



GROWING  
**HOPE**  
G L O B A L L Y

DOING MORE  
**TOGETHER**

2024-2025 Annual Report







*As a Christian response to hunger, we link the grassroots energy and commitment of rural communities in the U.S. with the capability and desire of smallholder farmers in developing countries to grow lasting solutions to hunger.*





## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on this past year, I am filled with gratitude and admiration - for our team, our partners, and most importantly, for the resilience of the communities we serve. This annual report is more than just highlights from the past year; it is a testament to what we can accomplish together.

I saw the power of standing together while visiting the Senegal Fatick program, with women supporting each other to overcome one obstacle after another and refusing to lose hope. I see the power of community in the achievements made in Nepal, with families experiencing increased income, reduced debt, and children having enough nutritious food to eat.

All of this is fueled by your collective efforts. Never doubt the impact a few people working for a common purpose can have on the world. I am excited about the

next generation of Growing Project volunteers in Lynden, WA. These high school students are thinking about how they can be the hands and feet of Christ, impacting communities in Uganda through their local efforts.

We are reminded in scripture that everything has a season (Ecclesiastes 3:1), and we see this in Polo, IL where we celebrate a new generation of leadership in the Sheaffers, while also giving thanks for what the Schmidts began 20 years ago.

Thank you for standing with us and working together toward a world where no one goes hungry.

With gratitude and hope,

Kaitlyn Slate

# Hope for the Future

## FFA chapter launches Growing Project, raises \$26K

A new Growing Project began in Lynden, WA this past year - more than 7 years after Jacob Steiger first heard about Growing Hope Globally from former staff member Ron DeWeerd and considered starting something with the FFA Chapter at Lynden Christian School. He didn't give up on the idea, despite a variety of challenges that delayed the project from starting. This year, Steiger's persistence finally paid off.

Kelly DeJong used the curriculum developed by Growing Hope Globally to teach her first-year Intro to Ag Class about the need for sustainable food production in developing countries. Three of her students wanted to get involved. They chose to raise funds for the Uganda Rubanda program and

launched their Growing Project with the support of their new Ag teacher, Samantha VanLoo.

"I chose to be a part of Growing Hope Globally because it is a good way to bless others that are less fortunate than me and to be the hands and feet of Jesus. I wanted to use my gifts to give to others," said Jaedyn Polinder.

"What partnering with Growing Hope does is it encourages kids to look beyond themselves and their own immediate needs and look to the needs of others," said Lynden FFA chapter mentor, Jacob Steiger. "Not only are we raising money for a good cause, but the students are learning how to market themselves. They're learning the economics of local agriculture, and they're learning that the world is bigger than themselves, and the role that they have in it."





The students took on a variety of initiatives to raise funds. They raised a steer and a hog for the youth livestock auction at their local fair, donating the proceeds to Growing Hope Globally. They have also leased a total of three cows from two local dairy farms. In exchange for the milk earnings from the cows, the students have committed to raising enough funds from donors and vendors to cover the housing and feed costs of the cows and reimburse the farmers.

“We are hoping that local businesses and members of our community will come alongside us and support this project, and as they do, that we can raise an awareness for worldwide food insecurity and global hunger,” said Brooke VanLoo.

In addition to their fundraising efforts, the students have had some unique learning opportunities. Emelita Goodard from World Hope International Cambodia visited and shared about the Mondulkiri and Tbong Khmum programs in August. In March, Growing Hope Globally staff Eric Mattson made a presentation on the Uganda Rubanda program.

The trio of students has also been



busy visiting local civic organizations, like Rotary and Kiwanis, as well as local businesses and church groups, sharing about their project and asking the community to join them. “I have learned how generous people can be,” said Jaedyn Polinder, “Sometimes all it takes is presenting them with the opportunity to help serve others, and they feel drawn to help.”

“I did this project because it was a great opportunity to help others in need,” said Case DeJong. “I learned if you get the word out in our community, people love to hear about it. I also learned the

behind-the-scenes of dairying – all the numbers and data – it is more than what you see on the surface!”

In their first year, the FFA students have raised more than \$26,000. They also received a \$4,000 matching gift from Growing Hope Globally’s Next Generation Fund to designate toward their selected program. And they aren’t done yet. The students plan to continue their efforts through the end of the school year and beyond. Since all three were just sophomores when their project began, the future looks bright for this new Growing Project.



# Still Growing Strong

Illinois Growing Project marks 20 years as new leaders carry on mission of global food security



With their 2024 harvest, the Polo, IL Growing Project celebrated 20 years of faithful support for Growing Hope Globally. However, just a year earlier, longtime Growing Project leaders Jim and Karen Schmidt were doubtful that their project would achieve this milestone. Jim's health caused him to give up farming, and it appeared there was no one to continue their efforts.

Inspired by another Growing Project, the Schmidts started theirs in 2005. The Polo project includes the Church of the Brethren, where the Schmidts attend, and three

other churches: Faith United Presbyterian Church in Tinley Park, Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, and Dixon Church of the Brethren. These three churches, along with the local co-op, provide funds for fertilizer, fuel and other expenses. Paul Schmidt, Jim's uncle, also donated profits from his acres to the project until he passed away in 2023.

The Schmidts knew what they were doing was important, but a 2014 visit to Nicaragua cemented their involvement. On that trip, they visited local participant Betty's house and garden. "It was one of





***“I have seen how much Jim gets out of being a part of this mission and I wanted to make sure it continues to succeed.”***

**Steve Sheaffer**

the most humbling experiences I’ve ever had,” said Karen. Betty told them how her mother had raised her first child because she and her husband had to go to town and work. But things improved after she joined the program, allowing her to stay home and raise the children, while also tending her garden. The family also gained access to fresh, safe water thanks to the support of Growing Hope Globally. “That trip was eye-opening. Growing Hope Globally is definitely needed,” said Karen.

In the spring of 2023, continual rain made it difficult for Jim to see the markings where he already planted. He

came into the house very discouraged and told Karen: “I’m done farming, and I can’t finish planting this year.”

Helpful neighbors finished planting the Schmidts’ fields that year and harvested them in the fall, and Karen thought the project would end.

“I knew it wasn’t what Jim wanted,” she said. “That was the hardest part because there wasn’t anyone else in our church who still farmed to be able to carry on.”

However, that all changed when Steve Sheaffer volunteered to lead the project with his brother, Kyle. Their dad, Jim Sheaffer, is also a farmer and a longtime friend of Jim Schmidt.

Steve occasionally stopped by over the years and talked to Jim about his project and what Growing Hope Globally did for farmers around the world. Karen said, “Apparently, those visits planted the seed in his mind that he and his brother wanted to continue the mission.”

Knowing that the Growing Project wouldn’t end because Jim had to stop farming was a big relief for the Schmidts. Although the Sheaffers don’t attend the Brethren church that has historically been at the center of the local efforts, the Growing Project is a visible part of the community, so they were very aware of it. “I thought it would be a big loss if it ended,” said Steve. “I didn’t know of anyone else who would take it over, so I decided to step in. I have seen how much Jim gets out of being a part of this mission and I wanted to make sure it continues to succeed.”

Because of what the Schmidts started over 20 years ago and what the Sheaffers are humbly carrying on into the future, hundreds of farmers around the world, like Betty, will have the opportunity to find lasting solutions to hunger.





## Local Growing Projects

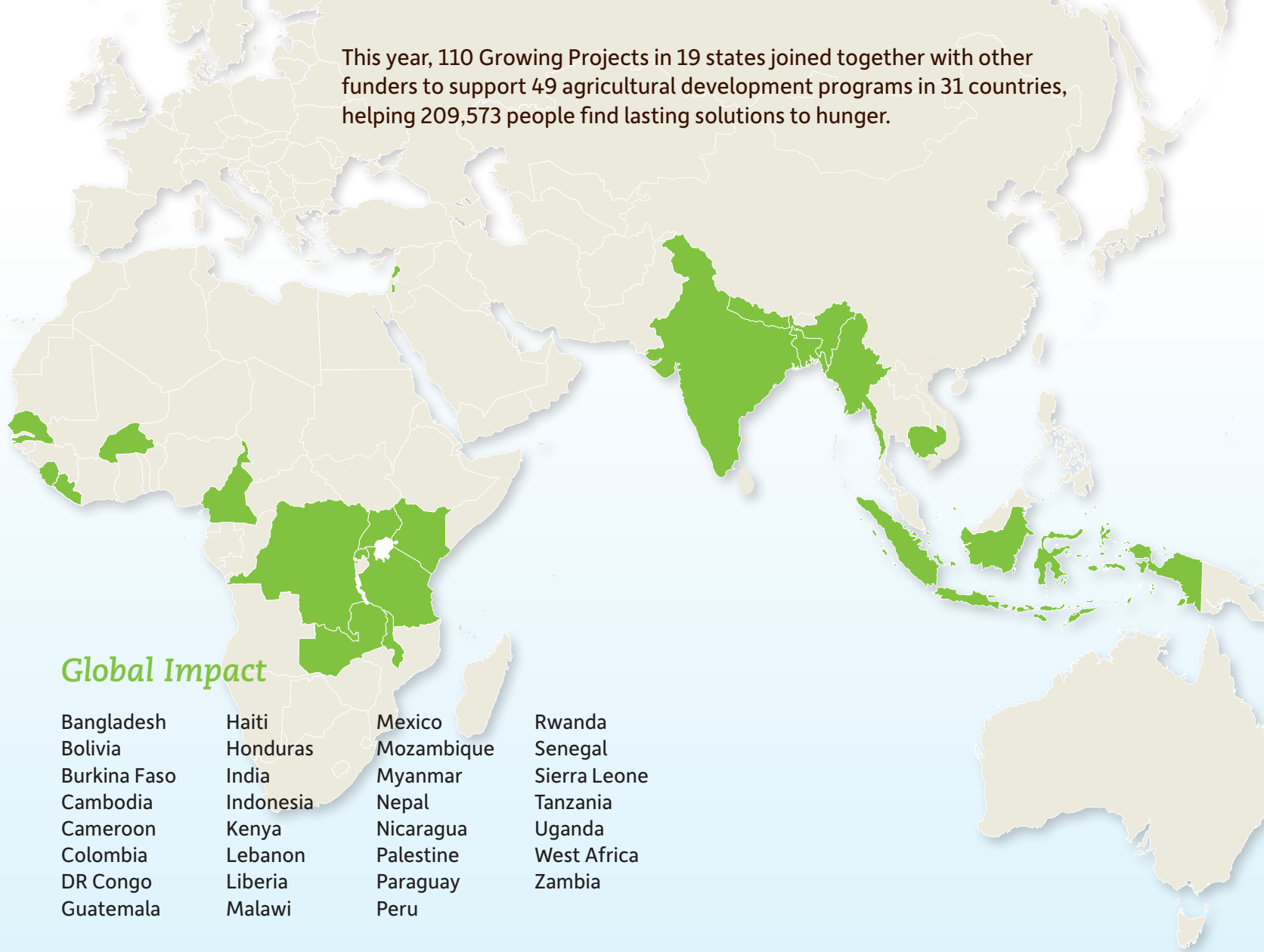
Delaware  
Florida  
Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Maryland  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Missouri

Nebraska  
North Carolina  
North Dakota  
Ohio  
Oregon  
Pennsylvania  
South Dakota  
Virginia  
Washington  
Wisconsin





This year, 110 Growing Projects in 19 states joined together with other funders to support 49 agricultural development programs in 31 countries, helping 209,573 people find lasting solutions to hunger.







# Through Fire, Flood & Faith

Senegalese women turn market garden setbacks into solidarity

**R**esilience and determination. Despite the many setbacks they have faced, these two words perfectly describe a group of women who are working together to grow a market garden for the first time.

Before the Senegal Fatick program began in March of 2024, these women had never had access to their own land. They partnered with the local church to advocate for the use of some land in their community. The local government exceeded their request, and instead of

giving them the use of the land, gave them ownership of it. Since then, they have worked together, doing their best to grow vegetables to feed their families and sell for income.

Unfortunately, they have yet to see the full fruits of their labor. Since the garden was established, they have experienced a series of unfortunate events. First, a brush fire came through and destroyed their crops. They were upset but didn't give up. They cleared the fields and planted again.





Then, heavy rains fell and flooded their garden. Again, they didn't give up. Instead, they worked to dig a ditch around the garden - which serves as a fire break and a water catchment area - to protect their plot from future natural disasters. Again, they planted, but yet again they were met with obstacles. Monkeys entered their garden early in the morning and ate their plants.

Despite all of these challenges, they are determined to succeed and have partnered with the church to offer shelter to a migrant family from Mali in their garden. This is a win-win situation since the family now has a place to live and the monkeys won't come into the garden with people around. The women have not given up, and they continue to faithfully tend to their plants, sure that their hard work will eventually bear fruit.

In the midst of these challenges, the women have grown closer as they support one another, working together and caring for each other's plots. "I am blessed by these women, and therefore I am a blessing to them," said Coumba Cisse.

One of the sustainable agriculture methods they have used is companion

***"I am blessed by these women, and therefore I am a blessing to them."***

**Coumba Cisse**

planting (also known as intercropping), which involves two plants growing side by side and providing mutual benefit to each other, including pest control, weed suppression, improved pollination, and enhanced soil health. In many ways, this method mimics what is happening in their lives as the women work together as a group.

The women are finding many creative ways to care for their crops using what they have. One group is using mosquito nets instead of pesticides to protect their small plants, reusing them each growing season. Another group is using peanut shells, which are readily available, to mulch their young plants, helping to suppress weeds and retain moisture in the soil.

They are grateful for the opportunity this garden represents for them to provide for their families in the future. "It gives us something to help ourselves, we thank you very much," said Albertine Fay. Although they have not been able to harvest as many crops as they had hoped for in their first year, their resilience and determination have paid dividends through their opportunity to work together.





# Empowered Communities

Nepal Jahada program brings transformation through improved livelihoods, reduced hunger

Things are looking up for the families who participated in the Nepal Jahada program over the last three years. During that short time, the average participating household has increased their annual income by 70% and reduced their debt by 50%.

The program included training and tools for more profitable and sustainable agricultural production, as well as encouraging off-farm income-generating activities to diversify livelihoods. Participants joined community-based organizations to better access government resources, advocate for social issues, and participate in savings and loans.

For a long time, Kanchan's husband was the sole breadwinner of their family of four, but his income was not enough to cover their household expenses. Although Kanchan desired to start her own business, financial limitations held her back from opening a shop.

Her situation began to change when she joined a Farmers' Group through the program. She participated in training on vegetable farming, home gardening, off-farm income generation, livestock management, nutrition, and gender awareness, building up valuable knowledge and practical skills.

Kanchan started a home garden near her house, which improved her

family's access to nutritious food and a diversified diet, while saving the cost of buying vegetables from the market. She received revolving loans to establish and expand her own grocery store business and has more than doubled her income, earning \$185 per month.

With her earnings, Kanchan has purchased a calf and is setting aside a small amount in her savings group. She now contributes significantly to her family's finances, especially supporting her children's education. She has also taken on a leadership role in her community as a member of the School Management Committee.







“Previously, only my husband used to work to earn, and it was difficult to cover all our expenses. We even had to take loans from microfinance institutions to get by. But now, I have my own business, and my husband helps me whenever he’s free. Together, we work and earn, which has helped us pay off our debts. I’m now planning to expand the shop further by adding essential cosmetic items,” said Kanchan.

Lalita’s story is similar. Before the program, she worked as a daily wage laborer on other people’s land to support her family of nine. Although she had received sewing training before she married, she could not start her own business due to a lack of finances and because some in her community believed women couldn’t run their own businesses.

Like Kanchan, Lalita participated in a variety of training opportunities and accessed a revolving loan, which made her dream of starting her own sewing enterprise a reality. Her small tailoring shop has now grown into a thriving business. She currently earns between \$74 and \$148 per month and has even hired staff to support the increasing workload.

“I used to ask my family for money,” said Lalita, “but now I am the one supporting my family financially. If I hadn’t started this business, I would probably still be working on someone else’s land.”

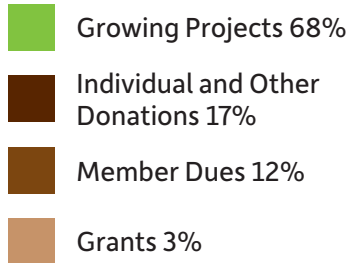
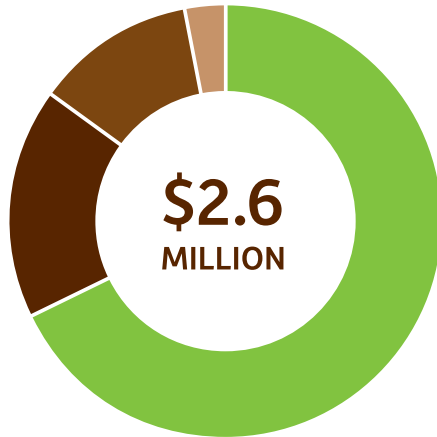
Things have vastly improved for the children of Jahada as well. Three years ago, 20% of program participants’ children were malnourished. Through careful growth monitoring, emergency intervention, the introduction and use of “Super Flour” - nutritious porridge using locally available ingredients - and parents’ increased understanding of children’s dietary needs, that number has been reduced to 3%.

The Nepal Jahada program ended in April 2025, having impacted more than 16,000 individuals over the past 12 years. Beginning in May, Mennonite Central Committee and local partner SAHAS (Group of Helping Hands) Nepal will begin a new chapter in the neighboring rural municipality of Dhanpalthan, building on the successes and lessons learned in Jahada and impacting thousands more with lasting solutions to hunger.

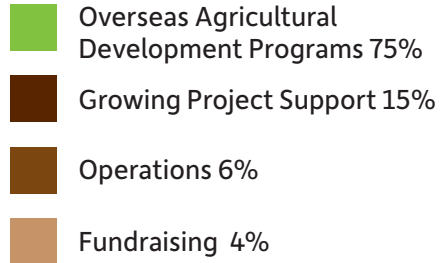
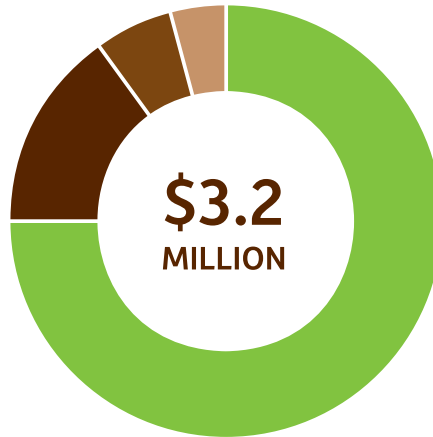


# 2024-2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

## Income



## Expenses





## OUR PARTNERS

### *Implementing Organizations*



### *Supporting Organizations*



### *Affiliated Organizations*







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