



INSIGHTS

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Women's Access to Land is a Human Right

Nearly 80% of people in parts of the developing world depend on women farmers for their daily food. For these people, women's land rights mean survival.

Yet male-centered ownership laws and multinational land grabs unjustly take land away from local women farmers throughout the world and the new "Green Revolution" imposes cash crops and huge monocultures at the expense of healthy soil, healthy communities and women's lives.

With the help of our donors, Grassroots International supports women as they organize for their rights. We do this because they are the ones most affected and because the leadership of women often results in creative, practical and effective solutions. When women secure their rights, ultimately the whole community benefits — and in the case of women farmers, so too does the sustainability of the earth itself.

World March of Women (WMW) – Ending Poverty and Violence Against Women

Our new global partner, WMW, is organizing training that combines



feminist political education and food sovereignty. With support from Grassroots International, WMW will hold an important conference in Mali that will draw women from all over Africa to discuss strategies to assert human rights, resist industrial agriculture, protect traditional seeds and defend land.

We Are the Solution (WAS) – Community Radio Builds a Movement of Rural Farmers

WAS is a campaign of rural women farmer associations in five countries of West Africa who support each other in efforts to secure their rights to land so they can feed their families. One tool to help spread information and

strengthen ties is community radio. Grassroots International supports efforts to train women leaders to host community radio programs. Our supporters are also providing funds for trainings for women on their land rights as well as sustainable agricultural practices.

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Through a Donor's Eyes

Dear Fellow Grassroots Supporters,

My daily work as a civil rights lawyer at the Prison Law Office on behalf of incarcerated men and women gives me a special appreciation for the human rights work that Grassroots International does all over the world.

Even here in the United States, in a stable democracy, with a relatively impartial court system, we have a hard time securing the rights of people who are poor. And an even harder time effecting real social change. It's a struggle.

That's why I'm so impressed with Grassroots International's approach to support and empower people to fight for their own rights. I'm impressed with their patience to win long-term change. And most of all, I'm impressed with the courage and determination of the people Grassroots International serves all over the world.

I'm also inspired by the way Grassroots International supports people the rest of the world wants to forget. The desperate plight of Palestinian workers and farmers is one of those "third rails" that no one wants to touch, especially here in the U.S. But Grassroots International is there working with Palestinian partners year after year.

I'm honored to be a part of this fight for human rights and progress.

As much as I love what I do and recommit myself to it every day, I'm frustrated that my work sometimes feels like a band-aid. We're trying to help people win back tiny scraps of dignity at the end of a long trail of misfortune and oppression.

I love that Grassroots International approaches the problems at the very root, helping people fight for opportunities, climate justice and food sovereignty.

With so much in the world that is foul right now, and so many horrible things that people in power are doing, I'm glad to be part of a global counterweight. Supporting Grassroots International over the last eleven years has helped me to feel internationally connected in a way that my local work can't. I'm grateful for the opportunity to give.

— Sara Norman



From the Executive Director

At a most basic level, Grassroots International and our global partners believe that land, water and food are human rights. Not commodities. Not spoils for the rich and powerful. That's the fundamental principle that drives movements and communities to organize to protect land and territory, even facing great risk to themselves.

In this issue of *Insights*, you will read stories of women on the frontlines of protecting people and the planet — in West Africa, Palestine, Guatemala and elsewhere. Grassroots International is honored to connect you to these partners and update you on their work.

This is also a moment to recognize the devastation facing climate-impacted communities from Houston to Haiti to India. As I write this letter, Hurricane Irma is starting to bear down on the Caribbean before turning northward toward the East Coast of the US. One lesson I've learned again and again is that meaningful relief and recovery efforts must be directed by communities on the ground. This is not only the right thing to do, but the most effective strategy, because local organizations can identify, coordinate and respond to their own community's needs quickly and in a way that builds longer term community resiliency and leadership.

There is so much you and Grassroots International can do to support politically and financially the movements for change from the grassroots up. Together we can remain steadfast in our resolve to be, as Sara Norman so eloquently puts it (p. 2), a counterweight to so much in the world that is foul right now.

In gratitude and solidarity,
Chung-Wha Hong
Executive Director

“Hurricane Matthew is the worst disaster in the history of Haiti for peasants,”

says Chavannes Jean Baptiste, of the National Congress of the Peasant Movement of Papaye, a peasant organization of more than 100,000 members and a partner of Grassroots International.

True Relief Comes from the Grassroots

When people are desperately trying to recover from a natural disaster such as an earthquake or storm, their need for assistance leaves them vulnerable to a permanent loss of human rights. Top-down relief too often comes with strings that create dependency and make rural families even more susceptible to the next disaster.

This was especially true of the aid that reached Haiti after the terrible magnitude 7 earthquake that killed more than 100,000 people in 2010. It's not hard to understand, then, why rural people in Haiti were wary of accepting help last year after Hurricane Matthew destroyed 80% of the food supply.

They welcomed assistance from Grassroots International, however, because they see our relationship as a partnership. The local groups we fund go directly to local people — without a language barrier — to ask what they need to survive, rebuild and better

protect themselves in the future. As climate change increases the severity of natural disasters in many parts of the world, redirecting relief and development aid to community-led efforts is essential, so that it protects the rights and assures the leadership of people most impacted.

Defense Against Disease

Disease often kills more people than injury or starvation after disasters. After asking our partner the National Congress of the Papaye Peasant Movement what was most needed, Grassroots International helped to provide emergency water and medicine for cholera, in addition to food, clothing and temporary shelter.

Rapid Restoration of Food Production

Grassroots International donor support helped us provide funding to our Haitian partners for distribution of seeds, such as plantains and yams that grow rapidly, to help the community stave off famine and re-establish sources of livelihood.

Black beans and corn seeds also gave local farmers much-needed staples of the rural Haitian diet. With new seeds, farmers immediately worked to restore destroyed crops.

Rebuilding the Future

At the request of farmer and peasant organizations across Haiti, Grassroots International is funding efforts to provide farm training to cultivate climate-resilient crops with agroecological farming techniques. We're also supporting efforts to restore farmlands and eroded lands and build climate-resilient housing.

Haiti is both a geological hotspot and right in the path of hurricanes. There is no way to prevent the people from being hit by disaster. But our support for their own grassroots-directed efforts can help protect the human rights of the people of Haiti and make them less at risk of tragedy in an era of climate change.

PLANT SMART! SOW SEEDS OF GLOBAL JUSTICE ALL YEAR LONG!

Please consider joining us as a monthly donor today. It's a fast, easy and efficient way to support global justice! Plus, we'll send you less mail — which means that more of your donation goes directly to our program work — and you don't have to write checks or go online to give. Everything is automatic!

Your **Seeds of Change** membership maximizes your impact in the fight for global justice, enabling us to make long-term investments in movements around the world. **Any amount is meaningful — even as little as \$10 a month.** Please join us today at GrassrootsOnline.org/SeedsOfChange!

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Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) – Women Asserting Food Rights

In Palestine, the loss of human rights has directly led to increased poverty rates and hunger in recent decades. Funding from Grassroots International supports the UAWC's Women's Empowerment Project that trains women to gain economic independence and become less dependent on international relief programs.

Peasant Unity Committee – Women Taking Control of Food Sovereignty

By funding the Women's Vegetable Garden Project in Guatemala, Grassroots International supporters are providing the tools and skills needed to regain food sovereignty by using local seeds and natural fertilizers for their home and community gardens. With this assistance, women can resist the forces of multinational agribusiness that try to usurp their land rights.



UAWC member presenting herbs and seasonings processed through a solar hydrator.

At the same time, women are leading the way toward healthier food, lower malnutrition rates and stronger family incomes. ■

Through programs like these, Grassroots International is supporting women as they assert their leadership to defend human rights and protect the earth.

Grassroots International works in partnership with social movements to create a just and sustainable world by advancing human rights to land, water, and food through global grantmaking, building solidarity across organizations and movements, and advocacy in the US. 