

Environmental Grassroots Organizations Need Increased Funding At Home and Abroad

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International grassroots organizations are underfunded and yet are one of the most important and effective tools in the environmental movement.

A recent report by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, [*Cultivating the Grassroots: A winning approach for environment and climate funders*](#), re-affirms the important role that grassroots organizations have played in protecting the environment, especially in communities most at risk of pollution that poses serious risks to human health and safety. The report, written by Sarah Hansen, documents the success of grassroots organizations in fighting for the health and safety of their communities and, in the process, building support for changes in state and federal policies to protect the environment. Despite the success of community-led campaigns to protect the environment, the report indicates that from 2007 to 2009 only 15% of environmental grant dollars benefitted marginalized communities and only 11% supported community-based organizing and policy efforts.

During my nearly 25 years at the Public Welfare Foundation we focused our Environment Program's support on the grassroots environmental justice movement, both in the United States and around the world. Our early and continued support for community struggles against polluters supported efforts to bring attention to and action on a broad range of issues, including oil company pollution in Ecuador and Nigeria, the destruction of Appalachian communities by strip mining and mountain-top removal operations, and the long-term human health effects of nuclear weapons development in communities across the country. In each case, we supported both local campaigns and state and national policy advocacy efforts that were guided by those campaigns. And in each case, our support was provided on a long-term basis, understanding that serious environmental problems cannot be solved in the often arbitrary timelines imposed by funding cycles.

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