



Isla**Urbana**  
U · S · A

# Annual Report 2025

#Rainmakers  
#RainForAll

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# Contents

Director Greeting .....	3
Mission and Vision .....	4
2025 Overview .....	5
On-The-Ground Highlights .....	8
Student Engagement .....	22
Community Fundraising .....	27
Financials .....	30
Growth .....	32
Roundtable Reflections .....	34
Thanks and Supporters .....	39

## Director Greeting

# Dear Rainmaker,

This year has been difficult, as we have witnessed growing tensions around the world, especially in the latinx communities we care about so deeply and know personally. At the same time, it has been a privilege and a blessing to keep building alongside our supporters, partners, collaborators, Rainmakers, and friends, helping to create more constructive paths both within and beyond the communities we serve.

**I want to thank you for continuing to stand and walk with us.**

Your support made this one of Isla Urbana USA's strongest years yet! Our community of support has grown, helping us reach underserved communities, especially rural families and students. Together, we reached nearly 5,000 people this year.

This year, we focused much of our effort on expanding the Rain School Program, particularly in Oaxaca, while also advancing community rainwater harvesting projects in Mexico City. We supported school and community systems, home installations in Guerrero and Oaxaca, and additional interventions in Nuevo León, while also distributing water purification filters to families, schools, and communities across Mexico. We are especially proud that, thanks entirely to Isla Urbana USA donors, all five public Rain Schools in San Nicolás Yaxe, Oaxaca, are now complete.

Our 2025 Rainmaker Student Summer Program was small but impactful, and it left us feeling hopeful. It was inspiring to see a younger group participate with such curiosity, openness, and maturity. That kind of exchange is a powerful reminder of why this work matters.

**We cannot thank enough the many people who made this year so meaningful for Isla Urbana USA.** To our Agua Vida community and volunteers, we see you and we are deeply grateful. To our corporate partners, thank you for your trust and commitment to this mission. To our academic and student allies, we look forward to continuing to learn with you and collaborate in every way we can.

Please stay in conversation with us as we continue asking how we can better serve the mission we all care about. **We invite you to begin by reading the Roundtable Reflections section of this report.**

As we look to next year, we hope to stay close and continue finding new ways to bridge what divides us through the resource that connects us all: water, and in one of its most generous forms, rain.

**With deepest gratitude,**  
**Renata Fenton**  
Isla Urbana USA Director



## Vision

A future where equitable and sustainable water access is a universal reality, empowering communities in Mexico to achieve **autonomy through increased water access**.

## Mission

Forge partnerships across North America to drive **equitable clean water access through sustainable rainwater harvesting and management technologies**, inspiring a water justice movement that transcends geographical boundaries.

# 2025 Overview



## ● Nuevo Leon

**Municipalities:** Juárez and Apodaca

- Handwashing stations installed: **2**
- Existing rainwater harvesting systems upgraded: **1**
- People impacted: **1,565**

## ● Mexico City

**Boroughs:** Benito Juárez, Coyoacán, Tlalpan, Miguel Hidalgo, and Xochimilco

- Schools: **2**
- Community centers: **5**
- Homes: **5**
- Emergency system installations: **1**
- Water filters distributed: **6**
- People impacted: **2,337**

## ● Guerrero

### 1. Tlamacazapa

**Municipality:** Taxco de Alarcón

- Homes: **10**

### 2. Cacahuatpec

**Municipality:** Acapulco de Juárez

- Water filters distributed: **30**
- People impacted: **295**

## ● Oaxaca

### 1. Nanda Jtsi, La Cañada Region

**Municipalities:** San José Tenango, San Mateo Yoloxochitlán, and Santa María Chilchotla

- Schools: **12**
- Community centers: **1**
- Homes: **12**
- Water filters distributed: **88**

### 2. San Nicolás Yaxe and the Central Valleys

**Municipalities:** Yaxe and Santa María Zoquitlán

- Schools: **2**
- Homes: **10**
- Water filters distributed: **22**
- People impacted: **2,408**

# 209 Total Systems Installed!

*double the amount for last year!*



**6,605**  
Beneficiaries



**1,137,190**  
Gallons of annual  
harvesting potential  
(4.3 million liters)



**3,903**  
hours of water  
hauling eliminated  
(5.3 months)



# On The Ground Highlights



# RAIN SCHOOLS



**1,664**  
Students Impacted

This year, with the support of our corporate partners, **the Rain School Program expanded significantly across rural communities**, strengthening access to water and deepening **local capacity for long-term program success**.

A major focus throughout the year was not only on implementing systems, but also on **creating the conditions for sustained impact**. This included identifying local leadership, strengthening regional implementation strategies, and investing in the people and materials needed to support long-term use and maintenance.

In the Mazatec region, **particular emphasis was placed on building local capacity** through the training of community-based technicians and school workshop facilitators. These efforts are helping establish the foundation for more locally led implementation, maintenance, and educational outreach over time.

Program implementation advanced across diverse contexts, including rural schools in the Mazatec region and the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, as well as urban schools in Mexico City. At the same time, new and more durable maintenance materials were developed and adapted to specific regional conditions, helping ensure that participating **schools are better equipped to maintain their systems successfully over the long term**.





## Partnership Spotlight

A smaller but especially meaningful collaboration took shape in Mexico City, where we partnered with CENTRO, a leading design university, to adapt and translate Isla Urbana educational materials specifically for Christel House, a nonprofit school. Supported by Kohler, the two rainwater harvesting systems installed at the school not only strengthened access to water, but also expanded access to knowledge—helping transform the project into a more powerful educational tool for students and the broader school community through this collaboration.



# OAXACA



**2,025**  
People Impacted

## Nanda Jtsi, Mazatec, Cañada region

In Oaxaca’s Cañada region, the Mazatec project Nanda Jtsi (Rainwater in Mazatec) continues to strengthen local autonomy and build long-term community capacity around rainwater harvesting.

What began with household systems in San José Tenango has now expanded significantly. Alongside the growth of the Rain School Program into two new municipalities, the region’s capacity to organize, engage, and bring new communities into the work has grown substantially, now reaching more than 40 communities across the region. This expansion reflects not only increased program reach, but also the growing strength of local leadership and community ownership.

Our local counterpart, Naxo Tojndi, has also continued exploring new ways to provide locally rooted services and strengthen its presence in the region. As part of this effort, the Nanda Jtsi workshop was refurbished, and a new storefront was established in the center of San José Tenango. This space includes both a rainwater harvesting supply store and an educational demonstration system, creating a visible and accessible hub where local families can learn about the technology, explore its benefits, and purchase wares produced locally by Naxo Tojndi.





# Community Spotlight



A key highlight of the year was the Rain School celebration held on September 27, 2025, in San José Tenango. Organized by the local team, the event convened students, teachers, families, and local leaders to celebrate the program’s growing impact in the Mazatec region.

The event, “Juguemos por el Agua,” reflected the momentum of an initiative that now engages more than 16 schools and showcased the leadership of local schools, families, and partners, including Naxo Tojndi. Through a water parade, student performances, music, and artistic activities, the event created a vibrant public space to recognize the collective effort behind the program and the pride communities have built around rainwater harvesting and education.



## Community Spotlight



Isla Urbana USA also supported the creation of two community murals, developed collaboratively with local residents and artist Ella del Bosque.

The first mural was completed in San José Tenango with the participation of 22 women, men, and children, including members of the Naxo Tojndi women’s arts and crafts group. The second was created with the involvement of 12 secondary school students from the nearest Rain School in Teocuatlán, together with four local families from the community of Agua Apestosa—one of the communities with the highest number of rainwater harvesting systems in the region.

Together, these murals created shared spaces for participation, reflection, and community expression around water, rain, and local identity. They also became visible celebrations of the pride communities feel in the rainwater harvesting program they have helped build and sustain.

“

*With the rainwater harvesting project, everything has been a great success. It has worked very well for us. Since it was installed at the school, we have not needed to buy water for the bathrooms and toilets.*

- Jose Juan Castro, School Principal  
Cerro Central

”





**383**  
People Impacted

# OAXACA

## San Nicolás Yaxé and Central Valleys

Corporate support has helped drive continued expansion across Oaxaca’s Central Valleys, strengthening the project’s reach at both the household and school levels. San Nicolás Yaxé marks an important milestone: thanks to Isla Urbana USA donors, all five schools in the community are now part of the Rain School Program.

At the same time, we have continued working with local partners to install rainwater harvesting systems in homes and extend the program into neighboring communities, including one of the two local schools in Las Casas, Santa María Zoquitlán.





## Individual Spotlight

Meet Don Germán. During our visit to Las Casas, he was one of the first to welcome us to the Rain School at Francisco Villa Primary School, where he serves as head of the school's Rainwater Committee.

A local mezcal producer and parent of children at the school, Don Germán spoke with pride about the new system and the community's role in caring for it. He was especially encouraged by the amount of rainwater already collected and eager to learn more, even taking part in flushing the Tlaloques and testing the purification filter.



# GUERRERO



**175**  
People Impacted

## Tlamacazapa

This year, individual donations through Agua Vida were essential to sustaining progress in Tlamacazapa, Guerrero, where the need remains urgent. Families in the community continue to face serious challenges—not only from limited water availability, but also from the poor quality of existing water sources.

By complementing broader implementation efforts, Agua Vida supporters helped ensure that work could continue moving forward in a place where safe, reliable water access is still far from guaranteed.

As Jennifer White, General Director of Isla Urbana Mexico, reflected:

“ *The most severe water scarcity I have witnessed in my 16 years working in water-stressed communities was in Tlamacazapa, Guerrero. The situation had become so extreme that families were buying jugs of water just to bathe.*

*During one visit, I saw a family using a single small bowl of water to wash around fifteen spoons and forks. When water scarcity reaches this level, illness can spread more easily, and existing hardships only deepen.* ”



# COMMUNITY SYSTEMS



**1,200**  
People Impacted

This year, Agua Vida and corporate supporters played a key role in advancing projects with community-serving institutions, helping extend the benefits of rainwater harvesting to spaces that support collective well-being. In particular, Kohler’s support made it possible to install systems at community centers in Mexico City, including Casa PAS and Sumando por Ti, strengthening water access for children, caregivers, and the broader communities these organizations serve.

These collaborations reflect the important role corporate partners can play in enabling high-impact interventions by pairing practical water solutions with long-term community benefit.





## Agua Vida Update



The efforts of the Rice University Agua Vida team in 2024 made a tangible impact in 2025 through the installation of three rainwater harvesting systems at Olintlalli, a family-run chinampa and ecotourism center in Xochimilco.

Installed in February 2025, the systems are designed to **harvest up to 47,000 gallons of rainwater** annually, with **4,000 gallons of storage capacity, benefiting eight team members and approximately 1,440 visitors each year.** The systems provide cleaner water for crop processing, cooking, and handwashing, helping reduce dependence on water transported from three kilometers away. In a strong sign of local ownership and confidence in the project, the Olintlalli family later chose to self-fund a fourth system, expanding the intervention beyond its original scope.





**1,060**  
People Impacted

## **FILTER DELIVERY AND EMERGENCY EFFORTS**

This year, a cross-program filtration initiative helped expand access to safe drinking water across the communities served by Isla Urbana. By integrating water purification filters into all programs, we strengthened the impact of rainwater harvesting efforts by addressing not only water availability, but also water quality. Using gravity-fed ceramic candles, these filters help remove bacteria, sediment, and some chemicals from rainwater, tap water, and natural water sources.

The initiative also included an emergency response in Cacahuatpec, Guerrero, where 30 filters were distributed to families facing urgent water quality challenges. Together, these efforts increased access to safer drinking water and deepened the practical and health benefits of each intervention.



**1 filter + 1  
replacement  
cartridge**



**2,000**  
**16.9 oz disposable plastic  
bottles displaced.**

Beyond improving access to safe drinking water, the filters also help reduce reliance on disposable plastic bottles, creating both environmental and household cost-saving benefits. In the coming year, we are working to establish simple, affordable, and sustainable ways for users to access replacement cartridges more easily. Strengthening this supply pathway will be key to ensuring the long-term effectiveness and accessibility of the filtration initiative.





# Agua Vida Update

In June, Isla Urbana responded to an urgent water crisis in Cristo Rey, San Gregorio Xochimilco, after the community's main shared water tank was damaged, leaving 54 families especially vulnerable. Through local leadership, and with support from Agua Vida 2024 supporters, three new tanks were provided and installed by the community, adding 2,170 gallons of storage capacity and supporting 126 full-time users.



# Student Engagement



# Rainmakers Student Summer Program

The 2025 Rainmakers Student Summer Program brought together seven students for a week-long immersion in water, community, and environmental justice in and around Mexico City. Throughout the program, students visited a Rain School, learned directly from Isla Urbana’s team, and explored important sites, including Teotihuacan, Xochimilco, Paraje Quiltepec, and Isla Urbana’s headquarters. They also took part in hands-on fieldwork, helping install two new residential rainwater harvesting systems, repair two existing systems in Huacahuasco, Xochimilco and support a more complex installation at Casa Tonalli in Coyoacán. Together, the systems they worked on represent a potential annual harvest of up to 40,700 gallons of rainwater.

The program went far beyond technical training. It also created space for reflection, intercultural exchange, and storytelling. Students connected with families and community leaders facing water scarcity, documented their experiences through photography, and reflected on what it means to be a “Rainmaker.”





“  
*It inspired me to bring the message of water conservation to the younger generation where I live.* - Luna ”

“  
*I learned so much and enjoyed going to the communities.* - Mia ”

These experiences gave students a rare opportunity to understand both the technical and human dimensions of the work. As another student reflected, she valued seeing both “the more ‘business’ side with the hostel and the true Isla mission side with the houses in Huacahuasco.”

The program was made possible with support from Isla Urbana US partners, in close collaboration with Isla Urbana Mexico, the Rain School team, and the local communities that generously welcomed students into their work and daily lives.

## Volunteer Rainmaker

This year, Isla Urbana USA had the opportunity to collaborate with volunteer Sean Donnelly, a 2024 graduate of Virginia Tech’s Executive Master of Natural Resources program, in a collaboration that became both a meaningful learning experience and a valuable storytelling contribution.

Through direct exposure to the work, Sean developed a deeper understanding of the broad range of efforts IUUSA supports, from the Rain School Program and nonprofit coordination to the local leadership emerging through rainwater harvesting initiatives in Indigenous communities. His experience led to a series of blog posts for the IUUSA Blog, later also published on Virginia Tech’s Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability website, helping share the complexity, humanity, and regional diversity of this work with a broader audience



## Student Rainmakers Highlight

At the beginning of the year, students from the Cook Engineering Design Center at Dartmouth completed a capstone project focused on designing a simple, functional and low-cost metering system for a home rainwater harvesting system. Team members Daysia, Jacob, Margaret, Sophie, Rubi, and Clare dedicated significant time and care to the project, working closely alongside the Isla Urbana team. Their technology and insights will help inform Isla Urbana’s Data Analysis efforts. It was an inspiring collaboration, and we are deeply grateful to the students for the heart and commitment they brought to it.

## Volunteer *Rainmaker*

We are proud to celebrate one of our star volunteers, Anusri Chinni, who was selected as one of the 20 Under 20 in Dallas–Fort Worth by the Junior World Affairs Council (JWAC) in recognition of her community work both locally and abroad with Isla Urbana.

This initiative honors 20 exceptional high school students under the age of 20 who are active in JWAC and truly embody what it means to be a global citizen.

We are incredibly proud of all that Anusri has accomplished and warmly congratulate her as she begins her next chapter at Northwestern University, where she is pursuing a double major in Mechanical Engineering and Manufacturing and Design Engineering.



# Community Fundraising



# Agua Vida 2025: Walk for Water

Agua Vida 2025: Walk for Water invited supporters to turn movement into impact by donating, attending events, spreading the word, or joining the campaign through direct action.

From October 27 to December 7, participants walked—and in some cases literally ran—in solidarity with communities in Mexico that continue to face long distances, uncertainty, and daily challenges in accessing water. Through the campaign’s Strava challenge, supporters helped make that solidarity visible and collective.

The campaign set out to raise \$30,000 to fund 18 rainwater harvesting systems, bringing an estimated 158,000 gallons of water to approximately 120 people. We are proud to share that, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our teams in Minnesota, Maryland, New York, California, and Texas, the campaign surpassed its goal and raised an impressive \$41,677 USD.

**100% of funds will go directly toward supporting rainwater harvesting programs in 2026 and expanding water access in the communities we serve.**



## Volunteer *Rainmaker*

A special thank you to Joel Broch for his outstanding support during Agua Vida: Walk for Water. A Swiss expat based in Mexico City, Joel connected with Isla Urbana USA with the goal of putting his M.A. in Economics to good use. He quickly became one of the most active participants in the Run for Rain Strava running challenge and an exceptional fundraiser, raising more than \$2,000 USD.

Joel's initiative, generosity, and commitment made a meaningful contribution to the campaign's success.



## Volunteer *Rainmaker*

This year, we had the joy of collaborating with Ellin Aceves (@shes\_aesthete), a Latina climate activist and amazing supporter from Tampa, Florida. She even created a beautiful video for our Agua Vida Campaign, helping bring more visibility, heart, and energy to the mission. We're so grateful for her commitment and for the support she shared with our community.

# Financials



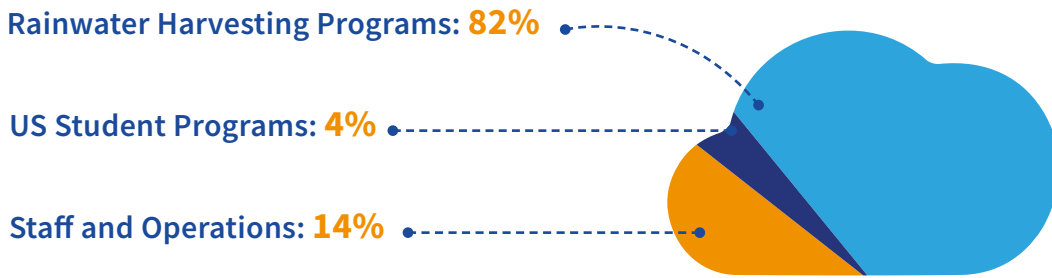
# 2025 Financials

We Fundraised  
**\$278,531.74**

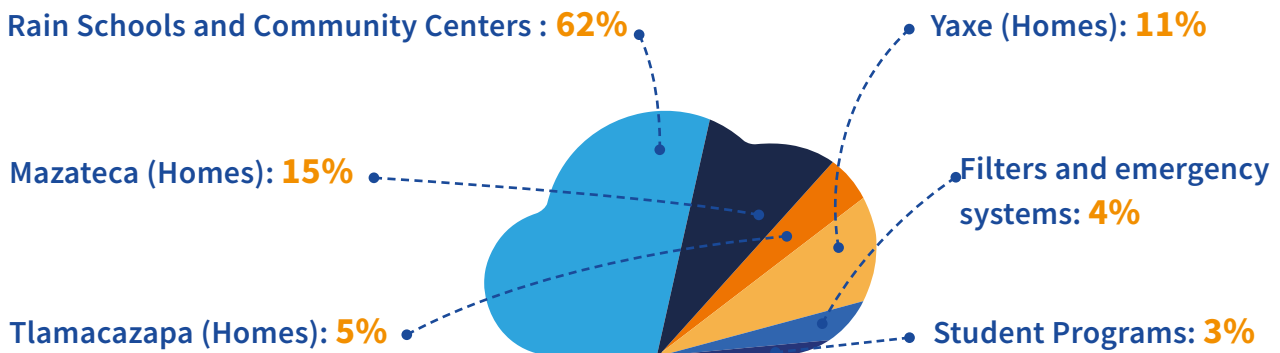
almost **100k more**  
than last year.

**46% over** last year's  
fundraising achievement!

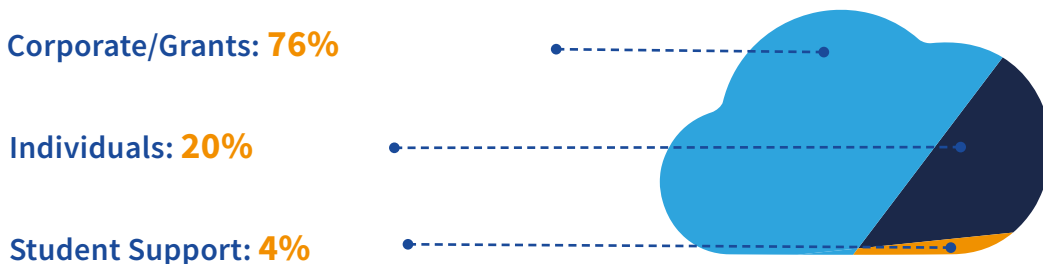
## Expense Breakdown:



## Contribution by project area:



## Funding by source:



# Growth



# Growth

## Looking back *(since 2019)*



**709**

**Water Systems supported**  
*209 in 2025*



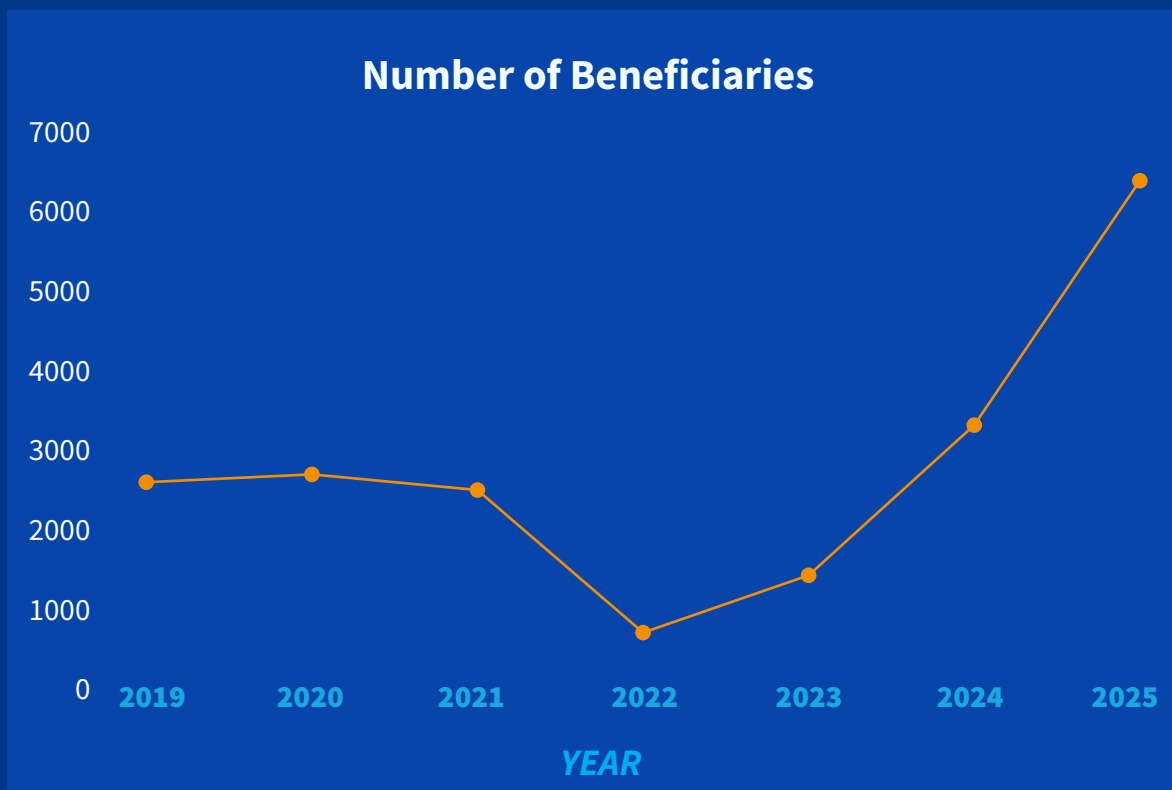
**18,881**

**Beneficiaries**  
*6,605 in 2025*

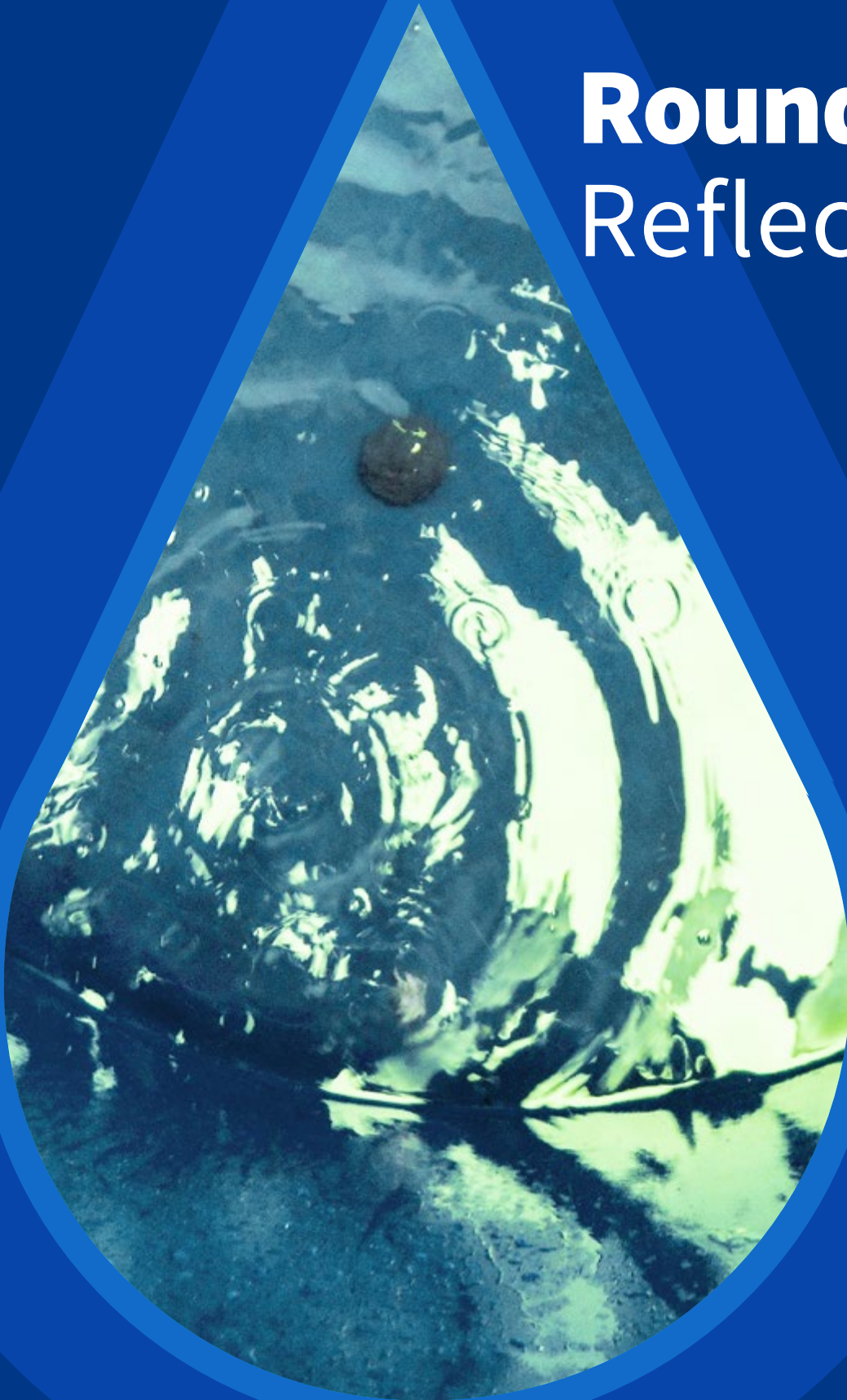


**4,513,160**

**Gallons Harvested**  
*1,137,190 in 2025*



# Roundtable Reflections



**To close this year with a bit of perspective, we invited members of Isla Urbana USA’s leadership and the General Director of Isla Urbana Mexico to respond in writing to a shared set of questions.** The thematic sections that follow synthesize their responses, blending shared ideas and recurring reflections into a collective voice, while the final section presents individual answers in a more personal format. **Together, they offer a look back on the challenges, lessons, hopes, and commitments that shaped 2025, as well as the shared purpose that continues to connect our work across borders.**

## How We Bridge

At its core, Isla Urbana USA helps build connections: between communities and supporters, between Spanish and English, and between the lived realities of water insecurity in Mexico and the people in the United States who want to be part of the solution.

Our role is to help English-speaking partners understand the work in Mexico in its full context, carrying not only language, but also culture, values, and connection in both directions. Through relationships, cooperation, and shared learning around water and sustainability in a time of climate and social uncertainty, Isla Urbana USA serves as a bridge between local work in Mexico and English-speaking partners—linking people, resources, and understanding across borders, race, and class, grounded in a simple belief: water is for all.

## Where We Have Been

One of Isla Urbana USA's greatest strengths has been its ability to connect relationships, resources, and practical support where they are needed most. It has been especially effective in Indigenous communities facing severe water scarcity, where rainwater harvesting can help shift daily life toward greater water security.

At the same time, Isla Urbana USA has successfully connected sustainability-minded companies, foundations, and students with meaningful opportunities to channel resources, learning, and support to low-income communities in Mexico. This year, that strength was reflected in its ability to mobilize partners around underserved schools and communities, while also helping make safe drinking water an integral part of each initiative.



## Why Community Matters

Again and again, the reflections returned to the same truth: lasting water solutions are only possible when communities help shape, use, and sustain them.

Community-based solutions have a way of growing; when one family adopts a system successfully, others often follow. As water becomes more available across a community, it can open the door to other forms of development by saving time, supporting learning, and making daily life more manageable.

Working directly with communities is essential because real transformation depends on the people who use and care for these systems every day. Strong rainwater harvesting projects are built not only on physical infrastructure, but also on strong relationships, shared purpose, and the social fabric that allows a project to endure long after construction is complete.

Whether in a remote town in Oaxaca or among volunteers in the United States, it is the community that gives this work meaning, resilience, and lasting impact.

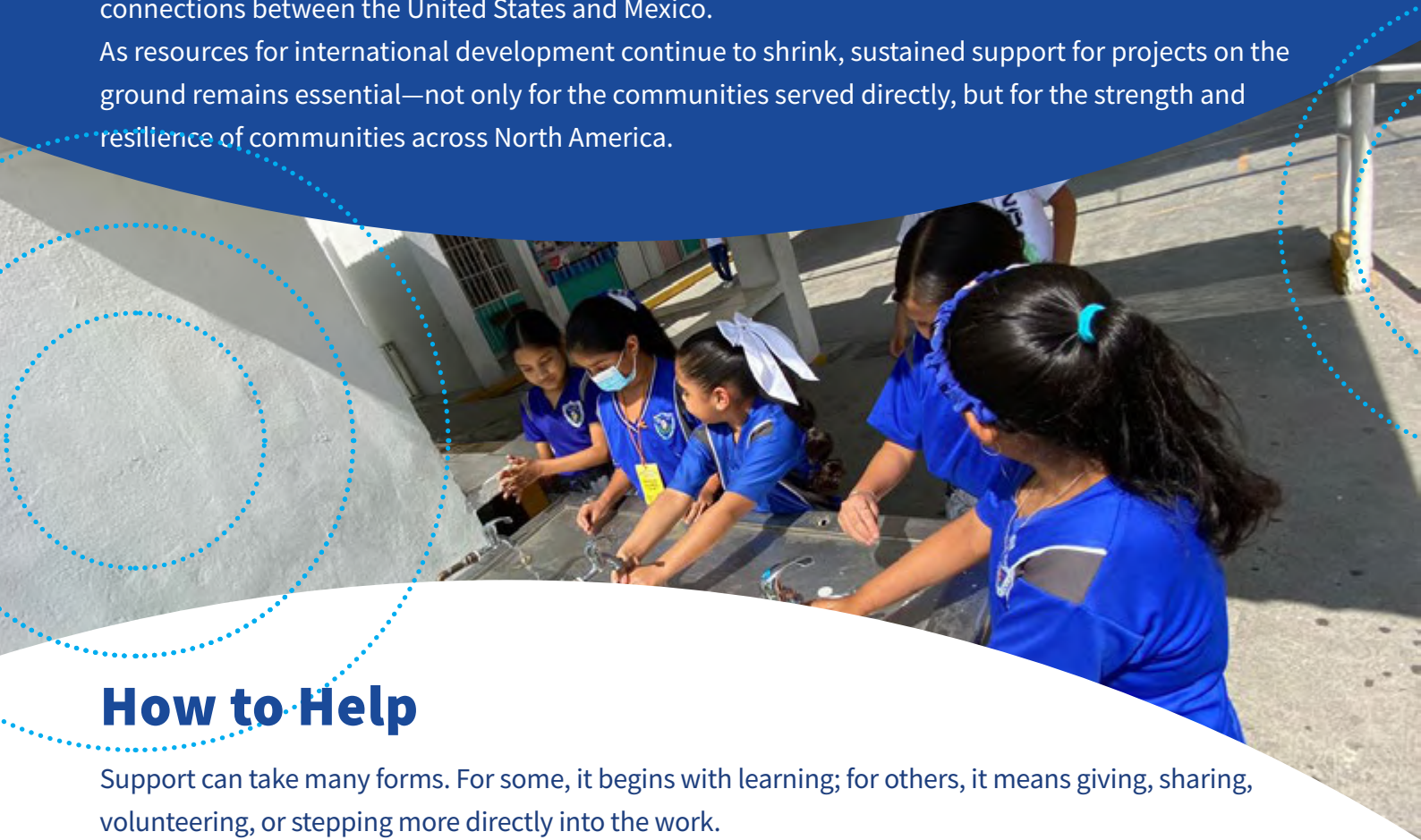
## What Matters Now

Looking ahead, the reflections point to what feels most important right now: deepening adoption, improving how the work is carried out, and continuing to build for long-term impact.

A key priority is strengthening the adoption of rainwater harvesting in schools through relationship-building, follow-up visits, workshops, and ongoing learning. At the same time, Isla Urbana USA remains focused on developing thoughtful, effective models that help reach communities more deeply, stay meaningfully connected, and continue learning in order to improve how the work serves others.

Through rainwater harvesting systems and water filters for families and schools, Isla Urbana USA is helping address urgent water needs while also supporting communities in managing their own solutions. More than ever, this work also highlights the importance of strengthening meaningful connections between the United States and Mexico.

As resources for international development continue to shrink, sustained support for projects on the ground remains essential—not only for the communities served directly, but for the strength and resilience of communities across North America.



## How to Help

Support can take many forms. For some, it begins with learning; for others, it means giving, sharing, volunteering, or stepping more directly into the work.

Support starts with understanding more about sustainability and community-based solutions like rainwater harvesting, as well as the realities many communities in Mexico face. Every contribution matters. Supporting even one household system can help bring water access closer, and community fundraising can create meaningful impact.

Whether through learning, sharing, donating, or volunteering, every level of engagement helps strengthen the work on the ground—rooted not in hierarchy, but in mutual respect and shared purpose.

# Walking in the Rain

The final reflection is the most personal. It reminds us that beyond systems, strategy, and partnerships, this work is also about relationships: with rain, with water, and with the beauty of seeing both differently.



**Jennifer White,**

*General Director at Isla Urbana Mexico, Mexico*

Now when it rains, I immediately think about water tanks filling up. There is something beautiful about knowing that rain can mean water for a family. My children feel that connection too. They often say, “It’s raining, that means we have more water.” They walk in the rain more than I do.



**Renata Fenton,**

*Director at Isla Urbana US, Mexico*

Rain feels magical to me. It reminds me of both the beauty of water and the responsibility we carry to conserve it and harvest it thoughtfully for all living beings. Rainy days fill me with energy. And yes, with a nickname like Rain, of course I walk in the rain.

**Elisa Sabatini,**

*Board member at Isla Urbana USA, USA*

I live in a region with little rainfall, so when it rains, everything feels renewed. The landscape changes, hillsides turn green, and cactus begin to bloom. I love to walk in the rain.



**Jaime Croteau,**

*Board member at Isla Urbana USA, US*

This work has made me see rain as so much more than weather. Water is life, and rain now feels like a kind of gift that can bring water directly to people who need it. When paired with a simple way to harvest it, rain can transform daily life for families and communities across Mexico. Supporting Isla Urbana USA



# To Our Supporters, Partners, Collaborators, Rainmakers, and Friends, Thank You.

Thank you for walking with us this year.

Your support helped Isla Urbana USA continue bringing clean, reliable water closer to families, schools, and communities that need it most. In a world that has often felt tense and divided, your generosity has helped us keep building with connection, care, and shared purpose.

On behalf of the entire Isla Urbana community, thank you. Every donation, partnership, and collaboration has helped strengthen this work across borders. Your support does more than fund rainwater harvesting systems—it helps build stronger communities and lasting change.

Thank you for being part of this work.

**With Gratitude,  
The Isla Urbana USA Team**

## We would like to give special thanks to:

**KOHLER**

 **PENTAIR**

 **LIQUIDIV.®**

**PIB** Premier  
Banks FCM

  
CAMARONI



Isla**Urbana**

Isla Urbana USA is a proud member of the Isla Urbana organization network, a pioneering institution harnessing rainwater harvesting for water sustainability.



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