# 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.



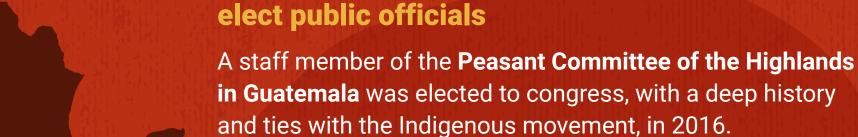
Size: Grassroots can mean small, volunteer-run groups or larger organizations with more developed infrastructure, paid staff, and centralized or decentralized leadership. **EXAMPLES** 



with myriad, sophisticated strategies on systems change and power.

#### **REFORM THE SYSTEM**

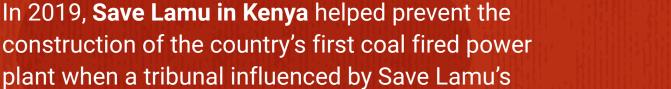
### **Grassroots groups rally public support to**



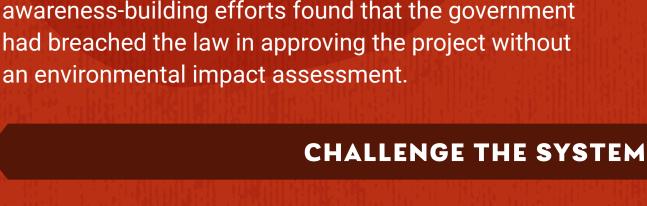


The Women's Association for the Development of

Sacatepéquez in Guatemala won their rights to ancestral intellectual property of Indigenous Mayan weaving designs and clothing.

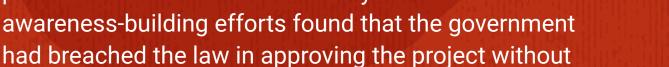


Grassroots groups advocate for and secure human



rights and environmental protections







base to shift political will

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

continue to map violations to ensure protections. **Grassroots groups build a popular** The National Federation of Peasant, Artisan, Indigenous,

**Sahabat Alam Malaysia and the Borneo Project** 

## elected officials to integrate a gender lens into climate policies.



Native and Wage-earning Women of Peru organizes actions

outside national congress and secures commitments from



people globally to oppose the industrial assault on local land, waterways, and Indigenous Peoples' rights.

and traditional herding grounds - and won. REIMAGINE THE SYSTEM

**Grassroots groups oppose moral** 

where the state fails to do so

wrongs, & protect people and planet

Herder organizations in Mongolia, Oyu Togol Watch

and Gobi Soil, opposed one of the largest mining

companies in the world that threatened their water



**Grassroots groups provide direct services and** change material conditions where the state neglects, excludes, or threatens community well-being. The Landless Workers Movement in Brazil has reclaimed land the size of Massachusetts on which they sustainably

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

produce healthy food for dispossessed peoples.

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





outside the state

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.