

From Excluded to Essential

Women shaping the future of rural food systems



“My academic achievement is the result of IIRR’s support... The presence of IIRR in my school doesn’t just benefit me; it is a lifeline for all the girls here.”

Shagitu

Student, Guji Zone, Oromia Region, Ethiopia

**ENHANCING STUDENTS’ LEARNING
PERFORMANCE IN GUJI ZONE**

THE ORGANIZATION

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TEN THEMES

From Excluded to Essential

Women shaping the future of rural food systems
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Credo

SINCE 1960

Go to the people,
Live among them,
Learn from them,
Plan with them,
Work with them.
Start with what they know.
Build on what they have.
Teach by showing.
Learn by doing.

Not a showcase, but a pattern.
Not odds and ends, but a system.
Not piecemeal, but an integrated approach.
Not to conform, but to transform.
Not relief, but release.

DR. Y.C. JAMES YEN, FOUNDER



OUR MISSION

To empower rural people to build resilient communities and attain socioeconomic equity through creative and community-led action.

OUR VISION

An equitable world in which rural people achieve their full potential, living a life of dignity and self-reliance in harmony with the environment.





Sometimes, the most meaningful change begins so quietly that it is easy to miss. It begins with a private musing that turns into a conversation. An inspired idea. A skill shared between neighbors.

Young people discovering the confidence to speak up about something important. A woman deciding to try something she had never imagined possible. A community choosing to care for the land that has cared for them for generations.

These moments may seem small, yet they are often where lasting transformation begins.

As Chair of the IIRR Board, I have the privilege of seeing these small beginnings grow into something much greater. Across the stories in this report, I am reminded that meaningful progress is rarely the result of a single intervention or organization. It grows through relationships between communities and local governments, farmers and researchers, generations, and people and the natural environments on which their lives depend.

Visiting our communities reminds me how these outcomes are achieved. Communities are not passive recipients of development. They are problem-solvers

and leaders who bring deep knowledge, resilience, and determination to the challenges they face. When people are trusted, listened to, and given opportunities to participate, they begin to create change in their own way.

This spirit of partnership has been at the heart of IIRR's work for more than six decades. It continues to guide how we work today, with humility and a belief that sustainable solutions are built within communities, not for them.

Every story in this report reflects your belief that meaningful change is built together.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank our communities, partners, donors, and the IIRR team.

I hope these pages leave you feeling encouraged. They remind us that while the challenges are real, so is the determination people bring to caring for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Emily Cheng

Chair, Board of Directors, IIRR

From the President

PETER WILLIAMS

For more than six decades, IIRR has acted on the belief that the people closest to a challenge are also closest to its solution. This report is a record of that conviction at work over the past year.



The context is not easy. Climate shocks are unsettling harvests and livelihoods. Food insecurity persists. Wetlands, forests, and farmlands are under strain, and too many people, especially women and young people, still lack a fair chance to get ahead. None of this is abstract to us as we see it in the communities where we work across Africa and Asia.

In these pages you will meet women who have turned traditional roles into thriving enterprises and stepped into leadership. You will meet young people who have become advocates for food security and nutrition in rooms that once excluded them. You will see farmers and neighbors bringing peatlands, wetlands, and forests back to life, not as conservation set apart from daily life, but as the ground their livelihoods stand on.

For us, impact is not measured only in people reached or hectares restored, though those numbers matter. It is measured in stronger local institutions, in the

confidence of communities to solve problems, and in the growing capacity of people to shape their own future.

Food security, climate resilience, healthy ecosystems, education, and economic opportunity rise and fall together. Progress lasts when we strengthen the connections among them and keep communities at the center of every solution.

This is the heart of rural reconstruction, the approach that has guided IIRR since our founding. We do not arrive with finished answers. We start with what people already know and build on what they already have, working alongside communities to co-create solutions that are practical, locally owned, and built to last.

To the communities who have trusted us, and to the partners, donors, governments, and staff who make this work possible: thank you. What you read in these pages belongs to all of you.

We will keep working shoulder to shoulder with communities to open opportunities, strengthen resilience, and help secure a better future for people and the places they call home.

Peter Williams

President, IIRR

Pillars & Programs

FIVE PILLARS · TWELVE PROGRAMS

Five pillars, each carried by its own programs — and each depending on the others. Progress in one rarely holds without progress in the rest.



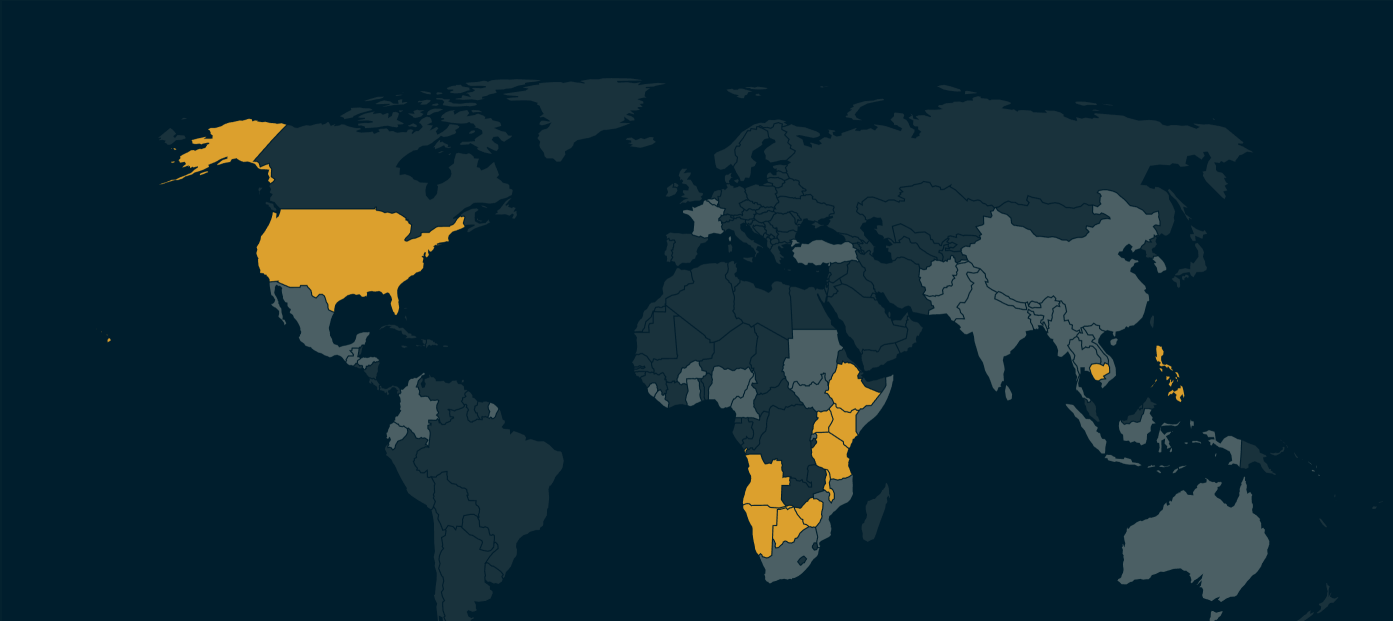
01	Economic Empowerment	Financial Inclusion	Enterprise Development	Social Protection	Securing Assets
02	Education	Access to Education	Skills for Success		
03	Environment	Disaster Risk Reduction	Climate Change and Adaptation		
04	Food Systems	Food Security and Nutrition	Agriculture		
05	Health	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Community Health		



Mangrove and coastal ecosystems, Philippines — where food systems and environment are the same work.

Where We Work

12 COUNTRIES TODAY · 49 SINCE 1960



CURRENT PRESENCE

- | | |
|----------|---------------|
| Angola | Namibia |
| Botswana | Philippines |
| Cambodia | Tanzania |
| Ethiopia | Uganda |
| Kenya | United States |
| Malawi | Zimbabwe |

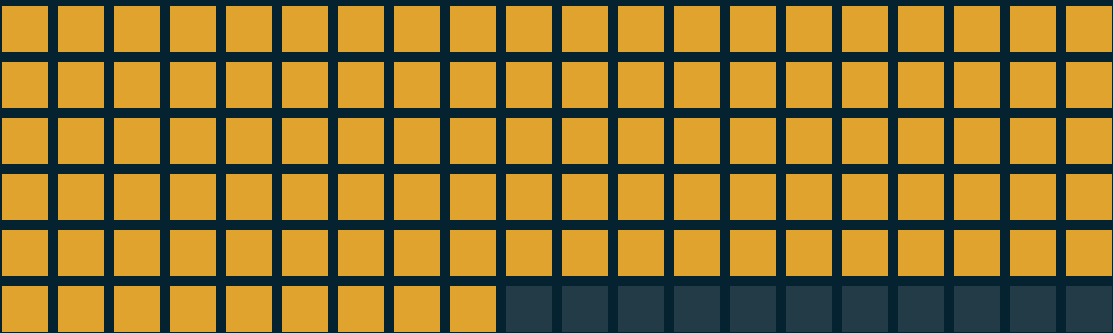
OTHER COUNTRIES IN WHICH IIRR HAS WORKED

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Afghanistan | Honduras | Solomon Islands |
| Australia | India | Somalia |
| Bangladesh | Indonesia | South Africa |
| Belgium | Laos | South Korea |
| Bhutan | Liberia | South Sudan |
| Burkina Faso | Mexico | Sri Lanka |
| Cameroon | Mozambique | Sudan |
| China | Myanmar | Thailand |
| Colombia | Nepal | Timor Leste |
| Ecuador | Nigeria | Turkey |
| France | Pakistan | Vietnam |
| Ghana | Rwanda | |
| Guatemala | Sierra Leone | |

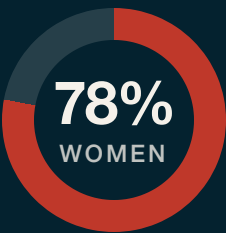
5.45M

lives impacted

across 12 countries in Africa, Asia, and the United States



EACH SQUARE REPRESENTS 50,000 LIVES



252,354

farmers equipped with skills and agricultural inputs —
nearly four in five were women

REACH BY COUNT — SHOWN TO SCALE



500_{ha}

restored through
reforestation

216

health & emergency
responders equipped

105

child development
centers & schools

8

policies & plans advanced

Results in the field

FIVE COUNTRIES

CAMBODIA

AQUACULTURE

Fish processing raised the value of production sevenfold



3x

women in producer-group leadership

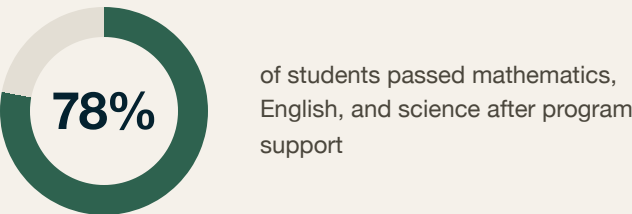
50%

of groups operationally ready

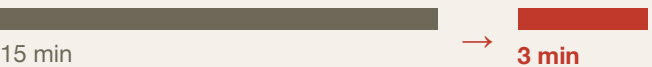
ETHIOPIA

EDUCATION & RESPONSE

Learning outcomes rose and emergency response times collapsed



EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIME



ETHIOPIA

API CULTURE

Honey output and household incomes more than tripled

Honey production **+262%**

Household income **+257%**

124,435 youth into sustainable livelihoods

79% of them were young women

UGANDA

RESTORATION

River systems and wetlands brought back to life

268 km
of river ecosystems restored

70 ha
of wetlands rehabilitated



PHILIPPINES

Urban gardens changed what families eat

+61%

household use of community gardens

+115%

crop diversity in urban gardens

98%

of households at high vegetable consumption

“I have gained valuable knowledge and skills in beekeeping and livestock fattening... People in my community are beginning to recognize that women can successfully create jobs and improve their families’ lives. That gives me confidence that the future is bright, especially for young women.”

Sara

Beekeeper and entrepreneur
Kodo Wono Kebele, Ethiopia

MASS YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN APICULTURE





THE THEME OF THIS REPORT

From Excluded to Essential

In rural communities worldwide, women grow crops, raise livestock, care for families, conserve natural resources, operate businesses, and pass knowledge between generations. Yet their contribution has gone unseen, undervalued, and underinvested.

— That is changing.

Around the world, there is recognition that investing in women is more than a matter of equity — it is one of the smartest investments in food security, poverty reduction, climate resilience, and rural development. When women have access to productive resources, financial services, education, and leadership opportunities, farms become productive, businesses grow, families are healthier, and communities are equipped to withstand economic and environmental shocks.

Throughout 2025, IIRR partnered with communities across Africa and Asia to ensure that women are more than participants but are recognized leaders. Across our work, women are strengthening food security,

restoring landscapes, building enterprises, improving nutrition, influencing communities, and preparing the next generation of leaders.

These achievements reflect a shift from viewing women as beneficiaries of development to recognizing them as producers, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers whose leadership is essential to resilient food systems. This report explores that transformation through ten themes.

The evidence in these pages is specific. Fish processors in Cambodia raised the value of their catch from \$1.75 to \$6.50 per kilogram. Seed enterprises in Ethiopia lifted household income by 30%. Women's representation in cooperative leadership tripled.

“ When women are empowered to lead, rural communities don't just survive. They thrive. Together with our partners, IIRR is helping ensure that women continue to shape the future of food systems for generations to come.

THEME ONE

Women as Producers and Decision-Makers

Rural women cultivate crops, manage livestock, process food, and trade in local markets — yet remain locked out of the land, credit, and decisions that shape the food systems they sustain.

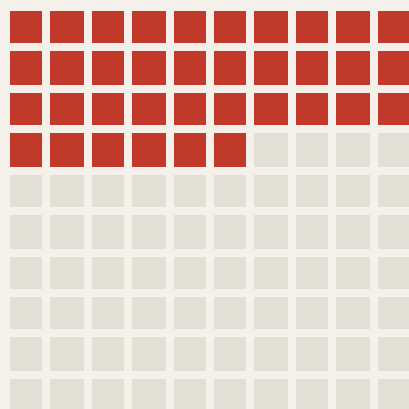
Women make up approximately 36% of the global agricultural workforce, and their labor spans every stage of the value chain, often alongside unpaid caregiving work that goes unmeasured in formal accounting.

Less than 15% of landholders globally are women. These gaps are self-reinforcing: without land titles, women often cannot access credit or join cooperatives,

limiting their influence within households and markets.

IIRR's work is built on the premise that women are not merely participants in food systems, but leaders, innovators, and stewards of community well-being.

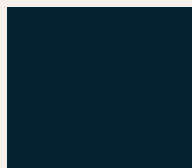
THE GAP, MEASURED



36% of the global agrifood workforce is made up of women — the majority in many low-income countries

AVERAGE FARM OUTPUT

-24%



Men's farms



Women's farms

Not because women are less capable, but because they have less access to land, inputs, credit, extension services, and technology.

\$1T

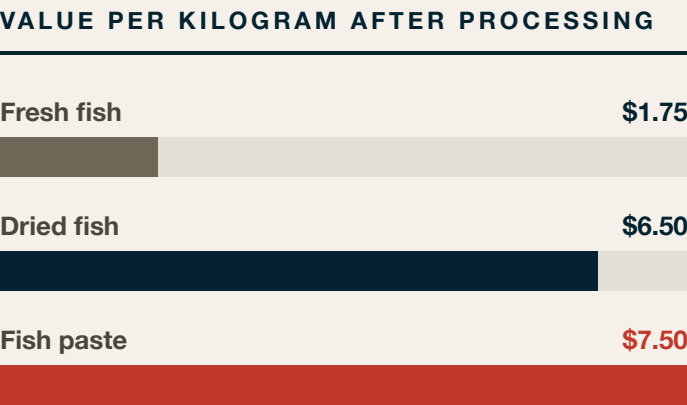
potential gain to global GDP from closing gender gaps in agrifood systems — reducing food insecurity for 45 million people

WHY IT MATTERS

Investing in women farmers is one of the most effective strategies for improving food security, household incomes, and climate resilience.

Building Fair Prices and Stronger Voices

Sours Nak and the Mean Chey Agricultural Cooperative, Prey Veng Province



Processing training turned \$1.75/kg fresh fish into products worth up to four times more.

For years, Sours Nak, leader of the Mean Chey Agricultural Cooperative, watched local fish farmers work hard yet struggle to earn fair returns. Although members produced safe, high-quality fish, they could not compete with lower-priced imports, and selling fresh left little room to raise incomes.

Through IIRR's Scaling for Impact project, supported by CGIAR and WorldFish, Sours Nak joined a fish-processing training with 18 other women from

cooperative committees and fish-raising households — learning processing, packaging, hygiene, and food safety.

More than a technical exercise, it strengthened women's leadership in the cooperative. Sours Nak now buys fish from members at fair prices, oversees processing, and markets products in Prey Veng and Phnom Penh.

“ Once concerned about competing with imported fish, she is now helping fellow producers earn fairer prices and build a stronger future together.

18

women trained in processing

4x

value gain per kilogram

3x

women in group leadership

PROJECT

Scaling for Impact (S4I)

63%

of aquaculture workshop participants were women

THEME TWO

Breaking Cultural Barriers to Participation

Women perform a significant share of agricultural labor while remaining excluded from land ownership, training, leadership, and control over productive assets.

Inheritance customs and household decision-making structures often limit women's mobility and their say over income and farming investments, leaving many women to work land they hold no formal claim to.

These barriers carry real costs. When women cannot fully participate or access the same resources as men, productivity suffers, poverty and food insecurity deepen,

and communities become more vulnerable to shocks like poor harvests and price volatility.

Evidence shows transformative change happens when communities challenge restrictive norms together — household dialogue, community engagement, male allyship, and inclusive farmer organizations. IIRR treats gender equity as a foundation for resilience rather than an add-on.

THE BARRIERS, MEASURED

COUNTRIES WHERE MEN CONTROL SUBSTANTIALLY MORE AGRICULTURAL LAND

40 of 46



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICIES



75% acknowledge women, but only 19% include measurable gender objectives.

IF WOMEN HAD EQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES

150M

fewer hungry people — the reduction equal access to productive resources could deliver

WHY IT MATTERS

Transforming social norms unlocks women's full potential as farmers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

From Unemployed Nursing Graduate to Entrepreneur

Sara, 19, Kodo Wono Kebele

WHAT SARA OWNS TODAY



15 days

of training in
beekeeping,
fattening, and
enterprise

25

members in her
savings
association (VESA)

2,000 birr

weekly rental
income
from her
motorcycle



At just 19, Sara had already faced a challenge familiar to many young women in rural Ethiopia. After earning a diploma in nursing in 2022, she spent two years searching for work but could not find employment. Rather than waiting for an opportunity, she chose to create one.

“My father has been a traditional beekeeper for years,” Sara recalls. “I grew up helping him make beehives, hang them in trees, and harvest honey. So when the kebele’s selection committee began choosing young women for the MaYEA program, people who had known me since childhood believed I was the right candidate.”

After training, she borrowed from her 25-member Village Saving and Economic Association, purchased modern beehives, built ten transitional hives, and invested in three goats for fattening. “I sold the goats for a good profit and have continued buying and selling sheep every four months.”

“I’ve built a new house and bought a motorcycle that I rent out,” she says. “Before, we sold all our honey because we desperately needed cash. Now my family consumes some of it, and I even share honey with my neighbors.”

“My daughter is only one year old, but my biggest dream is to see her and my future children receive a good education and live a better life than I have. I also hope every child in my community gets the same opportunity.”

PROJECT

Mass Youth Employment in Apiculture (MaYEA)

124,435

youth transitioned into work

THEME THREE

Women-Led Enterprise and Economic Independence



Across developing countries, women operate millions of microenterprises — yet face compounding constraints on capital, networks, markets, and technical support.

Investing in rural women generates substantial returns. Recent estimates suggest targeted investments could improve resilience for more than 235 million people and increase incomes for tens of millions of households.

Women entrepreneurs consistently reinvest earnings in their families, supporting children's education, health, and nutrition — money that circulates back into the

household and community rather than remaining isolated gain.

Promoting rural women-led enterprises builds pathways toward economic independence, confidence, and greater influence over household and community decisions. These enterprises also serve as models, gradually shifting what communities believe is possible for women.

THE GAP, MEASURED

AGRICULTURAL WAGE, PER DOLLAR EARNED BY MEN



Women in agricultural wage employment earn 82 cents for every dollar earned by men.

LIKELIHOOD OF FOOD INSECURITY

+18% more likely than men to experience moderate or severe food insecurity, for women in agrifood systems

200M

RURAL WOMEN

operate micro- and small enterprises worldwide — despite having significantly less access to finance, markets, and business services than men.



each block = 10 million women running a micro- or small enterprise

WHY IT MATTERS

Supporting women entrepreneurs creates benefits that extend well beyond individual businesses to entire families and communities.

From Liquid Soap to Stronger Livelihoods

A women's producer group in Gati Village, Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary



FOUR MONTHS OF PRODUCTION

\$1,014

total sales generated within four months

\$712

profit — 2,846,000 Cambodian riels

70%

of sales retained as profit by the group

Profit · \$712

Costs

Sales of \$1,014 shown in proportion

A liquid soap producer group was established by community members in Gati Village with the goal of producing affordable soap for household use while creating employment and income for local women.

Although the women had little previous experience running a collective business, they made encouraging progress. Through training they learned to produce high-quality liquid soap using a standardized formula, and began marketing within the community and through social media, reaching customers beyond their locality.

To support frontline soldiers, the group donated 100,000 riels (US\$25) from its profits. Rather than distributing all remaining profits, it established a reserve fund for members facing illness, unexpected medical expenses, or other urgent family needs.

By combining entrepreneurship with mutual support, the group is improving livelihoods, strengthening community resilience, and creating opportunities for rural and Indigenous women to build a more secure future together.

PROJECT

Promoting Social Enterprises in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary

3x

growth in women leading farming groups

THEME FOUR

Urban Gardening as Women's Social Protection



Because these plots require little land, capital, or equipment, they are one of the few food-production strategies genuinely accessible to women with limited resources or time.

As urbanization accelerates and food prices grow more volatile, urban and peri-urban gardening has emerged as an important strategy for household resilience. For women in low-income communities especially, small-scale food production offers reliable access to nutritious food, supplemental income, and financial stability.

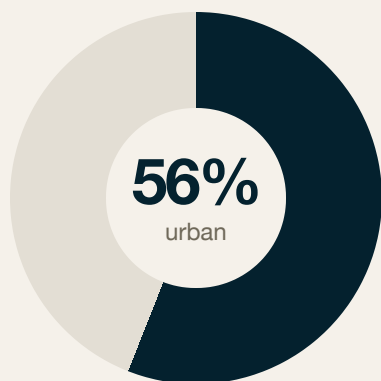
Urban gardens reduce dependence on market purchases and help households absorb economic shocks, climate disruptions, and rising food costs.

Cultivated close to home, they let families harvest what is needed rather than waiting on markets that may be disrupted or unaffordable.

Women often lead in managing urban gardens. That leadership extends beyond the garden: coordinating planting schedules, sharing seeds and techniques, and organizing collective plots builds networks of trust that strengthen social cohesion.

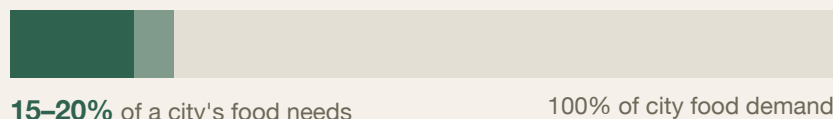
THE CONTEXT, MEASURED

WHERE THE WORLD LIVES



Over half the world's population now lives in urban areas, increasing pressure on affordable, nutritious food supplies.

WHAT URBAN AGRICULTURE CAN SUPPLY



In many developing-country contexts, urban agriculture supplies a meaningful share of city food needs while improving dietary diversity and reducing food expenditures.

2.3B

people experience moderate or severe food insecurity each year — the backdrop against which a household plot becomes a safety net.

WHY IT MATTERS

Small-scale food production provides women with an accessible safety net during economic and climate shocks.

Growing Resilience Through Urban Agriculture

Sabiniana, Quezon City



WHERE ONE GARDEN'S HARVEST GOES

- Fresh vegetables for her family, daily the garden's first purpose
- Produce shared with neighbors reaching beyond her front gate
- Vegetables for the barangay feeding program community nutrition
- Surplus sold to cover school expenses her grandchildren's future

+115%

crop diversity across
program gardens

+61%

household use of
community gardens

Widowed and without a stable source of income, Sabiniana has maintained a small garden which became her family's main source of food and a modest source of earnings, helping her stay active while putting fresh vegetables on the table each day.

Through IIRR's support to the Joy of Urban Farming Program, Sabiniana and other gardeners received training, peer learning, access to plant nurseries, and

seedlings for community gardening. The support gave her more than new techniques; it connected her to a wider network of fellow gardeners.

In a densely populated urban environment where many families struggle with rising food costs, her story shows how community-based gardening can strengthen food security, generate income, and foster shared progress among neighbors.

“ For me, the garden means having nutritious food for my family. With many children at home, it makes me happy to know that whenever they ask for vegetables, I always have something to serve. The income I earn from selling produce helps pay for transportation and my grandchildren's school expenses.

— Sabiniana

PROJECT

Expanding the Role of Nutrient-rich, Hardy Vegetables in Home and Community Gardens, Quezon City

+115%

crop diversity in urban gardens

Access to Finance and Financial Inclusion

Financial systems were built around assets, documentation, and credit histories many women do not have — even when their businesses are creditworthy.

Millions of women worldwide remain excluded from formal financial systems. Women entrepreneurs and farmers frequently face barriers to opening bank accounts, obtaining credit, and securing capital.

For rural women, these barriers are compounded by limited asset ownership, lower financial literacy, restricted mobility, and social norms that constrain

financial decision-making. Many rely instead on informal savings and lending that offer short-term flexibility but higher costs and fewer protections.

Access to savings, credit, insurance, and digital finance strengthens resilience to shocks and increases women's control over economic resources — positioning a woman to weather a bad season, expand a business, or invest in her children's education.

THE EXCLUSION, MEASURED

WOMEN IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES WHO REMAIN UNBANKED **740 million**



each block = 20 million women without a formal financial account

ACCOUNT OWNERSHIP GAP



Women remain **6 percentage points** less likely than men to own a formal financial account.

FINANCING GAP FOR WOMEN-OWNED MSMES

\$1.7T

unmet financing need faced by women-owned micro, small, and medium enterprises globally

WHY IT MATTERS

Financial inclusion is one of the strongest predictors of women's long-term economic empowerment.

Unlocking Opportunity for Young Women Entrepreneurs

Muthoni, founder of MK Plug, Nyeri Town

MK PLUG, MONTHLY

Ksh 15–20K



revenue

Ksh 6–8K



profit

Roughly **40%** of revenue converts to profit — steady growth built on groundwork laid before the summit.

50

youth entrepreneurs given market exposure

1

phone — all she started the business with



After moving to Nyeri, Muthoni realized that many of the personalized household items and lifestyle products she wanted were difficult to find locally. She decided to create a solution herself, born from a glaring gap in the market.

Starting with only her phone and a desire to succeed, she launched MK Plug through an online drop-shipping model, slowly building her customer base while saving enough to open a small physical shop in Nyeri Town. Rather than waiting for the right resources or the perfect moment, she worked with what she already had.

But growth did not come easily. Limited access to affordable financing made it difficult to expand and reach larger markets — a challenge familiar to small business owners, particularly in rural areas: even a strong product and loyal customers can only carry a business so far without capital.

With IIRR's support through the EASETRADE project, Muthoni participated in the Nyeri Youth Summit. She built partnerships, exchanged ideas with fellow entrepreneurs, and connected directly with new customers — relationships she could draw on long after the summit ended.

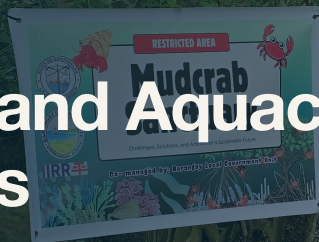
PROJECT

EASETRADE MSME Digital Infrastructure Lending Project

50

youth entrepreneurs reached

Processing and Aquaculture Value Chains



Closing these gaps is less about giving women new roles and more about removing obstacles that keep them in the same ones.

Across rural communities, women transform raw agricultural and aquatic products into higher-value goods — work that often determines whether a harvest becomes steady income or is lost to spoilage before reaching a buyer.

Despite their contributions, women remain concentrated in lower-value segments, facing barriers to equipment, technology, finance, and market information. Without

the tools available further up the chain, women often have little choice but to sell quickly, in small volumes, at lower prices.

Even modest investments in processing equipment or storage can shift a woman's position in the value chain, allowing her to sell at a time and in a form that earns more, rather than whenever a buyer happens to be available.

THE VALUE CHAIN, MEASURED

WOMEN'S SHARE OF THE WORK VS. SHARE OF THE PROFIT

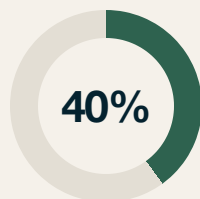
Post-harvest activities

50%

Share of profits captured

Women perform about half of all post-harvest activities in many developing-country food value chains but capture a much smaller share of profits.

WOMEN IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE



45 million women work directly in fisheries and aquaculture worldwide — nearly 40% of the sector's workforce, including post-harvest activities.

GAIN FROM SIMPLE VALUE-ADDED PROCESSING

+30%



Processing can raise market value by 20–30% or more, while reducing food loss.

WHY IT MATTERS

Helping women move into higher-value market opportunities multiplies economic returns for rural families.

Improving Aquaculture Value Chains in Quezon

Maria Teresa and her family's tilapia farm



FROM ONE POND TO AN EXPORT CUSTOMER BASE

BEFORE

Fresh tilapia, sold locally.
Production hit a ceiling; income unstable.

Pond management · feeding · processing · drying · packaging · labeling · marketing

each family member contributing to a different part of the enterprise

WITH AQUADAPT

→ Fingerlings, broodstock, drying units, an on-site nursery, and training.

TODAY

→ “Guinading” dried tilapia, ordered from Hong Kong, the US, and Canada.

“The AQUADAPT project has been a great help to us.”

— Maria Teresa

When the AQUADAPT Project first reached Quezon, Maria Teresa and her family were doing everything they could to make their small tilapia farm viable. Despite access to natural water and years of hard work, production hit a ceiling and income was unstable. Like many small-scale fish farmers, the family had the skills, but lacked the tools.

Through the project she received high-quality fingerlings and broodstock, training in sustainable tilapia production and fish processing, and support materials to improve

pond conditions. She also established an on-site nursery, allowing the family to produce their own fingerlings and reduce dependence on external suppliers.

Using simple drying units provided by the project, they began producing “guinading” — dried tilapia — which became a well-known local delicacy. Maria Teresa promoted the products through Facebook and Messenger, and orders soon arrived from nearby communities and from Filipinos living overseas.

PROJECT

AQUADAPT PhilCam · Philippines and Cambodia

23

working papers and briefs produced

Gender-Responsive Nutrition and Caregiving

Women are usually the first to notice signs of malnutrition, and the first to adjust what a family eats when resources grow tight.

Women are typically responsible for food preparation, child feeding, caregiving, and household health management. Globally they spend roughly twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic and caregiving work — a burden often intensified in rural areas by limited infrastructure and services.

While women drive family nutrition, they often face nutritional vulnerabilities themselves due to unequal access to food, healthcare, and resources. Gender-

responsive programming must address women's own health and workload, not just their caregiving role.

Evidence shows that when women gain more control over resources, families invest more in nutritious food, healthcare, and education. Reducing women's workloads improves outcomes for both mothers and children.

THE BURDEN, MEASURED

HOURS OF UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK



Globally, women spend about two times more hours than men performing unpaid care and domestic work.

FOOD INSECURITY GENDER GAP

4.3pp the gap widened to 4.3 percentage points during recent global food and economic crises

WHEN WOMEN CONTROL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

+20% household spending on nutritious food can rise by up to a fifth, and children's survival to age five improves significantly

WHY IT MATTERS

Empowering women improves nutrition across entire households — not just for mothers, but for future generations.

Growing Nutrition, Growing Care

Child Development Workers and mothers in Sorsogon



For the Child Development Workers in Sorsogon, and the parents — particularly mothers — responsible for preparing meals at home, ensuring children received nutritious food was a daily challenge. “Our daycare center was very small. We had no garden, so all the vegetables for the children’s meals had to be bought,” recalled one worker.

Everything changed when the Climate-Smart and Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture project equipped workers and parents with climate-smart farming skills, seeds, tools, and starter kits. Through hands-on training and community participation, caregivers transformed unused spaces into productive gardens.

THE BUDGET BEHIND A CHILD’S MEAL

₱15

per child, per meal —
the supplementary
feeding allocation

With no garden of its own, every vegetable had to be purchased, stretching an already limited budget.

AFTER THE CCS-NSA PROJECT

31

Child Development
Centers with gardens

1,496

households with improved
access to vegetables

Soon the gardens produced chemical-free vegetables that became regular ingredients in children’s meals. Mothers began preparing nutritious meals at home using the same harvest. One recalled making a simple bottle gourd soup with misua for her two-year-old son: “He smiled and said, ‘Mom, this is so delicious!’”

Caregivers also worked together to protect the gardens from climate-related challenges by building drainage canals, using banana leaves for shade, and planting drought-tolerant crops.

“ Before, we had to buy all the vegetables. Now, the garden provides what we need. The produce is fresh, safe, and comes at no cost.

— A Child Development Worker, Sorsogon

PROJECT

Climate-Smart and Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (CCS-NSA)

1,496

households reached

THEME EIGHT

Women in Governance and Advocacy

When women and other marginalized groups are excluded, policies often fail to reflect the realities of rural communities.

Women remain underrepresented in the institutions that influence agricultural policy, natural resource management, and community development — from farmer organizations and water user groups to local councils and national platforms — even though these decisions directly affect their households and livelihoods.

Evidence shows the reverse is also true: inclusive governance leads to more responsive institutions and better development outcomes, as diverse perspectives help shape solutions to local challenges.

Through mentorship, practical experience, and opportunities to engage in governance processes, women develop the confidence and skills needed to participate effectively over the long term.

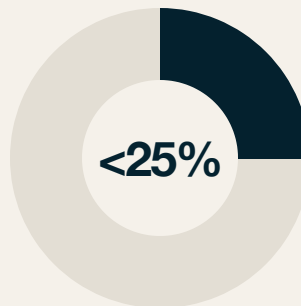
REPRESENTATION, MEASURED

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICY DOCUMENTS



19% include measurable gender objectives — roughly two documents in ten

LEADERSHIP IN PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS



Women occupy fewer than one quarter of leadership positions in many agricultural producer organizations worldwide.

20–30%

BETTER OUTCOMES

Community resource management groups with meaningful participation by women are associated with 20–30% better natural resource governance outcomes, including improved forest conservation and water management.

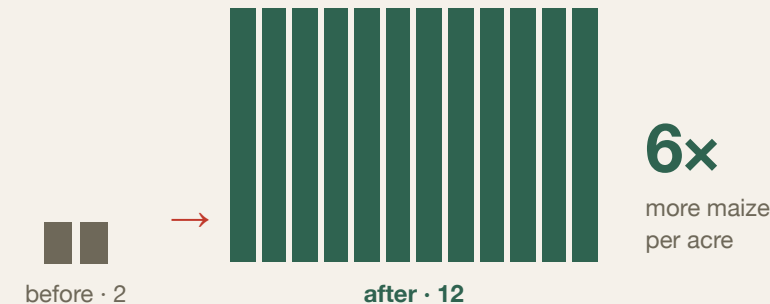
WHY IT MATTERS

Women's voices lead to stronger institutions and more sustainable rural development.

From Eroded Land to Renewed Opportunity

Malita, 35, Magola Village, Ntcheu District

MAIZE HARVEST, 50-KILOGRAM BAGS PER ACRE



MWK 90,000

earnings, with cowpea
as a second income

1 acre

the whole farm —
restored, not expanded



For years, Malita, a single mother of three, struggled to make a living from her one-acre farm. Declining soil fertility, erosion, and poor harvests left her maize yields at just two 50-kilogram bags per acre, barely enough to feed her family.

Through the Transforming Landscapes and Livelihoods Project, Malita joined the Mphepozina Farmer Field School, where she participated in season-long, hands-on training with other local farmers. Together they

explored practical ways to restore degraded land, including intercropping maize with legumes such as cowpeas to naturally replenish soil fertility.

The impact extends well beyond her own farm. As Secretary of her Village Savings and Loan Scheme, she has become a respected leader who helps other families build financial resilience and agricultural success — demonstrating that restoring the land and strengthening livelihoods go hand in hand.

“ Malita’s farm represents far more than increased harvests. It is a source of resilience, opportunity, and leadership — showing how sustainable agriculture, community-based learning, and local leadership can restore degraded landscapes while empowering women to become catalysts for lasting change.

PROJECT

**Transforming Landscapes and Livelihoods Project
(TLLP) · Africa Region**

35,000

farmers reached through cascading training

Gender-Inclusive Monitoring and Learning

What goes unmeasured is easy to overlook in program design and difficult to build on. Closing the gap starts with asking who is doing the work, and counting it consistently.

Gender-inclusive monitoring ensures women's experiences and outcomes remain visible throughout program design, implementation, and evaluation, since aggregate results can mask very different experiences between men and women within the same household or community.

Gender-responsive monitoring systems help organizations identify barriers, track progress, and adapt interventions — but these insights only matter if they

lead to real changes in how a program operates, not just reports of gaps.

Beyond measurement, participatory learning treats women as genuine partners in interpreting data and shaping priorities, not simply sources of information. IIRR treats monitoring as an ongoing conversation with communities.

WHAT THE DATA MISSES

COUNTRIES WITH ADEQUATE SEX-DISAGGREGATED AGRICULTURAL DATA

Adequate data

Nearly half still lack it

Nearly half of countries still lack adequate sex-disaggregated agricultural data needed to monitor women's participation and outcomes.

INVISIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Millions of hours of women's unpaid agricultural and caregiving work remain unmeasured in official statistics.



BETTER EVIDENCE = BETTER RESULTS

Programs that collect and use gender-disaggregated data are better able to target resources, improve equity, and increase development impact.



WHY IT MATTERS

Measuring gender outcomes makes development investments more effective and accountable.

Ajio’s Voice in Building More Inclusive Food Systems

Ajio, 23, Asere Village, Koboko District



FROM A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE TO NATIONAL POLICY

HOUSEHOLD

Women share their experiences in community dialogues and participatory learning

When Ajio looks across her recovering farmland, she sees more than newly planted trees. She sees a community that has begun to recognize the importance of listening to the people most affected by environmental change and food insecurity.

Before joining IIRR's People-Centred Food Systems initiative and the Integrated Water Management Project, Ajio watched her family's maize harvests decline as water sources became less reliable. Through community dialogues, training, and participatory learning, she and other women were encouraged not only to share their experiences but to help identify challenges and shape solutions together.

COMMUNITY

Local leaders see how degradation and food insecurity affect women differently

LANDSCAPE

Actions restore degraded land, protect water sources, repair river banks

As women's perspectives became a regular part of community monitoring, local leaders gained a clearer understanding of how environmental degradation, food security, and household responsibilities affected women differently. Those insights informed community actions to restore degraded landscapes and protect water sources.

The conversations reached national decision-makers, contributing to greater recognition of rights and equity within government programs, including a strategic objective on social equity, inclusion, and participatory governance.

NATIONAL

Revisions to the Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy; a National Agroecology Strategy

“ Before this project I was not aware of my rights to a better environment and right to food, but through this project we are restoring our community, our landscape is regenerating with trees, we repaired our river bank and my farm is recovering.

— Ajio · People-Centered Food Systems (Uganda, Cambodia, Ethiopia)

THEME TEN

Girls, Young Women, and Future Farmers

Agriculture is aging while young people migrate to cities. Without girls and young women, communities risk losing both labor and innovation at once.

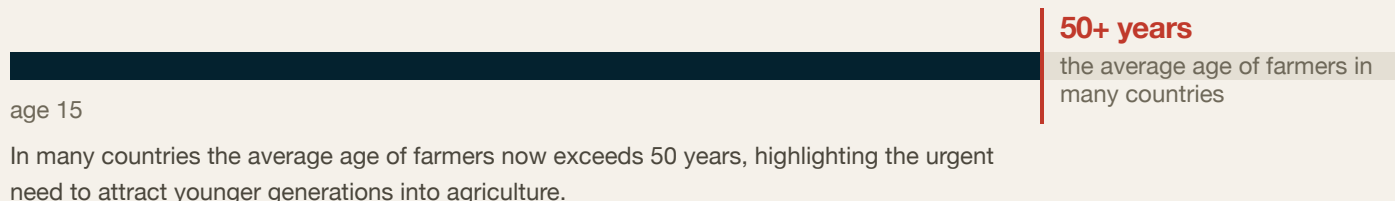
Young women often face a double burden of barriers based on age and gender. Limited access to land, finance, education, mentorship, and leadership opportunities restricts their ability to build agricultural livelihoods, while social norms often discourage girls from pursuing agriculture as a viable career.

Investing in girls and young women creates benefits that extend across generations. Those who gain access to education, skills, resources, and leadership opportunities are better positioned to contribute to household well-being and food system transformation.

This work is designed to meet young women early, before barriers fully take hold, and to stay with them as they grow.

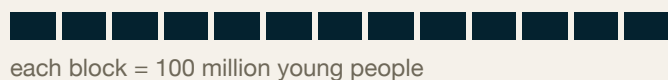
THE GENERATIONAL GAP, MEASURED

AVERAGE AGE OF FARMERS, AGAINST A WORKING LIFE



YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15–24 WORLDWIDE

1.3B with hundreds of millions living in rural areas where agriculture remains a primary livelihood



WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL AGRIFOOD WORKFORCE



Women account for more than one third of the global agrifood workforce, yet young women continue to face greater barriers than young men.

WHY IT MATTERS

Today's girls are tomorrow's farmers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

Youth Leading the Way to Food Security

Nina, 16, a student leader from Ivisan, Capiz



WHERE THE PLANTING MATERIALS WENT

12,600+ planting materials raised at IIRR's Bio-Intensive Garden Learning Center

741
households

71
child development centers

3
schools

Youth ran the nutrition dialogues themselves, and pregnant and lactating mothers established home gardens with indigenous vegetables.

At only 16, Nina had never imagined that her ideas could help shape her community's future. Living in a coastal barangay where access to fresh vegetables is limited, she saw how families relied heavily on purchased food while available land remained unused.

Through IIRR's GenSecure program she learned that food security is about more than having enough to eat; it is about ensuring communities have consistent access to nutritious food while protecting local resources. More importantly, she realized that youth have the knowledge, creativity, and influence to bring about meaningful change.

Across Guinayangan, Quezon and Ivisan, Capiz, the project strengthened the leadership of rural youth, engaged adolescents in nutrition dialogues, and trained young people in bio-intensive gardening, seed saving, container gardening, and climate-smart food production.

Instead of being seen only as beneficiaries, youth emerged as partners in building healthier, more resilient communities — facilitators of discussions, advocates for healthy eating, and champions of nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

“ This may be the first time in our barangay that an activity specifically targeted youth to help them understand what they should eat for a better life.

— A Sangguniang Kabataan Chairperson

PROJECT
GenSecure: Empowering Youth for Food Security and Nutrition

741
households supplied with planting materials



“When we were asked what project we would choose for our community, I said I would start a community garden because we live near the sea. We can plant vegetables and fruits to harvest and give freely to help others.”

Nina

Student leader, Ivisan, Capiz, Philippines

**GENSECURE: EMPOWERING YOUTH
FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

Every year brings new insights. The experiences of 2025 reaffirmed that lasting impact depends not only on what we achieve, but on how we learn, adapt, and continuously improve.

KEY TAKEAWAYS & AREAS FOR GROWTH

01

Adaptive management as a core strength

Teams responded to extreme weather, political transitions, and logistical hurdles with flexible timelines and alternative delivery mechanisms — a capability IIRR will keep investing in as programs expand into new contexts.

02

Community ownership as the foundation for sustainability

Engaging rightsholders, youth, farmer groups, and local governments as active participants translated support into locally-owned, lasting processes — reinforcing this as a guiding principle for future design.

03

Capacity building that grows with communities

Practical, hands-on learning, mentoring, peer exchange, and local facilitation proved most effective, pointing to continued investment in sustained, locally-adapted training models.

04

Partnerships as a growth frontier

Collaboration already expanded technical reach and policy influence; deepening early engagement and streamlining coordination with partners offers further opportunity to accelerate collective impact.

05

Expanding financial inclusion and market access

Youth, women, and small producers stand to gain significantly from deepened investment in financial linkages, business literacy, and market connections alongside technical training.

06

Strengthening data and evidence for smarter decisions

Building shared indicators, stronger baselines, and coordinated monitoring systems from the outset is a priority investment that will sharpen impact measurement across the portfolio.

07

Elevating communication as a strategic function

With a growing share of projects developing communication plans, formalizing this practice from day one is a clear opportunity to amplify community voices and showcase results to donors and partners.

For 65 years, IIRR’s approach has begun with a simple instruction: **go to the people**. That will never change. What is changing is the scale of what communities — and the world — now need from organizations like ours.

Rural communities sit at the center of the defining challenges of this decade: food security, ecological resilience, and economic opportunity. Meeting them will take more than projects. It will take durable partnerships that connect communities with the full range of actors shaping rural futures — philanthropic donors, governments, corporations building responsible supply chains, and investors seeking outcomes that last.

In 2026, IIRR begins a new five-year strategy that builds on these roots. The seeds of this future are already visible in this report: women like Sara, Muthoni, and Maria Teresa are not beneficiaries; they are producers, employers, and leaders whose enterprises now stand on their own.

FOUR COMMITMENTS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Deepen where we are trusted Building on six decades of community relationships rather than starting over.	Grow rural enterprise So young people, especially young women, can build livelihoods worth staying for.	Restoration as infrastructure Treating ecological restoration and regenerative agriculture as economic infrastructure, not charity.	Share what we have learned Through training, research, and our participatory methodology, with practitioners worldwide.
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21%

OF 2025 REVENUE WAS EARNED



Earned through training courses, study missions, and technical assistance — a sign of an organization whose knowledge is valued, not only funded.

To those considering partnership — whether through philanthropy, supply chain collaboration, government co-investment, or impact-driven finance — we invite you to build with us.

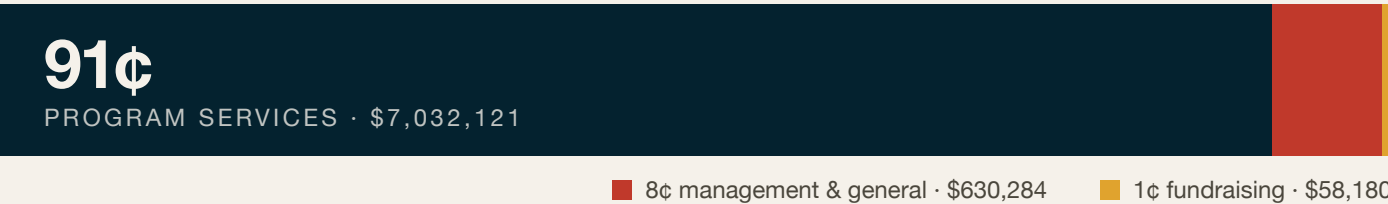
The communities are ready.
So are we.

Financial Report

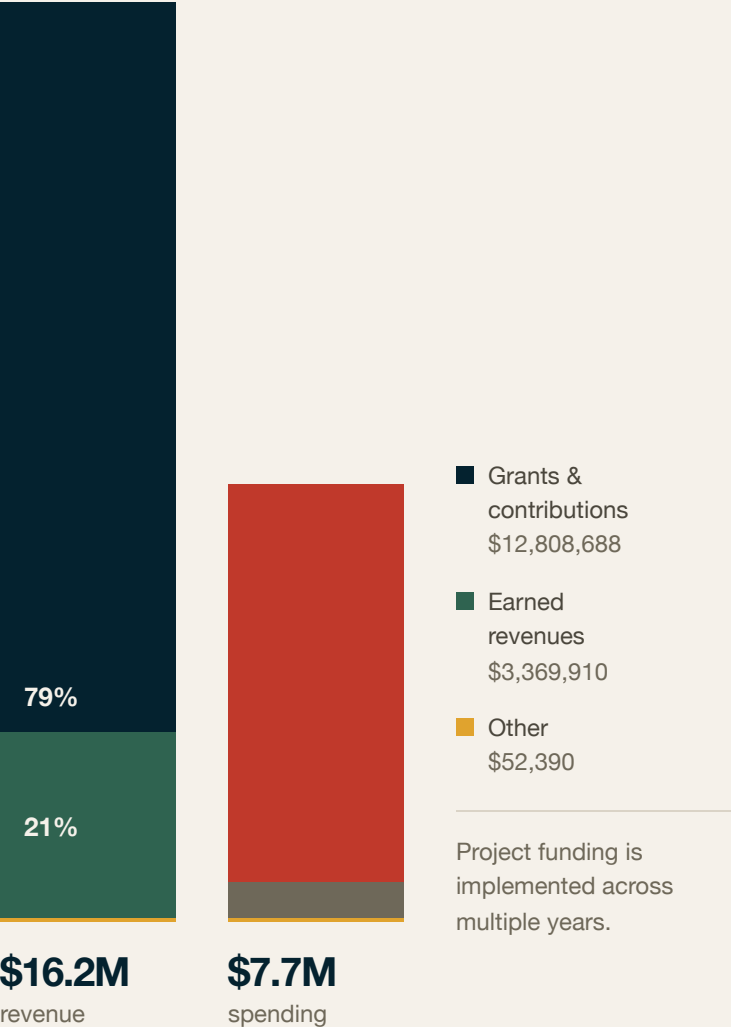
2025

Revenue reached **\$16.2 million** in 2025. Of the **\$7.7 million** spent, more than nine in every ten dollars went straight into programs with communities.

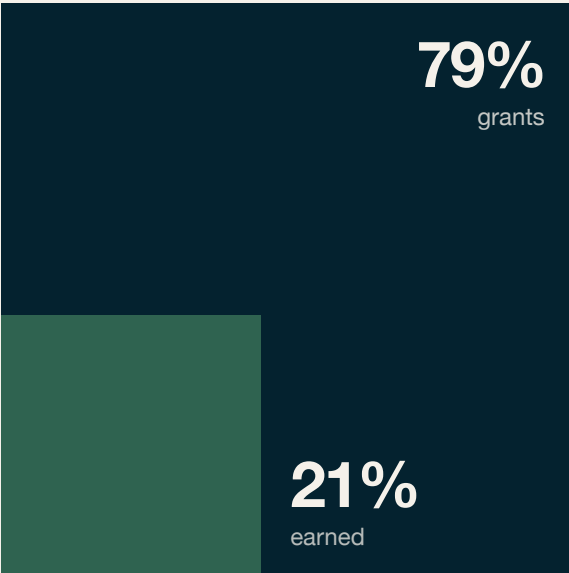
WHERE EVERY DOLLAR SPENT GOES



REVENUE AND SPENDING, SAME SCALE



EARNED REVENUE, BY AREA



Areas shown in proportion: one fifth of 2025 revenue was **earned** through training courses, study missions, and technical assistance.

RECOGNITION

IIRR is recognized as an accountable and transparent organization, receiving the highest ratings in the industry.

Statements of Activities — Operating Basis

IN US DOLLARS

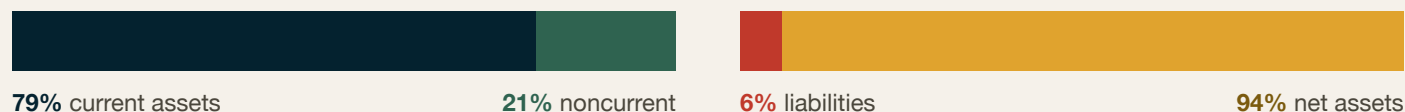
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL 2025	TOTAL 2024
OPERATING REVENUES				
Foundations	7,000	11,860,295	11,867,295	1,057,516
Governments	—	763,822	763,822	135,029
Individuals	109,567	30,000	139,567	127,604
Corporations	38,004	—	38,004	584,140
Training courses, study missions and technical assistance	3,064,349	—	3,064,349	156,268
Use of campus facilities	305,561	—	305,561	287,448
Other revenues	52,390	—	52,390	89,163
Total operating revenues before releases	3,576,871	12,654,117	16,230,988	2,437,168
Net assets released from restrictions	7,635,834	(7,635,834)	—	—
Total operating revenues after releases	11,212,705	5,018,283	16,230,988	2,437,168
OPERATING EXPENSES				
Program services	7,032,121	—	7,032,121	8,126,926
Management and general	630,284	—	630,284	697,120
Fundraising	58,180	—	58,180	76,144
Total operating expenses	7,720,585	—	7,720,585	8,900,190
Change in net assets from operating activities	3,492,120	5,018,283	8,510,403	(6,463,022)
NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES				
Other non-operating income †	121,419	—	121,419	181,206
Interest income from investments	26,973	—	26,973	27,903
Translation and exchange gain	(697,055)	—	(697,055)	11,485
Change in net assets from non-operating activities	(548,663)	—	(548,663)	220,594
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS				
Change in net assets	2,943,457	5,018,283	7,961,740	(6,242,428)
Net assets, beginning of the year	1,542,849	5,370,727	6,913,576	13,156,004
Net assets, end of the year	4,486,306	10,389,010	14,875,316	6,913,576

Statement of Financial Position

IN US DOLLARS

	2025	2024
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	7,558,033	2,949,309
Investments	1,307,753	1,311,400
Contribution receivables	828,413	1,050,709
Other receivables	2,773,788	150,197
Prepayment and other current assets	48,445	45,523
Total current assets	12,516,432	5,507,138
Noncurrent portion of contribution receivables	2,745,768	1,703,588
Property and equipment, net	470,874	1,009,402
Retirement benefits asset, net	75,055	73,677
Other non-current assets	58,471	58,471
Total noncurrent assets	3,350,168	2,845,138
Total assets	15,866,600	8,352,276
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Accounts payable and other current liabilities	991,284	1,437,490
Non-current liabilities	—	1,210
Total liabilities	991,284	1,438,700
Net assets without donor restrictions	4,486,306	1,542,849
Net assets with donor restrictions	10,389,010	5,370,727
Total net assets	14,875,316	6,913,576
Total liabilities and net assets	15,866,600	8,352,276

BALANCE SHEET, SHOWN IN PROPORTION



- Financial statements for prior years are available at the IIRR website: www.iirr.org
- Latest annual report filed with the Attorney General of the State of New York is available from IIRR or from [full wording to be supplied].
- The Institute is exempt from Federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES, GOVERNMENTS, AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Johns Hopkins University (JHU)
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
Save the Children Fund (SCF)
Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)
International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM)
Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
World Vegetable Center (WVC)
International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)
Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Uganda

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Polish Center for International Aid (PCPM)
Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP)
Department of Agriculture — Philippines (DA)
Ministry of Environment, Cambodia
Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Cambodia
Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), Uganda
Trade Catalyst Africa (TCA)
CGIAR
WorldFish — International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management
Trade and Development Fund (TDF)

FOUNDATIONS

MasterCard Foundation (MCF)
Learning Our Way Out (LOWO)
Helen Keller International (HKI)
Henderson Foundation
Pelon Charitable Fund
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Every result in this report rests on partnership — with the institutions listed here and with the communities who lead the work.

\$12.8M
in grants and contributions

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2025

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Mr. Robert O. and Ms. Alice Yen Hing

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Susan Wheeler
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WITH GRATITUDE

To every individual who gave in 2025 — your support reaches farmers, students, caregivers, and entrepreneurs in twelve countries.

FOUNDERS

Dr. Y.C. James Yen (1893–1990)
Alice Yen (1895–1980)

Whose Credo — go to the people — still opens
this report 65 years on.

Diana Amoa
Managing Partner, TriSphere Global

James C. Diao
Investment Banker

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The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction works
alongside rural communities in Africa, Asia, and the United States
to build locally led solutions that last.

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