



**new
roots**

2025 IMPACT REPORT

2025 Impact Report - Cultivating Joy!

What often begins with planting vegetables quickly grows into something deeper. In 2025, the International Rescue Committee's New Roots program helped thousands of newcomers and their neighbors to strengthen food security, build new skills, connect to community, and find joy.

At A Glance



66 urban garden & farm sites across the country



254 markets



252 food distribution events



584 community workdays, celebrations, and public workshops

The Multiplier Effect:

New Roots improved **food security for thousands of individuals.**



75,438
total people in households with improved food security



17,137
food distribution recipients



6,293
market shoppers



1,716
individuals growing food

CULTIVATING community

New Roots participants gain connections and community through shared work and shared harvests at farm and garden sites across the country. In addition to agriculture, these spaces served as community hubs where families access healthy food and find a place for togetherness. Through educational programs, shared meals, and intergenerational exchanges, New Roots participants find purpose, friendship, and a strong sense of belonging.



16,154 individuals gathered at community events

"It has helped me build connections, learn from others, and feel more connected to the community."



Nearly all participants

strengthened their social networks



97%

said they could come together to solve problems



96%

said they would offer help to others in the program



83%

met someone through the program they would not have met otherwise

"I feel happy meeting people from different parts of the world through this program."

stories from the field:

SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

Tomatoes climb their trellis, peppers fleck sunlight, and roses are in full bloom. **“I worked in this garden for ten years,”** Asif says. In that simple statement lies a testament to resilience: a man who left behind a governor’s office in Afghanistan for a life in Charlottesville, VA, along with a patch of earth.

Gardening became both a sanctuary and a bridge—a way to grow nourishing food on a fixed income and to share culture in a new land.

Over the years, IRC’s New Roots program has enriched that experience not just by improving farming skills but by cultivating leadership.

“They’ve given us access to seeds, tools, and seminars,” Asif says, **“and they taught us how to speak in front of city council.”** Early workshops on crop rotation evolved into public speaking clinics that prepared the gardeners to advocate for themselves.

This past year, when the local Parks and Recreation Advisory Board proposed sweeping changes, including term limits on gardening leases, a jump in annual fees, and limitations on build structures, **Asif delivered a powerful address to a packed board meeting** with his son translating from Dari. A half dozen speakers later referenced Asif’s speech directly, and their voices changed the conversation. In the months since, the term limit idea is out and **garden members—including Asif—have been invited to the table to represent their perspectives as collaborators in setting the future of the gardens.**



Back in the garden, there is a community finding its voice. **“My favorite part is sharing what I grow,”** Asif says. **“It encourages me to keep going.”**

Note: Asif’s quotes have been translated from Dari into English with the assistance of a translator.

CULTIVATING health & food security

Since 2016, New Roots has been grounded in food security. This year, when thousands of people served by IRC lost their federal food benefits, New Roots was well-positioned to help. Households reported having more and better-quality food at home.

Farmers and gardeners grow nutritious and culturally meaningful food, helping to feed families and the broader community. New Roots markets accept nutrition assistance and incentive program benefits, which helped more than 6,000 customers to stretch their food dollars while supporting local farmers. Free food distributions ensured communities had further access to healthy food. By linking production, market access, and public outreach, New Roots contributes to the vibrancy of the local food system, builds pride in farming, and feeds American communities.



Over **\$3.5 million** worth of **food grown**

"Farming is good for our bodies and health, and we have more food in the house."



94% reported that they had **more high-quality food** available in their household

"I've been able to encourage my family to eat more fresh produce, and I see the benefits of that on their health."



90% of participants reported **improvements in their health**

17,137 people received **critical support** through food distribution events



stories from the field:

ADAPTING TO CHANGING FOOD SECURITY AND SAFETY NEEDS IN SPOKANE

When major changes to federal food security programs were introduced through H.R. 1, our team in Spokane, Washington moved quickly, knowing that shifts in policy would translate into real and immediate impacts for the communities we serve. We created accessible, plain-language information on the expected changes to eligibility and access and held drop-in education events with large-scale food distribution. **At the height of these efforts, we were distributing nearly 2,400 pounds of food per distribution.**

These events also played a critical role in helping us better understand the communities we serve, and the realities of the local food system. In response, we partnered with local religious institutions to mobilize \$15,000 in community-raised funds to support food purchasing, allowing us to include halal, kosher, vegetarian, and culturally specific staple items, and began hosting twice-weekly food giveaways.

However, the landscape shifted again. Rising immigration enforcement activity and increased presence of anti-immigrant groups made what had once been open, community-oriented gatherings unsafe. **Within one week, our team fully redesigned the program model, transitioning to a fully virtual and mobile food distribution system that prioritized confidentiality, safety, and continuity of care.** Participants could select a preferred delivery location, language, dietary needs, and household size through a secure sign-up process. Volunteers packed and then delivered all food boxes within two hours. This rapid, decentralized model ensured both efficiency and discretion in a way that was responsive, community-informed, and grounded in dignity, in moments of rapid change.



CULTIVATING economic opportunity

Through markets, public workshops, and training programs in nutrition, agricultural production, business management, and household budgeting, participants earn income, develop practical skills, and build independence.

All program participants strengthen household budgets and local economies through lower grocery expenses, direct sales income, and small business development. Farmers sold through 19 weekly community markets, supporting their emerging businesses. New Roots engaged young people ages 10–22 to grow, sell, and distribute food while building confidence, leadership, and new skills that can be applied in the garden and beyond.



1,485 people engaged in **education and training programs**

"I've learned new skills that I use at the farm and beyond."



94.7% said they **save money on groceries** because of the program

Average **weekly grocery savings: \$82.04**

"It was also great to take home produce, allowing me to save money on groceries."

Farmers sold **more than \$720,000** in farm products through IRC-led markets

"I was able to get more food, more vegetables, ...and I could [earn] money."



stories from the field:

FAMILY FARM BUSINESS IN SALT LAKE CITY

Hser, born in Thailand, came to the United States when she was only ten years old. Hser is now a mother of three children and works as a seamstress.

In 2023, Hser and her family joined the New Roots program in Salt Lake City, first as community gardeners, **and then as budding farmers in 2024** to grow vegetables on local urban farmland. She enjoys learning different techniques, spending time with her family, and is always surprised to see how quickly the vegetables grow. As Hser works full-time in her off-farm job, her dad is heavily involved in cultivating their land at the New Roots farm site.



He also enjoys the busy market days selling produce and interacting with customers. **Working on the farm has become a bonding experience for Hser and her dad.**

Through their hard work, **Hser's family had their most successful year of farming in 2025, selling nearly \$20,000 worth of high-quality, hard-to-find produce to community members.** New Roots staff provide support as they work toward goals of greater financial independence.

For Hser, farming motivates her forward. When Hser was asked what advice she would give to others she said, **"Keep going and stay strong with your family and then communicate together. Keep going and going. Don't give up."**

