

Oxfam Management response to the review of Governance in West Africa: Evaluation of the GROW campaign (Effectiveness Review Series 2015/16)

Prepared by:	<i>Alexandre Seron, regional GROW campaign manager & Imma De Miguel, in charge of Economic Justice Campaign</i>		
Contributors:	<i>Gabriel Pons, Aimé Lukelu, Charlotte Masselot & Aminata Ba</i>		
Signed off by:	<i>Beatriz Novalez, regional director for Oxfam Intermon & Aboubacry Tall, regional director for Oxfam GB</i>		
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1. The context and background of the review

As part of Oxfam Great Britain's (OGB) Global Performance Framework (GPF), samples of mature projects are randomly selected each year and their effectiveness rigorously assessed. The GROW campaign in West Africa was selected for review in this way under the Governance thematic area.

The GROW West African Campaign was launched in 2011 working to influence regional level policy processes and practices so that: a) agricultural policies are gender responsive; b) regional agricultural policies recognise the role and importance of small-scale farmers (SSF) and respond to their needs and concerns; c) budget commitments are met and adequate investment in small-scale farming is secured; d) social protection and crises prevention mechanisms are in place, and e) access of SSF to productive resources is secured.

The evaluation explores the work done by the regional GROW Campaign and members during the ECOWAP+10 revision process and analyses the effectiveness of that work in relation with the following three policy outcomes:

Targeted outcome 1: Increased political will towards the need to harmonise regional agricultural policies and initiatives.

Targeted outcome 2: The reform of agricultural development policies and programmes integrates gender at all levels to massively strengthen the economic role of women in the sector.

Targeted outcome 3: Increased investment and recognition of the livestock sector as a key economic sector in the region.

Following a predefined research protocol, this report presents a qualitative analysis and discussion of selected key results of the Campaign, following a thorough and detailed review of strategic project documentation and numerous informant interviews. The purpose of this Effectiveness Review is to evidence the extent to which the project's key targeted outcomes have materialised and what other alternative or competing factors may have also contributed to those outcomes.

The evidence presented in this report relies on existing research and secondary sources, a plural range of testimonies from 33 key informants and first-hand observations of the Campaign's work. A field mission to Senegal and Togo was conducted from 11 – 30 March 2016. All findings have been carefully triangulated across different primary and secondary sources. Whenever this has not proved possible it is clearly indicated.

2. Summary main findings and recommendations

Summary of Key Findings:

Outcome	Contribution scores	Short commentary
<p>Increased political will towards the need to harmonise regional agricultural policies and initiatives</p>	3	<p>Outcome realised in part and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</p> <p>The evaluator could not find enough evidence to affirm that the outcome has been fully achieved. Although the recognition of the need to work for a single common agricultural policy was formally reflected in the final document of orientations and adjustments for ECOWAP for 2025, no other indicators of a stronger political will could be verified.</p> <p>However, in a particularly complex political context, the fact that the issue has been kept on the agenda is not to be underestimated and can be considered as a positive outcome. We can also safely conclude that GROW has made an important contribution to this result. The general perception of key regional stakeholders is that Oxfam's activity, and the report produced, considerably increased the visibility of the issue among regional stakeholders and decision-makers. The report launched by the Campaign motivated strong reactions among decision-makers and was frequently mentioned by stakeholders. It was also the only study of this kind presented in the framework of this process.</p>
<p>The reform of agricultural development policies and programmes integrates gender at all levels to massively strengthen the economic role of women in the sector</p>	4	<p>Outcome realised in full and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</p> <p>The evaluation was able to find evidence of increased formal political will and incipient signs of a more substantive will to advance the gender cause in regional agriculture policies.</p> <p>An important contribution by GROW to the former could be found and a clear influence of the GROW Campaign in the final wording and framing of the gender issue in the ECOWAP+10 document of orientations and adjustments was verified as an indicator of stronger formal political commitment. At the substantive level, although not clearly linked to the ECOWAP+10 process and/or GROW, recently launched initiatives by FAO/ECOWAS also reflect stronger substantive political will and a more decisive intention from regional institutions to make progress in this field.</p>

<p>Increased investment and recognition of the livestock sector as a key economic sector in the region</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Outcome realised in full and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</p> <p>The evaluation found strong evidence of a stronger political commitment towards the need to increase investment and recognition of the livestock sector as a key economic sector in the region.</p> <p>The GROW Campaign's contribution to enhancing the communication, visibility and advocacy capacities of RBM and APSS, and to a much lesser extent ROPPA, was clearly acknowledged as a major contributing factor, not only by Campaign members, but also by high-level decision-makers at ECOWAS.</p> <p>However, other two similar factors could also be identified making it difficult to isolate and measure the exact weight of GROW's contribution against the rest of the identified factors. The data available suggests, and most interviewees agree, that the three initiatives provide complementary support to producer organisations. We can therefore conclude that the sum of the capacity-building initiatives, including GROW, together with a renewed interest by the main donors on the issue of pastoralism and livestock farming, have made the achievement of this outcome possible.</p>
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<p>5</p>	<p>Outcome realised in full Evidence that intervention made a crucial contribution</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Outcome realised in part and evidence that intervention made a crucial contribution Outcome realised in full and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Outcome realised in part and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Outcome realised in part and evidence that intervention made some contribution Outcome realised to a small degree and evidence that intervention made an important contribution</p>
<p>1</p>	<p>Outcome realised, to any degree, but no evidence that the intervention made any contribution</p>

Recommendations:

GROW West Africa is an ambitious regional campaign that seeks to mobilise West African public opinion and to influence regional institutions' agricultural policies and practices so that they are more responsive to the interests of small-scale farmers, both men and women. The ECOWAP+10 revision process was a key opportunity to influence the regional agricultural policy framework of ECOWAS.

The evaluation's key finding and conclusion is that, despite some flaws, the Campaign's strategy to influence the ECOWAP+10 process has been reasonably effective. The analysis of the three targeted outcomes shows that, although to different degrees, progress has been made in all three policy areas. The contribution of GROW is also evident, although with a different intensity in the three areas. The analysis of the different strategies has provided some valuable learning and is presented here to stimulate collective reflection and discussion. Some of these aspects will require further consideration by Campaign members.



1. **Alliances.** Engaging a broad range of regional and national organisations underpins the GROW Campaign's strategy. This is particularly pertinent in the West African regional context, where local organisations are increasingly accepted as legitimate actors and valid interlocutors of regional integration organisations such as ECOWAS. The coalition element was particularly relevant in the analysis of the work of the Campaign on sub-outcome 1, where some latent tensions about the alliance model and what is generally perceived as a dominant role (and visibility) of Oxfam were uncovered. Despite important steps having been taken to ensure that all members' logos are more systematically made visible in Campaign activities and outputs, this is still not always the case. This is partly because the separation between activities that fall under the Campaign's framework and activities conducted by members as part of their own agenda, but which also contribute to the Campaign's goals, is not always clear. This is not an easy debate and a discussion about the desired visibility of the Campaign and the collective ownership of the Campaign's strategies needs to be encouraged. A final key lesson that can be drawn is the need to engage critical boundary partners, such as ROPPA or FAO, at key moments. As we will elaborate on a bit later, a good power map should provide the necessary information about different strategic actors to engage at key points.
2. **Capacity building.** Lessons have also been learned about the importance of capacity building as a leverage of policy change. The skills and competences developed by Campaign members on issues such as advocacy or communication, among others, were highly valued by all members, who considered that to be the main added value of belonging to the Campaign. Capacity support was also found to be a significant factor contributing to the achievement of sub-outcome 3. Given that a number of capacity-building activities promoted by different actors are actually ongoing, it would be good to map them out and focus on the unique expertise of Oxfam in fields like communication and public mobilisation.
3. **Lobbying.** The Campaign has successfully engaged decision-makers and facilitators of the policy dialogue process through formal and informal contacts. Informal dialogue has been critical to ensure that some of the Campaign's demands were ultimately reflected in the final document of orientations, as was the case in sub-outcomes 1 and 2. A combination of formal and informal policy dialogue was found to generate the best results.

It would be advisable to invest more time in a thorough stakeholder and power analysis and collective thinking of specific advocacy strategies for each different policy goal.

4. **Theory of change.** Using a theory of change approach can help to collectively unpack underlying assumptions about how change occurs in particular contexts and to decide on the appropriateness of specific advocacy tactics. Besides, it is important to note that, regardless of what the focus of the policy dialogue is, it requires a long-term perspective to change. This requires the definition of short-term or intermediate outcomes and indicators to be able to track the effects of the advocacy strategy. Partners can then choose the approach that best suits their advocacy style.

Intermediate outcomes should be defined of the overall process of change but also, and when feasible, of specific advocacy strategies. An example of this is the strategy used in sub-outcome 1, where what was generally perceived as a maximalist tone provoked the serious opposition of a significant number of key stakeholders. This does not mean that the strategy has completely failed as we were able to explain earlier in the report. But the risk that the issue loses momentum exists. A reorientation of the strategy and the identification of incremental and clearly defined intermediate policy goals would be recommended.

5. **National/regional link.** A better use of theory of change could also serve as the basis of collective discussion about the interplay between the national and regional campaigns. Understanding how change is expected to happen between the two levels and unpacking the map of influences and intersections between the national and regional level can help articulate this link more effectively in the future. More joint planning and collective spaces for strategic thinking are also needed. These spaces could be also used to share learning across countries.

3. **Overall do the findings of the review concur with you own expectations or assessment of the project's effectiveness?**

Yes they do as mainly they highlight the partnership framework, which has been working for 4 years now, and needs to be challenged in order to meet the expectations of all members. The Effectiveness Review also facilitated an external perspective on the strengths and challenges of the campaign, demonstrating positive progress as well as issues that require further reflection.

4. **Did the review identify areas that were particularly strong in the project?**

Lobbying, both formal and informal is a clear strength of the GROW campaign within the ECOWAP10 process. Oxfam's staff and members were able to make great progress because of their influencing capacities and contact networks. The capacity building strategy used with WILDAF, APSS and RBM was also found very effective. This can potentially become a model to be further developed and researched, to see how we can learn from it and try to apply it to similar types of partnerships.

5. **Did the review identify areas that were particularly weak in the project?**

It seems there is consensus with GROW members, that the priority challenge is one of ownership/leadership. Better communication/coordination/planning/strategic thinking with full and continuous members' and stakeholders' involvement could mitigate this weakness in future. In terms of moving forward to address this, one solution would be the articulation and use of a strong "Theory of Change" for the GROW campaign.

6. **Summary of review quality assessment**

In broad terms, we have assessed the review as strong, within the understanding that the review targeted one specific area of work of GROW campaign during one limited period of time. The process with consultant and key Oxfam staff seemed smooth and open; direct and independent dialogue between consultant and key actors was facilitated with success, which drove to critical and objective findings. Just one quick correction to be made: in the review when you read FAO (www.fao.org), please understand we talk about AFAO (www.afoawawa.org).

7. **Main Oxfam follow-up actions**

As immediate follow up, we anticipate three steps: A) share per email the effectiveness review and invite members (including consultant?) to skype calls/webinars to clarify/understand better the findings, // December16, B) organize a key strategic meeting with current/new members to discuss findings, review and adapt the Theory of Change of the Campaign and elaborate a new

comprehensive – not only related to ECOWAP10 – 2 year MOU (including roles, responsibilities, differentiation of members/allies, ways of working, visibility, monitoring and evaluation...) with all members // January17, and C) structure a collective planning/evaluating process on a 6 month basis with all regional members/allies, whose aim will be to strategise collectively and plan together // March17. Amongst key actions we plan (see detailed action plan for more details), the following recommendations are proposed:

- RR1 on alliances: we re-discuss the partnership model with different GROW current/future members
- RR2 on capacity building of members: we conduct a capacity building need/offer assessment/mapping of GROW members at national and regional level to better target what support who can give to whom
- RR3 on lobbying: we support the development of strong GROW national/regional campaigns strategies (with improved stakeholder and power analysis) and ensuring these strategies have stronger influence in continental/global campaigns agenda/ initiatives
- RR4 on theory of change : we jointly develop the theory of change with GROW members and also develop a mechanism to assess/track how progress is reviewed and changes are made
- RR5: on national/regional links : we systematically involve national/regional GROW members in the development of strategies/operating plan and we make sure all regional GROW members activate their country counterparts to be part of country GROW campaigns

We shall also interconnect the findings of the effectiveness review with the regional partnership learning project we have in WAF, where GROW in WAF as one of the cases that will be explored. This is due start at the beginning of November 16, with the first results due by the end of December 16, This fits perfectly with the three steps process we explained above. It should be noted that there are two clear levels of actions, one being within internal to the GROW campaign and the other to be addressed within the OI regional platform.

8. Any conclusions/recommendations Oxfam does not agree with or will not act

None

9. What learning from the review will you apply to relevant or new projects in the future? How can the regional centre/Oxford support these plans?

Clearer and formalized relations with/between regional members within GROW campaign will need high attention in the future work as part of the new OI regional platform. This will require further discussions to ensure that there is a clear articulation between ORS pillars in terms of harmonized ways of working/partnering with regional SOCs/INGOs. Some members of the GROW campaign will be embedded within Food Justice pillar but might also be in touch/interested/partnering with Oxfam on relevant work connected with the two others ORS pillars. This is probably a key responsibility which needs specific dedicated time at high level within the new OI regional structure. Some support from OGB/OIntermon HQ would be welcome to share experiences from other regions and accompany that specific process.

10. Additional reflections

We have been aware of many of the above findings as part of our ongoing work as there is a clear will amongst members to facilitate ownership, to work collectively on a shared strategy under GROW brand, to explore new ways of working and to improve MOUs. Two key challenges (which are also constraints/obstacles) may need to be addressed; firstly to reinforce the institutional capacities of GROW members and secondly to improve existing consultation frameworks.