



Response and Resistance: Social Movements, Covid & Converging Crises

INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS	
Introduction	1
Context	2
<i>Snapshots</i>	
Burkina Faso	5
Palestine	6
Puerto Rico	7
Honduras	8
Brazil	9
Haiti	10
Key Learnings	11
Conclusion	13

When Covid-19 erupted in 2020, the world was already facing mounting social and environmental crises. Hunger was on the rise, as were the climate crisis, corporate concentration, authoritarianism, and militarization. As the pandemic traveled down the well-worn path of inequality, it interacted with these and other preexisting threats, each magnifying the effects of the other. Inevitably, the very same populations found themselves in the cross-hairs of multiple assaults – peasants and workers across the food chain, Black and Indigenous communities, women and youth.

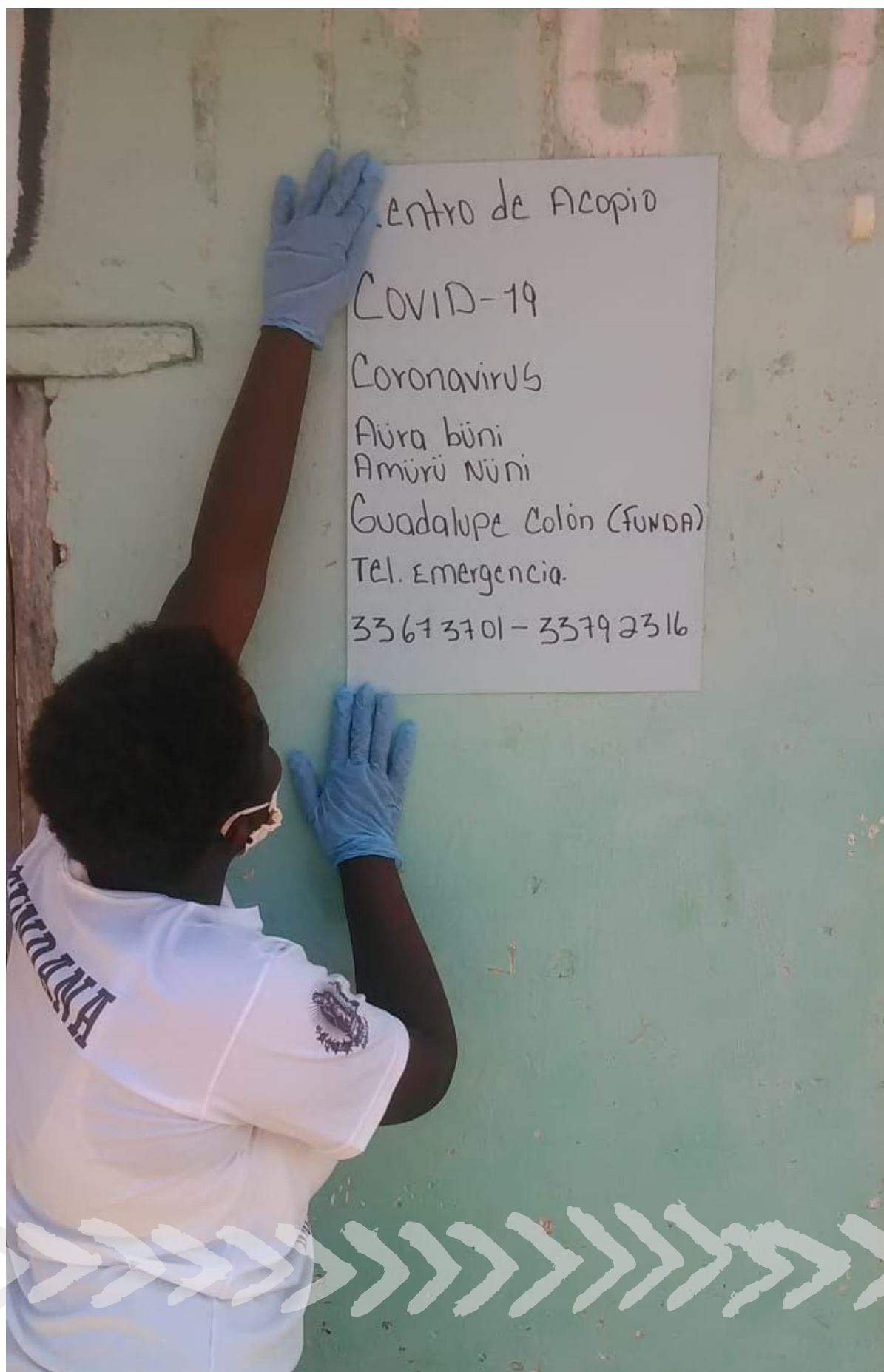
A striking example is in the Gaza Strip, where Palestinians had been living under a suffocating blockade for over a decade when the pandemic struck. Between crowded conditions and heavily restricted access to essentials like medical supplies and water, proper Covid prevention and treatment were all but impossible. Access to vaccines was also blocked at the same time that they were distributed widely to the surrounding Israeli population. Then, in May 2021, while still in the throes of the pandemic, heightened Israeli military attacks brought further devastation to Gaza, including the destruction of its only Covid testing lab and the displacement of nearly 90,000 people. On top of the attacks being a moral outrage, medical professionals warned of their “super spreader” potential.

Another vivid example can be found in Brazil, where deaths from Covid-19 surpassed half a million in little over a year. There, the pandemic has combined with authoritarianism under Jair Bolsonaro to result in some of the highest Covid death rates in the world, together with heightened rates of poverty, land invasions, and displacement.

From the outset of the pandemic, social movements have approached it with the conviction that if Covid cannot be separated from the other crises at present, neither can its response. At Grassroots International, we have made a special effort to support our movement partners and allies in holistic responses to the pandemic, while bolstering their ongoing work to tackle injustices on multiple fronts. We have done so through both our Covid emergency grantmaking (totaling more than \$850,00) and our overall grantmaking since the start of the pandemic. We are pleased to present this report highlighting some of the transformative responses to the pandemic by movements that we have been honored to accompany.

The report highlights, for instance, how social movements have served as critical first responders to the pandemic, through their deep roots and mobilizing capacities within many of the hardest hit communities. It also underscores how movements are not only addressing immediate needs through their Covid response, but sowing seeds for the better world that is possible in the wake of the pandemic. Indeed, a large part of what has made their response efforts so effective is that they had been steadily building toward their transformative visions all along.

As this report is being released, the Covid pandemic remains a reality across the globe. We hope that these insights inform ongoing response efforts, as well as informing collective visioning on recovery from the pandemic and building anew in its aftermath. Finally, these learnings go well beyond Covid. They are about working toward change in a world ever more prone to uncertainty, inequality, war, and ecological destruction. As movements forge new ways forward, it is essential that we join them in solidarity and action.



CONTEXT: COVID & CONVERGING CRISES

Two years into the Covid-19 pandemic, all of us continue to be affected by it, albeit in highly uneven ways. For some, recent months had marked an easing of restrictions following mass vaccination against Covid-19, at least until advanced virus strains raised new alerts. For others, both the pandemic and its economic fall-out remain widespread and devastating. Unsurprisingly, these diverging realities fall largely along the global North-South divide between countries. At the time of writing, more than 85% of those living in low-income countries have yet to receive a first vaccine for Covid while wealthy countries hoard more than their populations need, in a global scenario of “vaccine apartheid.” Disparities also fall along lines such as race, class, and gender within countries. In the US, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color continue to be about twice as likely to die from Covid as the white population.

How did we get to this place?

First, global system failures (really, failures by design) made us susceptible to this pandemic to begin with. Take the industrial food system. In driving habitat loss through land clearing and promoting factory-like farming operations on a mass scale, it has fostered the precise conditions for viruses like Covid to emerge and spread. The industrial food system, furthermore, forms part of a globalized web of supply chains that facilitate the rapid travel of pandemics across the globe.

Second, system failures have made the pandemic as devastating – and as unequally devastating – as it has been. This can be seen in the multiple, overlapping crises that were already facing frontline communities across the globe before Covid was added to the mix, making the pandemic ever more disastrous. These include:

LAND AND WATER GRABBING

Every day, rural communities across the globe face the attempted theft of their territories by corporate and state powers. Particularly pervasive are large-scale land transfer deals that displace communities, cutting off their access to vital resources, including forests, grazing lands, oceans, rivers, lakes, and aquifers. Many of these deals are ostensibly legal, even if in clear violation of human rights. And they are inextricably tied to neo-colonialism and the predominance of extractive economies. Movements and researchers have reported increased incidents of land and water grabbing during the pandemic, as governments have used Covid as a pretext for rolling back existing protections. In turn, the resulting displacements make communities all the more vulnerable to the pandemic.

FOOD CRISIS

Land and water grabbing are directly enmeshed in the crisis of our food system, in which hunger persists despite there being more than enough food to go around; the majority of the hungry are, paradoxically, food producers and food chain workers themselves; and exploitation, inequality, pollution and waste abound from production to plate. Much of this is attributed to mounting corporate concentration within the food system, and to an industrial model of agriculture harmful both to people and the planet. As a symptom of a food system in crisis, hunger was already on the rise for five years in a row before Covid and has dramatically worsened over the course of the pandemic.

CLIMATE CHAOS

Overshadowed by the pandemic was the fact that 2020 tied with 2016 as being the hottest year on record, while 2021 brought the highest-ever recorded ocean temperatures. As climate-induced weather extremes have continued to intensify over the course of the pandemic, the ensuing displacements have pushed already vulnerable communities further into the pandemic's path. This was seen, for instance, when hurricanes Eta and Iota slammed Central America in late 2020, leaving more than 200,000 people without homes. While frontline communities are bearing the brunt of climate chaos coupled with Covid, they are also on the receiving end of dangerous false solutions, such as land and water grabbing packaged as “green” and “blue” carbon mitigation schemes.





ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

The pandemic has both exposed and intensified extreme inequalities within and among countries, fostered by an extractive economic system that concentrates wealth and drives poverty. Before Covid, 64 of the poorest countries were already spending more on external debt payments than on their public health systems, making them particularly vulnerable to the pandemic. Covid has further deepened the debt crisis, with Africa's external debt now past \$700 billion, as resources continue to be plundered across the continent. Hunger and poverty have both skyrocketed throughout the pandemic, with women and other vulnerable populations hit the hardest due to preexisting disparities. Economic inequality has also led to extremely uneven distribution of Covid vaccines, fostering "vaccine apartheid" that is claiming lives and prolonging the pandemic globally.



AUTHORITARIANISM

Growing inequalities are among the factors that have fueled a widely recognized surge in authoritarian regimes across the globe. While this global rise in authoritarianism predated Covid-19, right-wing governments from Brazil to the Philippines have used the pandemic as an excuse to further advance military incursions and power grabs and to stifle dissent. Over the course of the pandemic, authoritarian regimes have dismantled social safety nets; forcefully displaced communities; further criminalized informal and migrant workers; quashed forms of protest; rolled back human rights protections while forcing through regressive laws and policies; and authorized new megaprojects further violating the rights of communities, among countless other violations.



WAR AND OCCUPATION

Authoritarian regimes could not exert such power were they not propped up by a vastly powerful military-industrial complex extending to all corners of the globe. As this report is released, global attention is on war in Ukraine, adding to numerous other military conflicts and occupations largely out of the public consciousness. Militarization, war, occupation, and coercive measures such as economic sanctions rob lives; displace communities; ravage farmland, water supplies, and critical infrastructure; drive up hunger (including by fueling global food price volatility, as we're seeing now); contribute massively to climate change (the U.S. military alone is a larger polluter than about 140 countries); and reduce the ability of populations to withstand other crises—like global pandemic.



These and other crises each interact with Covid – and with each other – in a multitude of ways, meaning that communities and movements have not just been grappling with Covid but Covid intersecting with multiple, pre-existing crises. That is, Covid is both exacerbating and being exacerbated by other crises.

Furthermore, class, gender, and race are among the fragile fault lines upon which these crises manifest in uneven ways. From climate chaos to the food crisis to authoritarianism and militarization, it is working-class women and gender nonconforming people of color who are hit the hardest, and this has been all the more the case since the start of the pandemic. Covid, for instance, has pushed more women than men into extreme poverty, while the burden of unpaid care and domestic work faced by women "exploded" under Covid, in the words of the UN. The pandemic also gave rise to alarming spikes in violence against women and gender nonconforming people across the globe.



Pushing Back Against Covid and Land Grabbing with Women-Led Agroecology in Burkina Faso

Covid has been sweeping across West Africa together with large-scale land grabs – both phenomena threatening the survival of rural communities who have guarded their Sahelian territories for millennia. Corporate interest in farmland – for food crops and for climate change mitigation schemes – has driven working people out of the countryside, just as public services such as access to healthcare have plummeted in urban areas.

Many West African social movements recognize that these pressing issues are entwined with one another and connected at the root by a legacy of colonialism and patriarchy. Women peasants are leading these multifaceted struggles by strengthening their work around agroecology and building a broader movement to secure their historic rights to land, water, and seeds for generations to come. These dynamic movements operate at scale, from the local, to the regional, to the national level. We are the Solution is an umbrella organization, and a pioneer of demonstrating what feminism looks like in the West African context. It is active in seven countries throughout the subregion through a tightly woven network of national movements.

The Fédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (National Federation of Peasant Organizations, FENOP) is a member organization of We are the Solution operating across Burkina Faso, where it has carried out projects related to food sovereignty for 25 years. Over the course of the pandemic, FENOP has carried on with its promotion of agroecology – all the more essential in the face of rising food and input prices – as well as taking a number of measures to curb the spread of the virus. Both have involved in-person training as well as dissemination via community radio.

As a response to both Covid and unaffordable imported products, a women-led FENOP member organization has been making soap and training other peasants to follow suit. Soap makers use local natural ingredients such as shea butter and the black ash of native plants. Not only does this provide an educational platform for Covid prevention, but it also provides women a livelihood opportunity that is made by and for them. We are the Solution scales these efforts back up to the regional level – also spreading them horizontally, from one community to the next. Doing so is one of many ways in which West African social movements work together to protect land and territory.



PMRS
جمعية الإغاثة الطبية الفلسطينية
SNAPSHOT
Palestine

Resisting Medical Apartheid Through Community Healthcare in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

The extreme disparities in medical access across the globe spotlighted by the Covid pandemic are by no means accidental. In few places is this more apparent than the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli government was proactive in its Covid response, with early precautionary measures followed by wide-scale vaccination of Israelis. Meanwhile, it systematically denied the same protections to the Palestinians living under Israeli control on their Indigenous lands. As a result, Israelis were already looking toward a “post-pandemic future” a year into Covid, while the pandemic remained a stark reality across Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These divergent scenarios reflect the apartheid system maintained by the Israeli government, of which medical apartheid is a key component.

In response, grassroots movements in Palestine have stepped up to control the spread of Covid-19 while providing necessary medical care. This includes the cutting-edge work of Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) in broadening access to healthcare for all, efforts which PMRS redoubled in the era of Covid. Through its network of more than 50 clinics, PMRS has provided vital community attention during the pandemic, both Covid-related and ongoing primary care for those who need it most. Particularly innovative are its mobile clinics, through which PMRS has provided healthcare access to more than 80 communities that would otherwise be cut off from services. These include hard-to-reach Bedouin communities in the West Bank that live under severe Israeli restrictions and are isolated by militarized checkpoints and other means. PMRS also supports those in Gaza, where access to healthcare is impeded by ongoing Israeli military aggression and blockade, with outside travel, even for medical treatment, all but impossible.

Central to PMRS’ strategy are its partnerships, which range from community-based organizations to UN agencies. PMRS’ community roots run particularly deep, enabling it to cultivate a cohort of 1000 community health workers in response to Covid. These volunteers have mobilized in all districts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip to contribute to a comprehensive community awareness campaign around Covid. This direct person-to-person outreach has been complemented by broadcasts over digital platforms to further extend the reach of PMRS in its Covid prevention efforts.

The political consequences of this work in the context of militarized settler colonialism are apparent in that Israeli forces have arrested several community health workers as well as prohibiting them from entering the old city in East Jerusalem. PMRS insists that a democratic society for all citizens must be based on human rights, of which health is paramount. Advocacy, in partnership with both Palestinian and international allies, thus forms another essential component of PMRS’ efforts as it strives toward this vision.



Confronting the ‘Shadow Pandemic’ of Gender-Based Violence Through Grassroots Feminisms in Puerto Rico

Interlinked with the Covid-19 pandemic has been a “shadow pandemic” in the form of increased gender-based violence across the globe. The situation is particularly extreme in Puerto Rico, where gender-based violence had already been sharply rising since 2018, fueled by the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Maria and a series of economic measures imposed by the US government that have left the population in increasingly dire straits. The layering of the Covid pandemic upon these already fragile conditions has resulted in a full-blown crisis for women and gender non-conforming people, with femicides occurring on a weekly basis.

Against this backdrop, La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción (the Feminist Collective in Construction, known as La Cole) has organized around Covid from a grassroots feminist perspective. This includes highlighting the “feminization of the crisis” – the fact that, from healthcare to food chain workers, women are on the front lines of pandemic response. La Cole also stresses that staying home, as advised by the government, is neither possible nor safe for everyone, particularly for those facing domestic violence.

La Cole makes critical links between violence carried out in homes and structural violence connected to colonialism, patriarchy and racism that intersect through gender-based violence. It asserts that its approach to feminism considers the material conditions of women and gender non-conforming people and connects with struggles against colonialism, anti-Black violence and the austerity measures of the government.

Early on in the pandemic, La Cole organized popular caravans to push the government for widespread Covid testing and transparency in the handling of the pandemic, along with expansion of nutrition and economic assistance programs. As both the pandemic and shadow pandemic raged on, La Cole mobilized its bases to pressure the government to declare a state of emergency on gender-based violence in Puerto Rico, eventually succeeding in early 2021. In doing so, it built upon the mass mobilizing tactics used in the #RickyRenuncia rebellion in 2019 that took down the corrupt former governor – in which La Cole had also played a key role.

Since the state of emergency declaration, La Cole has not stopped – and refuses to stop – mobilizing until the government matches its stated commitment with concrete action. Its grassroots feminist strategy in the face of Covid goes far beyond protest, however. Building upon the experience of Hurricane Maria, together with other movements, La Cole is bolstering community power through collective care and mutual aid toward visions of just recovery and just transformation.



Community Self-Protection against Pandemic and Racialized Violence in Honduras

In the tumultuous aftermath of a US-backed coup in 2009 that gave rise to a twelve-year narco-military regime, Honduras became a particularly hostile place for defenders of land and territory. Land grabs and forced displacements of communities to make way for free trade zones and megaprojects are commonplace, as are kidnappings and assassinations of environmental activists. This is especially the case for Honduras' Afro-Indigenous Garífuna communities, who face near-constant assaults on their physical bodies and their ancestral lands – attacks with obvious racial undertones.

Among the ways that the Garífuna people have resisted is through organizing and building power under the banner of the Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras, OFRANEH). When Covid struck Honduras, it combined with the above-mentioned conditions into a deadly mix. With already marginalized Garífuna communities at particular risk, OFRANEH responded rapidly by building upon a number of ongoing efforts.

These efforts have included community safety and protection measures, in which community members monitor comings and goings as a protective mechanism against abductions and other forms of state-sanctioned violence. Community checkpoints used for safety monitoring have doubled as health monitoring and washing stations, combating both violent attacks and Covid. Monitoring efforts have also involved identification of most vulnerable community members, such as the elderly, who are in need of extra support.

The pandemic has also encouraged OFRANEH to build upon its grassroots feminist work to value and protect the traditional healing knowledge held by women. This has included the development of a detailed guide to ancestral plant-based medicines. The guide focuses on natural medicines with immune system-boosting properties to help keep community members' immune systems strong in the face of Covid. A survey and additional tools have been developed along with the guide for use in community-based health education.

Additionally, OFRANEH has worked with communities to establish five “Garífuna Community Ancestral Health Houses” and fifteen centers for attention to Covid as further measures to promote community health and safety while preserving ancestral knowledge essential to defense of territory and the sustenance of life. Faced with a lack of medical infrastructure and health care access, such measures have been absolutely key to the survival of Garífuna communities throughout the pandemic.



Building Food Sovereignty amidst Authoritarianism-Fueled Pandemic in Brazil

When Covid-19 hit Brazil under the grip of the far-right authoritarian regime of Jair Bolsonaro, the results were disastrous. Brazil rapidly became among the top countries in the world both in number of Covid cases and Covid-related deaths. Unemployment, hunger and poverty simultaneously soared to their highest rates in decades. Key to the magnitude of devastation from the pandemic is that the Bolsonaro regime had overseen a major expansion of agribusiness and other business interests while dismantling much of the country's social safety net just prior to the pandemic. The latter included cuts to essential public health infrastructure, income supports, and Brazil's once widely acclaimed Zero Hunger programs, among other devastating losses. The country's public health system was already reeling by the time the pandemic struck, with hunger and poverty on the rise.

Against this backdrop, Brazil's Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement, the MST) has led a valiant struggle to protect the population from Covid-19, while simultaneously upholding its agenda of food sovereignty based on agroecology and popular agrarian reform. Early into the pandemic, while the Bolsonaro regime was dangerously dismissing Covid, the MST sprang into action. In a rural area in dire need of health facilities, it converted one of its agroecology schools into a field hospital while advocating for government action. And it activated its National Health Collective to send out cohorts of "popular health agents" into communities to raise awareness of the virus and help curb its spread – an effort that continues to expand and multiply.

The MST also turned its attention to the "hunger pandemic" accompanying Covid, with massive distributions of food produced in its settlements through agroecology methods. As of January 2022, the MST had distributed well over one million lunchboxes and more than six thousand tons of food since the start of the pandemic, largely to urban dwellers in need. Essential to these still-ongoing efforts has been their organizing component. The MST is clear that this is not a one-way distribution of food, but a form of popular organizing across the urban-rural divide, building essential linkages toward a vision of food sovereignty.

Additionally, through the Brazil Popular Front, together with the People Without Fear Front, the MST has joined with other movements in calling for vaccine access for all (with the slogan "vacina no braço comida no prato," "vaccine in the arm, food on the plate"), the restoration of emergency aid slashed by the government, protection of the public medical system, and an end to the Bolsonaro regime. These and other forms of mass mobilization toward system-wide change form an essential component of the MST's pandemic response.



Revitalizing the Countryside through Peasant Agriculture Amidst Converging Crises in Haiti

Haiti is currently facing its worst hunger crisis in more than a decade, compounded by ongoing effects of the Covid pandemic, political upheaval, and an earthquake that rocked the south in 2021. The root causes of the crisis are multifold. Through decades of neocolonial relations with the US, Haiti moved from an agricultural surplus to import dependency for upwards of 60% of its food. Additionally, the country's domestic agriculture sector has been hard hit by climate chaos in the form of intensifying drought and damage from hurricanes over the past decade, worsened by widespread deforestation. This, in turn, has exacerbated rural-urban migration, with crowded, unsanitary living conditions and inadequate medical infrastructure in the capital and other cities.

The overlapping crises facing Haiti at present point to the need to revitalize the countryside. This is precisely the work that the Mouvement Peyizan Papay (Peasant Movement of Papaye, MPP) has been doing over many decades. MPP is addressing the environmental crisis in the countryside through a massive community-based reforestation effort. The more than 50 million trees planted through the efforts of MPP buffer against both droughts and floods while providing food, fiber and fodder. MPP is also fostering a future in the countryside through revitalized food economies grounded in agroecology. Among the visions is to prevent further rural exodus while giving those who have left the countryside a reason to return, as was piloted through ecovillages for victims of the 2010 earthquake.

While such efforts aim to make Haiti less vulnerable to pandemics and other shocks in the future, MPP has also been doing its part in the midst of the current Covid outbreak to curb the spread of the virus into rural areas, including through distribution of essential supplies and a massive communication campaign via its Peasant Voice radio station. Such preventative efforts continue to be life-saving at a time when the vast majority of the Haitian population has yet to be vaccinated against Covid. Haiti was among the last countries in the world to receive access to Covid vaccines, and, as of March 2022, [vaccine access](#) remains extremely limited.

The multiple injustices facing Haiti, many of them global in nature, have led MPP to scale its local work to the national and global levels, including through active membership in the Via Campesina global peasant movement – toward visions of climate justice, food sovereignty, and sovereignty more broadly in Haiti and beyond.

KEY LEARNINGS

The following are highlights of learnings gleaned from our social movement partners over the course of the past two years of pandemic:

1 We need system change. The Covid pandemic has vividly illustrated how systems of oppression feed into each other and why we need to dismantle them. This makes the big-picture demands of social movements – like debt abolition, reparations, ending fossil fuel subsidies, breaking up corporate monopolies, defunding war and militarization, etc. – more essential now than ever. To do so involves breaking out of our respective silos and linking up struggles toward the big picture of social and ecological transformation. For funders and other movement supporters, this entails having the courage to join movements in their bold stances while consistently challenging our own positions vis-à-vis oppressive systems.

2 Building community-based alternatives is key to collective survival. As we dismantle the old, we must build the new, and that is precisely what social movements have been doing, across multiple scales. At the same time that they are making demands of governments, movements are not waiting for governments to act, nor are they depending upon it. They are building their own systems – of food production and distribution, community protection, collective care work, community-based healthcare based on ancestral knowledge, feminist economies for the sustainability of life, etc. This approach has proven life-saving during the pandemic, particularly among communities that are off the radar of the state, or are targets of state-sanctioned violence.

3 Social movements have the solutions. Out of necessity, the pandemic has put many of the solutions long advanced by movements to the test – solutions like food sovereignty, feminist economies, and community-based healthcare. As noted in multiple examples above, local food systems based on agroecological production have enabled communities to feed themselves over the course of Covid amidst disruptions, shortages and inflated prices throughout conventional supply chains. There are also examples, such as that of MPP in Haiti, in which agroecology has been key to recovery efforts following disasters. This will undoubtedly be the case as we work to move beyond Covid. The pandemic has also underscored the importance of movement work around feminist economies, particularly with respect to often-invisibilized forms of care work carried out largely by women. Relatedly, movements have made major advances in expanding community-based healthcare infrastructure – from mobile clinics to volunteer health brigades to ancestral healing centers.

Pandemic Response Grants: 2020 to 2021

\$867,000+ Total Funds Provided

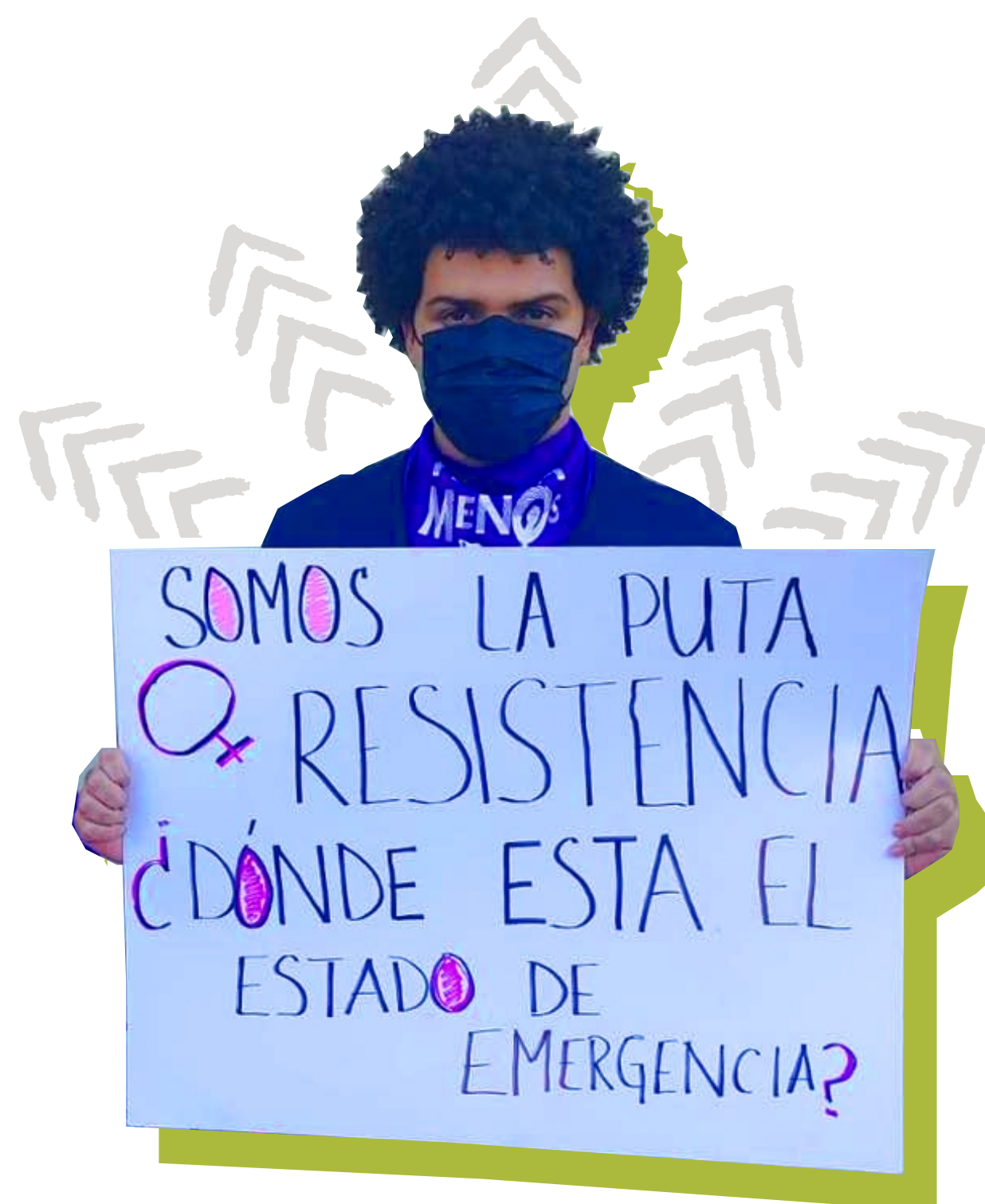
Asia	\$10,000	2 organizations
Brazil	\$168,000	19 organizations
Haiti	\$49,000	10 organizations
Mesoamerica	\$65,000	10 organizations
Middle East	\$96,000	9 organizations
Puerto Rico	\$88,000 ¹	20 organizations ¹
West Africa	\$150,000	13 organizations
Global Movements	\$5,000	1 organization
USA	\$236,000 ²	62 organizations ²

[1] includes \$28,000 dispersed to 7 orgs via BEAI Fund

[2] includes \$200,000 spread to 50 orgs via BEAI Fund

4 Social movements are essential first responders. Social movements were able to hit the ground running in their pandemic response because they already knew the lay of the land in their respective communities and had extensive networks built through trust over years of community organizing. They were able to rapidly mobilize these networks for emergency relief based on mutual aid. Such an approach dramatically departs from outside aid agencies parachuting in to provide one-time aid, often undermining efforts to build community-based infrastructure and local leadership over the long-term. The recognition of social movements' efficacy in emergency response does not deflect responsibility from governments to respond, which has consistently been a key demand of movements. Rather, it points to the type of grassroots-led response efforts governments and others should ideally be supporting. For funders, this underscores the importance of sustained flexible funding for movements that allows them to a) build up their internal capacity and b) rapidly shift gears for emergency response, if and when needed.

5 It takes people power to protect democracy in times of crisis. Moments of crisis are often used by governments and private interests as opportunities to undermine democracy and human rights. Over the course of the pandemic, we've seen increased repression, pandemic profiteering, concessions for extractive industries, further closing in of civil society space, and the attempted rollback of historic human right gains. Amidst these and other assaults, movements have remained vigilant and maintained resistance, as exemplified by the slogan of La Via Campesina "Stay Home but Not Silent." Community organizing coupled with international coordination has been key to these efforts, often facilitated by creative forms of popular media. Just as prior community organizing was key to successful pandemic response, for many movements, pandemic response has also been a means of community organizing and movement building.



6 International solidarity matters. Each of the movements featured in the snapshots above is articulated within broader national, regional, and/or global networks. We are all inextricably connected, even if we are impacted differently based on our respective locations and identities, and it's going to take all of us, everywhere, to get us out of this mess. It is arguably upon those of us living in centers of power like the US to step up most of all. This spirit of internationalist solidarity was embodied by the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), an alliance of frontline groups in the US, in its early Covid response. GGJ allocated 20% of the Covid relief funding it raised to Global South social movements via Grassroots International, in recognition of the disproportionate burdens they face, and of the common struggles shared across borders.

7 Movement-centered grantmaking is needed for the long term. Crises such as the current global pandemic call upon progressive funders to be disciplined about what it means to be movement-centered. The bottom line is not about how many masks are distributed or how much public health programming is conducted through funding social movements. It's about supporting movements through moments of crisis to save lives and build power. This includes advancing visionary solutions; defending policy gains against attacks, and sometimes even making new wins; supporting each other; clarifying visions; etc. – on their own terms.



CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the deep flaws inherent in many of our existing systems, leading more people to look to social movements for transformative visions of how to re-organize our societies. While the snapshots above are a small sampling of the vast movement-based work carried out over the course of the pandemic, we hope that they contribute insights into collective efforts toward change in the midst of the incredible uncertainty of our times. Among the resounding messages is that intersecting crises call for intersectional approaches — as exemplified by our movement partners and allies in powerful ways.

At Grassroots International, we are committed to incorporating these learnings more deeply into our work, including our strategies around solidarity philanthropy as we accompany movements over the long haul. We are also committed to sharing these insights more broadly with others, including other funders, so that we can continue to learn and evolve together. While some of the most effective and inspiring responses to the Covid pandemic are coming from social movements in the Global South, less than 1% of philanthropic funds are reaching them. This funding gap makes philanthropy complicit in perpetuating global inequalities, as seen in disparities in deaths, infections, and vaccine access. We can and must do better. From ending vaccine apartheid to challenging extractive economic policies to building stronger movement-support infrastructure, there are ample opportunities to challenge oppressive systems and to move closer toward the visions that social movements have long been advancing.

