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Quick description

The Global Grassroots Support Network (GGSN) is a [*community of practice*](#) that brings together projects and individuals supporting “*grassroots justice-oriented*”^{*} activist groups in multiple regions and continents. Our objective is to share knowledge around common challenges that people providing support to activists face, and how each has solved for them. Folks in this network can learn from each others’ experience and swap ideas for trainings, coaching and resource materials (i.e. guides, workshops, media) they created in their own part of the world. The goal for the network is to compile our collective knowledge on good practices for supporting *grassroots justice-oriented* activist groups, to benefit from each others’ innovations, and together, improve support for grassroots movements around the world.

**We are using ‘justice-oriented’ to contain all struggles for justice. The sections below expand on the terms “grassroots” and “justice-oriented” to explain how our network understands them. Please see the ‘glossary of terms’ at the end of this document for italicized terms used throughout.*

Who can benefit from joining the GGSN?

Our network is focused on supporting grassroots activism and advocacy. The range of struggles included in our membership is unpacked further below. But, what unifies all of them is a transformational agenda, as opposed to service delivery, development or aid programs, as they are traditionally designed.

Our network is currently made up of seasoned grassroots organizers, campaigners, coaches and more. They come from Africa, Australia/New Zealand, Europe, Latin America, North America and South Asia. To widen our reach and get outside the usual circles of privilege and geography, we have started work with Regional Coordinators to bring more folks in from Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, India, Nigeria and Kenya.

The people in our network work within institutions and groups or act as individuals that support grassroots organizers involved in anti-oppressive struggles related to climate justice, reproductive justice, LGBTQIAS+ rights, housing justice, workers rights etc.

GGSN members can participate as representatives of an organization, or as individuals without being affiliated to an organization. People that can benefit from joining the GGSN include any organization representative or individual that provides support as outlined below.

What we mean by "support" and what kinds of skills and resources are shared within the GGSN

The GGSN enables mutual support and sharing around all activities that promote knowledge transfer on topics relevant to grassroots activists, or that increase the capacity of grassroots activists. This includes but is not limited to:

- Coaching, training, mentorship
- Developing educational tools
- Holding convening spaces and establishing connections between activists
- Developing campaigns to put knowledge into action
- Care and wellbeing support for activists
- Ongoing troubleshooting support for activist campaigns



The GGSN will be less relevant to your work if you are...

Looking for peers and expertise focused primarily on [philanthropy](#), aid programs, development programs or advocacy programs led by large and structured Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

If however, you are involved in philanthropy, aid, development or are a member of an NGO but are interested in learning how to better support grassroots activists involved in advocacy, then you may benefit from joining this community.

How we interact and share with each other

The Global Grassroots Support Network started in 2022. In its current year, it is facilitated by Principal coordinator Kenzie Harris, Project manager Tom Liacas and Supporting coordinator Ines Lepage. This project is being built around the digital infrastructure and networks established by the [Blueprints for Change](#) project*.

Folks who join the GGSN can commit the time they have available to participate in exchanges, or simply benefit from the collective knowledge being shared.

Members of the GGSN are invited to join our dedicated Slack channel and mailing lists and typically exchange with each other in the following ways:

1. **Zoom calls.** Calls to raise and discuss challenges, and topic-specific calls, held every 2 months.
2. **Slack/email.** Challenges and resources from calls are thrown back to the group for further swapping of knowledge/resources.
3. **Resource databases.** Members contribute their own tools and resources to these public libraries for the benefit of others. These include:
 - a. **A public collection** of shared resources on [Blueprints for Change](#) and the [Commons Library](#).
 - b. **A secure drive** containing shared tools and templates that not meant for public circulation, stored on Cryptpad
 - c. **Knowledge round ups** that compile responses to questions and challenges raised in calls from GGSN members. Some of which are made available in the public collection, while all are stored in the secure drive.

**Founded in 2018, Blueprints for Change has brought together a network of volunteer helpers from around the world to create tactical 'how-to' guides for progressive campaigners. You can learn more about this project here. <https://blueprintsfc.org/about/>*

Defining ‘grassroots’ and how we define ‘justice-oriented’ activist groups

Why we are focusing on support of 'grassroots' groups

- Grassroots groups have always been the least-funded and supported among those involved in social change
- Throughout history, grassroots-led social movements have created dramatic moments of change (more recently: Black Lives Matter protests, 2019 global climate strikes)
- Given their distinct organizing culture and practices (as defined below), grassroots groups face specific challenges that are not always shared by funded and structured staff-led organizations

In our view, what defines "grassroots" groups is that they share at least one of these attributes:

- Are largely driven by "people power", ie. motivated activist volunteers, though paid staff may facilitate and coordinate this energy
- Are self-starting and self-organizing, especially when they are first formed
- Share power and decision-making responsibilities amongst group members to a smaller or larger extent
- Have some degree of autonomy to define their own strategy, tactics and group culture, especially at the local level

How we define “justice-oriented” activist groups

We have used the term ‘justice-oriented’ activist groups to contain the many intersecting fights for justice that unite us.

Communities are affected differently and unequally by oppressive conditions based on race, socio-economic status, class, gender, age, dis(ability), sexuality, and other social identities. The characteristics of one aspect of injustice and its intersections with other identities cannot exist separately. [*Structural inequities*](#) cause power imbalances within society, and differing exposure to forms of injustice, suggests all fights are interconnected.

Many projects/individual groups that are included in the network are focused on supporting a particular issue and are fighting for rights/justice related to it. These groups may use terms such as, “social justice”, “climate justice”, “racial justice”, “human rights”, “reproductive rights”, “gender and sexual rights”, “economic justice”, “decolonization” etc. The GGSN understands all of these as falling within our definition of “justice-oriented” activist groups.

The activists being supported may choose a number of routes and approaches towards systemic social change. Whether organizing and acting through direct action, politics, law, social media, storytelling etc. We consider all methods of challenging and resisting power and systemic oppression to be justice-oriented activism, and that all are necessary for the success of grassroots movements.

Values & how we live them

Blueprints for Change and its Global Grassroots Support Network are values-driven projects. We are all trying to go beyond our comfort zones and usual networks of peers to create something inclusive and empowering for all involved. Through our network of open sharing of knowledge and experiences, we are attempting to revise dominant narratives and [archetypes](#) around campaigning and organizing. We also aim to prioritize people-powered change led by those who are most marginalized. To echo the change we are attempting to create, we aspire to the following set of values:

1. **Equity.** We aim to reflect the many voices and perspectives of our partners in the activist community in our team of advisors, [bottom-liners](#) and content contributors. We particularly seek the perspective of individuals who identify as: Black, Indigenous, People of color, women, queer, trans; the voices of those outside of ‘developed’ countries; campaigners working with limited funding and access to tools; and those marginalized in a system of capitalist and white supremacist patriarchy who are building the movements we need for a fairer society. We welcome and ask for voices that will challenge and shake up our notions of how to compile/share experience and what is or is not useful to the communities we are trying to work with.
2. **Empowerment.** We want everyone participating in this project to feel that they are gaining something useful from the experience. We are conscious of the value

of people's time and ideas and will seek their input on how to create exchanges of time, skill and resources that are fair and productive for our advisors, contributors and *bottom-liners*. We also value using the development of knowledge and support to empower communities that are marginalized in our broader society, strengthening their experiences and achievements - all to strengthen our global work of change making.

3. **Transparency.** We believe in open communication, transparency, and honesty in our content, partnerships, attributions and promotion. This is why we have tried to lay out all the thinking and decision-making processes behind the project in this doc. We want everyone to know what they are getting involved with and to challenge the structures as needed. We also believe in revisions to our transparency and overall model, including listening to and adopting feedback from participants.
4. **Collaboration.** We seek to collaborate with justice-oriented activists and the movements they represent. Our place in the movement ecosystem is to listen to the needs of activists, develop resources to address those needs, and share them freely with respect across borders and issue areas so that we can all win and learn together.
5. **Liberation.** Through the production and collaboration on support for grassroots justice-oriented activists, we seek to liberate activists and our work from typical challenges in organizing around access - be it access to tools, funding, training and connection. We seek to include all voices, tailor our work across language, timezone, experience and funding status and include additional and ongoing voices and experiences.

Guidelines for exchanges on the #grassroots_support_network Slack channel

We opened this channel on the Blueprints For Change Slack account so that we can begin surfacing challenges we all face in our support work and also share specific



questions our groups have asked us that may benefit from the collective knowledge of the network.

Here are the kinds of topics we encourage on our Slack channel:

- A question coming from local grassroots groups that could benefit from the network's input and ideas
- A general call-out to the group when looking for a specific template, how-to or any other tool needed to support grassroots groups
- Posting a list of top concerns or challenges shared by the grassroots groups you support
- Sharing a workshop curriculum or approach to convening around a certain issue that helps grassroots groups
- Sharing a review of external resources that grassroots groups could find helpful

To keep our Slack useful, let's keep the following to a minimum:

- 'Link bombing' to promote external content, events or groups with little or no context provided for network members
- Job postings and recruitment-oriented posts or funding requests

Good practices to keep Slack channel exchanges easy to follow:

- If answering or contributing knowledge to a subject someone initiated in a previous post, pls reply to the original post rather than starting a new thread in the channel
- You can tag other members of the network using the @ symbol if you would like their input on a particular thread or think they would be interested in something you are posting

- If you want to exchange 1 to 1 with another member, please contact them using the Direct Message function on Slack to keep 1 to 1 exchanges out of the main discussion threads

Glossary of terms used

Anti-oppression (anti-oppressive): “Doing anti-oppression work [...] is not only about confronting individual examples of bigotry or societal examples, it is also about confronting ourselves and our own roles of power and oppression in our communities and in the general context.”

-[Stephanie Jeremie, La Forge](#). Anti-oppression involves deconstructing the oppressive ideas of the dominant culture that one has internalized (i.e. sexism, the patriarchy, racism, ableism etc).

Archetypes: “the original pattern or model from which all things of the same kind are copied or on which they are based; a model or first form.” -[Dictionary.com](#)

Bottom-liners: take responsibility/accountability for seeing ideas through to action. -[The HUB structure workshop](#)

Community of practice: “a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals.

Communities of practice often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this.” -[Community of practice](#)

Grassroots justice-oriented: See the above sections ‘Defining ‘grassroots’ and ‘How we define “justice-oriented” activist groups.’

Philanthropy: “refers to charitable acts or other good works that help others or society as a whole. Philanthropy can include donating money to a worthy cause or volunteering time, effort, or other forms of altruism.” -[Investopedia](#)

Structural inequities: “a system of privilege created by institutions within an economy. These institutions include the law, business practices, and government policies. They also include education, health care, and the media. They are powerful socializing agents that tell us what we can achieve within society.” -[The balance](#)

Transformational agenda/social movement: targets the root of systems of oppression by attacking their structure and adopting an understanding of power as a social phenomenon. A transformational social movement uses symbolic demands, which are broad and intended to



highlight the importance and urgency of the desired changes. As symbolic messages are heard, concrete, instrumental gains (specific and possible in the immediate political landscape) will occur. An example of a symbolic demand is abolishing the police, and an example of an instrumental gain is a % reduction in the police budget in a specific municipality. Transformational agendas seek to gain more active support to tilt public debate and allow for profound societal changes. -[The HUB](#), inspired by the writings of Gene Sharp and their interpretation of Paul and Mark Engler's work

Please reach out to us if you would like further terms included in this document added to the glossary.