ANNUAL REPORT 2025

RAISE Research and Action for Income Security

“Our vision is a world where everybody has income security through decent work and social protection

RAISE is a non-profit knowledge and development hub. We work to develop systemic solutions to social problems.

Photo by: Rasmus Schjødt

contents

RAISE Research and Action for Income Security

Where we worked in 2025

Georgia:

- Strengthening social and economic rights.

Myanmar:

- Boosting livelihoods of small-holder farmers through production of black soldier fly larvae.

Uganda:

- Supporting advocacy to improve access to pension.
- Supporting advocacy for a new national benefit for children with disabilities.
- Supporting organisation of home-based workers in the informal sector.
- Strengthening livelihoods and nutrition of refugees through production of edible insects for food and feed.

Message from the board

Working through crisis

By Rasmus Schjødt, Chairman of the Board

Very few of us would have anticipated the change in the context of international development that has taken place during the last year. The whole development industry is now asking itself how it is going to move forward and what it is going to look like in the future.

Many organisations experience the pressure on development aid and for the people we work with in Uganda and elsewhere the cuts have had severe negative effects. Altogether, this situation created a lot of uncertainty in 2025, but also an opportunity to rethink how and what we are doing.

In RAISE, we worked during 2025 on sharpening our mission and bringing more clarity to why we are here. In line with that, 2025 has also been a year of strengthening our organisational capacity. We hired a student assistant, Anne Mette Rolighed Olesen, in the beginning of the year, and with two full time interns in the autumn semester, we had a Secretariat of five people. This strengthened our capacity to contribute with technical assistance and international experiences to the work of our partners.

During 2025, we initiated several new projects and extended our work on key thematic programmes. We continued supporting refugees in Uganda to produce edible insects as a way to strengthen both livelihoods and nutrition.

Building on our experiences from Uganda, we also started a new partnership with Spectrum, a Burmese organisation supporting production of black soldier fly larvae in Myanmar.

On social protection, we continued our partnerships in Uganda to support advocacy to strengthen the country's national social protection system. Our work focuses on two key next steps: improving the access to pension and introducing a new cash benefit for children with disabilities.

In the future, we will keep working to diversify our income sources to become more financially resilient. We will continue our long-term partnerships, as well as building partnerships with new organisations in new countries. We will also focus on strengthening our communication and engagement work in Denmark, and build more partnerships with organisations working on social policy in the Danish context.

Photo by: Umberto Diecinove

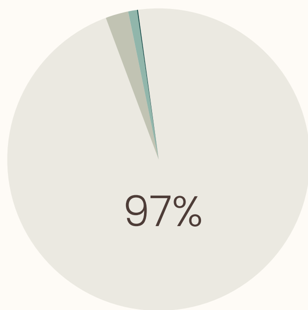
Financial statement

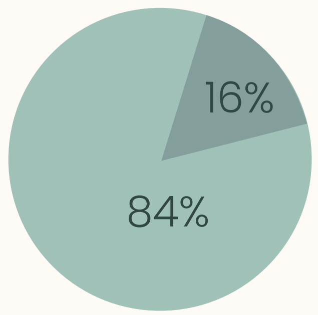
In 2025, RAISE had a turnover of DKK 9,734,598, most of which came from grants from the Danish Civil Society Fund (CISU) and the Novo Nordisk Foundation (NNF). While we are still receiving most income from private and public donors, we increased our income from other sources, in particular consultancy services and corporate partnerships.

We transferred about DKK 7,898,382 to our partners in Uganda, Georgia and Myanmar, corresponding to about 84 percent of our expenditure. Expenses at the Secretariat amounted to DKK 1,529,688, or about 16 percent of total expenses in 2025.

This covered mainly the full-time salaries of Rasmus and Jakob, and the part-time salaries of our accountant Lars and our student assistant Anne Mette, but also office rent, auditing, software subscriptions and other running costs.

Financial statement 2025	
INCOME	
Grants	9,402,329
Membership fees	6,500
Donations	93,200
Services provided	232,569
Total	**9,734,598**
EXPENDITURE	
Support to partners	7,898,382
RAISE Secretariat	1,529,688
Total	**9,428,070**
Result	**306,528**
Equity	**632,790**





Income

- Grants
- Donations
- Membership fees
- Services provided

Expenditure

- Support to partners
- RAISE secretariat

Photo by: Anne Mette Rolighed Olesen

From international poor relief to a global welfare state

2025 was a true annus horribilis for international aid, with large cuts to aid in the United States and many other countries, as well as the United Nations in deep financial trouble. While these tragic circumstances have deeply troubling impacts for millions of people all over the world, it is also an opportunity to re-think the global aid system. Maybe now is the time to finally move from 'aid' to a better system of global redistribution based on solidarity?

By Rasmus Schjødt, Programme Director

During 2025, I had several opportunities to discuss the crisis of development aid and the potential future of aid with audiences in Denmark.

In May, we organised a hybrid meeting in Copenhagen with the British aid veteran Jonathan Glennie, author of books on 'The trouble with aid' and 'The future of aid'. In October I participated in two discussions: a panel debate at CISU's Education Weekend at Askov Folk High School and a discussion at the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University with Professor Anne Mette Kjær, the former Chairperson of the Danish Council for Development Policy.

Common for all three discussions was an attempt to try to make sense of the crisis of international development aid. In 2024, the US provided 42 percent of all funding for humanitarian aid in the world. In 2025, US aid was cut by 56.9 percent and overall official development aid from OECD countries dropped by 23.1 percent. Large amounts of funding disappeared, not just for humanitarian aid, but also from sectors such as education, health and social protection.

These cuts have obviously been met with horror by most people working on international aid, because of the direct impact they have on the lives of millions of people in the Global South. I have personally experienced the shock of people in Uganda, where for example education for tens of thousands of refugee children was abruptly halted.

But, perhaps more surprisingly, these massive cuts have also been welcomed by many people in the sector as an opportunity to rethink the whole aid system. This speaks volumes about how dysfunctional and unpopular the existing aid system has really become.

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I have worked in international development for almost twenty years. From my time as an intern for a Danish NGO in Ghana in 2007, it has been clear to me that the biggest issue with aid is that it is based on charity: decisions about aid are made by donor governments, and accountability is mainly towards tax payers in the Global North, not towards the people benefitting in the Global South.

As such, inequality is built into the whole aid system, and it is a form of inequality that mirrors international relationships during colonialism. This explains why the way we talk about aid as a question of generous donors giving to people in need, do not elicit great excitement or popular support in either donor or recipient countries.

If we want a world with more peace and stability and less poverty and inequality, we need a fundamental shift from the current charity model of aid to a universal, rights-based model based on solidarity.

In other words, we need a system based on common investments towards common goals – for example peace and stability – rather than charity from the rich to the poor. This is in fact very similar to the way the Danish welfare state gradually developed over time, from a system based on charitable giving from the rich to the poor, to a system based on social rights, where most people both contribute and benefit.

This is exactly what Jonathan Glennie argues in his latest book 'The Future of Aid' where he presents the concept of 'Global Public Investments' as a replacement for aid. Global Public Investments would mean a shift to a more democratic and more ambitious global regime of redistribution.

This is already happening in some ways. We could for example look toward the various global funds that have been established in recent decades, such as the 'Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria', which has been one of the most successful innovations in global health financing. This and other funds have been successful in bringing together traditional and new donors and major foundations and in more democratic decision making.

In RAISE, we are advocating with other civil society organisations for a new 'Global Fund for Social Protection'. This is a proposal for a new mechanism of global re-distribution that was originally introduced by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food in 2012, and revived in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Such a new global fund would have as its purpose to provide technical support and funding to governments wanting to expand Social Protection Floors, including pensions, child benefits and disability benefits. It would provide predictable multi-year funding, conditional on countries increasing their own funding towards social protection over time.

This is the kind of initiative that would contribute to re-designing the global aid system to be less based on charity and more on joint commitments to invest in our common future.

The five necessary shifts for moving from aid to Global Public Investments:

1 **A shift in Ambition:** from poverty reduction to equal opportunities. Just as the effectiveness of the Danish universal welfare state comes from the fact that it is not just about poor relief, but about creating a more equal society. And just like the EU redistribution between member countries is not about poverty, but about narrowing the gap in wealth between countries.

2 **A shift in Function:** global public investments is not just a stop-gap for the poorest countries that will eventually be phased out, but something that plays a unique role in all countries, regardless of income level, in the same way that EU-funding plays a role in Denmark, despite it being one of the wealthier member states.

3 **A shift in Geography:** from donors and recipients to a system where all countries contribute and all benefit (again, just like in the Danish welfare state and in the EU).

4 **A shift in Governance:** from a system dominated by a handful of wealthy donor states to a more democratic system, where everybody has an equal say.

5 **A shift in Narrative:** from charity to investing in a common future, based on obligations.

Photo by: Rasmus Schjødt

Our work on social protection in 2025

Expanding access to **social protection** in Uganda

One of our key focus areas in RAISE is supporting civil society organisations and governments to expand access to social protection. Since the founding of the organisation, we have worked in Uganda, and we continue to support local organisations pushing for more investments in social protection there.

In 2025, we contributed to two different projects, aimed at improving access to pensions and at getting government support for a new national benefit for children with disabilities.

By Rasmus Schjødt, Programme Director

Photo by: Rasmus Schjødt

A People's Pension for Uganda

In our 'People's Pension' project, we continued our long-term collaboration with the Ugandan organisation 'Initiative for Social and Economic Rights' (ISER). The aim of the project is to improve the access to pension for older persons in Uganda. Currently, only 13 percent of people aged 60 and above have access to pension, resulting in very high levels of poverty among older persons.

In Uganda, caring for older persons has so far mainly been left to the families. However, this traditional system is strained in a situation of high levels of migration from rural areas to cities, with many older persons being left behind without support.

In addition, many older persons experience it as undignified to depend completely on their families for support. Testimonies from older persons receiving Uganda's current benefit for older persons, the Senior Citizen Grant, show that even the very small amount provided provides a sense of dignity that comes from being able to buy basic goods such as soap and clothes for oneself, as well as contributing to the household. Many older persons use part of their pension to buy school materials for their grandchildren.

Interestingly, the situation with high levels of informality, rural poverty and migration to cities that Uganda faces today is quite similar to the situation in Denmark when that country took its first steps towards a universal social pension. This situation, with most of the population outside formal employment, was one of the reasons that Denmark opted for a tax-financed pension about a hundred years ago, rather than the contributory system that had already been introduced in Germany, where only formal sector workers had access to pension.

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Photo by: Anne Mette Rolighed Olesen

Uganda is in many ways facing similar challenges today, and here a tax-funded, universal, basic pension is also a key part of the solution to old age poverty.

In Denmark, it took more than 60 years from the first steps to introduce a tax-funded benefit for older persons to the universal 'People's Pension' that forms a cornerstone of the country's welfare state today.

In Uganda, the access to pension is also expected to improve gradually over many decades. But it does not happen automatically. Organisations like ISER play a key role in keeping the issue of access to pension on the agenda and helping to formulate both a long-term vision for a pension system as part of national development and suggestions for specific reforms that can be adopted right now.

One specific objective of ISER's current efforts is to get political support for creating a stronger legal basis for Uganda's social pension. At the moment, the existing Senior Citizen Grant is not anchored in law. This means that it is difficult to hold the government accountable when funding is cut or people are unrightfully excluded from the pension.

A new national benefit for children with disabilities

Uganda currently provides very limited support to persons with disabilities. The so-called 'Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities' provides small one-off grants for groups of persons with disabilities to start small businesses or invest in livestock. But there are no regular social protection benefits.

Throughout 2025, we supported a coalition of Ugandan disability organisations and parliamentarians with the aim to place a new national benefit for children with disabilities on the political agenda in the lead-up to the national elections of January 2026.

The project included activities aimed at mobilizing the Ugandan organisations of persons with disabilities to push the government to adopt a new benefit for children with disabilities.

At the same time, the Ugandan Parliamentary Forum for Social Protection, an association bringing together about 200 Ugandan Members of Parliament organised tv and radio talk shows and mobilized their members to support the proposal.

Within the government, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to develop a detailed costed policy proposal.

At the time of writing, it is still uncertain whether the new national child disability benefit will be included in the national budget for 2026/27, but with the effort from both the disability organisations, other civil society organisation, parliamentarians and within government, it seems very likely that the benefit will eventually be introduced.

> "Our partnership with RAISE demonstrated that collaborative, evidence-based advocacy can drive policy change."
>
> *- Angella Kasule Nabwowe, Executive Director, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER).*

In 2025, the Government of Uganda made a commitment to lower the age of eligibility for the old age pension from 80 to 65 and increase the monthly benefit from 25,000 to 35,000 Uganda Shillings. In addition, ISER's Community Advocates have supported eligible older persons who were excluded to enroll on the program.

Myanmar

Supporting farmers in Myanmar's delta

By Rasmus Schjødt, Programme Director

The global insect farming industry is in a deep crisis. In 2025, Ynsect, the world's largest insect farming company, went bankrupt after raising over €600 million. Other major factories have closed this year, including the large Danish producer of black soldier fly larvae 'Enorm Biofactory'.

It seems the large-scale factory production model is simply not viable yet, with production costs too high, too many barriers to using food waste as feedstock and insufficient market for large-scale producers to turn a profit.

This is a real shame, given how damaging the conventional feed ingredients soy and fish meal are to the environment and life in the oceans. The global feed value chains are incredibly destructive to the Amazon rainforest and to global fish stocks.

But maybe the future belongs to other, smaller, models of insect production. In November 2025, I visited the black soldier fly larvae project that RAISE is supporting in Myanmar. Here, families living from a combination of rice farming, fish farming and small-scale rearing of chicken and

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Photo by: Rasmus Schjødt

Photo by: Rasmus Schjødt

"The cooperation with RAISE has been a really critical one, and very timely. Our approach to decentralized insect farming was tested and readied for further extension to scale. Without the support to do this, we would not have achieved the scale we have. Now we have significant numbers of women-led farming enterprises showing the model's value."

– David Allan, Director, Spectrum

ducks have been trained to produce black soldier fly larvae – and it makes so much sense.

The project has provided basic materials and training to start production of black soldier fly larvae for animal feed. Already after six months, the farmers are successfully producing larvae for their own needs and for others in their local area. Some of the women have even started investing their own money in scaling up their production capacity with a view to selling larvae to other local producers of poultry or fish.

There are few barriers to scaling up production in this context: with the right training, the women can manage the whole life cycle, producing their own black solider fly eggs. Feedstock for the larvae is widely available in the delta, including by using fermented water hyacinth (an invasive plant species) and banana tree pseudo-stem, which works really well when mixed with rice bran and a bit of fruit or fish waste.

Capital to purchase the necessary materials is a barrier, but many women are organised in savings and loans groups or cooperatives that can assist with this, and in the end the cost is manageable.

The produced larvae are excellent feed for fish farming and poultry and duck rearing, with the frass used for fertiliser in vegetable gardens or rice fields. This is especially important in a context where the price of conventional feeds and fertilisers has increased a lot, and the quality is often poor.

In this way, insect production supports farmers to diversify their incomes by making fish farming, poultry and duck rearing more profitable. It helps make farmers more resilient.

So, while the large-scale factory model is in crisis, this should not make us conclude that insect production in general is not able to fulfill the promise of turning locally available organic materials into valuable feed and fertiliser.

The conflict in Myanmar

Myanmar has been affected by civil war since independence from the United Kingdom in 1948. For many years, the country was isolated under brutal military regimes. In 2011, there was an opening, with a more progressive government coming into power, and in 2015 the country's long-time opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, won a landslide election.

However, conflicts between the central military-dominated government and ethnic armed groups continued, as well as disagreements between Aung San Suu Kyi and the powerful military leadership. In 2021 the military re-took complete power in a coup and since then Myanmar has been plunged into all-out civil war with many people joining the People's Defence Force in fighting the military junta. National elections in 2025 were not considered free or fair by anybody.

The conflict has led to the displacement of more than three million people and more than a third of the population are considered in need of humanitarian assistance. With the military supported by China and Russia, there is little hope of peace anytime soon.

Our insect production project focus on the Ayeyarwaddy and Yangon regions, which are two of the most stable regions in Myanmar. Here, the impacts of the war are mainly felt through the collapse of the economy, devaluation of the currency, escalation of agricultural input prices, rising food costs and limited employment opportunities.

Short updates on other projects

1

Photo by: Anne Mette Rolighed Olesen

Partner visit from Uganda in May

In May we had the privilege of hosting our partners, Edward and Violet from MAMAH and Bobo Eco Farm, that we have collaborated with since 2018 on edible insect production. Edward and Violet participated in a dissemination workshop in Copenhagen where they shared learnings from the REFIPRO project to partners and interested organisations. It was an inspiring and mutually enriching workshop that brought together many of the NGOs and researchers that are involved in edible insect production. The workshop finished with a field trip to Bugging Denmark's mealworm production in Copenhagen.

2 Shrinking civic space in Georgia

In Georgia, we entered a partnership with a local human rights organisation in 2024. The intention was to support their work on social protection for persons with disabilities. However, since parliamentary elections in 2024, where the Georgian Dream party consolidated its power, the situation became increasingly difficult for organisations critical of the government. In 2025, the Georgian government froze the accounts of our partner and the organisation was forced to shut down its activities in the country.

Photo by: Shutterstock.com

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Photo by: Lilit Manukyan

Improving active labour market policies in Armenia

At the very end of 2025, we received a new grant from the Danish Neighborhood Fund, managed by CISU, for a project in Armenia. The project focuses on improving active labour market policies in Vayk municipality and is a partnership with the Armenian Association of Social Workers and the local organisation Enabling Social Impact Consulting Group. Our contribution will be to bring in experiences of active labour market policies from Denmark and other countries.

4 Collaboration with Ngalo Buwereza Organisation (NBO)

During 2025 we have been collaborating with NBO on serval occasions, strengthening our programmatic focus on supporting the creation of decent jobs. In March our Head of Secretariat participated in NBO's General Assembly, where the organisation's Constitution was signed. During the last months of the year, we ran an online membership campaign, with 100 % of all membership fees provided to a newly established NBO Saving and Credits Co-operative (SACCO).

Photo by: Anne Mette Rolighed Olesen

Update from the secretariat

Strengthening our organisation

By Jakob Lundager, Head of Secretariat

The RAISE secretariat has been growing throughout 2025. In the beginning of the year, we hired a Student Assistant, Anne Mette, who is finishing her studies in Political Science at Aarhus University. Anne Mette has primarily been responsible for strengthening our communication on social media and the newsletter, but has also contributed to membership campaigns, re-designing the website etc.

From august and onwards the secretariat was also strengthened with four volunteers and two interns. Our volunteers arranged a dissemination event at Aarhus University in collaboration with the student association 'GloPol' while also running an online membership campaign. The campaign supported our partner NBO who are organising home-based workers in Uganda, while also adding more members to RAISE.

In the autumn semester, we had two interns, Inés and August, for about 4 months which was a great add on to the secretariat. They dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to supporting the organisation and in particular strengthened our research work. We absolutely, loved having them on the team and we wish them all the best for the future!

We are planning on recruiting new interns for 2026 and am also always open to hearing from people interested in contributing to our work as volunteers.

Photo by: Anne Mette Rolighed Olesen

> “RAISE is a bridge for our members of home-based workers in Uganda to access opportunities to build their capacity to advocate for social protection and amplify avenues to achieve socio-economic development.”
>
> *– Betty Lunkuse, National Coordinator, Ngalo Buwereza Organisation*

RAISE Research and Action for Income Security

info@raise.dk • Skæringvej 88 • 8520 Lystrup • CVR: 39 69 98 69

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