

# IMPACT REPORT 2025

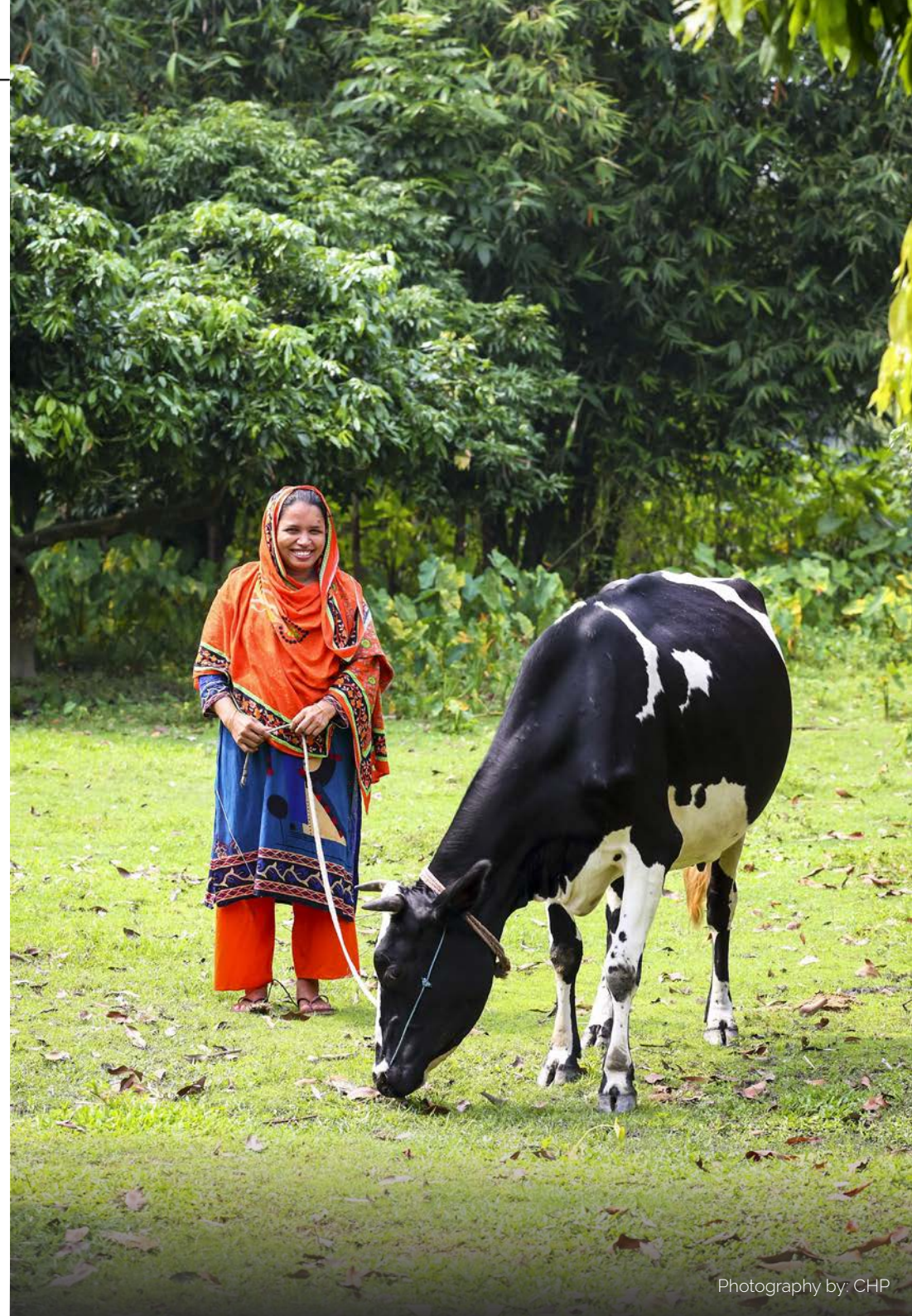
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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTORS

Dear entrepreneurs, investors, partners, and stakeholders.

Welcome to Truvalu's Impact Report 2025.

This past year has been one of conviction tested and strengthened. Of ambitions pursued in the face of headwinds. This report is our attempt to capture that spirit honestly - sharing not only what we achieved, but what we learned, where we fell short, and what continues to drive us forward.

## Investing where impact is deepest

Truvalu's mission remains as urgent as ever: to invest in the "missing middle" - small and growing businesses in the agri-food sector in emerging markets that are too large for microfinance, yet too small or too informal to attract conventional investors. In 2025, we continued to demonstrate how targeted, patient capital combined with hands-on support can unlock opportunity, strengthen resilience, and foster inclusive growth.

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**“Local ownership is not a theory. It is something we learned through experience: lasting impact only emerges when the people closest to the challenge hold real power over the decisions that shape it. That is why we share power, profit, and value — not as a gesture, but as the foundation of everything we build.”**

JAAP-JAN VERBOOM  
Founder & Director

Our focus countries - Bangladesh, Colombia, and Kenya - remain at the heart of this work. In each context, we back SMEs and value chain actors who are quietly powering local economies, often without the recognition or resources they deserve. This report reflects not only the outcomes we achieved together, but the deeper understanding we have gained of what it truly takes for these enterprises to grow and create lasting impact.

After more than a decade in this space, our conviction has only sharpened. Local ownership is not a principle we pay lip service to - it is the foundation of everything we do. Sharing power, profit, and value creation - between Truvalu and the entrepreneurs we back, and within Truvalu between our Netherlands-based team and our country offices - makes us better investors and more reliable partners. Our co-entrepreneurship model, anchored in patient capital and genuine skin in the game, sets us apart from more transactional approaches. It is brought to life through our integrated co-entrepreneurial support model: the deliberate combination of finance, governance and coaching, and business development that underpins every investment we make.

## Scaling impact through a platform model

Our ambition for the years ahead is to scale our impact - without losing sight of the missing middle that defines our purpose. Scaling is not optional; it is how we increase our reach, deepen our resilience, and remain relevant over the long term. But it must be done thoughtfully.

That is why we have designed a platform approach: a decentralised, scalable network of locally co-managed and co-funded investment vehicles, with our Netherlands office partnering closely with country teams in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Kenya through shared expertise, methodology, track record, and financing capacity. By bringing each country's operation up to the scale of our current total portfolio,

we believe we can triple our impact - while remaining firmly committed to the small-scale SME investments that define who we are.

Blended finance is central to this ambition. Combining public, philanthropic, and private capital thoughtfully, we can reduce (perceived) risk and costs and open the door to investors who would otherwise stand on the sidelines. In 2025, we began actively structuring new blended investment vehicles designed to de-risk early-stage, high-impact SMEs and mobilise additional capital at scale. Early results are encouraging - particularly in the Truvalu-platform's ability to unlock genuine local investment.

Despite ongoing economic uncertainty and a more cautious global investment climate, we welcomed new investors in 2025, while several existing partners deepened their commitments through follow-on investments. We do not take that confidence lightly.



**“We partner with AgriFood companies to grow. And through that growth, we believe something more important happens: decent jobs get created, women gain more economic and decision-making power, and value chains become something the planet can actually sustain.”**

MACHTELD OOIJENS  
Director



**JAAP-JAN VERBOOM**  
Founder & Director

## With gratitude and resolve

This report is more than a record of data and results. It is a collection of real stories and hard-won lessons - evidence of what becomes possible when committed entrepreneurs, investors, development partners, and country teams align around shared goals and stay the course together.

We are profoundly grateful for your trust, your partnership, and your continued belief in what Truvalu is building. We hope what you find in these pages inspires you - as it inspires us - to keep pushing: to expand access to finance, to deliver business support that makes a real difference, and to keep finding better ways to create impact in the places that need it most.

## Together, we are building something that matters.

Warm regards,

Jaap-Jan Verboom & Machteld Ooijens Directors and Owners, Truvalu Global



**MACHTELD OOIJENS**  
Director

# A MESSAGE FROM THE TRUVALU DIRECTORS IN BANGLADESH, COLOMBIA AND KENYA

We enter this report with a sense of pride - and a clear sense of direction.

2025 was a year of purposeful growth: of stronger partnerships forged, of structures built that will last, and of impact created that reaches far beyond our balance sheet. Across Bangladesh, Colombia, and Kenya, our work is guided by a dual commitment that we refuse to compromise: supporting businesses to generate measurable positive change, while unlocking the capital needed to scale it. Impact and investment, inseparable.

In **Bangladesh**, Truvalu made meaningful strides in green and inclusive finance. Through our flagship Access to Green Financing for Enterprises (A2GF) programme—supported by the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh—my team continued mobilising blended finance and technical assistance to help SMEs transition to more environmentally sustainable practices. By pairing financing solutions with impact-linked incentives, A2GF is making green business not just possible, but commercially scalable.

Alongside this, we launched the Off-grid Renewable Energy II Fund in partnership with One to Watch, making our first investment in the Greener Garments Initiative (GGI)—an energy service company accelerating the deployment of solar solutions across manufacturing SMEs. This is climate action made tangible: decarbonising supply chains, one factory at a time.

In collaboration with Kore Global, we developed a Gender-Smart Climate Investment Landscape report and a Gender-Climate Nexus Financing Toolkit, now entering its piloting phase."

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**"I am very proud and passionate about Truvalu's intensified commitment to Gender Lens Investing (GLI) through a multi-year, Swiss-supported programme. The structural barriers facing women-led enterprises—limited access to finance, expertise, and networks—are well documented but too rarely tackled head-on. We are doing exactly that, working with SMEs and ecosystem actors to build a stronger pipeline of gender-focused businesses and shift norms across the investment landscape."**

SHARAWWAT ISLAM  
Managing Director of Truvalu Bangladesh

2025 was a defining year for Truvalu **Colombia**. We consolidated our role as a locally anchored investment manager, deepening our hands-on co-entrepreneurship approach with portfolio SMEs—supporting them on financial management, governance, and commercial growth, the building blocks that structured capital alone cannot provide. A landmark moment came with the structuring of a new blended finance vehicle in partnership with Bancóldex—a process that required bridging international fund structures with local realities, and one that positioned Truvalu firmly as a fund manager.

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**"Over the past year, I realized that building an investment platform in Colombia is not only about capital or structures. It is about earning trust, from entrepreneurs, institutions, and partners; and showing that local teams can lead sophisticated investment processes while staying close to the realities on the ground."**

ANDRÉS JIMÉNEZ  
Managing Director of Truvalu Colombia

In **Kenya**, we focused on strengthening our portfolio and sharpening our impact. A follow-on investment in FarmWorks reaffirmed our confidence in scalable agricultural enterprises.

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**“A follow-on investment is one of the clearest signals an investor can send. With FarmWorks, we wanted to say plainly: we see what you are building, we believe in where it is going, and we are staying with you for the journey.”**

PETER OWAGA

Managing Director of Truvalu Kenya

The CBI project continued to generate learnings on how to approach women’s economic empowerment in meaningful ways. We executed a successful exit from GrowPact Kitale—a tangible demonstration of value creation—provided advisory support to fellow fund managers including Oxano, and grew our local team.

Our portfolio remains rooted in agri-food systems and rural value chains: sectors where financing gaps are wide and impact potential is extraordinary. The results in this report reflect the resilience of the entrepreneurs we work with—and the effectiveness of staying close to them.

Looking ahead, we are building Truvalu into a platform of strong, locally rooted funds. In close collaboration with our colleagues in the Netherlands, we are working toward scaling each country fund to €10 million over the next three years—growing our portfolio while preserving the hands-on approach that makes the difference. Our deepening relationships with development finance institutions, donors, and local partners are laying the groundwork for the next chapter.

This report tells that story. We hope it moves you to keep building with us—toward economies that are more inclusive, more resilient, and more just.



SHARAWWAT ISLAM

Managing Director of Truvalu Bangladesh



ANDRÉS JIMÉNEZ

Managing Director of Truvalu Colombia



PETER OWAGA

Managing Director of Truvalu Kenya

# TRUVALU AT A GLANCE



**10** Years of track record



**5** Members global directors team, **40%** of them women



**24** Dedicated team members (December 2025)



**2** Follow-on and new SME investments in 2025



**7** Projects and programs executed in 2025



An inspiring network of HNW investors and private and development agencies

## Investments Since 2015

**55**  
**€213K**  
**€11,7M**

SME Investments  
Average ticket size  
Total capital invested



Interested in these data? Go to our [impact dashboard](#) to find our impact data



## In our focus countries Bangladesh, Colombia and Kenya

**26**  
**€308K**  
**€8M**  
**€2,54M**  
**€1,53M**  
**€3,93M**

SME Investment  
Average ticket size  
Total capital invested  
Loans  
Convertible loans  
Equity



## Field of operations of the SME investments (2025):

The 17 companies we invest in and report about operate in diverse fields including:

-  **13** Agri food processing
-  **1** Energy service company
-  **1** Handicrafts from natural materials
-  **1** Waste Management & Insect Farming
-  **1** (Fin)Technology  
(e.g technology to optimize the food supply chain, e-marketing, environmental innovations)

### SDG focus



## Strengthened SMEs:

**122** SMEs participated in general (pre-investment) BDS (82 women-led). **64** SMEs were selected for more support and benefited from investment readiness support, enhanced policies, a stronger knowledge base on gender inclusion and climate mitigation and preparation, finance, digital tools, branding, impact measurement and management. All propelling sustainable growth and profitability.



## Responsible business practices:

A growing awareness and implementation of responsible business practices amongst SMEs, including environmental sustainability initiatives like climate change mitigation, renewable energy, waste management, and water and land conservation, alongside commitments to labor rights.



## Market expansion and innovation:

Vested SMEs achieved greater market reach and foster innovation through new buyer contracts, product development, and technological advancements.

## Job creation and economic empowerment:

**10,585** Our efforts translate into significant growth and job creation. The total workforce employed by the **17** portfolio companies presented in this report employed **10,585** individuals (fulltime, parttime, seasonal workers).



Notably, **88%** of this workforce comprises women, and **66%** are young people (15-35 years old). **29%** of the board positions are women and **47%** of the management teams, highlighting Truvalu's commitment to inclusive economic development.

**28,280** Small holder farmers benefited from investments in the portfolio companies (16,614 supplying farmers, 11,666 benefiting from inputs delivered by the SMEs). **62%** of the farmers in the value chain are women

## Enhanced awareness through community learnings:

Stakeholders gained a deeper understanding of climate financing, gender lens investing, blended finance and impact linked finance fostering broader adoption of these practices. Truvalu contributed to the development of a stronger capacity to integrate impact investing principles into investment strategies, and the creation of a platform for SME support.



## Collaboration and networking:

By facilitating collaboration and networking within the impact ecosystem, Truvalu contributes to a more supportive environment where SMEs with social and environmental impact can thrive.



# AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS IMPACT REPORT

Welcome to Truvalu's 2025 Impact Report. Given our 10 years track record and the experience gained and the various lessons learned, we are proud to continue sharing quantitative and qualitative information in this report. While the outcomes highlighted in this report are the result of collective effort, we are proud of the role Truvalu's capital and co-entrepreneurship have played in driving these results.

## Impact measurement approach: a continuous process of deepening our learnings

Since 2021, our approach to data has matured. Following the development of our long-term strategy and **Theory of Change (ToC)** in 2023 (see page 28), we strengthened our **Impact Measurement & Management (IMM) Framework**, expanded it with a few indicators and aligned it with the internationally recognized IRIS catalog. This allows us to link our impact to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2X Challenge, and the UN Global Compact reporting standards. This year marks a significant milestone as we further deepened our impact framework and built a digital environment to monitor and present the impact data we collect.

Truvalu's ToC is not set in stone—we regularly reflect on it, test the underlying assumptions, and adapt it based on data and lessons learned. Impact data are collected by using Google Forms Surveys. The surveys contain quantitative and qualitative questions. For key indicators, we disaggregate data for men and women, age (youth: 15- 35 years), and location (rural-urban). The investees filled out the SME survey while discussing the data and means of verification with our country teams, turning the impact data into an immediate tool for dialogue and discussion. Our country teams ensured the accuracy and reliability of the data. In 2025, we invested time and efforts in building an improved **impact dashboard** (in addition to a financial dashboard we use). With this dashboard and the data

included, we aim to make comparisons over the years to come and present a picture, reflecting the diverse contexts across our operating countries. The dashboard makes the results of the surveys readily available for internal and external steering, learning and reporting. Our quarterly financial monitoring provides data and insights related to the financial returns of our investments and the impact of blended finance models. This complements our impact assessments.

All our results are aggregated at the country and overall levels. This aggregation provides insights into our overall impact performance, informing our communication materials, benchmarking, internal reflections, and learning processes. As such, our impact measurement is an important tool for adjusting and refining our activities. We also share our findings and learnings with other ecosystem stakeholders to inspire them and build their capacities.

## Origination of the data in this report

An overview of Truvalu's **active portfolio** is presented on page 20. Our impact assessment draws on data from **17** companies (the portfolio of Truvalu Enterprises<sup>1</sup> and the Colombian Firp- Rural Peace Fund) across four countries: Bolivia (1), Colombia (9), Kenya (5) and Bangladesh (2). Due to business hibernation, fraud cases or the complexities of attribution in the case of a very large firm, we were not able to collect data from 4 companies we invested in. In order to align with our ToC, the results from technical assistance (TA) and ecosystem development projects are also included in this report. We remain

committed to transparency - sharing not only our successes, but also the honest challenges of investing in complex markets.

It is still too early to conduct full year-over-year comparisons from Truvalu's inception. However, we are confident to continue our structured approach and be ready to present trends and

developments in the years to come. For Truvalu, impact measurement is more than a reporting requirement—it is a **strategic tool** used to underscore our commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement, and to refine our activities and foster deeper collaboration with our ecosystem partners by sharing our insights.



Photography by Truvalu

## What's inside this report

This year, we showcase the impact of **17 portfolio companies** and a diverse array of projects across our focus regions.



**Truvalu at a Glance:** A high-level overview of our 2025 footprint (page 8), with a reference to our Impact Dashboard.



**Sector insights and learnings:** Reflections on our participation in the **Dutch Trade Mission** to Kenya (page 78); and the development of a toolkit for impact investors on the **Gender-Climate Nexus** (page 62).



**Insights** into Truvalu's Journey of 10 years (page 12)



A timeline of **events** where Truvalu colleagues engaged in building relationships, partnering with stakeholders, (page 68) and exchanging knowledge, as well as an overview of our **communications in 2025** (page 76).



**The human element:** An interview with three team members on their work for Truvalu. (page 16).



An overview of our **partners** (page 81).



**Inspirational TruStories:** Mesa Baja (page 72), our exit in the Kenyan GrowPact Kitale (page 22.) and follow-on investment in FarmWorks (page 60).



**Our impact:** The results achieved in 2025, in statistics, learning and stories based on our ToC (page 29).



Our **future ambitions** are outlined in the final chapter of this report. (page 82).

We invite you to explore our journey over the past 10 years and of 2025 in particular and look ahead with us toward our future ambitions in the final chapter.

# TEN YEARS OF TRUVALU: HOW LOCAL OWNERSHIP SCALES IMPACT



"We started with the conviction that you create truly sustainable value by investing in local communities and entrepreneurs worldwide," says Machteld Ooijens. "By putting impact at the centre and taking the long view, we achieve not only social progress but financial returns as well." For ten years, that conviction has been at the heart of Truvalu's success.

The impact investment firm, founded by Jaap-Jan Verboom in 2015, invests in early-stage agri-food businesses in Bangladesh, Colombia and Kenya. Verboom, a former IT entrepreneur who later spent years working in East Africa for development organisation ICCO, saw first-hand how subsidies and grants were spent on projects without a business case. "There was too little focus on entrepreneurship," he says. "I wanted to do things differently."

Together with Ooijens, who built up years of experience in international cooperation, corporate social responsibility and gender inclusivity before joining Truvalu as a partner in 2023, he built a fund that deliberately decentralises power and ownership. Not only investing from the Netherlands, but through local teams who are entrepreneurs themselves, make their own decisions and can become co-owners. This structure creates impact and makes economic sense.

The figures speak for themselves. 54 investments since 2015. An impact assessment in 2024 showed that more than 6,350 jobs had been created, around 90 per cent of them for women. Nearly 13,000 farmers were reached. Truvalu had assets under management of close to €11 million, growing towards €30 million. They are generating a 'single digit' net return, modest, but stable and reliable enough to keep investing without subsidies.\*

Over the past ten years, Truvalu has developed and refined a formula that works, built on two pillars: local ownership and co-entrepreneurship.

\*This chapter was written at the end of 2025. Impact data presented comes from our impact report 2024.

## Learning by doing

The early years were a steep learning curve. Together with ICCO, Verboom launched two pilot funds with tickets of €100,000. "We thought: we'll work with small, wonderful little businesses that will naturally grow," he says. "But those 'promising cocoons' never hatched. The impact was far too limited."

What did work: co-entrepreneurship. Not just investing, but thinking alongside, co-managing and offering hands-on support. And being present locally. "The professionals in the countries where we work know where the opportunities lie," says Ooijens. "With their knowledge, experience and networks within their own socio-economic, political and cultural context, decisions are made better and faster."

In 2020, ICCO stepped back and Truvalu became fully private. The learning curve was over, the formula found. The focus shifted further towards scalable early-stage businesses and local embeddedness. From that point on, everything revolved around professionalisation.

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**Profit is the flywheel of continuity. The longer we make a profit, the longer we can keep doing this. That is a very important element of a sustainable enterprise.”**

JAAP-JAN VERBOOM  
Founder & Director Truvalu



## Local autonomy as the key

Between 2015 and 2020, Truvalu made two crucial decisions. To stop working with very early-stage startups and focus on businesses with a minimum turnover of €250,000. And to strengthen local offices in Colombia, Kenya and Bangladesh. Not as extensions of the Netherlands, but as autonomous profit centres.

That decentralisation was an intensive process, but proved to be the key to survival. The local managing directors were tasked with making their offices profitable. In Colombia, the local director is now a co-owner. In Kenya, this is being prepared.

That local co-entrepreneurship makes all the difference. Take Del Huerto, a Colombian vegetable business in which

Verboom and Ooijens have invested. The local team hit a wall with the Colombian tax authorities. "We simply negotiated together," says Verboom. "Familiar territory for us, completely new ground for the Colombian entrepreneurs. We reached a settlement. The business could move forward."

Or Cacao Pacifico, another investment that went through difficult times. "We had the confidence to put more money in rather than collect interest. Our shared entrepreneurship made it possible. And it worked." All the additional financing has since been repaid.

## What sets Truvalu apart

Sustaining ten years as an impact fund in emerging markets — in a sector that is still maturing and where the path is rarely straightforward — is no small feat. So what does Truvalu do differently?

First: realistic expectations. Not promising twenty per cent returns, but a single-digit net return. Stable and reinvestable.

Second: skin in the game. Verboom and Ooijens have committed substantial personal capital. "This is our own future story," says Ooijens. "If things go wrong, we are the first to feel it."

Third: strict focus. Agri-food, three countries, early-stage.

Fourth: operational excellence. Ten years of data on costs, returns and failures. They know precisely at what level of assets under management an office breaks even. "We have found a recipe for scaling the small," says Verboom.

And fifth: exits that work. In December 2025, Truvalu sold its stake in Growpact Kenya after eight years at a strong multiple. "Our role had run its course," says Ooijens. "When a business is ready for the next step, we redeploy our capital somewhere we can add new value again."

## Impact as strategy

The work of Verboom and Ooijens becomes tangible at Classical Handmade Products (CHP) in Bangladesh. When Truvalu came on board, the business was legally a sole trader. Everything in cash, no proper governance. "You cannot invest in that," says Verboom. The local team professionalised the business step by step.

Today CHP employs thousands of workers, supplies Ikea and H&M, and has solar panels and a water treatment installation. Women receive health

check-ups, training and childcare. And that matters: "Satisfied employees are more productive and deliver better quality," says Ooijens.

Truvalu makes a deliberate choice to focus on gender inclusivity. On average, 29 per cent of board members across portfolio companies are women. In management teams that figure is 51 per cent. "Diversity leads to better decision-making and higher productivity," says Ooijens. "Companies with more women in key positions simply perform better."



**Gender equality and diversity within businesses is more than a human right or a nice-to-have. It leads to higher productivity, financial stability and better decision-making. Companies with more women in management simply perform better."**

**MACHTELD OOIJENS**

Co-owner Truvalu



Photography by: CHP



# STRUCTURE & GOVERNANCE

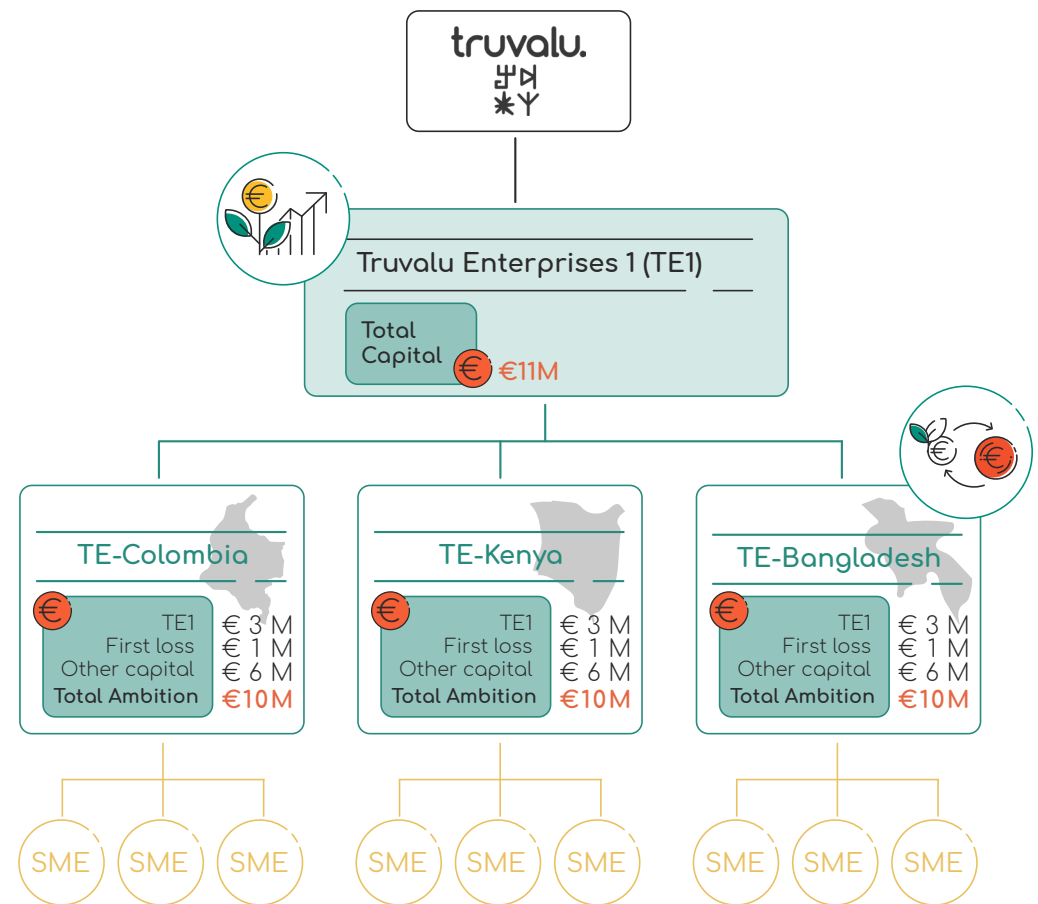
Globally, Truvalu operates as a platform of locally incorporated, locally managed investment management companies with localised investment vehicles.

Local investment companies (Kenya, Colombia, Bangladesh) are managed by local professionals who make investment decisions with local market intelligence. Truvalu Netherlands plays a dual role: Management Partner (strategic support, methodology, quality assurance) and Cornerstone Investor (skin in the game through TE 1).

For the three countries, this means that the following entities are involved:

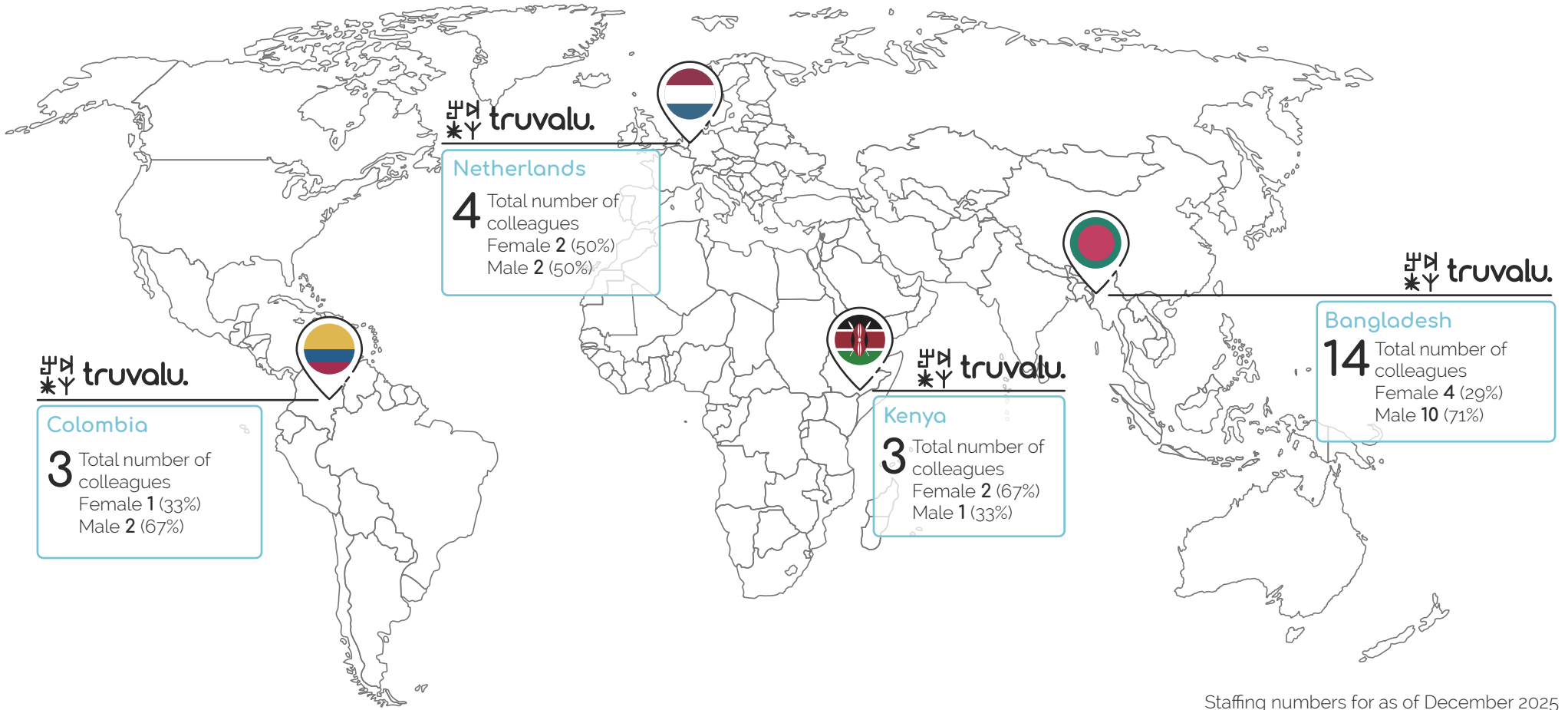
- **Truvalu B.V.**, registered in the Netherlands and serves as the platform holding company, providing methodology, governance frameworks, impact measurement tools;
- **Truvalu Enterprises 1 B.V. (TE1)**, registered in the Netherlands and serves as an anchor investor providing cornerstone capital to Truvalu Enterprises Kenya/ Bangladesh/ Colombia
- **Truvalu Enterprises Kenya- Colombia-Bangladesh:** Dutch registered investment vehicles, specifically focused towards Kenya, Colombia or Bangladesh, holding the capital for investments in that country and owning the investment titles;
- **Truvalu-country:** the locally registered fund management company providing the fund management services to the Truvalu Enterprises country fund.

The picture below gives a visual illustration of this structure, including the intended financial volumes.



**Note:** At the moment, the capital vehicle for Kenya has not yet been incorporated. Investments in this country are still done from the feeder fund, TE1. Incorporation is planned for the moment that external investors will come on board. In comparison, for Bangladesh a localised structure has already been incorporated and for Colombia we are now incorporating a vehicle with a Colombian DFI as anchor investor.

TE-country funds are (envisaged as) an open ended permanent structure. The final structure and form of the capital vehicle can still be determined in conversation with the anchor investors.



# GET TO KNOW SOME TRUVALU PROFESSIONALS

We are grateful for our dedicated in-country teams of highly skilled and committed professionals in Bangladesh, Colombia and Kenya. Their commitment and diverse expertise are extremely valuable for all the work we do as Truvalu. Having these teams across three regions is an important asset, enabling us to navigate in these chosen economies. Their unique perspectives, deep understanding of local contexts and their personal passion set us apart in the impact investment space.

In our last two impact reports, we introduced nine of our colleagues from Truvalu's three country teams (see impact report 2023 and 2024). Let us introduce three more colleagues, showcasing the diversity, dedication, and unique talents that drive our company forward.

Naomi Steiyan is a financial analyst, assisting with financial analysis, portfolio reporting and research. Esther Njau is a finance and investment professional with expertise in corporate finance.

Naomi brings to the team her strong research skills and a background in financial analysis. Esther plays a key role in managing investments, conducting financial analysis, and is leading Truvalu's contribution to the implementation of the CBI project "Women Economic Empowerment Programme", implemented together with Private Equity Support. Both joined the team in 2025.

**Naomi, what does a usual day in the Truvalu Kenya office look like?**

**Naomi:** "My day mainly involves working with financial information from our portfolio companies and companies we are assessing for investment. I review company financial statements, build financial models, and prepare analyses used in investment assessments and ongoing reporting. I also spend time on macroeconomic and market research to better understand the environments our portfolio companies and potential investees operate in."

**Esther, you joined Truvalu in September 2025. What made you decide to start working for Truvalu Kenya?**

**Esther:** "I have always wanted to work in the investment space and apply my skills in investment analysis. Truvalu provided the perfect opportunity to do that, offering a platform where I can contribute to impactful investments while continuing to grow professionally."

**You do financial analyses of Kenyan companies. What is really characteristic of Kenyan SMEs?**

**Naomi:** "Most Kenyan SMEs operate with very tight cash flows and little room for idle cash, meaning performance is often managed month by month rather than year to year. Many are sensitive to external factors like rising costs, exchange rate movements, and tax compliance, which can quickly affect margins. At the same time, these businesses are very adaptive, often adjusting their processes and using digital tools to stay afloat and continue growing."

**Can you tell us about your roles and main responsibilities in the Kenya office?**

**Naomi:** "I perform financial analysis of our portfolio companies and companies we are assessing for investment. I build business case financial models and memos, and prepare reports that provide insight into each company's performance and growth potential. This work helps the team understand these

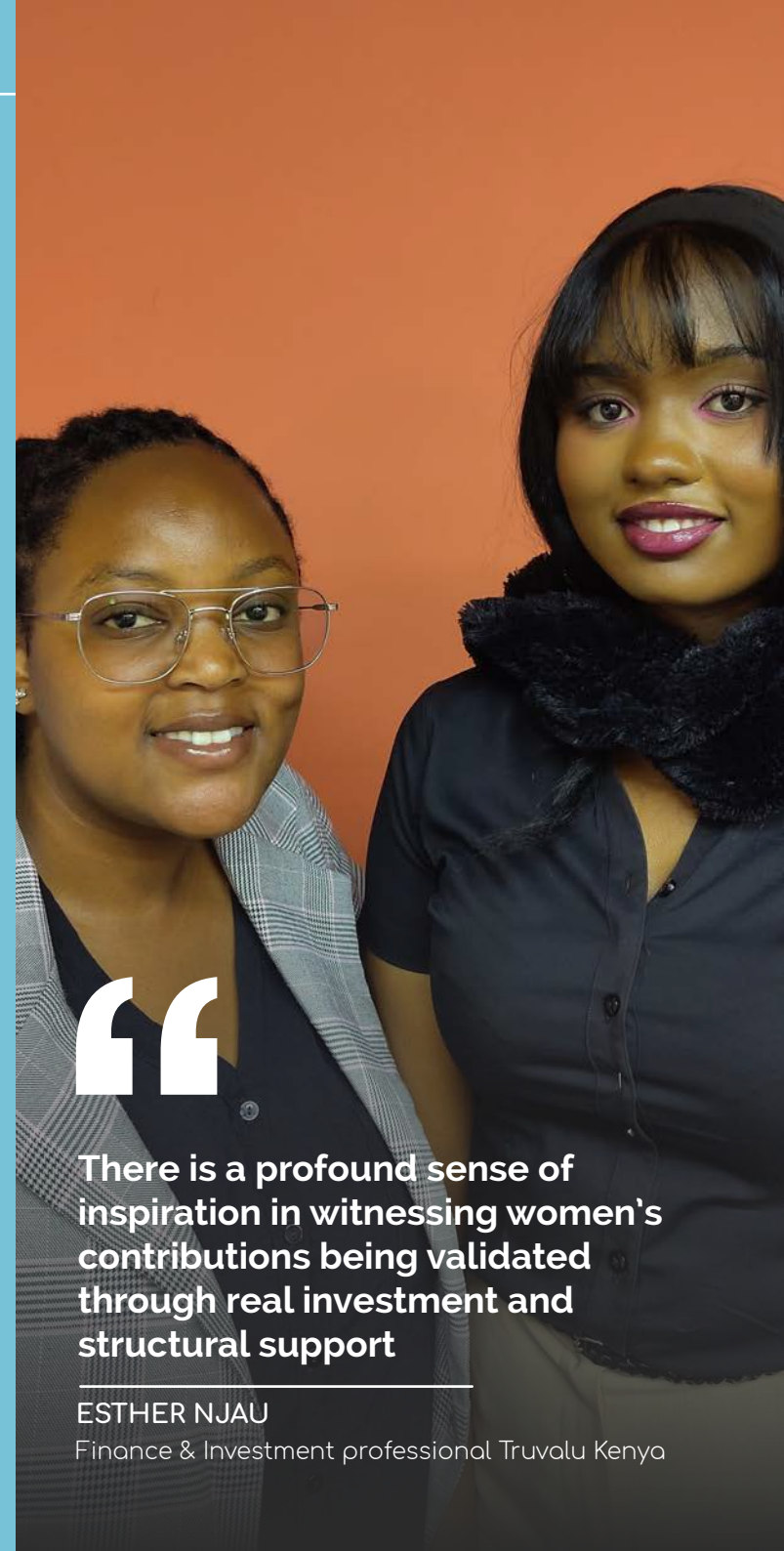
companies better and supports ongoing monitoring of their progress and performance."

**Esther:** "My main responsibilities include building business case financial models, conducting assessments of SMEs, and performing both financial and data analysis on companies. I also produce relevant reports that support investment decisions and provide insights into business performance and growth opportunities."

**Can you both share your personal Truvalu highlight in 2025?**

**Naomi:** "My personal highlight in 2025 was progressing from an intern to a full-time Financial Analyst. This transition allowed me to take on greater responsibility in investment analysis, portfolio monitoring, and reporting, and to contribute more directly to Truvalu Kenya's investment and impact work."

**Esther:** "My career highlight has been actively contributing to the ongoing implementation of the Women Economic Empowerment Programme. Being part of this process has been both exciting and rewarding. To me, seeing women being actively considered at every level of the economic framework feels like a personal victory. There is a profound sense of inspiration in witnessing women's contributions being validated through real investment and structural support. I look forward to continuing this work and witnessing the programme's full outcomes as it progresses."



**There is a profound sense of inspiration in witnessing women's contributions being validated through real investment and structural support**

**ESTHER NJAU**

Finance & Investment professional Truvalu Kenya



“

**It is extremely interesting to be part of interconnected processes with an integrated approach that links diverse local actors committed to legitimate economies from within their territories.**

**YEYMI GUZMAN**

Finance & Accountancy Truvalu Colombia



**Yeymi is a Certified Public Accountant and financial and accounting consultant with over twelve years of experience supporting social impact organisations. Her work focuses on strengthening financial management, transparency, and accountability.**

Through her work, she contributes to the sustainability of resources and the generation of long-term social value.

**What makes impact investing and working for Truvalu in Colombia so interesting for you?**

"For many years in Colombia, investment, primarily from international cooperation, was focused on rebuilding the social fabric fractured by years of internal armed conflict. Impact investing, on the other hand, places people

and grassroots organizations in a different context, positioning them in an environment of income generation and strengthening their value chains. Therefore, it is extremely interesting to be part of interconnected processes with an integrated approach that links diverse local actors committed to legitimate economies from within their territories."

**What is your role in the Truvalu Colombia team?**

"I support the General Management in monitoring and controlling the portfolio statements associated with the fund's investments in Colombia, a blended finance fund that combines cooperation and private investment resources. My role focuses on the traceability and execution of payments derived from investments, the preparation of portfolio financial reports, and the follow-up on payment requests. I also manage and file the supporting documentation required for the control and audit processes typical of this type of fund. Additionally, I maintain close contact with the companies to address operational and administrative concerns during the investment process."

**Where does your passion for finance and impact come from?**

"My passion for finance stems from understanding it as a tool to provide comprehensive support to organizations and the people who comprise them. Throughout my

professional career, I have seen how responsible financial management, resource optimization, and proper risk management can strengthen organizational processes and generate sustainable social impact. For me, finance is the bridge that connects accounting information based on historical data with strategic planning, enabling informed, timely decisions aligned with each organization's social purpose."

**What makes Truvalu a unique company in the Colombian context?**

"I believe that what makes Truvalu unique in Colombia is its ability to recognize value in a wide variety of companies, organizations, and ventures, committed to comprehensive, long-term support. Its mixed financing model represents an innovative approach in the country, as it transforms the way rural areas are perceived, not as spaces of scarcity, but as environments with high potential for investment and development. This vision is strengthened through the collaboration with strategic stakeholders who promote legitimate and sustainable economies from within these territories."



Anwar is an experienced accounting and finance professional with expertise in financial accounting and reporting, financial planning and analysis, taxation, and corporate law. Since joining Truvalu in 2019, he has contributed to the growth of both the Bangladesh office and the Global office, with finance operations running smoothly and aligned with the company's strategic goals. Beyond managing numbers, Anwar is motivated by the broader purpose of his work and its contribution to meaningful, long-term impact.

**Can you tell us about your roles and main responsibilities in the Global office?**

'At the Global office, I manage Truvalu's end-to-end finance function, including financial accounting, group reporting, budgeting and forecasting, cash flow oversight, compliance, and investment portfolio administration. I work closely with country offices and other business units to ensure consistent financial standards and adherence to group policies. Through structured reporting and disciplined financial analysis, I provide management with reliable information to assess performance, monitor risk, and support sustainable growth across the company.'

**Can you tell us about your roles and main responsibilities in the Bangladesh office and how you are building a Department for finance and admin?**

"In Bangladesh, I oversee the finance, administration, and HR functions of the company. From managing accounting and reporting to budgeting, planning, and taxation, my role touches many aspects of day-to-day operations. Over time, I have been focused on growing the team and expanding the department so it can better support Truvalu's growth, simplify processes, and make decision-making easier. I approach my work by building practical systems and guiding the team, creating operations that are

reliable, flexible, and able to adapt as the company evolves."

**What makes Truvalu for you a unique company and what dreams do you have for Truvalu?**

"Truvalu stands out by combining professional rigour with a clear social impact mission. Every financial decision, report, and process ultimately supports meaningful outcomes for the communities and markets we serve. My goal is to continue contributing to stronger collaboration across regions and improve our systems so our work remains efficient, transparent, and aligned with our impact objectives. I hope to see Truvalu grow steadily as a trusted partner to entrepreneurs, investors, and other stakeholders that generates sustainable financial returns and creates lasting economic value in the markets where we operate."



**Truvalu stands out by combining professional rigour with a clear social impact mission. Every financial decision, report, and process ultimately supports meaningful outcomes for the communities and markets we serve.**

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**ANWAR SARKER**

Head of Finance, Administration & HR,  
Truvalu Bangladesh



# OUR INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO



## Bangladesh



### Classical Handmade Products (CHP)

Produces home decoration products, such as rugs and baskets, from natural and biodegradable materials, such as jute, water hyacinth, cattail and banana fiber from smallholder farmers), for the international market. Through a combination of visionary entrepreneurship and creative designer skills, the founder, Mr. Tauhid Bin Abdus Salam, has grown CHP to a scale, now able to produce for various international brands and creating employment for thousands of rural workers, mostly women. See [Impact Report 2023, page 24](#).



### Greener Garments Initiative (GGI)

GGI is an Energy Service Company (ESCO). GGI is supported by the Off-Grid Renewable Energy Fund (ORE Fund) from Truvalu and One to Watch, which invest in scalable clean energy solutions across South Asia. GGI decarbonizes international supply chains through solar energy solutions for manufacturing SMEs. See box 17 & 23.



## Kenya



### Camino Ruiz Agencies Ltd.

One of the first companies in Kenya that has managed to organize the whole value chain from production to distribution and finally selling of tilapia fish directly to the consumer. **Camino Ruiz** is serving the B2C market with the sale of tilapia fish (both fresh and processed) through the main supermarket stores in Kenya as well as through their own shops.



### Ecodudu

An innovative waste-to-value company. It converts agricultural waste into organic fertilizers and highly nutritious inputs for animal feed derived from the black soldier fly. **Ecodudu** is founded and managed by a couple, Adan Mohammed and Starlin Farah. Their model is to work in-house with large agricultural waste producers and convert the waste on the spot through rearing the flies. See [Impact Report 2024, page 48](#).



### GrowPact Kitale

A nursery farm producing more than 27 million seedlings per year for a variety of crops for farmers. High-quality vegetable seedlings such as cabbage, tomatoes, cucumber and capsicum to smallholder farmers result in higher yields at farmer level and hence a better income and improved food security. **GrowPact Kitale** is owned and led by a Kenyan couple, Joshua Mugendi and Mercy Njiru. Truvalu successfully exited this company at the end of 2025 (see [page 22](#)).



Engaged in sourcing soybeans from Northern Uganda and Western Kenya and supplying them to oil and animal feed processors in Nairobi. **Ndivisi**, founded by James Ododa, transitioned from a trader to a processor and has now equipped its factory to process soybeans into soy meal and soy oil. The value added products are sold to B2B customers.



A FinTech startup aimed at small vendors in emerging markets, founded by Walter aan de Wiel and Bartel Verkruijssen. The company has developed an 'Order now, Pay later' IT platform, fully geared towards and embedded in emerging markets. In 2022, **Sevi** was among the first 10 licensed Digital Credit Providers by the Central Bank of Kenya. Sevi's platform enables a fully automated AI-based Know Your Customer process and credit rating. See [Impact Report 2024, page 43](#).



### The Big Thundernuts

Sourcing macadamia shells from other processors and selling them as biomass to companies to fuel their boilers. Led by Moses Wachira. **The Big Thundernuts** started processing the nuts into oil, greatly adding value and giving the opportunity to source from smallholder farmers directly.



### FarmWorks

**FarmWorks** is an integrated agricultural company in Kenya focused on developing mid-sized commercial farms, supporting smallholder farmers through an out-grower program, and establishing market access infrastructure. The company is expanding its out-grower network and investing in technology, agronomy, and operational excellence to improve farm productivity and consistency. Its operations aim to drive efficiency, lower production costs, and enhance market access for farmers. See [Impact Report 2024, page 43](#).



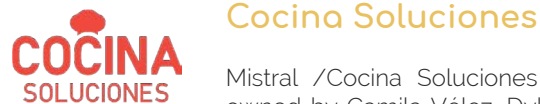
**Artesana**

Artesana is a restaurant chain specialized in pizza and pasta. Beyond its innovative culinary approach, Artesana stands out for its commitment to social impact, sourcing ingredients sustainably and supporting local producers. With a unique menu that sets it apart from its competitors, the brand is rapidly gaining popularity in the city, particularly among middle- and upper-middle-income consumers.



**Cacao Pacifico**

A facility in Cali that produces a good range of products such as cocoa liquor, cocoa butter, cocoa powder, and special cocoa coatings and that meets all (international) quality assurance requirements with the latest know-how in the production of cacao. Company founder Antonio Varela is an entrepreneur with a strong commitment to small farmers in especially Tumaco and other conflict affected areas in the South of Colombia, providing an alternative for illicit crops.



**Cocina Soluciones**

Mistral /Cocina Soluciones is owned by Camila Vélez, Dylan Misrach and Jérôme Di Salvio. Their company, based in Bogotá, offers delightful artisan pastries and bread, using (mostly organic) ingredients from almost solely Colombian suppliers and about 1600 small farmers. Many of them are based in areas affected by armed conflict and cocaine plantations, or other vulnerable communities. The company is providing jobs to almost 100 (mostly young) people (80% women). See [Impact Report 2023, page 54](#)



**Cindy Coco**

Cindy Coco buys coconuts from small coconut producers and cooperatives in vulnerable and conflict affected areas of Colombia, and processes the coconut into coconut milk, butter and coconut ice and cream. **Kiero Koko** (the brand name) was founded by entrepreneur Jaime Ponce who sees great potential in both B2B as well as B2C markets.



**Del Huerto**

Dedicated to processing and marketing of fruits and vegetables to restaurants that meet quality standards for human consumption as well as the technical requirements of its customers, in the Valle del Cauca in South-West of Colombia. **Del Huerto** was founded by the entrepreneurial couple Lilia Marcela Torres and Marlon Sanchez, employs 16 dedicated individuals (62% of them women) and collaborates with a network of more than 48 small producers from various regions in the South of Colombia, still characterized by enormous security issues and poverty.



**LCC**

Lácteos del Campo Caqueteño is a Colombian dairy company founded in 2014, specializing in cheese production. With a capacity of 45,000 liters of milk daily, it serves national retailers and large food groups. The company produces various dairy products, including milk cream and low-fat cheeses, and is exploring opportunities in aged cheese and dairy by-products like whey. Positioned for growth, it offers significant potential with a 4x revenue increase and interest from potential acquirers. See [Impact Report 2024, page 16](#).



**Mesa Baja**

Mesa Baja is a producer and trader of organic raw sugar blocks, supplying buyers in Chile and the USA, as well as selling in Colombia through Juan Valdez and major national retailers. The company is led by Sara Grisales, a passionate entrepreneur who strongly believes in the fair distribution of benefits across the value chain (find the story on [page 70](#)).



**Pomario**

Produces and sells organic salads, edible flowers, buds, and micro vegetables. **Pomario** (Del Campo por Tradicion SAS), located in Los Llanos de Cuivá, is a pioneer in the sector, offering fresh products and delivering within 24 hours after harvest, a/o through a webshop, sourced from small farmers and grown in its greenhouse. The company is founded and run by 4 siblings. See [Impact report 2023, page 36](#).



**Ruta de Chocolate**

**La Ruta del Chocolate** is a small company in the Putumayo department, in the Amazonian region in the South of Colombia. It is founded and owned by a married couple. It consists of two business units: tourism services related to a real cocoa experience and cocoa derivatives such as cocoa liquor, cocoa wine, chocolate bars and others.



**Alimentos Liofilizados Natur SRL**

Produces Freeze Dried (super) fruits, such as Acai powder and freeze dried tropical fruits for the local, regional and international market. **Alimentos Liofilizados Natur SRL** operates a unique, energy-efficient form of freeze drying, developed by the entrepreneur, André Luiz Napravnik.



**Manduvira**

Manduvira is a large cooperative that sources organic sugar cane from more than 900 smallholder farmers in Paraguay. With the support of Truvalu, the cooperative set up a new business line through which the organic refined sugar is sold to the retail market in addition to the existing bulk market. Manduvira has obtained various important organic and fairtrade certifications giving the strong position in international markets.



# TRUVALU NOTCHES AFRICAN AGRICULTURE EXIT TO DUTCH FAMILY OFFICE

by Lucy Ngige, ImpactAlpha



Photography by: GrowPact Kitale

Netherlands-based impact investor Truvalu Group has exited GrowPact Kitale, a Kenyan seedling distributor it backed in 2017, through a strategic sale.

GrowPact Kitale has worked closely with Dutch agricultural tech company Viscon to modernize seedling production and distribution.

Following the exit, GrowPact, Viscon, Truvalu and the family office have launched GrowPact Global, a new vehicle to invest in and provide technical assistance to seedling nurseries across Africa, starting in Ghana.

## Setting a precedent

According to Truvalu's Peter Owaga, some investments in the agriculture sector have become very expensive. This is because investors wait until companies are heavily de-risked before committing capital, at which point their valuations have increased and they're forced to scale quickly, creating pressure for fast exits.

He hopes the GrowPact deal will show investors the value of supporting businesses earlier in the process as they formalize their operations and approach investability.

"I hope it will show investors that there is opportunity in that missing middle that's often talked about," Owaga told ImpactAlpha.



**I hope it will show investors that there is opportunity in that missing middle that's often talked about"**

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**PETER OWAGA**  
Managing Director,  
Truvalu Kenya

## Exit options

Truvalu sees strategic sales, secondary sales to larger impact funds and entrepreneur buybacks as viable exit options for agriculture investors. But in practice, secondary transactions remain scarce. Truvalu's Jaap-Jan Verboom noted that the limiting factor is not a lack of investable businesses, but a shortage of buyers at the next stage of capital provision.

"There is barely any secondary sale. We have done so far less compared to strategic sales or buyback scenarios, which are also often quite complicated."

Truvalu is backed primarily by private Dutch investors. Its Kenya arm manages an active portfolio of eight companies and is deploying approximately €5 million (\$5.8 million), with ticket sizes ranging from \$250,000 to \$500,000.

“

**There is a lot of capital floating around the globe that is not connected to the real entrepreneurial opportunities on the ground. The difficulties that we have to raise capital are not at par with the immense amount of opportunities that we see.”**

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JAAP-JAN VERBOOM

Founder & Director Truvalu

Verboom said most investor capital targeting agriculture remains concentrated in closed-ended funds, reflecting continued risk aversion. And he argued that more patient, long-term capital, including permanent-capital structures, is better aligned with the realities and potential of small agribusinesses in emerging markets.

"There is a lot of capital floating around the globe that is not connected to the real entrepreneurial opportunities on the ground," Verboom said. "The difficulties that we have to raise capital are not at par with the immense amount of opportunities that we see."

“

**The effect of the collaboration with Truvalu is phenomenal considering the transformation of our business model and the growth of GrowPact.”**

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JOSHUA MUGENDI NJIRU

Director GrowPact Kitale



# 2025: KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN TRUVALU'S FOCUS COUNTRIES

2025 brought profound political transformation across Truvalu's investment regions. **Bangladesh** prepared for elections under an interim government, **Kenya** navigated fiscal pressures and political realignment, and **Colombia** faced sovereign downgrades and emergency fiscal measures. Despite considerable headwinds, our portfolio companies demonstrated resilience through strategic adaptation.





### Bangladesh: Political transition towards elections

2025 was a challenging year for Bangladesh's economy and political stability - marked by slower growth, inflationary pressures, weakened investor interest, and heightened social tensions amid a democratic transition. Looking ahead, 2026 presents an opportunity for significant improvement. Should the nation achieve political clarity and implement crucial structural reforms, a substantial economic recovery and a resurgence in investor confidence are viable prospects.

The current macroeconomic environment reflects a fragile and uneven recovery. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth saw a sharp decline, reaching only 3.97 percent in FY2025. While this signifies a partial rebound from the political unrest

disruptions, it falls significantly short of both the country's historical average and the level necessary to create sufficient employment for the rapidly expanding labour force. According to World Bank and IMF assessments, private and public investment remained constrained, and inflation persisted at elevated levels, denting household and business confidence. Inflation in Bangladesh continues to be a concern throughout 2025, with levels often remaining in high single digits, contributing to rising living costs.

However, the garment sector - Bangladesh's export backbone - showed resilience, and a recent trade deal with the United States improving tariff conditions for Bangladeshi textiles has boosted optimism in export markets. Remittances also remained strong - surpassing \$30 billion - helping to support the current account and foreign exchange reserves. Most development partners project modest recovery in 2026. IMF and World Bank forecasts see GDP growth rising gradually - estimates range from around 4.6 % to 6.1 % over the FY25-26 and FY26-27 periods, depending on reform pace and political stability. If elections in early 2026 produce stability and reform momentum continues, Bangladesh could re-enter a moderate recovery trajectory. However, structural reforms - particularly in banking, taxation, and governance - remain decisive for sustainable medium-term growth.





Photography by: Truvalu



## Kenya: Resilience amid fiscal and political transition

Kenya's political environment in 2025 was marked by heightened volatility alongside institutional consolidation. The death of opposition icon Raila Odinga in October reshaped the political landscape well ahead of the 2027 elections, while President William Ruto strengthened his position through new alliances and the reconstitution of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, restoring a degree of electoral credibility.

At the same time, widespread youth-led demonstrations—driven by unemployment, cost-of-living pressures, and governance concerns—periodically disrupted urban centres and underscored rising social tensions that remain a key political risk factor.

The government's decision to ban the Muslim Brotherhood and enact East Africa's first cryptocurrency regulatory framework signalled a firmer regulatory and security stance.

Economically, conditions were mixed. The IMF programme ended in March, resulting in the loss of approximately USD 800 million and delays in World Bank financing, while domestic debt increased to KES 6.60 trillion. However, macro-financial conditions improved later in the year as the Central Bank implemented nine consecutive rate cuts, bringing the policy rate to 9.00%, customs revenues reached record highs, inflation eased, and currency pressures moderated.

Structurally, Kenya continued to advance as a regional digital and climate-finance hub, with M-Pesa users rising to 37.9 million and the country joining the Coalition to Grow Carbon Markets and co-leading COP30 negotiations, supporting long-term opportunities in fintech, climate finance, and green infrastructure despite near-term social and political pressures.



### Colombia: Navigating fiscal headwinds

Colombia's investment environment in 2025 was shaped by fiscal pressures and a cautious macroeconomic outlook following a period of economic slowdown. According to the IMF and World Bank, GDP growth in 2025 is 2.5%, following a sharp deceleration in 2023–2024. At the same time, fiscal constraints and ongoing policy debates around structural reforms contributed to a more cautious investment climate and tighter liquidity conditions for small and medium enterprises. Sovereign credit ratings remained under pressure, reflecting continued concerns around fiscal consolidation and public debt dynamics.

Despite these macroeconomic headwinds, Colombia continues to stand out as one of the most developed ecosystems for impact investment in Latin America. According to Latimpacto and the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN), impact investing in Latin America now

represents over USD 160 billion in assets under management, with Colombia consistently ranking among the most active destinations for impact-oriented capital in the region. The country hosts a growing network of impact funds, development finance institutions, and philanthropic capital providers working across sectors such as sustainable agriculture, financial inclusion, climate resilience, and nature-based solutions.

Entrepreneurial activity in these sectors remains strong. Colombia's fintech ecosystem surpassed 400 startups, with digital financial services expanding access to finance for underserved populations (BID Lab). At the same time, the country continues to play a strategic role in climate and nature based solutions in the Amazon basin, creating opportunities for investment in regenerative agriculture, sustainable food systems, and forest conservation.

In this context, impact investors increasingly play a countercyclical role, providing patient capital and technical assistance to small and medium enterprises navigating periods of macroeconomic volatility. For Truvalu, this environment required closer engagement with portfolio companies, strengthening financial discipline, operational resilience, and strategic positioning while continuing to pursue opportunities aligned with long-term sustainable growth.





Photography by: Ecodudu

# TRUVALU'S THEORY OF CHANGE

## THE PROBLEM



Truvalu has found that **SMEs represent 90% of businesses**

According to the World Bank, SMEs account for the majority of businesses worldwide and are important contributors to job creation and economic development.



SMEs employ **60 - 70% of workforce** in Asia, Africa and Latin America



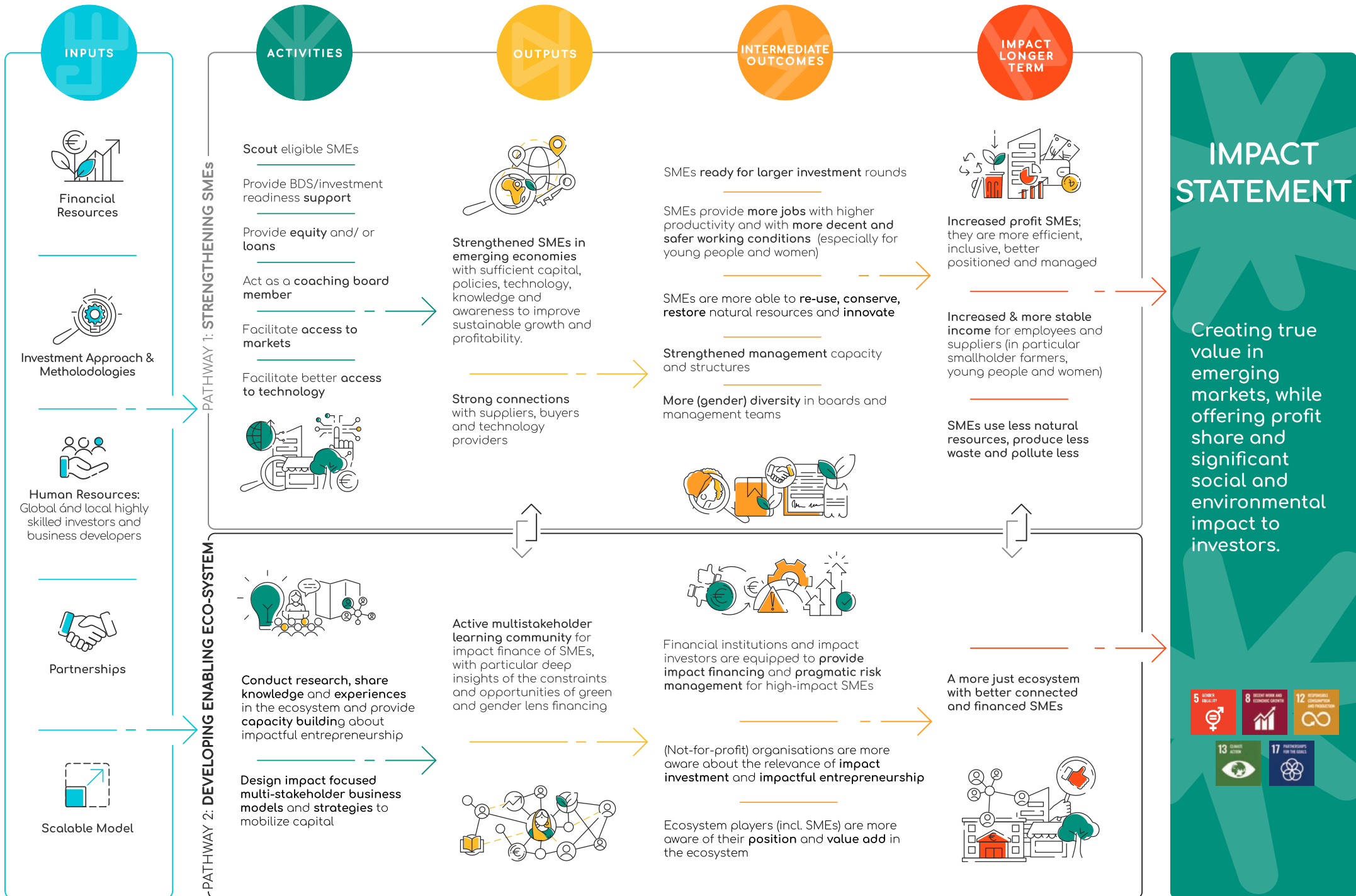
**40%**

Formal SMEs contribute up to 40% of national income - gross domestic product - in emerging economies.



USD **\$8 trillion** funding gap

Access to finance is critical barrier to growth, with a USD8 trillion funding gap.



# IMPACT RESULTS 2025

At Truvalu, our mission is clear: we are committed to investing in the “missing middle”—small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in emerging markets that are too often overlooked by traditional financing.

Our work has always been about more than just financial returns; it's about unlocking opportunity, driving innovation, and empowering communities that need it most. We believe that the most powerful impact comes from building strong local partnerships and leveraging blended finance to mitigate risk and unlock capital for high-impact SMEs.

In line with our [Theory of Change](#), in this chapter we dive deeper into Truvalu's 2025 activities, outputs and results, along the lines of the two defined pathways: The first one focusing on strengthening SMEs in this missing middle and the second pathway, contributing to an enabling ecosystem. Both ultimately with the aim to strengthen access to impact finance for SMEs for impact.

## INPUTS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

To implement our activities either in investments or in ecosystem building, we rely on the following **inputs** that we divide into the following categories:



### Financial resources

Capital, which includes equity, loans and trade finance, and our own skin in the game. Financial inputs also include capital of investees, funding of impact-focused (semi-) institutional financiers for de-risking instruments, and grant funding for investment readiness support and BDS, experts, innovation and knowledge building.



### Human resources:

Our global office partners with local teams of highly skilled and committed professionals in Bangladesh, Colombia and Kenya. We know these countries, their business culture, the economic and political contexts, and their financial, tax, export and legal policies.



### Our approach & methodologies:

This includes Truvalu's (gender inclusive) investment methodology, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and impact focus, training and tooling, i.e. for scouting, acceleration processes, investment readiness, software, and digital financial literacy.



### Partnerships:

We establish strong collaborations with other stakeholders in the ecosystem, like larger (international) companies, traders, universities, financial institutions and NGOs.



### Our scalable, replicable model:

It is based on closely monitored models of success and the continuous steering on lessons learned.



Diving deeper, let's explore 2025's activities, their outputs, and initial results, all aligned with our Theory of Change.

## PATHWAY 1: STRENGTHENING SMEs



In pathway 1 we identify the following co-entrepreneurial activities to strengthen SMEs in the three emerging economies:

### Scouting eligible SMEs

To **scout and screen SMEs** that aim to be supported and are interested in access to finance, Truvalu gets in touch with SMEs through its growing **local networks and referrals** (for example from other accelerators, impact investors, financial institutions, chambers of commerce, universities, social media).

We increasingly apply a **gender-climate lens** from the start, which broadens the pipeline and helps uncover high-impact opportunities that drive both equitable growth and climate resilience. Our teams for that reason also engage with stakeholders such as the Women Investors Network in Bangladesh (BWIN) and women's business associations to look beyond traditional deal flow. By doing this, we help surface underrepresented entrepreneurs and inclusive green ventures.

In 2025 we had 10 companies in our pipeline for further deep analysis, all coming from Colombia and Kenya.

**Business Development Support (BDS)** programs we implement also create the opportunity to build a pipeline of future investee companies. We expect to identify potential investee companies in Bangladesh in 2026.

### Providing investment readiness and BDS

Truvalu provides BDS through **grant co-funded projects and programs**, and by **one-on-one support** to individual (potential) investees.

### Co-funded BDS projects and programs

The 2025 BDS programs contributed to our ambition to strengthen SMEs and promote access to green and/or gender inclusive finance. We tend to reach out to larger groups of SMEs and organize group-based **general BDS** and **customized, individual BDS** for a selection of companies hereafter (this can be related to finance, technology, digitalization, branding, energy audit, etc.). See **box 1** about BDS for SMEs in Bangladesh.



Photography by: Thanapara Swallows

In 2025, investment readiness and BDS program for (green and gender focused) SMEs were in particular organized in Bangladesh:



In 2025, a total number of **221 SMEs** SMEs from various sectors applied for BDS under either the Access to Green Finance (A2GF), Gender Lens Investing (GLI) or B-Briddhi program.

Out of this group; **122** were selected for General BDS (82 were women-led)

and **64 SMEs** were offered customized support by Truvalu Bangladesh.



Number of employees working for the SME joining the BDS, (indirectly) benefitting from the BDS programs: **7.427** (GLI and A2GF).



Photography by: Truvalu



In **Kenya**, in collaboration with Private Equity Support, Truvalu contributed to the CBI Women Economic Empowerment project. 2025 was in particular focused on learning from support in financial management and market access initiatives and re-strategizing for 2026.



Photography by: Truvalu

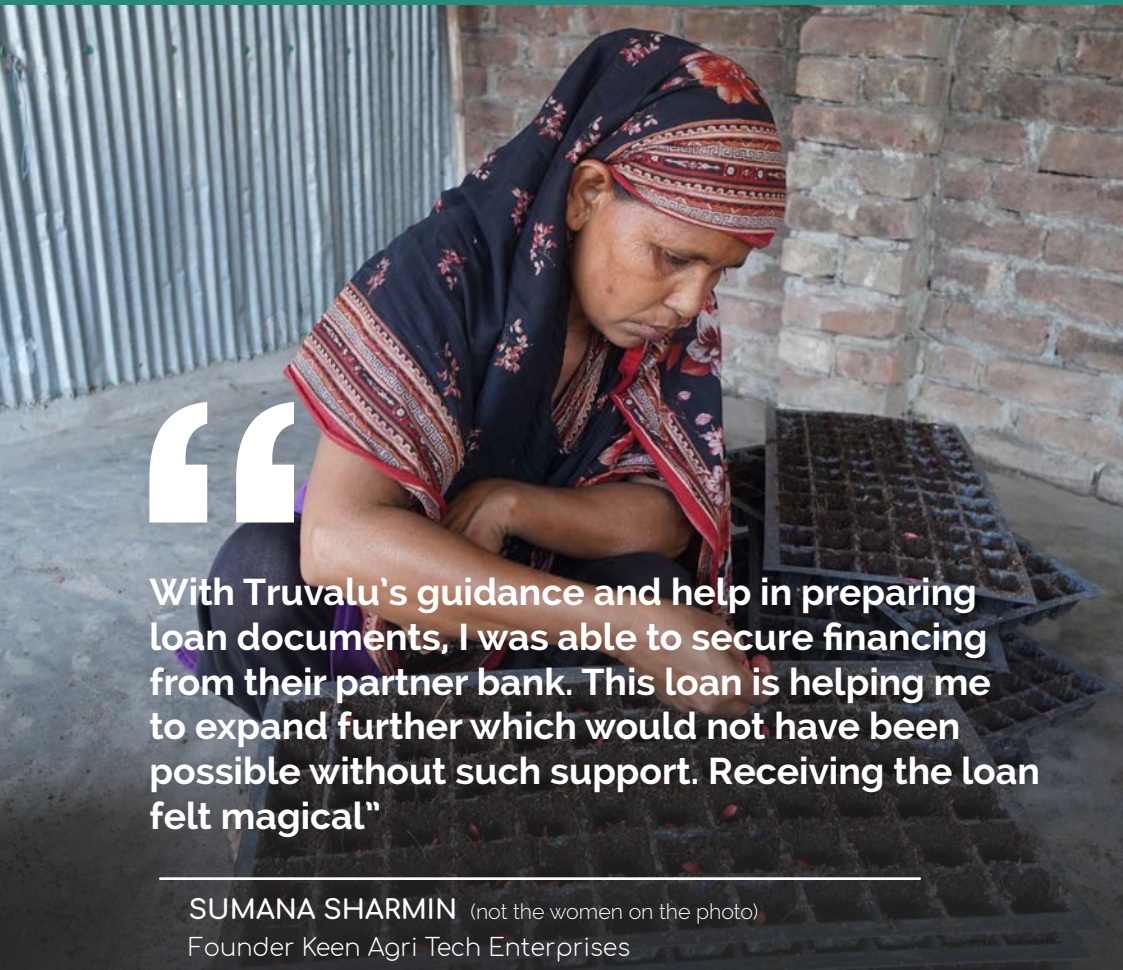
## Investment readiness for gender and/or green focused companies in Bangladesh

Truvalu Bangladesh has supported several promising SMEs through BDS - helping them become investment-ready and better positioned to access financing from commercial banks. Some examples:

**Keen Agri Tech Enterprise** – A women-led high-quality seedlings business, supporting smallholder farmers all over Bangladesh. With our support, the SME strengthened its operations, adopted a digital system, and accessed financing by City Bank PLC for the first time.



Photography by: Truvalu



“

**With Truvalu’s guidance and help in preparing loan documents, I was able to secure financing from their partner bank. This loan is helping me to expand further which would not have been possible without such support. Receiving the loan felt magical”**

SUMANA SHARMIN (not the woman on the photo)  
Founder Keen Agri Tech Enterprises

Photography by: AgriKeen

**Thanapara Swallows Development Society** - A social enterprise producing fair-trade handicrafts, garments, and lifestyle items while providing skills development and employment to women from marginalized communities (founded in 1972 to support income generation for women who had been widowed by a massacre during the Bangladesh Liberation War). Through our support, they are improving product development and expanding digital sales channels.

**Baah Stores** - A women-led boutique and lifestyle brand in Dhaka offering handcrafted bags, accessories, and home décor in partnership with local artisans working with eco-friendly, upcycled and sustainable goods. Baah Stores leveraged Truvalu’s support to optimize operations, and become investment-ready - resulting in a successful loan application through the Bangladesh Bank refinance scheme.

**Nassik** is another growing seedling production company, providing high-quality, disease-resistant vegetable and fruit seedlings to farmers to improve crop productivity and reduce climate-related risks. With Truvalu’s support, the company has strengthened its account management, and started building a more structured go-to-market approach. These improvements are helping Nassik position itself for green investment and scale its impact across the Rangpur agricultural ecosystem.

## Gender sensitive Business Development Services

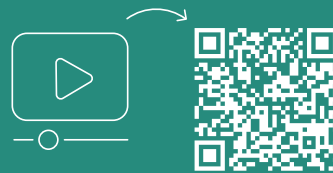


Our regional engagements in Bangladesh have highlighted important cultural and gender dynamics that influence how BDS need to be delivered. In many regional contexts, women entrepreneurs often face mobility constraints, household responsibilities, and the need for family approval to participate in business activities. These factors directly influence their ability to attend training sessions, access finance, and make business decisions.

To address these realities, we adapted our BDS approach to be more flexible and context-sensitive. For example, during longer training sessions we allow participants to bring their children with them so that caregiving responsibilities do not prevent them from attending. In Jessore, we also deliberately involved the husband of one entrepreneur in the discussions so that he could better understand the business and feel included in the process, which ultimately encouraged greater support for his wife's participation. Similarly, in Rangpur, one woman entrepreneur was unable to apply for a loan because her husband was reluctant to act as the guarantor. After reviewing the financial records and accounts that we had helped her prepare through our BDS support, he gained confidence in the business and agreed to support the loan application.

Engaging family members and addressing social dynamics can be just as important as technical business support in enabling women entrepreneurs to grow their enterprises.

Watch this video to learn more about our GLI work in Bangladesh:



We have **offline learning** modules like market segmentation; financial modeling; lean validation approach; investment proposition; valuation; marketing/sales; impact creation and measurement; branding; valuation; pitch training. However, we try to listen and assess as best as possible what entrepreneurs need when they apply and **offer customized answers** to

their stage of development. Instead of offering a general curriculum, in our modules we aim to focus on **solving people's immediate problems**.

Our training of SMEs revealed that a **hybrid model** - combining **online and offline** components - yields the best results. For online sessions, it's critical to tailor content and delivery

to the technological capabilities of participating companies to ensure seamless learning experiences. In-person (offline) sessions proved highly effective, emphasizing the value of face-to-face interaction for deeper engagement, inspiration and improved learning outcomes.

By equipping enterprises with financial models, IIR, and impact tracking mechanisms, projects help to reduce risks and shorten the time required for SMEs to become investment-ready. In that sense, they complement Truvalu's investment strategy by creating a stronger foundation for sustainable growth and measurable impact.

### One-on-one BDS support to (potential future) investee companies

To SMEs that match our investment criteria and to those that have already become part of our investment portfolio, Truvalu provides one-on-one pre-and post investment BDS in a broad range of fields. We focused a lot on the performance of our current portfolio companies. Strategizing (OGSM development), Business Case Financial Modeling (BCFM) and access to finance (creating linkages to other investors) are the areas most covered in our active investments (as in previous years). In addition,

## The importance of contextualized Impact Measurement and Management

Truvalu supports the development of investment-ready, impact-driven enterprises under the **B-Bridddhi program** in Bangladesh (led by Light Castle Partners and Roots of Impact) through two core services: Impact Investment Readiness (IRR) and Impact Measurement and Management (IMM). These services help SMEs strengthen their capacity to attract investment while improving how they measure and manage their social or environmental impact. Some enterprises engaged with the TOC card game, a light IMM activity designed to introduce impact logic and outcome mapping through an interactive format. While IRR and IMM services deepened investment readiness among participating SMEs, the TOC engagement expanded outreach to enterprises needing introductory exposure to impact frameworks. Some SMEs achieved notable outcomes. Agronochain Limited secured a grant from IFAD after engaging with Truvalu's Certified Trainer services, while Doctor Chashi received a Bronze medal in an external investment competition, demonstrating growing competitiveness and the value of capacity-building support.

An important lesson learned was that SME engagement varies widely in terms of interest, readiness and capacity, highlighting the need for tailored engagement strategies. Also time management and adherence to deadlines appeared to be recurring challenges, indicating the importance of stricter scheduling, clearer expectations, and a more proactive follow-up to ensure accountability.

depending on the needs of the SMEs, our Truvalu teams helped SMEs with supply chain optimization, investor relations support and provided input for an in-depth impact study by Sevi. Truvalu also assisted portfolio companies in receiving support from PUM The Netherlands and other specialized experts to support the companies in specific technical areas. Truvalu also started referring SMEs to GGI for probable deployment of decarbonization services (rooftop solar).

Entrepreneurs at early stages often lack effective tools to present their finances, yet investors and other stakeholders expect clear, comparative insights on past, present, and future performance. To address this, Truvalu offers a simple, interactive financial dashboard that visually tracks performance over time and provides forecasts, helping entrepreneurs present their business more clearly and confidently. Our Colombian team is currently strengthening this evidence-based decision making as a company.



**Establishing clearer processes for inventory and administrative management has improved our ability to monitor performance and make timely decisions.”**

**JUAN ESTEBAN DELGADO**

Cocina Soluciones



**“Strengthening our financial and operational data has helped us make more informed decisions about growth and expansion. Keeping our accounting up to date has allowed us to better understand the company’s financial health and supports more strategic decision-making. Clarifying roles within the organization has also significantly improved coordination and efficiency across the team.”**

**DILAN MISRACHI**

Cocina Soluciones

Photography by: Cocina Soluciones

### Provision of equity capital and/or loans

Truvalu leverages diverse financial resources, including equity capital, (convertible) loans, and grants, to support a growing portfolio of SMEs, enhanced by contributions from private investors and donor agencies.

These 17 SMEs operate in diverse fields with a high percentage active in agri-food production and/ or processing (13). Others are active in waste management and insect farming, FinTech, handicrafts and since 2025

an energy service company. The agri-food groups are diverse, from defatted soya flour and soya bean meal, fruits and herbs, coconut derivatives for industry (flakes, ice creams, coconut water, coconut cream), fresh cheeses (cream, mozzarella type of cheeses), cacao liquor, butter and restaurants/ bakeries. See graph 1.

8 companies fall under the TE1 fund, 6 under the Colombian Rural Paz Investment Fund (Firp), 2 received investments from both Firp and TE1 and the energy service company received Truvalu’s investment through

End of 2025, Truvalu had: \_\_\_\_\_

**€8 million**

a total of €8 million capital invested **since 2015** in our **three focus countries**, with an average ticket size of € 308k. (€3.93M equity, €2.54M loans and €1.53M convertible loans).

**2**

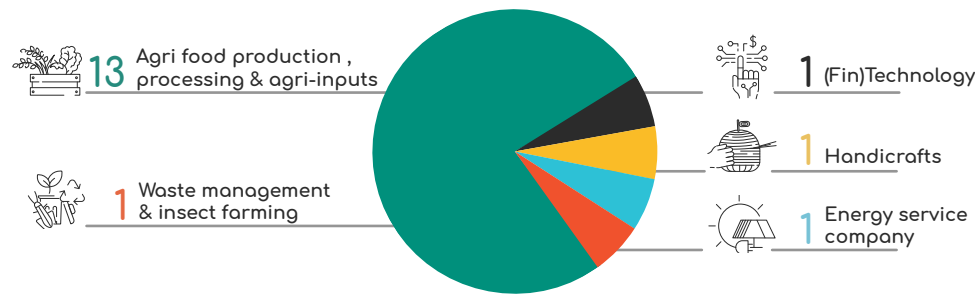
1 new (follow-on) investment was done in 2025: FarmWorks (Kenya) and 1 new investment through the ORE II fund (GGI).

**1**

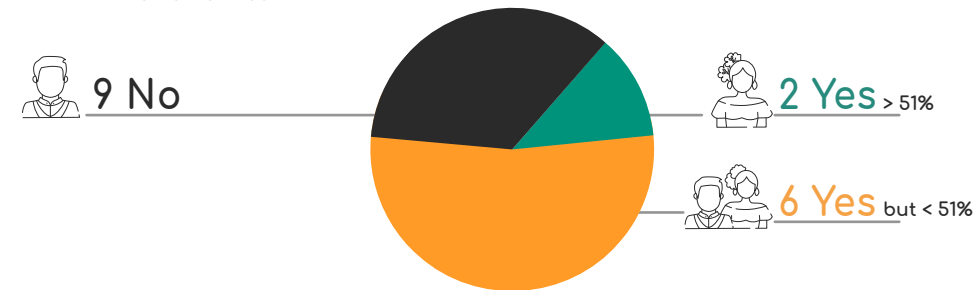
1 exit (see page 22)



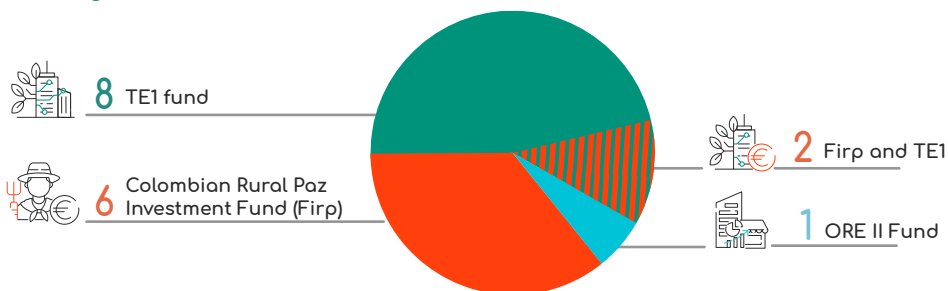
GRAPH 1: Fields of operation



GRAPH 2: Women-owned SME



GRAPH 3: Investment / Fund



the ORE II Fund (see box 23). 11 companies (65%) have female ownership: 2 companies for more than 51% and 9 are co-owned by a woman entrepreneur.

### Acting as coaching board member

In 2025, Truvalu actively participated in 48 formal board meetings across its portfolio companies.

These meetings (according to the SMEs) proved to be essential platforms for **strategic decision-making** and provided guidance in discussions about operational challenges, critical business pivots, capital raising, **opportunities and risks**, sustainability, and market expansion. Meetings also provided **good governance** and strategic interaction, with one SME improving the format and structure of advisory meetings to better balance information sharing and strategic conversations with Truvalu's support. In the case of GGI (Bangladesh) shareholders meetings helped the company to execute its initial OPEX strategy, improve focus, pipeline referral and possible service offering to new target buyers (smaller SMEs pipeline shared by Truvalu).

The boards played a decisive role in **crisis management**, executing **structural adjustments** (like headcount reduction), and prioritizing **long-term financial viability**. For smaller SMEs (especially those in Colombia), where formal board structures may not yet exist, governance often takes the form of **informal, but regular meetings**, or ad hoc strategic discussions.

### Facilitate access to markets and technology

The majority of the SMEs (16) operate on the local market, 10 on the national market and 6 are already active on the international market as well (3 from Colombia, 1 from Bolivia, 1 from BGD and 1 from Kenya). Compared to 2024, the share of SMEs active internationally increased from 29% to 35%.

Truvalu supports its portfolio companies in growing and scaling by sometimes establishing smart connections with buyers, technology providers, or peers in the sector of the SME, also internationally. In Kenya for example, a Dutch agro expert from Truvalu's network accompanied FarmWorks at the Berlin Fruit Logistica expo and made some initial connections. Amongst other the insights gained led to a decision by the SME to focus on the Kenyan market first.

The above activities show that Truvalu is not a mere fund manager, but rather a business partner that brings along investment capital. Truvalu can be best described as a co-entrepreneurial impact investor, investing in AgriFood companies in emerging economies, in exchange for shareholding, coaching and strategic guidance through a board seat, building an action plan together, support in the decision making and financial monitoring of the expansion.

# Strengthened SMEs in emerging economies with stronger connections with suppliers and buyers



Truvalu's co-entrepreneurial activities have contributed to strengthened SMEs in Bangladesh, Colombia and Kenya.

## SMEs with governance and policies in place

All SMEs in our portfolio are **aware** of the opportunities and the need for **strong**

**governance** and **responsible (green and gender sensitive) business policies, practices and sustainable growth**. As a bare minimum, all companies comply with **national legislation** (checked



**“In this packhouse, we work as one team. We were taught how to be safe and how to treat each other with respect. Even if you are a woman or a man, you are given your rights. It makes me feel proud to come to work every day.”**

NYERERE MBEKI Staff FarmWorks

## BOX 2



## New labour regulations in Colombia

In 2025, the Colombia government introduced new labor regulations requiring companies to reduce the standard workweek to 42 hours. In response, companies updated their Internal Work Regulations and Code of Conduct, to ensure full compliance with the law. These adjustments included a reduction of working hours, redefining overtime management practices, and aligning labor conditions with the new legal framework. Updates were also made to compensation policies to align with the 2025 minimum wage increase of 23%.

with local lawyers and other local experts as part of our due diligence process). Policies refer to such national legislation.

The **exporting SMEs** are aware of the need to also be in compliance with international laws, agreements and conventions. The evolving **legislative landscape in Europe**, with directives like the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), EU Deforestation Regulation and human rights due diligence legislation, presents additional challenges for SMEs exporting to Europe. Compliance with stricter standards can be daunting for resource- and experience-limited SMEs. Providing guidance and support (coaching, capacity development) on traceability, data transparency, documentation and due diligence becomes more relevant.

The much smaller SMEs (selling especially on the national market) do not (yet) have written out all their commitments on paper. In board or investor meetings, Truvalu discusses how to further strengthen company policies and supplier relations.

As part of Truvalu's pre-investment due diligence process and post-investment coaching, strengthening of SME policies concerning environmental sustainability, human rights, and labor rights, even though this can be challenging for SMEs under financial pressure, is part of Truvalu's attention. In 2025, all Colombian companies updated their internal labour policies (see box 2). In another country, one company adopted a formal wellbeing policy, including salary benefits, and approved a sexual harassment policy. Another company maintained a shorter 36-hour workweek, reflecting a commitment to work-life balance and a people-centered culture, and supported national initiatives for inclusive employment (hiring of youth and women).

SMEs consider **environmental sustainability** to be important and to strengthen their internal related policies, focusing on climate change, water conservation, waste management, biodiversity, and energy efficiency.

## Examples of capacity development organized by the SMEs in 2025

In 2025, SMEs implemented a wide range of capacity-building initiatives to strengthen workforce skills and operational performance. Training focused on quality, occupational health and safety, and continuous improvement (e.g., Mesa Baja, Cindy Coco, Cocina Soluciones). Several firms emphasized technical standards, including Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), ISO 22000, and organic certification (e.g., La Ruta del Chocolate, Artesana, Cacao Pacifico, NATUR).

Others invested in soft skills, leadership, and digital learning systems (e.g., Sevi, Pomario), while some targeted operational efficiency and waste reduction (Del Huerto). Additional efforts covered sales, financial management, and employee well-being (Farmworks, Growpact Kitale, Ndivisi Enterprises). These initiatives highlight SMEs' commitment to improving productivity, quality, and team capabilities.

### Knowledge and awareness to improve sustainable growth and profitability

Truvalu is aware of the **lack of awareness and knowledge** in the overall SME sector regarding the importance of **sustainable (agriculture) and responsible business conduct**. Through BDS, Truvalu aims to raise more awareness and strengthen SME responsible practices. In 2025, the SMEs we invest in offered capacity development of their own staff, aiming at enhancing operational efficiency, safety, and staff development (see box 3). A total number of 460 individuals were trained **during the reporting period** (233 women and 227 men). 323 of these staff members were younger than 35 years (70%).



“Working at Sevi has provided a very supportive and empowering working environment that encourages growth, innovation, and ownership. One of the biggest personal changes I have experienced is the opportunity for career development. I joined Sevi as a Business Development Representative. Through dedication, mentorship, and the organization's trust in its people, I was promoted to my current role as Business Development Manager. This growth has strengthened my professional skills and given me the confidence to lead teams, build strategic partnerships, and contribute meaningfully to the company's mission of enabling businesses to access working capital and grow sustainably. Being part of an organization that recognizes potential and invests in its people has been a truly impactful experience for me.”

ADAN NAGASA, BUSINESS  
Development Manager Sevi





Photography by: Cocina Soluciones

## BOX 5

## FarmWorks adapts to market changes

FarmWorks has demonstrated strong adaptability in response to shifting market conditions by strategically adjusting its product mix and business model. Its domestic business unit remains focused on three core products - tomatoes, onions, and white potatoes - while performance across these categories has varied significantly.

In 2025, onion sales volumes increased by an impressive 72% compared to 2024, indicating strong market demand. In contrast, white potato volumes declined sharply by 92%, and tomato volumes decreased by 7% over the same period, reflecting changing consumption patterns and market dynamics.

In response, FarmWorks restructured its operations by discontinuing its export business unit and introducing a new avocado product line. This transition has already yielded positive results, with avocado volumes surpassing those previously generated by the export unit. While the company has not yet initiated direct exports, it is currently supplying avocados to an exporter within the domestic market, positioning itself for potential future entry into international markets.

Overall, FarmWorks expanded its operations by 20% in 2025, underscoring its capacity to pivot and grow despite fluctuations in individual product segments.

## Stronger connections in the market

In 2025, the SMEs continued to make significant changes to their production strategies - some scaling up, others focusing on product diversification, innovations, efficiency, technical opportunities, or value optimization. These changes reflect both opportunities and challenges in response to market demand, resource constraints, and evolving business priorities.

The businesses are leveraging a mix of strategies to open new market doors, expanding their market presence, both locally and internationally. These include participation in trade fairs, referrals through existing networks, government matchmaking initiatives, and well-planned marketing campaigns. Personal introductions and consistent follow-up have also proven critical for **onboarding new buyers**. In 2025, all SMEs successfully closed new deals, an encouraging sign of adaptability. 12 companies were introduced to potential new buyers.

11 SME scaled their production/ operations in 2025 (the majority with > 20%). In 6 cases there was no change (2) or activities slowed down (3). 9 out of 17 companies experienced substantial growth (more than 10% increase of turnover). SMEs strengthened their market access and commercial performance through strategic partnerships (for example with seed companies), certifications, trade expos, and expanded distribution channels.

## BOX 4



## Examples of Colombian SMEs accessing new markets

Several **Colombian SMEs** have successfully expanded into new markets by leveraging certifications, partnerships, networks, and digital tools:

**Cocina Soluciones** accessed high-value clients by securing a deal with a major national restaurant chain through its HACCP certification, which demonstrated compliance with strict quality and safety standards. It also entered the retail segment via a supermarket chain and strengthened its presence with a premium coffee brand by improving supply chain capabilities and centralizing distribution to Bogotá.

**Artesana Pizza** expanded beyond traditional sales by tapping into local networks to serve catering and large-scale events, while also opening a new retail location and targeting institutional clients.

**Cacao Pacífico** leveraged its primary contact network to reach new regional clients, establishing commercial relationships with major companies such as Nestlé and Del Alba-Manitoba, while exploring further opportunities with additional partners.

**La Ruta del Chocolate** grew its footprint in regional markets through direct outreach and partnerships with health food stores in cities like Popayán and Cali, as well as collaborations with restaurants and word-of-mouth promotion via specialized retailers.

**Lácteos del Campo Caqueteño** diversified its market channels by forming strategic alliances with partners including a deli meat producer, a pizza chain, and public food programs.

**Cindy Coco** expanded its market reach by adopting digital strategies, including the use of a mobile app and targeted online marketing.

These examples illustrate how SMEs can combine quality standards, partnerships, networks, and innovation to successfully penetrate and grow in new markets.



Photography by: CHP

## BOX 6



### CHP diversified products and strengthens production capacity

CHP has expanded its market reach by connecting with foreign buyers through its own network and proactive direct outreach efforts. At the same time, the company has responded to rising raw material costs—particularly for jute—by exploring alternative natural inputs. This shift has enabled CHP to develop new biodegradable products, diversifying its portfolio and enhancing its competitiveness.

To support growing demand, CHP invested in expanding its production capacity by adding approximately 100 sewing machines to its production floor. This upgrade increased overall capacity by 2%. The newly installed machines are dedicated to the production of jute bags, which remain a core product line, with around 80 different varieties in the company's portfolio.

These combined efforts highlight CHP's ability to adapt to cost pressures, innovate in product development, and incrementally scale its operations.

## BOX 7



### Climate change affecting production of Lácteos del Campo

In the municipality of La Unión, Caquetá, Lácteos del Campo Caqueteño (LCC) has built a business model that connects smallholder farmers to formal markets while generating local employment. Led by Maria Emilia Rojas and Arnulfo, the company has played a steady role in strengthening economic opportunities in a region historically affected by conflict. Before 2025, LCC purchased around 12,500 liters of milk per day from local producers and provided 18 formal jobs, most of them for young people.

On July 23, 2025, a severe flood affected the company's facilities and marked a turning point. Water entered production and storage areas, damaging equipment and forcing a full disposal of finished cheese products due to contamination and loss of refrigeration. The company suspended operations for seven days. Total losses were estimated at 337 million Colombian pesos (about €77,250), with insurance covering only part of the damages. The remaining costs had to be absorbed through working capital, limiting the company's ability to operate at full capacity in the following months.

The impact extended beyond the company. Reduced processing capacity led to a decrease in milk purchases to approximately 9,200 liters per day, a 26% drop compared to pre-flood levels. This reduction directly affected around 150 farming families who depend on daily milk sales as their primary source of income. At the same time, flood-related damage to pastures reduced cattle productivity by up to 50%, further constraining supply and reinforcing a cycle of lower production and reduced earnings across the local value chain.

Despite these challenges, LCC maintained its commitment to employees and suppliers, prioritizing stable employment and timely payments where possible. The company also continued its environmental practices, such as reusing whey by-products, while exploring additional measures like solar energy.

Looking ahead, LCC is working to gradually restore its processing capacity and return to pre-flood production levels. At the same time, it is developing a risk management and environmental mitigation plan to better respond to climate-related events. The experience has highlighted the vulnerability of small and medium-sized enterprises to climate shocks, particularly in rural and post-conflict regions, and reinforces the importance of integrating resilience and adaptation into business operations and investment strategies.

# Where does this all lead to?

The above described activities and outputs to strengthen SMEs in the three emerging economies resulted in the following:

## SMEs are ready for larger investment rounds






In 9 cases, Truvalu was the first investor in the company. We assisted the SMEs

in their next round of fundraising, by reviewing pitch decks, business plans, and making connections to potential new financiers, either for investments or for particular projects. We are proud to see other investors have stepped in, like DOB, Vested World, One to Watch and local banks.

## More (decent) jobs, especially for young people and women

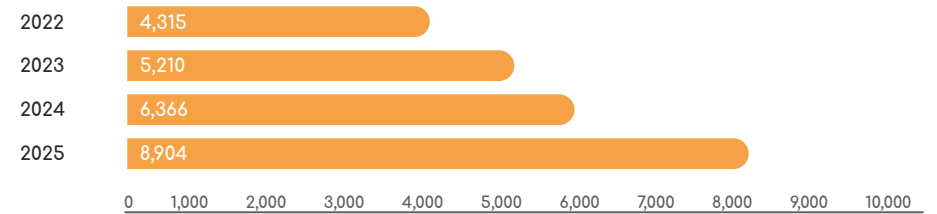
The total number of people **employed** by Truvalu's 17 portfolio companies (including the full-time, part-time and seasonal staff) was **10,585** in 2025 (without seasonal workers this is 8,904). As presented in graph 5 we see a steady growth of employees.

FIGURE 4: Employment across all portfolio companies

	 Male employees	 Female employees	 Youth (as part of full-time staff)	 Part time employees	 Seasonal employees
Bangladesh	889	2,184	1,996	4,973	1,526
Bolivia/Colombia	124	135	152	2	40
Kenya	237	204	343	156	115
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>2,523</b>	<b>2,491</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>1,681</b>

**Total all employees: 10,585**

GRAPH 5: Number of people employeeed across all 17 portfolio companies



As presented in graph 5 we see a steady growth of employees: A disclaimer we need to make is that it is challenging to present a comparable picture over the years since the 17 SMEs included in the impact survey are not all identical as in previous years.

Just as last year, the high number of jobs can be largely attributed to one of our portfolio companies (CHP in Bangladesh) that was able to keep growing its revenues substantially and employing and employing more full-time, part-time and seasonal workers, almost all women.

Although most of the other companies also show growth, the biggest part can be explained by two Kenyan and one Colombian company.

Notably, **66%** of the full-time workers are considered **youth** (up to 35 years old). This does not include the part-time/ seasonal workers. Good guidance, mentoring and attention for technical and soft skills development of this young workforce is one of the points of attention. Truvalu is in touch with organisations specialised in youth entrepreneurship and employment to create and sustain meaningful job opportunities for young people. Not

only in the SMEs in our portfolio, but also in the value chains of these companies. Investing in youth remains a priority for sustainable growth.

For Truvalu, **gender inclusion** is a way of doing business that makes sense - socially and economically. In all three countries, we have embedded gender intentionally into our investment approach and ecosystem-building initiatives. Women are critical drivers of inclusive growth and their involvement is key to make impact investing work. In the workplace we see a high number of women workers, especially if we include the parttime/seasonal workers (88%). To compare: this was 82% in 2023 and 87% in 2024 for the total number of female workers. If we focus only on the fulltime female workers the percentage for 2025 is 69%.



**High employee turnover** was a common challenge across the portfolio, particularly in the coffee shop and restaurant sector where customer-facing roles typically see frequent movement. During the reporting period, 11% of the employees left across 16 SMEs, driven by three main factors:

- **Voluntary resignations** were the most frequent cause. Career progression and personal or family priorities played an important role. CHP, which employs a high share of women with caregiving responsibilities, saw many departures for mainly family-related reasons specifically. Employees also left for better-paying jobs, more convenient working hours, or positions closer to home.
- **Organizational restructuring** - Colombia's difficult macroeconomic climate in 2025, including rising labor costs, forced several companies to reduce headcount to remain financially viable. Kenya-based Ecodudu faced an exceptional situation: after losing access to the land on which it operated, the company had to let its entire staff go (see box 8 for details).
- **Performance-related dismissals** accounted for a smaller share of departures, where employees did not meet the technical or operational standards required for their roles.

BOX 8

**Ecodudu: Setbacks to overcome**

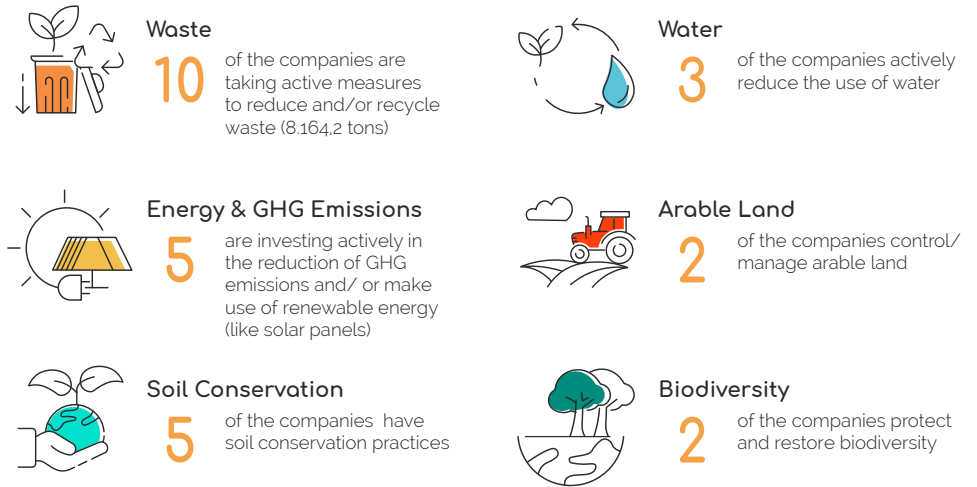


In 2025, Ecodudu abruptly lost access to the land where they were previously operating, which resulted in all employees being unable to continue working. The company plans to rehire the previous workers once operations resume. The founders are actively seeking a new site in Kenya to re-establish their physical operations. Ecodudu has also secured a new partnership with a company based in Somalia to support establishing its own Black Soldier Fly farming operation.



Photography by: Ecodudu

FIGURE 6: Companies with specified environmental friendly practices



**SMEs re-use, conserve, restore natural resources**

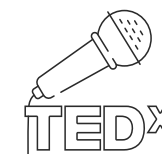
Despite some setbacks due to supply chain issues or market slowdowns, the majority of SMEs keep taking measures toward long-term ecological and economic resilience. See figure 7 for the type of environmental friendly practices the SMEs focus on.

Read how the Colombian La Ruta de Chocolate is promoting biodiversity through agroforestry (box 9).

**SMEs innovate**

Several companies (14) introduced **product and process innovations** in 2025. The SMEs demonstrated strong progress in adopting advanced technologies, improving operational efficiency, and developing higher-value products. These innovations are helping businesses remain competitive, open new market segments, and create long-term resilience (see box 10).

The CEO of FarmWorks, Yi-Li talked about real, lasting climate impact in an interesting Ted Talk, which you can find here.



## Promoting biodiversity through agroforestry – La Ruta del Chocolate



La Ruta del Chocolate actively promotes biodiversity conservation by integrating sustainable practices into its cacao production model. The company supports agroforestry systems, where cacao is cultivated alongside a diversity of plant species. This approach enhances ecosystem balance, improves soil health, and creates habitats for wildlife, contributing to more resilient agricultural landscapes.

In addition, the SME participates in bird monitoring studies, using them as an indicator of ecosystem health and biodiversity levels in cacao-growing areas. These efforts not only support conservation but also generate valuable data to guide sustainable land management practices.



Photography by: Ruta del Chocolate

## Examples of product and process innovations

**Ruta de Chocolate** focused on product diversification by refining formulations and developing innovative cacao-based products, including mucilage wine, white chocolate with nibs, and cacao mucilage beer - maximizing the use of by-products and expanding its portfolio. **Cacao Pacífico** advanced both product and process innovation by developing new offerings such as a Milo spread and specialized coatings, while investing in technology to enable new lines.



“When I started, we were using notebooks and losing track of harvests. Now, with the app on my phone, my work is organized. I don't get phone calls at night asking for data because everything is already in the system. I have more time for my own family now because the work is flowing smoothly.”

MARY MUTHEE (not the woman on the photo)  
Staff FarmWorks

Photography by: FarmWorks

**Farmworks** led digital innovation through the development of BranchGo, an AI-enabled platform that delivers full traceability and supports data-driven decision-making across sourcing, pricing, sales, and workforce management. Its dynamic pricing engine uses real-time market data to optimize margins, while predictive analytics enhance supply forecasting and automate order recommendations - effectively transforming the business into a fully digital and traceable operation. **Sevi** continued enhancing its mobile application by integrating M-Pesa payment prompts and improved USSD functionality, increasing accessibility and usability for its customer base.

**Del Huerto y Más** implemented a proprietary B2B digital ordering platform that significantly **improved production planning** through real-time demand data and enhanced logistics through route optimization, reducing waste and increasing efficiency.

**Natur** strengthened **quality and export readiness** through certification processes and **new cold storage infrastructure**.

**Lácteos del Campo Caqueteño** developed and is commercialising its first aged cheese line, marking a transition into higher-value, longer shelf-life dairy products and demonstrating increased technical sophistication.



## Strengthened management capacity and structures and more (gender) diversity in boards and management teams

### Management capacity and governance structures

Across the portfolio, 2025 saw meaningful progress in the formalization and strengthening of governance structures. Through board seats, hands-on coaching, and active connection to relevant networks and expertise, Truvalu worked closely alongside founders to build more robust organizational foundations. A recurring area of focus was the formalization of governance structures. In a number of portfolio companies, roles that had previously overlapped in the hands of a founder - board, management, and shareholder responsibilities - were separated and clarified. This shift brought greater accountability, transparency, and strategic clarity, making these companies more resilient and better positioned for future investment or partnership. With targeted support in financial management, strategic decision-making, and - in several cases - exit preparation, founders now actively think ahead about ownership transition and what that requires structurally.

### Gender diversity in boards and management

Women in leadership positions bring diverse perspectives that lead to better decision-making, and research consistently shows that companies with more gender-diverse leadership outperform their peers financially while also driving stronger social and environmental outcomes. For that reason Truvalu aims to actively invest in and support companies that demonstrate meaningful gender diversity at board and management level, recognising it as both a marker of good governance and a driver of long-term financial and social performance. In our portfolio, we see a notable average percentage of women holding board and management positions in 2025:

	2023	2024	2025
Women occupying a board position	38%	29%	29%
Women in management team	44%	51%	47%

The small decreasing % of women at the management level (compared to 2024), can be explained by the exclusion of two companies with high % of women at the various levels.

“

Working at SEVI has shown me how access to flexible financing can truly transform businesses. Many of the customers we support once struggled to stock their shops and manage cash flow, but through Sevi they can access inventory, grow their businesses, and serve their communities more consistently. Seeing the significant impact of the solutions we provide has been the most meaningful change for me.”

MERCYLINE ODHIAMBO  
Customer Success, Sevi

“

Working at Sevi has shown me how access to responsible credit can truly transform small businesses. I have seen traders regain stability, restock their shops, and rebuild trust with suppliers after clearing their debts and getting back into the trading ecosystem.”

CAROLINE MARTIN  
Team lead (Recovery Department), Sevi

# Pathway to impact



Assuming the companies will continue to grow, we expect the above results so far to lead to more efficient, inclusive, better positioned and managed SMEs, with more profits (see our ToC). We assume there will be increased and more stable income for employees and suppliers (in particular smallholder farmers, young people and women), and SMEs using less natural resources, producing less waste and polluting less. Since this intermediate impact level can only be seen after a few years, Truvalu will monitor carefully to what extent positive changes can be created over the years to come.

## Strengthened SMEs with increased profits

Assessing profitability across the portfolio requires an important caveat: obtaining complete and comparable financial data from SMEs operating in volatile economic environments remains challenging. Short-term fluctuations do not always reflect the underlying trajectory of a business, and several companies experienced temporary dips in profitability before recovering - a pattern that points to operational resilience rather than structural weakness.

With that context in mind, the overall picture for 2025 is one of mixed but broadly positive progress. 10 portfolio companies improved their profitability, while others continued to face significant margin pressure from external factors largely outside their control.

Among the positive developments, several companies moved from loss-

making positions to net profit, or significantly strengthened their EBITDA generation. These improvements were driven by a combination of market strategy consolidation, stronger commercial partnerships, tighter cost control, and improved operational management. One company delivered a particularly strong turnaround, transitioning from a net loss in 2024 to positive net profit in 2025 through more stable margins and better expense management. Another posted a sharp increase in net income after completing construction of operational projects that began generating recurring revenues - a clear sign of a maturing business model. Another company has also demonstrated an ability to maintain healthy margins and financial stability while leveraging its geographic position to serve nearby municipalities where larger competitors face logistical challenges.

However, companies also continue to face structural profitability challenges. Rising labor costs, raw material inflation, higher logistics expenses, and intense

## Cindy Coco: A testimony of resilience

In August 2025, Cali experienced a wave of security incidents linked to dissident factions of the former FARC. These groups carried out a series of bomb attacks, including car bombs aimed primarily at military and security installations in and around the city. The attacks caused fatalities, injuries, and damage to infrastructure, and led authorities to increase the military presence across Cali. Checkpoints, patrols, and heightened surveillance became part of daily life as the government tried to prevent further incidents and maintain control.

The attack involved a car bomb near the Escuela de Aviación Marco Fidel Suárez. It caused multiple deaths (around 6–7) and dozens of injuries. Nearby neighborhoods and businesses were physically damaged and militarized afterward. One of them was Cindy Coco, one of Truvalu's portfolio companies. This SME works with smallholder farmers along the coast, persuading them to shift to coconut production instead of illicit crops.

Jaime Ponce, the owner, returned to inspect his business after the explosion. Eight of his workers were seriously injured in the attack, and also his two young daughters. The area suffered significant blast damage, and the business was among those directly affected (at least partially damaged with loss of machinery). This situation created enormous financial and emotional challenges for the company.

Jaap-Jan visited the company a few days after this incident. "It was impressive to see that - under a half broken roof and without a proper front wall - the entrepreneur Jaime, and his team are keeping the factory in operation. In Jaime's words: "We have worked years to convince the farmers to produce coconuts, and we will not let them down now." Jaap-Jan: "It leaves me speechless; this resilience, power of entrepreneurship and dedication is what makes a real change in the lives of individuals and - if supported to grow - in a whole economic system. And it makes me grateful that as a co-entrepreneurial impact investor, we can help this entrepreneur and his company to push on and grow against all odds."



Photography by: Truvalu




price competition in low-value-added segments are squeezing margins across parts of the portfolio - particularly in Colombia, where the macroeconomic environment in 2025 was especially difficult. In some cases, revenue growth has not translated into improved profitability, as cost pressures grew faster than revenues.

Overall, the portfolio is maturing, and the companies demonstrating the strongest profitability improvements share a common thread: stronger governance, clearer commercial strategy, and more disciplined financial management - areas where Truvalu's hands-on support has been most active.

### Wages and employee benefits

Employees in the SMEs (n=17) earn at least a minimum wage. 46% of the companies also pay a living wage (or above). A living wage ensures that employees can afford basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare, promoting better quality of life and job satisfaction. Truvalu advocates for living wages to enhance productivity and sustain economic growth. The height of a living wage varies from country to country and within a country from area to area, and depends on the calculation methods applied. Truvalu uses the following benchmark for the countries we operate in (see table 7)

TABLE 7: Benchmark living wage in focus countries

	 Bangladesh	 Colombia	 Kenya
Minimum wage	€66 - €86*	€322** (significant increase in 2026)	€100 - €125*** (rural - urban)
Living wage	€189 - €229*	€369 - €741** (average €572)	€178 - €235***

\*Align Bangladesh  
 \*\*Salario Minimo Colombia 2025  
 \*\*\*Remote people & Tuko

\*Align Bangladesh  
 \*\*Global Livingwage & Anker Research  
 \*\*\*Align Kenya & Anker Research

In our assessments and conversations in the three markets we see many SMEs struggling to pay such living wages (see box 12), despite their commitments to improve wages once the financial capacity increases. With SMEs we continue to discuss and in some cases develop a roadmap to define the height of the wages.

15 SMEs reported **increasing salaries for a number of employees** in 2025, driven by contractual agreements, performance-based raises, or - in one case - as a deliberate

BOX 12



### The living wage challenge

SMEs give the following barriers to pay a living wage :

**Compliance overwage growth:** A mandated transition to a shorter work week required additional hiring and shift restructuring, forcing companies to prioritize operational stability and legal compliance over individual wage improvements.

**Limited financial headroom during growth:** Companies in an expansion phase face high operational and logistics costs alongside intense competition, making full living wage payment currently unaffordable. In several cases, co-founders have voluntarily withheld their own salaries to ensure staff continue to be paid.

**External shocks to margins:** Profit margins were further squeezed by a severe raw material crisis, supply chain disruptions, high inflation, climate-related impacts on production (see box 11), and — in one case — a bombing incident that destroyed a retail location and damaged machinery.

**Pressure from international buyers:** Some SMEs operate in supply chains where international buyers negotiate aggressively on price, pushing margins to levels that make living wage payment structurally difficult. When buyers prioritize cost over sourcing ethics, the financial pressure lands directly on workers at the bottom of the chain — making it nearly impossible for suppliers to pay above the legal minimum, regardless of intent.



**We finally have some cash without depending on our husbands and can spend it on our children and family”**

SHAHANAZ BEGUM

Hoglo home worker of CHP, Nilphamari (not women in picture)

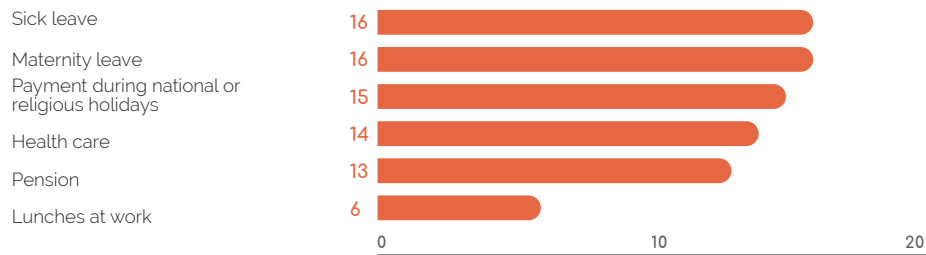


talent retention strategy to hold on to key staff. In some instances no explanation was provided. At the same time, one company decided on an **income decrease** for some employees, due to either underperformance and a reduction in company profits. The remaining employees saw no change in their income during the reporting period.

## Employee benefits

For all SMEs (100%), employee benefits include:

**GRAPH 8:** Social benefits available to employees (SMEs, 2025 n=16)



Some companies offer a comprehensive **set of social benefits** aimed at enhancing employee wellbeing, financial security, and work-life balance. For example, one company provided extended health coverage through private insurance plans, ensuring faster access to specialized and high-quality medical care. They also grant additional paid time off beyond legal requirements, such as extra vacation days or a day off on an employee's birthday.

One company supports local communities through unique initiatives, such as providing monthly supplies of traditional foods like panela, contributing both to employee nutrition and the local agricultural sector. One company focuses on improving work-life balance by reducing working hours, implementing 6-hour workdays or shorter workweeks, and introducing policies such as paternity leave.

Financial and performance-related benefits also vary across companies. Some provide production bonuses tied to operational targets, performance-based incentives for point-of-sale leaders, and partial coverage of life insurance to strengthen financial security. Additional benefits such as food allowances and Sunday work compensation are also commonly offered.

Some companies also have their own corporate social responsibility contribution in the communities they operate (see the case of FarmWorks and CHP).

### Payment to smallholder farmers reached

Of the 15 SMEs working with farmers, **13 source produce from smallholder farmers** and **4 provide inputs** - such

as seeds, equipment, or agronomic support - that help farmers improve their production. Two companies, Sevi and GGI, operate outside agricultural value chains entirely.

Across the portfolio, **28.280 farmers** were reached in 2025 - a significant increase compared to 12,859 in 2024, 9,890 in 2023, and 8,399 in 2022.

Of the total, **16.614 farmers** participate as **suppliers** of raw materials, while **11.666 farmers** receive **inputs** or services from SMEs that strengthen their agricultural production. This growth of suppliers is largely attributable to the expanding reach of Cocina Soluciones, la Ruta de Chocolate, CHP, FarmWorks and Cacao Pacifico. GrowPact reaches many farmers with their seedlings.

The profile of farmers reached is notably inclusive: **62% of supplying farmers are women**, and **36% are**

**under the age of 35** - reflecting both the gender and youth dimensions of the agricultural communities our portfolio serves.



**Before FarmWorks, I was just guessing with my farm. Now, I don't worry about where to sell. The money comes straight to my phone without delays. Truly, this has helped us a lot."**

ERIC OCHIENG, FARMER

#### BOX 13

### Community investments by the SMEs



Some portfolio companies invest in their surrounding communities as part of their broader commitment to social responsibility. In Kenya, **FarmWorks** runs a sister initiative called Malaika Kitchens, founded in 2021, which builds self-sustaining kitchens in rural schools. To date, the program has reached 12 schools and served over 1.8 million meals to children — with measurable effects on school enrollment and academic performance. In 2025, Malaika Kitchens secured new funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to support its continued growth.

**CHP** in Bangladesh took a hands-on approach to community support in 2025, conducting a sanitation campaign that distributed hygiene packages — including soap and sanitary pads — to more than 200 women in surrounding communities. CHP also supported the local sports league and donated a water filter to local prayer centers, providing cleaner water access to community members.



Photography by: FarmWorks

## Training farmers

Across several portfolio companies, farmers benefit from structured and continuous training programs aimed at improving agricultural practices, quality standards, and sustainability. Training is often developed in collaboration with technical institutions — including the Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA) in Colombia, which provides guidance on compliance, crop management, and certification — as well as producer associations and internal quality departments.

Programs vary in scale and focus. Some companies work intensively with smaller groups, supporting cohorts of around 40 farmers or communities of approximately 170 families on organic farming and sustainable practices. Others operate at greater scale, with dedicated agronomists having trained up to 1,000 farmers. On-the-ground support is central in some cases: with field supervisors conducting daily visits and providing hands-on training in Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), hygiene and animal health management.

Across these efforts, training programs are building local agricultural capacity and supporting farmers' access to competitive markets — contributing to more resilient rural livelihoods over the long term.

## Customers and business partners served

Across the portfolio, **15 SMEs operate as B2B companies**, selling directly to retailers, small businesses, and entrepreneurs rather than to individual consumers. Together, these companies reached **36.229 business customers** in 2025, with Sevi and FarmWorks accounting for the largest share at a combined **22.000 clients** - reflecting the significant scale at which these two companies operate within their respective markets.

In 2025 SEVI commissioned an impact study of its stock financing model for micro and small retail businesses across four Kenyan counties. The key findings (presented in September 2025) can be found in the following infographic (**Sevi impact at a glance**). 84% of Sevi retailers report an increase in their household income and of these 68% doubled their income.

On the consumer side, portfolio companies with direct-to-consumer models show a total of **253.741 individual customer transactions** in 2025. This number is largely driven by Cocina Soluciones, which alone registered **252.000 consumer transactions** - underscoring the company's exceptional reach and its central role in the portfolio's overall consumer impact.

## BOX 14: SEVI IMPACT AT A GLANCE

**60%** SEVI-supported businesses operate in the **general retail category**

**60%** have a **micro-scale nature**, occupying spaces **under 25 square feet**

**80%** of SEVI retailers are aged between 25 & 44.

female **60,18%** male **39,82%**

**84%** of SEVI retailers report an **increase** in their **household income**, of these **68%** double increase **8%** triple increase

**88%** of retailers **doubled** their **stock levels**, of which **80%** **doubled** their **stock orders**, noting: **46%** improvement in profit margins **68%** rise in household income **13%** **trippled** their **stock orders**, noting: **75%** improvement in profit margins **88%** rise in household income

**1** Retailers with over one year on the SEVI platform reported:

- 84%** increased savings
- 91%** stock growth
- 34%** decreased risk to financial shocks

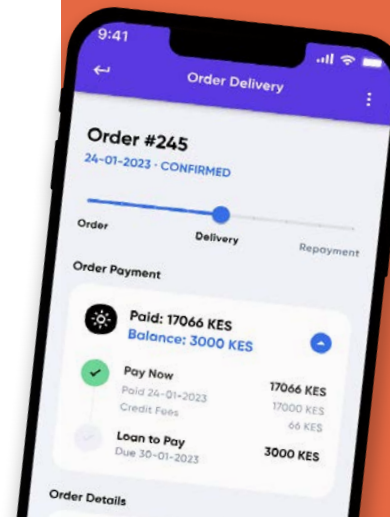
**60%** of businesses reported **physical expansion**

**72%** of all respondents reported **improved savings capability**, of whom

**96%** of businesses reported **improved access to credit**

**68%** of SEVI retailers employ between **1 to 5 staff members**. An increase from **56%** prior to joining SEVI

**72%** reported **enhanced tech know-how** since joining SEVI.



**79%** plan to use SEVI as their **primary financing source** for future growth.



Photography by: GrowPact

## SMEs use less natural resources, produce less waste and pollute less

Reducing resource consumption, minimizing waste, and limiting pollution are central environmental objectives across our portfolio. A number of SMEs have made concrete progress - shifting to cleaner production methods, reducing packaging waste, adopting water-saving practices, and moving away from chemical inputs in favor of organic alternatives.

We are transparent about a significant challenge: reliably measuring environmental impact at SME level in emerging economies is genuinely difficult. Most SMEs lack the systems and technical capacity to track environmental data consistently,

baseline data is often absent, and rigorous monitoring is frequently beyond what early-stage businesses can afford. As a result, the quantitative data collected this reporting period does not yet meet the standard of reliability we require to report with confidence. We believe it is more responsible to acknowledge this than to report figures that could be misleading.

We are actively investing in tools to close this gap. We developed a GHG emission calculator specifically designed for SMEs, lowering the barrier to emissions measurement for companies without dedicated sustainability teams. Our Gender-Climate Nexus Financing Toolkit (see [page 53](#)) will further support portfolio companies in integrating environmental metrics. On water, we will establish

### BOX 15

## SME practices in soil conservation

SMEs are applying a range of practical approaches to conserve soil and promote sustainable agriculture. **Natur** focuses on improved farming practices that protect crop health, maintain soil fertility, and support biodiversity regeneration. Similarly, **La Ruta del Chocolate** works closely with farmers, providing training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and promoting organic methods that safeguard soil health while supporting rural livelihoods through fair pricing and quality standards.

**Pomario**, despite all difficulties during the year, contributed through greenhouse production, enabling precise control of irrigation and soil conditions, reducing degradation and improving resource efficiency. Meanwhile, **GrowPact Kitale** adopts integrated soil management techniques, including crop rotation, manure application, erosion control measures, and the use of biodigesters to convert organic waste into soil-enriching inputs.



baselines per SME by reading meters regularly and calculating use per unit of output - a simple but consistent approach that builds comparable data over time.

What we can say with confidence is that environmental awareness is growing across the portfolio. Several SMEs are actively reducing their footprint through waste reduction, responsible sourcing, and cleaner energy use - with some creating value from by-products

and building sustainable production systems (see box 16). Others are still in an exploratory phase.

Looking ahead, Truvalu will deepen its understanding of climate adaptation and mitigation opportunities across the portfolio, integrating this into our business support and monitoring approach - and seeking partnerships to further invest in this agenda.

#### BOX 16



### Renewable energy, waste reduction and circular economy practices

SMEs are increasingly adopting circular economy approaches to minimize waste and improve resource efficiency. **Lácteos del Campo Caqueteño** exemplifies this by repurposing whey—a byproduct of cheese production—returning approximately 7,000 liters daily to local farmers as nutritious pig feed, reducing environmental impact while supporting the local value chain. **Cindy Coco** maximizes coconut utilization, processing around 474 tons and transforming nearly all parts into value-added by-products, including inputs for fertilizers. Similarly, **La Ruta del Chocolate** reuses cacao residues such as mucilage and husks for product development and organic fertilizers, while **Cacao Pacífico** focuses on reducing organic and packaging waste and promotes recyclable materials and reuse of cacao bags.

Other SMEs emphasize organic waste management, including **Natur**, **FarmWorks**, and **Ecodudu**, the latter converting organic waste into fertilizers and insect protein. **Mesa Baja** complements these efforts through 100% recycled packaging and strict waste tracking systems, while **Cocina Soluciones** operates structured liquid and solid waste management programs. **Pomario** contributed by using natural fertilizers and eliminating chemical pesticides.

**CHP** continues to maintain its existing sustainability practices like a minimal water and chemical usage, using its Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) to clean and reuse wastewater, 100% solar energy utilization at the Nilphamari factory and the use of natural fibers with low environmental impact.

Truvalu invested in the Greener Garments Initiative (GGI), a renewable energy company accelerating the decarbonization of Bangladesh's garment sector. See below for more details on the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>emissions realised in 2025.



Photography by: Truvalu

BOX 17



### Greener Garments Initiative (GGI)

The Greener Garments Initiative (GGI) is a climate-tech joint venture focused on accelerating decarbonization in Bangladesh's garment sector — one of the world's largest and most energy-intensive export industries.

Operating as an Energy Service Company (ESCO), GGI finances and installs industrial rooftop solar systems for factories, removing the barrier of high upfront costs through an OPEX model: factories pay for the energy they use rather than the infrastructure itself. This approach makes the transition to renewable energy accessible to manufacturers of all sizes.

During the reporting period, GGI deployed 3.12 MW of renewable energy capacity across 6 projects, resulting in a reduction of 1.393 MT of CO<sub>2</sub>emissions. These results contribute directly to helping factories reduce energy costs, lower their carbon footprint, and meet the increasingly stringent sustainability standards required by international buyers.

BOX 18



### Lácteos del Campo Caqueteño: reducing water use and waste

In 2025, the company achieved a significant reduction in water consumption, decreasing daily usage from 12,000 liters to 3,000 liters. This 75% improvement was driven by the strategic implementation of electric pressure pumps for cleaning and sanitation processes. This technological upgrade has allowed us to optimize water flow, significantly reducing waste while maintaining high hygiene standards across our production lines.



Photography by: Lácteos Del Campo

# PATHWAY 2: ECOSYSTEM BUILDING



The level of success of SMEs and their access to finance and potential to grow cannot be seen as isolated from the context they and we as co-entrepreneurial impact investor operate in. SME's access to financial services remains severely constrained due to higher risks as perceived by local banks and investors, and the lack of availability of the appropriate lending models and risk management strategies. For sustainable success and real system change, tackling business challenges and addressing underlying root causes throughout the value chains of these SMEs also highly depends on collaboration with other actors. To create impact that is truly sustainable, scalable, and holistic, we aim to move from isolated transactions to coordinated system transformation.

Truvalu has become actively involved in developing an **enabling ecosystem** in which SMEs can flourish and where evidence is collected on (innovative) scalable

financing models that work to support SMEs and entrepreneurship for impact. These activities have been (co-)funded by external donor agencies (like the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, CBI - part of the Netherlands Government, and the Netherlands Embassy in Bangladesh). We actively collaborate with a wide range of ecosystem actors to strengthen sustainable and inclusive business practices. Financial institutions (like the City Bank PLC, Eastern Bank Limited, IPDC Finance PLC, IDLC Finance PLC, Bancoldex), development partners, multilateral organizations (such as UNCDF), impact investment/ private sector networks (the Bangladesh Women Investors Network, Collaborative of Frontiers Financiers, Latimacto, UN Global Compact and WIFS), NGOs (like Conexion, PUM, Swisscontact) and private sector companies/ecosystem developers like LCP and Sajida Foundation in Bangladesh. On [page 81](#) you find an overview of our key partners.

Our activities in the ecosystem, in line with our ToC and as described in this section, consists of:

- Conducting research, sharing knowledge and experiences in the ecosystem and providing capacity building about impactful entrepreneurship.
- Designing impact focused multi-stakeholder business models and strategies to mobilize capital.

Herewith Truvalu contributes to an active multistakeholders learning community for impact finance.

## Conducting research, sharing knowledge and experiences in the ecosystem and providing capacity building about impactful entrepreneurship

Truvalu's ultimate goal is not to only help a small group of companies become socially responsible, grow their exports and create more jobs. It is to leverage their success to other value chain actors and to contribute to

**structural, transformational changes.** We aim to foster a **multi-stakeholder learning community** focused on improving access to finance for impact-driven SMEs, especially through gender and climate lens investing, and true value creation in the agri-food sector. This community brings together investors, financial institutions, SMEs, government agencies, development agencies, NGOs, and incubators to share insights, identify barriers, and explore opportunities in impact financing.

We can do that by collaborating with a range of partners and market players to **collect useful data** as input for impactful strategies and creating the right conditions and support services. By **sharing knowledge and experiences** within the impact finance ecosystem. By providing capacity building to **strengthen impactful entrepreneurship**. And last but not least, by seeking collaborations with various stakeholders throughout our investees' value chains to strengthen local ecosystems, as described in pathway I.

### Conducting research

Without understanding market structures, key players and the root causes of identified dilemmas, investments can unintentionally reinforce the status quo. To feed our strategies, we always ask ourselves: Who are the stakeholders, what truly drives them and in what market structures are they operating? To answer that question, we conduct **mappings** within the ecosystems to identify relevant key players. We also organize **research, interviews and consultations** to understand the root causes of specific dilemmas, the needs and challenges of various actors, facilitating stronger connections (see [box 19](#) and [box 20](#) for examples of research done in 2025).

## Bangladesh's gender-smart climate investment landscape

In 2024 and 2025 Truvalu convened **two roundtables** in Bangladesh on financing solutions at the **intersection of climate change and gender inclusion**, bringing together financial institutions, development actors, and women entrepreneurs. Discussions highlighted growing investor interest in Gender Lens Investing (GLI) and underscored that women-led enterprises need not only capital, but also mentorship, technical expertise, and strategic partnerships. Innovative financing approaches, including impact funds and blended finance, were identified as key to accelerating investment in gender-inclusive, climate-resilient businesses.

Building on this momentum, Truvalu and **Kore Global**, with support from the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, conducted an **in-depth analysis** of the country's **gender-smart climate investment landscape**. Drawing on consultations across the ecosystem, the study identified four strategic priorities:

- 1. Tailored financial products:** Develop concessional loans, blended finance solutions, flexible collateral options, and climate-risk insurance suited to women-led and gender-inclusive SMEs, aligned with central bank frameworks.
- 2. Gender integration across investment cycles:** Move beyond compliance by embedding gender considerations into sourcing, due diligence, structuring, and portfolio management, supported by better data and targeted technical assistance.
- 3. Capital plus capacity:** Strengthen SMEs through business development support, climate advisory, technology access, and financial literacy to enhance resilience and investment readiness.
- 4. Partnerships to scale capital:** Leverage collaboration among financial institutions, investors, ecosystem actors, and development partners to reduce risk and build strong investment pipelines.

These insights informed the development of a **Gender-Responsive Climate Finance Toolkit**, co-created by Truvalu Bangladesh and Kore Global (also with the support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh). The toolkit provides a practical, data-driven framework to help investors integrate gender and climate considerations into decision-making, portfolio management, and reporting. Designed to align with Bangladesh's regulatory and market context, it has been refined through stakeholder validation and is currently being piloted (also in other Truvalu's focus countries), with feedback guiding further improvements before wider rollout.

In parallel, Truvalu is developing a **contextualized GLI Framework** to further support investors and SMEs in embedding gender considerations into investment and operational practices.





## Scoping Study: Circular Economy Transition for Bangladesh's RMG and Textile SMEs

Together with Sajida Foundation, Truvalu Bangladesh / OneTrueValue (commissioned by RVO and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Bangladesh) conducted a scoping study to assess how SMEs in Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) and textile sector can transition toward circular, resource-efficient production, and how blended finance could support this shift.

The study (combining desk research, interviews, and a multi-stakeholder consultation workshop) focused particularly on Tier 2 and Tier 3 factories, which face the greatest barriers to adopting cleaner technologies due to limited capital, weaker compliance capacity, and restricted access to finance. The research identified viable circular business cases in resource optimization, water and wastewater management, waste recycling, and traceability and digital tools. Many solutions offer 10–40% cost savings with payback periods of 6–24 months. However, adoption remains limited and is largely driven by external pressures such as EU supply-chain regulations and buyer requirements.

The study proposed establishing a Challenge Fund combining grants, concessional finance, and technical assistance to de-risk investments, strengthen SME capacity, and scale circular solutions across the sector. The study will be given follow-up in 2026.

### Sharing knowledge and experiences in the impact investment ecosystem

Throughout 2025, Truvalu country offices actively contributed to a range of international **roundtables, panels, and workshops** that brought together investors, entrepreneurs, governments, and development organizations to address key **challenges in inclusive and sustainable finance**. We also joined sector-focused discussions

on **sustainable food systems and agriculture finance**. These dialogues provided opportunities to share practical insights from Truvalu's investment practice and to engage with partners across regions and sectors (see [box 19](#) for some examples).

We also shared our own experiences and ideas as **guest speakers or participants at meet-ups organized** (see our timeline of events on [page 68](#)) and increased our visibility on social media (see [page 76](#)).



## Contributing to global dialogue on inclusive and sustainable food systems and finance (2025)

In a panel on **financial opportunities in the agriculture and water sectors**, organized by the Embassy of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to **Kenya**, Truvalu shared how its co-entrepreneurship investment approach combines financial support with strategic partnership to help entrepreneurs scale their businesses. At the **Financing Agri-food Systems Sustainably Summit**, Truvalu Kenya highlighted the role of finance in reducing food loss and waste, emphasizing the potential benefits of investing in cold storage solutions: improved profitability, enhanced food security, reduced environmental impact, and stronger climate resilience.

In **Colombia**, Truvalu contributed to dialogues on impact investing and regional ecosystem development. During the **Europe Day event** in Bogota, we shared lessons on building inclusive businesses and presented the case of an investee company demonstrating how strategic investment and hands-on support can scale sustainable impact. Truvalu also engaged in the launch of the **Elevara** initiative, aimed at strengthening the impact investment ecosystem in the Valle del Cauca region, participated in a workshop on structuring international investment funds for emerging fund managers, organized by **Bancóldex and Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt & Mosle LLP**, and joined the **Impact Minds: Collective Makers Conference** (a platform for capital providers), hosted by Latimpacto en Medellin.

In October Truvalu joined the **World Food Day** in **The Netherlands**, focused on tackling today's most urgent food systems challenges and highlighting partnerships that feed the future. It was organized by the Netherlands Food Partnership with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature. In the session "Unlocking Capital for the Missing Middle," Truvalu, One Acre Ventures and Holland Greentech explored how to bridge the financing gap for SMEs and unlock the potential of this segment. Panelists concluded that there is a clear need to de-risk investments in a tough space. Therefore the importance of blended finance, impact linked finance are interesting entry points. The essence of smart partnerships, long term frames, to crowd in concessional money to reach real scale, and to always plan for scale from the start were underscored by all.

To facilitate opportunities for women entrepreneurs to showcase their products and connect with investors, financial institutions, and corporates, we also organized an **SME Fair** in Dhaka where one-on-one meetings took place. The event boosted visibility, expanded networks, and strengthened a more inclusive, gender-responsive investment ecosystem in Bangladesh.



“

**Across all these ecosystem engagements, a consistent theme emerged: closing the financing gap for the “missing middle.” Participants highlighted the importance of blended finance, risk-sharing mechanisms, and capacity building to make SMEs investment-ready while enabling investors to support scalable, high-impact opportunities.”**

MACHTELD OOIJENS

Director Truvalu

## Providing capacity building about impactful entrepreneurship

In the presentation of our 2025 results, under pathway I, we give more insights in the support provided to SMEs under the Gender Lens Investing and the Access to Green Finance programme. Our team in Bangladesh (given our expertise and experience in working with MSMEs), also provided Technical

Assistance on entrepreneurship, investment readiness and business development in the framework of the BYETS program (see [box 22](#)). The target group of this project were not SMEs but young individuals. Given our ambition to contribute to impactful entrepreneurship development, Truvalu was honoured to provide this capacity building.

# Active multi-stakeholder learning community



## Designing impact focused multi-stakeholder business models and strategies to mobilise capital

We design and implement multi-stakeholder impact-related business models with other ecosystem partners, such as banks, other investors, buyers, business associations, governments, development finance institutions, NGOs, and knowledge institutions. This is a challenging endeavour. But we strongly believe that a **systemic change** can occur where shared value and responsibility are cherished and complementary expertise across a sector or a value chain is respected.

to facilitate access to green financing for SMEs, aiding them in both adapting to and mitigating the risks associated with climate change. As part of A2GF, we started piloting innovative finance models, such as **impact linked finance (ILF)**, working closely together with local financial institutions. For more information about our work with financial institutions and ILF, see our [impact report 2024](#) (page 51). And read the interview in this current report on [page 64](#) for some reflections related to ILF.

An impact focused strategy we proudly highlight is the **Access to Green Financing for Enterprises (A2GF) Programme**, implemented together with One to Watch, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and with support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh (see our [impact report 2023](#) for a more detailed description). This initiative actively engages with SMEs, financial institutions, investors, and policymakers

To complement the A2GF programme, a **renewable energy fund structure** was set up, with a mission to enable green growth by pioneering innovative financing for scalable climate solutions across emerging markets. This Fund is now managed by **OneTrueValue (OTV)**, a joint venture between One to Watch and Truvalu (see [box 23](#)). At the end of 2025, A2GF was scaled as the "Access to Green Financing

### BOX 22

## Building Youth Employability through Skills (BYETS) program

The Building Youth Employability through Skills (BYETS) program tackles high youth unemployment in Bangladesh, where nearly 30% of youth are NEET. Supported by the Netherlands Embassy in Bangladesh and implemented by Swisscontact, it aims to empower 25,000 youth - half women - through skills development and income opportunities.

In 2025, Truvalu trained **255 ICT graduates in entrepreneurship**. Among them, **204 graduates actively sought entrepreneurial support** and received tailored one-on-one coaching on business planning, financial management, cost analysis, and idea validation. As a result, **41 launched businesses**, and **25** reported **increased sales** and **24** noting **increased profits**. Truvalu also strengthened **six training providers**, enabling two to offer paid entrepreneurship courses with strong uptake.

Despite challenges such as geographic dispersion, limited device access, varying commitment (due to studies, jobs, family responsibilities), and lack of youth-friendly startup capital, the program mitigated these through continuous online mentoring, peer engagement, and financial documentation support. Overall, it demonstrates strong progress in **linking skills training to entrepreneurship**, while highlighting the need for sustained mentoring and improved financial access.

(A2GF) for Enterprises - **Scale & Innovation programme**": a multi-year initiative that aims to facilitate capacity development, technical assistance and access to green financing for SMEs across all sectors in Bangladesh. LightCastle Partners was added as an implementing partner. By testing and learning about new blended finance models and various instruments (impact linked finance, first loss facility, etc.), we promote the replicability of these models.

Truvalu contributed to the blended finance **PDETs programme** in Colombia, which concluded in early 2025. This multi-stakeholder initiative strengthened business ecosystems in post-conflict regions—Cauquetá, Putumayo, and Tumaco—by improving the productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability of dairy and cocoa value chains. Funded by the EU Trust Fund for Colombia and implemented with Red Adelco, Conexión/ICCO, and CIAT, the programme was complemented with the **Rural Paz Investment Fund (FIRP)**, co-funded and managed by Truvalu. The EU supported business development services and provided a first-loss facility. Additional infographics and [video](#) (a co-production with Conexión/ICCO) further illustrate this blended finance approach.

We also actively (co-)lead **impact-driven private initiatives**, including **OneTrueValue** (box 23) and **Growpact Global** (box 24). Both initiatives lead to various players being more aware of their position and value add in the ecosystem. Follow these two initiatives on LinkedIn!



BOX 23



## OneTrueValue and the Off-grid Renewable Energy II Fund



Off-grid Renewable Energy II (ORE II) is a €20 million equity fund managed by the OneTrueValue (OTV) team (a joint venture of Truvalu and One to Watch), designed to decarbonize international supply chains in South and Southeast Asia. The fund currently operates in Bangladesh and Nepal, with a strategy to expand into a third high-potential Asian country once we have raised more than 5 million for the Bangladesh market.

Key characteristics of the investment strategy are:

- The fund invests in Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) that provide turnkey decarbonization solutions, including rooftop solar, battery storage, and energy efficiency.
- Clients—primarily Commercial & Industrial (C&I) businesses in the textile and garment sectors—face no upfront costs, with repayment tied to energy savings.
- The fund targets a projected Net IRR of 11–13% for investors.
- ORE II employs a phased approach to investment, with defined exit strategies that include dividends, trade sales, and potential IPOs of the ESCOs.

ORE II is committed to delivering measurable social impact targets (the creation and protection of 3,750 jobs, with a specific focus on gender equality and supporting women as leaders or owners) and environmental outcomes (a target reduction of 60,000 tons of CO2 emissions annually).

OTV leverages a seasoned, multinational team with deep expertise in finance and impact investing. Last but not least, the fund benefits from strategic relationships with technical developers (e.g., Gham Power, Solshare) and financing partners (e.g., NMB Bank, SDC) to manage risk and enhance project execution.



Photography by: OneTrueValue



## Growpact Global: Building a scalable network of seedling nurseries across Africa

**Growpact Global** is successfully moving beyond its initial proof-of-concept phase to become a scalable platform for agricultural impact. Building on the foundational success of Growpact Kitale, recognized last year as a profitable and fully operational center of excellence, the focus in 2025 shifted to strategic validation and positioning for replication.

A significant achievement was Truvalu's successful exit from Growpact Kitale at the close of 2025. This exit confirms the model's commercial viability and enhances its appeal to investors seeking both financial returns and measurable development outcomes (see page...). As a founding partner, Truvalu maintains a strategic role in supporting the platform's ongoing development and scaling.

Throughout 2025, Growpact Global significantly strengthened its foundation. Key activities included refining the modular nursery model, integrating new partners, and accelerating pipeline development across Africa. The model directly addresses a critical failing in local food systems: the lack of access to high-quality planting material, which is vital for boosting farmer productivity, income, and resilience. Concurrently, this approach generates sustainable entrepreneurial opportunities for youth and women, fostering inclusive economic growth.

What distinguishes Growpact Global is its holistic, integrated methodology. It combines essential technical infrastructure, practical, hands-on training, and access to finance within a robust, locally owned business structure. This comprehensive ecosystem approach, already validated in Kitale, is now being structured into a clear expansion strategy, with multiple new locations currently under evaluation and development.

Looking forward, the primary goal is unambiguous: to scale a network of high-performing nurseries that are both financially sustainable and drivers of systemic impact. With a growing coalition of aligned partners and increasing interest from development organizations and investors, Growpact Global is strategically positioned for its next phase: transitioning from an early-stage initiative into a replicable, investment-ready platform to catalyze agricultural transformation across Sub-Saharan Africa.



Photography by: GrowPact

### Systemic Impact Investing Standard

With the support of FCDO, we were audited at the beginning of 2026 against the Systemic Impact Investing Standard (SIIS) by the **Bertha Centre** and **Agora Global**. Truvalu's sourcing and management process appeared to be already well aligned with the SIIS.

Specific actions to further strengthen our measurement are being taken while this impact report was written. By applying the SIIS approach, Truvalu aims to become even more focused on increasing the likelihood of sustainable development impact at scale. We will report about this process and our learning in next year's report.

# Truvalu's ultimate envisioned impact areas



Truvalu by itself won't change the world, and the transformation we aim to inspire cannot occur instantly. However, since our first investments in 2016, we've achieved notable progress each year. Gradually, each improvement serves as an inspiring example and brings us nearer to our vision of a world where value can be created in a fair manner, and where we ultimately contribute to the following **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**:

**5 GENDER EQUALITY** **SDG 5** Truvalu contributes to gender equality and women empowerment by investing with a gender lens. Truvalu strives for a portfolio of companies that are gender focused by promoting gender equity in the workplace and their value chains. A good number of Truvalu's investee companies are either women-owned, co-owned or women-led.

**8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH** **SDG 8** Truvalu contributes to this goal by investing in scalable SMEs with a specific focus on: creating sustainable employment for both qualified and unqualified workers; increasing knowledge and skills in the workforce and; promoting market-based solutions that further improve the sector's productivity and added value.

**12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION** **SDG 12** Truvalu invests in SMEs that purchase their raw materials from a large network of producers / smallholder farmers. We strive for a fair distribution of power, profit and value creation.

**13 CLIMATE ACTION** **SDG 13** Climate change is increasingly making its impact felt worldwide. Everyone is suffering, but the poor in the developing world are bearing the brunt of the impacts. We are committed to provide green finance, technologies and capacity building, work on regenerative agriculture, and contribute to the reduction of emissions to deal with climate change.

**17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS** **SDG 17** Truvalu realizes that investing in agri-SMEs in emerging economies requires the collective synergies of various organizations in the ecosystem and thus works with public and private partners (NGOs/DFIs/Accelerators/Incubators/FIs/ governments) who share Truvalu's vision and values to support investees, build a support ecosystem for impact entrepreneurs, and offer blended financing.





# HOW FARMWORKS IS RESHAPING KENYA'S AGRICULTURE THROUGH DATA AND RESILIENCE

In 2025 Truvalu decided to do a follow-on investment in FarmWorks Kenya. Machteld Ooijens interviewed the entrepreneur behind this company, Yi Li, and shares her interesting story in this chapter.



In the chaotic bustle of Nairobi's Marikiti wholesale market at 3:00 AM, it is rare to see a foreigner, let alone a young Chinese woman, navigating the stalls of vegetables. But in early 2021, that is exactly where you would have found Yi. Having just left a prestigious career as a management consultant at McKinsey, she was not there to advise on strategy from an air-conditioned office; she was there to understand why the tomatoes she grew weren't selling.

Yi is the co-founder and CEO of Farmworks, an agribusiness startup in Kenya that has evolved from a single struggling farm into a massive supply chain platform connecting thousands of farmers to market vendors. Her journey is a masterclass in the specific brand of resilience required by female entrepreneurs in emerging markets—a story of pivoting when the model fails, finding strength in "feminine" leadership, and the grit required to build something from zero to one.

## The shift from advisor to builder

Born and raised in China and educated in the US, she had spent years at McKinsey advising powerful business leaders. Yet, she felt a growing disconnect. "I felt that there was a limitation of what I could achieve as a consultant," Yi explains. "At the end of the day... you're not the one executing your own advice".

She craved the ability to build. When she approached her boss with her intention to leave, instead of offering a promotion, he offered a partnership. He had a vision for transforming Kenya's

agriculture - moving from "30,000-foot strategies" to reality on the ground. Trusting his integrity and shared values, Yi took the leap into a sector she knew not much about.

## The reality check: From theory to mud

The early days of Farmworks were defined by what Yi describes as "pure chaos". Initially, the company aimed to be a producer, farming 30 acres of crops. They quickly hit the hard wall of reality that plagues African agriculture: production is useless without market access. "We harvested all these watermelons and tomatoes, and then nobody was buying them," she recalls.

“

**We harvested all these watermelons and tomatoes, and then nobody was buying them.”**

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YI LI

CEO & Co-founder FarmWorks



Photography by: FarmWorks

It was this failure that drove her to the markets in the middle of the night during COVID-19 curfews. Yi was busy deconstructing the value chain. She bought a truck and began doing deliveries herself, working 24-hour shifts, driving from midnight to midnight, often without eating. "I remember thinking... I only need to do this a day... but our drivers and stuff have to like do this day in, day out".

This period was brutal but essential. It taught her that while she might not be the best farmer, she had the analytical mind to solve the logistics puzzle.

### The pivot: Knowing when to quit

One of the most difficult lessons for any entrepreneur is recognizing when their original vision is wrong. For the first two years, Farmworks tried to do it all - grow the crops and sell them.

But by 2023, the data was undeniable. Their own farms contributed only 20% of the revenue but caused 80% of the problems, ravaged by droughts, floods, and pests. Meanwhile, the network of smallholder farmers they had started buying from was growing rapidly and reliably.

The turning point came in a moment of unexpected danger. Trying to micromanage farm operations, Yi went to inspect sprayers at 5:00 AM. In the darkness, a guard dog mistook her for an intruder and attacked her. As she sat in a hospital getting vaccinated for rabies, bleeding and exhausted, she had a realization about "founder-business fit".

"I may not be the founder of the business of farming," she realized. "I may be a much better founder when it comes to building a platform based on data and efficiency". This self-awareness allowed her to make the hard decision to shut down their own farming operations and pivot entirely to a platform model. Today, FarmWorks supports thousands of farmers by providing them with a reliable market, allowing the company to scale without the heavy risks of primary production.

### Redefining leadership in a male-dominated sector

Agriculture in Kenya is often viewed as a male domain, controlled by cartels and rigorous physical demands. Yet, Yi has found that her gender, often perceived as a disadvantage in business, has been a distinct asset.

"We should not only focus on what women lack. We should especially remember what women have as our unique power," Yi asserts. She finds that her leadership style - more relatable, communicative, and trustworthy - resonates with her staff. In a market where hierarchy often stifles communication, her approachability allows problems to surface and be solved quickly.

Her presence has also had a ripple effect on the women she employs. "I have heard more than once from our female colleagues... 'Oh, now I know that women can be CEO, because our CEO is a woman,'" she shares. This representation matters. Yi believes that human beings are "animals of mimicking"—we cannot be what we cannot see. By simply



“

I do think ideally having some foundation of job experience... in a bigger organisation... is a good experience.”

YI LI

CEO & Co-founder FarmWorks

Photography by: FarmWorks

existing in her role and leading with competence and transparency, she is expanding the horizon of possibility for the young Kenyan women on her team.

Her background also brings a unique cultural efficiency. She attributes her “penny-pinching” operational style to her Chinese upbringing. In a low-margin business like vegetable trading, where every shilling counts, this cultural trait of extreme efficiency has kept the business afloat where others might have burned through capital.

## Impact beyond the spreadsheet

FarmWorks actively promotes gender. For Yi, entrepreneurship is the vehicle for impact. Unlike her consulting days, where she questioned if her PowerPoint slides ever changed lives, the impact of FarmWorks is tangible.

The company provides hundreds of stable jobs in a country with high unemployment. For the farmers, FarmWorks offers consistency - a rare

commodity in agriculture. “The best farmers don’t worry about the market price... [they] only worry about their yields.” Yi explains. By guaranteeing offtake at fair market prices, FarmWorks allows farmers to invest in their land, increasing their acreage and doubling their income.

Furthermore, they serve over 20,000 “market ladies” - the women who sell vegetables in urban stalls. By providing a reliable delivery of traceable produce, FarmWorks removes the need for these women to travel long distances or deal with unpredictable brokers, allowing them to stabilize and grow their own micro-businesses.

## Advice for the next generation

Yi is realistic about the challenges of the Kenyan business environment, citing the powerful position of the “cartels” that make it difficult for small players to enter the market. However, she remains optimistic about the potential for female entrepreneurs.

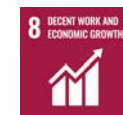
Her advice to aspiring women is grounded in pragmatism: get experience first. “I do think ideally having some foundation of job experience... in a bigger organization... is a good experience,” she advises. She credits her time at McKinsey for showing her “what good looks like” regarding work structure and professionalism - benchmarks she now applies to her own startup.

## Conclusion

Yi’s story is not just about selling onions or tomatoes; it is about the courage to deconstruct one’s identity - from consultant to farmer, from farmer to platform builder. It is about the “outsider’s advantage” - using a fresh perspective to see inefficiencies that others might accept as status quo.

Today, FarmWorks stands as a testament to the power of resilience. Yi is leading a company that is modernizing Kenya’s food supply chain. She has proven that with enough data, humility, and “bias to action”, a female entrepreneur can indeed reshape an industry, one truckload of vegetables at a time.

## SDG IMPACT TO ACHIEVE



## LEARN MORE

For more information about FarmWorks, also read page 42 of our previous [Impact Report 2024](#)

“

We should not only focus on what women lack. We should especially remember what women have — that is our unique power.”

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YI LI

CEO & Co-founder FarmWorks

# IMPACT-LINKED FINANCE: "THE INCENTIVE IS THE MISSING PIECE."

A conversation with Jaap-Jan Verboom and Sharawat Islam on Impact-Linked Finance.

Jaap-Jan Verboom is the Founder and Global Director of Truvalu. Sharawat Islam is Truvalu's Managing Director in Bangladesh. We spoke with both about what ten years of impact investing has taught them - and why Impact-Linked Finance may be the tool the sector has been waiting for.

**Jaap-Jan, ten years in - what has Truvalu actually achieved?**

**Jaap-Jan Verboom:** "Quite a lot, and I say that with genuine pride. We've invested in over 50 agri-SMEs across Bangladesh, Colombia and Kenya, with a very significant impact. In our current fund alone, we've already created more than 6,000 decent jobs, reached nearly 13,000 smallholder farmers, and built local investment platforms that are genuinely embedded in the communities they serve. The entrepreneurs we back are building businesses that are both financially viable and socially transformative.

What I cannot yet say is that this model scales easily. And that tension keeps me up at night."

**What's the core structural problem holding back scale?**

**Jaap-Jan Verboom:** "It's a return problem that nobody in the sector talks about honestly. Deep impact investing in early-stage businesses in emerging markets is, by design, expensive. Our gross returns at the investee level are inherently modest - we work in contexts where infrastructure is unreliable, governance takes time to build, and market conditions are unpredictable. We accept that.

But the gap between those gross returns and what reaches investors is also wider than in conventional asset management. That's because much of what we call "asset management" is actually capacity building - sitting with an entrepreneur to rework their financial model, helping them access a new market, navigating a governance



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**JAAP-JAN VERBOOM**  
 Founder & Global Director,  
 Truvalu



crisis at 11pm. This is not overhead. It is the core of co-entrepreneurship. But it's a cost that conventional fund structures were never designed to absorb. The result is a model that achieves substantial impact while remaining financially just-sustainable. That's not enough to attract the capital at large to make a real difference."

**So how do you close that gap? What are the levers available?**

**Jaap-Jan Verboom:** "I see three. The first is improving gross returns at the enterprise level - and this is where Impact-Linked Finance, or ILF, comes in. The idea is to link financial terms to the achievement of agreed impact targets: reaching smallholder farmers, reducing gender inequality, cutting emissions. Instruments like Social Impact Incentives and impact-linked loans have demonstrated that when you reduce a company's cost of capital in exchange for measurable impact, you simultaneously strengthen the business case and the impact case.

The second lever is externalising capacity-building costs. Technical assistance facilities help with this, but I think there's an underdeveloped opportunity for ILF instruments specifically designed to fund the capacity-building work that deep impact investors like us embed in our asset management.

The third lever - and the one I find most promising for scale - is applying ILF at the fund or investor level. A single grant-backed instrument can reach every enterprise in a portfolio while dramatically reducing delivery costs.

And when incentives are aligned from investors to funds to entrepreneurs, ILF can create a system where financial performance and development outcomes reinforce each other."

**Can you give a concrete example of what fund-level ILF looks like in practice?**

**Jaap-Jan Verboom:** "Yes - our ORE II Fund in Bangladesh, which finances commercial rooftop solar installations for SMEs. We developed what we call an Acceleration Bonus. It offers early investors an IRR uplift to over 15%, with distributions beginning in 2027 and roughly 20% of committed capital returned by 2030. That significantly reduces early-stage risk and fully protects returns against foreign exchange fluctuation.

The critical design element is the final payment trigger. The last tranche is only released when €5 million has been deployed and converted into 8 megawatts of installed solar capacity generating at least 8,000 MWh in 2030 - approximately 4,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> avoided annually. One instrument. One verification event. Every solar project in the portfolio covered. A €1 million grant from a development partner unlocks €5 million in private capital."

**Sharawwat, you lead Truvalu's work in Bangladesh. What does the financing landscape look like on the ground?**

**Sharawwat Islam:** "Fragmented and misaligned. Most financing still relies on equity, debt, or grants deployed in isolation, leaving SMEs systematically mismatched with their actual funding

needs. Early-stage enterprises struggle to secure patient capital while simultaneously needing flexible debt or working capital. But the gap is not primarily about capital availability. The problem is incentive misalignment — the institutions that could channel capital into green, women-led, or early-stage enterprises simply don't have sufficient commercial reason to do so.

We wanted to understand the "why." That required a deep dive into how Bangladeshi banks and investors

actually make decisions - and what would motivate them to channel capital differently."

**What did you find?**

**Sharawwat Islam:** "Several compounding barriers. From a conventional lender's perspective, an SME applying for a green loan represents layered risk. Lending to SMEs already costs roughly twice as much as lending to corporate clients in Bangladesh - due diligence is more intensive,



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**SHARAWWAT ISLAM**

Managing Director, Truvalu Bangladesh



Photography by: Agrikeen

documentation is inadequate, collateral is weaker. Green financing adds another layer: the lender must evaluate not just the borrower's creditworthiness but the technical viability of a green initiative. The result is interest rates that make the business case for green investment unworkable for most SMEs.

Women entrepreneurs face additional structural disadvantages. Property registration norms, social collateral expectations, and male-dominated credit networks mean women-led businesses are disproportionately screened out at the very first stage of loan appraisal - not because of poor business fundamentals, but because the eligibility criteria were designed for a borrower profile that simply doesn't include them.

And then there are broader market failures: externalities go unpriced, information asymmetries are severe, and there's a first-mover disadvantage that discourages financial institutions from pioneering green SME lending when later entrants can free-ride on their groundwork."

#### How is Truvalu using ILF to address these barriers in Bangladesh?

**Sharawwat Islam:** "We introduced one of the most comprehensive ILF initiatives in the country, operating along two parallel dimensions: directly incentivising SMEs to pursue and sustain impact, and incentivising financial institutions to channel capital toward those SMEs.

A good example is **Wild Woven** - an export-oriented manufacturer employing 57 people with an annual turnover of 150 million BDT (around

€1 million). In 2024, they enrolled in our Access to Green Financing for Enterprises programme. They received training on green transition, financing readiness, and GHG emission methodology. Within a year, Wild Woven secured 1.8 million BDT (€12,500) from a local financial institution at significantly below-market rates. That was possible for two reasons: the financial institution was incentivised through ILF, and Wild Woven's improved loan readiness reduced the institution's due diligence burden. This funding helped the business expand their manufacturing facility allowing them to meet the growing global demand for eco-friendly lifestyle products while maintaining their commitment to job creation.

Under the programme, when a green loan is disbursed, the financial institution receives two incentives - a transaction-based origination incentive, and a performance-based Impact Bonus paid when the borrower achieves verified impact milestones. Both are structured as a percentage of the loan amount."

#### What do the results look like so far?

**Sharawwat Islam:** "Modest in absolute terms, but significant as proof of principle. Of 40 SMEs we referred to financial institution partners, four secured financing - resulting in €165,000 in total disbursements. Previously unbanked women-led enterprises accessed formal bank loans for the first time. These numbers matter not for their size, but for what they demonstrate: a small, precisely placed ILF instrument can open a door that market forces alone have kept shut."

**Jaap-Jan, what have been the hardest lessons in implementing ILF?**

**Jaap-Jan Verboom:** "Three stand out. First, defining impact indicators that are robust but not burdensome - we all operate with limited resources, and impact measurement systems must reflect that reality. Second, balancing ambition with realism. Impact targets must be transformative but achievable within the operating context of the business, accounting for market volatility, climate risks, and regulatory changes.

Third, the structural challenge: designing and implementing impact-linked mechanisms takes time and resources, and the broader financial ecosystem is still learning how to incorporate these models.

But here's what surprised us: in several cases, the process of defining impact targets actually helped entrepreneurs clarify their own vision. Rather than seeing ILF as an external requirement, they started viewing impact as a strategic driver of growth and differentiation. That reinforces our core belief - when incentives are aligned, impact and profitability reinforce each other rather than compete."

**Is ILF a long-term solution, or a transitional tool?**

**Jaap-Jan Verboom:** "I want to be honest about this. ILF depends on grant capital from development partners. When those grants are exhausted, the incentive disappears. ILF is not yet a permanent financing architecture.

My view is that it's a high-leverage tool for a specific phase of market building - the phase where the commercial case for impact investing hasn't yet been fully demonstrated, where risk perceptions outrun evidence, and where catalytic capital can do disproportionate work. Used well, ILF creates the track record, the scale, and the market confidence that eventually makes the incentives unnecessary. The goal is to demonstrate that finance can be a powerful tool for positive change - and then let that track record carry the argument forward on its own."

**Finally - what are you looking for from the investment community?**

**Jaap-Jan Verboom:** "We're not waiting for the field to design the perfect instrument. We're building and testing, learning from what works, and refining as we go. The Acceleration Bonus in ORE II is our current answer at the fund level. Our work with financial institutions in Bangladesh is our best answer at the enterprise level. Neither is finished.

What we're looking for are investors who share the conviction that the returns of deep impact investing can and must improve - and who want to be part of building the financial architecture that makes that possible. If that question is also on your mind, we'd welcome the conversation."



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**JAAP-JAN VERBOOM**  
 Founder & Global Director Truvalu



Photography by: Truvalu

# TIMELINE OF EVENTS

In 2025, Truvalu organised and actively participated in events with ecosystem players to learn with others, to network, to stay up to date, to gain synergies, and to show-case our own experience, expertise and the solutions we have found.





February



**Global**

**Closing session of UNGC's Target Gender Equality Accelerator**

During nine months, Truvalu Global and Bangladesh participated in the Target Gender Equality Accelerator, a UN Global Compact Network (UNGC) initiative focused on transforming gender equality commitments into tangible action. Truvalu further strengthened its internal gender action plan.



**Africa**

**Celebrating African Entrepreneurship: Special Vice Versa Edition Launch**

A special Vice Versa edition was launched, highlighting the resilience, innovation, and potential of African entrepreneurs, and showcasing real stories and providing practical insights into fostering a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in Africa. Truvalu contributed to this special, sharing the stories of Sevi and FarmWorks.



**Kenya**

**Sankalp in Nairobi**

Truvalu attended Sankalp Africa 2025: the perfect platform to connect with changemakers, innovators, and leaders from across Africa who are driving impactful change through entrepreneurship. The event highlighted that partnerships between a variety of actors in the ecosystem is needed for real scalable and lasting impact.

**Bangladesh**

**Trade Mission Circular textiles**

Truvalu and One to Watch participated in a Dutch trade mission to Bangladesh focused on circular textiles, bringing together 18 companies including fashion brands, sustainability experts, and impact investors. The mission aimed to strengthen business collaborations, share impact investment experiences, and promote green growth initiatives, particularly renewable energy investments in Bangladesh's garment sector.



**Bangladesh**

**SME Exhibition: Showcasing Impact in Bangladesh**

Truvalu Bangladesh, with the support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, successfully hosted the SME Exhibition: Showcasing Impact—an event dedicated to fostering investment opportunities for SMEs and startups, with a particular focus on gender-inclusive businesses. The exhibition brought together financial institutions, investors, and ecosystem enablers, creating a dynamic platform to enhance access to capital for businesses led by and benefiting women.

February

March

April

March

**Bangladesh**

**Truvalu at Ring the Bell for Gender Equality 2025**

Sharawat participated in the Ring the Bell for Gender Equality event, hosted by IFC and Dhaka Stock Exchange to celebrate International Women's Day 2025. Thirteen women entrepreneurs from Truvalu's Gender Lens Investing programme showcased their businesses, while a panel discussion explored strategies for improving women's access to finance and financial inclusion in Bangladesh.



**Kenya**

**CFF convening Kenya**

Machteld and Peter participated in the 2025 Collaborative for Frontier Finance Annual Convening, addressing the missing middle financing gap affecting African SMEs. The event focused on demystifying frontier finance, facilitating peer-to-peer learning to accelerate investment readiness, and creating pathways to align institutional investments with local capital providers to amplify impact across the continent.



**Kenya**

**Trade Mission Agriculture**

Truvalu's Peter and Kees joined a trade mission to Kenya focused on sustainable agriculture and water, organized during the Dutch State Visit (see page 78 in this report). Peter participated in a panel discussion on financial opportunities for the agriculture and water sector, sharing how Truvalu's co-entrepreneurship investment strategy provides financial support while empowering entrepreneurs to scale their businesses.



April

**The Netherlands**

**Best of Bangladesh**

At the Best of Bangladesh Europe event in Amsterdam, OneTrueValue presented ORE II, a catalytic investment fund accelerating industrial decarbonization in global supply chains. The presentation highlighted how ORE II, investing alongside BESTSELLER, is driving rooftop solar adoption in Bangladesh's garment sector, enabling factories to reduce costs, cut emissions, and align with EU low-carbon regulations.





May



**Kenya**  
**FINAS Summit on Sustainable Agri-Food**

Peter participated in the FINAS 2025 Summit, where the agricultural and financial sectors discussed financing sustainable agri-food systems over three days. In a side session, Peter highlighted the role of finance in reducing food loss and waste, specifically emphasizing the quadruple win of investing in cold storage: economic gain, sustainability, food security, and climate impact.

Truvalu Bangladesh celebrated KingsDay in Dhaka



**Bangladesh**  
**Partnership with Eastern bank PLC**

Truvalu Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Eastern Bank PLC to support gender-focused entrepreneurship under the Gender Lens Investing programme, supported by the Embassy of Switzerland. The partnership combines Truvalu's capacity building and business development services with EBL's financial literacy training and preferential financing, empowering women-led SMEs and startups while advancing financial inclusion in Bangladesh.



**Colombia**  
**Europe Day Dialogue on Impact Investment**

Andrés participated in a Europe Day panel discussion on challenges and opportunities in impact investing in Colombia. He shared how Truvalu builds inclusive long-term investments centered on entrepreneurs transforming their communities, presenting Cocina Soluciones as an example of how strategic support and appropriate investment can scale real, sustainable impact alongside ecosystem partners.

**Colombia**  
**Launch of Elevara Impact Investment Strategy**

Andrés participated in the launch of Elevara, a strategy to boost impact investing in Valle del Cauca, Colombia. Hosted by the regional government, Comfandi, and Trulab, the initiative positions Truvalu as a benchmark for impact investing in the region, with renewed commitment to expanding investments and identifying future success stories.



August



**Colombia**  
**Workshop on International Fund Structuring**

Andrés participated in a workshop on international fund structuring for emerging managers, organized by Bancóldex and Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt & Mosle LLP. The session covered fund structures, key players, and essential topics for launching international funds, highlighting the importance of advisory support and providing valuable insights into global capital access opportunities and challenges beyond Colombia.

**Bangladesh**  
**Partnership with City Bank for Women Entrepreneurs**

Truvalu Bangladesh signed a partnership with City Bank PLC under the Gender Lens Investing programme. The collaboration provides women entrepreneurs and gender-focused enterprises with mentorship, business development support, and preferential-rate financing access. Together, they co-create training content, conduct donor outreach, and organize awareness events to build a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

May

July

August

July

**Bangladesh**  
**Bangladesh Agro Conclave on Sustainable Agriculture**

Sharawat spoke at the Bangladesh Agro Conclave 2025, organized by LightCastle Partners and Sustainable Agriculture Foundation Bangladesh. She emphasized blended finance's potential to unlock opportunities for women and youth in agri-food systems, stressing that innovative financial models combining public, commercial, and philanthropic capital can address collateral barriers and catalyze sustainable growth.

**Ghana**  
**Africa Impact Summit**

Jaap-Jan and Kees attended this summit which brought together leaders and experts from all over the continent to discuss bold strategies for scaling up financial innovations in Africa.



**Bangladesh**  
**Climate Finance Readiness Workshop in Bangladesh**

UNCDF, in partnership with Truvalu and One to Watch, organized a two-day workshop in Dhaka to strengthen climate finance readiness for SMEs in Bangladesh, supported by the Embassy of Switzerland. Over 50 participants from regulatory bodies, ministries, and financial institutions explored Green Climate Fund access pathways, proposal development, and de-risking strategies to enhance SME access to green finance.



**Bangladesh**  
**Bangladesh Women Investors' Network**

Truvalu Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bangladesh Women Investors' Network (BWIN) under the Gender Lens Investing programme, supported by the Embassy of Switzerland. The partnership provides women-led startups and SMEs with access to training, mentoring, and investment readiness support, connecting BWIN entrepreneurs to Truvalu's Gender Lens Investing programme while enabling investment screening and co-creating impactful events.





**Netherlands**

**Women in Sustainable Finance (WIFS) event**

Machteld represented Truvalu at the WIFS event in Utrecht, where women leaders, industry pioneers, and committed allies came together to explore the future of sustainable finance. The need for continued investment in climate finance, even amid backlash was emphasized, as well as the importance of inclusive leadership in building resilient institutions.



**Netherlands**

**Truvalu Wins Sustainability Frontrunner Award**

Truvalu founder Jaap-Jan received the Sustainability Frontrunner Award 2025 at the Leaders of Progress Summit, organized by UN Global Compact Network Netherlands. Selected from five finalists among over 300 participants, the award recognizes Truvalu's impact-driven work with resilient entrepreneurs across agri-food value chains in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Kenya, reinforcing the organization's commitment to creating sustainable value.



**Bangladesh**

**National Women Entrepreneurs' Conference 2025**

Gender Lens Investing Program Coordinator Rimoon participated as a panelist at the National Women Entrepreneurs' Conference 2025, hosted by Winrock International's Ashshash Project. She discussed startup support for artisans, highlighting how blended finance can unlock capital while reducing risk. The session explored gender-sensitive loan products, incubation models, and tailored support for early-stage artisan enterprises and trafficking survivors.

October

**Belgium**

**Joining Kampani's 10 year anniversary celebration**

Jaap-Jan and Machteld had the privilege of joining Kampani's 10-year anniversary celebration in Belgium — a milestone that showcases the power of investing in the missing middle of the agricultural value chain. Jaap-Jan joined a panel session underscoring that targeted investment in small and growing agribusinesses can drive real, lasting impact — both socially and financially.

**The Netherlands**

**World Food Day 2025 and Growpact Global Launch**

Jaap-Jan, Machteld and Kees participated in World Food Day 2025, organized by the Netherlands Food Partnership with Dutch ministries. Jaap-Jan spoke about unlocking capital for the missing middle, discussing de-risking investments, blended finance, and smart partnerships. Kees officially launched Growpact Global, a new partnership initiative co-founded by Truvalu to scale professionally raised seedlings for improved agricultural productivity.

December

September

September

**Colombia**

**Truvalu at Latimpacto Impact Minds 2025**

Andrés participated in its first Latimpacto event, Impact Minds 2025 in Medellín, as a new member. The event brought together regional investors to explore three key trends: rethinking finance for sustainable solutions, building impactful partnerships, and leveraging data and technology for measurable impact—all central to Truvalu's mission in Latin America.

**Bangladesh**

**Private Sector Partners event in Dhaka**

Cordaid Bangladesh hosted a meet and greet with 13 private sector partners in Dhaka, including Truvalu Bangladesh, focusing on strengthening collaboration between business and development.



November

November

**Kenya**

**AVPA Conference in Nairobi on Impact Investment**

Peter attended the African Venture Philanthropy Alliance Conference in Nairobi from November 3-5, 2025. The event focused on catalytic capital, blended finance, and sustainable innovation, emphasizing collaboration between investors, philanthropists, and entrepreneurs. Peter highlighted that impact and returns can reinforce each other, particularly through local capital mobilization and innovation for Africa's growth.



**Bangladesh/Global**

**Stakeholder validation workshop on a pragmatic toolkit for gender and climate integration**

Kore Global and Truvalu, with the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, facilitated a workshop to present and validate an analysis of the green financing demand among women-led businesses, identified barriers and enablers for integrating gender into climate investments in Bangladesh. They also presented a user-centered gender-climate nexus toolkit for investors and gathered insights from key actors in the financial sector, development partners, and gender climate experts to validate the toolkit.

**Nepal**

**Strategy workshop of OneTrueValue (JV with One to Watch)**

The OTV team gathered in Kathmandu for a two-day Strategy & Team Building Workshop, where colleagues from Bangladesh and Nepal came together to align on a shared mission and future plans. Over two days of discussions and collaboration, we revisited and refined OTV's strategic direction.

December



# THE SWEETNESS OF RESILIENCE: HOW SARA GRISALES IS REGENERATING COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURE



In the lush, verdant hills of Armenia, within Colombia's famous Coffee Axis (Eje Cafetero), the soil is rich, but the economic reality for those who work it is often unforgiving. For decades, the narrative of the Colombian farmer has been one of hard labor with little reward - a story of selling raw commodities to a global market that dictates prices with indifference to the hands that harvest the crop.

This was the reality that greeted Sara Grisales Olaya in 2015 when she returned to her hometown after studying international business administration in the United States. She arrived with a vision of "triple impact" companies - businesses that prioritize social and environmental value alongside profit - only to find a local landscape with little appetite for such ideas.

The catalyst for her journey came from a family heartbreak. Her grandfather, a lifelong panela (unrefined cane sugar) producer, was closing his sugar mill - crushed by market prices that failed to cover production costs, laying

off 100 employees and declaring the countryside "ungrateful." "It was very sad," Sara recalls. But where her grandfather saw an end, Sara and her cousin Sebastián Jiménez - a product design engineer - saw a necessary beginning. In 2016, the two cousins combined their complementary skills and resolved to "turn the situation around," founding Mesa Baja with a clear mission: to make local agricultural products competitive again by adding value, securing certifications, and connecting small producers directly to conscious markets.

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**Fundamos la empresa Mesa Baja bajo el tema de empresas de triple impacto.”**

**SARA GRISALES OLAYA**

Founder Mesa Baja

"Fundamos la empresa Mesa Baja bajo el tema de empresas de triple impacto," Sara explains—a company built from the ground up on the triple bottom line model, integrating economic, social, and environmental purpose into every layer of its business.



## From commodity to regenerative brand

Mesa Baja began its journey with panela, aiming to elevate a humble staple into a premium, export-ready product. They developed a pulverized, certified organic version, targeting health-conscious consumers in Europe. They succeeded, placing private-label products in major retailers, and building a reputation in responsible international

markets across Europe, Australia, and Chile as a strong point of reference for organic and sustainably sourced traditional Colombian products.

But Sara's vision was dynamic. Following the pandemic, she recognized that the "monoculture model" - relying on a single commodity like sugar cane - was fragile. She pivoted the company toward diversification, applying the lessons learned from panela to cacao

and coffee.

"We saw that there were many cacao producers selling the dry bean at whatever price was current," Sara explains. To keep more value within Colombia, Mesa Baja began transforming the raw bean into instant cocoa and other finished products.

Today, the company's focus has deepened into regenerative agriculture - not as aspiration, but as implemented practice. Mesa Baja supports partner farmers in adopting soil regeneration techniques, polyculture systems, and organic pest management. Through hands-on training reaching 170 smallholder producers across seven Colombian regions, the company builds climate resilience from the ground up. Active support in obtaining EU Organic, USDA Organic, and Alimento Ecológico certifications turns compliance into market opportunity.

## Impact that begins with people

Behind every bag of coffee, block of panela, and cacao bean is a network of individuals whose livelihoods are directly linked to the company's work. Seven employees form the core of this effort, with women representing more than half of the team - not by chance, but by design. Fair wages, healthcare access, paid holidays, pension contributions, parental leave, and meal support create the stability families need to thrive. In this way, Mesa Baja transforms everyday employment into a pathway toward gender equality, dignified work, and inclusive economic growth in rural Colombia.

## The "puberty" of business

By 2022, Sara was the sole founder remaining at the helm. She describes this stage as a difficult "puberty" - too complex to be a startup, yet lacking the capital reserves of a large corporation. The challenges are compounded by the agro-industrial sector's complexity. Unlike a tech startup that scales with code, Mesa Baja must manage living supply chains, volatile harvests, quality certifications, and heavy machinery. "No one wants to do the transformation because it is expensive and uncomfortable," Sara notes. Yet she persists, knowing this "uncomfortable" middle ground is exactly where value for the small farmer is created.



**No one wants to do the transformation because it is expensive and uncomfortable, yet knowing this "uncomfortable" middle ground is exactly where value for the small farmer is created."**

SARA GRISALES OLAYA



**We saw that there were many cacao producers selling the dry bean at whatever price was current."**

SARA GRISALES OLAYA  
Founder Mesa Baja



Photography by: Mesa Baja

have become price-sensitive, Sara has noticed a rise in the Colombian local market, where domestic consumers are increasingly willing to pay for high-quality, ethical goods.

### Truvalu: A co-entrepreneur, not just an investor

Truvalu's role has extended far beyond traditional investment. Acting as a co-entrepreneur through its strategic partner TruLab, Truvalu strengthened Mesa Baja's governance, financial architecture, brand positioning, and impact measurement. LEAN

optimization, rigorous accounting practices, and refined business planning consolidated the foundations required to scale competitively.

Critically, Truvalu has also supported the company through a tailored trade finance model, facilitating working capital to meet export commitments. This mechanism enables Mesa Baja to pre-finance purchases from its suppliers, ensuring access to high-quality products at competitive prices while honoring strict export delivery schedules - strengthening both the reliability of international sales and the financial stability of the entire supplier network.

### Soft power in a "boys club"

Agriculture in Colombia is traditionally a "boys club." Rather than fighting this with aggression, Sara has adopted "soft power" - viewing her approach as a tactical advantage. "I say, 'Explain to me how you do this,... and little by little, you gain their trust and respect."

The gender gap becomes starkly apparent when raising capital. When her male cousin used to pitch, investors saw risk-taking as ambition. When a woman pitches the same risks, it is often met with skepticism - a subtle but persistent barrier.

### The market shift: price vs. planet

In 2021-2022, sustainability was the primary currency for buyers. Today, amidst global inflation, the conversation has reverted to price. Faced with this commoditization pressure, Mesa Baja made a strategic choice. They could have chased volume, forcing farmers to lower prices to compete with industrial giants. Instead, they chose the harder path: building a brand focused on experience and diversification. By offering a portfolio of high-quality, regenerative products - with plans to expand into natural seasonings (aliños) and herbal infusions - they protect their farmers from the race to the bottom. Interestingly, while European buyers



Photography by: Mesa Baja

## A collaborative future

Looking toward 2026 and beyond, Sara is reimagining the very structure of her company. She realizes that Mesa Baja's greatest asset is not just its brand, but its infrastructure, the processing plant, the quality certifications, and the export knowledge.

Her new vision is to transform her factory into a "co-working" space for agro-industry. She plans to open her doors to other small businesses - a craft brewery, a bakery, other cacao and coffee brands - allowing them to operate under Mesa Baja's "umbrella" of compliance.

The company's growth now extends far beyond its internal team, with plans to integrate 278 additional smallholder farmers from Huila and Risaralda into its value chain. Through structured alliances with two regional cooperatives, Mesa Baja is building more stable market access for producers while reinforcing collaborative value chains that connect rural communities with international retailers, HORECA channels, and manufacturing industries. The company also aims to materialize a polyculture pilot project with nearby farms before promoting these practices among its broader supplier network. Supported by digital tools, upgraded quality systems, improved financial readiness, and ongoing conversations with additional impact investors, this model is poised to ensure Mesa Baja's expansion.

Sara is standing firmly in the center of Colombia's agricultural transformation, proving that with patience, resilience,

and a touch of sweetness, it is possible to regenerate not just the land, but the economy that depends on it.

## About Mesa Baja

Mesa Baja is an agro-industrial company based in Armenia, in the Coffee Region of Colombia, dedicated to the production and commercialization of high-quality, sustainable food products including panela, coffee, and cacao.

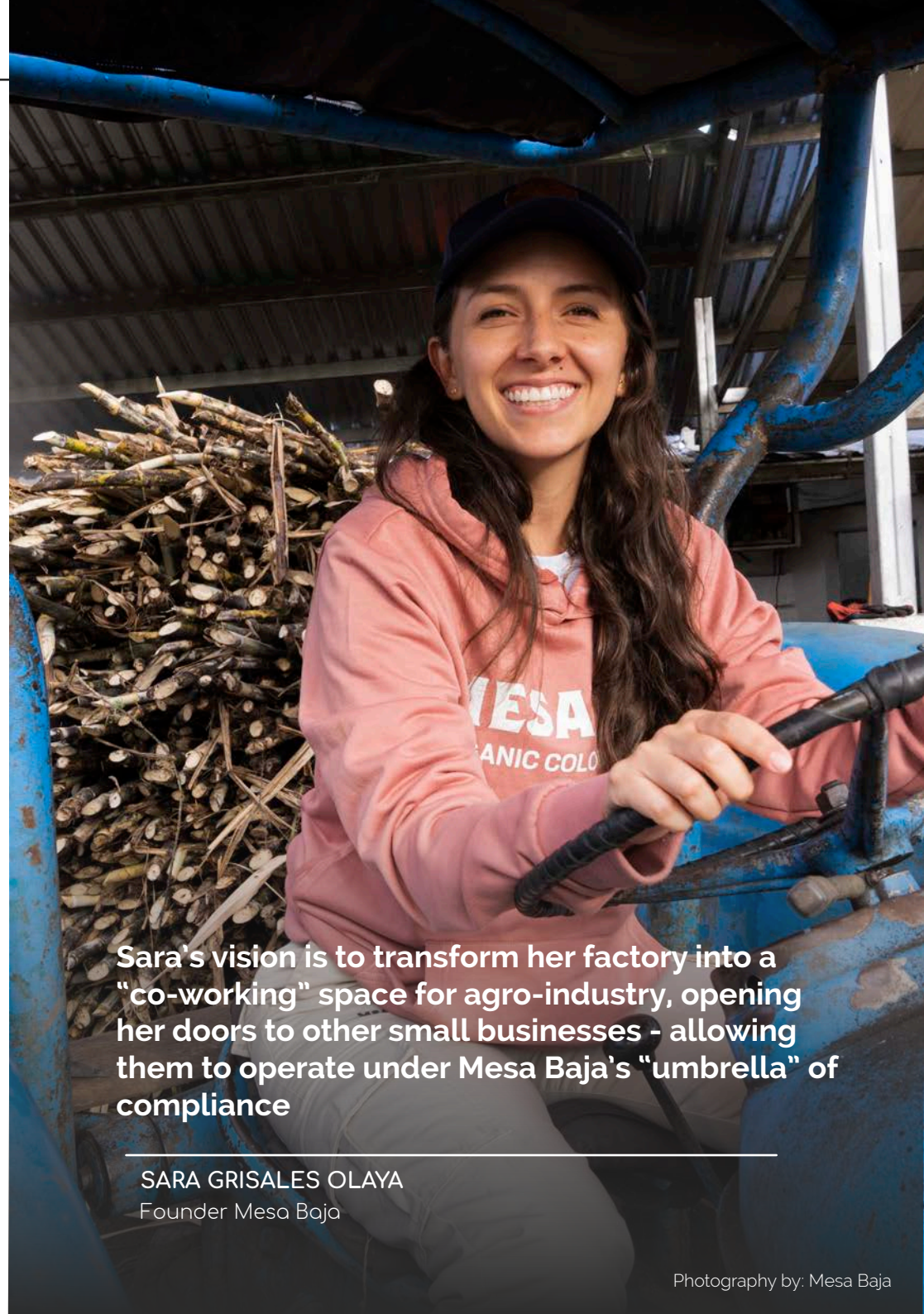
Working directly with 170+ smallholder producers across multiple Colombian regions and supported by certifications including EU Organic, USDA Organic, and Alimento Ecológico, Mesa Baja promotes regenerative agriculture, fair trade practices, and the triple bottom line model - advancing measurable social and environmental impact in parallel with commercial growth.

### SDG IMPACT TO ACHIEVE



**Sara's vision is to transform her factory into a "co-working" space for agro-industry, opening her doors to other small businesses - allowing them to operate under Mesa Baja's "umbrella" of compliance**

**SARA GRISALES OLAYA**  
Founder Mesa Baja





# IN THE MEDIA



## 13.442 LinkedIn followers

Truvalu Global and Truvalu Bangladesh, dd. 22.05.2025 - 1.091 new followers in the last 365 days for Truvalu Global



### Awards

Truvalu recognized as Sustainability Frontrunner 2025 at the Leaders of Progress Summit 2025 - read more in the insert.

Our portfolio company **Ecodudu** is a Kenyan company transforming organic waste into high-quality and sustainable biomaterials through black soldier fly technology. Ecodudu was put in the spotlights, when one of the two entrepreneurs behind the company, **Dr. Starlin F.**, was featured in Africa's Top 40 Under 40 Women in Kenya.

**Sevi** won three awards at the Best Digital Lenders Awards 2025 by **Think Business Africa**

**FarmWorks Agriculture**, a Truvalu partner company in Kenya, was nominated for Norrskan Impact/100 List and featured on the Nasdaq screen in Times Square, highlighting entrepreneur Yi Li's innovative work and reinforcing the relevance and positive impact of the company's mission.



## Truvalu recognized as Sustainability Frontrunner 2025 at the Leaders of Progress Summit 2025

On October 15th, Truvalu was awarded the Sustainability Frontrunner Award 2025, announced at the Leaders of Progress 2025 Summit organized by UN Global Compact Network Netherlands. This was not only a meaningful recognition for Truvalu's work, but even more so for all the resilient entrepreneurs we have the honor to work with in Bangladesh, Colombia and Kenya. This award reinforces our commitment to driving impact, building resilience, and creating true value across agri-food value chains in emerging markets. Jaap-Jan dedicated the award to **Cindy Coco**, one of our portfolio companies in Cali, that works with smallholder farmers along the coast, persuading them to shift to coconut production instead of illicit crops. This company was the unintended victim of a bomb attack in Cali (see page 45)



### TEDx Talk

The CEO of FarmWorks, Yi-Li talked about real, lasting climate impact in an interesting Ted Talk. She shared the journey of building FarmWorks

Agriculture, a story rooted in farmers, food, and the fight for a more sustainable future. And on how financial sustainability - not just climate solutions - is the key to long-term agricultural impact. Find the Ted Talk here.



Publications

**Vice** **Versa's** **African entrepreneurship** (special edition) highlighted the resilience, innovation, and potential of

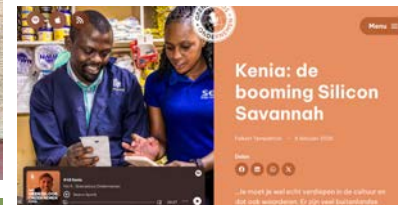
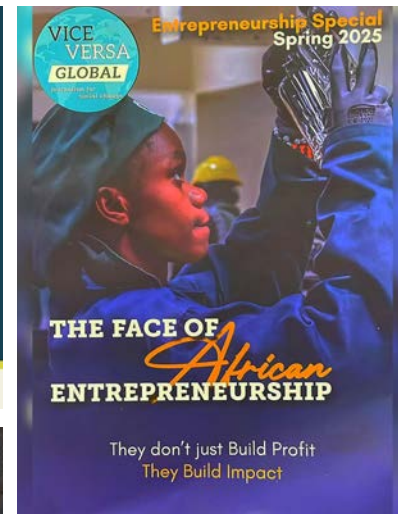
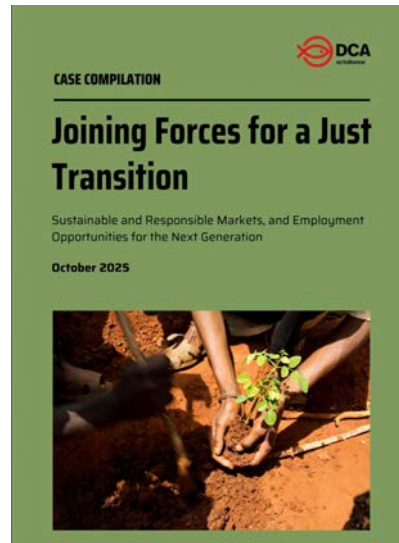
African entrepreneurs, showcasing real stories and providing practical insights into fostering a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in Africa. Truvalu, together with the entrepreneurs Yi Li and Walter aan de Wiel behind FarmWorks and Sevi respectively, contributed to this special, sharing their purpose, business idea and how they respond to a concrete need in the market.

**'Joining Forces for a Just Transition - Sustainable and Responsible Markets, and Employment Opportunities for the Next Generation.'** by DanChurchAid (DCA) 'Through cases from Kenya, Bangladesh, Denmark, Nepal, and Ethiopia, the publication explores how responsible business conduct and multi-stakeholder collaboration can drive an inclusive green transition that is not only environmentally sound, but also socially just and economically inclusive. This report features the case study, Catalyzing a Just Transition: Financing Green and Gender-Responsive SMEs in Bangladesh Through Blended Impact Investment, authored by Truvalu's Machteld Ooijens and Sharawat Islam, CFA.

**Impact report 2024** was published in June 2025.

**Scoping study for establishing a challenge fund for SMEs in RMG&textiles sector in Bangladesh.** Report written by Truvalu and Sajida Foundation (see box 19). A roundtable took place in January 2026.

**Investing in Equality and Resilience: A Toolkit for Gender-Responsive Climate Finance in Bangladesh.** By Truvalu and Kore Global, with support of Switzerland.



Podcasts

The Grenzeloos Ondernemen podcast of Folkert Tempelman released an episode about entrepreneurship and investing in **Kenya**. In this episode, Machteld and entrepreneur Walter aan de Wiel of the FinTech company Sevi (one of Truvalu's investees) shared their experiences on impact-driven investments in early-stage SMEs in emerging economies and innovative financing solutions for small businesses in Kenya.

The recording of a second podcast about **Bangladesh** took place at the end of the year and was published in January 2026. In this episode, Jaap-Jan and Willem Grimminck share their experiences with impact-driven, innovative financing solutions for sustainability in Bangladesh. They do this through our joint venture, OneTrueValue.

Global Campaigns

**Raise the flag for the SDG**

Alongside UN Global Compact Network Netherlands and hundreds of organizations, Truvalu raised the SDG Flag to reaffirm its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and building a more inclusive, just, and sustainable society. Truvalu shared a video with various team members sharing the SDGs most important to them.



**Orange the World: No excuse to gender-based violence**

At Truvalu, we reaffirmed our commitment to gender equality (SDG 5) and workplaces, where women and men can thrive free from fear, discrimination, or abuse. We joined the call to UNiTE to End Violence against All Women and Girls.

# CULTIVATING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS: TRUVALU AT THE 2025 DUTCH TRADE MISSION TO KENYA

In March 2025, Truvalu participated in a high-level Dutch trade mission to Kenya, organized alongside the State Visit of King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima. The mission focused on Sustainable Agriculture and Water and brought together over 50 Dutch and Kenyan companies, financial institutions, and public stakeholders. Truvalu's participation aligned closely with its impact strategy in East Africa, where agriculture plays a vital economic role but faces challenges such as climate change, rising costs, and limited access to finance for the "missing middle" of agri-SMEs.



## TRUVALU LEARNING

Truvalu joined the mission to gain market intelligence on Kenyan agri-SMEs, strengthen partnerships through strategic matchmaking, and advocate for better financing solutions for growth-oriented SMEs. The organization was represented by Kees Veldhuijzen and Peter Owaga, underscoring Truvalu's blend of strategic leadership and strong local presence.

A key highlight was Truvalu's contribution to the Business Forum,

which emphasized innovation, responsible business conduct, and access to finance. Peter Owaga participated as a panellist in a session on financial opportunities for agriculture and water, where he presented Truvalu's integrated co-entrepreneurship model. He highlighted the importance of combining patient capital, hands-on governance support, and market linkages, as well as the role of blended finance in de-risking investments and mobilizing additional capital.



**“Sustainable growth in agribusiness requires more than capital alone. It demands integrated approaches that combine finance, expertise, and long-term partnership.”**

PETER OWAGA  
Managing Director, Truvalu Kenya

Photography by: MFA, The Netherlands



Photography by: MFA, The Netherlands

The mission also facilitated targeted matchmaking meetings, particularly relevant to the development of Growpact Global in Kenya. These discussions reinforced Truvalu's ecosystem approach, focusing on complementary partnerships across finance, agronomy, regulation, and market access. Several of these conversations are already shaping follow-up activities.

Field visits provided practical insights into sustainable and technologically advanced agricultural operations, ranging from organic and regenerative farms to modern floriculture, horticulture, and large-scale export-oriented enterprises. These visits deepened Truvalu's understanding of how sustainability, technology, and market access intersect across different scales.

## TRUVALU LEARNING

A major milestone was the public signing of the Growpact Global Cooperation Agreement during the Business Forum, highlighting strong Kenyan-Dutch collaboration and positioning Growpact Global as a concrete example of joint action in sustainable agrifood systems.

Overall, Truvalu concluded that the mission's greatest value lay in long-term relationship building rather than immediate transactions. Participation strengthened Truvalu's sector intelligence, visibility, and partnership pathways, reinforcing its conviction that impactful finance is most effective when embedded in strong, collaborative ecosystems.



Photography by: MFA, The Netherlands



The ceremony was chaired by senior Dutch and Kenyan dignitaries, including the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, the President of VNO-NCW, and the Dutch Ambassador to Kenya.

Photography by: MFA, The Netherlands

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**The mission was a valuable way to build new relationships, deepen our understanding of the Kenyan market, and expand our network in a way that supports long-term collaboration rather than short-term deals.”**

Reflection after the mission by  
KEES VELDHUIJZEN

Director of Business Development at Truvalu

# OUR PARTNERS

Truvalu is profoundly grateful to the **investors** that entrust us with financial capital to support promising early-stage SMEs. In exchange, we offer them capital preservation with profit share and significant social and environmental impact.

We are proud of the **SMEs** that we partner with, creating positive change and improving societies and environments in which we operate. See page 20 for our portfolio.

Our work would also not be possible without the following **partners and networks**. Together, we develop innovations that deliver positive change. We highly appreciate the cooperation we have with these organisations.



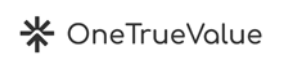
Financiado por:



Implementado por:



Apoyado por:



Government of the Netherlands



CBI Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Kore Global



Impact Capital for Development



# LOOKING AHEAD: SCALING AMBITION THROUGH COLLABORATION

The work documented in this report is not a conclusion - it is a foundation. As we look ahead, Truvalu stands at an inflection point. The model we have built over more than a decade - patient capital, genuine co-entrepreneurship, and deep local roots - has proven its worth. Now, the question is not whether it works, but how far it can reach.

## A platform built for the next generation

Our vision for the coming years is anchored in a simple but powerful idea: the most durable impact is created by entrepreneurs rooted in the markets they serve, with local ownership, backed by a platform that provides the tools, the capital, and the credibility to succeed.

This is the logic behind Truvalu's evolution from a Netherlands-based investment company into a decentralised family of locally rooted investment teams. Each country office - in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Kenya - operates with its own P&L responsibility and local directorship, and is structured to be (co-)owned by the people who run it. These are not branch offices. They are the second generation of Truvalu: inheritors of a decade of lessons, methodology, and track record, now empowered to grow on their own terms.

We think of this deliberately as a family. There is hierarchy - our Netherlands office remains closely involved—but there is also genuine autonomy, mutual learning, and shared purpose. Together, we exchange lessons, challenge each other's assumptions, and draw on a growing collective experience. This family model also addresses one of the sector's most underappreciated challenges: succession. By enabling local fund managers to gradually take ownership, we create a pathway for long-term institutional continuity that permanent capital vehicles rarely achieve.

## Tripling impact by 2028

Our growth ambitions are concrete. At our 2023 directors' meeting, we committed each country office to an annual portfolio growth target of €2.5 million, with the goal of reaching €10 million per country by 2028 - well above the threshold required for operational sustainability. Across three countries, this translates into a consolidated portfolio of €30 million: a tripling of our current reach, achieved without abandoning the small-ticket SME investments that define our mission.

This is scaling done deliberately. Rather than chasing larger ticket sizes, we are replicating and refining a methodology that works at the small end of the market - and building the infrastructure to do it in more places, with more partners, more efficiently. Our immediate priority is to capture and integrate the lessons from Bangladesh, Colombia, and Kenya so that future local teams can be launched faster and with greater confidence.

## Mobilising the capital this mission requires

None of this is possible without the right financial partners. Blended finance - combining public, philanthropic, and private capital - remains our primary tool for reducing (perceived) risk and opening SME investment to a broader range of investors. The blended solutions we began structuring are early proof that this model can mobilise genuine local capital, not just international flows.

Looking to 2028, our ambition is to demonstrate that this platform approach can be replicated far beyond our current three countries—equipping passionate, highly qualified local investment professionals who lack only the track record and the capital to lead. We provide both. In doing so, we do not just build a portfolio. We build a generation of locally owned, impact-driven investment managers.

## An invitation

The road ahead will demand boldness, patience, and deep collaboration. The challenges we face - economic volatility, climate pressure, persistent inequality—are not reasons to hesitate. They are precisely why this work matters.

We are actively seeking strategic financial partners who share this ambition and are ready to grow it with us. If this report has shown anything, it is that the missing middle is not a niche - it is where the most consequential economic change happens.

**We invite you to be part of what comes next.**





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## COLOPHON

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For more information about  
Truvalu:

[www.truvalu-group.com](http://www.truvalu-group.com)

[info@truvalu-group.com](mailto:info@truvalu-group.com)

connect with us on LinkedIn

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