For more than seven decades, MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) has been a beacon of hope and empowerment around the globe. Through your generous support, MEDA has transformed lives, communities, and entire economies. This report, titled “70 Years in 70 Countries,” aims to showcase the profound impact your donations have had on MEDA’s work and the people it serves.

Looking Back

Our Origin: Providing a Fresh Start

In the aftermath of World War II, thousands of Mennonites sought refuge in Paraguay and Uruguay. MEDA’s story began when the Mennonite Central Committee, with the assistance of individuals from North America, helped these refugees establish themselves. While initial aid provided essentials for survival, what was needed was capital for economic development. The refugees had skills and dreams of entrepreneurship but lacked financial resources. A group of ten Mennonite businessmen committed financial support to help bridge this gap and lay the foundation for MEDA’s mission. And thus, MEDA was born.

Join us in celebrating our 70th anniversary by sharing your own MEDA stories and experiences on social media using the hashtag #MEDA70. Together, we can inspire others to join our mission and make an even greater impact in the years to come.
In the 1990s, MEDA embarked on a journey towards sustainability by embracing a social enterprise approach and aimed at establishing profitable businesses that benefited entrepreneurs, creating opportunities, and generating mobilization and increasing market access. Financial contributions from foundations paired with institutional funding helped establish joint ventures and the MEDA Trade Company, shaping business development impact and valuable lessons.

The Road Ahead

2010–2020 Investing for Sustainable Change

The third phase saw the introduction of Small Enterprise Development Technical Assistance (TA), and entrepreneurs were expected to provide catalytic financial mechanisms, business development Technical Assistance (TA), and enhanced market access for farmers. Support from donors like you, made projects like the impact investing in Frontier Markets: ‘Impact Investing in Decent Work Opportunities’ a reality, creating opportunities for 500,000 people in the Global South, empowering individuals, especially women and marginalized groups, to create opportunities within communities, reducing unemployment rates and alleviating poverty. As businesses grow, so does the prosperity of the regions they operate in, leading to improved infrastructure, education, and healthcare for all.

Global Impact

MEDA’s reach extends across 70 countries, from Africa to Asia, Latin America to the Middle East. Your generous contributions have touched the lives of millions, fostering resilience, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development. The impact of our entrepreneurship initiatives goes beyond economic statistics. It fosters hope, creativity, and a sense of purpose among those who dare to dream, it strengthens communities, empowers women and youth, and contributes to global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In essence, entrepreneurship is a catalyst for positive change.

Entrepreneurs are job creators. By nurturing entrepreneurship, MEDA has helped generate employment opportunities within communities, reducing unemployment rates and alleviating poverty. As businesses grow, so does the prosperity of the regions they operate in, leading to improved infrastructure, education, and healthcare for all.

Empowering Entrepreneurs for a Brighter Future

At MEDA, we firmly believe that entrepreneurs are the driving force behind economic growth and sustainable development. Your support of our work with entrepreneurs around the globe has been instrumental in shaping prosperous and resilient communities.

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