

Evaluation of the GRAIN Project:

**“Supporting Social Movements and
CSOs for Peasant Land and Seed
System”**

**Project N° E-WEL-2015-0272 with Brot für die Welt of the years
2016 - 2018**

Executive summary, external evaluation report

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May 2018

Acknowledgements

The evaluators thank all the people who supported this evaluation by contributing their time and insights. In particular, they express their gratitude to Henk Hobbelink for providing them with all sorts of background documents and supporting the evaluation team with a large list of possible interview partners. In addition, GRAIN staff facilitated the phone and skype conversations by establishing direct contact between the evaluation team and the interview partners on several continents. Board, staff and former board and staff members as well as a considerable number of GRAIN partners and colleagues contributed to the evaluation with their time and their openness to our questions. Thank you all.

All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of GRAIN, Bread for the World 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 of the cooperation between GRAIN and Brot für die Welt, Project no. E-WEL-2015-0272, “Supporting Social Movements and CSOs for Peasant Land and Seed Systems”. It was undertaken from December 2017 to May 2018 by Rainer Tump and Theo Mutter in cooperation with Frauke Seidensticker who co-authored the parallel evaluation of the Misereor project.

The project supported by Bread for the World started on January 1, 2016 and will end on December 31, 2018.

The program budget for this period is € 1.270.000. Of this amount, € 410.000 (32,3%) are covered by the BfdW project.

The Overall Objective of the project is: *“Establishment of a sustainable and productive agriculture oriented towards biodiversity under the control of the local communities”*.

For each of the three components of the project one specific objective was defined:

- 1. Social movements and civil society organisations in the Global South are actively challenging land grabbing and defend their land and territories.*
- 2. Social movements and civil society organisations in the Global South are actively challenging corporate seeds laws and defend farmer seed systems.*
- 3. The broader public is aware of the forces behind the industrial food system and its impact on local farming and food security.*

The direct target groups of the project are social movements, farmers organisations and CSOs in the Global South. Indirect target groups are policy makers and the wider public that makes use of GRAIN´s information and analysis.

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 work	Corporations, power and the global food system	Land grabbing and land rights
	Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis	People’s control over seeds
	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. The character of this project required a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data collection with a clear emphasis to the qualitative instruments. During the whole evaluation process a consequent participatory approach has been applied 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 “old” and more recent of GRAIN partners.

A total of 58 individual interviews have been conducted: 30 partners, 6 international experts; 13 staff members, four present and two former board members as well as BfdW and 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 Main findings

Relevance

Relevance asks whether the activities of the project and the general objective of GRAIN tackle the general challenges in this specific socio-political field and meet the needs and the demands of the direct target groups, in this case the partners with which GRAIN cooperates.

To be able to react adequately to the broadly used tactics of land grabbing it is essential for the communities to be well organised and to have the relevant information especially about their rights. For the affected communities and/or the CSOs and NGOs active in this field GRAIN's approach is more than relevant, it is a necessary support.

One of the challenges for the peasants in this context is to defend the use of their own seeds which are adapted to the local conditions against the objective of big corporations to take control of the world seed production and eliminate the use of 'peasant seeds'.

The importance and the usefulness as well as the relevance of GRAIN's contribution in form of research material and support, especially in capacity building, has been expressed clearly in all interviews. Owing to the high quality and reliability of the research results and the information material, also other organisations which have no formal contract with GRAIN are using the material as a relevant source in the respective issues. GRAIN is considered as a relevant actor, especially since the thematic areas GRAIN is working on will remain a challenge in the future.

Outcome and Impact

In the programme area "**Land grabbing and access to land**" GRAIN intensified its work to challenge foreign investors in specific cases where basic rights were violated, and where the food security of local communities was undermined.

The website farmlandgrab.org with regularly updated information on landgrabs in more than 80 countries was visited by about 100.000 users in the years 2016 and 2017. It continues to be a valuable source for NGOs, movements and researchers. The initiated effort to gain partners to share the workload of the website was not yet successful.

GRAIN's activities in this thematic area have strengthened social movements and civil society organisations in the Global South and enabled them to challenge landgrabbing and defend the land of local communities.

In the programme area "**The struggle for seeds**" several publications strengthened the capacity of partners in the Global South on local and national level to defend the right of farmers to produce and use their own seeds. A documentary video showing local seed management and promotion initiatives in Latin America was highly appreciated by the partners interviewed. In 2016 and 2017, GRAIN was also capable to strengthen networks and alliances

on seeds by participating in major events in the Global South and by supporting farmer schools and training courses on seeds and agroecology, especially in West Africa and Latin America.

As a consequence, social movements and civil society organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America were able to actively challenging corporate seeds laws and defend farmer seed systems.

The total number of around 2,5 Million visitors on the four websites initiated and updated by GRAIN shows the importance of the programme area **“Communication and Outreach”**. In addition, videos, a comic book and several posters were published.

Effectiveness

The agreement between Bread for the World and GRAIN contains 3 objectives and 6 indicators. The analysis based on 58 interviews with partners, experts, GRAIN staff and board as well as data from webstatistics showed that all 6 indicators were fully achieved for the first two years of the project.

As the indicators measure the number of activities and the use of outputs rather than the achievement of the related objective or outcome and impact, they are not very useful to measure the success of the project.

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 BfdW 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” from a given percentage of partners. It should be possible to identify at least one meaningful qualitative indicator per key topic. Finally, cooperation between BfdW and GRAIN could definitely be exploited better, especially because agriculture and food security are priority topics of many projects in the Global South supported by BfdW.

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 in this project 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 as realised by GRAIN and its partners.

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

0.4.1 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 then 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.

0.4.2 Recommendations for GRAIN and Bread for the World

Finding	Recommendation
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.	GRAIN shall continue working in the thematic areas of land and seeds as well as on outreach taking into account the findings in chapters 3.2 and 3.3.
There are different opinions between GRAIN and BfdW about the usefulness of quantitative indicators; a sober application of a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators may though be appropriate and would fulfil needs of back donors	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.