Dear Friends,

At Groundswell International we are working with communities and partner organizations around the world to generate solutions to our broken farming and food-system from the ground up. We believe that in order to affect real, lasting change we need to work together to replace vicious cycles of decline with positive cycles that regenerate the planet and the wellbeing of people and communities. We start by investing in people -- family farmers in remote villages in places like eastern Burkina Faso, the highlands of Ecuador, and central Haiti. Groundswell and its partners support these families to experiment with practices to restore their land, their food production, and their livelihoods. Successful strategies are spread farmer-to-farmer, family-to-family, and community-to-community. We strengthen community-based organizations to link villages together and mobilize local leadership and resources for change. We support rural and urban communities to build market relationships to create healthy local economies. And Groundswell links local organizations to national and regional movements advocating for systemic change, to strengthen their efforts to create more people-centered sustainable agriculture and food systems.

We encourage you to read through some of the highlights from our work in 2012. Our accomplishments are made possible by the committed organizations and individuals who support us, and we are grateful for that support. Together we are creating virtuous cycles and generating a more hopeful future.

Thank you,

Steve Brescia
Executive Director
Groundswell International was established in 2009 as a nonprofit partnership of local organizations and activists that work together to support sustainable agriculture initiatives and to strengthen local food systems in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. We bring together decades of practical, hands-on experience strengthening rural communities and organizations to create lasting improvements in people’s lives.

**What makes us unique**

Groundswell works in partnership, locally and globally, to strengthen sustainable and healthy farming, food systems and rural communities from the ground up. We invest in the capacity of communities to lead their own development processes, link local organizations to wider food sovereignty movements, and strengthen the voices of rural women and men in shaping their future.

**Groundswell’s Role**

We partner with and strengthen the capacity of rural communities, organizations and movements to:

- Spread agroecological farming solutions to improve food production, the environment, and people’s lives;
- Promote farmer-led innovation and farmer-to-farmer learning and teaching;
- Rebuild local food systems by strengthening mutually beneficial relationships between urban and rural communities;
- Link local organizations to wider movements working for people-centered policies and food sovereignty;
- Share and disseminate knowledge to influence change.

**Effectiveness**

We are working in eight countries, with our local NGO partners supporting dozens of community-based, women’s and farmers’ organizations. Together, we are supporting more than 300,000 people to improve their lives and communities.

**Efficiency**

In 2012, we invested 87% of our total revenue in programs for social change and just 13% in fundraising and administration.
“Now the Food I Eat Has Meaning”

With an average monthly income of less than $200, it was nearly impossible for Rubila Candela to feed her family healthy food. An unhealthy diet was contributing to Rubila’s increasing body weight, high blood pressure, and chronic fatigue, which made it difficult for her to work and care for her children. All this changed soon after Rubila helped form Ecuador’s first Canasta Comunitaria with families from her neighborhood. Canastas Comunitarias or “community food baskets,” are a type of community-supported agriculture whereby low income, urban consumers form groups to buy food wholesale directly from farmers. Rubila and the other Canasta families began pooling their money to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in bulk from wholesale markets, and then dividing the produce among themselves. The result was incredible: a 30%–50% savings on their food bills! In addition to increased savings, Canasta members visit nearby farmers to learn about the role small-scale farmers play in preserving native seeds, conserving land, and cultivating healthy food. The visits started a process that has resulted in local Canasta groups like Rubila’s developing direct relationships with small-scale farmers in the countryside surrounding the cities where they live. Groundswell and EkoRural, our partner in Ecuador, support the Canastas Comunitarias movement, sponsoring farm visits and helping the leaders develop direct relationships with local institutions and small-scale farmers. Rubila’s eating habits and health quickly improved, and her food awareness came full circle – from the farm to her table. Rubila says, “I see these farm families’ sacrifice in every potato and carrot I eat. I see the women working hard to feed their families and produce our food, while we sit and wait in front of the T.V. Now, the food I eat has meaning.”

Building Local Food Systems in Ecuador

For the past three years, Groundswell has worked with EkoRural to support the Canastas Comunitarias movement that started in Riobamba and has now spread to every major city in Ecuador. As part of this process, Groundswell partners with EkoRural to work with thousands of indigenous family farmers in the Central Highlands of Ecuador to recover the production of native seeds, promote water harvesting, scale sustainable farming practices, and strengthen rural livelihoods and local food systems. Instead of “prescribing” solutions, Groundswell and its partners work with community members to identify needs and develop strategies together.
“Cholera Would Have Been Much Worse in Our Community”

After a period of stabilization, the number of cholera cases in Haiti surged in the last six months of 2012. This was due in part to the impact of Hurricane Sandy, and, more importantly, the declining support from the international community for the life-saving education, water and sanitation measures that are vital to preventing the spread of cholera. Groundswell and Partenariat pour le Développement Local (PDL), our local partner in Haiti, continue to support health education and improvements in household water and sanitation infrastructure, such as water filters and latrines. PDL works with local peasant organizations, such as Inyon Gwoupman Peyizan Bay (IGPB), that are organizing to create positive change in their communities. As a community health promoter of IGPB, Elisme Winsor provides training to community members on nutrition and disease prevention. “We were trained by PDL in 2009,” she says. “We’ve been working since then and we are seeing change in our community. I’m seeing people treating their water and digging latrines. If this work had not started in 2009, I think cholera would have been much worse in our community. Every month we do health trainings during our community meetings. For water treatment we use what we have. Over 175 people have received water filters through PDL’s support for our work. Some people use aqua-tabs or Clorox. There are still some people who can’t even afford Clorox. It makes me feel good to see people digging latrines and treating water. People thank me for the work I’ve done and that makes me feel good as well.”

Building Resilient Rural Communities in Haiti

Groundswell and PDL have made great progress in strengthening local peasant organizations to improve lives since launching our work in 2009. In rural areas where government services are largely absent, we are supporting peasant organizations to carry out practical programs to overcome debt entrapment, set up savings and credit cooperatives, spread soil conservation and other sustainable farming techniques, improve food production, establish community-managed seed banks, prevent disease, and improve health. Since the earthquake in January 2010, we have redoubled our efforts to promote a prosperous and sustainable countryside as the foundation for Haiti’s development.
Declining soil fertility throughout Africa’s Sahel is contributing to a food crisis that by UN estimates has severely impacted the food security of nearly 20 million people. Women are responsible for the majority of agricultural work, and so are vital to improving farming and food security in rural communities. In Ghana, Groundswell’s partner Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) is focusing on strengthening women’s leadership to spread effective solutions. Madame Fatima Addy is one of those leaders. She is the head of a women’s association in her community in southern Ghana, and is also a leader of the national Rural Women Farmers Association of Ghana (RUWFAG), which is spearheading the women’s “We Are the Solution” campaign. Madame Fatima works with women farmers every day to improve sustainable agricultural practices. “The Agriculture Ministry does not come to the local villages where the problems are and doesn’t understand what daily life is like for many of the farmers they are trying to serve. ‘High-yield’ production materials, like chemical fertilizers and pesticides, are disbursed, but farmers are often scared to use them.” Madame Fatima understands the challenges faced by women farmers because she is one. “I am no different than them,” she says. “We work with women, and they don’t have much time. Each of them must learn to improve their own farms. We support the women to learn from each other – we call this farmer-to-farmer learning.” Madame Fatima is helping rural women to experiment with farming methods that revitalize the soil and increase food production. In addition, she and other women leaders are asking policy makers to support these solutions for a more food-secure Africa. “I am with the communities every day,” says Fatima. “If you want to be a leader, you have to come to the ground, you have to be practical. We are the solution. You have to take your destiny into your own hands.”

Scaling Alternatives and Changing Policies in West Africa

Peter Gubbels, Groundswell’s Regional Facilitator for West Africa, authored a report entitled “Ending the Everyday Emergency: Resilience and Children in the Sahel” for Save the Children and World Vision, members of the Sahel Working Group. “The development model in the Sahel, particularly around agriculture, is not addressing the food, nutrition or environmental needs of most of the population, and there is a need for a paradigm shift,” said Peter. “Agroecological farming needs to be promoted more widely as an alternative to help the poorer, most vulnerable households to increase their food production, build resilience and improve child and family nutrition”. In July, Peter presented his findings at the United Nations. The US Agency for International Development recently acknowledged that Peter’s analysis influenced their resiliency strategy for the Sahel.
Results:
“Before we did the soil conservation work I was just able to grow corn and beans,” says Medis Seraphen, who lives in Bay in the Central Plateau of Haiti. “I’m now able to grow more because my garden is healthier because of the soil conservation. Now we have more food in our home. If we are hungry we can just pull food from our garden and, if we don’t have hunger, we can sell some of it.” Groundswell’s partner PDL supports Medis and other members of his peasant organization to learn soil conservation and other agroecological techniques.

Agroecological techniques:
• Soil conservation through contour barriers
• Reduced tillage and improved planting techniques
• Soil improvement through mulching, cover crops and nitrogen fixing plants
• Agroforestry and farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) of trees
• Strengthening local seed systems
• Water harvesting and micro-irrigation
• Diversification of family farms
• Integrated pest management
• Sustainable livestock management
• Community-based natural resource management

Why Agroecology?
Groundswell primarily works with rural, small-farmer communities, so we focus on farming as the basis for families’ food security, income, health and ability to participate as citizens. Mounting global evidence shows that scaling agroecology, or ecological farming, among family farmers is a highly effective strategy to spark farmer innovation and leadership, produce more food, and improve the health and resilience of rural communities. Agroecology is a form of agriculture that optimizes the sustainable use of natural, local resources, combining traditional farmer knowledge with opportunities to learn new methods, while minimizing costs and negative environmental impacts associated with technologies derived from industrial farming.
Partner and Program Highlights from 2012

**Guatemala and Honduras**
Groundswell partners with Vecinos Honduras to strengthen community-based organizations to spread sustainable farming practices, improve community health, and establish seed and grain banks. Foundation for Northern Development AQ’AB’AL (FUNDENOR), our partner in Guatemala, promotes integrated people-centered development to facilitate sustainable local solutions that are in harmony with both the environment and cultural diversity.

**El Salvador**
The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources requested Groundswell’s support with “Program for the Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes” (PREP), to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder planning meetings to develop strategies to scale sustainable agriculture practices in three pilot zones along the Lempa River watershed.

**Ecuador**
We support our partner EkoRural in strengthening local seed and food systems and spreading sustainable farming practices in Ecuador’s central and northern Sierra regions. This program helped establish four community seed banks to guarantee farmers’ access to high quality, native, non-GMO seed.

**Haiti**
In collaboration with our partner Partenariat pour le Développement Local (PDL), our program in Haiti has expanded from working with three peasant organizations in 2009 to 12 peasant organizations, representing more than 210,000 people. Almost 5,000 farmers are engaged in learning soil and water conservation practices, and nearly 2,500 leaders have been trained to manage community-led development.
**Mali**

In collaboration with Oxfam America, we worked with a national network of women’s Saving for Change groups in Mali to integrate fertilizing trees into their farms. The program was piloted with 2,000 women in 20 villages. We also began a partnership with the local NGO Sahel Eco to support the spread of farmer-managed natural regeneration of trees and to strengthen farmers’ voices to shape more supportive policies.

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**Burkina Faso**

We are working with Association Nourrir Sans Detruire (ANSD) to overcome the food and climate crisis by strengthening a learning network of farmers’ organizations and NGOs to spread sustainable farming approaches throughout rural communities. Over 2,475 households in 19 villages have been reached, with 7,434 direct beneficiaries and 20,549 indirect beneficiaries, over half of whom are women.

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**Ghana**

We are collaborating with the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) to strengthen rural communities and women’s associations. We supported exchange visits of women leaders between Ghana and Burkina Faso. Women participating in the program have organized themselves into 40 savings and credit groups with a total membership of 747 direct participants and 2,255 indirect beneficiaries.

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**United States**

Our US based coordination team opened a satellite office in Asheville, NC, located in heart of Appalachia. The coordination team supports Groundswell’s global network of local partners in their efforts to implement people-centered development programs as well as working to raise awareness about sustainable local food systems and agroecology.
Financial Report for 2012

2012 Revenue

- Contributions: 20%
- Grants: 69%
- Other: 2%

Total Revenue: $1,008,772

2012 Expenditures

- Program Services: 5%
- Fundraising: 87%
- Management & General: 8%

Total Expenditures: $855,971

Revenue Sources

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Operating Expenditures

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Assets

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Liabilities and Net Assets

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Groundswell International

Supporters

Groundswell appreciates the tremendous support of many institutions and individuals who make our work possible. We do not have space to list all donors, but extend a special thanks to the institutions and individuals listed below, many of whom have supported us generously since 2009.

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Please join us.

Invest: Support us in strengthening rural communities to build healthy farming and food systems from the ground up. Donate online at www.groundswellinternational.org.

Connect: Join our movement by signing up for our “Updates from the Ground” monthly e-newsletter. Follow us on our blog, Facebook, and Twitter. Spread the word to your friends and family.

Volunteer: Please check out our website or send us an email to inquire about volunteer opportunities: info@groundswellinternational.org.

See for yourself: Participate in a study tour. Contact us for further information.

Questions? Call at 828.333.4719 or contact us at info@groundswellinternational.org

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