

Independent mid-term evaluation of Oxfam's GROW Campaign

GROW Management Team response

The GROW campaign was launched in June 2011, and is Oxfam's priority public campaign for 2011-15. The goal of the campaign is to secure long-term solutions to the broken food system, given almost 900 million going hungry every day. The campaign is now active in 35 countries in the South and 20 in the North, working with partners and allies to achieve change at global and national levels in relation to the policies and practices of governments, corporations and individuals. The campaign has 4 thematic areas, land, investment in small-scale agriculture, climate change and food prices and crises. These issues are central to Oxfam's mission and we are investing heavily in our campaigning on them. So we felt it essential to conduct a substantial, independent evaluation at this mid-term stage of the campaign. The evaluation was conducted by consultancy 'OWL Re' following a competitive tender process (<http://www.owlre.com/wordpress/>)

Owl Re conducted a comprehensive evaluative process including interviews with 90 external respondents and 40 Oxfam staff, a web based survey, five in depth case studies (in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Guatemala the Netherlands, and of our international work on land), and a web survey.

This document summarises Oxfam's response to the evaluation. It contains the main conclusions that we draw from this study, and the lessons that we will apply to strengthen future campaigning.

1. Noting our successes to date

We were pleased to see independent evidence of the impact of our campaigning at national and global level, and across all 5 of the GROW campaign objectives. However, it also noted that we have had most external impact where we have come together to focus on one specific issue. The evaluation highlights the most significant external changes achieved by the campaign including:

- Commitments from the world's biggest food companies to change their policies
- Increased access to decisions makers for women food producers generated by the Female Food Heroes (FFH) project in 15 countries;
- Changes to World Bank policies as a result of our 'Land Freeze' initiative;
- Changes to national agricultural and food security processes/policies and local wins on securing land for women and vulnerable groups in some 20 countries
- Ending or suspending speculative trading on agricultural commodities by banks in France, Germany, Austria and the UK
- Contributing to improvements in the Voluntary Guidelines of Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

Related to the in depth case studies carried out by OWL, we are pleased that the evaluation has many positive things to say about our work in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, the Netherlands and our international 'land freeze' work. Our internal monitoring and reporting shows that there are many other examples of change generated by our campaigning with partners and allies, in countries in all regions of the world and at regional and international levels.

2. Learning lessons for the future

The GROW management team feel that the lessons highlighted by OWL are the right ones, and in responding to the conclusions and recommendations have the following specific comments to make:

Focusing our Campaign, and elevating national issues to global level.

The challenges inherent in the scale of the GROW campaign was a recurring issue in the evaluation. It is very gratifying that Oxfam country teams have chosen to launch GROW campaigns with partners and allies in around 50 countries. These campaigns are diverse; rightly led by country teams' assessment of national priorities. While there is strength in this diversity, the evaluation rightly pointed out the tension between "letting many flowers bloom" and having sufficient prioritisation and focus to achieve wide impact in the world. As we move into the second half of the campaign we are thinking hard about the right model for our work. We need to increase our support for southern national campaigns and make more disciplined choices about what we do jointly at international level.

One recommendation made by OWL is that we should seek to elevate more issues from southern national countries to the international level. The *Polochic* case and the Sahel crisis are two examples of how we have done that effectively. We are actively looking for such opportunities in our upcoming work on food and climate change, and are committed to responding to other opportunities as they arise. This means greater flexibility than we have seen to date.

Strengthening Movements and Alliances

The original GROW campaign strategy places a strong emphasis on strengthening movements working on GROW issues. We are absolutely convinced that this remains the right approach. There is little or no prospect of substantial change from governments, companies and individuals without a strong movement to demand this action. As the evaluation found, the success of the campaign at national level in the South is due in large part to the success of our partnerships and alliances. Additionally, the evaluation shows that an important success factor is to build alliances and partnerships on long timeframes with on-going investment. We have also mobilised publics and collaborated to good effect in the North and around some global processes, for instance linking with organisations working on land grabs and the CFS.

A crucial part of building movements is mobilising publics, and as the evaluation points out, we have not reached our ambitious public mobilisation targets globally. We believe that public campaigning is central to our model of change – and we need further training and resourcing for public campaigning, particularly in the South, and to frame our campaigning in ways that truly resonate with publics in different countries. We also need to prioritise work with partners and allies who are engaged in reaching out to publics, and strengthening our alliances with other organisations remains a priority for the GROW campaign in 2014-15. We recognise that different campaign models as well as dynamics nationally in the North and South, as well as regionally and globally require tailor made approaches. We are currently assessing how best to enable this.

Internal co-ordination

We strongly agree that decision-making and internal commitment to agreed priorities are two critical issues that need addressing. We have taken several steps to reform our ways of working in recent months, including strengthening the voice of Southern countries on our campaign management team and reforming the ways of working, membership and terms of reference of Oxfam's senior campaign governance group. The GROW management team will continue to push for greater streamlining in sign-off and decision making and greater discipline in implementing decisions.

Sustainability

The GROW campaign is a 4 year commitment by Oxfam – already extended to December 2015 because of the external agenda on climate change. The prominence of GROW issues in the current Oxfam Strategic Plan for 2013-19 means that Oxfam will continue to be active on these issues in some way. *How* we will work on these issues beyond 2015 is yet to be decided.

Gender

Oxfam believes that GROW has achieved considerable successes in relation to putting gender and women's rights at the heart of the campaign, most notably at national level. The evaluation notes

several areas where this was achieved, such as providing access to women farmers to markets or decision making processes in Burkina Faso and Tajikistan, and successfully pushing for gender provisions in international agreements on climate change and land tenure. We agree with the evaluation's suggestion that the campaign would benefit from greater input from gender specialists.

3. Responses to individual case studies

The evaluation included four country case studies, and a case study of our international campaigning and advocacy on land targeted at the World Bank. The teams involved will draw on the lessons learned from these for their future work.

We were pleased to see confirmation of our external impact in each case. In Burkina Faso this included influencing the governments rural sector develop plan, ensuring that family farming was at its heart. In Guatemala, the campaign with partners to get land returned to 769 evicted farmers has won government commitments, as well as helping place the issue of land grabs on the international agenda. In the Netherlands, there was campaigning success in getting five large Dutch banks to take preventative measures to avoid involvement in land grabs.

In Bangladesh, there was evidence of Oxfam and its partners influence on government positions on climate change and access to national resources, and increasing visibility of these issues internationally. It is important to note that Oxfam and the Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (CSRL) had been working to objectives similar to those of the global GROW campaign since 2007. The September 2011 'solidarity launch' in Bangladesh by CSRL-GROW-Oxfam therefore represented a continuation, rather than the start, of campaigning work on these issues by Oxfam and its partners.

In relation to the case study on our World Bank land freeze campaigning, we welcome the evidence of our impact in securing changes in policies and regulations around land rights issues. However we want to respond to several specific conclusions of the case study.

We chose to focus on the World Bank as a target for our campaigning because of its strong influence on the issue of land (given its significant investment in agriculture, its influential advice to developing countries, and its role as a standard setter for other investors), and the progressive attitude of its new President. It was a choice that other NGOs working on land supported. The evaluation notes that some World Bank staff felt that Oxfam could have been more supportive of it in its messages and that the campaign created some tensions between the organisations. However, targeting any actor with a public campaign is likely to lead to 'frostier' relationships than normal and there were also many staff of the Bank who actively welcomed Oxfam's campaign as it raised the profile of land issues within the institution. Overall, we believe our combination of insider lobbying and public campaigning was effective in achieving results in this case.