



Annual Report 2025



Letter
from our
founder

Dear Supporters and Collaborators,

It goes without saying that for many, 2025 was a wild ride. Climate change, global geopolitics, and more challenged a lot of us in numerous ways, especially in the development and coffee sectors. With the closing of USAID, the addition of tariffs to the coffee industry, and the rise of coffee prices due to several factors, our organization had to navigate a truly changing world. Fortunately, navigating such challenges is not foreign to us, as we have always been a small and resilient organization, which has led to our success over the past 11 years.

For us, success has come to mean many things, from having a strong, supportive team of amazingly creative and caring women, to maintaining a host of company and corporate donors who believe in our mission. Of equal importance are two interconnected realities that we don't take for granted: our ability to keep evolving as an organization, and our ability to keep driving impact.

As an organization partnering with local leaders in coffee-growing communities, it can be hard to describe the impact of our work to those who are not involved in the coffee or development worlds. But to it sum up, the vast majority of coffee farmers worldwide do not earn a living income, and this is true despite the rise in global coffee prices this past year. The industry is designed so that profits remain at the top, and the result is that an estimated half of the approximately 12.5 million smallholder coffee farmers around the world live in poverty.

Not only do we serve these families through our work, we do so in a way that allows local leaders in coffee-growing regions to design, carry out, and measure the impact of their own community-led initiatives. This allows the people who are the most impacted by the coffee industry's inequities, to design their own solutions, and see themselves represented as global changemakers.

To learn more, I invite you to read this year's report and review our 2025 successes and impact stories. Over the past 12 months, we managed several consulting assignments, launched our first iteration of courses as part of the new Specialty Coffee Association (SCA)'s Coffee Sustainability Program, and of course, continued our work with the Community-Led Development (CLD) Incubator—all with the help of an amazing SCA Trainer, two incredible Fellows, and our partners and supporters.

Thank you for making it all possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nora Burkey', written in a cursive style.

Nora Burkey
Founder & Executive Director



Our mission

The mission of The Chain Collaborative is to co-create opportunities and strengthen capacities for community-led change in the coffee sector.

Our vision

Our vision of the future is an equitable and responsive global coffee industry that recognizes, values, and accompanies the self-directed development of coffee communities worldwide.

Our beliefs

We believe that coffee communities make the best decisions about their own development and that sustainable change comes from local leadership. We know that local leaders possess the drive and capacity to mobilize and inspire their communities toward long-term goals for positive impact; as an organization, we aim to invest in these capacities.



2025

highlights

Community-Led Development *Incubator*

Launch of 2025-2026 East Africa Cohort

In April 2025, we launched our second East Africa CLD Incubator cohort, onboarding four community-based organizations from three countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Over the course of the Incubator's first phase, the six-month Learning & Design Phase, TCC led six all-cohort training sessions and 20 individual guidance meetings, and supported participant organizations to develop four program documents each—including project plans, timelines, budgets, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. As of October 2025, each organization officially entered the Incubator's nine-month Implementation Phase, receiving \$15,000 in funding, and launched their community-designed projects.

Close of 2024-2025 Latin America Cohort

After spending half of 2025 finalizing the Implementation Phase of the CLD Incubator, all participating organizations of the 2024-2025 Latin America cohort entered the final phase, the Reporting & Offboarding Phase. During this time, they applied the monitoring and evaluation frameworks they had developed for their projects, submitted their final reports, and officially entered TCC's Alumni Network. They are now continuing to strengthen connections with each other and additional Incubator alumni, and are looking forward to accessing new opportunities.

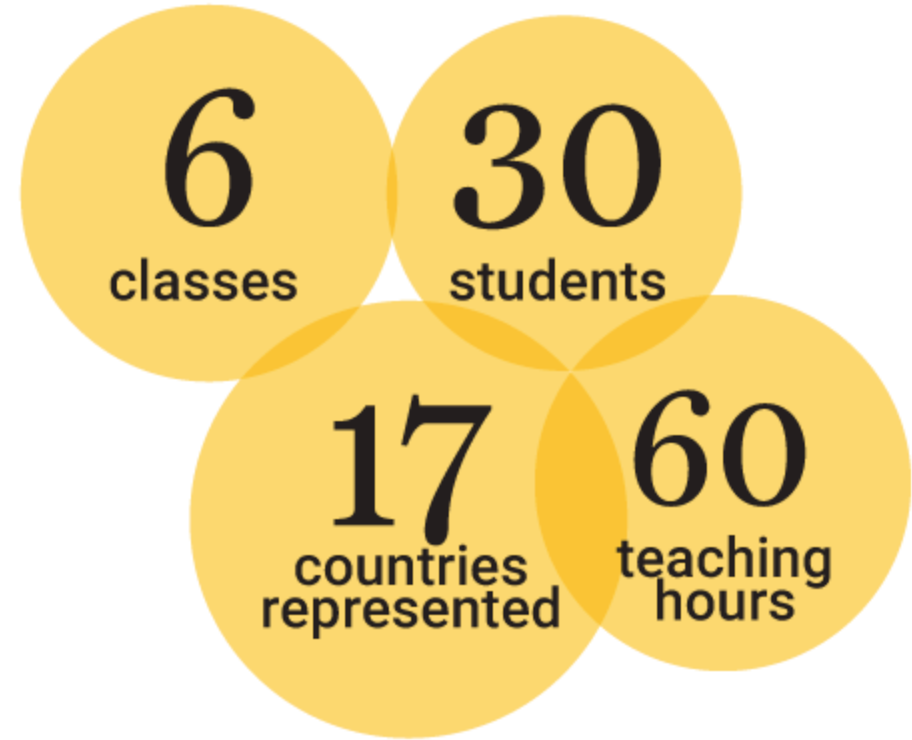


Education

Launch of new courses

In 2025, TCC welcomed Emma Warren to our team as the new Authorized Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) Trainer. With support from previous SCA Trainer Nora Burkey, Emma led the design and rollout of TCC's new course offerings under the revamped SCA Coffee Sustainability Program, version 2.0.

The restructured learning program features an updated Coffee Sustainability Foundation course and three new advanced courses: Climate & Coffee; Coffee Economics; and Compliance, Governance & Reporting. Through a combination of theoretical training and practical in-class activities, Emma guides students in developing the skills to integrate, analyze, and improve diverse sustainability initiatives at various points along the coffee value stream.



Coffee Sustainability *fellowship*

In 2025, TCC had the pleasure of working with two coffee professionals, Miranda Haney and Alex Jacob, through our Fellowship program. TCC's Coffee Sustainability Fellowship is a unique opportunity to support our organization and work alongside local leaders from coffee communities around the world. TCC Fellows help manage the CLD Incubator, developing relationships with participating organizations and ensuring their progress through the program. They also contribute to TCC's monitoring and evaluation efforts, consulting assignments, and communication channels. Fellows additionally complete the full SCA Coffee Sustainability Program, and learn about how to approach sustainability in the coffee sector in an anti-top-down and anti-colonial way.



Miranda
Haney



Alex
Jacob

“Working as a TCC Fellow allowed me to deepen my connection with coffee communities and grow as an impact-focused coffee professional, developing relationships with those around the world with similar industry passions.”

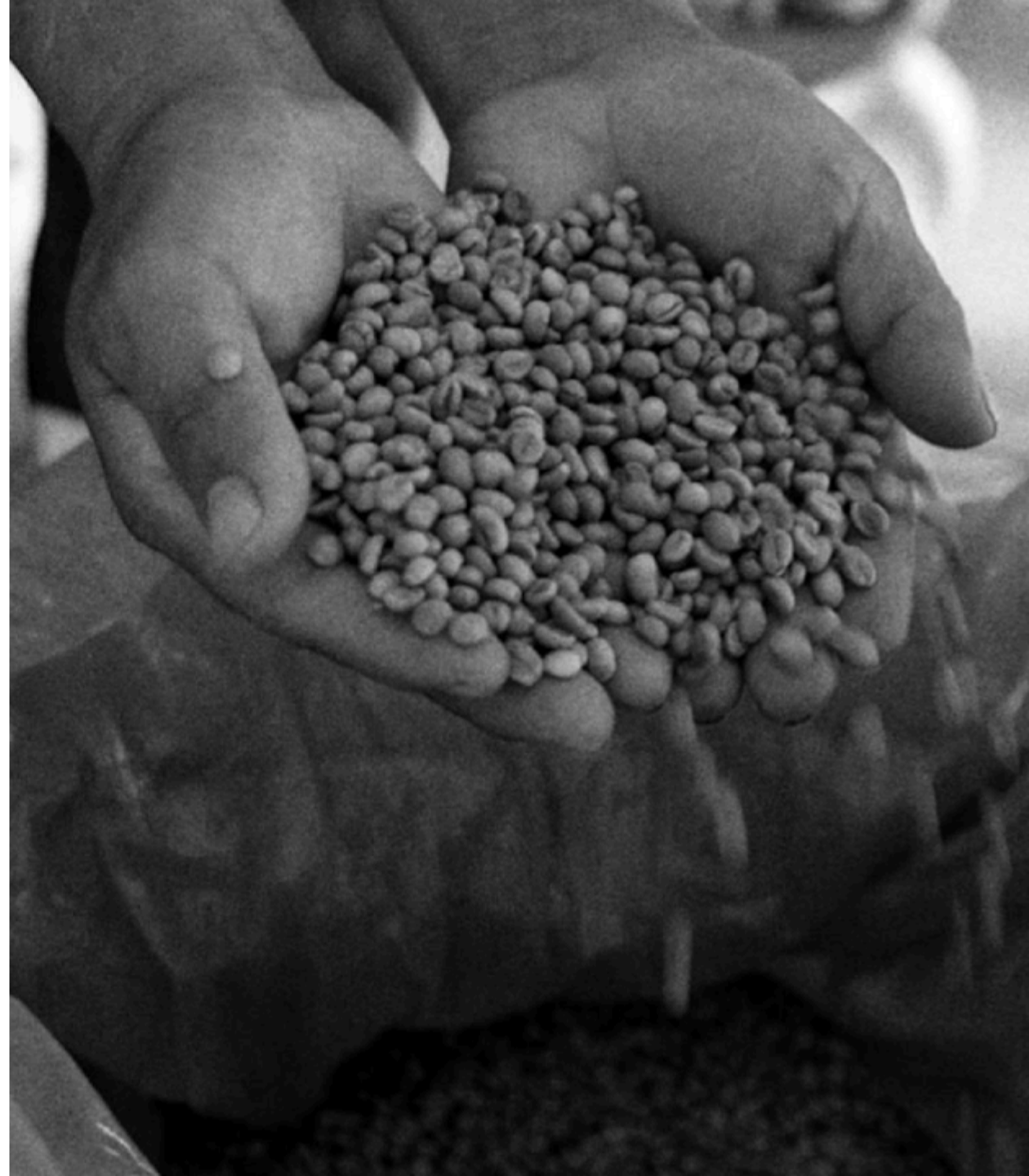
-Alex Jacob
2025 Fellow



Our
impact

CLD *Incubator*

The Community-Led Development Incubator (CLD) is TCC's primary organizational program. It is an 18-month collaborative learning experience for local leaders of community-based organizations from coffee-growing regions of Latin America and East & Central Africa. Participating organizations complete three program phases over the course of 18 months, which allows them to design, carry out, and measure the impact of their own community-led initiatives, with TCC funding and robust support. This work ensures that community-based organizations in coffee-growing regions are able to combat intergenerational poverty and marginalization in the coffee sector on their own terms, and according to their own visions and expertise.



CLD Incubator since it started

22

participating
organizations

59%

of participants
receiving first-time
funding

13

countries
represented in the
Incubator

13,735

total beneficiaries

330k

USD invested in
Incubator
projects/communities

Impact areas

TCC recognizes that needs in coffee-growing communities are diverse, and extend beyond improved coffee production. We also understand that it is the people from coffee-growing communities themselves who are the most equipped to identify their most pressing priorities. Given this, our goal is to resource local leaders and community members to design their own context-specific solutions, which ensures they are truly reflective of cultural and lived realities. To date, since the inception of the CLD Incubator, no two projects launched by participating organizations have been the same, but they have tended to fall into common impact categories.



64%

of projects focus on improved infrastructure



59%

of projects lead to improved access to education



45%

projects lead to increases in food security/sovereignty



73%

of projects lead to increases in income



41%

of projects lead to increases in climate resilience



91%

of projects lead to increases in participation from women and youth

2025 *Impact*

2024 - 2025

Latin America Cohort

By the end of 2025, all eight participating organizations of the 2024-2025 Latin America cohort of the CLD Incubator had completed all three program phases and officially onboarded into the TCC Alumni Network. They spent the majority of 2025 implementing their projects and reporting on their impact. The projects each participating organization designed alongside their communities tackled various challenges, from climate change to food insecurity, and lack of access to infrastructure and education. The following section provides end-of-project highlights from two of the eight participating organizations.

3,462

total beneficiaries

38%

of projects led to increases in food security/sovereignty

75%

of projects focused on improved infrastructure

50%

of projects led to increases in climate resilience

50%

of projects led to increases in income

42

hours of TCC-provided guidance

75%

of projects led to improved access to education

7

final reports submitted to date

75%

of projects led to increases in participation from women and youth

100%

of local leaders joined the Alumni Network

2024 - 2025

Latin America
cohort

project highlights

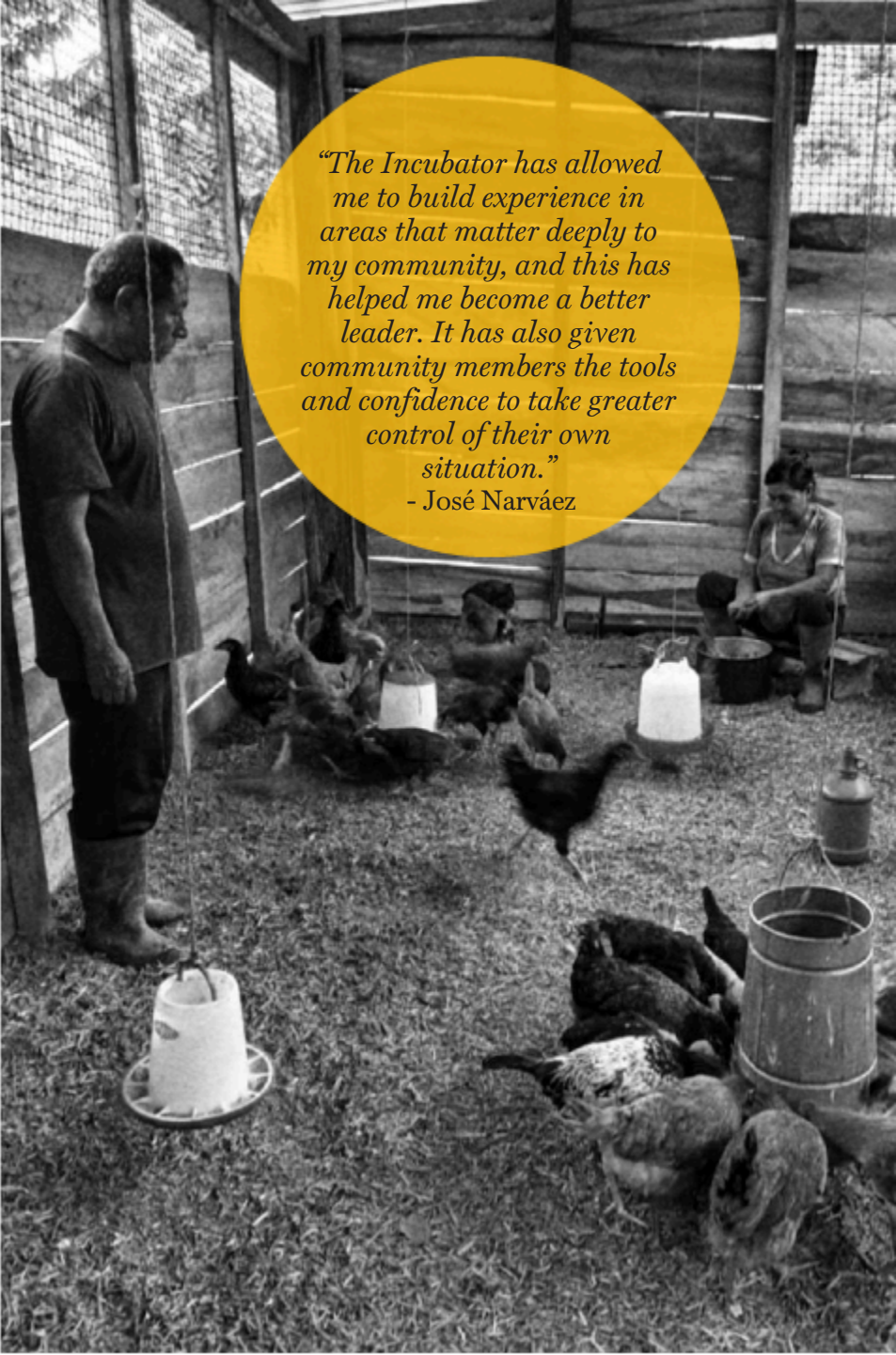
Project *highlight*

Casa del Puma (Ecuador)

Casa del Puma is a farmers association in Mushullacta, Napo Province, Ecuador, made up of 15 families who grow organic coffee, bananas, and other crops to support income and food security. To address environmental degradation, out-migration from their community, and low income, the association created an action plan centered on ancestral farming knowledge, forest restoration, and an experiential Forest School, where children could learn both academic subjects and hands-on lessons in coffee production and forest care.

Through the CLD Incubator program, Casa del Puma chose to implement part of their action plan, focusing on a project to diversify income, improve food security, and ensure the creation of coffee inputs through fertilizer. They launched a chicken-rearing initiative, which included building an enclosure, providing each family in their association with 100 chickens, and offering training in poultry husbandry and by-product development. They also distributed 300 coffee and vegetable seedlings to each family, as well as materials for the production of organic fertilizer from chicken manure. Looking ahead, Casa del Puma aims to expand their post-harvest processing area and continue promoting forest-preserving coffee systems.

- Direct project beneficiaries:** 15 farming families
- Total number of chicks provided to project beneficiaries:** 1,500
- Number of training sessions on chicken-rearing and organic fertilizer production:** 4
- Total kilos of organic fertilizer produced from chicken waste:** 2,700
- Number of coffee and vegetable seedlings provided to each project beneficiary:** 300
- Number of coffee samples sent to potential buyers:** 3



“The Incubator has allowed me to build experience in areas that matter deeply to my community, and this has helped me become a better leader. It has also given community members the tools and confidence to take greater control of their own situation.”

- José Narváez

Project *highlight*

Combrifol (Honduras)

Cooperativa Mixta Brisas de la Frontera Limitada (COMBRIFOL), located in Marcala, Honduras, has been facing rising production and export costs that are increasingly impacting their members' incomes. To address this challenge, the cooperative used Incubator funds to build capacity to produce their own organic fertilizer. By sourcing raw materials locally, establishing an in-house production system, and selling fertilizer to members at a reduced cost, COMBRIFOL is now helping farmers access more fertilizer, lower their expenditures on inputs, and increase their incomes from coffee—as improved fertilizer application leads to enhanced coffee quality and yields. In addition, as a central goal of the cooperative is to expand the participation of women and youth, COMBRIFOL decided to train young people in in-house fertilizer production. Following the training they offered, the cooperative employed five youth from the community to continue the work.

Number of youth trained in fertilizer production: 15

Number of youth employed to produce fertilizer going forward: 5, including 3 men and 2 women

Amount of organic fertilizer produced to date: 5,000 kilos

Number of farmers receiving fertilizer, disaggregated by age and gender: 125 members, including 54 women and 71 men, of which 26 are young women and 20 are young men

Extent of improvements to date in coffee yields, current export volumes, and current cup quality on farms where the new fertilizer has been applied:

Yields: 25% increase

Cupping score: 86.5

Exports: 2,247 quintals

“In our area, fertilizing farms is increasingly difficult due to high input prices and low coffee prices. The [Incubator] project enabled us to provide two rounds of organic fertilizer application. This not only helps lower production costs, but also strengthens our community by giving young people more reason to stay, as coffee farming becomes a more promising opportunity.”

—Eduardo Cáceres



2025 *Impact*

2025 - 2026

East Africa Cohort

In 2025, we welcomed four community-based organizations into the 2025-2026 East Africa cohort of the CLD Incubator program: Common Grounds from Ethiopia, the Farmers Caucus from Kenya, and Mt. Elgon Agroforestry Communities Cooperative Enterprise Ltd. (MEACCE) as well as Mugungulu Farmers Group from Uganda. Between April and October 2025, each group moved through the Incubator's Learning & Design Phase, co-creating a project in collaboration with their community members. By the end of 2025, each group moved into the Incubator's next phase, the Implementation Phase, and began to carry out the initiative they designed. The following section highlights two of the four projects that have been developed.

4

Incubator participants

\$60k

USD invested in Incubator projects/communities

3

countries represented in the Incubator

75%

of participants are receiving funding for the first time

33

hours of TCC-provided guidance

686

total beneficiaries

16

strategy documents produced by participants

2025 - 2026

East & Central Africa
cohort
project highlights

Project *highlight*

Mugungulu (Uganda)

Located in Mubende, Uganda, Mugungulu Farmers Group (MFG) was founded in 2015 by Gloria Kisakye in an effort to increase financial security during the coffee off-season. Now comprising 19 member families, MFG works together to increase their incomes and promote economic resilience. During the CLD Incubator's Learning & Design Phase, they developed a chicken hatchery project, which aims to distribute chicks to MFG families and train them on proper animal care. MFG also set aside Incubator funds to construct coffee drying beds and a storage space; make purchases of green coffee and red cherries from member families; and improve post-harvest care. Through these efforts, MFG aims to increase member families' incomes from both the sale of eggs and poultry, as well as from coffee.



Project *highlight*

Farmers Caucus (Kenya)

Represented by Stephen Nendala, the Farmers Caucus is a group of 15 estate farmers in the Trans-Nzoia County of western Kenya who are working together to achieve common goals. At present, they are focused on building a shared methodology to support coffee worker families, who are in need of more consistent, year-round income to meet essential needs. Through the CLD Incubator, Farmers Caucus is piloting a program to support worker families to develop new income streams to complement their income from coffee. To do so, they are providing practical inputs—such as land rental, seedlings, livestock, beehives, and other essentials—as well as hands-on technical training. This will allow each benefiting family to jump start an alternative business that is of most interest to them.

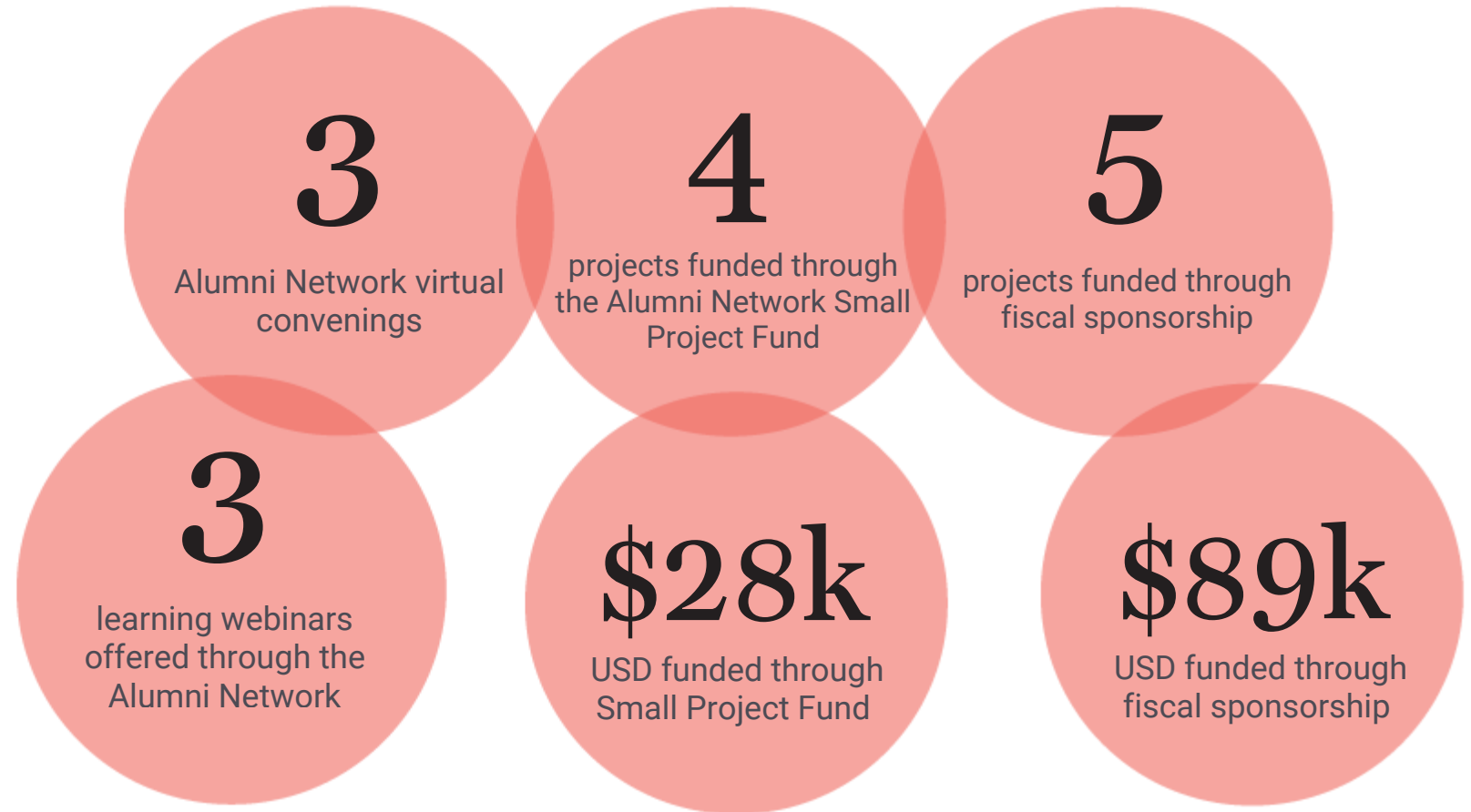




Alumni
Network

The TCC Alumni Network is a remote community for former CLD Incubator participants from both the Latin America and East & Central Africa cohorts. It offers alumni an ongoing space to strengthen and expand their professional networks, apply for additional funds to scale their Incubator projects or launch new community-led initiatives, and access fiscal sponsorship and continued learning opportunities. It also serves as a platform for peer exchange, allowing members to share experiences, troubleshoot challenges, and collaborate across regions. At the end of 2025, the 2024-2025 Latin America cohort joined the network, bringing the total number of participating community-based organizations to 18, further enriching this growing, cross-regional community.

Alumni Network *2025 in numbers*



Small Project Fund *highlight*

Girl Power Foundation (Uganda)

Girl Power Foundation Uganda (GPFU), a participant in the 2023-2024 CLD Incubator East & Central Africa cohort, utilized TCC funding from the Alumni Network Small Project Fund to contribute to their transformative programs in vocational skills training, mental health awareness, community engagement, and girls' education across six villages in Nyamigoye parish, Kanungu District, Uganda. Throughout 2025, GPFU provided school scholarships and held its first in-person graduation ceremony for girls in their tailoring program, and secured tenders from local schools for uniform production, ensuring sustainable employment for their tailoring trainees. They also hosted interactive drama sessions and competitive sports events focused on how to improve mental health through activity and expression. These events reached over 3,000 community members, and raised awareness on the importance of mental health. Looking towards 2026, GPFU now plans to formalize 12 women's groups in the region and provide them with capacity-building to develop cooperative income-earning projects.

Indicators of success:

- **Provided scholarships for 12 girls through their Go Girl Secondary School Scholarship program**
- **Trained 25 adolescent girls and young mothers (aged 14- 29) in vocational skills**
- **Engaged over 3,000 community members through interactive drama activities and showcases**
- **Engaged 360 participants overall in sports activities**



Small Project Fund *highlight*

Abateraninkunga ba Sholi (Rwanda)

Abateraninkunga ba Sholi, a participant in the 2023-2024 CLD Incubator East & Central Africa cohort, received a Small Project Fund grant to contribute to their ongoing women's empowerment initiative, which aims to promote gender equality and enhance the social, economic, and political status of women coffee farmers in Muhanga District, Southern Province, Rwanda. Established in 2008, Sholi is a Rwandan coffee cooperative that now includes 211 women. Via the Alumni Network Small Project Fund grant, 50 women received coffee seedlings, and 100 received training on organic farming techniques, both in an effort to enhance yields and incomes from coffee. In addition, Sholi scaled their vermicompost initiative, supporting 50 women to establish a vermicompost pit on their farms. Finally, the Small Project Fund grant allowed Sholi to provide inputs for ongoing handicraft production, an alternative income stream that they developed for women farmers.

Indicators of success:

- **Training provided:** 4, including 1 hands-on session
- **Topics covered:** vermicompost production, and climate resilience and mitigation
- **Number of coffee trees distributed per beneficiary:** 350
- **Number of shade trees distributed per beneficiary:** 70
- **Quantity of vermicompost produced:** 2,400 kilograms across all beneficiaries
- **Total number of handicraft items made per month:** approximately 720



Webinars

The topics for our 2025 webinar series were sourced directly from Alumni Network members, who expressed an interest in learning more about how to read market trends. The three-part series, launched in partnership with Coffee Knowledge Hub, focused on trends across the coffee value stream, and each webinar featured a panel of diverse coffee professionals who shared their country- and role-specific experience. Recordings of the webinars are now available on TCC's YouTube channel and Coffee Knowledge Hub.

Webinar 1: Trends in Green Coffee Production and Processing

Webinar 2: Trends in Coffee Roasting and Consumption

Webinar 3: Trends in the Valuing and Pricing of Coffee

12

speakers
7 women / 5 men

611

participants who
signed up for
webinars

10

countries
represented as
speakers

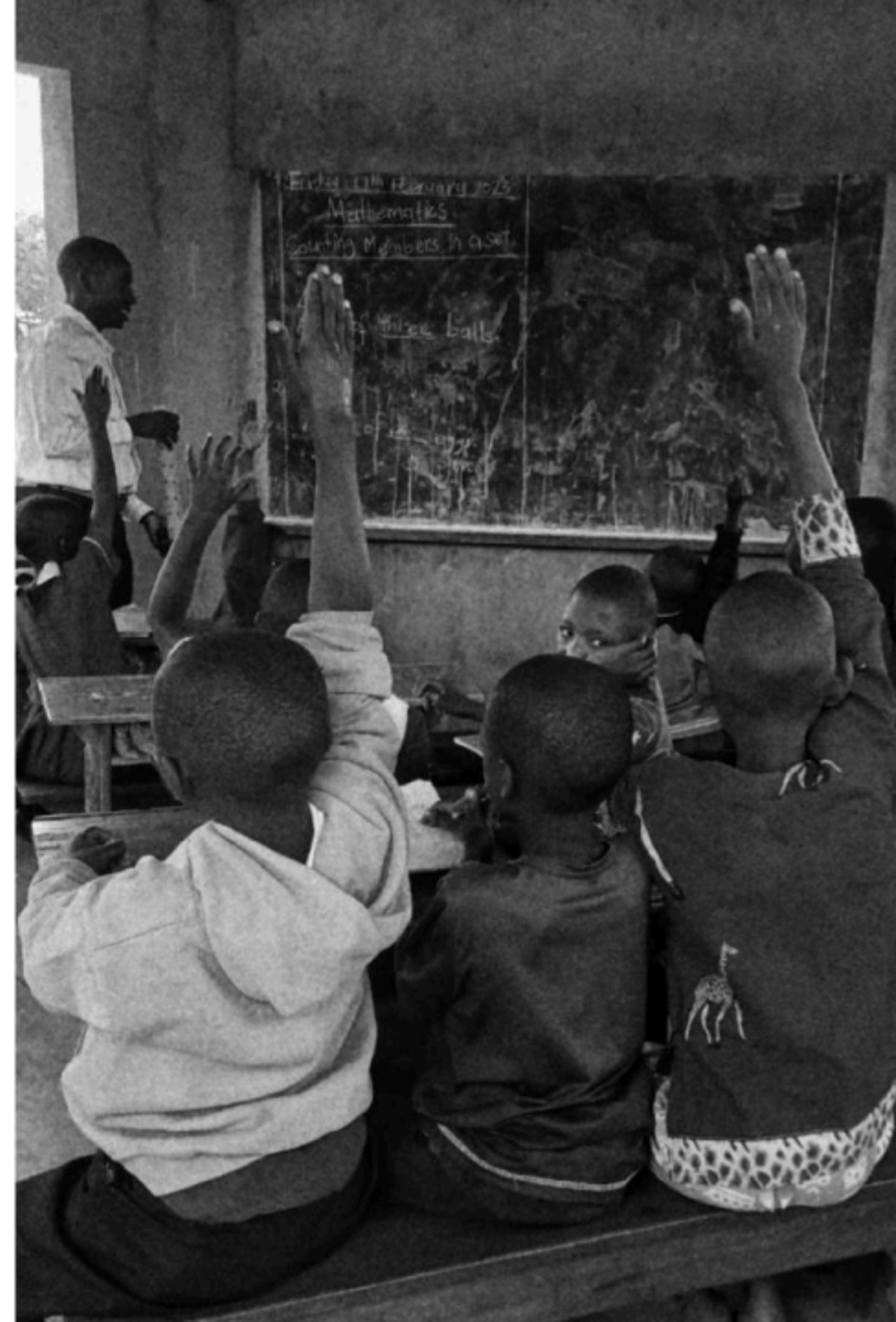


Fiscal Sponsorship *Project highlight*

Now Africa Initiative & Karama Education Center (Uganda)

Now Africa Initiative (NAI) is a grassroots social enterprise that is dedicated to the socio-economic transformation of southwestern Uganda through agricultural and educational improvements. As TCC's first-ever community-led partner, NAI went from being a loose group of farmers who had a dream of working together, to a thriving business with a coffee dry mill, in-house technical training program, and primary school for kids. The building of their primary school, Karama Education Center (KEC), was TCC's first project as an organization. NAI now serves over 1,000 smallholder coffee-farming families, while KEC supports 580 individuals, including staff. In 2025, the Alumni Network's fiscal sponsorship opportunity allowed KEC to secure new land, provide scholarships to graduating students, and improve classroom infrastructure.

- The land will allow KEC to plant corn and soybeans, as well as build coops for chickens and rabbits. The chickens will be able to provide eggs for school lunches, while both the chickens and rabbits will be able to provide meat. The land will also be leveraged as a living classroom so that KEC can teach students about farming and animal husbandry.
- Beginning in 2023, KEC began offering at least two scholarships per year to the top graduates from Primary 7 so they could go on to attend secondary school. As of 2025, a total of seven students are attending high school thanks to a partnership that relies on TCC's fiscal sponsorship.
- In 2024, KEC built a digital classroom so kids could learn about Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In 2025, through TCC fiscal sponsorship, KEC further outfitted each classroom block with projection capability, internet access, and laptops, ensuring that each teacher could integrate ICT into their curricula.





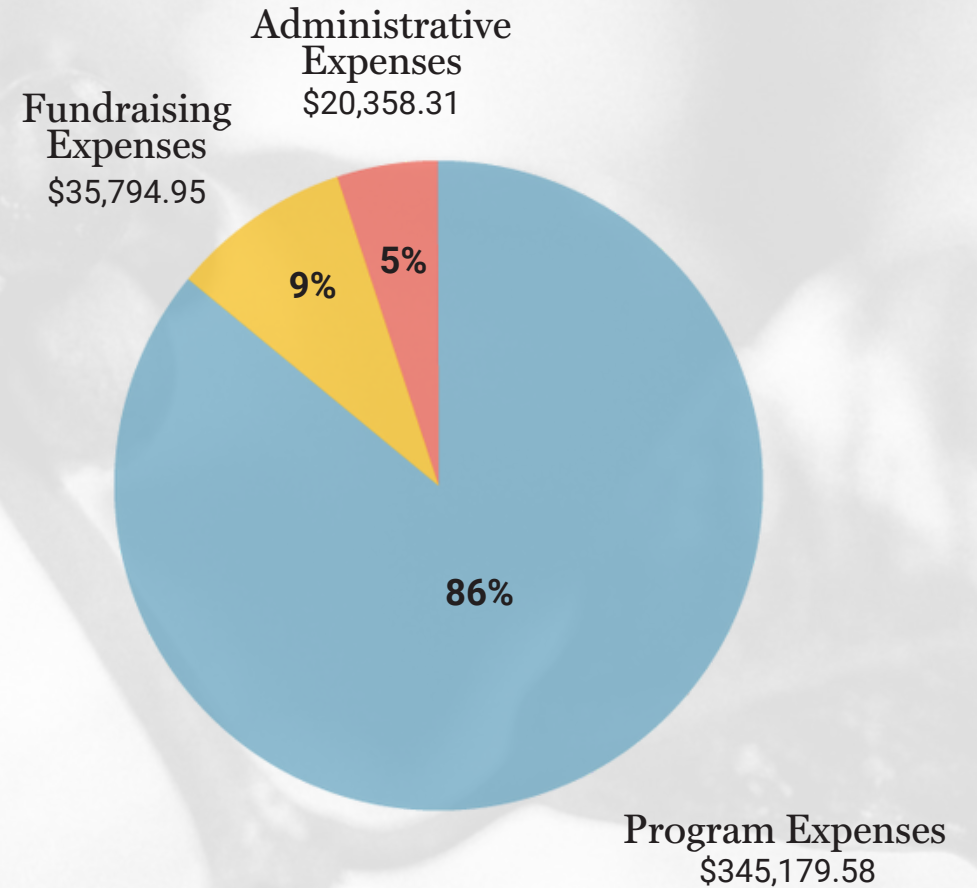
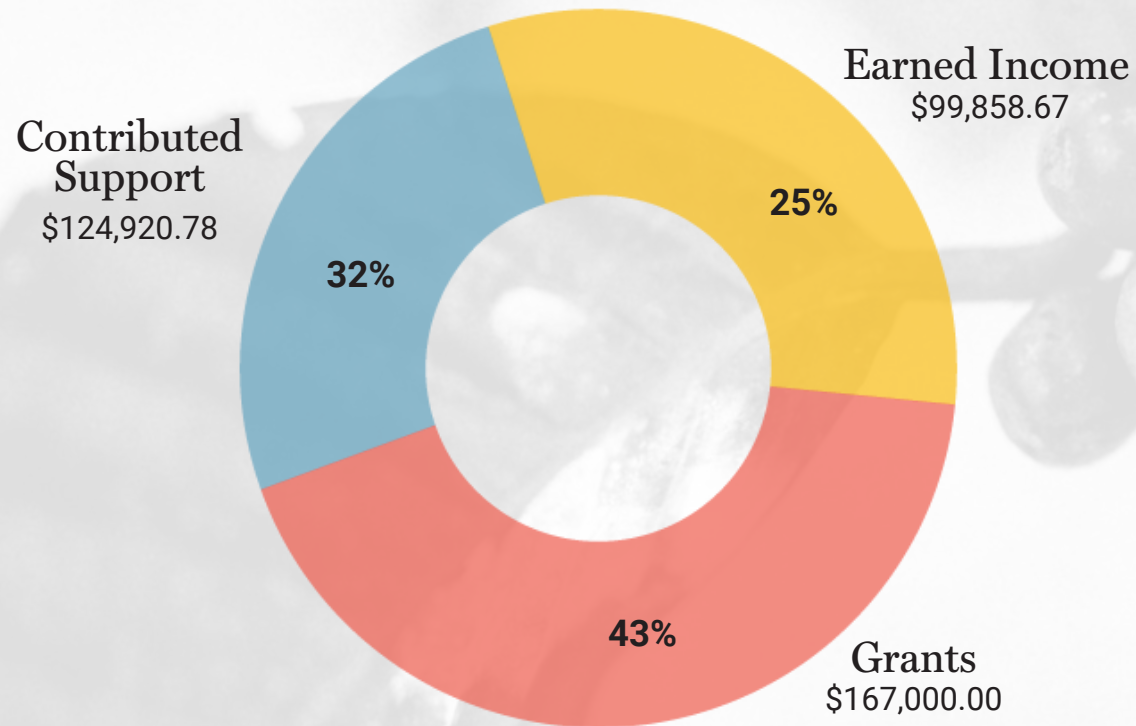
Financials

Income*

\$391,779.45

Expenses

\$401,332.84



* **Earned Income** refers to the earnings coming from our consulting and education activities. **Contributed Support** refers to the money raised through donations from companies and individuals. **Grants** refers to the funds we received from Foundations.



Looking *Ahead*

Onboarding 2025-2026 Latam cohort, continuing with East Africa cohort

In 2026, TCC will welcome our third Latin America cohort of the CLD Incubator program, our fifth cohort overall. We plan to interview applicants in Q1 2026 and onboard between four and six organizations by Q2. Meanwhile, the 2025-2026 East Africa cohort will continue through the Implementation Phase of the CLD Incubator, carrying out and ultimately finalizing their projects, before heading into the Reporting & Offboarding Phase. They will report on their impact and transition into the TCC Alumni Network by Q4 2026. TCC will also continue our consulting work and provide courses in the SCA Coffee Sustainability Program. To learn more, contact us about our services, or view the course calendar to sign up for our educational offerings.





Our
supporters



Thank
you!

Foundation and Corporate

Betty's and Taylors of Harrogate
Blooming Prairie Foundation
Conshohocken United Methodist Church
(on behalf of Now Africa Initiative)
Cotopaxi
Coffee Tools Distributing
Lafayette Foundation CPW Rotary (on
behalf of Now Africa Initiative)
MiiR
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SORCE Technologies
Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters
Toddy
Vista Hermosa Foundation (on behalf of
Now Africa Initiative)
Whiptail Coffee
Yallah Coffee Roasters
Yield Coffee Roasters

Individuals

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Adrienne Elefantis
Andrea Sedlock
Andrew Montemayor
Angelica Brisk
Anika Manzoor
Barbara Ditchey
Cindy Weisbart
Claudia Taylor
David & Patricia Patterson
Edith Burkey
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Joseph Mears
Rachel Wyon
Samatar Ali
Sandra Mallard & Molly Alcott
Toby Tiktinsky

In-Kind

44 North Coffee
Acaia
Ascension Coffee
Carrboro Coffee
Connect Roasters
Cotopaxi
Crimson Cup
Don Carvajal Café
Greater Goods Coffee
Joe Coffee Company
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One Village Coffee
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Prima Coffee Equipment
Rise Up Coffee Roasters
Roast Magazine
Slow Pour Supply
Spirit Tea
Standart
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staff & board

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