What does 'grassroots' mean, anyway?



Grassroots means coming from, led by, and accountable to the people most impacted by a problem.

In the case of our ecological crisis, those most impacted are frontline communities or those bearing the brunt of the impacts from extractive industries and most directly affected by climate chaos, often Indigenous Peoples, women, peasant farmers, and youth.

Grassroots organizing has been a central strategy of almost every major social and economic transformation in world history. It builds people power and creates change across geographies and sectors.







Grassroots is distinct from 'grasstops' organizations in terms of the roles they play, how they are governed, and to whom they are accountable. There is overlap with movement-support organizations, but

grasstops often have a bigger mic and less accountability (e.g., local political figures).



Structure: Grassroots groups can have formal or informal structures (e.g., they may be legally registered or be housed within another organization). Their structures are often dynamic and change to meet current realities and contexts.



Reach: Grassroots groups can be local, national, regional, and international; and they can work within movements or outside of them. At whatever scale, grassroots groups are accountable to communities.



Size: Grassroots can mean small, volunteer-run groups or larger organizations with more developed infrastructure, paid staff, and centralized or decentralized leadership. **EXAMPLES**



with myriad, sophisticated strategies on systems change and power.

REFORM THE SYSTEM

Grassroots groups rally public support to



and ties with the Indigenous movement, in 2016.



legislation and policy The Women's Association for the Development of Sacatepéquez in Guatemala won their rights to

Grassroots groups write and pass

ancestral intellectual property of Indigenous Mayan weaving designs and clothing.

In 2019, Save Lamu in Kenya helped prevent the construction of the country's first coal fired power plant when a tribunal influenced by Save Lamu's

Grassroots groups advocate for and secure human



rights and environmental protections





unjust law/policy



In Malaysia, logging and the construction of mega-dams are increasing, ignoring "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent" laws protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. After winning a landmark victory in

Grassroots groups hold governments

accountable to law/policy or resist

continue to map violations to ensure protections. The National Federation of Peasant, Artisan, Indigenous,

the courts to punish violators, grassroots groups

Sahabat Alam Malaysia and the Borneo Project



Native and Wage-earning Women of Peru organizes actions

elected officials to integrate a gender lens into climate policies.

outside national congress and secures commitments from

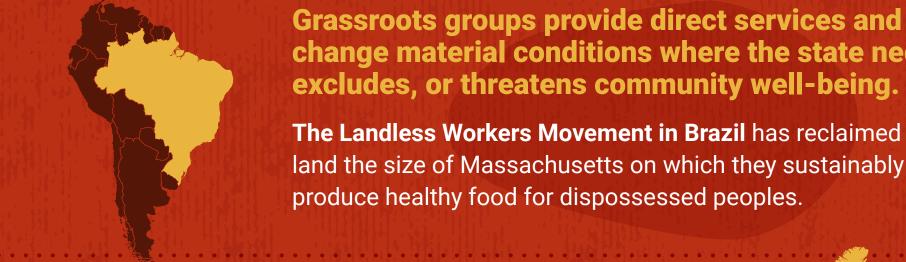
Grassroots groups move popular culture to oppose injustice and oppression Over 300 Indigenous nations traveled to Standing Rock to resist the Dakota Access Pipeline and galvanize

land, waterways, and Indigenous Peoples' rights.

people globally to oppose the industrial assault on local



REIMAGINE THE SYSTEM





Grassroots groups create or uplift alternative economic and/or governance structures to manage human & ecological communities outside the state

The Wet'suwet'en Nation in Canada maintains sovereignty over their territory, upholding traditional relationship and care of lands and water.





Less than 1% of international giving from the U.S. goes to community-level groups. Yet, they have an outsized impact on confronting the root causes of the climate crisis and social inequities, and building sustainable futures.