

Weaving resilience and resistance for systemic transformation

This edition of Rooted Magazine is published in conjunction with the 3rd Nyéléni Global Forum, a landmark convergence of grassroots movements and organisations from around the world, happening in September 2025 in Sri Lanka.

As the Forum takes place, civil society organisations are also preparing a People's Summit leading up to COP30 in Brazil, while the High-Level Panel of Experts in Food Security and Nutrition is launching a key report on building resilient food systems. This issue of Rooted, launched on the eve of the Nyéléni Forum, complements these three processes. We share insights from people weaving resilience and resistance every day through grounded experiences in agroecology and food sovereignty.



Memory Mateveke, one of over 300 small-scale farmers from across Bikita district in southeast Zimbabwe, exhibiting seed at Gangare Village.

Our planting, harvesting, cooking, and eating are political. Especially in a world where most people don't know where the food they eat comes from, who produces it, or how it is distributed, and where – despite the industrial agriculture promises – hunger and undernutrition are increasing. In these times of civilisational crises – when the commons (water, land, biodiversity, food, basic human rights, etc.) are being seized and exploited by authoritarian states and corporations, and systems of racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity are weaponised to dispossess and divide – our grassroots initiatives that build community resistance and resilience often get dismissed. Even potential allies may see our work as too small, too slow, or too localised in the face of such vast, interlocking crises. Meanwhile, significant funding – including harmful subsidies with taxpayer and other public sources – and attention are directed toward false solutions like green- and pinkwashing that do not support our planet, either socially or ecologically, but instead fill the pockets of corporate actors driving destruction.

That is why Rooted Magazine presents insights from grassroots agroecology initiatives, through which people fulfill their basic food needs in a socially and ecologically just way, and also ignite broader societal change. While it is now common to say that reimagining and rebuilding systems like food and energy has great potential for systemic change, it is far less acknowledged that this transformation must be driven by the diversity of local actions, alternatives and processes rooted in people's bodies and territories. Our movements' experience and the stories in this magazine tell us that this can happen only when people reclaim control over their land, seeds and water and when they build local knowledge, relations and skills to create pathways for healthy, thriving communities – in contrast to the precarious living situations imposed by profit-seeking, market-driven models. And while this work is rooted locally, it is deeply interconnected globally. There is no ethics in so-called 'food security' when struggles for food sovereignty are not taken up everywhere. Such is the significance, potential, and hope of our initiatives!

The Nyéléni movement for food sovereignty

For us to further realise this potential, we are not only building just alternatives on the ground, but also organising to defend our territories and rights, and to raise political demands at all levels.

Almost 30 years ago, La Via Campesina introduced the concept of food sovereignty during the World Food Summit of the United Nations in 1996. The food sovereignty movement then further organised globally into the International Planning Committee for Food

Sovereignty (IPC), which has played a significant role not only in democratising institutional processes and defending peasant rights globally, but also organising action on the ground. In 2007 the 1st Nyéléni Global Forum for Food Sovereignty in Mali brought together nearly 500 delegates from all continents and constituencies to strengthen and deepen the concept of food sovereignty.

During that process, Nana Aïcha Cissé from Mali, and one of the founders of the World March of Women, shared this consensual definition of food sovereignty, elaborated on by peasant movements: "Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It means consuming only what we produce and producing what we consume."

Who was Nyéléni?

In Africa there is a story that has been passed down through generations about a woman from Mali named Nyéléni, who challenged patriarchal power by excelling at something that was considered men's work: agriculture. As well as defeating her male opponents in farming competitions, she also managed to overcome the arid climate and to domesticate crops like fonio and samio, which were crucial for sustaining her people. The first international Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty, held in the town of Sélingué in the Sikasso region of Mali in 2007, was named in her honour, after which the Nyéléni Centre and movement were established.

Following the first forum, the 2nd Nyéléni Global Forum took place in 2015 in Mali to deepen movement consensus around agroecology as a pathway to food sovereignty. This year's 3rd Nyéléni Global Forum in Sri Lanka will build on this shared understanding of food sovereignty and agroecology to serve as a space for political convergence of struggles towards systemic transformation – recognising that no struggle stands alone, to ensure that all the values of our diverse movements shape the change, and to strengthen our collective voice.

Shaping a joint political voice

Through this process of convergence among diverse constituencies, including fisherpeople, feminism movements, solidarity economy groups and 'health for all' advocates, important considerations are being brought to the table. For instance, peasant feminist movements at the 3rd Nyéléni Global Forum highlight the importance of re-centering life around care and emphasise that we are eco- and interdependent. Women are made responsible for daily practices that sustain life, such as growing, preparing and sharing food and taking care of families and communities, which forces us to rethink how we organise domestic and care work. This essential work, which can take place in community kitchens, gardens and laundries, is often invisibilised by capitalism and not recognised as work at all, yet people exploit and profit from it around the world. Similarly, women farmers, pastoralists, fishers and gatherers do most of the work but lack access to wages or rights and consequently to health, education, decent work and opportunities to decide for a life worth living.

Shaping a joint political voice is a defining feature of the Nyéléni process, setting it apart from other global forums

calling for a convergence of movements, in particular the World Social Forum (WSF). Although the WSF has supported the convergence of movements, the Forum itself did not establish a unified political position. In contrast, the Nyéléni Global Forum process goes beyond simply providing an open space; it shapes a collective political voice and shared direction. Over the past two years, this has occurred through a series of regional meetings with representations organised geographically, intersectionally and according to constituency criteria, which will culminate in the release of a unified political agenda during the 3rd Global Forum in September.

The Nyéléni process brings together a balanced range of constituencies. Beyond its traditional social base of small-scale producers, there will be groups from climate justice, feminism, social and solidarity economy, human rights, peace, health and other rights movements, as well as committed and critical artists, and scholars. Some of these actors share their experiences and insights in this issue of *Rooted*, demonstrating their efforts to weave resistance and resilience.

A break out session on agroecology at the 2nd Global Nyéléni Forum in Mali.



Resilience and resistance

The two indeed go hand in hand. As the dominant powers in the world seem to be losing their moral compass and we witness distressing acts of genocide and starvation, this issue leads with a contribution from [Palestine](#). Youth-led agricultural cooperatives are rooting Palestinian identity, mobilising popular action, and building a solidarity economy, ultimately aiming to nurture social fabric and dismantle oppressive economic hierarchies. In an [interview](#), Anuka DeSilva (La Via Campesina) and Hemantha Withanage (Friends of the Earth) set the stage in Sri Lanka where the 3rd Global Nyéléni Forum takes place, sharing how they are working to revive the great diversity of traditional seeds of the island while resisting destructive mega development projects. Along the same lines, small-scale fishworkers in [India](#) are reclaiming their rights to water as they build their movement through a creative boating campaign.

Building relationships of care and collective learning emerge as central threads in the weaving work between resilience and resistance. The development of a regional Participatory Guarantee System in [Mexico](#) fosters trust and resilience and teaches “that agroecology isn’t just something to be certified: it’s something to be lived, built collectively, and defended as a shared and contested territory”. In [Pakistan](#), farmers are resisting ‘green grabbing’ and land dispossession for corporate agriculture, while building a dynamic grassroots movement in which women learning circles hold an important place. The transborder coffee networks between [Mexico, Nicaragua and the United States](#) are building a solidarity economy through knowledge exchange and creating bonds of trust. The experience of the Piçarreira community garden in northern [Brazil](#) teaches how acting collectively can make the difference between losing and preserving a space to cultivate. Authors in [Latin America and the Caribbean](#) reflect on how care, spirituality, and justice are key to agroecology for transformative resilience.

We received various submissions that explore how Indigenous peoples around the world are leading the way in building resilience, often reframed as cultural survival under oppression. Maasai pastoralist communities in [Kenya](#) are building a mosaic of governance, ecology, and empowerment across 30 villages, as “homegrown resistance to systemic injustice and an invitation to rethink how resilience is built”. The Dene in [Canada](#) are growing food in a way that reframes agriculture from a colonial activity to a

practice rooted in cultural revitalisation, collectivism, food sovereignty, and climate resilience. This resonates with the reflections of Method Gudzindwa from [Zimbabwe](#), where communities are reviving robust Indigenous crops and, at the same time, tapping into their cultural memory. The Tuareg in [Mali](#) today proudly uphold their history as a people who have survived for centuries by relying on local wisdom as they cultivate crops in the desert. In the Sierra Nevada of [Colombia](#), the Indigenous *mamús* are seeking dialogue after centuries of isolation, and restoring balance in the territories to ensure the continuity of all of life.

These experiences serve as urgent reminders of the need for cultural revitalisation as an act of both resistance and resilience in a world deeply defined by the violence and erasure of colonisation. Keeping this in mind, we extend an invitation to the Rooted community to continue visualising, supporting, and participating in grassroots initiatives. Because it is through everyday acts of care, cultivation, and community that resistance and resilience for systemic change truly nurture and grow. ■

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