

**Assessing the relevance and impact of
GRAIN's work
on Food, Corporations and Climate**

**Evaluation no. 2233 Z 1040-1219
of the years 2016-18**

**Project no. 600-600-2288 ZG with Misereor
Executive summary, external evaluation report**

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of GRAIN, Misereor or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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0 Executive Summary

0.1 Introduction

This is the evaluation no. 2233 Z 1040-1219 “Assessing the relevance and impact of GRAIN’s work on food, corporations and climate” covering the years 2016 – 2018 of the cooperation between GRAIN and Misereor, Project no. 600-600-2288 ZG. It was undertaken from December 2017 to May 2018 by Rainer Tump and Frauke Seidensticker in cooperation with Theo Mutter who co-authored the parallel evaluation of the Bread for the World project.

GRAIN was founded in Barcelona on the 16th of March 1990 as a private non-profit foundation. Its original name was Genetic Resources Action International. The organization kept the abbreviation, has a much larger focus today, though. The Statutes from 1990 list four complex goals as follows:

- A. Stimulate public awareness about the importance of genetic resources for society and about developments and factors that threaten this diversity.
- B. Increase knowledge and understanding about structural causes behind the destruction of biological diversity and the implications of this destruction for the poor.
- C. Stimulate activities and policies that lead to a better conservation of genetic diversity at the local, national and international level with a special focus on the interests of the poor in developing countries.
- D. Support the activities of individuals and public interest groups, such as Third World, consumers, environment, farmers and church-linked organisations, as well as trade unions and researchers, concerned about these issues and facilitate communication and cooperation between them.

Today GRAIN’s purpose is summarized as working “to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems”, with research, analysis, networking on local, regional and international levels and “fostering new forms of cooperation and alliance-building”. The main shift in GRAIN’s focus was the adoption of a stronger focus on phenomena with large impact on agriculture, such as the global food crisis, climate change, land grabbing and the role of investment and big corporations in agriculture. Today’s GRAIN’s interconnected key topics are:

- Corporations, power and the global food system
- Land grabbing and land rights
- People’s control over seeds
- Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis

The four thematic areas of work and two structural ones are divided as follows between the two donors:

Donor	Misereor	Bread for the World
Area of	Corporations, power and the global food system	Land grabbing and land rights
	Food sovereignty to fight the	People’s control over seeds

work	climate crisis	
	Organizational development	Communication and outreach

0.2 Methodology

For a profound analysis the data collection has been undertaken using a pragmatic mix of methodological instruments of the empirical research tool kit. This required a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data collection with a clear emphasis to the qualitative instruments. A participatory approach has been applied throughout the evaluation with regular feedbacks with the GRAIN team, in order to structure the evaluation as a dialogue.

For the selection of interviewees, a number of parameters had been set to ensure the representativity of all relevant stakeholder groups: (1) Level on which the partners work: the target is a mixture of partners that work on grassroots, national, regional and international level and (2) time of cooperation with Grain; here the target is a mix of long standing and more recent of GRAIN partners.

A total of 57 individual interviews have been conducted: 30 partners, 6 international experts; 13 staff members, four present and two former board members as well as two Misereor staff members have been selected and interviewed via Skype or telephone by the three evaluators. In order to avoid two interviews with the same person, the interview phase has been organised in joint form by the two evaluation teams. The comprehensive and detailed interview guideline covered the issues of both evaluations.

The leading questions for the analysis and the structure of the report are determined by the five OECD-DAC criteria: Relevance, Outcome and Impact, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. Following a participatory methodology, the first draft of the evaluation report has been discussed with the GRAIN coordination team before being presented and discussed in the final workshop with Misereor and BfdW in Berlin.

0.3 Findings

Relevance

The relevance of the defence of community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems could not be better summarised as in the recently presented IPBES report. The main factors for the problematic situation of our globe are addressed by GRAIN's programme of action with its four interconnected fields of activity. The importance and the usefulness of GRAIN's research material and support especially in capacity building has been expressed clearly in all interviews.

Since the FTAs are mostly negotiated without the participation of the affected communities and people, GRAIN's support in terms of information and capacity building, notably the information about the rights of the affected people, is very relevant. The deforestation and the subsequent monocultures and large-scale agriculture have a negative impact to the biodiversity and a clear influence on

the climate; thus, the project's approach defending peasant agriculture is very relevant.

Outcome and Impact

The evaluation team analysed the main activities carried out by GRAIN in each thematic area from January 2016 to March 2018 on the main outcome and impact achieved. This included also outcome that is not mentioned in the agreement with Misereor.

One of the most visible outcomes in the programme area "Corporations, power and the global **food system**" was the strengthening of the alliance of NGOs and movements from the Global South and the Global North fighting against the destructive impacts of palm oil plantations.

With publications on China's new role in agribusiness or "Cashless economy" GRAIN showed once more its ability to stay "ahead of the curve" and spark discussions on developments and trends at a very early stage.

All partners contacted by the evaluators confirmed that GRAIN has influenced their agenda with its good research, useful publications and effective networking. At the same time, they highlighted the participative approach of GRAIN.

The programme area "**Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis**" is the newest of the four thematic areas of GRAIN's program. GRAIN was one of the first organizations that researched and published on the link between climate change and food production.

The comic book and the video "Together we can cool the planet" gained a lot of attention on the responsibility of the (industrial) agriculture for the climate change as well as of locally produced food based on agroecology.

The book "The great climate robbery" together with a video translated into several languages was widely spread and the video and related comic "Together, we can cool the planet"¹ were downloaded more than 10.000 times by April 2018.

Neither the agreement between GRAIN and Misereor nor the annual and semi-annual reports mention concrete activities of the component "**Organizational development**" that would lead to concrete outcome. The "success story" of GRAIN here to mention is that it managed to widen its donor portfolio and has strengthened the relationship to several donors.

Effectiveness

The 5 objectiveness in the agreement with Misereor are well formulated. The quantitative indicators in both agreements only cover the levels of „output“ and „use of output“ without effectively measuring outcome and impact. 8 of the 12 indicators were fully achieved (67%), 1 indicator was nearly achieved (8%) and 3 indicators (25%) were not achieved. The main reason for

¹See [Revista Biodiversidad 89](#)" 498 times

The main reason for the non-achievement of the three indicators was that downloads of GRAIN documents did not reach the targeted of downloads.

Efficiency

The overall impression of the efficiency of GRAIN's internal systems and communication is very positive. There are comprehensive systems in place, and they are applied daily. This results in a very collegial working climate. The decentral system was chosen to explicitly and resolutely move closer to partners in the field. This works, leads to challenges for the individual staff member though having to handle multiple demands from partners, in addition to tasks generated internally. Priority setting will remain important for the GRAIN team. GRAIN being a staff driven organization, the role of the board is limited, must play a role though in assuring a smooth succession in case of retirement of the founders.

When it comes to the PME-systems, the evaluation team appreciates internal systems which serve the basic demands of Misereor as a donor and at the same time the difficulty to align GRAIN's functioning with a log frame. A future log frame should be established with a pragmatic approach, combining meaningful quantitative indicators with simple but appropriate qualitative indicators such as "positive change in the behaviour/strategy of a corporation/government" or "feedback obtained at the end of a workshop" for a given percentage of partners. It should be possible to identify at least one meaningful qualitative indicator per key topic. Finally, cooperation between Misereor and GRAIN could definitely be exploited better, especially because food is a priority topic of Misereor's policy department.

Sustainability

GRAIN's institutional sustainability depends on its long-term strategy and the well-balanced diversified donor structure, relying on 17 different donors from eight countries with different financing periods. The two German donors Misereor and BfdW hold the first rank with a share of 29,8% together, followed by the United States with 27% and Switzerland with 18,1% of the total GRAIN budget (898.528 € for 2017).

The sustainability of results and impact depends on the stability and the success of the partner organizations. Thus, the selection of partners has an influence on the sustainability of impacts. Results in this project are not static facts but rather dynamic processes initiated by the partners with GRAIN's support. Most of the initiated changes, mainly the institutional and structural ones, are long-term processes. The crucial success factors for sustainability are the quality of training and capacity building, the working in networks and the building of strategic alliances and especially the creation of public awareness.

GRAIN's strategy for the empowerment is to provide information as well as the instruments and the methodology for research work at local and regional level. In

this context the three websites are important and reliable sources not only for the partners but also for the public in general.

0.4 Main Recommendations

Recommendations for GRAIN

Finding	Recommendation
GRAIN is relatively restrictive when selecting partners, whose approach is not identical with GRAIN's, and there is no pro-active policy for the selection of partners,	GRAIN should be more open in selecting partners for cooperation, accepting also different approaches, mainly complementary ones, in order to create broader and more effective alliances and a list of strategic criteria should be established.
In its Annual Report 2016 GRAIN reported on an initiative to find partners for maintaining the website farmlandgrab.org. Several of GRAIN's partners articulated their interest.	The effort to create a broad partnership to continue the valuable work for the website farmlandgrab.org should be intensified. This can be in form of a workshop presenting numbers and new trends of land grabbing, combined with negotiations for potential involvement of Misereor and BfdW as potential partners.
GRAIN's partners often translate publications and/or parts into local languages. But for rural and local people the wording and the style of a lot of documents is very elaborate and academic.	Content on GRAIN's publications and websites should be available in shorter versions and as didactical material less academic to make it easier for NGOs and movements at local level and more focused on "actionable knowledge", information that is first transformed into knowledge for the target group and into action. A good example is the poster "big meat and dairy's supersized climate footprint".
GRAIN's website grain.org is "old fashioned" and not attractive enough. The search process is sometimes awkward and complicated for the high quality reports, videos, books and poster produced	GRAIN should make its websites (especially grain.org) more attractive and improve the visibility of its publications by adapting the selection of key words to the (changing) algorithms of search engines.:
Staff members report about challenges regarding time-management and managing priorities; multiple demands from partners and internally difficult to handle.	Continue to put priority and time management high on the internal agenda and make sure staff applies solid and realistic procedures to [avoid burnout] and manage requirements of the daily work in a healthy way.
Focus on female partners, gender mainstreaming in the organization and in programmes is useful and highly appreciated.	Build a gender focus into all relevant programme areas and keep assessing needs of female farmers, farmer's associations and women's movements in the field.

Recommendations for GRAIN and Misereor

Finding	Recommendation
<p>The relevance of GRAIN's approach in general with the 4 thematic areas and in particular the project objectives (land grabbing, seeds and outreach) are very relevant.</p>	<p>GRAIN shall continue working in the mentioned line and the following project shall address these issues.</p>
<p>There are different opinions between GRAIN and Misereor about the usefulness of the present log frame; a sober application of a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators may though be appropriate and would fulfil needs of back donors.</p>	<p>For the next funding agreement, a log frame shall be developed and meaningful objectives and performance indicators with quantitative and qualitative indicators measuring visible impact to GRAIN on partner knowledge, capacity or successes.</p>
<p>The issue of food being top on the Misereor agenda, the partnership between GRAIN and Misereor is not very intense.</p>	<p>The partnership between Misereor and GRAIN should be elaborated; the advantages of a direct partnership between GRAIN and Misereor's policy department should be explored.</p>