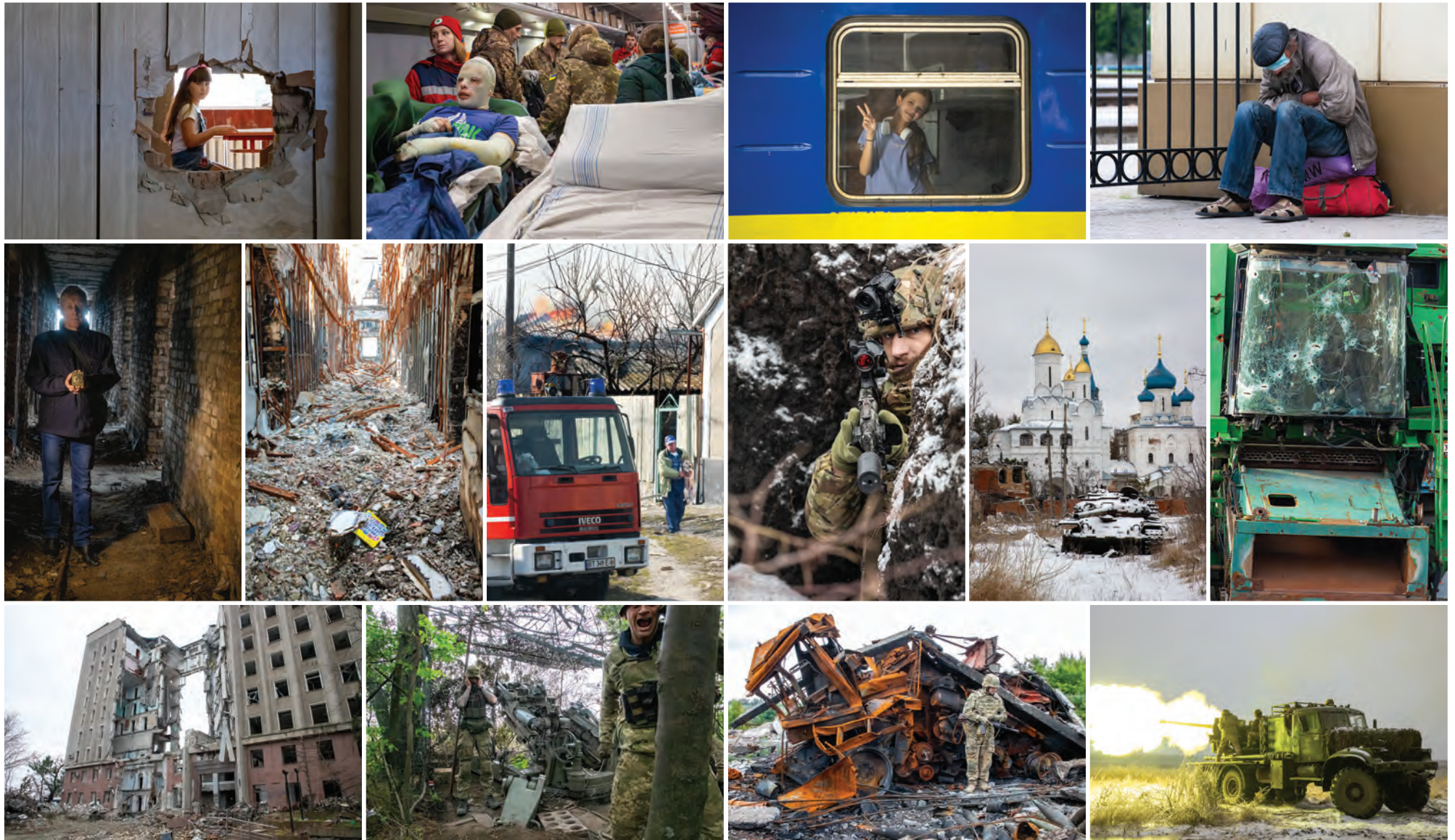


Я з України ♥

THE HOWARD G. BUFFETT FOUNDATION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





Cover photo: Several months into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, I visited the Okhmatdyt Hospital in Kyiv to photograph Arthur, a 14-year-old young man who had lost his left arm from a Russian missile attack. Another patient there, Mariya Filenko, age 11, gifted me with a painting she had made in her art therapy class for children affected by the war. Mariya's painting has been reproduced on the cover.

Photos above taken by Howard G. Buffett between April 2022–January 2024.

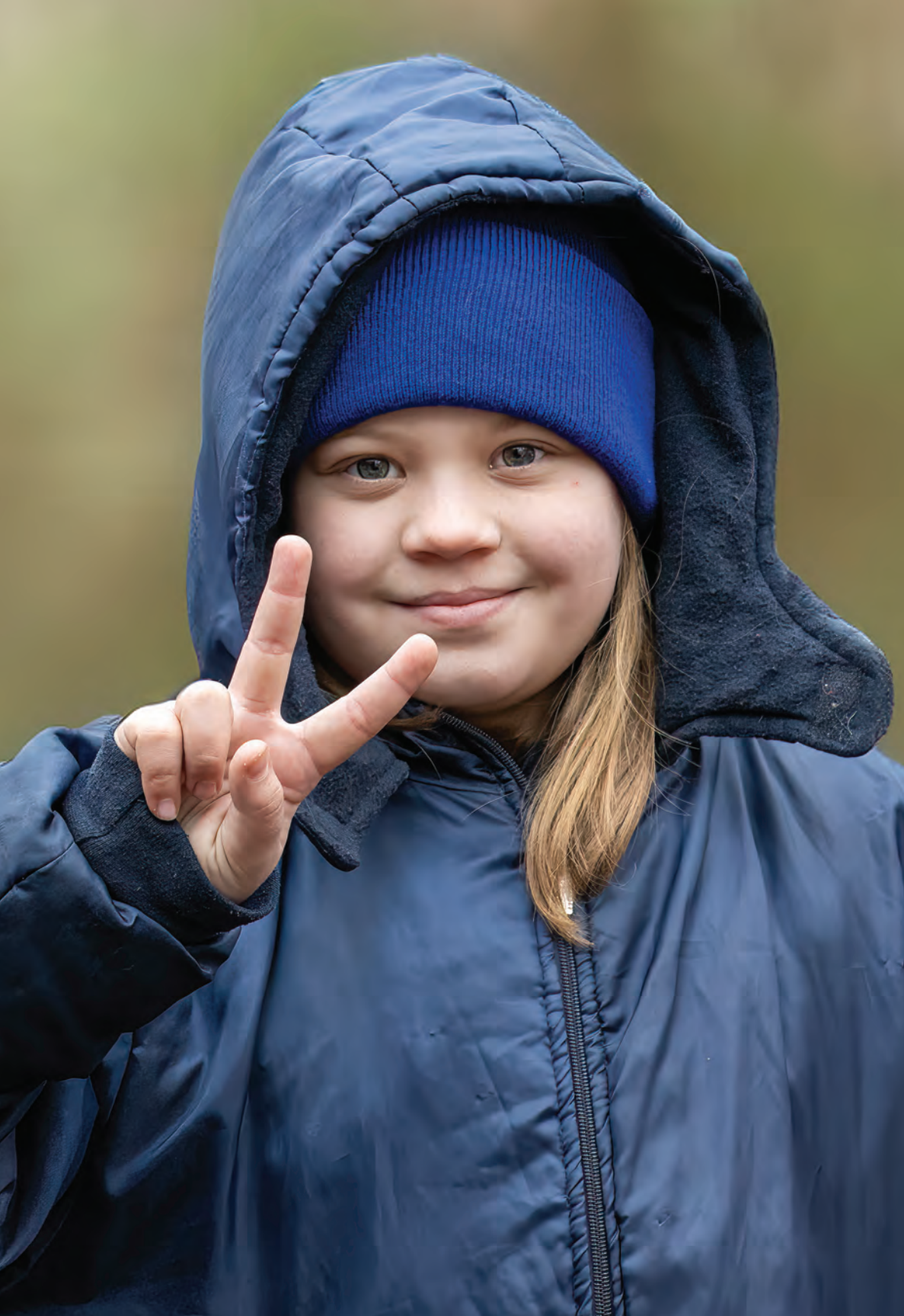


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BRAVERY

IS TO BE (WITH) UKRAINE

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Established in 1999, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation's primary mission is to catalyze transformational change, particularly for the world's most impoverished and marginalized populations. We see the Foundation's resources as rare risk capital that can be deployed to improve conditions and create change in the most difficult circumstances and geographies. We invest our funding in four main areas:

- Food Security
- Conflict Mitigation
- Combatting Human Trafficking
- Public Safety

Our support for global food security is directed toward agricultural resource development and management for smallholder farmers in the developing world. We support a range of investments to support the most vulnerable and under-resourced farmers adopt better farming practices to improve their productivity and incomes. In the United States, we raise awareness about the critical role American farmers play in meeting the world's growing demands for food and encourage adoption of better production practices that will sustain and revitalize our natural resources.

Conflict and citizen insecurity are key barriers to achieving global food security and economic prosperity. We seek out investments to mitigate conflict and improve citizen security in two ways: by working to end or improve the conditions that fuel violence and conflict; and by supporting communities that have been affected by violence or conflict.

Our initiative to combat human trafficking in the United States builds capacity and amplifies the efforts of law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers in targeted communities to disrupt human traffickers, dismantle their networks and bring justice to victims of human trafficking.

Public safety is the primary focus of our grantmaking in the communities in the United States where we have operations and employees. We partner with local law enforcement agencies to identify and address key community public safety concerns; invest in initiatives to improve policing and police training; and we support volunteer fire departments in rural communities where resources are scarce.

The Foundation provides other support to the communities where we have operations and employees, and we continue to make smaller investments in areas where we have historical knowledge and relationships, including cheetah and mountain gorilla conservation.

The Foundation does not accept unsolicited proposals, and we typically do not provide general operating support. December 31, 2045 is the final dissolution date of the Foundation's assets.

TRUSTEES

Howard G. Buffett, Chairman & CEO
Ann Kelly Bolten
Devon G. Buffett
Heidi Heitkamp

Trisha Cook, Secretary
Michael D. Walter
Erin Morgan





LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Left: A group of young people visiting Independence Square in Kyiv posed after they saw me with my camera and I gave them the peace sign. Only a few hundred feet away is an area with thousands of flags placed in the ground in memory of soldiers who have died defending Ukraine. The contrast between the war's devastation and glimpses of normalcy can be found across the country.



Since our founding in 1999—and after shifting our Foundation’s initial focus away from wildlife conservation—we have remained consistent in prioritizing investments in food security and conflict mitigation. Historically, about 75 percent of our giving has been deployed outside the United States, except during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we made larger investments domestically, especially in Decatur, Illinois, where our Foundation is headquartered. We have also focused our limited human resources on making larger grants while keeping our overhead low. In 2023, we achieved a record \$511,094,491 in distributions, with overhead expenses accounting for only 1.1 percent of that amount. We set the bar high on when to make internal hires, and we only use consultants when we need very specific expertise, typically in places like El Salvador, Colombia, and Ukraine. Our staff is small but extremely versatile, adaptable, mission-focused, and hardworking. They demonstrated these qualities countless times over the past two years when we quickly and unexpectedly pivoted to ramp up our giving in Ukraine in response to Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022, while simultaneously increasing our total giving between 2021 and 2023 by 115 percent. Even with our shift to Ukraine, we maintained our support where we have historically worked.

We focus our giving in four areas: food security, conflict mitigation, combatting human trafficking, and public safety. With our activity in public safety decreasing, in 2024 we plan to fold new public safety grants into conflict mitigation, combatting human trafficking, or non-strategic grantmaking, depending on where each individual grant fits best. Our work in food security and conflict mitigation is nearly all outside the United States, and it’s consistently where we commit the most resources. Our work to combat human trafficking is primarily in the U.S.

One of the most important lessons I have learned after spending many years working in conflict areas is the importance of the rule of law in shaping societies and the impact it has on the lives of the people living in those societies. Although the relationship between a well-functioning system of laws and the stability, level of prosperity, and security of the people living under those laws should seem obvious, when you are a philanthropic organization focused on addressing crop failures, extreme poverty, and displaced people, sometimes you miss the bigger picture. Your focus tends to be on delivering specific results or benefits to address the problems that you can readily see and that most directly affect people’s daily lives versus contemplating the larger circumstances.

I remember for many years when people asked me how to address poverty, my simplified answer was, “provide people with economic opportunity.” It was only after I met Gary Haugen, the founder of the nonprofit organization International Justice Mission, that I realized there was a critical piece of the equation that was missing in my answer. When we discussed it, I immediately realized how obvious it was. He pointed out that the places where organizations like our Foundation focus our philanthropy—the places with the most vulnerable and marginalized populations and the greatest amount of human suffering—were places where the rule of law was weak or absent. As Gary noted, economic opportunity was not a solution unless there also existed a system of laws and a justice system that made those laws effective.

***Left:** Dealing with conflict requires specific responses to each set of circumstances with a limited ability to affect the underlying issues. A refugee in Chad needs immediate provisions and shelter. A soldier in Congo follows orders with little concern about negotiations or policy discussions. These create complex dynamics. The Foundation has attempted to find ways to engage in addressing issues beyond the emergency level. This requires the time to build relationships and trust. **Opposite Page:** One evening, while serving as Sheriff, I found myself assisting at a traffic stop. A woman came up and hugged me. I thought she was the mother of one of the over 150 people our office had sent to drug rehabilitation. It turned out she was the mother of a military veteran who we had sent to a facility in Arizona to assist with the post-traumatic stress he suffered from following his service in the war in Afghanistan. This was the type of personal impact on lives I appreciated seeing when I was involved at a local level. (Photo: Travis Wolfe)*

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It was with this understanding, and many years working in fragile states with little to no rule of law, that I later had the opportunity to volunteer to serve as a sworn deputy sheriff and then serve as a sheriff in Illinois. It proved to be one of the best learning opportunities I have ever had, and it helped me connect the dots between the macro and the micro, particularly as it applies to our grantmaking. At our Foundation, we are doing big projects to help improve the lives of thousands of people at a time. Their problems are very real, and I spend as much time as possible in the field so that I can understand what we are doing and who we are trying to help, but it is impossible to truly individualize every grant we make. As sheriff, however, I was able to see the faces and shake the hands of the people I helped. It was a much more personal experience. I am still in touch with several people I helped steer through substance abuse treatment and veterans who were able to get medical care and support that changed their lives. Having this direct impact on people was one of the greatest experiences of my life. This was an opportunity for me to see, firsthand, the impact on individuals rather than just the outcomes of programs.

Another lesson that I learned from our early work led me to a better understanding of how short term projects often have minimal value. When you recognize this, your approach to philanthropy changes. For one thing, thinking beyond the short term means exploring not three- to five-year ideas but committing to 10- to 20-year ideas, or investments that are based on a longer horizon. Making that shift in thinking also forces you to spend enough time in the places you want to work to build critical relationships with governments and implementing partners, to learn more about the issues you want to address, and to better understand the very human and cultural considerations that must be integrated into your thinking. You cannot do that on a single trip or even a few trips.

**I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN SHOWING UP, THAT YOU MUST BE ON THE GROUND,
MEET THE PEOPLE, SEE THE ENVIRONMENT, AND SOMETIMES FEEL THE DIRT BETWEEN YOUR
FINGERS AND THE SMELLS AROUND YOU JUST TO START TO UNDERSTAND A PLACE AND ITS CHALLENGES.**

But showing up is not something that gets checked off a to-do list. It means developing a deep understanding of the circumstances, going back multiple times to establish trust, to create and maintain critical relationships, and to demonstrate that your support is not short term. My “showing up” has taken me to 154 countries, on over 242 international trips, including 96 trips to the continent of Africa. There is little question that the experiences from these trips have shaped our Foundation’s grantmaking for the better. I realize I cannot do this forever, but the 30 years of experience from this approach has helped me build a foundation of understanding that I can apply when I can no longer travel as extensively as in the past.

Several of my international travel experiences have also had an outsized impact on shaping my view of the world. I’ve written about some of these experiences in the past, including when I traveled to Czechoslovakia by myself in 1969 at the age of 14 to visit a foreign exchange student who had lived with us in Omaha. It was during the Soviet occupation, and it was the first time I saw oppression and violence and experienced how government propaganda could alter someone’s understanding of world events. When I was 20, I attended Chapman University’s World Campus Afloat (now known as “Semester at Sea”) and saw first-hand the human suffering created by apartheid in South Africa and extreme poverty in the slums of India. And in 1991, I took a trip to the Soviet Union, six months before Ukraine voted for independence. I had no way of knowing that 30 years later, that trip would provide me a better perspective of Putin’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.





Looking back on our early work, especially in Africa, I viewed projects from the same perspective of many of the nonprofit organizations that we fund: in terms of three-year programs designed with narrow scopes. It took me a few years of funding these types of projects to learn just how little impact they had on addressing the systemic issues underlying the long-term challenges we wanted to address. I realize there is a need to address short-term problems and emergency situations; however, with larger resources, I believe we should primarily focus on bigger ideas. I also learned that to effect change for big problems you have to make much bigger bets, take risks, and be willing to fail. The issues we choose to focus on cannot be solved with just our own resources, but we can afford to be the first ones to test new ideas. We can take on the early risks, bet on an idea to see if it can work, or try to chip away at the problem enough that we begin to demonstrate change, hopefully thereby inspiring others to choose to invest as well because they can see progress towards a solution. It is not a strategy that fits my type A personality, so I struggle at times to have the patience that constantly showing up and working for the long-term solutions requires, but the results speak for themselves, especially compared to the alternative.

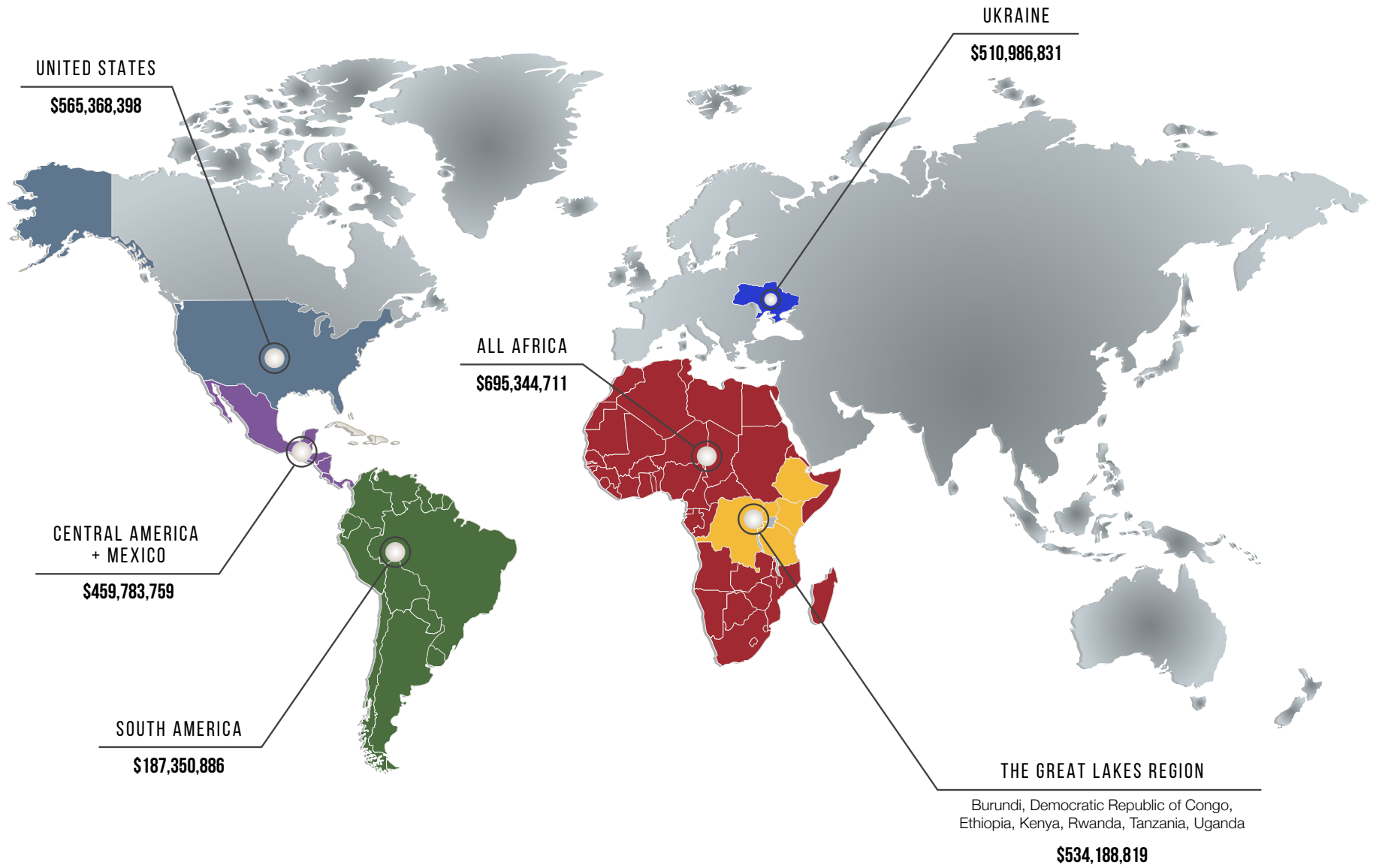
With this context in mind, if you look at the world map we include in our annual report that depicts our current and past grantmaking, it accurately reflects the breadth of our experience, but it does not represent the depth of our involvement. The map on the opposite page provides a better idea of where we have focused our resources. In Africa's Great Lakes Region, we have invested over \$500 million to date over more than two decades of engagement. In Latin America, we have invested almost \$650 million, with a large portion of it in Central America and Colombia. Our work supporting and educating the region's rain-fed, smallholder farmers and encouraging adoption of conservation-based agriculture systems is also well into its second decade. This was hands-on collaborations with local stakeholders and implementing partners to develop big ideas to try to address the system failures that keep people hungry, poor, fighting, and fleeing. This was a lot of showing up and a big commitment to investing for the long term. And in Ukraine, we deployed more than half a billion dollars in less than two years following Russia's full-scale invasion. This was not check-writing philanthropy. This required a quick ramp up of understanding the dynamics of war, the culture, and where our support could be the most effective.

Our work in Ukraine reflects 25 years of experience and lessons learned, much of it working in conflict areas. After the 2022 full-scale invasion, our depth of experience helped us make the decision to go big, take risks, and immediately start thinking long term. The speed and scale of our investment in Ukraine is representative of the flexibility and responsiveness I have always wanted our Foundation to maintain, even as our annual giving has grown. It's also why we keep our team small (at times, I will acknowledge, too small). We hope that it helps others see the value in this approach. These are not the types of investments you make unless you are prepared to work in an area for many years. It means that we will be working in certain countries and regions like Central America, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda for a long time. In Ukraine, we are currently responding to the humanitarian crisis created by the full-scale invasion by Russia, but we have ideas of the role we can play when the war ends and the hard work of recovery begins. Too often, the world responds in a big way when a new conflict starts, but in my experience, the hardest work begins when a conflict persists, or a country moves from conflict to recovery. I cannot tell you the number of times I have seen nongovernmental organizations leave when the "crisis" period of a new conflict is determined to be over. The truth is, the emergency usually lasts for years, it just stops making headlines.

Left: I had to hustle to get this photograph, but to me it reflects why Ukraine is still free today. Ukrainians are proud of their heritage and refuse to give up their independence and freedom.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

HGBF REGIONAL SPENDING TOTALS THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2023



ADDITIONAL SPENDING NOT ON MAP: \$11,975,643



We have worked for many years in active conflict zones, but never in a country at war where the outcome has global implications. At the start of 2022, I had no reason to even consider making a trip to Ukraine. Within days of Russia's full-scale invasion, I immediately understood the war would have far-reaching consequences beyond Ukraine and that I would be on my way there soon. This past December I embarked on my tenth trip to Ukraine since the start of the war, spending my birthday, Christmas, and New Years in a country under siege.

There are many scenes from my trips to Ukraine that I will never forget. Seeing Ukrainian farmers, who for years have contributed to global food production, stand in line to receive food assistance for their families is one of them. As a fellow farmer, I cannot imagine what that would feel like. Walking through the torture chambers where Russians beat and executed Ukrainian civilians and seeing the numbers written on the walls marking their days of captivity—and trying to imagine the agony they endured. Witnessing dead residents on the street in Kherson, killed by Russian shelling, knowing I was looking at someone's mother and father who had done nothing that day except be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Every time I leave Ukraine to return home, I ask myself the same question: if we do not stand with Ukraine as they fight to defend their freedom, then what value do we place on our own freedom?

Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine is a war on global food security, freedom, democracy, and sovereignty. After 77 years of relative peace in Europe, secured largely through global alliances established after World War II, it was hard to imagine a war of this magnitude would be fought again on European soil. As NATO countries are supporting Ukraine and new countries join NATO, Russia is aligning with a host of bad actors to fight alongside it, including Iran, North Korea, and mercenaries from Syria, Belarus, Serbia, and Chechnya. Russia has released approximately 100,000 prisoners with an agreement that if they fight in the Russian military, they would be granted clemency. In addition, Russia has very effectively used private paramilitary groups like the infamous Wagner Group to fight alongside the Russian military. With Russia receiving drones from Iran and ammunition and ballistic missiles from North Korea, Ukraine is facing the second most powerful army with support from the United States' worst enemies.

Top left: Over the course of its invasion of Ukraine, Russia and its military have displayed complete disregard for international laws governing armed conflict. By attacking Ukraine, Russia violated the UN Charter, the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, the Hague Conventions and repeatedly breached the Geneva Conventions. Putin has deliberately targeted civilians, both by targeting non-military sites and by capturing, torturing, and executing civilians in occupied areas. Thousands of innocent Ukrainians who have never put on a military uniform have been killed. Here, DNA is being taken to determine the identity of a civilian who was executed by Russian soldiers. (Photo: Mark Rigel) **Middle left:** This photo was taken in a room where Ukrainian civilians had been tortured early on in the war. There were signs of the brutality Russian soldiers inflicted on people, including blood stains on the walls, buckets that had been used as toilets, pipes used as weapons to beat people, and medications used as part of torture. When I took this photograph, I could only think of the many other times in history someone used a wall and nail or pencil to keep track of their captivity. **Bottom Left:** Residents gather at a food distribution in Lyman, less than nine miles from the front lines. Lyman was occupied from May to October 2022. Ninety percent of the city's infrastructure is destroyed. At a food distribution, the span of generations is represented by both looks of hopelessness and mistrust. **Opposite page, top:** Since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Ukraine has been attacked with approximately 30,000 rockets, missiles and drones, destroying hundreds of pieces of critical infrastructure and killing thousands of civilians. The support of Iran and North Korea has allowed Russia to consistently target churches, schools, hospitals, apartment buildings, police stations, rescue equipment, and first responders. Russia has adopted an approach referred to as a "double tap," where they hit a target, allow enough time for first responders to arrive and then hit the same location again to kill police and firefighters and destroy their equipment. Targeting civilians and rescue personnel is a war crime. **Opposite page, bottom:** While handing out food kits, I watched hundreds of people—farmers—accept support who have historically been a part of a rural community that has contributed to feeding millions of people across the world. (Photo: Spencer Taylor)

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The war in Ukraine has created the greatest humanitarian crisis in my lifetime. This war has already made the world less food secure and less safe; the downstream consequences of this, particularly in fragile countries that are now more food insecure without Ukrainian grain production at full capacity, cannot yet be quantified. It has increased instability and driven food shortages throughout Africa and the Middle East. This war dwarfs any efforts by donors to address health crises or fund anti-poverty initiatives. It has already allowed Russia to commit war crimes on a scale we have not seen since World War II, and it has driven millions of refugees to seek shelter across Europe and beyond. The global impact of how this plays out cannot be underestimated.

RIGHT NOW, THERE IS NO OTHER SINGLE EVENT THAT OUR FOUNDATION CAN RESPOND TO THAT WILL IMPACT MORE LIVES THAN IN UKRAINE.

It does not mean we have reduced our commitment to our other priorities. We continue to work in Central America, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda, but our investment in Ukraine in two years will come close to our individual investments in each of those areas over a decade or more. We anticipate that by the end of 2024, our grantmaking in Ukraine will be the single highest investment we have made in any region since our inception. In terms of dollars, we expect to exceed \$800 million invested by the end of 2024. We have never predicted our future spending before, but in this case, I believe it is important to demonstrate our continuing commitment, as there is no relief in sight for the humanitarian crisis created by Russia's invasion.

Given the scale of our investment in Ukraine, we have decided to focus a large amount of this year's annual report on detailing our work in Ukraine. I will address some of our ongoing work in Central America, Colombia, and Rwanda as well. These investments are of no less importance, and collectively they totaled about \$200 million in 2023, almost equal to the total disbursements we made in 2019. However, the resources we have committed to Ukraine are exceptional. I also believe it is critical to highlight the needs of Ukraine at a time when the world has a short attention span. Ukraine has lost visibility in the media, and we want to encourage other foundations to invest in this once-in-a-generation humanitarian crisis and the global threats that continue to unfold.

In our 2010 annual report, we took a similar approach but focused the entire annual report on our failures in grantmaking. (That was a fun exercise encouraging our grantees to tell us all the things that had gone wrong with the money we gave them.) That idea was inspired by my Dad's encouragement to take risks, to always swing for the fences with big ideas, and to not be afraid to fail. Focusing much of this report on Ukraine is also inspired by my Dad's advice to work where others will not always invest. There are several public charities and individuals who have made significant contributions to Ukraine, including some people who have made real personal sacrifices in doing so. And there are some private foundations working quietly to fund good and innovative work in Ukraine. However, with a few exceptions, the largest U.S. foundations have gone about their business as usual. This is an extraordinary time; it requires extraordinary resources and doing everything except doing business as usual. It is a time that threatens the free world at a scale not seen since World War II. It is not difficult to play out scenarios that continue to displace tens of millions of people and push tens of millions more into poverty and closer to starvation, to say nothing of direct and immediate war-time casualties. The numbers are bigger than any other global crisis since our Foundation's founding.



It requires action, not deliberation. Civilians are shelled by Russians daily, and landmines continue to indiscriminately kill people while disrupting the global food supply chain. Yet what we have seen to date cannot compare to the scale of devastation we will witness if Russia defeats Ukraine. Russia has been clear in its intent to eliminate Ukrainian identity and Ukraine's very existence. In January of 2024, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairperson Dmitry Medvedev reiterated that the elimination of Ukrainian statehood and independence remains one of Russia's primary goals of the war. This war, however, goes beyond Ukrainian lives and Ukrainian security; it is about European and American lives and global security. If this war escalates beyond Ukraine, our available resources will be insufficient relative to the need.

There is nothing to indicate Russia will stop at a victory over Ukraine, and there is everything to indicate that Putin will be emboldened to continue to push further into Europe. It is precisely why Finland and Sweden joined NATO; they understand their neighbor. If Russia prevails, it will be at NATO's doorstep. Eventually, and almost certainly, NATO member militaries will be directly engaged in war, and America will need to fight alongside its allies. The expense of fighting the war will increase exponentially, in terms of dollars, lives, and humanitarian needs. Other countries will take sides, escalating the geopolitical risks and the threat of nuclear war. Global food security and the world economy will suffer further. Other countries experiencing instability will tip further into violence. And billions of dollars that could be used to address long-standing humanitarian needs will be redirected to fight an expanded war, demanding more and more humanitarian assistance.

It is with this understanding of what is at stake that we have challenged ourselves to do whatever we can to mitigate the effect of the conflict on Ukrainian civilians and work to address the ways the war is undermining global food security. Within the broader umbrella of food security and conflict mitigation in Ukraine, we are focused on five areas: agriculture, humanitarian demining, investigation and documentation of war crimes, food security, and strategic infrastructure. At times, it is a bit of a puzzle fitting together emergency needs and longer-term investments. In this report, we provide the background on many of these efforts.

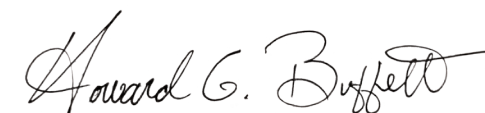
We have done our best to respond to the needs that we see and learn about, but we cannot address every aspect of the crisis. Ukraine faces a tough way forward, and the humanitarian cost increases daily. We know that much of what we are doing is at risk of being destroyed or undermined in some way by the war. It is a risk we are willing to take to continue to address the most urgent humanitarian needs while supporting Ukrainians to reestablish their economy in a war environment.

While I was writing this letter, I received a text that I knew I could receive one day but hoped would never come. One of the combines we provided through our Victory Harvest project hit a landmine and was destroyed. Thankfully the farmer will recover with several surgeries to his feet. It was not easy to convince the Ukrainians who oversee dispersing the combines, tractors, planters, and drills that we have provided to put this equipment in harm's way, but the greatest need is where the most landmines exist and where the Russian shelling is the heaviest. This is part of the risk we take in trying to keep farmers producing crops and an important part of maintaining the Ukrainian economy. You cannot work in war with the same mindset that you work in during peace. The risk is higher in everything that you do, and you must be willing to take that risk.

This report also covers a milestone that we achieved in Rwanda. The first class graduated from the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture (RICA) in 2023. RICA provides a completely different approach to African agriculture. Many foundations and nongovernmental organizations have tried to push Western agriculture approaches onto small-sized and resource-poor farmers. RICA is designed to blend the concepts and benefits that have derived from 200 years of research and extension in the United States with the practical application in Africa. It also provides an opportunity to change the mindset that so often prevails in Africa's youth that agriculture is only about farming—and backbreaking poverty. As one young Rwandan said to me, "I don't want to spend my life using a hoe." RICA is opening the minds of the younger generation and encouraging entrepreneurs and new investment in agro-enterprises while supporting better production for small-sized farm operations.

As I referenced earlier, we passed another milestone in 2023: we distributed over \$500 million. We are making a conscious effort to draw down our cash and stock balance to meet the expectations set when we received larger amounts of funds in 2005, 2013, 2022, and 2023. Our goal is to be out of business; not to build an organization that operates in perpetuity. Therefore, we will maintain a higher level of giving.

As I write this year's letter, war has once again ignited in the Middle East. The world is less safe today, and it will continue to get more dangerous if terrorists and the states who sponsor terrorism or act like terrorists, prevail. Our Foundation will continue to be flexible while doing our best to stay focused in ways and places where we are uniquely positioned to respond to the humanitarian needs created by certain conflicts. We hope more will join us in this endeavor.





Above: Ukraine has become the most mined country in the world. It is estimated that 6.2 million acres of agricultural land is littered with landmines. The cost to clear the mines that have been identified is estimated at \$37 billion. The combine pictured here is one of 85,000 pieces of agricultural equipment destroyed during the war.



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THE HOWARD
BUFFETT
FOUNDATION



2023 FINANCIALS

2023 CONTRIBUTIONS

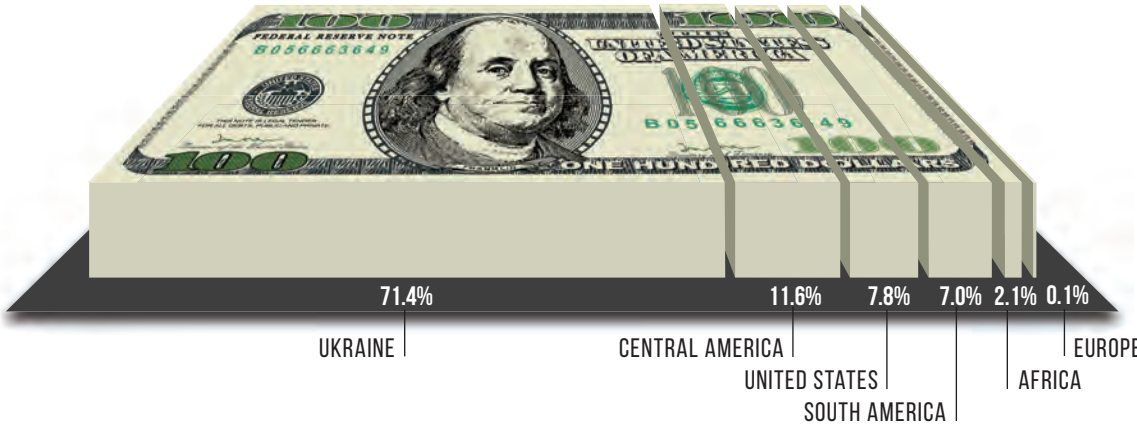
CONTRIBUTIONS BY CATEGORY



CONTRIBUTIONS BY DESTINATION



CONTRIBUTIONS BY GEOGRAPHY



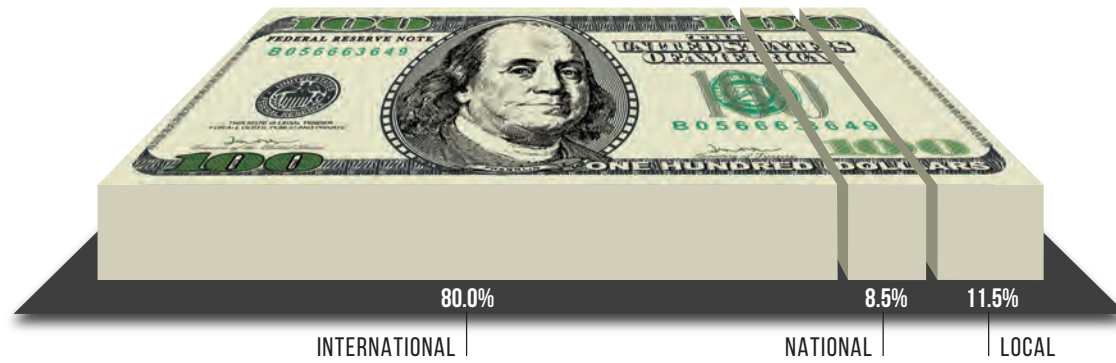
FINANCIALS

2022 CONTRIBUTIONS

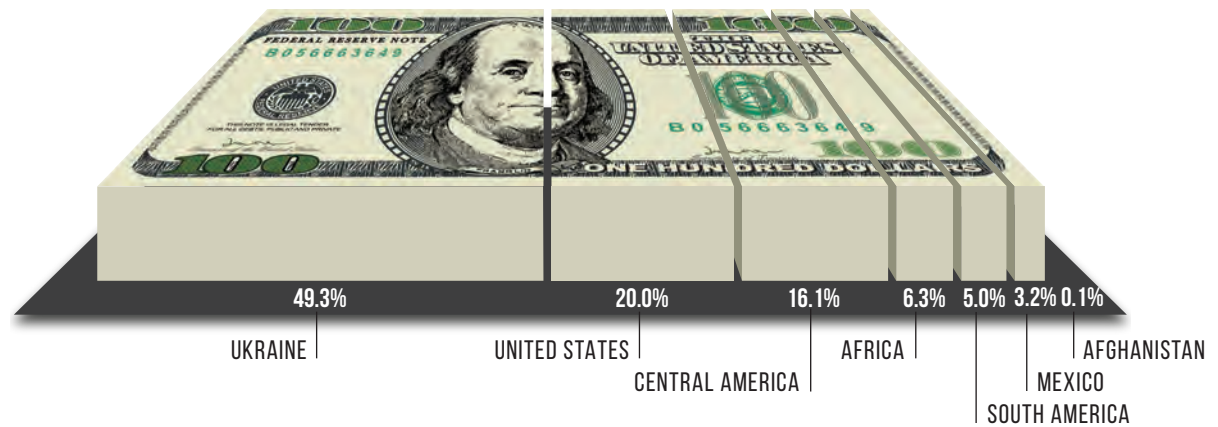
CONTRIBUTIONS BY CATEGORY



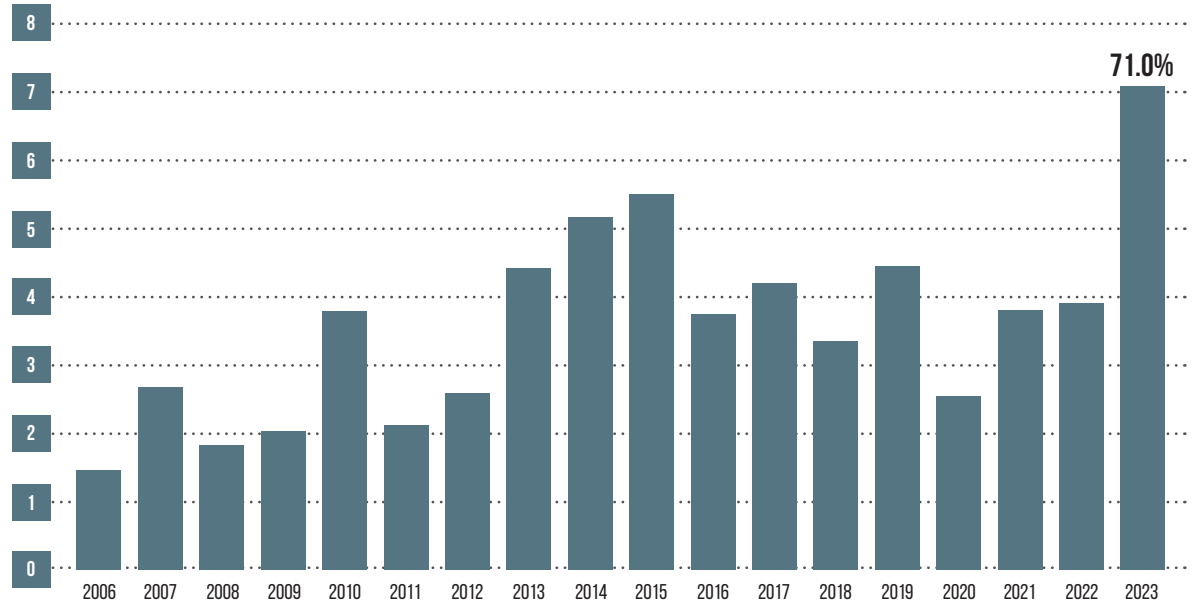
CONTRIBUTIONS BY DESTINATION



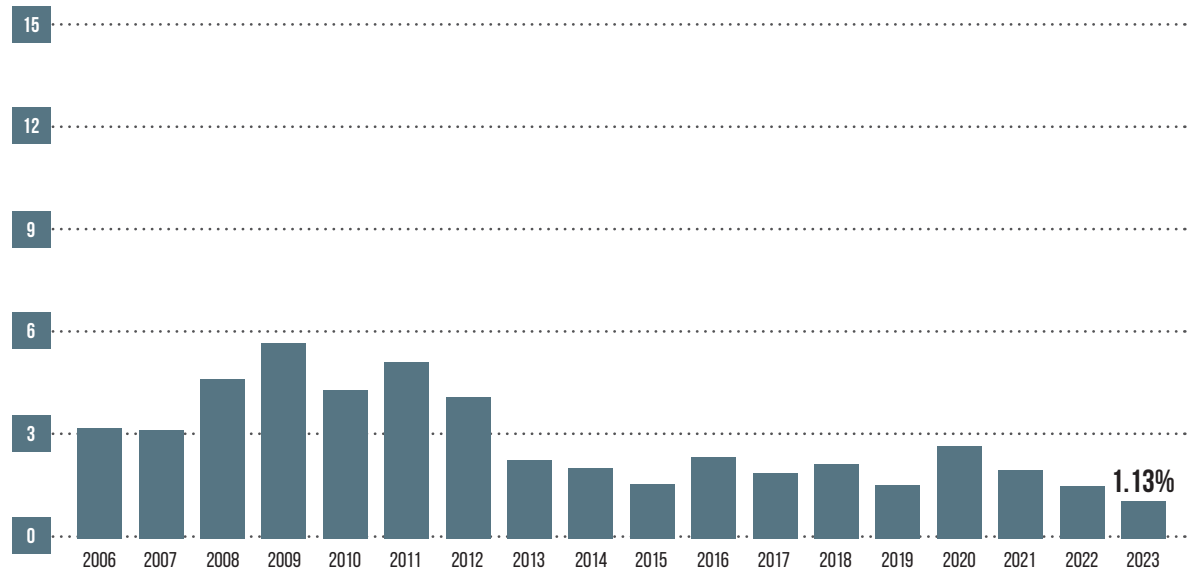
CONTRIBUTIONS BY GEOGRAPHY

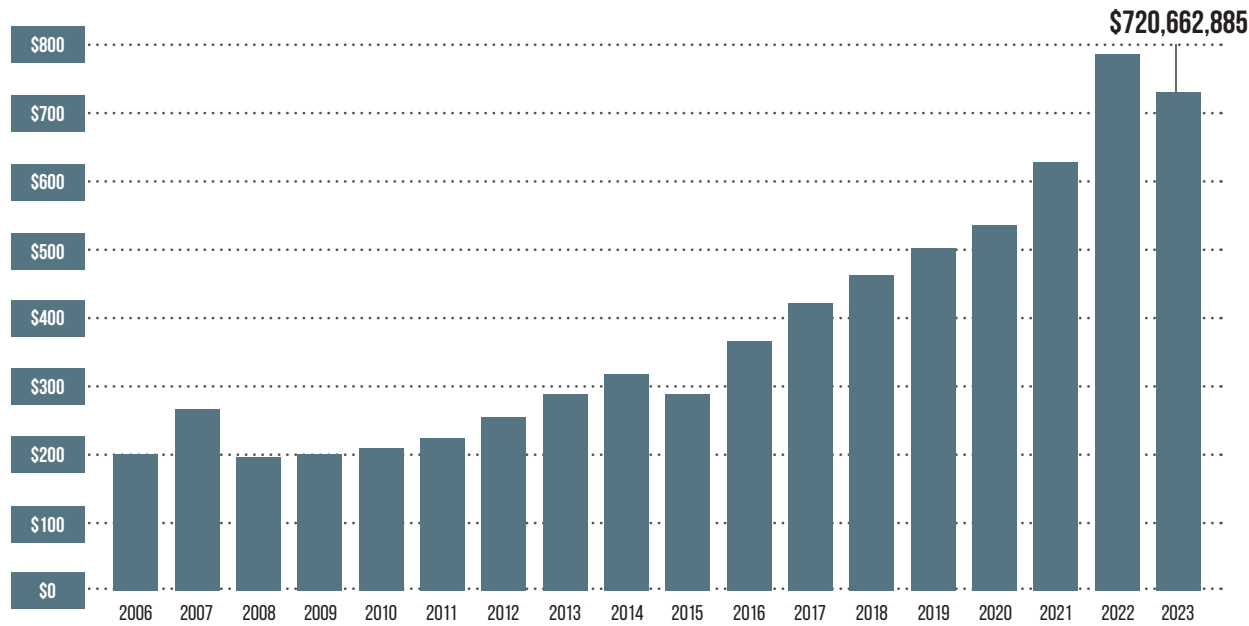


2023 QUALIFYING DISTRIBUTIONS
(AS PERCENT OF ASSETS)

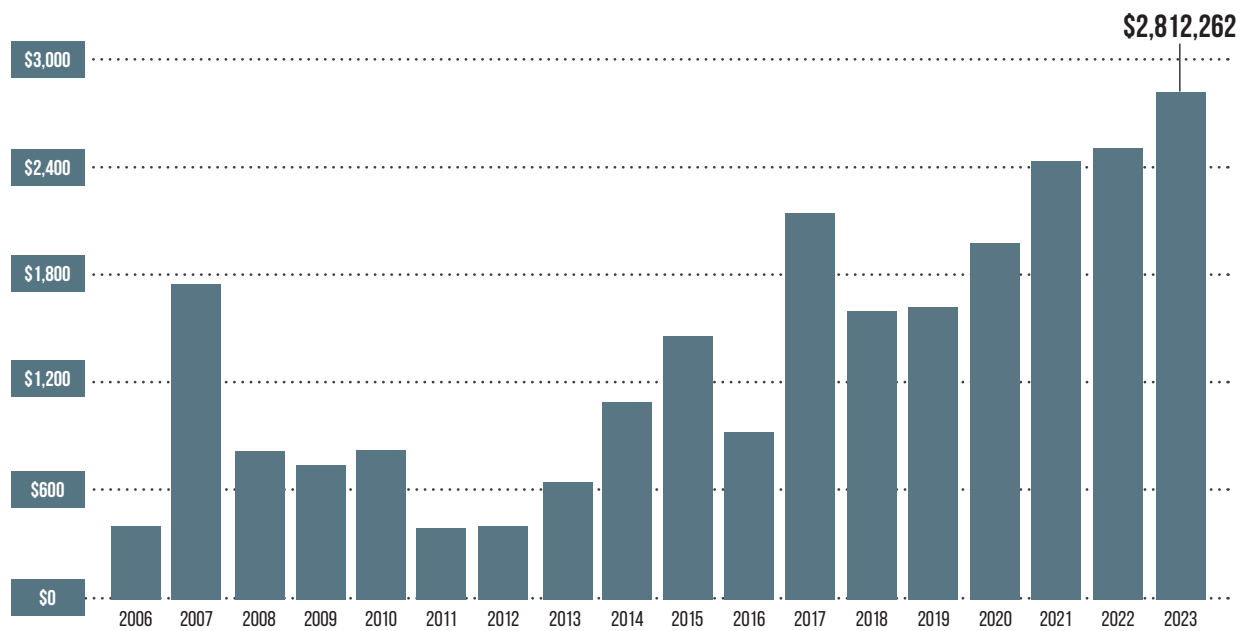


2023 OPERATING EXPENDITURES
(AS PERCENT OF GRANTS)





2023 TOTAL ASSETS
(IN MILLIONS)



2023 AVERAGE GRANT SIZE
(IN THOUSANDS)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION¹
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$	40,259,230
Investments		671,374,943
Other assets		8,405,665
Land, Buildings, Equipment, net of accumulated depreciation		623,047
TOTAL ASSETS	\$	720,662,885

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Liabilities:

Accounts payable	\$	112,260
Income tax payable		119,640
TOTAL LIABILITIES		231,900

Net Assets:

Unrestricted		720,430,985
TOTAL NET ASSETS		720,430,985
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$	720,662,885

¹ Statements prepared on a cash basis/income tax basis

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES¹
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

REVENUE AND SUPPORT:	
Contributions and Grants:	
Operating	\$ 356,063,646
Total contributions and grants	356,063,646
Gain (Loss) on sale of investments	4,679,575
Interest and investment income	16,445,623
Unused grant returns	9,799,757
Other income	432,580
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	\$ 387,421,181
EXPENSES:	
Program:	
Food Security	\$ 34,606,092
Conflict Mitigation	3,672,968
Community	17,808
Human Trafficking	488,285
Public Safety	293,102
Total Program	39,078,255
Contributions, Gifts, Grants Paid	458,120,307
General and administrative	6,598,245
TOTAL EXPENSES	503,796,807
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(116,375,626)
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	783,489,806
CHANGE IN UNREALIZED GAINS ON INVESTMENTS	53,316,805
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$ 720,430,985

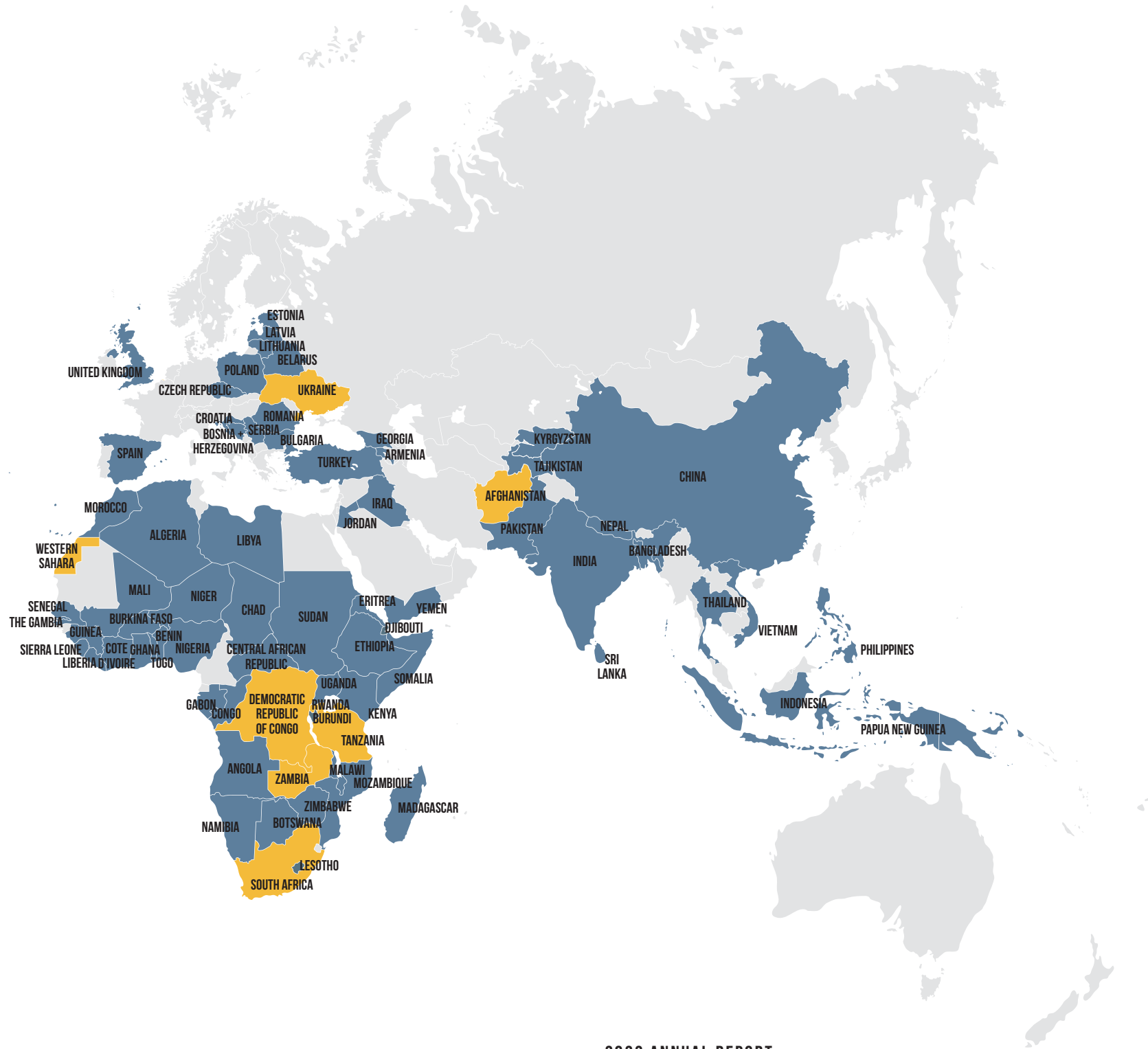
¹ Statements prepared on a cash basis/income tax basis



2023 CONTRIBUTIONS OR CONTINUING PROJECTS

FORMER CONTRIBUTIONS

COUNTRIES RECEIVING FUNDS IN 2023 ALSO MAY HAVE RECEIVED FUNDS IN PRIOR YEARS.





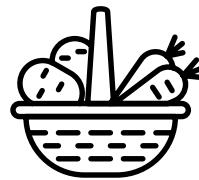


**FOOD
SECURITY**

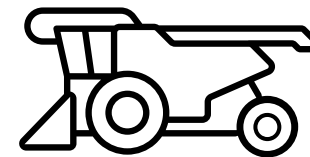


The Foundation's focus on global food security was never more relevant than in 2023, as the war in Ukraine, extreme weather events in Latin America, and conflict-related instability and forced displacement in many other regions of the world disrupted and undermined global food supply and food security. In 2023, the Foundation continued to invest in its long-term efforts in Central America, southern Mexico, and Colombia, while ramping up investments to meet the unique and historic circumstances in Ukraine.

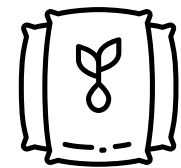
RESPONDING TO A HISTORIC CRISIS IN UKRAINE



EMERGENCY FOOD AID
\$95,598,425



VICTORY HARVEST
\$47,267,729



FARM INPUTS
\$36,372,933

Left: Deminers work on clearing the area after a Victory Harvest John Deere T670 combine was destroyed by an anti-tank mine while harvesting sunflowers in the Kharkiv region on November 1, 2023. Thanks to the Victory Harvest team, they were able to respond quickly by loaning additional equipment to the farmer, so she could try and finish the harvest. Landmines have destroyed hundreds of pieces of farm equipment while injuring and killing many farmers. It is estimated that 174,000 square kilometers (67,000 square miles) of land, or 30 percent of Ukraine's territory, needs to be surveyed for landmines and unexploded ordnance. The current cost to demine the affected Ukrainian territories is estimated at \$37 billion. (Photo: The Howard G. Buffett Foundation/Paula Bronstein).

SUPPORTING WAR-AFFECTED FARMERS IN UKRAINE

VICTORY HARVEST

Victory Harvest is a nonprofit organization established by Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food to receive and manage in-kind donations of agricultural equipment provided by the Foundation. Victory Harvest's mission is to help farmers continue planting, harvesting, and storing their crops throughout the war.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, the Foundation has donated agricultural equipment valued at almost \$50 million to Victory Harvest. Many of the first combines and tractors purchased for Victory Harvest were originally destined for Russia. Those contracts were cancelled when Russia invaded Ukraine.

Victory Harvest makes the 70 combines, 84 tractors, along with wagons, drills, and planters, available free of charge to qualifying smaller-sized farmer operations that have suffered losses to their farms because of the war. Farmers only pay for the fuel they use. Support from the Foundation also ensures Victory Harvest can transport the equipment from farm to farm, provide regular maintenance and upkeep, and store the equipment when not in use. As of December 2023, farmers using the Victory Harvest equipment have harvested 236,188 acres (95,582 hectares) and planted 160,248 acres (64,850 hectares) across Ukraine, including in areas that continue to be under regular attack by the Russian military and where the presence of landmines remains a significant threat.

TARGETING SUPPORT TO SMALLER-SIZED PRODUCERS

Many of Ukraine's agricultural producers operate on a small scale, with many household-level enterprises. Before the war, these small-scale producers contributed to nearly 40 percent of the country's agricultural production, which in turn accounted for 20 percent of Ukraine's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). These smaller-sized farm operations have been the most affected by the war, in part because much of the early support developed by the government and multilateral donors is targeted at larger producers. Displacement, landmines, destruction of assets, and increasing production costs due to more expensive fuel, storage, fertilizers, and seeds, has meant that many of these small-scale producers can no longer make a living from farming and are at risk of leaving the sector altogether.

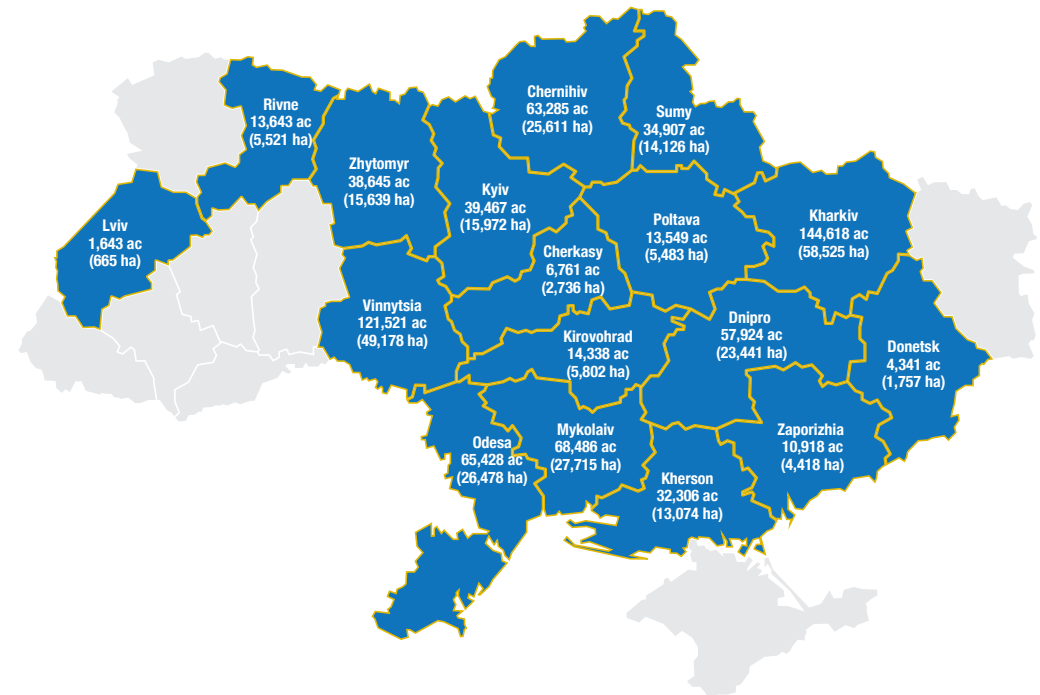
To stabilize the agricultural livelihoods of these farming households, the Foundation has partnered with Mercy Corps to provide emergency grants to 1,000 small-scale farmers and 100 small- and medium-sized agricultural enterprises. The \$22 million dollar program includes competitive grants to help revitalize this sector to bolster both domestic and global food security.

The Foundation has also provided over \$36 million of in-kind donations of vegetable seeds for home gardens and commodity seeds and fertilizers for small-scale farmers to help alleviate the often prohibitively high costs for these inputs. For the 2023 Spring planting season, the Foundation purchased 600,000 individual packets of varying types of vegetable seeds to distribute to over 295,000 Ukrainians living near the frontlines. The donations of commodity seeds like corn, sunflower, and oilseeds, along with mineral fertilizer, benefited over 1,500 small producers farming less than 500 hectares (1,236 acres). Commodity seeds and mineral fertilizers we purchased locally in Ukraine provided the necessary inputs to plant nearly 740,628 acres (300,000 hectares) across 16 different Ukrainian Oblasts.

TOTAL AREA PLANTED WITH HGBF-DONATED SEEDS

TOTAL ACRES (AC): 725,017

TOTAL HECTARES (HA): 293,405





ADDRESSING EXPORT BARRIERS BY AUGMENTING STORAGE CAPACITY

Ukraine has historically been a major exporter of cereal grains to much of the world through the Black Sea, with about 90 percent of Ukrainian pre-war agricultural commodities transported through seaports. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, Russian forces have targeted exports through the Black Sea, creating bottlenecks in the agricultural value chain, destroying farmer livelihoods in rural Ukrainian communities, and exacerbating food insecurity in developing countries throughout the world that rely on Ukrainian grain. Although the U.N.-brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative helped Ukraine increase its export capacity and ease global grain prices, Russia withdrew from the agreement in July 2023 and immediately intensified its attacks on Ukrainian port infrastructure and warehouses, reducing the country's export potential by 40 percent and placing renewed pressure on land-based export routes.

There is an urgent need to diversify Ukraine's land-based export capacity to address these bottlenecks and avoid already growing deficits in grain storage capacity. Currently, the country's Soviet-style gauge rail system makes it difficult to integrate with European rail systems, increasing the cost and limiting the potential for overland export capacity. For-profit companies have little incentive to invest in Ukrainian supply chain infrastructure for the foreseeable future given the risks created by the conflict. Charitable or public-sector financing is therefore required to address these issues.

Left: Pre-war, 40 percent of the United Nations World Food Programme's wheat was sourced from Ukraine. Disruption to transportation and commodity production has caused food prices to increase by 45 percent in Africa. To put this in tangible context: the corn produced on Ukrainian farmland now occupied by Russia and crops that would typically be produced on farmland in Ukraine that is out of production because of the war could feed almost 400 million people for a year in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Add that to the destruction of Ukraine's grain storage and shipping facilities by the Russians and it's no surprise the war's impact is felt in many poorer countries in Africa and the Middle East that rely on Ukrainian exports.



INVESTIGATING WAR CRIMES TARGETING UKRAINE'S FOOD SUPPLY

As of June 2023, the Kyiv School of Economics estimates that the Russian-led invasion has caused \$8.7 billion in damages to Ukraine's agricultural sector, ranging from the destruction of agricultural machinery (\$4.6 billion) to theft of Ukraine's agricultural output (\$1.9 billion) to attacks on grain storage facilities (\$1.3 billion). Russia has weaponized food in its war on Ukraine by intentionally targeting and destroying the country's agricultural resources—a war crime as defined by the Geneva Convention. Russia's actions have deeply impacted not only farming communities but also global food availability. To seek justice from the international community, Ukrainian authorities need to properly collect and document evidence for future adjudication.

To assist in this effort, the Foundation has partnered with the nonprofit organization Project Expedite Justice (PEJ) to support Ukrainian justice officials as they seek accountability for Russian war crimes—with a focus on pillage and plunder—through capacity building, preparing legal briefs and evidence packages, identifying judicial avenues to seize Russian assets, coordinating evidence collection efforts within formerly occupied agrarian communities, and filing sanctions requests with the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) when appropriate.

To date, PEJ has collected open-source intelligence on over 870 incidents related to the destruction of agricultural products; identified 40 cargo vessels involved in illegally transporting Ukrainian agricultural products; mapped the corporate structure of nine networks involved in transporting agricultural products from regions occupied during the full-scale invasion; and conducted 32 witness interviews from within Ukraine's agrarian community. Additionally, PEJ is providing direct case support to officials within the Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the Prosecutor General's Office, so prosecutors and investigators have access to the evidence they need to seek justice for war crimes that have affected Ukraine's food production and supply.

Top left: Unexploded rockets and casings from rockets that deploy cluster munitions make fields dangerous for farming. According to U.S. defense officials and as reported by NBC News, in 2022, artillery rounds were fired at a combined rate of 24,000 or more rounds per day, leaving thousands of rockets in farm fields that will need to be removed. **Middle left:** A ship is loading corn for transport through the Black Sea. In February of 2022, the Russian Navy blockaded Ukraine's ports, preventing the export of over 20 million tons of grain. This helped push global food prices to all-time highs and reduced humanitarian shipments of grain to low-income countries. **Bottom left:** Expended shells that were collected and removed from a field in the Mykolaiv region lie under a center pivot irrigation system.



DELIVERING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO WAR-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN UKRAINE

MOBILIZING DELIVERY OF HOT MEALS BY TRAIN

The Ukrainian Railways (UZ) has been a vital institution on the ground in Ukraine throughout the war, continuing its operations even as stations and rail lines are bombed, putting an emphasis on keeping trains running on time and finding creative ways to safely and reliably support Ukrainian transportation needs when the war brought all civilian air travel to a halt. It was with this public service mission in mind that UZ conceived of the “Kitchen Train” to respond to the food needs of communities impacted by the war.

Engineered by UZ and operated by a local food catering company, the train is 150 meters (492 feet) long with six special purpose wagons: (1) a generator wagon with a 400 kW capacity; (2) a refrigerator wagon with a freezer; (3) a cold kitchen for meal preparation and assembling cold meals; (4) a hot kitchen for cooking hot meals; (5) a staff wagon for the railway crew and cooks; (6) and a water storage wagon holding 27,000 liters (7,133 gallons) of water with filtration and pumping stations. Designed to operate autonomously for five to seven days at a time, the train has the capacity to prepare approximately 10,000 meals per day to be delivered directly into frontline communities and territories newly liberated by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. To avoid crowding the train stations, special thermoboxes are used to transport ready-made lunchboxes with food from the train to the end recipient. The train relocates based on need and moves throughout the country on the extensive railway system. It is one of many examples of Ukrainian ingenuity and perseverance that has emerged despite the terrible devastation, destruction, and chaos Russia's war has unleashed.

GETTING ASSISTANCE TO FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

Since February 2023, the Foundation has fully funded all the work and operations of the Global Empowerment Mission (GEM) in Ukraine. During this period, GEM Ukraine has purchased, assembled, and distributed over 1.7 million Family Necessity Kits, equivalent to approximately 115.4 million meals, supporting 500,000 people across more than 300 regions in Ukraine each and every month. The people who receive this assistance live in communities near the front lines or in recently de-occupied areas with limited access to other assistance beyond what GEM provides.

Left: Packed meals are prepared on the food train to distribute to families in Kramatorsk.

While the impact and reach of the assistance is remarkable enough, the way the kits are assembled is also part of the story. Each Family Necessity Kit contains an array of locally sourced products, including barley groats, peas, condensed milk, canned meat and fish, pasta, sunflower oil, and sugar. Donations of supplemental food products from outside sources are also included in the boxes. These products include dehydrated soup mixes, protein and granola bars, and ready-to-eat premade meal kits.

Through GEM's cooperation with the locally owned and operated Ridne Food Factory, food products are purchased from neighboring farms, and the factory employs internally displaced persons fleeing Russian occupation. The food factory and local farmers do not believe their businesses would have survived without the partnership with GEM. At the end of 2023, there were 30 Ukrainian farms providing products to the food factories for these Family Necessity Kits. GEM estimates that this assistance model has created 2,000 new jobs in Ukraine.

In June 2023, when the Kakhovka Dam was destroyed, reducing the volume of water available to the North Crimean Canal by more than 72 percent, the Foundation's support allowed GEM to immediately respond with the highest need item: clean drinking water. GEM's water distribution program initially delivered 500,000 liters monthly, increasing to 1,000,000 liters of water by August. Between June and October 2023, GEM distributed 4,733,640 liters of water to over 58 regions around the Khersonska, Donetsk, and Dnipropetrovska oblasts.

TARGETING AID IN THE WINTER MONTHS

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, Ukrainians have dealt with the constant uncertainty created by regular power outages, air raid sirens, and mandatory evacuations. A reality of living amidst the chaos and instability of war is people's need to regularly seek out safe places to shelter and access basic supplies. With funding support from the Foundation, Nova Ukraine worked to address this need by opening 102 warming centers between December 2022 and April 2023, providing a safe and warm place to shelter over 1.1 million individuals throughout Ukraine. These warming centers also allowed people to recharge their devices, connect to the internet, and access basic services, including tea, coffee, and first aid services.

For the 2023-2024 winter, Nova Ukraine reopened 111 Centers in areas where they are needed most. Fifty of these centers are in Ukraine's Ukrzaliznytsia (UZ) regional train stations. These improved centers now offer medical check-ups, physical fitness equipment, a designated children's area, and psychological support services. The specific services offered at each center are tailored to the needs of the population surrounding the center.

REIMAGINING KHARKIV'S SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

With its proximity to the frontlines, over 800 educational facilities across the Kharkiv region have been destroyed or damaged since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Many children have fled Kharkiv or are being educated online instead of in schools. The Foundation is committed to building and supporting the operations of a central production kitchen in Kharkiv that will help 88 schools serve up to 13,700 meals per day as one component of a plan to safely return children to in-person education. The new central production kitchen will target schools with reduced capacity for proper food service resulting from the invasion. Once complete, the central production kitchen will prepare lunches for all the schools in its network and deliver them for reheating and consumption. The Foundation's funding support also includes kitchen upgrades, cafeteria equipment, and repairs for participating schools.



Above: Children in Bucha are served meals prepared from the Foundation-funded central production kitchen. (Photo: Bucha News)

THIS OP-ED WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE NOVEMBER 2023 ISSUE OF FARM JOURNAL MAGAZINE.

FARMING IN UKRAINE

BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

On one of my recent trips to Ukraine, I joined one of our grantees, Global Empowerment Mission, to deliver emergency food assistance to recently liberated villages on the front lines of Russia's full-scale invasion. Many of these communities have not received any help since the war started. One day stood out in my mind as emblematic of what it means to live—and try to survive—in the middle of a military conflict. We started the morning after a night of air raid sirens. The air raid sirens are actually the easiest thing to adjust to—they go off so frequently that they become background noise and the constant shelling sounds like thunder from a never-ending storm. What you cannot get used to is the nonstop air attacks on civilians. These are rural farming communities. People try to seek cover in their basements when they have one—and many people live exclusively in their basements now—but that is little protection from a direct hit. Imagine a small town in rural America, except everyday you see bodies pulled from the rubble of demolished homes, people walking around visibly injured, and children who are forever traumatized.



1: This group of people have been living in this basement for months. When I visited Avdiivka, only about 1,700 residents remained from a pre-war population of 30,000. Avdiivka is a bit like pre-war Bakhmut, where Ukrainian troops dug in, both in 2014 and in 2022. Avdiivka has endured heavy shelling since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. **2:** As we move to the front lines, it is common to pass military equipment. **3:** In the village of Zolota Nyva, this woman was one of only 18 remaining residents. She broke down in tears at the sight of the first humanitarian assistance she had seen in months. She is sad, happy and angry, all at once. The village had been liberated for about five days, and we were the first non-military people she had seen. Many of the people who have stayed behind in places like Zolota Nyva refused to leave their homes when ordered to evacuate because they felt they had nowhere else to go. **4:** Drones have been used for surveillance and the delivery of explosives. **5:** A farm building near the Kharkiv and Luhansk border served as a base for military operations. I took this photo on March 13, 2023, and the building was destroyed one month later by a Russian high precision Krasnopol rocket on April 11, 2023.

On this day, we traveled to the front line to a town called Zolota Nyva, in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. The small village was liberated roughly five days before we arrived. I say “roughly” because liberation in this context is never clear-cut as the fighting pushes back and forth. Regardless, liberated does not mean safe. We learned that after we arrived. We passed tanks and armored personnel carriers as we moved towards our destination. As we got closer to the village, we saw plumes of smoke that were accompanied by large explosions. We knew we were close by the sounds of the howitzers firing.

When we arrived, we had difficulty finding people. Some of the houses were destroyed. The village is small, and we waited along the road as members of our convoy scouted the area. Our vehicles must spread out for safety, and we pulled off the road under trees to be less conspicuous. The Russians do not distinguish between military convoys and humanitarian aid convoys, just as they don't distinguish between civilians and soldiers so any people or vehicles out in the open and in range of Russian attacks are at risk.



As we moved into the next street, someone emerged from a house. We were likely the first non-military people they have seen in the 18 months since the Russians occupied the village. Most of the team started to quickly unload the boxes of food and water as some of my colleagues had a conversation with the residents to better understand the situation. The military personnel escorting us urged everyone to hurry.

Then I noticed something that was familiar to me from a very different time and place. All at once, every bird from every tree in sight flew up and away. When they fly like this it is quite loud. I immediately thought of the many times I have been in Africa photographing leopards or cheetah. There are two signs that typically give away predator activity: vultures circling a kill or birds literally evacuating trees.

As I was momentarily distracted thinking about how familiar this was, I felt someone grab the pull handle on my vest and start pushing me towards the vehicle. It was one of the military personnel and he was telling me to hurry. Everyone quickly loaded up and our vehicles sped out of the village. We maintained a very fast speed for at least 15 minutes. When we finally reached a spot where we could debrief, a soldier told me that the birds fly like that when they hear a drone. The same early warning system that worked to warn potential prey in Africa was working in Ukraine. The difference was that we were the prey and the Russian drone was the predator.

I cannot imagine what it is like to live under this constant threat every day. Millions of Ukrainians face different threats each day and each night. In addition to the threats, many people have lost everything they own. One thing I noticed as we traveled through rural areas are the unharvested sunflowers and corn. Huge fields that have been left by farmers either because of the landmines, the fighting, or the complete loss of their farm equipment. Ukraine's farmers face a daunting future. Many farmers cannot return to their fields until the war ends or Russia is forced back closer to the sovereign borders of Ukraine.

Whenever I visit Ukraine, I cannot help but think about what it means to be a farmer there today and what they have lost. I try to imagine what it would be like to face a similar threat on my own farm at home, to have my livelihood destroyed, my equipment stolen or blown up, my land made unfarmable, and my identity as someone contributing to global food security replaced with that of someone dependent on food assistance to survive. The truth is, I cannot imagine all of that. So instead, I meet with these farmers and their families to hear their stories, to let them know I cannot imagine what they are going through but I can see it is wrong, and I visit the places that are being shelled daily by Russian assaults. Then our Foundation figures out ways to mitigate the impact of this war on people who never asked for their lives to be upended and who do not deserve this attack. We work to get emergency relief to people who need it, and we work to support as many farmers as we can, as close to the front lines as possible, by funding landmine removal, loaning farm equipment, and yes, providing food assistance.

After the war, Ukraine will need to rebuild its agricultural economy. They will be able to learn a lot from American farmers. Until then, they can teach and remind us how fortunate we are and how much we need them to prevail in their fight for freedom.

TWO APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY IN GUATEMALA'S WESTERN HIGHLANDS

IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

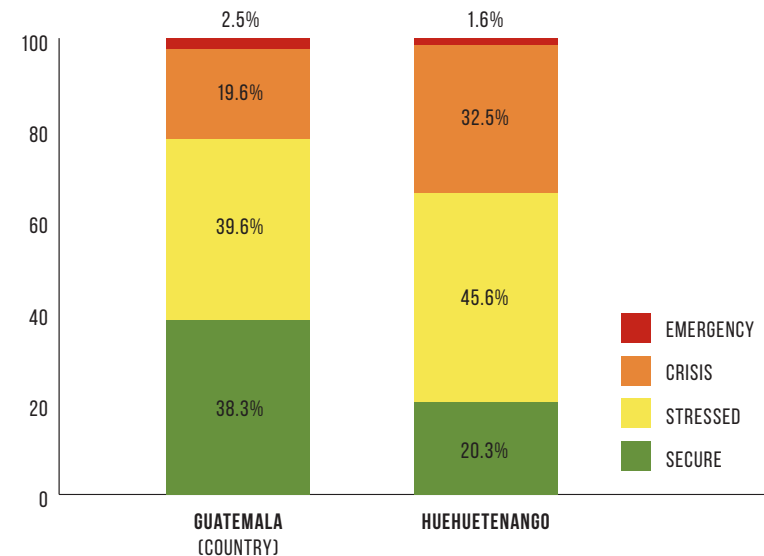
Six out of every 10 people in Guatemala live in poverty that impacts multiple aspects of their daily lives. They face food insecurity, malnutrition, lack access to decent employment, suffer health threats, and limited opportunities for housing and education.¹ In recent years, the pandemic and weather-related shocks have aggravated the situation. Increasing food insecurity has resulted in Guatemala having the fifth-highest rate of stunting (low height-for-age) in the world—and the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean—at 47 percent.² Indigenous and rural populations are at greatest risk, with indigenous children twice as likely to suffer from chronic malnutrition than non-indigenous children. Huehuetenango, a department in Guatemala's Western Highlands, is where the problem is the most acute—a staggering 80 percent of the population experiences food insecurity.³

With the implementation support of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Foundation is providing \$10 million over three years to scale up an integrated, resilience-building pilot program that works to improve food security. Our funding targets 30,000 people in four priority municipalities (Aguacatán, Santa Barbara, Chiantla, and Huehuetenango) where less than five percent of children between the ages of six months and two years have access to the minimum acceptable diet.

The project works to improve the food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable populations, particularly indigenous women, adolescent girls, and children. To ensure that the beneficiary households have sufficient, safe, and nutritionally adequate food throughout the year, the program provides conditional cash transfers and market access for productive projects. These interventions are complemented by trainings in hygiene, nutrition, entrepreneurship, and agricultural production designed to increase the capacity of these communities to safely weather future food security crises.

1 Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network/ MPPN, November 2019 Guatemala | MPPN
 2 Ministerio de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social (MSPAS), Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), ICF International. 2017. Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil 2014–2015. Informe Final. Guatemala: MSPAS/INE/ICF.
 3 IPC. 2022. Guatemala: Acute Food Insecurity Situation Projection Update for November 2020 - March 2021. <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1152979/?iso3=GTM>.

LEVEL OF ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY COMPARISON IN GUATEMALA AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUEHUETENANGO ACCORDING TO THE IPC CLASSIFICATION RANKING



LANDSCAPE RESTORATION IN GUATEMALA'S WESTERN HIGHLANDS

Agricultural production is the main livelihood and the largest contributor to meeting local food security needs for families in the Western Highlands. Increased droughts, intense weather events, and plant-based diseases—such as coffee leaf rust—have led to declining yields throughout the Western Highlands. Unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation drive soil erosion and water resource degradation on the region's steep mountainous terrain. Introducing conservation-based agricultural practices and targeting support for smallholder farmers is critical to restoring the wider landscape in Guatemala's Western Highlands and in turn, increasing food security. The Foundation's decades-long work across Central America, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), has successfully demonstrated how adoption of better agricultural practices can improve yields, incomes, and resilience for farmers. The goal is to translate those successes to the Western Highlands.

To achieve this goal, the Foundation and CRS is prioritizing landscape restoration through adoption of “water-smart agriculture” (WSA) practices, empowering youth and supporting agricultural entrepreneurship with an investment of \$49.6 million over 10 years. The *Horizons* program will eventually support 15,000 farmers and 4,800 young people across 17 municipalities in the departments of Huehuetenango, San Marcos, and Quiché. These departments also have the highest outmigration in Guatemala. Participating farmers will join a multi-actor extension network with access to WSA training and technical assistance. *Horizons* is prioritizing market-based development strategies to link farmers to inputs, services, and markets.

CRS is also organizing and offering vocational trainings, educational scholarships, and seed capital for agro-enterprises, so young people can develop their technical and leadership skills and take advantage of economic opportunities in their home communities. Programming focuses on supporting women and indigenous youth interested in pursuing professions in rural and agricultural livelihoods. Through coordination between local partners, a training-of-trainers initiative and a soil information system, *Horizons* aims to strengthen the social capital and leadership capacity for agricultural landscape management in Guatemala's Western Highlands. With this long-term funding commitment in a critically under-invested region in Guatemala, the Foundation hopes to foster sustainable agricultural livelihoods built on resilience to extreme weather and community investment.

Right: A girl in a small village in Guatemala hangs corn to dry. The corn hanging behind her are traditional varieties that hold special purpose in her culture.



THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY AGRILINKS ON JULY 27, 2023.

HOW A CACAO RESURGENCE IS REVITALIZING DEGRADED LAND AND THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY IN EL SALVADOR

BY CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Is it possible to reintroduce a crop with a compelling global value in a nation with substantial land degradation and little institutional crop memory? Yes, it's possible. But only with a strategic approach to market systems development (MSD).

With local partners CLUSA El Salvador, Acugolfo and Caritas, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been working since 2014 to resuscitate El Salvador's cacao sector through the Alianza Cacao project. Alianza Cacao aims to turn El Salvador into a key exporter and place of origin for high-quality, aromatic, fine-flavor cacao by stimulating production of an estimated 4,500 metric tons of Salvadoran cacao worth approximately \$20,000,000 over the life of the project. Additionally, by supporting farmers to implement water-smart agroforestry practices that restore soil and water resources, Alianza Cacao is helping to repair the environmental degradation that threatens the long-term health and resilience of the land and economy in El Salvador.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Cacao production in El Salvador goes back over 3,000 years. In recent decades, production decreased dramatically in favor of crops like sugar cane and coffee, even though Salvadoran cacao is among the best in the world. El Salvador produces just 1,500 metric tons of cacao per year, only 5% of the worldwide production of almost 5 million metric tons. There is a huge opportunity for El Salvador to reclaim its rich cacao history and establish a place among the world's finest cacao producers.

And this tremendous economic opportunity can also contribute to resolving El Salvador's big environmental problems. Widespread deforestation, along with soil and water resource degradation, have left El Salvador with little protection from the increasingly erratic rainfall and drought, extreme storms and higher temperatures brought by climate change. El Salvador is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate risk in the world and is already facing water scarcity. Cacao agroforestry systems managed to restore soil and water resources are an economically viable land restoration strategy that benefits smallholder farmers, climate-vulnerable communities, and El Salvador's economy.



Before and after cacao agroforestry in El Salvador.

VIABLE SOLUTION

The two-phase Alianza Cacao project began in October 2014. Funding for phase one came from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, USAID, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Phase two is funded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. Alianza Cacao's goal is to increase the production and processing of cacao in El Salvador and establish the country as a global source of fine chocolate by creating a viable, environmentally sustainable and high-revenue-generating livelihood for vulnerable farmers.



Tetonalli Chocolate produced by Glendy Fernández and Juan Carlos Valle's family. Tetonalli means "A new beginning" in local Nahuatl language, and it really was a new beginning for Juan Carlos, who was deported from the U.S. The CRS Alianza Cacao project helped the family start a cacao business that provides a livelihood at home in El Salvador. (Photo: Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS.)

CRS used an MSD approach to make Alianza Cacao sustainable at scale. The program analyzed the cacao market system, identified key market issues and bottlenecks, created a vision for a better functioning market system and then partnered with a diverse group of government and private sector entities to design and implement the interventions. Alianza Cacao works with universities to improve the agriculture extension curriculum, lab testing and research. They work with the government to pass and implement policy that prioritizes the cacao value chain. They work with small- and medium-scale cacao producers, processors and others in the value chain to improve the quality and quantity of cacao. They strengthen small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with business planning and commercial, financial and administrative management tools to strengthen local markets for local cacao. They connect farmers to financing, and Alianza Cacao has raised the international profile

of Salvadoran cacao by helping producers and processors share their products at international competitions, thus creating demand from international chocolatiers. As a result of this work, in 2023, the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO) recognized El Salvador as an exclusive exporter of fine or flavor cocoa beans and noted efforts made over the last decade to develop the sector.

NOTABLE PROGRESS

Alianza Cacao has successfully partnered with small-, medium-, and large-scale farmers to plant thousands of new cacao trees, effectively reintroducing cacao to El Salvador, and the efforts are paying off!

In 2017, Alianza Cacao reached a major milestone when Jose Eduardo Zacapa, a project participant, became one of the 18 “International Cacao of Excellence” award winners, and the first-ever Salvadoran to win the event. The award put El Salvador on the global map as an important source of fine and aromatic cacao, and soon the international orders for Salvadoran cacao rolled in. Cacao processors supported by Alianza Cacao are also sending samples to fancy food shows around the world, and Salvadoran participation and representation at fancy food shows have already led Czech, Taiwanese and American buyers to contact the Ministry of External Affairs about sourcing cacao from El Salvador.

HOLISTIC MARKET SYSTEMS PROCESS

Alianza Cacao’s work in the value chain and market system is establishing cacao as a nationally prioritized crop:

UNIVERSITIES/EDUCATION: In phase one, the project signed agreements with local universities to provide small grants for research, technical workshops and advisory services for students studying cacao production and processing. The project supported digital tools and manuals to ensure the curriculum was technically sound and the use of modern testing protocols by university laboratories. These testing protocols enabled El Salvador to participate in the Cacao of Excellence competition in Paris, France.

PUBLIC SECTOR: The first phase of Alianza Cacao developed policy and proposed a legal framework to revitalize the cacao value chain. Despite a temporary stall in legislative work after the presidential elections and the change in administration in 2019, thousands of new cacao trees grew in the first years, and other aspects of the value chain moved forward. With the international demand for Salvadoran cacao continuing to grow, the public sector is again taking notice. In phase two, the project is fostering the government’s renewed interest and is continuing to advocate for policy and legislation, including incentives for the cacao sector at scale. This will reinforce the vision to establish an international market for Salvadoran cacao, supported by national policy.

PRIVATE SECTOR: Alianza Cacao helped to establish a National Cacao Roundtable consisting of producers, processors, exporters, industry, academia and the public sector. The Alianza then worked to strengthen the platform with annual strategic plans, management structures and capacity for advocacy. The National Cacao Roundtable then took over and supported the participation of farmers in the Cacao of Excellence competition in Paris. In the second phase of the project, the National Cacao Roundtable is still active, serving as a forum for partnerships among producers, processors, exporters and academia, while coordinating with Alianza Cacao. In phase 2, Alianza Cacao is applying a set of business-strengthening tools specifically for SMEs, which helps companies identify their competitive advantage, develop strategies for market opportunities and implement the value-adding interventions and techniques necessary to ensure a steady supply of quality raw material. The process also provides SMEs with new insights regarding end markets, how or where to obtain current market information, strategic and financial planning, and general capacity building in internal operational systems and protocols.

FINANCIAL SECTOR: Although Alianza Cacao engaged two public banks to establish lines of credit for cacao farmers, the smallholder producers were not able to meet the bank’s conditions. Instead, Alianza joined forces with several farmers’ cooperatives that produce beans and maize as well as cacao. The banks were willing to make the loans with the other crops as security, and cacao producers then gained access to lines of credit.

INVESTING IN CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

More than 80% of Salvadoran cacao farms rely on rainfall to water their crops. While the overall amount of rainfall in El Salvador is more than adequate for cacao production, the increasingly erratic distribution of the rainfall, fewer heavier rainfall events and a long dry season from December to May challenge farmers to keep their trees healthy and well-watered. Alianza Cacao is innovating with farmers to build rainwater reservoirs to harvest and store rain when it falls for supplemental irrigation when the climate gets too dry for too long. Combined with agroforestry practices that protect the soil with ground cover and leaf litter and reduce unproductive evaporation of moisture from the soil surface, El Salvador’s cacao producers are making the most of their rainfall and producing more cacao.

The global market demand for unique and high-quality Salvadoran chocolate is growing. With smart investments in agricultural practices that will regenerate the land while revitalizing economic opportunities, the future of chocolate in El Salvador is rich.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN RWANDA'S SEED SECTOR

Limited access to quality seed is a significant challenge for smallholder farmers in Rwanda. Certified and improved seeds are crucial for farmers to increase their yields and to help prevent crop damage from diseases and pests. To help meet high farmer demand, the Government of Rwanda subsidizes locally produced seed for key staple crops. However, seed production is a difficult business for local entrepreneurs to pursue because of the high investment costs and technical expertise required, so local production remains low, and Rwanda remains dependent on higher-priced, imported seed.

To promote domestic seed production and improve farmer access to high-quality seed, in late 2021 the Foundation provided an \$18.8 million, five-year grant to One Acre Fund (OAF) to establish the Seed Centre of Excellence at the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture (RICA). The Seed Centre will focus on three areas: (1) certified potato seed production; (2) multigrain seed processing; and (3) seed innovation. At the conclusion of this two-phase project, the Seed Centre at RICA will include the following resources: 100 hectares of irrigated land for potato and other seed production; a 10-hectare seed research plot; multigrain seed processing equipment and storage; specialized potato seed storage; a greenhouse to produce apical cuttings (the first step of potato seed production); a plant nursery; a lab and innovation center; and offices and meeting spaces. The Seed Centre will also offer opportunities for RICA faculty and students to learn about and participate in certified seed production and processing, and to engage in innovative research.

CERTIFIED POTATO SEED PRODUCTION

Potato is an important cash crop to many smallholder farmers in Rwanda, but access to high-quality, disease-free, certified potato seed is very low. Prior to this partnership, only about five percent of the demand for potato seed was being met. Potato seed production is very difficult and requires specific expertise to avoid diseases and pests. It also requires specialized equipment to perform soil testing and to harvest and store the potatoes in a way to avoid post-harvest losses.

Through partnerships with local seed companies and available farmland at RICA, OAF is working to produce 10,000 metric tons (MT) (9,842 tons) of certified potato seed to sell to Rwandan farmers within the next five to 10 years. The Seed Centre will also produce bean, cover crop, and other certified seeds as a part of a crop rotation with potato seed to avoid soil contamination that could cause disease.

In 2023, the project constructed specialized potato storage, worked with partners to produce various generations of potato seed, and successfully distributed the first crop of certified potato seed to 1,496 farmers.

MULTIGRAIN SEED PROCESSING

The need for professional seed processing services has increased as many cooperatives and local seed producers in Rwanda work to respond to the government's call for increased domestic seed production. Prior to the partnership with OAF, seed companies could lose up to half of their yields simply because they were not able to access processing equipment at the right time. To address this, OAF is constructing a multigrain seed processing center at the Seed Centre at RICA which will have the capacity to dry, clean, process, package, and test two MT of seed per hour for maize, wheat, bean, soybean, and sunn hemp. Seed companies from across Rwanda will have access to this processing center on a pay-per-service model, allowing small- and medium-sized enterprises to reduce their post-harvest losses and ensure their seed is high quality and meets all regulatory standards. The revenue generated from providing the service will also underwrite the operational costs and ensure the Seed Centre will be self-sustaining.

SEED INNOVATION

Since the domestic seed production industry is relatively new and growing rapidly, there is a significant need to innovate and professionalize the sector. Private seed companies in Rwanda lack capital and expertise to invest in developing locally adapted, customer-relevant seed varieties for smallholder farmers across almost all major crops. This leads to only a few popular seed varieties which are 15+ years old, which in turn limits farmers' choice of products and reduces yield potential.

To spur innovation, Foundation-funding allowed OAF to develop a Seed Professionals course to train seed company employees and recent university graduates on the best practices for seed production and business practices. The first cohort of the year-long program began in August 2023 with 16 students: five are employees from seed companies; five are recent graduates from RICA; and six are recent graduates from the University of Rwanda's agriculture program.

Another factor limiting the sector's potential is the shortage of seed inspectors who can visit companies to inspect their seed production processes to determine if the seed qualifies to be sold as "certified." Without adequate inspection services, there is less incentive for seed production companies to sell their seed as certified to obtain a higher price, and farmers will have more difficulty obtaining certified seed. To address this gap, the Foundation's grant provides funding for 22 seed inspectors at the Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Authority (RICCA) for 18 months to ensure that all seed production is verified. With this support, RICCA has been able to meet the demand for seed inspection services. In 2023, these seed inspectors trained

80 seed producers, inspected 900 hectares (2,224 acres) of land under seed production as well as 14 seed processing and storage units. The wide reach of the seed inspectors funded through RICCA is driving demand for their services, giving these inspectors viable opportunities to set up private consultancies to keep offering their services once the grant funding ends.

An additional aspect of seed production that RICCA works on in collaboration with the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Board (RAB) is trials of new seed varieties to test how they compare with existing varieties on the market. If the new varieties, developed by seed companies, do not prove to be better on certain metrics than the existing varieties, then they will not be permitted to be sold in the country. Using the newly developed farmland at RICA for the Seed Centre, OAF is collaborating with RICCA and RAB to run these trials. This collaboration will help to facilitate and accelerate the process of approving new improved varieties for the Rwandan seed market. The Seed Centre will also work to develop new varieties of their own, to improve the quality of seed available to Rwandan smallholders.

In October 2023, the Seed Centre celebrated its groundbreaking at RICA. Construction of the main campus in Phase 1 is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024 or early 2025. Through this partnership between the Foundation and OAF to develop the Seed Centre of Excellence at RICA, Rwandan farmers will have access to improved varieties of seed for a diverse set of crops to enhance their yields and profitability.

Right: A woman sorts and dries corn at the Nasho Irrigation Cooperative (NAICO) in Rwanda, where the Foundation has supported over 2,000 farmers.





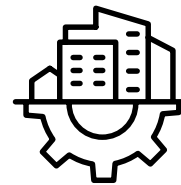


CONFLICT MITIGATION



The world—by any measure—did not become more peaceful in 2023. It is therefore difficult to characterize our 2023 investments in conflict mitigation as successful. Yet when we look at the needs of the people living in unstable places in the world where we directed our resources in Colombia, Central America, Ukraine, and Africa’s Great Lakes region, it is impossible to imagine what their lives would be like without those investments. By working alongside them and our partners on the ground to end conflicts, reduce their effects on people’s lives, and invest in the conditions that hopefully lead to peace and development, we hope over time to be able to use “peace” as our measure of success. Until then, we will share the small victories, bold ideas, inevitable mistakes, and lessons learned, and the stories of the remarkable individuals and organizations we are investing in to hopefully, over time, make the world more stable and lay the groundwork for peaceful development.

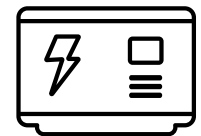
ADDRESSING URGENT NEEDS DURING THE WAR IN UKRAINE



STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE
\$90,508,285



DEMINE
\$87,632,584



GENERATORS
\$38,494,402

DEMINE FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SAFETY

BUILDING OPERATIONAL CAPACITY TO DEMINE

Russia has deployed over two million mines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) throughout occupied areas in Ukraine since the 2022 full-scale invasion. Ukraine now faces one of the most complex demining challenges in the world, with about 30 percent of its territory requiring surveys for landmines, including more than 15 percent of its total farmland.

Clearing land quickly and safely is essential to prevent continued loss of Ukrainian lives and to ensure Ukraine's agricultural sector returns to production as quickly as possible, both for its own economy and to contribute to global food security. The Foundation is working to build Ukraine's operational capacity to demine with the goal of restoring security at the community level and helping farmers safely return to their land to farm. To achieve this, we are working with the leading Ukrainian national demining entity, the State Emergency Services of Ukraine (SES), as well as with a number of humanitarian demining international organizations: the HALO Trust (HALO), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD). Through our work with these partners, the Foundation is adding capacity to Ukraine's demining sector and supporting research and innovation in the mine action space.

In partnership with HALO, the Foundation is prioritizing regions in Ukraine critical for agriculture, including Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and more recently, Kherson. These areas face a particular urgency to survey and clear land to help Ukraine rebuild its economic capacity. An initial 18-month, \$15.1 million grant with HALO is deploying 31 teams ranging from non-technical survey (NTS) teams to confirm and map areas with the presence of actual mines and UXOs, to manual and mechanical teams to clear confirmed landmines. Six months into the project, HALO has surveyed 342 settlements and cleared 55,383 m² in Kharkiv and Mykolaiv. HALO will continue deploying HGBF-funded teams to make more agricultural land available for production.

The Foundation also provided an 18-month, \$4 million grant to TDRM to train five clearance teams, two NTS teams, and one quality assurance team to work in Kharkiv and Mykolaiv. In the first few months of the grant, TDRM conducted 72 NTS visits to these oblasts and cleared 6,954 m². Most of the hazardous areas that TDRM encounters in their assigned areas require manual clearance, and on average a deminer can manually clear 15 meters (49 feet) per day—a slow and arduous task. TDRM also faced difficulties recruiting the required medics for each team, which led to some delays in field deployment.

The Foundation also provided funding to SES to fully equip 12 pyrotechnic teams and donated eight minesweepers to build SES's capacity to respond to their increased wartime demands. The rapid influx of equipment to SES from the Foundation and other donors required additional logistical support to ensure SES was able to properly manage, deploy, and maintain all equipment safely and efficiently. The Foundation partnered with the FSD to help SES build its operational capacity and assist with field deployment of the mechanical systems. While SES teams were initially apprehensive about receiving FSD mentorship, after a few months SES recognized the utility of the support and has requested this project be extended and expanded to other equipment.



Opposite page: Deminers from Ukraine's State Emergency Service (SES) check for mines around a house after they clear the inside of the structure. Six SES deminers from this group were killed in 2023 when a Russian drone dropped a grenade on a pile of stacked up TM-62 anti-tank mines that had been removed by the team. **Above:** Howard G. Buffett and Foundation President Ann Kelly Bolten look at a shell casing found in a minefield in the Kharkiv Oblast. Shell casings and other metal scraps are often found on fields with active landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs). This makes the demining process slow and dangerous, as deminers differentiate between junk and actual threats. (Photo: Cristina Camacho)

Halyna and Volodymyr Yevhenivka, husband and wife, are wheat and barley farmers born and raised in Yevhenivka, in Mykolaiv Oblast. Following Russia's full-scale invasion, they lived under Russian occupation for nine months. Their neighbors across the street, two brothers, died when they accidentally triggered anti-personnel mines attached to tripwires in nearby fields. These areas were then marked as hazardous by Ukrainian authorities, and HGBF-funded HALO demining teams are now working to clear them. Halyna said:

“WE CANNOT HARVEST, WE ARE SURVIVING THE BEST WE CAN.”

Volodymyr and Halyna currently rely on their livestock, cows, and chickens for their food supply and income until their 4 hectare (9.8 acres) field is fully demined. When asked if they would cultivate their fields after they are demined, they said “absolutely” and hoped that at that point, their children and grandchildren, who went to Poland to escape the brutal war, would return.

BUILDING UKRAINIAN CAPACITY TO MANAGE DEMINING

Tackling the enormous scale of landmines and other UXOs in Ukraine requires robust institutional and regulatory systems to assess, prioritize, manage, oversee, and allocate limited resources. Demining in Ukraine is not a new issue—landmines have been a problem since the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea—but the Ukrainian government's demining structure was never designed for a crisis of the magnitude it currently faces. Different agencies are tasked with different demining-related responsibilities, and the national mine action authority is led by the Ministry of Defense—the agency with the least available capacity to lead such a massive undertaking given its role in the war effort. Ultimately, international assistance for demining will yield little if not executed effectively.

Recognizing the imperative of demining to facilitate Ukraine's economic recovery, the Ukrainian Ministry of Economy was tasked with coordinating the non-military, humanitarian mine action ecosystem in the country, including providing recommendations for effective coordination in accreditation of new organizations, certification for clearance methods or machinery, and a framework for prioritizing areas assigned for demining. To formalize these efforts, the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers created a Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

To support the Ministry's humanitarian mission, the Foundation is partnering with the Tony Blair Institute (TBI) to assess the socioeconomic impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war and design a better way to prioritize areas for mine action. As part of its economic rebuilding mandate, TBI will also help the Ministry identify regulatory barriers to private sector investment in Ukraine.

TBI is assembling a team of experts to collect data from a variety of different national sources and databases, analyze potential socioeconomic losses associated with different regions requiring demining, and develop a methodology for prioritizing assets and areas for demining efforts.

The Foundation is also supporting the Ministry of Economy's Mine Action Team and the new Ukrainian Centre for Humanitarian Demining, through a staffing grant to the Lithuanian Central Project Management Agency (CPMA). CPMA is assembling a team of national and international demining experts and support staff to spearhead the Ministry of Economy's efforts to improve coordination in the mine action space across donors, demining implementers, and Ukrainian agencies.

INNOVATION IN MANUFACTURING FOR DEMINING

Much of the technology and equipment used around the world for mine clearance has remained unchanged for decades. Demining machines are also prohibitively expensive with long manufacturing lead times. The unprecedented scale of the landmine crisis in Ukraine will force new and creative approaches to demining, including new technology and mechanical clearance equipment and methodologies that can be done faster without sacrificing safety. Ukraine will need to become a global leader in demining technology innovation to recover its economy and address the scale of mines in its country. Organizations and individuals throughout Ukraine are already exploring ways to accelerate demining, ranging from using Artificial Intelligence (AI) software to remotely detect mines to farmers adapting their own farm equipment for ad-hoc mine clearance. Ukrainians are proving to be resourceful and ingenious in their search for alternatives to what could otherwise be a decades-long demining process.

To support this innovation effort—and working in close coordination with humanitarian demining organizations and the Ukrainian Ministry for Strategic Industries—the Foundation is testing retrofitted construction and agricultural equipment to determine if they can be repurposed for ground preparation, verification, technical survey, and/or mine clearance. Mechanical assets can be incredible tools for demining, especially when surveying or clearing large swaths of agricultural land. Given the expense and years-long production timelines of specialized demining machines, the goal is to adapt widely available construction and agricultural equipment using different specialized attachments that can be quickly manufactured in Ukraine to perform the same function for a fraction of the

price. The Foundation has purchased 66 bulldozers, three tractors, three excavators, and other heavy-duty equipment to retrofit for demining purposes. Achieving this goal requires a flexible approach and a high tolerance for failure as we test a variety of prototypes to engineer options that will be most effective and easy to mass produce. The Foundation is doing our own research in the field in addition to supporting partners who share and understand this need for innovation in mechanical clearance solutions.

Part of the Foundation's strategic partnership with The HALO Trust includes establishing HALO's Ukraine program as a center for innovation in mechanical landmine clearance. This \$5.5 million grant will research, test, and harness new demining technology to help Ukraine return land to agricultural production, including adding rakes, mine combs, sifters, and other attachments to bulldozers and farm tractors and testing their performance in a minefield. This will continue to inform the Foundation's ongoing efforts to build Ukrainian manufacturing capacity for demining. The localization of this industry is critical to the sustainability and accessibility of demining efforts in Ukraine, as well as to Ukraine's broader economic recovery.



Above: On the Foundation's farm in Decatur, Illinois, an area has been set aside to test machinery for adaptation and survivability for use in demining in Ukraine. This 333G has been fitted with a forestry attachment which mimics a demining tool. It shows no damage after multiple blasts of 300 grams of the explosive material C4; the 300 grams exceeds the normal explosive material in an anti-personnel mine that would be found in Ukraine. **Right:** Inside the cab of a D-6 Cat bulldozer, equipment has been installed using John Deere Precision Agriculture Management System (AMS) accessories to provide mapping and driving capabilities for potential use in verifying Ukrainian farm fields are free of landmines. This tool also allows the vehicle to operate in a straight line, document the area covered, and is capable of operating a machine 24-hours a day. The Foundation is working to combine technology commonly used in agriculture and construction with equipment adapted to support demining in order to safely and more efficiently clear agricultural fields and bring them back into production.



TARGETING INVESTMENTS IN STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

MODULAR BRIDGES

While we do not have the resources to engage in reconstruction efforts, the Foundation continues to look for ways to quickly address critical infrastructure needs in fast, flexible ways, particularly when they relate to Ukraine's role in the global food supply chain. We found precisely that scenario when we agreed to partner with the State Restoration Agency to provide \$9 million in modular bridge sections. The bridge parts were donated to the Ukrainian Roads Agency to restore civilian transit in areas that have sustained significant damage from the full-scale invasion. As of June 2023, over 15,000 miles of road and 344 bridges and bridge crossings have been damaged because of the conflict, at a cost of \$8.6 billion. The modular bridge parts can be assembled and disassembled by the Ukrainian Roads Agency technicians to respond to changes in the conflict or to allow for permanent repairs to the underlying bridge structure.



Above: The Foundation funded the construction of a temporary 509-foot modular bridge that crosses the Teresva River in the Zakarpattia region. The modular bridge helps ease the flow of traffic until the existing bridge, which collapsed last year, is fully restored. The Teresva bridge, which helps connect Ukraine with four neighboring countries, is a critical alternate grain transport route into Central Europe. (Photo: Joseph King/Conflict and Development Foundation)

A portion of the bridge sections donated by the Foundation were ultimately deployed to repair 509 feet of the collapsed Teresva Bridge in the Zakarpattia region, which connects Ukraine to four neighboring countries: Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Poland. The Teresva Bridge is an alternate grain transport route into Central Europe, giving its repair critical importance after the failure of the Black Sea Grain Initiative last year. When the old Soviet-era bridge collapsed in July, Russians used it as propaganda to say that Ukraine could not maintain its infrastructure. The quick installation of the modular bridge not only restored this vital trade route, it also countered these claims. The parts will be disassembled and redeployed once the permanent structure is built, but currently, it is the longest modular bridge in Ukraine.

MITIGATING ATTACKS ON CIVILIAN ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Foundation has worked closely with Ukrainian authorities and implementing partners to focus our support to respond quickly to the highest priority humanitarian needs. When Russia began targeting its attacks on Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure just before the winter of 2022, the Foundation began sourcing generators, securing a total of over 2,600 units of different sizes valued at nearly \$37 million with a total energy capacity of 145,000 kilo-volt-amperes (kVA). This donation included 390 generator tower lights that have assisted first responders in humanitarian rescue missions following Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure. Seventy-two generators are over 500 kVA and will be used to power hospitals and electrical substations, helping frontline communities ensure they can continue to treat injured civilians and keep their homes powered and warm through the winter months.

FIXING WINDOWS TO KEEP PEOPLE HOME

In 2023, the Foundation invested over \$9 million in partnership with GEM to help Ukrainian civilians return to lightly damaged but otherwise livable homes by installing 80,423 locally made window panels in residential buildings. To date, 116,061 window panels have been manufactured in-country. Quick installation of windows after severe shelling has allowed almost 100,000 people to stay in the comfort of their own home, rather than become displaced. Replacing windows in apartments, homes, shelters, administrative buildings, hospitals, and schools also restores a sense of normalcy and hope in the face of tragedy and conflict. At the end of 2023, the Foundation issued a new grant of \$11.2 million to cover the purchase and installation of an additional 33,000 to 55,000 window panels between October 2023 and June 2024, bringing the total window replacement investment in Ukraine to \$20.2 million.

CHILDREN'S CENTERS

As a result of the war, Ukraine's 7.5 million children have suffered disruptions to every aspect of their lives. To try and address this, Nova Ukraine has opened 40 Children's Centers with the Foundation's funding support. The centers provide safe spaces for children to play, socialize, and participate in group virtual learning. Educators facilitate lessons in Ukrainian history and English. These lessons have become so popular that Nova Ukraine increased the number of educators and learning groups in the centers. Over 170,000 children have found comfort in these Centers, benefiting from virtual learning and safety classes with an average of 2,000 visitors per day in fall of 2023. The Foundation is currently reviewing a proposal to expand the Children's Centers in 2024 with 10 additional centers in populated areas where there is high need. Center locations are chosen based on local demand and the presence of operating schools, while balancing safety concerns.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

RESTORING PUBLIC SAFETY IN IZIUM

Russian forces targeted Iziium, a strategic city in Ukraine's Kharkiv region, shortly after the start of the full-scale invasion. After nearly destroying the city's police station, the Russians occupied the building and used the basement to torture and interrogate local citizens. Following Kharkiv's liberation in September 2022, the police uncovered over 20 torture chambers across the region, demonstrating the organized, systematic effort by occupying Russian forces to terrorize the local population.

As Iziium begins to rebuild and residents return to the region, it's critically important that police and first responders are equipped to meet the community's growing needs. Iziium's police have taken on an expanded frontline response role as Iziium rebuilds following the occupation. Unfortunately, the police infrastructure was heavily damaged, hindering their capacity and effectiveness. To aid in Iziium's recovery, the Foundation has committed \$16 million to restore Iziium's police station and preserve the damaged station for evidence and as a memorial to Ukraine's resolve in the face of Russian aggression.

SUPPORT TO FIRST RESPONDERS

To strengthen the capacity of Ukraine's first responders following the Russia's full-scale invasion, the Foundation has provided \$18 million worth of in-kind equipment donations to the National Police of Ukraine (NPU) and the SES.

Firefighters working for the SES have been placed under extreme pressure as they battle fires resulting from indiscriminate shelling and dismantle building debris for search and rescue following missile strikes. Many fire trucks and stations have been destroyed because of the conflict, further limiting the capacity of Ukrainian first responders. To help address these challenges, the Foundation has donated 37 fire trucks and systems valued at \$3.5 million to the SES in Odesa and 3 fire trucks and ladders valued at \$370,000 to the SES in Kharkiv to help restore emergency response capabilities in both regions.



Above: Firefighters put out a fire started by a Russian tank shell in Kherson. The house was destroyed. It was one of six houses hit while we were in the area. Russia fired a total of 81 missile strikes that day.

According to the Kyiv School of Economics, more than 150,000 buildings have been destroyed because of the war, the majority of which are residential. To address some of this need, the Foundation has donated 41 heated shelters to the SES in Kherson, Donetsk, and Odesa so that first responders can temporarily house people during the winter months after their homes have been destroyed from Russian shelling. The equipment will be deployed by the SES to more isolated areas in each region where it's harder for victims to seek shelter in the aftermath of an attack.

K-9s also play a critical role in emergency response efforts, ranging from clearing unexploded ordnance at or near civilian infrastructure to performing search and rescue missions to detecting bodies at mass-casualty sites. To help bolster Ukraine's K-9 program, the Foundation has donated 190 K-9s and 59 K-9 vehicles valued at \$6.9 million to the NPU and SES in addition to funding K-9 handler training for the SES in Sumy and constructing a \$6 million national K-9 training center for the NPU in the Kyiv region.

INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION

IRON SQUAD

Russia's war on Ukraine has been especially traumatizing for Ukraine's children. Finding opportunities for children to feel safe, to learn about and take pride in their Ukrainian identity, and to just have "normal" childhood experiences amidst war is essential to a generation that will be part of Ukraine's post-war recovery. In 2023, with that context in mind, the Foundation granted funding to Save Ukraine to partner with the UZ to develop the Iron Squad program. Designed to support vulnerable Ukrainian youth between the ages of 11-17 who have been deeply affected by the Russian invasion, Iron Squad is in essence a mobile camp experience. Each month, children and their camp counselors travel by train to visit cities across western Ukraine and participate in a variety of physical and educational activities. The participants include Ukrainian children who have been rescued from Russia and occupied territories, as well as children of military personnel and railway workers, and those whose parent(s) have been killed during the war. Many of these children have been forcibly displaced by the Russian military.

Iron Squad addresses an important gap in youth education and socialization during wartime. These camps connect young people from all over Ukraine and introduce them to different aspects of Ukrainian culture, history, and to prominent Ukrainians. The counselors from the first few camps have reported that many children have recurring nightmares, panic attacks, and other side effects from the trauma they have endured. These camps provide a safe and nurturing space for these children and temporary relief from the chaos Russia's war has brought to their lives.



Polina is 14 years old and from Zaporizhzhia. Russia illegally annexed the Zaporizhzhia Oblast on September 30, 2022, including parts it did not control at the time. Polina recently lost her father, who was killed in the war. Despite her loss, Polina is smiling again. She and the other participants from her camp made Christmas toys, played volleyball, and made trench candles for the military, which became quite symbolic for her. She now wants to use some of the skills she gained at camp to help save the lives of others. Polina is grateful to Iron Squad for giving her this newfound inspiration and for the friendships she gained.

Varya, a participant in Iron Squad's fourth cohort, is from Popasna, east of Bakhmut, in occupied Luhansk. She and her family moved to Dnipro after the full-scale invasion, but her grandmother stayed behind in Popasna. In May, during their evacuation from Popasna, Varvara's father was on his way to pick up people when the bus was attacked by a grenade launcher, and he was taken prisoner. He has since returned home, but Varvara had a hard time being separated from him. For the few weeks of her Iron Squad program, she was finally able to relax, feel calm, and smile and laugh with new friends. Varya and her family came to Kyiv for the New Year holidays, where she was able to meet up with her new friends from Iron Squad.



Liza is 15 years old and comes from a family of railway workers. Despite being diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Liza was the most active of the Iron Squad participants in her cohort. She studied paramedicine diligently, participated in all the dance flash mobs, and as an avid painter for over seven years, excelled in the art therapy and fine arts classes. Liza continues to actively correspond with participants from her camp and is already looking forward to meeting up with those who live nearby.



CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SUPERHEROS

In 2023, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation invested \$15.3 million for the construction and equipment costs to develop the Superhumans Center in Lviv. The Foundation also provided \$2 million in prosthetics support, which fully funded the prosthetics department's work from its inception until December 2023.

This state-of-the-art prosthetics clinic provides prosthetics, reconstructive surgery, rehabilitation, and psychological support services for Ukrainian civilians and veterans. The center will be instrumental in rehabilitating the up to 30,000 Ukrainians who have lost at least one limb during the war through 2023. The Center produces, modifies, and maintains all prosthetics in-house within their prosthetics laboratory. In developing the center's facilities, Superhumans consulted with U.S.-based Medical Center Orthotics & Prosthetics (MCOP). MCOP was the exclusive prosthetic contractor for the U.S. military in Washington, D.C. during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They became a leading force in treating patients with complex cases and have been traveling to Ukraine and hosting Superhumans' prosthetists to provide training support.

Many Superhumans' patients were rejected for treatment by other prosthetics centers because of complex or multiple amputations. In its first nine months of operation, the Superhumans Center installed 406 prostheses (341 lower limbs, 65 upper limbs) for 284 patients. Approximately one third of the patients supported returned for adjustments due to a change in weight and extensive use of the prostheses.

In 2024, once a second phase of construction is completed, Superhumans will perform surgeries on-site, reducing the burden on neighboring hospitals and the need to transport patients to and from the prosthetics clinic.

Left: Howard meets with 24-year old triple amputee Denys Kryvenko at the Superhumans Center in Lviv in June 2023. (Photo: Joanna Kozakou)

INVESTIGATING WAR CRIMES WHILE AT WAR

After the de-occupation of Kharkiv in September 2022, authorities uncovered thousands of pieces of evidence showing that war crimes had been committed. These crimes include murder of civilians, sexual violence, torture, destruction of property, unlawful deportations, and deliberate bombardment of residential areas. Approximately 20 percent of all documented war crimes in Ukraine occurred within the Kharkiv Oblast, quickly outstripping the resources of the Kharkiv Police and the Kharkiv War Crimes Prosecutors.

By September 4, 2023, authorities in Kharkiv reported approximately 19,000 war crimes cases under investigation, and the caseload continues to rise. Authorities are hindered by problems within the Ukrainian law enforcement system before the invasion. These issues are all compounded by ongoing active conflict in the region. In response to these challenges, the Foundation partnered with PEJ to conduct a six-month assessment to develop a granular understanding of the legal, technical, operational, and human resources needed to support war crime accountability mechanisms in Kharkiv. The assessment highlighted the scope of war crimes carried out in the region and underscored the importance of a sustained commitment to ensure that justice operators have sufficient resources to meet their needs.

To hold more war crimes perpetrators accountable, the Foundation has expanded our partnership with PEJ with a \$2.6 million, two-year grant to provide additional capacity to police and prosecutors in Kharkiv to document and prosecute war crimes. PEJ will provide embedded support to help police and prosecutors cope with heavy caseloads and fill knowledge and capacity gaps through tailored training programs.

The Foundation has also sought to increase the technical capacity of Ukrainian investigators by providing \$5.1 million worth of DNA equipment to document crimes against humanity. The 18 mobile DNA machines that we donated to the National Police are being deployed to Kyiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv to identify bodies of civilians recovered from mass casualty sites and exhumed from mass graves in areas that were formerly occupied by Russian forces. Authorities anticipate a significant number of graves will be located as additional occupied areas are liberated.

MISSILE STRIKE IN HROZA

On October 5, 2023, the Russian military carried out a missile strike on a café in Hroza where 59 people were gathered for the reburial ceremony of a local Ukrainian serviceman. Immediately after the attack, Russian military representatives claimed that the gathering was a legitimate military target. The United Nations was able to refute that claim with the help of the Kharkiv police. The Kharkiv police worked around the clock for five days straight to establish 135 DNA profiles from corpses at the scene using mobile DNA machines donated by the Foundation. From there, specialists collected 23 samples from relatives of the deceased that helped them identify 19 corpses. One person was identified by 20 fragments found at the site of the missile strike. The preliminary DNA evidence collected by the Kharkiv police helped prove that the victims were civilians and largely of retirement age, making the incident one of the deadliest attacks on civilians since the start of the full-scale invasion.

Technical support provided by the Foundation was critical not just in identifying the victims, but also in the emergency response and crime scene reconstruction efforts. Foundation-donated K9s were used to search for bodies; Foundation-donated lights and generators were used to illuminate the scene; and Foundation-donated vehicles were used to transport bodies. While emergency response efforts were underway, the Kharkiv prosecutor's office deployed drones donated by the Foundation to collect footage of the scene and later used that footage to create a 3-D model of where the missile hit the café. It used to take prosecutors up to three days to collect this type of evidence, which can now be gathered in a few hours with the donated equipment.

The prosecutor's office identified two former police officers from Kharkiv as the source provided to the Russians for the attack. The officers are currently hiding in Russia and are also responsible for passing on to Russian forces information about the location of Ukrainian checkpoints and military equipment. The prosecutor's office is now carrying out a pre-trial investigation to determine command responsibility within the Russian military for the missile strike.

Right: Drone footage collected of the café in Hroza that was destroyed on October 5, 2023 by a Russian missile strike, killing 59 civilians who were attending a funeral reception. (Photo: Spartak Borisenko, Kharkiv Prosecutor's Office)



WHISTLESTOPS FOR UKRAINE

WHISTLESTOPS FOR UKRAINE

Russia's war in Ukraine is the largest conflict in Europe since World War II. The cost to rebuild Ukraine's agricultural sector alone is estimated to exceed \$400 billion. The war has driven food and energy insecurity, inflation, and the greatest wave of refugees across the European continent. The U.S. economy, especially for America's agricultural sector, is not immune: more than 80 percent of all fertilizers used in the United States are imported from Eastern Europe; many multinational agricultural corporations have ceased operations in Ukraine due to the war; and economic sanctions are limiting access to fertilizer, driving up costs. Russian propaganda has been successful in undermining support for Ukraine in the U.S.; however, what happens in Ukraine will have enormous implications for the global economy and global security.

Given the many parallels between the current environment and the challenges the world faced in the aftermath of World War II, the Foundation is partnering with the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and *Farm Journal* to travel to communities across the U.S. to talk about the war in Ukraine and explain its relevance to Americans. Each tour stop includes meetings, townhalls, and other engagements with local stakeholders such as city and county leaders, faith-based groups, community service organizations, veterans' organizations, civic and business leaders, schools, agribusinesses, and Ukrainian communities. The goal is to engage local stakeholders in open discussions about how Russia's war impacts their communities and why U.S. support for Ukraine's victory, economic recovery, and reconstruction enhances America's security and prosperity.



Above: Howard G. Buffett joins German Marshall Fund President Heather Conley and Ukrainian Ambassador to the U.S. Oksana Markarova onstage in Minneapolis for the first stop of the "Whistlestops for Ukraine" tour. (Photo: Farm Journal Media)

A few of the messages being underscored for American audiences include:

- **U.S. Support for Ukraine Supports Manufacturing Jobs in America:** According to the American Enterprise Institute, almost 90 percent of military aid to Ukraine is actually spent in the United States, with American defense companies that employ American workers across 117 production lines in at least 31 states and 71 cities and countless other U.S. suppliers from every U.S. state;
- **U.S. Support for Ukraine Is Making America's Military Defense Capacity Stronger:** U.S. support to Ukraine has allowed our military to clear out outdated weapons and old ammunition—many with high failure rates that the Ukrainian military experiences real-time in the field—and replace them with more advanced inventory, while reinvigorating our defense industrial base at a time when the world is getting more dangerous;
- **NATO Support for Ukraine is Increasing the Market for American-Made Goods Overseas:** U.S. companies are also benefiting from billions of dollars in sales to our NATO allies who are also supplying Ukraine with their old systems and replacing their inventories with more advanced weapons and systems manufactured in America;
- **Ukraine Has Significantly Weakened Russia's Military Capability:** A declassified U.S. intelligence report estimates nearly 90 percent of Russia's pre-war military personnel have been killed or injured in the war in Ukraine and losses in personnel and armored vehicles have set Russia's modernization efforts back by 18 years.

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INDEPENDENCE TAKES ON A WHOLE NEW MEANING

UKRAINIANS ARE FIGHTING FOR THE FREEDOM THAT CREATED AMERICA

BY HOWARD G. BUFFETT

Every country that fought for its freedom from oppressive or unwanted rule celebrates its own version of Independence Day. Each country also has an anthem and a flag that expresses its national identity.

I learned early on, when my dad took me to my first baseball game, to remove my hat, put my hand over my heart, face the flag and sing along (poorly) to the “Star Spangled Banner.” That sense of pride and obligation to celebrate my country will never change. Even with our country’s flaws, the mistakes we have made and the injustices that remain, I have seen enough of the world to recognize and appreciate what we have at home.

But this year’s Independence Day had a different meaning for me. Having recently returned home from my eighth trip to Ukraine since Russia’s full-scale invasion—and my third trip to the front lines—I did not hear the fireworks the same way I had in the past. My trips to Bakhmut, Borova, Krasnohorivka and other places along the front lines in Ukraine changed that for me. Standing in these places, the sound of shelling was a constant thundering, like a Midwest thunder- storm with no rain. The rumbling was only interrupted by the louder artillery explosions that were just like what I heard this Fourth of July.



SINCE RUSSIA'S INVASION, HOWARD BUFFETT HAS BEEN TO UKRAINE EIGHT TIMES. HE'S MET CITIZENS WHO ARE NOW ON THE FRONT LINES AND PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO CELEBRATE THEIR OWN INDEPENDENCE DAY.

Amid all of this are people living in basements of decimated buildings that look uninhabitable. You know where they are because the dogs detect the presence of humans and bark when you get close enough.

CITIZEN SOLDIERS

As I listened to the sound of fireworks and my dogs barking on Independence Day, I thought of where I had been a few weeks ago and the parallels to our very American celebration and the Ukrainians fighting for that same freedom, many of them citizen soldiers like our country’s own revolutionaries.

In a Ukrainian command center, I asked a few guys if they had always been in the military. They all smiled. One had been an auto mechanic, one a computer programmer, one a teacher and another had owned a bakery. On our trip to Velyka Novosilka, I met a Master Sergeant who had been a banker a year earlier. His son, who had been fighting in the same brigade, was buried a week before we arrived.

Ukrainians are fighting for the kind of freedom that created America nearly 250 years ago. They are fighting for the right to celebrate their own Independence Day.

PRIDE AND SADNESS

This Fourth of July I received several text messages from Ukrainians congratulating me on America’s independence as they continue to fight for their own. I heard from the commander of a tank group I met, the Sergeant of a Howitzer team and a friend from the Kyiv police who would reach out on difficult days when recovering civilians from shelled buildings.

The war in Ukraine has forever changed the Fourth of July for me. The sounds of fireworks will never be the same. When our national anthem plays, I will hear it with both pride and sadness because I have met people who have died fighting for freedom.

A vast field of golden wheat stretches to the horizon under a dramatic, cloudy blue sky. The wheat is in full bloom, with golden heads and green stalks. The sky is a deep blue with scattered white clouds. In the distance, a range of low mountains is visible on the horizon.

COURAGE OF A NATION

680 DAYS OF WAR

Below is a reprint of Howard's introduction from Courage of a Nation.

Courage of a Nation documents the first two years of war in Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, and showcases a compilation of the thousands of images Howard Buffett has captured over the 10 trips he has taken since the start of the war. Howard documents the atrocities committed against Ukrainians, as well as their suffering, resilience and courage. A digital version of the book can be viewed using the QR code, or at <https://online.fliphtml5.com/ewpvp/pahb/>.



I had not given Ukraine much thought since I first visited the country in February of 1991 to meet with farmers and the Minister of Agriculture. In 2014, I watched news accounts of protests by Ukrainians against their pro-Russia president and Russia's subsequent occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea. These events, as significant as they were, did not keep my attention because at the time they didn't relate to our Foundation's mission.

We have a long history of working in Central America, South America, Mexico and on the African continent. One of our Foundation's main focus areas is investing in agricultural development to improve food security. Ukraine, historically a global leader in exports of agricultural commodities, was a country where our support for agricultural development would not typically be needed. A second priority area for our funding is conflict mitigation, which is usually directed towards regional circumstances that are driven by widespread poverty, lack of economic opportunity, insufficient rule of law and poor government accountability. The kinds of conflicts our funding has worked to disrupt or mitigate are ones that occur mostly because of internal dynamics tied to poverty and food insecurity.

Our focus shifted when Russia's President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. I immediately recognized the impact this would have on global food security, particularly in some of the most unstable and food-insecure countries in the world, many of which we know well from past work. I anticipated some of the humanitarian consequences the war would create, though I initially underestimated its scale. The war in Ukraine very quickly created the largest humanitarian crisis I have witnessed in my lifetime and the largest food crisis in modern history. Russia has used starvation as a war tactic, in direct violation of the Geneva Convention. I learned long ago that food is power; in Ukraine, Russia is using it to try to break the will of the people. This strategy has failed so far, but as the war enters its third year, it will test the limits of Ukrainian resolve.

I also did not anticipate the depths Putin was willing to go to achieve his objectives: the unrelenting and systematic attack on civilians and civilian targets; the extensive and widespread commitment of human atrocities; and the complete disregard for international standards and rules of war. From what I have witnessed during my 10 visits to Ukraine, I can say without equivocation that Putin is responsible for an astonishing number of war crimes and crimes against humanity, committing them at a scale that is difficult to comprehend. It is a mistake to think these actions only affect Ukraine. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg made the point that if Putin wins, it signals to other authoritarian leaders that using military power is an effective strategy to get what they want. Such a world is inherently more dangerous, making the U.S. and our allies more vulnerable.

Photo: Mark Rigel





John McCain once said: “Not to provoke Putin is to show weakness, which will 100 percent provoke Putin.” Putin sees our failure to respond quickly and with the necessary military support as weakness. Our failure to act quickly and decisively to provide Ukraine what it needed has been costly, going well beyond the lives that have been lost in Ukraine. In late 2023, the First Lady Olena Zelenska said that Ukraine is in “mortal danger.” She was right. Putin is using lagging support for and attention on Ukraine to step up Russia’s attacks, including on civilian targets.

Russia’s invasion of a sovereign country has and will continue to shift the geopolitical landscape that has historically allowed for a mostly peaceful post-Second World War order. It is hard to fathom that Russia, with support from Belarus, Iran, North Korea, mercenaries from Syria and militias from Chechnya, is waging a war of choice on the European continent. Also incomprehensible is Russia’s willingness to contract with private militaries and release over 100,000 criminals, many convicted of violent crimes, from Russian prisons to fight against Ukraine. These unimaginable events are today’s reality.

One of the ways I try to convey and document the atrocities I have seen in places far from home is through my photography. I photographed the remnants of the conflict in Bosnia and the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda. Each successive human-initiated tragedy echoed the message that first emerged after the Holocaust: “Never again.” Never again should the world stand by as human beings are systematically exterminated because of their identity. Yet “never again” has been unfolding in Ukraine over the last two years. When this war is over and the full extent of the war crimes and the systematic targeting of schools, hospitals, churches, homes, apartment buildings, shopping centers, gas stations and other critical civilian infrastructure including the electrical transmission and distribution networks is accounted for, it will be a shocking toll. When the crimes against civilians are fully accounted for, I believe it will be a staggering number. Unfortunately, as Russia maintains a heavily fortified line of defense, occupying roughly 20 percent of Ukraine, and Putin continues to push the Russian military west, documenting and adjudicating the full breadth of war crimes they have committed will take years.



Russia has stolen Ukrainian children, taking them to filtration camps before distributing them across Russia. They have been “reprogrammed” to believe they are not wanted in Ukraine and to hate Ukraine. Teenagers have been placed in “patriotic education” camps; their Ukrainian documents are often replaced with Russian documents. Deportation and forceable transfer of persons is a crime against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. On March 17, 2023, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, Russia’s President, and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, Russia’s Commissioner for Children’s Rights, for the unlawful transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia. In addition to forcibly removing children from their families, Russia has replaced school curriculums and teachers in occupied areas, forced citizens to register as Russians, set up Russian administrations and held “referendums” to illegally annex areas of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions in Ukraine. Putin signed accession treaties with the four pro-Russian leaders in these regions. Today, there are documented reports that captured Ukrainian civilians are being forced to enter the Russian military to fight against their home country. And the relentless targeting of religious institutions, leaders and cultural heritage sites is designed to erase religious belief systems and Ukrainian identity. All of these actions are illegal under international law.

Since 2022, the Ukrainian military has had success pushing back and reclaiming 54 percent of the areas initially occupied by Russia, yet Russia continues to occupy parts of Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Crimea. In 2023, the counteroffensive prevented Russia from making significant advances; however, Ukraine has continued to fight at a disadvantage as Russia has maintained its air superiority, and Ukrainians lack long-range artillery and regularly run short on ammunition.

As the war has developed, misconceptions and misinformation have found their way into the mainstream media. Putin's propaganda machine has worked aggressively to influence public opinion, both in the U.S. and globally. One of those misconceptions is where the funds for Ukraine are spent. As much as 65 percent of American support for Ukraine is spent at home in the U.S.—in 31 states across 71 cities supporting American jobs and industries. Less than five percent of the U.S. defense budget has been allocated to support Ukraine, clearing out old stockpiles of weapons and replacing them with new, and in some cases, improved weapon systems. No U.S. lives have been put at risk while America's biggest enemy has been substantially weakened. U.S. intelligence estimates that Russia has lost 87 percent of its active-duty ground troops, 63 percent of its tanks and 32 percent of its armored vehicles. As we support Ukraine's fight to preserve its freedom and to protect its democracy, we are also protecting American interests at home and abroad.

Perhaps Serhii Plokhii put it best: "What the West perspective is missing is that the key question on a global agenda is the future of the West itself. At stake in this war isn't just the fate of Ukraine but also the security of the West, the stability of the international order and the future of democracy as a global force."

I know that photographs cannot convey the totality of what I've seen and experienced, but I hope they will provoke enough outrage to encourage the world to do everything possible to end this war and ensure Ukraine prevails. My goal in part is to provide some visual evidence of the destruction and toll this war has had on civilians. Our Foundation is also committing a significant portion of our monetary and human resources to help Ukrainians survive during this brutal assault by Russia: 50 percent of our resources in 2022 and 70 percent in 2023, in excess of \$500 million. Our redirected resources mean that some areas where we have historically worked received less support, but given the historical nature of this conflict, we feel we have no other choice. The world must bear witness to Russia's crimes and do everything possible to help Ukraine prevail.

One of the tragic outcomes of protracted conflict is the impact it has on everyday life. You want life to be normal; you do not want war to become the new normal. A trip to the market comes with the risk of being shelled; children cannot attend school in person unless they have enough time to evacuate to a bomb shelter; people regularly decide in the moment if they should respond to an air raid siren or ignore it because living life in a bomb shelter is not practical. You begin to accept things you should not. Living through war should never become normal or acceptable.

Putin's strategy in Ukraine has always been to be more patient than the West. That part of his war strategy is working. Politics, misinformation and competing agendas have reduced support for Ukraine, increasing the likelihood of a long and drawn-out war. As First Lady Olena Zelenska said: "In simple words, we cannot get tired of this situation, because if we do, we die. And if the world gets tired, they will simply let us die."





PEACEBUILDING IN COLOMBIA

The Foundation continues to prioritize investments in peacebuilding that support the landmark agreement signed in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), ending 50 years of conflict. The cornerstone of the 2016 Agreement is to bring government, services, and infrastructure to rural communities that have long been isolated and forgotten. Through a combination of grants that enable viable economic livelihoods as an alternative to illicit crop production, help smallholder farmers secure title to their land, and invest in complementary critical infrastructure, the Foundation is working to promote lasting peace and security.

HUMANITARIAN DEMINING

The widespread presence of landmines in Colombia continues to be a barrier to peacebuilding efforts. Yet six years after the Foundation's first \$38 million grant to the Humanitarian Demining Brigade (BRDEH) of the Colombian Army, the BRDEH has made significant advances on mine clearance throughout the country. Between 2016 and 2023, the BRDEH released 1,210 acres (490 hectares) through non-technical survey and cleared over 2,471 acres (1,000 hectares) of landmines, officially certifying 269 municipalities as mine-free, benefiting over 6.3 million rural Colombians. Of the 17 municipalities prioritized in the Foundation's 2017 grant, 14 have been certified mine-free, one is pending final release paperwork, and three were reassigned to other demining operators.

In 2021, the Foundation provided additional funding to the BRDEH to cover five years of operating costs. With these resources, the BRDEH has continued to work on the more than 40 municipalities assigned to them for demining by 2025. The BRDEH plays an important role as a fully humanitarian entity within the Colombian military. During the war, the only state presence many rural areas of Colombia had was the army. After the 2016 Agreement, the BRDEH had the opportunity to represent the armed forces in a positive way and build trust with communities. Beyond mine clearance activities, the BRDEH also supports mine-risk education, post-clearance community development, productive projects and environmental restoration projects. BRDEH has helped to reforest 1,107 hectares, and has created a differential "demining stamp" to use on products and businesses that come from demined areas, including herbs and spices, candy and confectionary, wine, and other products.

Left: A deminer uses a hand-held mine detector to look for explosives while training at the Colombia National Police Training Center. The Foundation provided over \$42 million to Colombia to support humanitarian demining across the country.

Colombia still has 119 municipalities that need to be assigned for demining. These areas are where the conflict is still active and the security situation is too volatile to guarantee safety for humanitarian deminers, including the Catatumbo region near the border with Venezuela. To assist in spot clearance and operational demining tasks in Catatumbo, the Foundation donated 50 ground-penetrating radars and 12 hand-held metal detectors to the Army's Military Engineers at the National Center for Explosive Artifacts and Mines. This equipment, purchased in 2022, is being used specifically for operational demining tasks in Catatumbo that will contribute to the Foundation's ongoing efforts to promote peace, development, and security in the region. The Foundation continues to monitor the potential for municipalities in Catatumbo to be assigned for humanitarian demining when the security situation allows.

IJM POLICE TRAINING IN TIBÚ

The municipality of Tibú near Colombia's northeastern border with Venezuela was one of the areas that suffered throughout the 50-year armed conflict with the FARC and continues to experience regular violence from armed groups and criminal gangs involved in drug trafficking. Many victims of violent crime are either unable or do not want to cooperate with government authorities because of the limited presence and poor capacity of the justice system as well as intimidation and retaliation by illegal actors. The police live sequestered in their local station and conduct irregular patrols in armored vehicles due to frequent attacks by armed groups. The public prosecutor, public defender, and forensic investigators physically left the territory due to repeated security threats, including the 2021 assassination of a local prosecutor. Victims who do report crimes are at greater risk because the municipality does not have the facilities or support networks to protect them. This environment perpetuates and normalizes violence and entrenches distrust between local government authorities and citizens.

In March 2021, the Foundation partnered with International Justice Mission (IJM) to launch a four-year effort to bolster community confidence in the police and help restore rule of law in Tibú. The goal is to build the capacities of police and law enforcement by developing systems for effective community engagement, trauma-informed care, and criminal investigations. Two years in, the project has helped local justice institutions coordinate better with each other and with community leaders to reinforce victim services as well as provide access to justice. Because justice sector actors were no longer physically present in Tibú, IJM set up virtual attention points in urban and rural areas to receive, track, and respond efficiently to cases of violence against women and children. They are also working with local government to promote the

attention points to increase crime reporting throughout the municipality. IJM has also created and activated three centers in coordination with the Mayor's Office in Campo Dos, La Gabarra, and Pacelli where victims can file complaints, attend initial judicial hearings, and access services. The Mayor's Office hired dedicated staff trained by IJM to receive complaints, facilitate virtual hearings, and provide guidance on navigating the justice system. To help socialize new points of contact between the citizens of Tibú and local justice sector institutions, IJM established the *Mujeres Protectoras* (Mujeres Pro) community protection network, an alliance of women who support and aid other women who have suffered from violence. The network coordinates between the community and justice sector institutions, facilitating information sharing on and access to available protection services.

IJM has also implemented a new policing model centered on trust-building dialogues between police stationed in Tibú and the community. As opportunities arise, local police and community members will co-design neighborhood policing strategies. The Foundation's hope is that the program will create an environment in which Tibú residents are safer from violence because they can effectively engage with law enforcement and have access to a justice system that responds to their needs.



Above: Police train for raids on illegal mining activity. The armed groups in the areas where police operate are oftentimes as well equipped as the police. The continued presence of armed groups and criminal activity undermines the Foundation's ability to support development projects in certain parts of Colombia.



Above: Farmers in Colombia's Catatumbo region (neighboring Venezuela) often cut down trees to create space for additional coca crops, the base ingredient for cocaine, leading to heightened environmental and food security concerns. With the expansion of our voluntary crop substitution program with Mercy Corps in Catatumbo, we will continue to offer farmers a viable alternative livelihood and help mitigate the negative consequences of coca expansion.

PROTIERRA CATATUMBO EXPANSION

The Catatumbo region of Colombia, along the border with Venezuela, is the country's highest coca-producing region, due to decades of conflict, limited state presence, the high prevalence of armed groups, and rampant drug-trafficking. More recently, Catatumbo has experienced an influx of thousands of Venezuelans fleeing economic collapse in their own country. Decades of promised but unfulfilled commitments left the local community deeply distrustful of the national government and other outside institutions. Since 2020, the Foundation has made targeted investments in efforts to promote peace, security, and development to Catatumbo including land-titling, food security assistance, and complementary infrastructure projects. These projects allowed the Foundation's partners to build trust with communities, paving the way for more ambitious projects.

In late 2022, the Foundation approved a seven-year, \$89 million project with Mercy Corps to support voluntary coca-crop substitution and land-titling for 5,000 participants in three municipalities in Catatumbo. This followed a previous three-year commitment the Foundation funded with Mercy Corps in Tibú to provide over 1,100 land titles and food security assistance to rural families. The timing of this program expansion was particularly fortuitous. In 2022, the Catatumbo region had 103,841 acres of coca (42,023

hectares) and Tibú alone had over 54,363 acres (22,000 hectares) of coca, according to the UNODC. By 2023, however, coca prices began to significantly decline, and farmers have a newfound urgency to pursue other livelihoods. This could mean substituting coca for legal crops or turning to other illicit economies such as illegal mining or charcoal production, which have skyrocketed in the area. By responding to this shifting market dynamic, the Foundation is targeting one of the highest-impact areas at a time where there is more potential for voluntary substitution programs than ever before. By 2030, Mercy Corps aims to substitute at least 17,297 acres (7,000 hectares) of coca farmed by 4,800 participants for legal crops, grant 5,100 land titles, and strengthen 45 local producers' associations.

The expanded project relies on an integrated farming approach that combines short- and long-term vegetable and fruit crops with agroforestry and livestock. Specific models will be tailored to each farm after individualized analyses and are designed to immediately generate income and improve food security, while helping the ecosystem recover from the long-term negative impacts of coca production. Mercy Corps analyzed coffee, cacao, and cattle production, all of which have a historic presence in the region but require significant technical assistance to achieve maximum potential production, and quality

levels. Mercy Corps will work directly with farmers and local producers' associations to provide that technical support, ensuring that the knowledge and capacity will remain in the community long after the program's end date. The Foundation's hope is this program will serve as a model for honoring the peace agreement's promises to support rural livelihoods.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

After the signing of the 2016 Peace Accords, the Colombian government was struggling to meet the commitments of the peace agreement, which included access to jobs for young people. Urban youth employment was particularly hard hit, creating growing discontent among young people at a time when the government needed to consolidate peace and create opportunities to keep young people gainfully employed.

In 2021, in response to this growing crisis, the Foundation partnered with Colombia's Presidential Agency for International Cooperation and the Colombian American Chamber of Commerce to connect youth in Bogotá, Cali, Cartagena, and Medellín with specialized training and job opportunities. After two years, the project successfully trained and placed 7,423 young people with jobs in 848 companies across sectors ranging from telecommunications to logistics and security, well exceeding its initial goal of 3,600 job placements. The project prioritized inclusivity: over half of those newly hired were women, and the Colombian American Chamber of Commerce partnered with local and international organizations to promote the inclusion of young people with disabilities in the workforce. This successful pilot effort is now a model for how government and the private sector can collaborate to create economic opportunities for young people in Colombia.

CREATING COMMUNITY ROOTING IN EL SALVADOR

PARQUE CUSCATLÁN

In 2017, the Foundation invested \$9.7 million to recover Parque Cuscatlán, a 17-acre park located in downtown San Salvador that connects some of the city's most marginalized communities with more developed, affluent areas. Prior to the renovation, most Salvadorans avoided the park because it was overrun by gangs that extorted visitors and surrounding businesses and engaged in other illicit activities. "Taking back" San Salvador's Parque Cuscatlán was not only an opportunity for the Foundation to improve the quality of life for approximately 1.5 million Salvadorans, it was also an opportunity to demonstrate what San Salvador could be like without the daily predation of gangs.

To complement Parque Cuscatlán's physical upgrades, which included path renovations, overhead walkways and a new cultural center, the Foundation partnered with Glasswing International on a three-year, \$900,000 outreach initiative to create a more secure environment in eight high-risk communities surrounding the park. Due to crime, violence, and stigma, the social fabric of these communities had been weak for decades. Glasswing sought to bring communities together by offering community-based programming and cultural activities at the park and other public spaces.

Glasswing's revitalization efforts and follow-on programming made community members around the park feel safer and more connected to their neighbors. The number of program participants who reported feeling closer to their neighbors increased by 33 percent and those reporting feeling more comfortable visiting public spaces increased by 59 percent. The visual transformation that occurred in target communities was also striking, as communities came together to target and revitalize public spaces. Glasswing is continuing to work in these communities through FUNDAPARC (the foundation created to preserve Parque Cuscatlán) and other USAID-funded initiatives, ensuring the initial impact of the Foundation's grant is sustained.

PLAZA ZURITA

In September 2021, the Foundation was unable to complete a security cameras project in San Salvador's historic center because of planning delays and political factors that interfered with the project's viability. As a show of good faith to the people involved in the project's community-based feasibility study, the Foundation partnered with Glasswing International to fulfill another community priority: recovering a long-abandoned public park in Plaza Zurita and its surroundings in San Salvador's historic center.

Although the project faced numerous delays because of heightened security risks and mobility restrictions instituted by the Salvadoran government, Glasswing was eventually able to complete the participatory design meetings with the community and complete construction in October 2023. Glasswing made improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and deteriorated public spaces so that Plaza Zurita could become an illuminated, safe, and high-quality community space where families gather.

CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN MEXICO TO ADDRESS MIGRATION

In recent years, tens of thousands of asylum seekers and economic migrants fleeing violence and poverty in Central America have passed through Mexico—typically on a route to the U.S.—in search of safety and jobs. Changes to immigration policies in the U.S. have encouraged these migrants to first seek asylum in Mexico. In 2023, Mexico’s asylum agency processed a record 137,000 applications, an almost 100 percent increase in applications since 2019.

To help process and integrate the significant surge in migrants—and help them find the safety and economic security they seek within Mexico’s borders—the Foundation partnered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on a two-year, \$21 million initiative to provide relocation, job placement, and local integration support to over 25,000 migrants from Latin America. The support includes matching program participants with job offers in regions of Mexico that need labor and have the capacity to absorb the newcomers. Participants undergo an orientation week to facilitate their integration and receive material support to move to their new homes. Children are enrolled in local schools, and UNHCR social workers accompany the family’s integration process with home visits during the first year of their relocation.

Participants who remain enrolled in the program are highly motivated and show a level of commitment that has impressed their new employers. For example, MABE, a Mexican appliance company, usually experiences a 10 percent turnover rate of employees, but the turnover rate among workers they recruited from this UNHCR program is 0.7 percent. The formal employment facilitated by the program is therefore providing benefits not only to program participants, but to the program’s private sector partners. Companies fill a gap in their labor force while achieving tangible recruitment savings from low employee turnover rates.

Originally scheduled to end in 2023, the Foundation provided UNHCR a one-year extension to give them time to secure other funding support. The extension provided data showing that the model is not a solution for all asylum-seeking migrants. By the third year, retention rates among participants had fallen from 86 percent in its first year to 72 percent in its third and final year. This was largely due to the new profiles of asylum seekers, including an increase in Haitian nationals who often don’t speak Spanish and are intent on reaching the United States. The main goal of the Foundation’s support was to demonstrate a better model for managing the hemisphere’s migration crisis using a market-based approach. By that measure, the project has been a success.

Right: A “camp” in Matamoros, Mexico, on the opposite side of the Rio Grande River from Brownsville, Texas, has thousands of people waiting to cross into the United States. These “camps” put children at increased risk of being trafficked and expose the temporary residents to a wide-range of criminal activity, serious health issues, and generate significant negative impacts on the environment.









COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Victims of human trafficking tend to be marginalized individuals, and it is typically their inability to access economic opportunities that make them vulnerable to human trafficking. By funding efforts to address food insecurity, mitigate conflict, and improve public safety, the Foundation has long worked to address the structural factors that make people vulnerable to human trafficking. Beginning in 2014, the Foundation began to also target the systems that lead to this abuse, investing in pilot projects to reduce labor trafficking in the agricultural sector. What we learned after nearly eight years of research and grantmaking led us to launch the Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking in 2021.

The Foundation's approach to combatting human trafficking is guided by a mission to strengthen community capacity to arrest and prosecute human traffickers, dismantle their networks, and support survivors. Our grantmaking targets investments in key communities through a data-informed and coordinated approach to unite and amplify the efforts of law enforcement, victim service providers, and community members. To date, we have centered our investments around:

- **Multidisciplinary teams** of dedicated law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and victim service providers to establish best practices for labor trafficking interventions.
- **Survivor leaders** whose actual experiences can inform investigative strategies, service provision, research, and policy.
- **Pilot approaches to identifying and serving victims** by improving access to hidden populations.

INVESTING IN THE AREAS OF GREATEST NEED

Our initial focus has been combatting labor trafficking, in part because it's the area of greatest need and challenge. While many U.S. law enforcement agencies have increased their focus on sex trafficking—primarily via vice raids—they have yet to develop best practices to address labor trafficking. Even human trafficking task forces funded by the Department of Justice, which are required to work on both sex and labor trafficking, generate few labor trafficking cases. In fact, forced labor represented less than three percent of the new criminal cases filed in federal court in 2022.

The small number of charged criminal cases of labor trafficking could give law enforcement agencies the misimpression that the crime does not occur within their jurisdictions. However, our first pilot project has demonstrated that dedicated resources will uncover this crime, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. In 2021, we funded a multidisciplinary team in Georgia, which was the largest effort in the history of the domestic anti-trafficking movement to exclusively focus on labor trafficking in agriculture. Our partners then supported one of the largest labor trafficking cases in the U.S., resulting in 24 defendants being indicted for a \$200 million human trafficking and money laundering scheme. Five of those defendants pled guilty with more plea hearings and jury trials anticipated in 2024. In 2023, our partners investigated 16 cases of labor trafficking and have two cases scheduled for grand juries in March 2024. These cases, and other leads, resulted in 66 survivors of agricultural labor trafficking receiving services, and 94 T-Visas, a visa specifically designated for victims of human trafficking, being secured.

Results from this historic funding have changed our partners' perspectives on criminal activity in their communities, as articulated by a Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI) Agent assigned to the Foundation's Agricultural Labor Trafficking Task Force:

"I had no idea the prevalence of illegal labor trafficking occurring on the farms of South Georgia. I have learned from our partners at Tapestri and Georgia Legal Services Program how important a victim-centered approach is to ensuring my investigations are successful. I am looking forward to continuing to uncover criminal activity that has far too long been hidden beneath the surface in Georgia."

Building on the success of our pilot programs, we made several investments in 2023 to further support local efforts to address labor trafficking.

We partnered with the University of Nebraska-Omaha to conduct a statewide labor trafficking assessment. As one of the first comprehensive studies in the country, this assessment will inform stakeholders in Nebraska on the industries and venues using forced labor and provide actionable recommendations for how to respond.

We also made key investments in multidisciplinary teams of dedicated law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and victim service providers to detect, investigate, and support victims of trafficking. At the end of this year, we added two new multidisciplinary teams: one covering Charleston, Dorchester, and Berkeley counties in South Carolina and the other covering the state of North Carolina.

In the Initiative's first two years, we learned it is critical to provide dedicated funds to address underserved areas. In 2023, investigative reporting detailed how unaccompanied minors are extremely vulnerable to dangerous and exploitive labor practices. In response, we partnered with Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), a leading agency serving unaccompanied minors. With a staggering number of unaccompanied minors entering the U.S.—around 130,000 in 2022, a 300 percent increase from 2017—we look forward to learning how to prevent and mitigate further exploitation of these minors.

Survivors of human trafficking who lack English language skills are another underserved community. To help address this, we enhanced the Survivor Leadership Academy through a 2023 grant to add Spanish-language accessibility. We originally helped found the Survivor Leadership Academy in partnership with the Sherwood Foundation and Survivor Alliance to provide an 18-month leadership development program to survivors of sex and labor trafficking and build capacity of anti-trafficking agencies to properly engage, mentor, and empower survivors. Lessons from this initiative will help the sector better understand how to approach and accelerate non-native speaking survivor leadership and how to thoughtfully include underprivileged populations within the survivor movement.

Right: On the banks of the Mexican side of the Rio Grande River across from Hidalgo, Texas, children stand in a makeshift camp waiting to cross into the United States. The camp is operated by criminal organizations that move people across the river in small rafts.



THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COALITION TO SAFEGUARD COMMUNITIES

One area in need of greater investment and intervention is human trafficking affiliated with the drug trade. Such forms of human trafficking are seen as too difficult, dangerous, and unpopular to tackle. While the media has at times highlighted the issue—including a case in the Shiprock Navajo reservation in 2020, and through a series of articles by *The Los Angeles Times* in 2022 and 2023—those responsible for identifying and intervening on behalf of victims are unsure of what steps to take. Local experts and community members have condemned these practices, but there are few state or national efforts to address these illegal activities—and even fewer that bring cross-sector resources together to address this multifaceted problem.

In 2021, we partnered with the Northern California Coalition to Safeguard Communities (NCCSC), a collaboration between law enforcement leaders from Butte, Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, and Trinity Counties and a team of experts on environmental crimes, human trafficking, data analysis, and victim services to address the serious and harmful consequences of illegal cannabis production in the region. In 2023, NCCSC identified 30 victims of human trafficking of whom 24 accepted support services, filed two cases of human trafficking for prosecution, identified dozens of environmental violations, and uncovered new forms of illegal pesticides that were smuggled into California. The early steps taken by NCCSC demonstrate that multifaceted collaborations and increased resources are needed to dismantle these complex criminal networks, assist victims, and address environmental damage.

In addition to the human trafficking toll, the environmental impact of illegal marijuana production has reached a crisis level on two dimensions: (1) growers without permits are diverting and stealing millions of gallons of water from creeks and streams that otherwise would fill reservoirs and replenish aquifers; (2) many illegal growers use highly toxic chemicals that kill wildlife and leach into the watersheds.

Our goal is to produce a set of best practices that not only succeed in these five counties, but also can form the basis for a larger coalition of counties in California, and eventually, be shared with other states.

Top right: *Illegal guns—including a short barrel rifle—and ammunition are recovered during a search warrant executed on an illegal marijuana grow in Northern California.* **Bottom right:** *Law enforcement discovered cash, passports, and other identification documents for multiple people working on an illegal marijuana grow in Northern California. One indicator of human trafficking is when workers are not in control of their identification and travel documents or their finances.*



LEARNING HOW BEST TO ADDRESS LABOR TRAFFICKING

Our early investments have already revealed some important lessons on how to target our funding to better address labor trafficking:

Partner with organizations that have access to hidden or isolated communities.

One of the most significant challenges in labor trafficking cases is identifying victims, which is why the Foundation is piloting different approaches in three locations: Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services in Central Illinois, International Rescue Committee in the Greater Miami Area, and Preble Street in Maine. While we are still in the early stages of developing models for victim identification, one early lesson is the value of partnering with organizations that have access to hidden or isolated communities. For example, our partners in Maine have generated multiple case leads at mobile health clinics, including identifying more than 40 victims of labor trafficking at a solar farm.

Leverage open-source information and analyze program specific data to make data-informed decisions about priorities and resource allocation.

In Central Illinois, Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services uses data to identify high-risk areas of forced labor to determine where they should conduct outreach to farmworkers. Georgia created a clearinghouse that compiles publicly available data, tips from GBI, and information from farmworker outreach to identify priority jurisdictions for training, outreach, and law enforcement intervention. The clearinghouse has even flagged potential farms and businesses of interest for further investigation.

Prioritize peer-to-peer learning to develop, pilot, and refine best practices.

Georgia presented its clearinghouse to our other multidisciplinary teams at our first peer-to-peer learning event in October 2023. Since then, several teams have requested further information as they look to analyze data that will drive decision-making in their own communities. Our funded partners are some of the only people in the country addressing forced labor, and peer-to-peer learning enables them to think more creatively by seeing examples from other contexts.

Adjust our funding support timeline and scope for multidisciplinary teams.

We discovered that startup for a multidisciplinary team takes about a year, primarily due to delays in hiring government positions. While we are testing new strategies to jumpstart these teams, including earlier and concentrated support, we have also adjusted our grantmaking strategy to fund multidisciplinary teams for five years instead of three years. This shift has already created opportunities for our investments, as we received bigger commitments from law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies to address underserved communities when we transitioned to five-year projects. We also found that coordination within multidisciplinary teams has been a linchpin for program success. While we originally provided implementation support for law enforcement, prosecutors, and service providers, we did not focus on coordination within the team. We could assemble teams of experts within their domain, but those experts often struggled to fully leverage the skills and benefits of the multidisciplinary team. Moving forward, we have added implementation support for coordinators and are developing resources to equip teams to be greater than the sum of their parts.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Many anti-trafficking efforts across the country are spearheaded by individual champions whose passion and drive make them a trusted community partner. However, when these champions leave their jobs, their efforts are often not sustained because they relied more heavily on individual initiative than on institutional practices. Our challenge over the next few years will be to institutionalize the work of champions to ensure that we are truly building community capacity to address trafficking.

CAMPBELL
DETENTION
FACILITY



CENTRAL
JUDICIAL SCHOOL

WATSON YARD

APARTMENT

WEXLER AVE





**PUBLIC
SAFETY**

The Foundation's support for public safety initiatives is mostly directed at improving security and quality of life issues in the communities where we have operations and employees. The exception is our years-long collaboration with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a nonprofit organization that works nationally to improve policing through research focused on critical issues in policing and sharing best practices on reducing use of force, developing community-oriented policing, and evaluating crime-reduction strategies. While we made few new public safety grants in 2023, some of our past investments achieved notable milestones that reflect the value we see in supporting such efforts.

LAUNCHING THE ICAT TRAINING CENTER

In May 2023, the Foundation, in partnership with PERF, officially commissioned the Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) training center in Decatur, Illinois. ICAT, developed by PERF, is an evidence-based approach to use-of-force training, designed to provide police officers with the tools, skills, and options they need to defuse a range of critical incidents successfully and safely.

ICAT was developed with input from hundreds of law enforcement professionals nationwide. It is currently being taught in police agencies of all sizes and in all parts of the country. The training focuses on situations involving persons in crisis and those who are unarmed or armed with weapons other than firearms.

To make ICAT training available to more law enforcement agencies across the country, the Foundation built a state-of-the-art training facility to offer train-the-trainer sessions to law enforcement agencies interested in implementing ICAT for their officers. The training is free of charge; participants only cover the cost of their travel and lodging. The building itself has large lecture halls but also an expansive, indoor "Hogan's Alley" with a variety of streets, stores, a bank, and a jail to facilitate realistic situations. Actors simulate real-life scenarios officers may encounter, and a VirTra simulator allows for additional scenario training.

Delivered over one and a half days, ICAT teaches officers to exercise leadership and identify best tactics and communications to deal with dynamic situations, including handling suicide-by-cop situations. Following the course, participants will have the training to in turn train their own agency's personnel in ICAT. ICAT, and the training

center in Decatur it inspired, is an example of the type of advanced, in-depth approach to training that PERF and other policing experts believe is essential to make policing more community-focused and safer for officers and the people they protect.

CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH PUBLIC SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

The Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute (DCLI) encourages students in Decatur (Illinois) Public Schools to pursue employment opportunities that benefit their communities, exposing them to careers in public safety, healthcare, local government, social entrepreneurship, and education. Participating high school students engage in project-based learning experiences that occur outside the traditional school environment.

Established in 2020 with a \$2.5 million grant from the Foundation, DCLI targets students from at-risk home situations and supports their development with trauma-informed programming that emphasizes service leadership and positive personal decision-making. Students are required to attend a weekly leadership and financial literacy program in addition to the career-oriented programming. DCLI also connects students with paid internships and prospective employers. Graduates who are substantially invested in the program can transition to Richland Community College as DCLI College Scholars, where they can earn a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) license and direct employment in one of Decatur's two hospitals.

One of the focus areas students are introduced to is job opportunities in public safety. DCLI was able to take advantage of the Foundation's investments in the Macon County Law Enforcement Training Center (MCLETC) to develop a four-week, credit-bearing summer school course for high school students. The pilot program included all public safety-related organizations in Decatur including the fire department, police department, St. Mary's Hospital, Decatur Memorial Hospital, Crossing Healthcare, United Way, State of Illinois Bomb Squad, MCLETC, and others. During the program, students became CPR-certified, completed stop-the-bleed training, heard from guests and visitors, and were immersed in public safety experiences.

The impact on the community's healthcare system has been substantial: DCLI produced 21 CNAs in 2023 who are now delivering healthcare in the Decatur community, for a total of 41 CNAs since DCLI was first launched.

Perhaps more important than the positive impact DCLI is having on the community is the impact it's having on the students and families who participate in the programming. As DCLI's Director Dr. Juanita Morris writes: "We continue to advocate for our students who successfully complete certifications and access employment. We continue to challenge systems that are not as inclusive and limit participation from a diverse range of participants...DCLI is an opportunity to live outside of the traditional educational space. It allows for the development of a proof of concept that can be replicated to expand its impact."



Above: A student from the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute participates in a four week law enforcement and first responder academy funded by the Foundation. High school students participate in mock traffic stops, learn about crash scene reconstruction, become certified in introductory emergency medical services and CPR, learn how to apply NARCAN, role play in virtual training scenarios, are educated about violence in schools, are exposed to simulated DUI driving, and learn about firefighting and dive techniques. The goal of the academy is to improve their understanding of public safety, learn appropriate responses, appreciate the fundamentals of community service, and consider a career in police, fire, or EMS.

A LETTER OF THANKS FROM A DCLI FAMILY

"My husband and I wanted to take a moment to express our profound gratitude for your generous contributions to our community.

YOUR SUPPORT HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON OUR TOWN, AND WE CANNOT THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR YOUR KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY.

Your gift that has funded the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute has provided valuable learning opportunities for our youth. My daughter personally benefited through the program two years ago. Her experience with DCLI was an enriching experience that she has made the most of. She was fortunate enough to be an intern at the City of Decatur. As an intern she was able to gain real world work experience that has been to her advantage early in her college career. Her DCLI participation led to her becoming involved with several organizations on her college campus. This summer she worked on campus for the General Counsel's office which is ideal for her, as her long-term goals include law school. Recently she was awarded an internship and will be spending her spring semester at the Illinois State Capitol as an intern. She has always been a good student and what struck me as the truly impressive part of her experience at DCLI was that the program is a springboard for good students like her, and those that have struggled in more traditional educational programs. There are very few programs that exist with that kind of success rate. One of her fellow DCLI interns was one of her high school classmates. This intern was borderline for graduating and was successful in the DCLI program in getting her CNA license. That intern also attends church with us, and prior to the program experimented with substance abuse. It has been amazing to watch this program propel that young adult in the right direction. I personally believe that Dr. Morris has provided that special ingredient for the success of all the students in the DCLI program. Dr. Morris sets out reasonable, yet high standards and conveys her belief to her students that they are capable of doing great things. All of the students in the DCLI program leave better for having been a part of it. Thank you for providing these life changing opportunities."





NON-STRATEGIC GRANTS



The Foundation continues to make limited investments in the local communities where we have operations and employees and on conservation issues where we have a history of support, primarily mountain gorilla and cheetah conservation.

REVITALIZING AFRICA'S CHEETAH POPULATIONS

Cheetah populations in Africa are highly threatened, with fewer than 7,000 adult cheetahs living across about 1.2 million square miles of the continent's territory. Land use change from rising human consumption and population pressures on the land has intensified the threats to the existing landscape on which cheetah depend. Since 2008, the Foundation has worked closely with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) on the Africa Range-Wide Cheetah Conservation Initiative (ARWCCI) to advance cheetah conservation across Africa by identifying and addressing the challenges they face. African cheetahs face multiple threats including climate impacts and habitat loss, illegal wildlife trade and hunting, disease and low repopulation rates. Without concrete steps to protect cheetah habitats and coexistence with humans, cheetah populations will be on the brink of extinction.



AFRICA RANGE-WIDE CHEETAH CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

In 2021, the Foundation approved a five-year, \$5 million grant to focus conservation efforts in three key areas: 1) strengthening wildlife protection frameworks; 2) fostering human-wildlife coexistence; and 3) supporting government conservation capacity. Through these efforts, alongside monitoring the status of cheetahs and mapping the surrounding human communities, ARWCCI hopes to reverse the decline of cheetahs across seven transboundary landscapes in 16 countries (Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe).

This project expands on three previous phases, which focused on developing conservation frameworks, increasing government institutional capacity, addressing land use change, and securing political commitment. The previous phases also raised awareness of cheetah conservation, increased political will to support conservation efforts, and set the stage to address declining cheetah populations. This fourth phase expands the scope and conservation range to include three new cheetah landscapes in southern and eastern Africa.

ARWCCI will utilize land-use plans to ensure cheetah conservation efforts consider surrounding human populations and possible contact with them. This includes cross-border cooperation and coordination between natural resource management to safeguard wildlife corridors and renew relevant conservation action plans. ARWCCI

has conducted a feasibility assessment of potential cheetah restoration sites, analyzed the cause of local extinction, and surveyed local community support to identify the risk factors involved in cheetah reintroduction.

CHEETAH REINTRODUCTION INTO THE GREATER LUANGWA ECOSYSTEM, ZAMBIA

Key findings from the feasibility assessment on potential cheetah restoration sites informed a 2023 follow-on grant with ARWCCI to consider reintroducing and translocating a breeding cheetah population in the Luangwa Valley in Zambia. The Luangwa Valley, which is comprised of four national parks including one of the largest remaining unfenced and ecological parks on the African continent, has high conservation value for cheetah.

This three-year, \$4.3 million grant will establish best-practice guidelines for cheetah translocation, while ensuring proper land use and zoning for connected parks and game management areas. It also aims to improve community support for wildlife conservation and human wildlife interaction.

Prior to translocating the cheetahs, ARWCCI will first conduct a feasibility and disease risk assessment to minimize any potential issues. Once relocated, the project will provide continuous monitoring to ensure proper reintroduction into the ecosystem with the goal that this will lead to a viable and sustainable revival of the cheetah population in Zambia.





CLOSING THOUGHTS

Photo courtesy of RICA

On August 8, 2023, the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture (RICA), an agricultural college constructed and operated exclusively with funding from the Foundation and in partnership with the government of Rwanda, reached an important milestone: graduating its first class of students. RICA was the realization of an idea I first talked about twenty years ago. It took nearly a decade of planning and work to get to this moment. I traveled to Rwanda to attend the ceremony and deliver the following remarks.

“Your excellency President Kagame, honorable Ministers, Governor, Mayor; to the many other local elected officials here today; to RICA’s students and families; RICA’s leadership, faculty and staff; and to the other distinguished guests here today: greetings on this incredible milestone of honoring this first graduating class of the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture, RICA.

I am pleased to be here today as RICA’s Chancellor and as Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, almost exactly five years after RICA’s official groundbreaking ceremony. Before I confer degrees on the 75 future leaders in agriculture who are graduating today, I want to thank many of the people who made this possible.

Twenty years ago, a well-known and successful American investor asked me to name one idea—he said very clearly, one idea, not two or three, but one—give me one idea that could be transformational for countries in Africa.

I didn’t hesitate in my response; I said every country in Africa needs their own version of a land grant university, a concept that transformed agriculture in the United States 175 years ago. Such an institute would be devoted to practical training, to more sustainable solutions, and operated in the context of appropriate agricultural practices for that specific country. And very importantly, informed by and designed for local needs, local research, and local extension. This institution would train the next generation of leaders in agriculture to help countries achieve their national priorities and change the face of agriculture.

Ten years ago, we decided that our foundation would try to fund that idea in a single country in Africa—we just needed to find the right partner. We found that partner in Rwanda. We are grateful to the government of Rwanda, for agreeing to be the foundation’s partner in this idea, for donating the land for this campus, and putting the full weight of the government, from the Office of the President, alongside the many Ministries who collaborated on RICA’s vision and curriculum, especially the Ministries of Education and Agriculture.

And a very grateful thank you to the local government leadership that supported the many years of construction to build this campus.

I also want to thank the University of Nebraska at Lincoln for their significant and steadfast collaboration. UNL understood from the outset that this idea was not about building a UNL campus in Rwanda but about designing an institution unique to Rwanda, that would reflect Rwanda’s priorities for agriculture and eventually serve as a model for hands on, agricultural education in east Africa, the continent, and the rest of the world.

To RICA’s Vice Chancellors, Drs. Ron Rosati and Richard Ferguson; to RICA’s Deputy Vice Chancellors Lydia, Jean Claude, Magnifique, and Michelle—your leadership has been extraordinary. This team has taken a big idea and made it a reality, successfully tackling and overcoming an unimaginable number of problems along the way. RICA would not exist without your dedication and hard work these last five years. I know there are many others on your respective teams who worked long hours as well, and I’m sorry we cannot name them all, but I thank them and our team thanks them.

To the people of the eastern province and Bugesera district: we thank you for your support of this campus. Many of the families in this district literally helped build this institute and help run it today. We thank you for your efforts.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, RICA would not exist without the young people and the families who raised them. We appreciate the willingness of the parents and students to take a chance on their education and their futures and to agree to come and be students at RICA.

RICA is about the future of agriculture, but it is also about leadership and entrepreneurship. The students who are graduating today have already made RICA a success through their hard work, their leadership, and their innovation. They are setting an example for the world to follow. You RICA graduates have learned that agriculture is about much more than farming.

AGRICULTURE IS ABOUT SCIENCE, AND MATH, AND TECHNOLOGY. IT’S ABOUT IMPROVING LIVES; IT’S ABOUT FEEDING PEOPLE; IT’S ABOUT TAKING CARE OF THE LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES SO THAT IT IS MORE PRODUCTIVE AND HEALTHIER; IT’S ABOUT TRANSFORMING YOUR COUNTRY AND ITS ECONOMY; AND IT’S ABOUT SUPPORTING FARMERS TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL AND TO LIVE BETTER LIVES.

Your education and your leadership will change the way young people view agriculture and its potential. Many of you will hopefully become entrepreneurs who develop new companies and new industries and create jobs to support and transform Rwanda’s future to the benefit of all Rwandans. I congratulate you on the hard work you have put

in over the last four years to get to today. I challenge you to continue to lead and work to improve your country and its potential to continue to be the success story of east Africa and the continent. I challenge RICA's leadership and future classes of students to continue to show the world what a modern education in agriculture should look like.

I want to provide a few personal thoughts that I hope you will consider after you leave this campus. Education is important, but is not the only thing that will make you successful. There are some very basic elements of human behavior that will determine how well you do in life. Your judgment, your ability to anticipate, your foresight, your strength to say no, and your acceptance and forgiveness of others will impact everything you do.

My dad used to tell me, every day you get up, make sure that whatever you do, you would be okay if your parents and your friends read about it on the front page of the newspaper. If you do this every day, you will avoid making mistakes that you will regret.

He also told me something I think might be the most important advice he has ever given me: it takes 30 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.

If you succeed in your goals, you will face many difficult decisions. Some you will wish you did not need to make. Sometimes you will make the wrong decision. That is what comes with responsibility. You must be able to own up to your mistakes, and you must push forward.

And I'm going to tell you one more thing my father told me that saved me from some bad business dealings over my career: you cannot make a good deal with a bad person.

My last word of advice is one you have heard many times from many places—but it will

affect how you end up feeling about yourself. Treat people the way you want to be treated. It is the simplest piece of advice anyone can give, and it can be one of the most difficult to live by. But try it—it works.

Finally, just when you thought I was done thanking people I have one very special person to thank. My style is to move quickly, take risks, and keep moving forward. That only works if you have someone that is balancing your actions, a person who is committed to your ideas but helps separate the good ones from the not so good ones. Ann Kelly Bolten recognized RICA as not just a good idea, but a great idea. Without Ann, this campus would not be here, and there would not be a graduating class. Thank you is completely inadequate, but Ann, thank you.

With that, I would like to confer the degrees to the first 75 graduates of the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture, class of 2023."

Below: August 8, 2023, Howard Buffett stands alongside Rwanda's President Paul Kagame and the 75 graduates of RICA's first ever graduating class. (Photo courtesy of RICA)



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