



groundswell
international

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



LIFTING VOICES / GROWING SOLUTIONS



Letter from the **Executive Director**

Dear Friends,

Extraordinary and disorienting crises continue to affect us all. They are also opening our minds to what changes are necessary – and possible – to live in a healthier way with each other and nature. At Groundswell International, we continue to be informed and inspired by rural communities and leaders around the world who have long been on the front lines, building real solutions to the ecological, social and political crises they face.

As we accompany and strengthen partners and communities leading the work of building healthier farming and food systems from the ground up, we are also striving to lift up their voices. Even as we continue to root our work in their wisdom, we seek to share their perspectives more broadly.

In that spirit, in 2021, we carried out a listening project with leaders from all of our partner organizations to understand how they are experiencing and responding

locally to rising challenges: injustice, the legacies of racism and colonialism, climate change, and political and economic systems disconnected from people's needs.

We also piloted our Youth Storytellers program, enabling young people to share stories of their community successes, to spread them locally and deepen our understanding globally of how we can build a more hopeful future. It's been exciting to see the energy and agency the program has generated among young people. We look forward to sharing more of their videos, stories, and voices in the months ahead.

A common thread expressed is that real solutions start with people. Viable technical practices and innovations exist to improve farms agroecologically, regenerate ecosystems and strengthen local economies. But they depend first on community solidarity and trust, a shared understanding of common good, collective work to achieve it, and people making their voices heard by those in positions of power.

We take these lessons to heart. In a recent conversation, my Haitian colleague Cantave Jean-Baptiste, Director of PDL, reminded me that "an African president said some years ago, 'some people are going to the moon to find solutions, but let us go to the villages.' Groundswell is playing a key role in strengthening that work, and sharing these lessons, among many different countries."

Thank you for joining us in this work.

Steve Brescia



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global network

collaborating in 10 countries

supporting

620 community based organizations

across 958 communities

**with over 155,398 farmers
applying agroecology**

**to regenerate over 296,665 acres
of degraded land**

and improve the lives of

716,000 people

IMPACTS

- Over 1,400 farmers are selecting, improving and reproducing resilient native varieties of corn, beans and sorghum seeds that are increasing production in the Dry Corridor.
- 22 communities established local grain banks to improve food security and escape dependence on middlemen, with over \$34,000 in grains stored (over 40,900 kg of corn and 63,700 kg of beans).
- Participants have established 48 cooperative enterprises to build rural economies. 654 people, including 72 youth, have formed savings and credit cooperatives, mobilizing over \$510,800 in savings.

HONDURAS

Strengthening Rural Economies in the Dry Corridor

Over 10 million people in Central America's Dry Corridor, including over a million smallholder farming families, are working to survive in a deepening crisis. They are impacted by decades of extractive agricultural practices; political and economic dysfunction; and extreme vulnerability to climate change, including persistent drought and devastating hurricanes. Those forced to migrate report food insecurity as a primary motivation.

Groundswell is collaborating with Vecinos Honduras to promote and scale ground-up alternatives that can reverse these trends. We are working with 52 communities and over 10,250 people to support agroecological farming on eroded mountain sides; to improve family nutrition and incomes; and to strengthen community-based organizations and cooperative enterprises to regenerate local livelihoods and rural economies. Women and young people play leading roles.

One example is the Jovenes Emprededores (Youth Entrepreneurs) group composed of six people from Concepcion de Maria, Choluteca. They are finding their niche and creating a future through value-added processing and sale of locally farmed plantains, yuca and camote. Melisa Lopez is 15 and is a leader of another group of young people focused on beekeeping and honey production, complementing the work of still other youth groups managing fruit tree nurseries to diversify family farms. "Knowing that we have opportunities here," said Melissa, "young people don't need to fall into using drugs or alcohol, or migrating."

IMPACTS

- We have supported the formation of 30 women's self-help groups, with over 700 members. They have accumulated over \$29,000 in their savings and credit funds.
- These groups are the foundation for 630 women to participate in agroecological experimentation, improved production and income generation, farmer to farmer learning.
- 36 women have created small enterprises like community stores to market local produce and other basic goods.

A photograph of three women standing in a lush green vegetable field. They are all wearing bright pink saris. The woman on the left is looking towards the other two. The woman in the center is smiling and looking towards the woman on the right. The woman on the right is also smiling and looking towards the woman in the center. They are standing in front of rows of green leafy vegetables. In the background, there are more trees and foliage. The word "NEPAL" is written in large, white, bold letters in the bottom right corner of the image.

NEPAL

Women Mobilizing for Change

We work with our Nepalese partner, BBP-Pariwar, to form and strengthen women's solidarity groups for mutual support and action-learning to improve their lives and communities. The women are predominately from the dalit caste ('untouchable'), in marginalized rural areas of the Kavre, Ramechhap and Sindhupalchowk Districts of Central Nepal. They work together to mobilize and control their own savings and credit; promote agroecological farming and small livestock management; improve nutrition; and generate income. In spite of the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and extreme storms, communities are forging ahead.

The women are adapting and spreading to other families agroecological techniques like worm composting and biological fertilizers and pesticides; diversifying farms by planting fodder and fruit tree seedlings; developing community seed banks; and improving household vegetable gardens, rain water harvesting, and small livestock management.

One example of success is our milking buffalo revolving loan fund. Families get a loan for part of the cost to obtain a milking buffalo. They consume 10% of the milk, an important protein source to prevent malnutrition of children and women in particular. Families then sell the rest of the milk to local cooperatives, paying off their loan in a couple of years. The buffalo also enable plowing and provide manure to improve soil fertility and food production. Where most people live on less than \$2/day, owning a milking buffalo increases families' assets and incomes up to \$900 per year, helping to pay for education and health care. As loans are repaid, more people benefit. So far 21 women and their families have obtained milking buffalos.



IMPACTS

- Farmers have increased their production through agroecological approaches, producing 335 combined tons of cereal (millet and maize) and vegetables, improving nutrition and food security for 9,500 people.
- 67 women's savings and credit groups (calabashes) have been established, to escape the high interest rates of moneylenders.
- 60 of these women's groups, representing 1,660 women, have negotiated access to land to establish dry season vegetable garden sites, and improved access to local markets for their products.

SENEGAL

Regenerating Land, Local Markets, and Responsive Governance

Our partner organization Agrecol Afrique is a member of our dynamic West Africa network. Together we are promoting and spreading strategies to address the collapse of soil fertility and livelihoods in the Sahel, and reverse extreme vulnerability of rural communities. Working in the ecologically fragile, risk-prone Kaffrine region, we are supporting a local movement to spread farmer-managed natural regeneration of trees (FMNR), dry-season vegetable gardening and other techniques to regenerate soil fertility and food production. Over 595 farmers are engaged in farm-level experimentation and action-learning, and 150 volunteer agroecology promoters are spreading effective practices to 25 agricultural groups and cooperatives.

Over 1,660 women have gained access to land, water and training, and are regenerating degraded land for dry season vegetable gardening. They produce to nourish their families, earn income and feed people through local markets. Over 2,915 women have increased their capacities for selling locally, including through popular weekend organic markets that Agrecol Afrique has helped to establish.

Agrecol Afrique is also working to generate understanding among district-level decision makers on how agroecological production contributes to climate resilience and wellbeing. They have engaged 60 elected officials, ministry of agriculture staff and traditional chiefs in visiting and learning from farmers groups, resulting in commitments to support these practices in municipal development plans.



YOUTH STORYTELLERS **EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION:** Changing the Reality and the Narrative

Agroecological farming and resilient local food systems are more effective and beneficial for people and our planet than industrialized agriculture. Scaling these alternatives are essential for nourishing people and reversing climate change. Yet, the false but dominant narrative is that industrialized agriculture must 'feed the world.' Current trends are driving many young people to migrate from rural communities, as they look for ways to contribute, but often don't see a future.

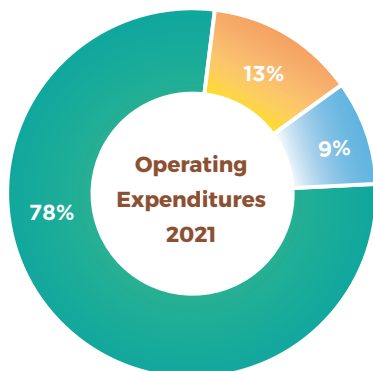
In 2021, we piloted our Youth Storytellers program with our network partners ANSD in Burkina Faso and Vecinos Honduras. We supported them to identify interested young people in program communities, and provide them with basic communications training and equipment to produce brief videos on local success stories. The program is generating palpable energy. Young people are using communications to drive positive social change. They are gaining a sense of agency, as they recognize, document and strengthen the power of community-based organizations to spread real solutions. While Youth Storytellers are sharing their videos locally through social media and gatherings, we are finalizing over 15 videos to allow them to shape the narrative internationally in 2022.

Rebecca Yarga is one of the Youth Storytellers in Burkina Faso. "I learned new things from the farmers I interviewed, and their way of doing things," said Rebecca. "They really fight to put what they learn into practice. I feel good when interviewing them, and I can see that they are happy as well."

In Honduras, Youth Storyteller Edras Amado Benegas explained "I want to motivate other young people who are going through difficult situations, and who do not feel they count. I invite them to get involved, and find the opportunity to participate and be heard."

Since 2009, Groundswell International has invested over \$18 million in strengthening rural communities in 10 countries to build healthy farming and food systems from the ground up.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES 2021



Programs	Fundraising	Management & General
Programs	78%	\$ 1,976,060
Fundraising	13%	\$ 319,933
Management & General	9%	\$ 233,269
Total Expenditures		\$ 2,529,262

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash and Equivalents	\$ 2,101,451
Grants Receivable	267,469
Prepaid Expenses	9,821

Total Current Assets \$ 2,378,741

Long-Term Assets

Investments	-----
Endowment	29,142
Property and Equipment, Net	-----

Total Long-Term Assets \$ 29,142

Total Assets \$2,407,884

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ 162,785
Accrued Vacation	12,021

Total Current Liabilities \$ 174,806

Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions	\$ 485,330
With Donor Restrictions	1,747,747

Total Net Assets \$2,223,077

Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$2,407,884





OUR SUPPORTERS

We are thankful for the incredible support of our numerous individual donors. Additionally, we are grateful for our institutional supporters listed below.

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Thank you for being part of our community and supporting real solutions.

We encourage you to be involved in cultivating and empowering farmers across the world.



Spread the Word

Wish more people knew about Groundswell?
Share the latest updates with your friends on
social media.



Cultivate the Movement

Interested in hosting an event to
benefit Groundswell? Contact us to
receive tools for a successful fundraiser.



Grow Real Solutions

We are grateful for all donations!
Become a monthly donor to sustain and
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continue to bear fruit for years to come?
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Call 248-928-6797 or contact us at info@groundswellinternational.org.
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Questions?

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