



groundswell  
international

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



**CELEBRATING 15 YEARS**

# Letter from the Executive Director

**15 YEARS**  
•  
IMPACT  
INNOVATION  
INFLUENCE



## Dear Friends,

Groundswell will celebrate 15 years in 2024. We feel both humbled and proud as we reflect on what we have been able to accomplish together so far, and are determined to have an even greater impact in the future.

Since our founding, we have learned a lot about how to coordinate an effective international network for collective impact, one that reflects our shared values and centers the agency of smallholder and indigenous farming communities. We are pleased to share some 2023 highlights in this Annual Report. Together as a network we have generated:

- **Impact:** Strengthened the capacity of over 1.5 million people who are facing severe poverty, in 11 countries across West Africa, the Americas, and South Asia, to improve their food production, land restoration, incomes, and nutrition. In **Mali**, as highlighted below, farmers have regenerated their farmland, agroforestry systems, and food production in the profoundly challenging context of the West African Sahel.
- **Innovation:** Facilitated vital innovation of technical practices and social methodologies across our network partners' allies. Farmers are experimenting with and spreading agroecological strategies where they live and sharing key practices across borders; increasing their resilience to climate change; improving their nutrition; ensuring greater opportunities and voice for women and youth; and connecting farmers to local markets. For example, in **Guatemala** and **Nepal** we supported women to organize and drive community change. We continue to strengthen youth leaders to disseminate real solutions to more families and communities.
- **Influence:** Synthesized, documented, and disseminated effective strategies and lessons, generated by farmers' organizations and NGO partners, within and across national contexts, in order to continually improve our programs and inform decision-makers and allies.

In today's turbulent world, we face a political, economic, ecological and social "poly-crisis". There is a growing consensus that we must do things differently. Fortunately, an incredible, global *human intelligence* network is generating solutions. About 2.5 billion people in the world are involved with smallholder farming and food production. Their creative capacity to farm productively and regeneratively with nature, instead of against it, is perhaps the most powerful force that can be unleashed to overcome the linked challenges of hunger, poverty, climate change, and environmental degradation.

Groundswell's mission is to strengthen that work. Thank you for being a part of it.

Steve Brescia



## BY THE NUMBERS

**1**

**global network**

**collaborating in 11 countries**

**supporting  
1,446 community-based  
organizations**

**across 1,225 communities**

**with 114,891 farmers  
applying agroecology to**

**regenerate over 162,409  
hectares of degraded land and**

**improve the lives of  
1,562,222 people**

# MALI

## Farmers Cultivating Hope in the Sahel

### IMPACT

- 100 agroecological farmer promoters received training in 2023 to spread practices to 1,000 farming households.
- Community grain reserves allowed farmers to escape their dependence on middlemen, store food locally, and increase their profits by an average of 78%.
- Formed 30 women's savings and credit groups, with 694 members, to mobilize local finance, engage in dry-season vegetable farming, and sustainably manage tree resources.
- 34,853 hectares of land were regenerated by agroecological farmers.





*Sahel Eco*, Groundswell's partner in Mali, works with rural communities to improve their standard of living through better management of their harsh Sahelian environment. Food insecurity is severe, with **26% of children under five facing chronic malnutrition in 2023**, according to the World Food Programme. Over the last year, **we supported and empowered over 340 villages and 29,385 farmers** to be agents of their own development and improve their food production and nutrition.

We facilitated farmer-centered training and learning processes on effective agroecology practices and innovations adapted to the Sahelian context. Many households have adopted farmer managed natural regeneration of trees (FMNR) as a strategy to regenerate their farms' soil fertility and productivity. Building on this foundational technique, communities have carried out farmer field schools to test bio-stimulants and have increased crop diversity. They are improving their soil fertility by catalyzing biology, rather than applying chemical fertilizers.

**We supported women to form new women's savings and credit groups, enabling them to take charge of their financial futures and foster economic independence.** These women's groups then negotiate access to land from local owners, and restore it for cooperative vegetable production during the dry season. To further incentivize the regeneration of trees on their land, women's groups also process and sell non-timber forest products, like shea butter and popular local food dishes made from nuts and greens. Additionally, **we supported communities to establish local grain reserves, increasing food security** by allowing families to store grain instead of selling low to middlemen after harvest.

*Sahel Eco* has greatly influenced the policies and practices of both government and peer agencies in promoting community-led FMNR, and is strengthening the wider "re-greening movement" in Mali and West Africa.

**"Now we also eat better because we have diversified our crops in our gardens and on our farms."**

**–Elisabeth, farmer and member of dry season vegetable gardening women's group in Mali**

# GUATEMALA

## Regenerating Native Seeds, Nurturing Young Leaders

### IMPACT

- Indigenous farmers led the rescue of native seeds; water conservation; improved production, consumption and sale of diverse, healthy local food; improved child and family nutrition; and promotion of natural medicines.
- 403 women organized themselves into savings and credit groups, and managed micro-lending to support each other.
- 400 farm households increased their net income from improved agroecological practices.
- Qacchu Aloom has established and manages their own social enterprise, Multiservicios Achí, to process and sell an annual average of 17,635 lbs. of amaranth and other seeds and grain from 110 farmers.





Groundswell's longstanding partner in Guatemala, *Qacchu Aloom* (translated as "Mother Earth"), is led by indigenous Maya Achi people, particularly women affected by the military violence of the 1980s. We expanded our program in Guatemala by welcoming a new partner into our network in 2023: *Asociación de Agricultores las Ilusiones el Divisadero (AGRIDIVI)*. *AGRIDIVI* works with Pocomam indigenous communities and a network of women's savings and credit groups to strengthen their agroecological farming practices.

Both NGOs **strengthen women's leadership and access to productive resources, and promote improved agroecological farming** to regenerate land, food production, incomes, and resilience to climate change. They are sustaining their indigenous cultures and local economies by passing on knowledge and responsibilities to their youth. Over the last year, these partners have **improved the wellbeing of over 6,120**

**people across 37 communities in Guatemala**, as a part of Groundswell's wider program in Mesoamerica to build resilience in the Dry Corridor.

*Qacchu Aloom* supported farmers to increase the diversity and productivity of their traditional *milpa* farming systems, integrating other crops with corn, beans, and squash. They have expanded their native seed banks, and produced and promoted the use of biological fertilizers and pest control. Participants are also testing and spreading simple filters they made from local materials to clean and re-use household "grey water" to grow vegetables year-round.

*Qacchu Aloom* was founded on the recovery of native seeds, ecological farming, and their Maya Achi heritage in the wake of the genocide of indigenous people in the 1980s. Now they are preparing youth to carry forward this legacy.

**"My husband and I teach (our daughters) to value our seeds, so they will appreciate and value the work of our ancestors. We show our daughters that Mother Earth generates a lot for us."**

**—Hilda, Maya Achi farmer in Guatemala**

# SOUTH ASIA

## Women Organizing to Grow Food, Incomes and Power

### IMPACT

- 4,239 people have improved their lives across 64 communities.
- 790 women farmers participated in cross visits and training to transition their farms to more productive and cost-beneficial agroecological strategies.
- Farmers have regenerated 326 acres of farmland.
- 54 women farmers created small businesses to increase their incomes.







In South Asia, Groundswell's partners include: *Baudh Bahunipati Project Pariwar (BBP-Pariwar)* and *Rural Women Upliftment Association (RWUA)* in Nepal, and *Preservation and Proliferation of Rural Resources and Nature (PRAN)* in Bihar, India.

With Groundswell's support, **BBP-Pariwar has supported 2,600 women to form 87 savings and credit groups, and together they have mobilized \$51,000 in savings.** With seed funding for the women to purchase livestock and pass on offspring, the women now own 180 water buffaloes, 750 goats, and 50 pigs. They have increased the productivity of their farms with ecological techniques, **improved their food security by an average of two months per year**, and have broken the cycle of dependency on money lenders who charge exorbitant interest

rates. The women are gaining confidence and increasing decision-making power in their families and communities.

Usha, a woman from southeast Nepal, has become an active leader in her community. She is a mother of two, and after several years has now become the president of her savings and credit group. Through our program support, she was able to buy a water buffalo and improve her family's nutrition with the milk, selling the excess to a local coop to earn income. She is an innovative farmer, always testing things to improve her production. The increased income has allowed Usha to send her children to school and provide a better life for her family. She and other women in her self-help group are transforming the future of their entire families.

**"I no longer feel helpless when unexpected expenses arise, thanks to how we all support each other in our group."**

**—Usha, farmer in Nepal**



## NEPAL STAFF RETREAT



During the last week of September 2023, our growing and evolving Groundswell staff team convened in Nepal, hosted by our partner *BBP-Pariwar*. With staff now based across eight countries, this important convening allowed us to come together to build our working relationships, trust, and coordination. We learned from our Nepali programs, in particular their strategies to empower women through agroecology, and strategized on growing Groundswell's impact together.

**“I know the farmers in my family, especially the women, lived very hard lives. I wish the women in my family had the same opportunity as the Nepali women with their savings and credit groups. Because if they did, I know their lives would have been a little bit easier, a little bit more hopeful.”**

**—Chandana Guntupalli, Donor Relations Manager**



# YOUTH STORYTELLERS

## Building a Narrative Based on Local Solutions

Since 2021, Groundswell's global network of local organizations has been recruiting, training, and supporting a cadre of talented youth. Through the Youth Storytellers Program, young people document and share the stories of family farmers in their home countries who are feeding people and regenerating land today - and who can feed the world if given the chance and a little support.

For the last two years, youth storytellers have documented the lives of smallholder farmers from their communities. They captured practical agroecological strategies and techniques critical to their success, that reflect universal principles,

and have shared them with other farmers around the world.

In 2023, **we supported over 80 young people from program communities in seven countries:** Burkina Faso, Honduras, Ecuador, Nepal, Guatemala, Haiti, and Senegal. They received training, equipment, and support to produce and disseminate videos to other local communities, schools, universities, and decision makers. We've organized global webinars to open space for these youth voices to share their stories and shape the narrative about how to best "feed the world."



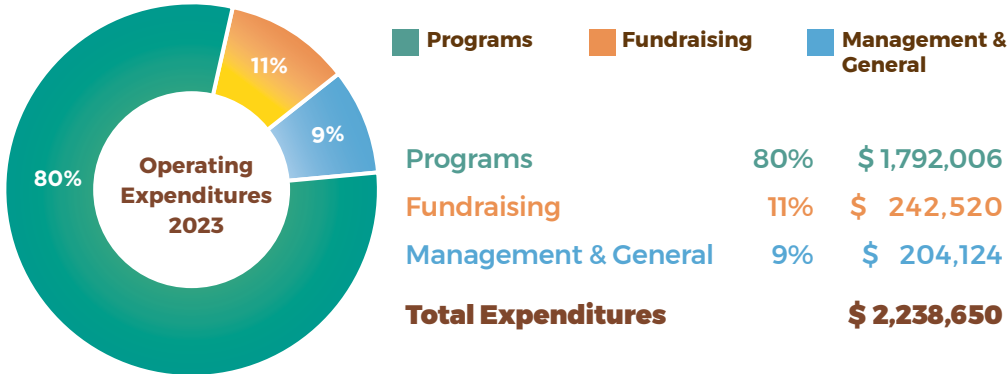
**WATCH  
THEIR VIDEOS:**  
Burkina Faso  
Honduras  
Ecuador  
Nepal  
Guatemala  
Haiti  
Senegal





Since 2009, Groundswell International has invested over \$19 million in strengthening rural communities in 11 countries to build healthy farming and food systems from the ground up.

## OPERATING EXPENDITURES 2023



## ASSETS

### Current Assets

Cash and Equivalents	\$ 2,284,634
Grants & Contributions Receivable	517,744
Prepaid Expenses	8,063

**Total Current Assets \$ 2,810,441**

### Long-Term Assets

**Total Long-Term Assets \$ 25,378**

**Total Assets \$2,835,819**

## LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ 46,233
Accrued Vacation	12,708

**Total Current Liabilities \$ 58,941**

### Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions	\$ 1,321,685
With Donor Restrictions	1,455,193

**Total Net Assets \$2,776,878**

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$2,835,819**

*FY 2023 Audit and 990 available on our website.  
Full financials available upon request.*

[www.groundswellinternational.org](http://www.groundswellinternational.org)





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

**11th Hour/Schmidt Family Foundation**

**Agroecology Fund**

**Anonymous**

**Ansara Family Fund**

**Casey & Family Foundation**

**Citi Foundation**

**Combined Change**

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## GET INVOLVED

**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  
grow Groundswell's impact.



### Leave Your Legacy

Want to make a legacy gift that will  
continue to bear fruit for years to come?  
[Please reach out](#) to learn more.

**Call 248-928-6797 or contact us at [info@groundswellinternational.org](mailto:info@groundswellinternational.org).**  
**Stay up to date with the latest from Groundswell International.**  
**[Sign up for our e-newsletter here!](#)**



Strengthening communities to build healthy farming and food systems from the ground up.

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Platinum  
Transparency  
2024

**Candid.**