



Our Story

A Cooperative Development Organisation in Time





Bolder, smarter and stronger.

The world was becoming less hungry, more equal, less poor and more gender equal every year. We have grown accustomed to new democracies emerging and growing stronger, with the most disadvantaged finding life a little easier with each passing decade. For more than 65 years, We Effect has contributed to this rapid and positive development by empowering smallholder farmers in poor countries and helping to promote the development of cooperative organisations. Each year, steps are being taken towards the 2030 global goals.

However, those days are now over. The world is moving backwards on almost all fronts, and development aid organisations have had to shift their focus from advancing their positions to protecting the gains that have been made. The global community is struggling to keep up with rapidly increasing needs. As more urgent issues like war, economic instability, and climate change arise, funding for development in the world's poorest countries is decreasing. This is clearly visible in the wider world and also in Sweden.

We Effect works to create robust and sustainable food systems, where small-scale farmers can bring more food to their communities, and where rural areas create jobs and economic development. This is a long-term endeavour with the aim of contributing to lasting change that will eliminate the need for future aid interventions.

Achieving this goal has proven more difficult than ever, but as challenges grow, we are strengthened by our evolving expertise and understanding. Against all odds, we can still deliver lasting results in the fight against hunger and poverty.

We continuously develop new approaches and build on existing methods to create a shift from hunger and poverty to food security and prosperity. We create jobs in rural areas and improve the profitability of smallholder farmers, preparing them for a new, warmer climate and strengthening their positions in the communities where they operate. In recent years, we have worked hard with our member organisations to create synergies and generate funding from the private sector. In Uganda, we are working with the coffee roaster Lykke Kaffegårdar and the Stockholm Consumer Cooperative Society to increase the pay for coffee farmers for sustainable beans; in Kenya, we are working with universities to turn waste from city markets into fertiliser and fodder for rural farmers; and in Colombia, we are working with HSB (Sweden's largest federation of cooperative housing) to ensure that more people have adequate housing.

We operate in tough and increasingly challenging contexts, but with innovative approaches, competent partner organisations and brave people we continue to achieve our goal of making aid unnecessary.



Anna Tibblin and Lotta Folkesson

Anna Tibblin | *Lotta Folkesson*

Together is the only way.

The world around us is changing. Falling prices and climate change are making food production more difficult. But the problem is bigger than that: millions of tonnes of food are thrown away every year, while one in nine people on the planet live in hunger. The gap between rich and poor is growing while the democratic space is shrinking. Yes, the world is indeed in change.

However, change is not our only enemy. It is also the answer to all the challenges we face. To achieve a just world free from poverty and hunger, we need more than good intentions. Development does not happen by itself and human rights should not be taken for granted. In our ever-changing world, we need a voice that can be heard, and the only way forward is to unite and organise. To link arms and hold a firm grip. The cooperative principles that have been with us since the beginning, both in Sweden and globally, are more important now than ever.

We need to stand united against the injustices that result in millions of people going hungry. As a united voice, we will no longer be ignored. Together, we can say no to unsustainable farming practices and rocketing prices. No to abuse of power and corruption. It is time to form a united front that promotes people's empowerment and the conditions for a life without poverty. Together, we make a difference.

Cooperation continues to take us forward.

Since We Effect was founded in 1958, we have supported people living in poverty to improve their living conditions through cooperative and membership-based organisations. Cooperative values underpin all our work: member-based democracy, long-term economic development and transparency. Our vision is a sustainable and just world, free from hunger and poverty.

The right to food and adequate housing is our main focus, in order to build resilience to crises and disasters. This includes promoting economic development, enterprise, gender equality, climate justice and anti-corruption. This is achieved through meaningful participation, empowerment and continued learning.

Our initiatives are long term and our goal is to create sustainable livelihoods that raise people out of poverty for good. We always bear in mind that development cooperation is a method – not the goal. Today, We Effect is the world's largest development cooperation organisation, with 59 of Sweden's largest cooperative and member-owned companies as members.



Petrolain P. Kiria. Photo: George Kamau

THE 2030 AGENDA

Our primary objectives



Organic farming empowers women in Honduras.

Malnutrition in Honduras is increasing as a result of rising food prices and climate change, which is affecting crop yields. Already vulnerable rural areas are increasingly at risk as the majority of families depend on agriculture to survive. The farmers' cooperative Movimiento Campesino del Aguan works to improve the conditions for families to become self-sufficient through food production.

"We focus on the right to food through organic farming. It has been a great experience, as we have learnt to work the land in a natural way without chemicals to produce healthy food for our families. All of this represents something very valuable and important to us, as we bring home food that's free of chemicals, which also protects our health," says Miriam, who is a member of the cooperative.

We Effect works to promote food security in Honduras together with local cooperatives. Members receive technical assistance and agricultural materials to help them farm the land sustainably.



Miriam Cruz Photo: Edward Rodwell Arrazola

Miriam, along with the other farmers in the cooperative, has shown that despite the challenges, community, organic farming and women's solidarity can be powerful tools in overcoming difficulties and shaping a better future.

Thanks to the cooperative, Miriam now has access to employment and education, enabling her to cultivate pineapples, bananas, lemons and avocados together with other farmers.

The crops they grow make an important contribution for feeding the members' families. The farmers have also started selling organic fertiliser that they have learnt to make, which generates an additional income. The money is distributed among the cooperative's members and then reinvested to increase the harvest.

Miriam has also joined a women's group organised by the cooperative, where members support each other and exchange knowledge. Among other things, they discuss women's lack of economic resources and access to land.

"It has helped me a lot on a personal level to overcome many fears. I urge women to organise themselves to be part of this," says Miriam.

Our work in Honduras

We Effect's work in Honduras has a strong focus on cooperative development, particularly with the participation of women, indigenous peoples and young people. Through sustainable agriculture and housing cooperatives, members work for food security and adequate housing.

From tradition to successful business model.

A home with bees is a happy home. This is something that many people who live in the mountainous region of Puka, north-east Albania, truly believe. What once started as an interest in beekeeping has evolved into a main source of income for many young adults in the region.

At just 13 years old, Drivalda Zmakaj started her beekeeping journey, and now – ten years later – she has grown into an accomplished beekeeper with a wealth of experience. Her family started out modestly with just two hives. Today they have more than 60. Drivalda says that beekeeping, or apiculture, is so much more than a matter of income: it's about passion and the quest to find a balance between modern life and a connection to nature.

"As a teenager, I was so fascinated by how bees produce honey. My parents have been professional beekeepers for many years, and they realised that beekeeping was more than just a hobby for me," she says.





Production development makes a difference

With We Effect's support, farmers can create high-quality products that improve their livelihoods. With the collaboration partner AgroPuka, training sessions in business and production development are arranged, providing beekeepers with better opportunities to succeed with their honey. Nowadays, beekeeping is seen as a sustainable and successful business model.

The challenges behind the sweetness

While Drivalda has been building the necessary skills to maintain a beekeeping operation, she has come across various challenges, such as finding reliable customers. The lack of an organised market is a serious obstacle and the search for buyers takes time. Therefore, it is important to secure sales from the very beginning, so that beekeepers can focus on maintenance and improvement opportunities in beekeeping. Despite challenges, Drivalda and her family's hard work has resulted in the production of high-quality honey and regular customers. The demand for honey has increased in recent years as people become aware of its health benefits. Running a beekeeping business is now a reliable economic pillar for Drivalda and several other households in Puka.

Motivating young people

It is clear that apiculture has contributed to many benefits for the local population, including food security, economic income, livelihood security, biodiversity and environmental conservation. The project has increased motivation, especially among young people, to turn their beekeeping into a profitable business and thus increase their income.

Building homes for peace.



Photo: Angelica Capistrano

The Philippines is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with around 6.7 million people currently having no home of their own. Poverty and food shortages are widespread, while people live under the constant threat of natural disasters such as typhoons, floods and earthquakes. The *Från hemlöshet till trygghet/From Homelessness to Safety* project is a long-term initiative in which We Effect and HSB (the largest Swedish federation of cooperative housing) are contributing to the construction of safe housing environments in highly vulnerable areas.

In the Cagayan de Oro area on the island of Mindanao, We Effect is working with CIRCLE FORGE (Centre for Inclusive Resilient Communities and Livable Spaces for Rurban Governance and Environment Inc.) to build housing that can withstand extreme weather, as the area is subject to recurring storms and flooding. The situation is predicted to worsen as a result of climate change, and there is a huge need for resilient housing.

But the project does not focus solely on building homes. The island is experiencing one of the world's oldest local conflicts, and in 2022 alone over 150,000 people were forced to flee their homes.

The construction project involves members from various community groups and religions. It aims to strengthen relationships and community solidarity in order to counter conflict and foster security. The aim is to build in an economical and climate-smart way, to enable education, healthcare and food security.

“We may come from different religions, but it’s okay. We build friendships to avoid conflict.”

- Jessie Asilom Gomez,
member of the housing cooperative

Through the housing cooperative, people will have the conditions and opportunities to stay in their neighbourhood and create cross-border cooperatives that provide security and reduce conflict. To date 223 families – 1,338 people – are members of the cooperative.

Trade is the method, not the goal.

For a long time there has been a false division between aid and trade, both in politics and within civil society. While some argue that only trade can solve world poverty, others have seen trade as a threat to locally rooted and equitable development. We Effect has long been the odd one out, insisting that trade and development are interlinked: they are two sides of the same coin, where different actors need to contribute to development in different ways. Business, politics and civil society must work hand in hand.


Since the right-wing government took office in Sweden, there has been a renewed focus on the links between aid and trade. Several of the government's reforms and initiatives are positive and have been long-awaited, while others have less of a foundation in research and established experience. Investments in local and regional enterprise, sustainable growth, economic empowerment of women and new links between food security and trade are important additions to the mix of Swedish aid efforts, which is something We Effect has requested for years.

For more than 65 years, We Effect has been working on trade as a method for fighting hunger and poverty, as well as for more equal, fair and sustainable rural communities. We promote cooperative and member-owned businesses and associations in agriculture, commerce and housing. We provide new knowledge, support and resources so that people can empower themselves and their communities with food security and better income. The goal of our actions is to remove the need for further aid: people want, are able and deserve to have the opportunity to manage on their own.



New innovative projects and partnerships are a priority in our work. In Uganda, we are working with Swedish companies to raise the status and profitability of coffee farmers. In Kenya, we are working with universities to convert food waste from city markets into fertiliser and feed for rural farmers. And in Colombia, we are in the early stages of a partnership between Swedish companies and Colombian politicians to reduce homelessness in Bogotá. These are challenging but exciting times for We Effect.

Want to know more about how we work with trade and aid? Find out more on our website www.weeffect.se.



**Our vision is a sustainable
and just world, free from
hunger and poverty.**



Jamia Salimo Photo: Edson Artur



Innovative pilot project improves conditions for coffee farmers.

From the mountain slopes of western Uganda to a coffee cup in Sweden, via a small roastery in Hökarängen. For a few years now, the Stockholm Consumer Cooperative Society (KFS) has been working with We Effect and the Swedish coffee company Lykke Kaffegårdar on a unique pilot project. The project provides coffee farmers in Uganda with new skills to grow their coffee sustainably and sell it on the global market, without costly middlemen.

The Rwenzori Mountains are called the Mountains of the Moon, because the range seemingly reach for the moon. Rainforest grows just below the mountain peaks, creating a unique microclimate in the area. Coffee here is grown by family farmers on small plots of land in inaccessible areas, using traditional methods without any machinery.

Coffee farmers are struggling to survive as income from farming is low and uncertain. The world market price of traditional coffee is highly variable and, as small producers in inaccessible areas, coffee farmers have had to rely on 'middlemen' who travel around the region and buy the coffee at the lowest possible price. Often, farmers are paid so little for their coffee that they can't make a living, feed themselves or send their children to school.

Global market and fair conditions.

The collaboration between KFS, Lykke Kaffegårdar and We Effect is now creating unique conditions for farmers in Mount Rwenzori to grow coffee with high technical expertise, access to a global market, and fair conditions for the individual farmer.

- The project guarantees farmers a fair price for their coffee, making them less vulnerable to price drops and laying the foundation for a profitable transition to organic production.
- With this new technical knowledge, farmers can grow coffee using methods that give it the quality required to be classified as premium coffee. Moreover, the technology is neither advanced nor costly, but is based on the conditions found in the mountains.
- Lykke Kaffegårdar of Sweden and global company Long Miles Coffee are business partners in the project, and through them coffee farmers have direct access to a world market where demand exceeds supply, which means the price of coffee is higher.





Coffee scouts raising the bar.

A key part of the project is to increase gender equality; today there are few women in decision-making positions within the coffee farming sector. In the project, coffee scouts are trained in techniques that improve the quality of coffee throughout the entire process, from cultivation to harvest. The coffee scouts then travel around the mountain region and meet with groups of farmers to pass on the knowledge. Half of these coffee scouts are women, which strengthens the role of women in the cooperatives.

The project started in 2021, and so far almost 2,000 farmers have been trained in the new techniques. The coffee has been tested by Lykke's coffee experts, and on the first tasting received a score that qualifies it as premium coffee. After one year, farmers report that their harvests and thus their incomes have increased. The coffee, named UFO – Uganda Farming Odyssey – is now available in selected Coop stores and at Lykke Kaffegårdar in Sweden.

Photo: Maria Kaarto

How is We Effect making a change in the different regions?



George Onyango, Regional Director East Africa “We Effect’s work in East Africa is incredibly important because of the dedicated commitment to promoting sustainable development and social justice for the participants in our programmes. It includes poverty reduction, gender equality and community empowerment, addressing systemic challenges that have long hindered progress. By providing communities with knowledge, resources and support, We Effect promotes self-reliance and resilience. This in turn creates long-term positive change. In addition, our close collaboration with local partners and stakeholders ensures that solutions are customised to the specific needs and contexts of the region.”

Mariam Ikermawi, Gender & Advocacy Programme Officer in Palestine “By providing technical support, training and networking opportunities, We Effect strengthens the capacity of cooperatives to organise themselves and their collective voice to influence policies that promote their interests. We Effect is committed to women’s rights through efforts to combat gender-based violence, and support for savings groups and credit unions. In addition, We Effect contributes to climate justice by advocating for sustainable practices and supporting initiatives that mitigate the impacts of climate change. This in turn favours the resilience and sustainability of Palestinian communities.”



Anneli Liena, Regional Director Europe... "We are working in Eastern Europe to strengthen the capacity of smallholder farmers to run efficient and sustainable agriculture. We also work to promote organisation, with a focus on women's participation and the inclusion of minority groups in society."

...and Asia.

"We support farmers' cooperatives and smallholder farmers to help develop rural areas, increase incomes and create more jobs. Our work in Palestine is an important part of the joint efforts of Sweden and Swedish organisations for peace and development in the region."



Lucy Mazingi, Country Manager in Zimbabwe

"We Effect has created opportunities for smallholder farmers in Southern Africa, despite the high levels of poverty in the region. Bringing rural women smallholders together in cooperatives makes joint action easier. We Effect supports local partners in their work to empower farmers to adapt to climate change, reduce disaster risk, and increase their resilience to climate-related stresses. Through our work, farmers have improved their household incomes and increased their participation in markets and financial services. When local economies are stimulated by improved trade opportunities, the potential to reduce poverty, especially among women and young people, increases."

Pia Stavås Meier, Regional Director Latin America

"Democratic space is shrinking in the region, while economic gaps are widening dramatically. We work closely with our partners to support them in surviving and thriving as organisations. At the same time, we are fighting to reduce women's workload by influencing policies that favour a fairer distribution of unpaid work in the home. In addition, we are working to make the transition to environmentally friendly and climate-adapted agriculture. We support smallholder farmers living in poverty to achieve economic stability that creates the conditions for a dignified and safe life in their home countries."



Your support is needed to eradicate hunger and poverty!

One of the UN's global goal is for poverty to be eradicated by 2030. For this to happen, we must work together. Through long-term efforts, we support people with the right conditions to lift themselves out of poverty for good. We hope you want to join us in achieving this.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

By donating regularly you can help bring about lasting change.

MAKE A DONATION

Donate directly by visiting weeffect.se or make a payment to 90 10 018 using Swish.

SUPPORT US AS A CORPORATE PARTNER

You can support our activities by becoming a corporate partner. Go to weeffect.se/foretag to see our various offers.

INFLUENCE OTHERS

By engaging with and sharing our reports and campaigns, you help us reach more people with our approach to reducing hunger and poverty.

Read more about what we do and what you can do at weeffect.se and follow us on social media.

