By supporting the Popular Peasant Movement (MCP) in Brazil, you are funding work that is a model for helping peasant communities around the world. The formula is to:

• Develop small-scale agriculture using locally adapted seeds that can be grown organically without the use of dangerous chemical pesticides and fertilizers;
• Empower the community — especially women — to govern themselves effectively; and,
• Create markets for selling crops in excess of what families need for food.

This not only helps the families avoid hunger (since the seeds are more productive and cheaper than industrial seeds and products), it also develops sustainable local economies, and it helps to save Mother Earth from the ravages of industrial farming.

The MCP’s Creole Seeds Project seeks to rescue, reproduce and distribute heirloom (aka Creole) bean, corn and rice seeds that have been locally cultivated by generations of farmers for resiliency, adaptability, taste and appearance. This provides an alternative to GMO seeds aggressively marketed by international agribusiness. MCP families produce over 270 tons of certified non-GMO seeds every year, and MCP sells the seeds to a government program called the Food Acquisition Program, which then works with MCP to distribute the seeds to peasant farmers.

Continued on page 4
Through a Donor’s Eyes

Dear Fellow Grassroots Supporters,

I have long been a Grassroots International supporter, and for most of that time, I was only able to read and see pictures of what my support accomplished. When I recently traveled to Palestine with Grassroots International’s donor delegation, it made me proud to see firsthand the work we are doing together.

The programs we support are vital because much of what is happening in Palestine is unjust.

For an example, I stayed overnight in the village of Susiya, where I was welcomed like family, even though they knew I was Jewish. The whole community lives in tents because their homes have been destroyed. They continue to face on-going harassment by both nearby Israeli settlers as well as by the Israeli government, who periodically enter their community and knocks down their living structures.

There was truly much to see that was disturbing. For example, the average Israeli uses 300 liters of water per day, but Palestinians are limited by bureaucracy and lack of access to 30-70 liters — far below the WHO recommended minimum of 100 liters per day.

Thankfully, one of Grassroots International’s partners has already drilled 357 agricultural wells to help Palestinians grow enough food to feed their families.

It’s disheartening to learn of the many terrible things happening in the world and not know what to do that might make any difference. But I truly do believe that Grassroots International’s work with its partners in Palestine does make a difference. That’s why I give to Grassroots International and encourage others to do so as well.

On behalf of the people of Palestine, thank you for sharing a commitment to this effort.

Sincerely,

Nancy Gold

From the Executive Director

As we approach the final weeks of our election season, I think about what participatory democracy and government accountability really means. And even as we do our part by voting and other ways, I also ask — what can we learn from our partners, about participatory democracy and organizing to hold government and corporations accountable?

In this issue of Insights, you’ll read about two pretty amazing examples of grassroots communities organizing to stop the bad — like stopping a destructive mining project in Mexico, and to build the good — like the alternative community infrastructure in Brazil, of a distribution system for native seeds and healthy school lunches. And these partners do this work by organizing the people most affected by these policies — peasants and community members most affected by hunger and mining.

Participatory democracy is not just about voting; it’s about empowering ordinary community members to do extraordinary things. They stop the bad; they build the good — and simultaneously, they build a vibrant democracy. Because without a strong democracy, these fragile victories are always at risk of being rolled back by corrupt and undemocratic governments or aggressive corporate projects.

And finally, a big thanks to Nancy Gold, one of our amazing donor-activists, for sharing her reflections about a deep connection she made with our Palestinian partners.

Thank you for being part of the Grassroots International community and part of our work to strengthen democracy and solidarity around the world.

In gratitude and solidarity,
Chung-Wha Hong,
Executive Director
Of all the industries in the profit-oriented global extraction economy, few can match the destructive power of mining. Mining by giant international corporations too often leaves behind disrupted communities, lifeless, poisoned landscapes, and profits that quickly fly to the bank accounts of the already rich. And far too often the people who bear the brunt of the devastation are the peasants who lived on the land prior to mining.

In Mexico, 17% of the nation’s territory has been taken by private mining companies for “open sky” extraction (similar to mountaintop removal in the U.S.).

Grassroots International’s partners have worked to strengthen peasant and Indigenous Peoples’ resistance as they build their self-governance power. Passage of community resolutions that prohibit mining serve as legal instruments to prevent new proposals that will jeopardize the rights and health of the community, stop privatization and regain control of their land and resources, protect Mother Earth, achieve food sovereignty, and keep local traditions of community organization alive.

Agapito Martinez, who lives in Magdalena Teitipac, a town in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, shared his community’s story about resisting the mining company that was poisoning their home:

“We started taking the fight seriously when some of our animals died. We realized the pollution the company was bringing to our community. So we started organizing...”

This was not an easy fight, and some members of the community spent time in jail for their peaceful resistance. And the mining company Plata Real (a subsidiary of the Canadian Linear Gold Corporation) is still trying to regain access to resume mining.

Thanks to our supporters, Grassroots International training — especially our work to empower women as leaders — is credited with playing a key role in helping the community protect itself.
Across the globe, grassroots organizations are steadfastly defending the ability for rural women and youth, family farmers and Indigenous People to decide how to share and steward land, food and water. Yet the forces seeking to concentrate control of the world’s land, food and water work voraciously.

Our solidarity and support for their movements for human rights and dignity must grow as well.

That is why, as Grassroots International approaches its fourth decade, we invite you to consider creative gift planning to make a larger and more lasting impact in the struggle for a just and sustainable world.

You don’t need great wealth to make a major contribution to the movements you support through Grassroots International. With creative gift planning, you can make a truly significant gift to the future, one that can transform lives and help lead to lasting social justice for years to come.

There are many ways, some very simple to provide for the future through Grassroots International:

1. Gifts from your will or trust
2. Gifts from a retirement plan
3. Gifts of stock and appreciated assets
4. Naming Grassroots International as a future beneficiary of your life insurance, bank account or other asset.

Carol Schachet, our Director of Development and Communications, can help answer any of your questions about gift planning. Please call Carol at (617) 524-1400 or e-mail her at Carol@GrassrootsOnline.org

Creole Seeds, School Lunches And A Farmers Market

Continued from page 1

In the city of Catalão, MCP has held trainings to develop the leadership skills of women. Those women then led the way in MCP’s School Lunch Project. As a way to generate income for small farmers, Brazil’s federal school lunch program (PNAE) requires that 30% of food served in public schools be sourced from family farmers. Every week, women of MCP prepare meals and snacks that are sold to PNAE to be distributed in local schools. Women trained by MCP also created a thriving weekly farmers market to sell vegetables, fruits, sweets and snacks to nearby communities.

These amazing programs may be at risk following the right-wing coup in Brazil. That’s why Grassroots International and our partners, like the MCP, work not only to promote sustainable agriculture but also to defend democracy and build a larger movement for food rights.

With funding for these critical programs, and the movements behind them, Grassroots International and our supporters stand with peasant communities in Brazil as they feed themselves and build a future for their families.