



**SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA  
JANUARY 25-26, 2011**

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**Resource Rights Activists? Straight to Jail you go!**

**Wednesday, January 26, 2011, 10:45am – 12:15 pm**

*Facilitator:*

**Kate Kroeger, Director of Grants, American Jewish World Service**

*Panelists:*

**Saulo Araujo, Program Coordinator for Brazil and Mesoamerica, Grassroots International**

**Shalini Nataraj, Vice-President of Programs, Global Fund for Women**

*Sponsor:* Grassroots International; Global Fund for Women

**Kate** lay down the paradigm for the session by bringing to the forefront how governments are cracking down activism and resorting to bad laws.

**Saulo** then continued by providing the definitions and examples of key and useful terms:

Criminalization: How Grassroots addresses this type of criminalization of social movements

Brazil: land rights workers criminalized by police, judges, corporate media, oligarchy have criminalized social movements. Police have taken new role through private security forces

Role of Corporate media has grown

Not about individual activity but when peasants etc. start organizing, they get criminalized

Example of Honduras in 2009: Coup

2006→ Grassroots has initiated the program and grown because of situation in Honduras

Assessment of partners needs and reports from field to assess impact of the Coup on the ground

- 1) Ally HR orgs that have been working in the region. → HR orgs are playing key role in making grantmaking more efficient.
- 2) Funders consultation on Honduras (in collaboration with Grassroots, Fund for Nonviolence, Communitas Charitable Fund, AJWS) Address ESCR rights
- 3) Support to the Honduras Solidarity Network: report published after the Coup helped define how they will implement their work in the field and how to connect people in the US with people in Honduras
- 4) keep networks and supporters informed (via social networks, sponsoring speaking tours, facilitating

contacts between groups) goes beyond money

5) continue funding the good work and exploring ways to strengthen leadership of criminalized communities

Strategy was multi-faceted → creating connection with people in US was critical

**Shalini:** USA trying to build economies and are going in search of where they can find natural resources. Post 9/11 globally all forms of dissent have been criminalized with use of force (police, military, etc. justify their response). Environmental organizations fighting for resource rights are getting painted with same labeling and response has acts of terror. Example: Environmental Liberation Front was targeted by the FBI.

Even peaceful demonstrations are treated as “law and order” situations. Women are coming more to forefront of resource rights protests (ex: India Chipco movement). Indigenous people have always been at forefront of this struggle. Increasingly see militarization of these initiatives. Women have also come to forefront because men have been targeted for so long and are no longer around. Women act as buffer. Since 1967: 10,000 Palestinian women jailed in Israel.

Women faces issues when they take on changing role in society:

Backlash from government agents, non-state actors, extremist religious groups, paramilitary groups.

Most troubling is women’s HR defenders and gender specific attacks on women are sexual harassment and rape

Ex: Congo → corporate interests in DR Congo. Rape used to target women to silence them, their families, and their communities. Poor psychiatric treatment – “good women would not do what you are doing”; physical abuse, including murder. Women also face abuse from male HR defenders including verbal abuse “whores, etc” Also susceptible to their families and children being threatened  
Cross-regional convening: to discuss issue of US bases and impacts on their resources and land  
What can funders do?

Women-led, women-focused orgs. Flexible funding which is important when orgs face these challenges  
Honduras etc.: express solidarity (not advocacy org but work to raise visibility)

Promote networking and linking

work closely with other orgs

Overall goal: build vibrant movements that can survive backlash and challenges

### **Questions:**

Criminalization/violence against resource rights activists comes from non-state actors → What are the differences in responses when dealing with State actors vs. non State actors?

**Saulo:** Judges, governments etc. cannot advocate for rights of peasants. Diminishing roles of governments and companies are growing. Internationalized land ownership and criminalization. Corp media links with companies in other countries. War is an economy itself, being outsourced.

**Shalini:** Difficult to find points to make a difference. Ex: Congo → you know company mining, at international level demand accountability and often they have their own supply chain monitoring systems. Requires funding of initiatives on the ground of investigative work. Paramilitaries used by government and then they say they do not know about them. Raise visibility, demand accountability. Constant challenge. Build capacity of local organizations to demand accountability.

**Mary Ann Stein** (Moriah Fund and Fund for Global HR):

Situation more complicated: Represent local capacity to express what they want, fear, need, know. Often it is an issue of policy (intl. or national scale). Congo situation also has rebel groups, local conflicts being enhanced by funds by mining. Rights to natural resources: policies of world trade agreements have overruled any government agreement to protect their citizens. Some instances it is corruption (ex: Guatemala where 200 or more concessions to mine silver, gold, etc. and gets only 1% of the profit. Guatemalan officials are corrupt). Interesting that extraction and resource rights coming up a lot in HR community but the situation is very complex and needs a lot of understand. Norway is interesting beacon on this: they have legislation where government takes majority of revenue from resources and put it into a fund where funding education, health etc. and serves as economic stabilization function.

**Terry Odendahl**, Global Greengrants Fund: When there are corporate HR abuses, best protection is media to publicize it, make victims famous, get person out of the country, look at how our security measures.

**Holly Bartling:** Gendered aspect, Mexico → death threats to grantee and she never told anyone at her org. etc. Many frontline defenders in labor rights movement are working with isolated NGOs and do not have access to church or community group where they can go.

Labor rights vs. Resource/Environmentalists: interconnections because the workers are the communities themselves and companies divide them to create an internal conflict.

Global Fund for Women: Use strengths and leverage. Sometimes when you unravel a messy looking issue like DR Congo you find that companies use local militaries to make it seem like ethnic strife.

**Meg Gage:** get a database where people can report on cases and information can be shared

**Mary Lawlor:** always do things with their permission. Most HR defenders do want recognition and legitimacy of their work recognized. Brought together HR defenders from the region and recognize every single HR defender and try to increase their visibility. Financial management: HR defenders have been targeted under tax, financial cases. Defamation in the press, stigmatization. Bring back to UN Declaration. All these govts. have agreed to defend HR. A lot you can do before somebody gets arrested. (Sometimes easy as moving someone to a safe house). Good legal assistance and following case to the end.