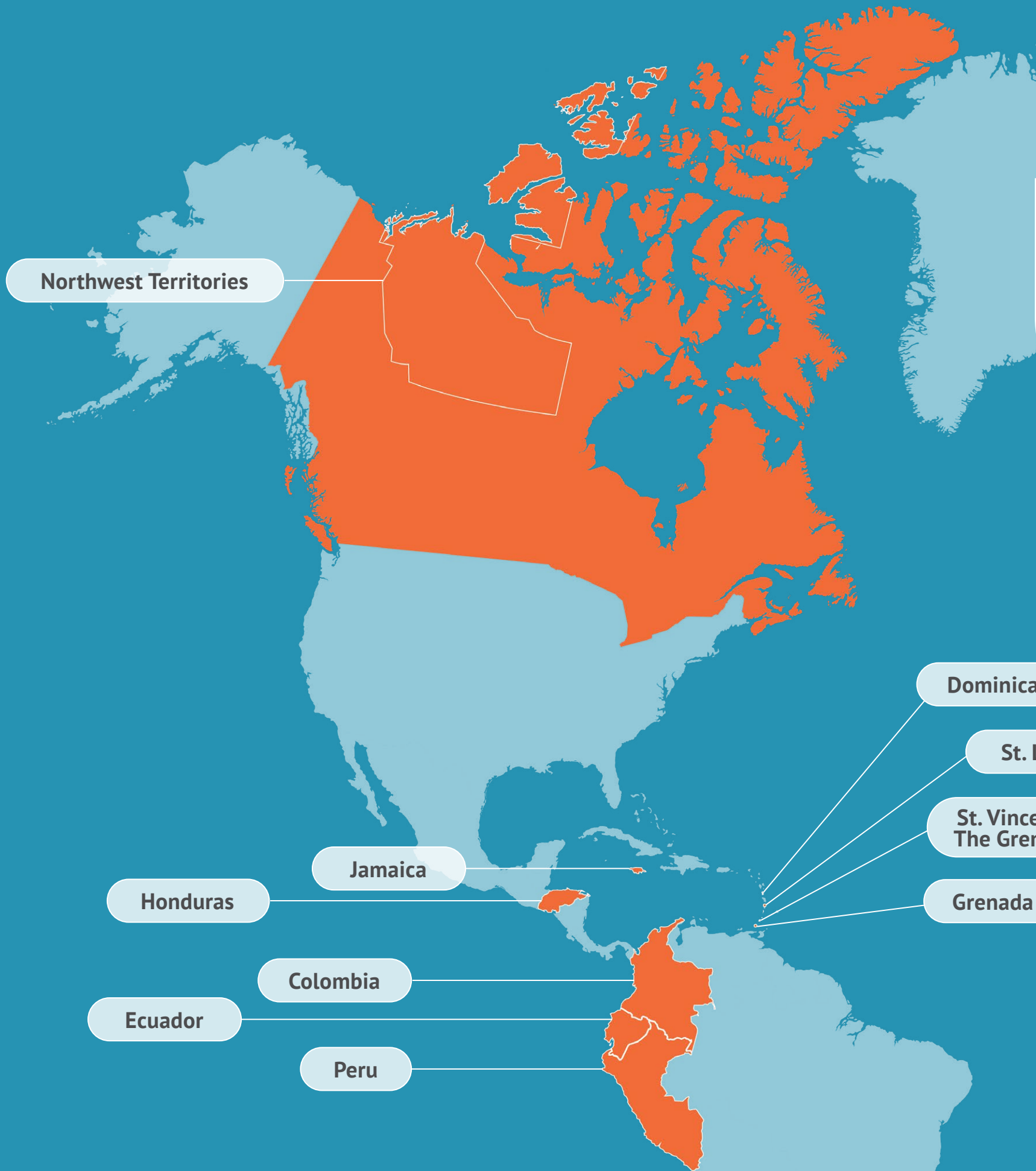
Nicolas Moyer  
CEO



Lucie Edwards  
Co-Chair



Darrell  
Gregersen  
Co-Chair



Northwest Territories

Honduras

Jamaica

Colombia

Ecuador

Peru

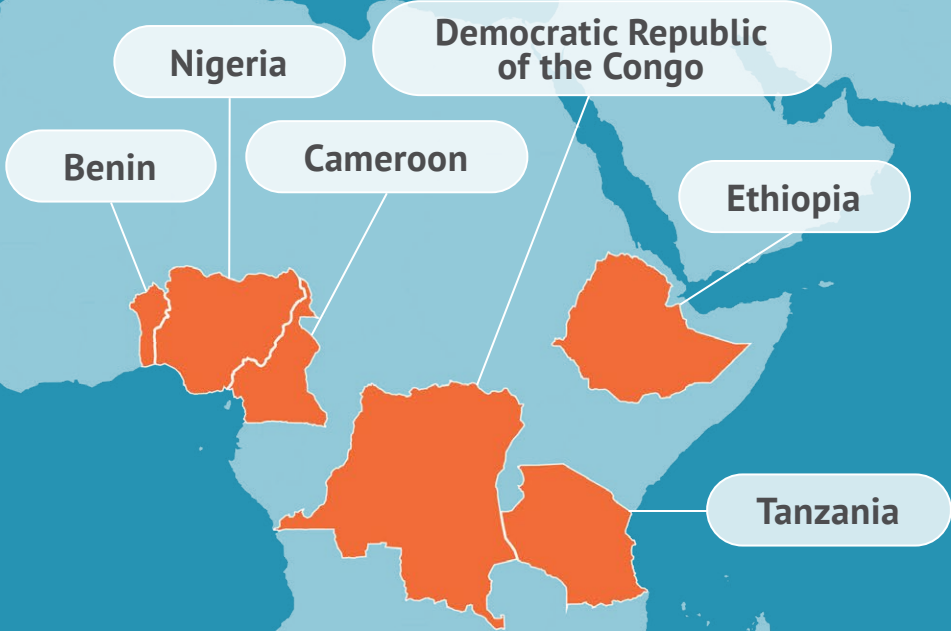
Dominica

St. Lucia

St. Vincent and  
The Grenadines

Grenada

# Cuso International Around the World



Nigeria

Democratic Republic  
of the Congo

Benin

Cameroon

Ethiopia

Tanzania



# Year at a Glance

In the last year, your generosity has improved the lives of thousands of vulnerable people — particularly women and girls — around the world. Thank you!



Countries  
16



Staff  
141



Partners  
312



Donors  
14,727



Volunteers  
222



Volunteer  
Workdays  
39,857



e-Volunteers  
31



Participants  
992,044

*Pictured here: Cuso International  
volunteer Margot Ferguson in  
Hay River, Northwest Territories.  
Photo: Margot Ferguson*

## Innovative Program Partnerships

With support from our institutional funders and our generous and loyal donors in Canada and around the globe, Cuso International developed several new partnerships and enhanced existing ones to scale our impact around the world. Here is a sample of the trusted and dedicated partners helping us to build brighter futures.

### BMZ

Providing targeted technical assistance to organizations and municipalities in Honduras to strengthen risk 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.

### Departamento para la Prosperidad Social

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





Pictured here: Cuso International volunteer Sebastián Martínez Silva and colleagues at local partner Fundación A-Kasa in Colombia.  
Photo: Sebastián Martínez Silva

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

## 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 LGBTQ+ youth, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## World Food Program

In Honduras, responding to the socio-economic 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 capacity building to increase resilience and food security of potential migrants and returnees.

## World Refugee & Migration Council

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



# Committing to a New Strategic Plan



Cuso International released its 2023–2027 Strategic Plan this year, renewing our vision for an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable world where all people are treated with dignity and can participate fully in society.

In moving toward our vision, our overarching strategic goal is to continue our work with partners to address the root causes of inequality, and improve the economic and social conditions of marginalized groups. We commit to working toward that goal by developing programs and projects that align with our three strategic priorities:

- **Strengthen gender equality and social inclusion**, which includes committing to grow as a feminist organization.
- **Improve economic resilience through sustainable solutions**, with a central commitment to engage and nurture partnerships that support marginalized people and communities.
- **Advance climate action**, recognizing that the defining challenge of the 21st century disproportionately affects marginalized communities.

We hold ourselves accountable to make progress in all of these areas, both in the programs we manage with our local partners and across our internal organizational processes.



Pictured here: Madame Sabine (left), a farmer in Awae, Cameroon with Cuso International volunteer Nelly Rakotozafy. Photographer: Brian Atkinson.





*Pictured here: Adonayit Mulugeta, 18, is a Grade 12 social science student at Bambasi Secondary School, Ethiopia.  
Photo courtesy of Cuso International*

# Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

*“My self-confidence has improved. I can now express myself in public, and the way I see things is different. I’m motivated to pursue my dreams and achieve them.”*

– Adonayit



## Talents Pluriels

*Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Cuso International, Global Affairs Canada and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency are delivering a project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to create more inclusive and equitable economic growth. Talents Pluriels supports youth, including young women and other marginalized groups, by creating economic opportunities, improving safe, inclusive and gender-responsive work environments, and building community awareness about the situation of marginalized communities.

**Over four years, more than 4,000 young entrepreneurs in the cities of Bukavu, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi will participate, and 6,000 will gain access to a digital e-learning platform.**

The platform includes training materials and other resources, and full courses from educational institutions. More than 600 youth will receive support from 30 African business mentors, and 2,000 will get support in their search for work.

Cuso International will work alongside established Congolese organizations to implement the project, including Jeunialissime, an LGBTQ2I organization, Si Jeunesse Savait, a feminist organization, and SODEICO, a company specialized in HR management.

## Achievements

This year, 689 youth from marginalized groups **(417 women, 245 LGBTQ+, 35 youth living with albino condition)** were trained on gender-sensitive business practices, looking for employment, and gender equality and social inclusion at the community level.

## U-GIRLS2

*Ethiopia*

Cuso International’s five-year U-GIRLS2 project is making higher education more accessible to young women aged 15 to 25 in Ethiopia’s Benishangul-Gumuz Region by removing the barriers that keep them away from school. U-GIRLS2 works with whole communities—including direct and indirect beneficiaries—to raise awareness about why girls should stay in school and why it benefits everyone.

Girls receive training, resources such as notebooks, bags, uniforms, reference books, and a financial stipend for supporting their families so they can focus on their studies. Community members such as families and others who live with and support the girls also work with the program to ensure beneficiaries have the social and home support they need to continue in school.

Adonayit, a Grade 12 science student at Bambasi Secondary School, didn’t used to have plans for her future. After she joined U-GIRLS2, private tutorials have helped Adonayit improve her grades, and she visited a local university. She also attended leadership and life skills training, workshops on reproductive health, and English-language training.

## Achievements

- **Trained 2,460 students, parents, community members and administrative bodies in gender-equality awareness**
- **U-GIRLS2 will directly benefit 1,000 female secondary school students over five years**



# Economic Resilience through Sustainable Solutions

## TechWomen Factory

Cameroon

The students in TechWomen Factory's data science classroom in Cameroon hail from every corner of the country, and bring diverse expertise—from engineering to nutrition to pharmaceuticals. TechWomen Factory primarily supports women 18 to 35 years old who are jobless or underemployed by adding advanced digital competency to their credentials.

First established in April 2021, the program is working to counter the resistance women experience trying to enter Cameroon's male-dominated IT sector. Cuso International supports the program in partnership with the Cameroon Youth School Tech Incubator, a pioneer in the design of educational programs and learning platforms for Cameroonian youth.

Before the program launched, Hadidja Moussa was not optimistic about her career prospects. Like the other young female professionals in the classroom, she had earned a degree in another field but was unable to find a job. TechWomen Factory gave her the digital skills she needed to embark on a bright future.

***“We had lost hope, but thanks to TechWomen Factory, we have discovered our talents and we hope to give the best of ourselves.”***

—Hadidja Moussa

## Achievements

- 179 direct beneficiaries, 142 of whom are women
- 90% of beneficiaries now have better knowledge of digital arts and data science
- 88% of beneficiaries now have better knowledge of web development
- 156 beneficiaries placed on internships following training

*Pictured here: Carlos Cáceres (left) and Nidia Ramona, SCOPE participants in Peru. Photo: Marlon Flores*



## SCOPE

Peru

For more than eight years, Cuso International's Sustainable Colombian Opportunities for Peacebuilding and Employment (SCOPE) program has been helping vulnerable groups such as youth, women, victims of conflict, and Venezuelan migrants find formal employment. SCOPE works with local partners in Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, focusing on gender equality and social inclusion to ensure workers—predominantly migrants—are included in labour markets in ways that help protect them. SCOPE works closely with public and private sectors, and civil society.

## Achievements

- 180 migrants were linked to employment
- 202 migrants have participated in the business-strengthening program
- 56% of participants have lasted three months or more in their jobs

***“Since we’ve been working, we feel like a part of the community, like it’s our home.”***

—Carlos Ramos

Nidia Ramona and Carlos Cáceres are migrants who fled from the ongoing political conflict in Venezuela, which has displaced millions of people. They arrived in Lima, Peru in 2017. Through SCOPE, they received marketing tools and legal advice to strengthen their new pizza-parlour business. They have also participated in workshops about sales and customer service.



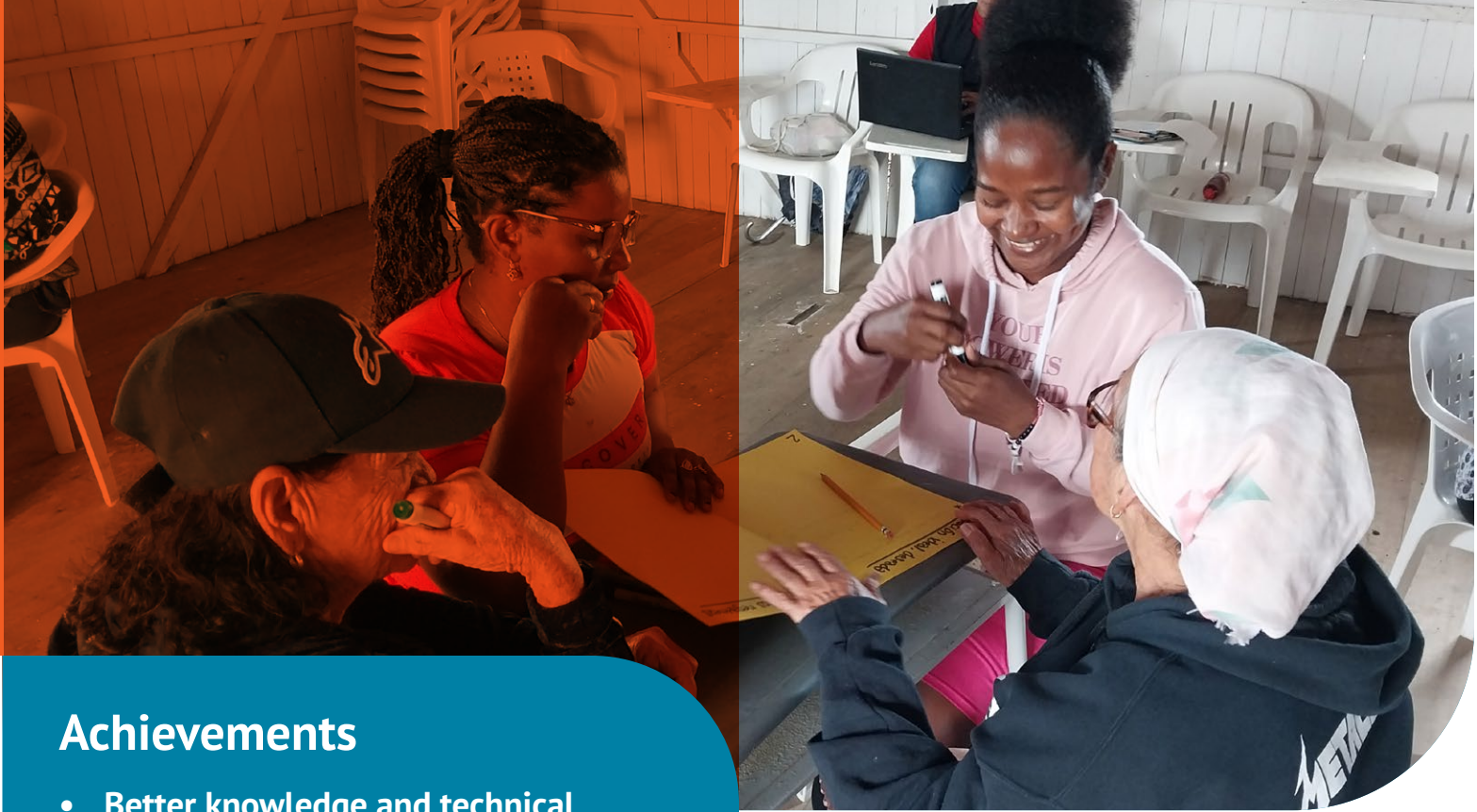
*Pictured here: Individuals participate in climate action and gender equality workshops in Colombia.  
Photo: Sebastián Martínez Silva*

# Climate Action

## Kasa Mangle Colombia

Fundación A-Kasa, a not-for-profit organization founded in Colombia, has been partnered with Cuso’s Sharing Canadian Expertise for Inclusive Development and Gender Equality (SHARE) program since 2021. The Kasa Mangle (Spanish for “mangrove house”) project is helping seven rural coastal communities in Colombia’s Cauca and Nariño departments recognize how environmental degradation is adversely affecting them—including interfering with their traditional fishing practices—and how they can lessen these effects. One challenge is that women’s voices and ideas are often ignored, making sustainable decision-making difficult to achieve.

Cuso International volunteer Sebastián Martínez Silva, a Montreal-based biologist, leads workshops on the importance of women’s work and the impact of climate



### Achievements

- Better knowledge and technical tools to gauge phenomena related to climate change, ecosystemic habitat management, and environmental conservation.
- Better awareness and changes in mentality about power relations between men and women.

change on communities’ lifestyles. Workshops have focused on green business ideas for the era of climate change, such as cocoa processing, ecotourism, and selling crafts for tourists using local and responsibly harvested materials.

***“If the community gets more money from marketing a resource, but women don’t have a say in what they do with their money, nothing is going to change.”***  
—Sebastián Martínez Silva

## Strengthening Entrepreneurial Knowledge for Women Honduras

Cuso International is providing migrant women living in Honduras with training to improve their food security and overall economic resilience. As part of the World Food Program’s Climate Adaptation Training to Agri-Business and Municipalities program, Cuso International’s project strengthens the capacity and resilience of small producers by giving them gender-responsive business training and access to saving and credit programs. It also provides migrant women with tools to support food security.

The training has transformed the life of one farmer, Maria Gómez Ándres, who

now views her business and finances in a new way and is able to pass on her knowledge to others. Maria had to leave school in second grade and devote herself to housework after her mother died. She became involved with Cuso International’s training program along with 91 other women when she observed her own children learning in school and saw how it enriched their lives.

Since the training, Maria has become president of Unión y esfuerzo, one of the savings groups in the Palagua community where she lives. The group manages capital, gives loans, and helps meet the needs and emergencies of its members. Maria is working towards owning her own plot of land to farm. She also wants to grow as a woman, along with her family and community. In the future, Maria hopes women in Honduras will be considered more important, that job opportunities improve, and that they have access to loans, better health, and education.

***“I didn’t even save a lempira before and now I have my own fund for any emergency that may arise.”***  
—María Gómez Ándres

### Achievements

- 10,048 direct beneficiaries
- 29,139 indirect beneficiaries



# Indigenous Communities: Supporting Education and Reflecting on the Way Forward

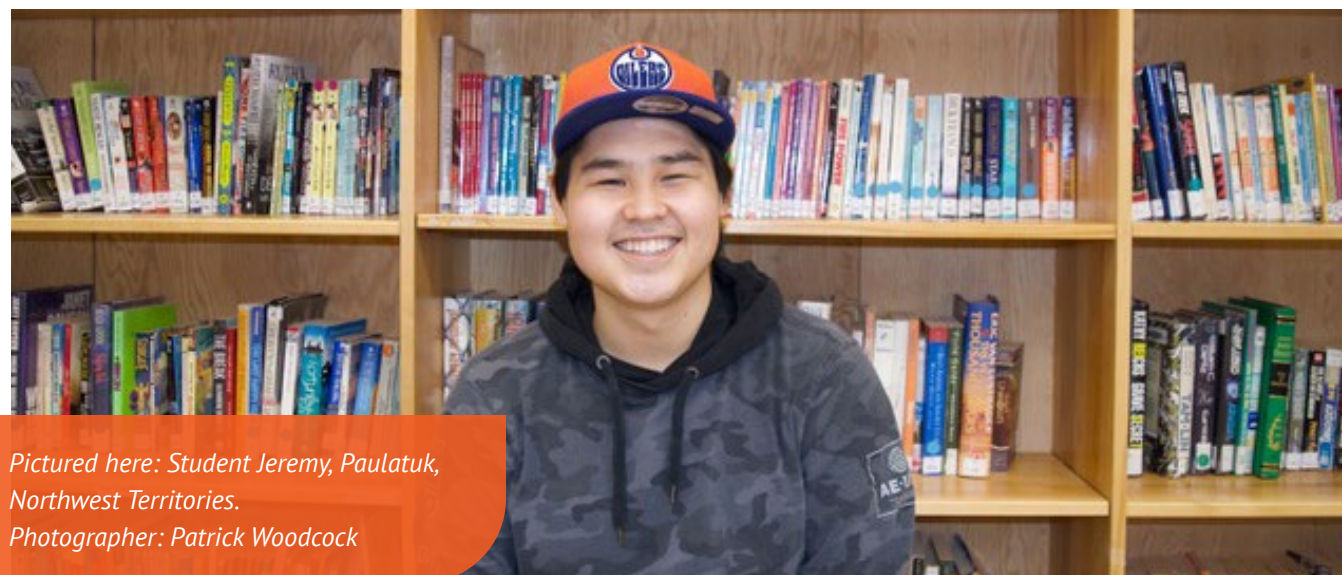


**Cuso International is committed to acting in solidarity with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in Canada in their efforts to advance self-determination, decolonization, and reconciliation.**

Cuso's programs support Indigenous Peoples and communities in ways that reflect their voices and aspirations. Although Indigenous Peoples make up approximately 6 percent of the global population, they account for roughly 20

percent of the extreme poor. This is unacceptable and calls for tangible action.

This year, Cuso International supported Moose Hide Campaign Day, a growing Indigenous-led grassroots movement



Pictured here: Student Jeremy, Paulatuk, Northwest Territories.  
Photographer: Patrick Woodcock

***“I’m excited for VIDEA and Cuso International to begin this journey together of co-creating a very special Canadian Program that Cuso can be proud of. We are looking forward to co-hosting community dialogues across Canada and hosting decolonization sessions within Cuso.”***

**—Kate Herchak**  
Head of Decolonial Policy  
Strategy & Relations  
VIDEA

against gender-based violence. We also began a multi-year partnership with VIDEA, an organization working to address international development issues, including decolonization, social justice, human rights, climate justice, and gender justice. We look forward to sharing the fruits of this collaboration over the coming months.

The Canadian Program continued to support Indigenous communities in the Northwest Territories as they work to address school attendance and improve students’ self-confidence. Through group work, and one-on-one interactions, Cuso International volunteers

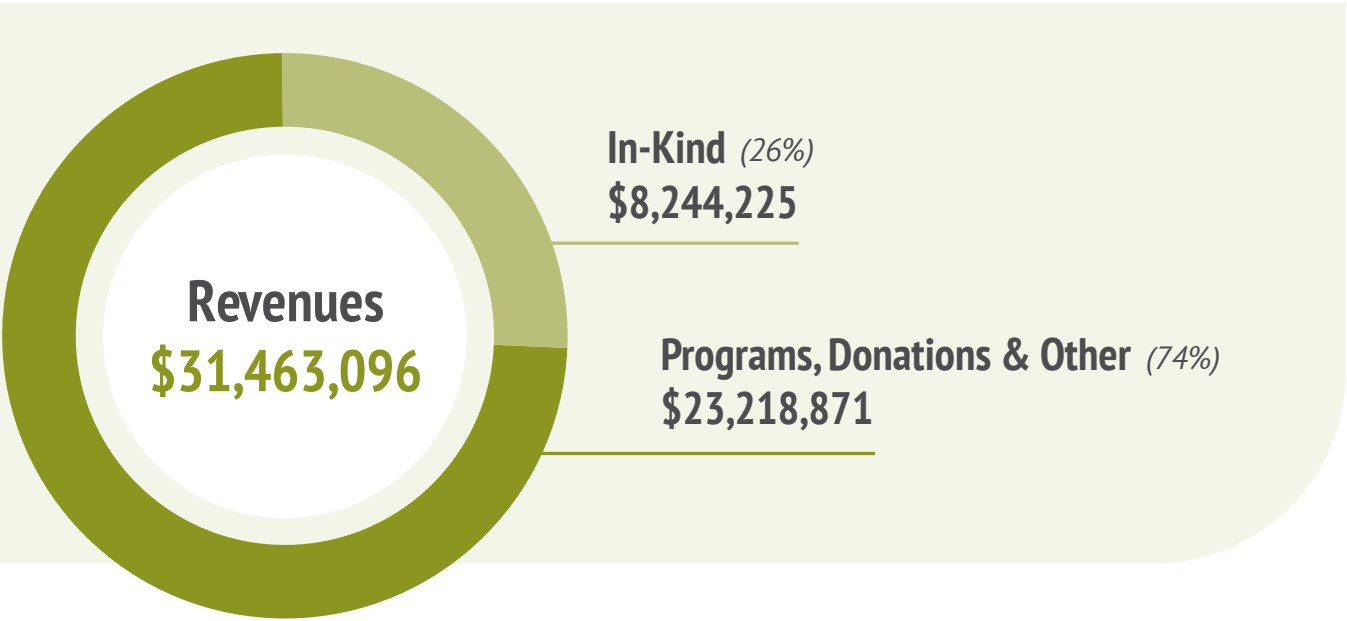
provided positive role models and encouraged students to believe in themselves. Four volunteers worked in the remote communities of Hay River, Fort Resolution and Aklavik, assisting a total of 111 students.



# Financials

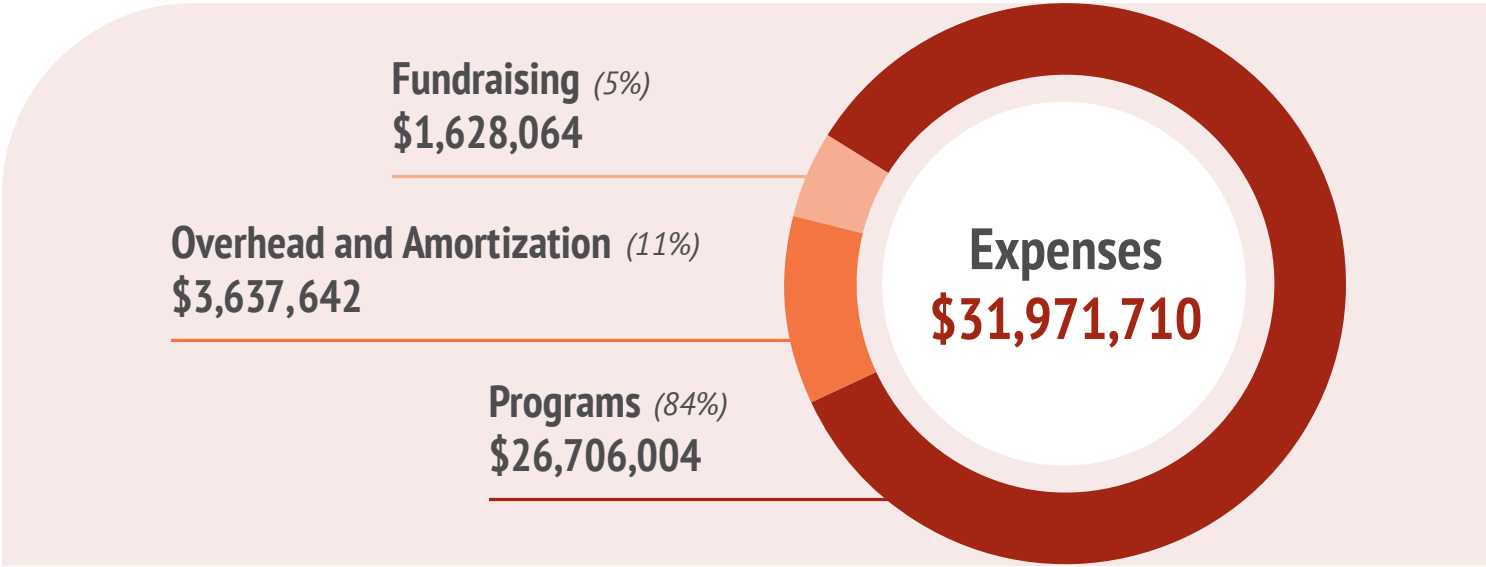


Thanks to your strong support and generosity, Cuso International’s financial position provides us with a secure basis for our work.



Through efficient operations and careful use of the 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.



To view our complete audited financial statements, please visit:  
[cusointernational.org/impact/finances-and-accountability/](https://cusointernational.org/impact/finances-and-accountability/)

# Board of Directors

- Lucie Edwards (Co-Chair)**  
*Waterloo, Ontario*
- Darrell Gregersen (Co-Chair)**  
*Victoria, British Columbia*
- Justin Winchiu (Treasurer)**  
*Ottawa, Ontario*
- Jeff Cates**  
*Mississauga, Ontario*
- Grant Curtis**  
*Halifax, Nova Scotia*
- Sharon Ffolkes Abrahams**  
*Montego Bay, Jamaica*
- Rosemary McCarney**  
*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*
- Wayne Robertson**  
*Vancouver, British Columbia*
- Lori Spadorcia**  
*Toronto, Ontario*
- Alejandro Jose Terrones**  
*Ottawa, Ontario*
- Rob Turpin**  
*Ottawa, Ontario*



# Why I Volunteer

**Katia Vergel Navarrete, who was born and raised in the north of Peru, understands the challenges that young women face navigating life and work.**

Educated in Montreal, where she moved with her family at age 14, Katia eventually became a psychologist with expertise in sexual and reproductive health issues, empowerment skills, and job placement.

In July 2022, Katia She brought her expertise to Asociación Kallpa in Lima, Peru at El Centro de Jóvenes y Empleo Inclusivo (Youth and Employment Centre). Katia works at the centre with teenage mothers, young women with disabilities, and migrant women, delivering psychosocial counselling, training workshops, and information about how to land and keep a job.

She also helps empower people—such as teenage mothers, young women, migrants, and young people with disabilities—who live in vulnerable situations, improving their knowledge of sexual and reproductive health.



***“Since I got to know Cuso, I felt very aligned with their values and the objectives they have as an institution. My experience with Kallpa has been very enriching as it has allowed me to work alongside a multidisciplinary team and learn new ways of intervening with the target population. I am proud of the results I have been able to achieve and I am very happy to have been able to make a change in the lives of the users of the Youth Employment Centre.”***

—Katia, Volunteer for Cuso International

# Why We Give

For siblings Siea and Menno Melitz, supporting Cuso International is a family tradition born out of their father’s adventurous spirit and deep-rooted desire to bolster international communities. Working as a soil scientist, their father Paul Melitz and his wife, Gerdy, lived abroad for a large part of his career, with contracts in Suriname, Cambodia, and New Guinea. Siea and Menno have vivid memories of growing up in Indonesia before the family returned to Canada in the 1990s.

**“Wherever he worked, our father always felt a strong connection to the local people and culture, and he saw what they were capable of,” says Siea.**

Paul believed that with a little support, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing, tangible, positive change was possible. To pursue this belief, he and Gerdy started the Bernhard Melitz Foundation in 2010, and the foundation has supported Cuso International for several years.

Siea and Menno took over the foundation’s work after Paul’s passing in 2020. The foundation, named after their grandfather, continues to support Cuso Inter-



***“Connecting people through ideas and making them real, that’s everlasting. And for us, that connects with who we are as a family.”***

—Menno Melitz

national today because the two organizations’ goals align—goals such as empowering women, which is a mission close to Siea’s heart.

Another shared interest is Cuso International’s pursuit of sustainability and skills transfer with local organizations. That is being demonstrated with a foundation-supported project in Cameroon where valuable agricultural skills are being passed to local farmers. The initiative is reminiscent of Paul’s work.

Siea and Menno wish for Cuso International to remain committed to being donor-friendly, financially responsible, and grounded in relationship-building that promotes the life-changing power of knowledge sharing.





# 2022-2023 Annual Report