“COFFEE IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR COMMUNITY,” says Wadamba Dison, who has grown coffee in the mountains of Uganda with his wife Nafuna Oliver for almost 20 years. Indeed, their coffee crop is what puts food on their table and provides for their six children.

But that’s not all: The proceeds from their farm also fund the village school and allow the couple to take in other local children who have nowhere else to go. Wadamba and Nafuna work hard to grow their coffee at the highest quality, because they know how much their community depends on them.

They also know that the prices they get for their crops can be unpredictable, and rarely in their favor. When they can’t sell their coffee at the prices they need, their losses threaten their farm and their family and reverberate through their village.

You can provide stability for coffee farmers like Wadamba and Nafuna through GROUND UP INVESTING. Your love will transform the lives of families by improving the quality of their crops and developing better access to markets that pay fairly.

What’s more, your gift can yield a return that will be reinvested year after year so that you can break the cycle of poverty for more families.

Because your support is more than a one-time gift. It’s an investment in the future.

Watch an interview with Wadamba and Nafuna and learn more about Ground Up Investing at lw.org/ground-investing-llc.
Transforming farming communities through impact investing

Corus International is an ensemble of faith-based organizations, each with its own long history of service in vulnerable communities. Together, the Corus family delivers holistic, lasting solutions needed to help these communities overcome the challenges of poverty.

Since 1945, Corus family member Lutheran World Relief has worked directly with vulnerable farmers — bringing improved seeds and farming methods, small business loans and other tools within farmers’ reach to improve their crops and incomes. For farmers who sell their crops in local markets, or who simply grow food for their own families to eat, this approach has reaped significant rewards toward overcoming poverty and hunger.

But too often, farmers who grow commodity crops like coffee or cacao are unable to make a living wage in commodity markets, where they must accept whatever prices the multi-national corporations that dominate the market offer. Most of these farmers, especially coffee growers, make less per pound today than they did 25 years ago.1 Despite their hard work, they may struggle to keep their farms operational, leaving them unable to feed their families or send their children to school.

Your gift to Ground Up Investing creates opportunities for farmers to escape from commodity markets that undervalue their crops. Instead, your contribution carves a path for farmers to sell directly to the carefully selected producers in our investment portfolio — producers we choose to work with because they value their farmers as partners and as people, pay them fairly and support their skills and growth on a commercially sustainable basis.

Through Ground Up Investing, your generosity ensures the hardworking farmers who fill our coffee cups each morning don’t struggle to put breakfast on their own tables.

What is Ground Up Investing?

Ground Up Investing, LLC, is Corus’s impact investing fund, dedicated to growing mission-driven enterprises that do more than generate profits: they’re also committed to creating social and environmental benefits for the communities they serve.

When you give to Ground Up Investing, we invest your charitable gifts in equity positions in hand-picked social enterprises, allowing our experts to provide management support to guide their growth and impact. We also offer small loans to help sustain them as they work to become commercially viable.

As these enterprises become profitable, their social missions also become sustainable — providing ongoing economic and ecological benefits to farmers and communities and helping to break the cycle of poverty.

And when the companies turn a profit, Ground Up Investing’s portion of those profits goes into the next enterprise, starting the cycle again. That means your gift can be reinvested, again and again, to reach more communities.

INVESTMENT SPOTLIGHT: Nevacos

In 2018, Ground Up Investing became 35% owner in Nevacos, an eco-friendly coffee production company in Colombia’s Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range. Nevacos aims to produce unique, premium quality products for top tier specialty coffee markets by challenging local conventions for production. While coffee growers in the region traditionally produce washed coffees (that consume large volumes of water) for commodity and entry level specialty markets, Nevacos uses the more ecologically sustainable method of natural processing, which decreases water use by up to 90% while bringing exciting new fruit-forward flavors to increasingly discriminating consumers in the US, Asia and Europe.

By accessing high value, luxury coffee markets, Nevacos is able to help farmers increase their profit margins by paying farmers above market prices and reducing costs associated with traditional processing approaches creating access to high value, luxury markets. For the 2019-2020 season, Nevacos was able to purchase coffee cherries from 60 local farmers at 30% above market prices, with an additional 34% in cost savings, delivering 64% more value to farmers than other buyers.

INVESTMENT SPOTLIGHT: Mountain Harvest

Ground Up Investing made its first investment in 2017 to establish Mountain Harvest, a buyer and trader of premium coffee grown on Mt. Elgon in Uganda. Mountain Harvest works with roughly 850 small coffee farmers to increase the quality and value of their coffee through improved processing and by helping them increase the health and productivity of their farms. In the process, Mountain Harvest is also introducing new crops and products like Hass avocados, which provide shade for coffee trees, as well as honey, which creates incentives for and benefits from greater biodiversity in the community, while simultaneously introducing new sources of income. Taken together, these activities help boost income and resilience for farmers and their communities.

In time, farmers on Mt. Elgon will be able to better provide for their families, invest in their crops and land, and begin to escape the cycle of poverty.

Our Portfolio

Established in 2017, Ground Up Investing has a small and growing portfolio of four investments. To get started, we have seeded our portfolio with coffee and cacao in countries where Corus manages programs in agriculture, livelihoods and economic development. Our goal is to create synergies between our investees, sharing ideas, tools and innovations across our portfolio to maximize the impact of your gift.
IMPACT INVESTING: A gift that keeps on giving

Ground Up Investing tackles poverty from a different angle, planting seeds that grow into sustainable impact for farmers and their communities. Our work is powered by innovation, collaboration and the radical generosity of our donors.

Are you ready to leverage your philanthropy in a new and powerful way — from the ground up?

Your investment today will allow us to:

- Invest equity in promising mission-driven enterprises
- Reinvest profits to fuel new local enterprises, edging us closer to ending the cycle of poverty
- Help farmers access new markets that pay fairly and support their growth, ultimately helping them to achieve a living income
- Create synergy and shared learning across our investments to amplify impact
- Remain in communities longer to ensure that both enterprises and farmers are prepared to face future challenges
- Provide expert management support to guide growth and impact for farmers
- Offer business loans to support growth and extend the impact of our portfolio companies.

As a Ground Up Investing contributor, you’ll receive regular updates on the fund’s impact in transforming the lives of smallholder farmers as well as its measurable financial progress. Let’s get started!

JONATHAN BUUCK
Director, Philanthropic Engagement
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Helping our investments weather the challenges of COVID-19

When the global COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, our vision became clearer than ever. Whatever challenge arises — whether it’s climate change, market volatility or a global pandemic — Ground Up Investing makes it possible for the enterprises in our portfolio to maintain stability during uncertain times.

For example, though most of Nevacos’ buyers have continued to express interest in purchasing coffee during the coronavirus pandemic, they have been forced to delay or reduce orders due to disruptions and uncertainty. Because of the deeper commitment we share to changing lives, Ground Up Investing didn’t hesitate to step up and provided a small loan to help support Nevacos through the crisis and ensure that their farmers were not only paid for the past season, but would also be able to continue to access better markets in the next one as well.