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OTHER WORLDS

Campaign for Land Rights and Human Rights for Haitian Farmers

Other Worlds' Engagement in Haiti extends back 32 years – long before the organization was born, through the involvement of its staffmembers. At the request of Haitian grassroots leaders, we stepped our work up exponentially after the earthquake of 2010. As those leaders tell us constantly, Other Worlds has produced powerful results. We have been critical in helping shape a global understanding of what is at stake in Haiti, communicating vital structural-change needs for a more just reconstruction. We have been a key international catalyst in campaigns for political power and voice for social movements, housing for earthquake-displaced people, and food sovereignty, and in campaigns of opposition to violence towards women and girls in refugee camps and the role of Monsanto and other agribusiness. We have often been the only source of information, support, or funding for movements and grassroots organizations in Haiti.

Our overarching objectives in our collaboration with Haitians are to:

- Promote the ability of citizens – especially women and small farmers - to actively engage in planning their country's reconstruction and future;
- Generate concrete support for grassroots-led initiatives, especially for the right to land;
- Secure human rights under a repressive government; and
- Create a better international understanding of Haiti and what's at stake in the rebuilding.

The Problem and the Opportunity: Haiti contains a large (60-80%) and desperately poor small-farmer population. Their ability to stay on their land and to continue to grow food has been dramatically eroded due to so-called free trade policies pushed by the IMF beginning in the 1980s. Today, fraudulently elected President Martelly rules with the slogan "Haiti Is Open for Business." It is, to mining, tourism, the creation of new free trade zones, and agribusiness. Not only are benefits not trickling down to the desperately poor population, but the extraction and "development" projects are taking place on lands stolen from some of the poorest of all: small farmers. Results of these land grabs include loss of livelihood and income, displacement to large cities, and loss of community and tradition. They include, too, the risk of a very hungry nation growing even hungrier.

At the same time, small farmers are among the most organized sectors in the country. Haiti holds well over 1,000 farmer associations, a number of which are focused on land rights. They are extremely motivated to educate, advocate, and campaign to defend their land, livelihood, and commitment to growing food.

A grassroots movement for secure land tenure and food sovereignty is growing throughout Haiti, and Other Worlds has committed to bolstering it.

Campaign for Human Rights and Land Rights: Our objective is to launch a strong global campaign to support organized farmers as they build their strength to guard their land, increase their ability to farm, sustain their families, and win policies of land reform and ecological restoration. The international aspect of the campaign would likely contain all the following elements, always conducted in close consultation with the Haitians directly impacted.

Research:

- Conduct research and analysis with local communities to understand the Martelly Administration's strategies and approach around corporate investment and land grabs;
- Figure out how to best get the attention and interest of international actors and friends (e.g. media, institutions, forums, coalitions, conferences, etc.);
- Conduct a systemic study of land grabs in the interest and for the purposes of tourism, mining, free trade zones, and foreign agribusiness.

Campaign Development:

- Explore what has already been done in Haiti, and what the most pressing needs regarding land rights are;
- Build the campaign's membership, including advocacy and policy groups and networks in the U.S. and in Latin America;
- Create an action plan together with co-coordinators, with clear timeline, division of labor, goals, and tactics.

Popular Education and Knowledge-Sharing:

- Bring representatives from similar movements in other countries to Haiti to share knowledge and strategy;
- Prepare information for popular education in Haiti, producing Creole materials on what the land extraction programs are, and who is behind them;
- Translate English-language tools and materials into Creole; and
- Work with relevant community radios and popular organizations to get information out.

Capacity-Building:

- Get literacy and Spanish classes for organizers, so they can participate effectively;
- Raise funding for the key Haitian farmer organizations;
- Help organizers get visas for international travel so they can garner support.

Human Rights Defense:

- Procure legal defense for land rights activist who has been imprisoned without charge or trial;
- Build strong international human rights defense network for others who will surely be attacked by government forces.

Public Education:

- Broadcast stories, research, analysis, and interviews, to promote understanding of and commitment to the issues and movements;
- Do public speaking and radio interviews to build awareness and solidarity;
- Regularly repost news on the campaign's website;
- Lead delegation of key leaders, environmental lawyers, and advocates to Haiti to build awareness and support.

International Movement-Building and Advocacy:

- Create direct links between the Haitians, international land rights coalitions, and human rights and advocacy networks;
- Work with counterpart social movements around the world to develop other effective leverage points for the campaign;
- Help Haitians find the funding and logistics to attend pertinent cross-border movement gatherings;
- Facilitate direct and sustained relationships with foreign organizations and coalitions.

About Other Worlds: Other Worlds is a women-driven education and movement support collaborative. We compile and bring to light alternatives flourishing throughout the world – ones opening spaces for economic, political, social, and environmental justice, as well as meaningful democracy – in order to inspire and incite others. We also directly support the movements that are propelling the alternatives.

In the spirit of “Nothing about us without us,” Other Worlds relies on deep collaboration with economic and social justice movements, and is accountable to them.

The eight-year-old, 501(c)(3) organization is based in Oakland. We work on a shoestring, with a donated office and a small team. However, because we know how to leverage our deep relationships, trust, and experience from the 32 years that our staff have been working with social movements around the world, we receive steady feedback that our work is rare and highly useful.