

GROW Campaign in Latin America  
Evaluation 2011-2015  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**with Oxfam Management Response**

---

Gabrielle Watson

March, 2016

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The GROW Campaign in LAC

This evaluation reviews the achievements of the GROW campaign in Oxfam's Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region between 2011 and 2015. Oxfam's GROW campaign sought to bring about a more just and sustainable food system where everyone has enough to eat. The campaign had five goals:

1. Help grow movements that would propel the campaign
2. Stop land and water grabs
3. Reach a global deal on climate change
4. Invest in the productivity, resilience, and sustainability of small-scale food producers, particularly women
5. Respond to global food price crises

This was the first Oxfam campaign that sought to link long-standing programmatic work on agriculture around the world with hard-hitting campaigning to influence policies at the global and national levels. GROW was the priority global campaign for the Oxfam confederation, and involved active campaigning in 40 countries. Countries were encouraged to prioritize the goals that were most relevant to their national contexts.

In LAC, the main policy focus was on agriculture and land, with a lesser focus on climate adaptation. The campaign was carried out in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru. The main influencing approaches used included strengthening civil society change coalitions, public-facing campaigning through traditional and social media, direct engagement with policy-makers (lobby) and research.

GROW Country teams in LAC were supported by a regional team of five people, which was gradually reduced to just one person, accompanied by a project coordinator for a major EU-funded project involving six of the 11 countries. In 2015, the LAC region decided to de-prioritize the GROW campaign in order to focus on Oxfam's new Inequality campaign. The EU project continues through the end of 2016, while many countries continue to prioritize GROW themes, but not under the banner of the GROW campaign.

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the prior five years of GROW work in LAC to draw lessons for influencing work going forward. It focuses on five main questions: 1) the significance of results achieved and Oxfam's contribution to them; 2) the sustainability of campaign results going forward; 3) the effectiveness of influencing approaches used; 4) the effectiveness of the flexible global campaign model and; 5) the appropriateness of regional and national campaign structures. The evaluation explores three strategic learning themes that are relevant for the future of Oxfam's influencing work: alliances, regional synergies, and transnational influencing.

The evaluation was undertaken between September 2015 and February 2016 and was commissioned by the LAC Regional Platform. A range of data sources and analysis were conducted to answer the evaluation questions: review of strategy and internal monitoring reports; an online survey with Oxfam staff and allies; in-depth interviews with staff, allies and

external observers. Six case studies were developed to explore the themes of alliances, regional synergies and transnational influencing. An advisory committee of LAC regional and country staff guided the design and focus of the evaluation and reviewed preliminary findings at three points prior to the completion of this report. The LAC regional MEL coordinator served as commissioning manager and provided substantive and technical guidance throughout the process. This report was prepared for Oxfam by Gabrielle Watson.<sup>1</sup>

## Findings and Strategic Implications

Overall, the GROW campaign marks a period of intensive growth in influencing capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The campaign is marked by significant progress in promoting policies for small producers – particularly rural women producers, heightened attention to controversial land grabs, and made some important in-roads into creative and hard-hitting influencing work with the private sector. Oxfam’s hard-earned regional and national recognition as a policy actor on agriculture, land, gender and climate issues, along with the legacy of strong coalitions built to advance these issues, represent a significant human and political asset. They can be leveraged to support influencing work going forward. The main evaluation findings and institutional implications are summarized below.

### GROW Results in LAC and Oxfam’s Contribution

**Significant progress has been achieved in the areas of agriculture policies for small producers, some especially for women, and making land conflicts and land concentration visible.** Nearly every country in LAC has advanced policy gains for rural women and small producers. Four countries – Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala and Paraguay – drew national attention to land grabs affecting small producers. Most gains achieved, however, are **partial victories in a longer process** of securing the aims of the campaign. These often require longer term commitments to secure program implementation and budget allocations. The land grab cases, despite progress highlighting the issue and mobilizing support, have as yet failed to bring resolution for most the people affected.

**Country and regional teams have significantly strengthened civil society coalitions that advance small producers’ and women’s interests.** In LAC, the GROW movement building objective was focused on building campaign coalitions. Oxfam’s staff and coalition members have increased their influencing capacity, especially in terms of agenda-setting, direct policy-maker engagement, public messaging, media outreach and digital mobilization. Women leaders in particular have been strengthened through the GROW campaign. This is primarily as a result of the joint strategy development and ongoing strategic reflection supported by Oxfam staff. Improvements in the processes for strategic and operational reviews would improve the quality of documentation and accelerate the process of building influencing capacity among coalition allies and Oxfam staff. The GROW experience in LAC suggests an effective influencing model of unbranded alliances of unusually diverse actors unified by shared objectives – and often held together by Oxfam’s skilled mediation of diverse policy agendas.

---

<sup>1</sup> [watson.gabrielle@gmail.com](mailto:watson.gabrielle@gmail.com)

**Regional networking and transnational influencing have strengthened national influencing initiatives, but deeper structural change still remains an aspiration at this juncture.** Synergies were fostered among country teams and allies working to advance food security laws and a rural women’s agenda on climate change through two “coalitions of the willing”, with a shared agenda among a series of national teams that contributed energy to drive these coordinated efforts. There remains an opportunity to target and influence regional bodies such as FAO’s Committee on Family Farming, CELAC and the Frente Parlamentario Contra el Hambre. National campaigns to support land grab cases were significantly bolstered by coordinated campaigning to mobilize public, celebrity and policy-maker support from outside the countries. Links between the land grab cases and more structural policy reforms were not made, however, except in the case of Colombia – though efforts there are ongoing.

In terms of influencing effectiveness and Oxfam’s contribution, the following institutional implications can be offered:

- Oxfam has an opportunity to leverage its hard-earned positioning on food security, land, gender and (to a lesser degree) climate. Oxfam LAC teams should analyze the relationships, coalitions and policy expertise created through the GROW campaign to find possible bridges to future influencing work. It should also examine opportunities for influencing regional bodies and actors, in alignment with broader regional influencing agendas.
- Oxfam should build on the successful model of supporting diverse, unbranded coalitions to propel policy change agendas in other influencing work. Oxfam branding is most valuable for specific initiatives where Oxfam’s global brand and perspective strengthen national influencing, such as research reports, multi-stakeholder convening, mobilizing global citizens and facilitating access to influentials in transnational spaces.

## **Sustainability of gains achieved and continuity of GROW themes**

**Sustainability of the policy progress achieved is strongly linked to the strength of the change coalitions that promoted them in the first place.** Oxfam’s success in fostering broad coalitions which facilitated access and influence in different policy spaces (and often under difficult political circumstances) has left a legacy of human and political capital. But Oxfam also runs the risk of squandering this resource – and potentially damaging its reputation and brand – if it does not take advantage of initial successes, relationships, and expertise built on specialized topics. In some cases, the potential for significant achievements may justify the continuation of certain public policy agendas through to completion.

**Oxfam has strongly positioned itself in the areas of agriculture, land, gender and to some extent climate resilience and has significant potential to powerfully engage and shape private sector norms and behaviors.** In order to realize this potential, current Oxfam staff and partner understandings of the role of the private sector and how Oxfam can or cannot engage it need to be advanced. As mentioned above, Oxfam needs to carefully consider the strengths and achievements built up through the GROW campaign as it designs influencing strategies for the new focus areas.

Based on this analysis, some institutional implications include:

- Continue to invest in coalition-building as a central component of Oxfam's model of influencing in LAC, and consider continued support for selected national-level initiatives where there are promising but incomplete advances aligned with Oxfam priorities for the future, with strong coalitions to push them through to implementation.
- Explore possible links between GROW themes and future influencing work, such as: (1) small producers and land concentration within Inequality work, (2) resilience to climate shocks within humanitarian work, (3) rural women within work on gender violence and women's economic rights.
- Create an active learning process around private sector engagement to enable LAC teams to learn from past experiences and increase the sophistication of their analysis of the private sector and expand the menu of engagement modalities.

## Effectiveness of influencing approaches

**Influencing capacity evolved considerably over the course of the GROW campaign in LAC**, likely fueled by joint strategy development and analysis and reflection along-side coalition allies.

**There was innovation and effective influencing in the areas of coalition support, agenda articulation, direct policy-maker engagement, making people and issues visible and digital campaigning.** Emerging areas that teams should continue to develop include building sharp influencing strategies, gathering political intelligence, public messaging, doing more selective research and private sector influencing. In some cases, a scatter-shot approach to selecting influencing tactics persists. Effort was likely wasted producing many reports that were of low quality and not used effectively or at all.

For influencing approaches, some institutional implications for Oxfam in LAC include:

- Prioritize investing in core staff competencies to conduct more structured design (especially power analysis) and strategic reviews (MEL) in order to select more targeted and relevant influencing tactics and to accelerate strategic learning.
- Specific technical influencing skill building – such as for media engagement, public messaging, direct lobbying, and conducting research – can be more targeted, through selective trainings, peer-to-peer coaching and active sharing of effective influencing approaches.
- Review and revise the draft model of influencing emerging from the LAC GROW experience, as the basis for a common design and assessment framework.

## Effectiveness of the Flexible Global Campaign Model

**The flexibility to select among multiple global campaign goals facilitated national adaptations aligned with national priorities, but global and national policy priorities were not necessarily aligned.** The flexible GROW campaign model with multiple campaign objectives permitted national teams to develop campaigns tailored to their national contexts. This was highly valued by country teams. They also valued the high quality technical and

strategic advice provided by global team and affiliate headquarters colleagues. However, the multiplicity of global campaign agendas and frequent shifts from one focus to another left country staff confused and over-burdened with multiple demands from the teams driving the “northern” agendas. It also likely distracted from the development of national influencing strategies to address the deeper structural drivers of food system injustices at the national level, such as unequal land distribution, gender discrimination and violence and the dominance of agro-industrial production models.

Some strategic implications on Oxfam’s global campaign model include:

- Continue to allow country teams to define national policy agendas in line with their national influencing priorities and within the wider global campaign themes.
- Support the participation of national staff in the design of global and multi-country campaign strategies to improve alignment between national and global agendas.

## Appropriateness of Regional and National Structures

**Regional agenda articulation and strategic support to country teams strongly boosted national influencing effectiveness, through more could have been done to influence regional actors and spaces.** A significant transition in the LAC regional team mid-way through the campaign reduced regional team capacity and was poorly communicated. Nevertheless, regional coordination continued to generate significant results, such as stronger national campaigns on food security framework laws in multiple countries and the generation of a regional rural women’s agenda on climate change.

Some institutional implications for regional structures include:

- Continue to maintain small regional influencing/campaigning teams for priority initiatives (greater than one; smaller than five) that support national influencing design and strategic reflection, articulate common regional agendas and facilitate transnational agenda alignment especially around global moments.
- National teams should more strongly assert their influencing agendas. One way to promote this is by supporting country teams in developing national influencing strategies.
- The regional team should help Oxfam rebalance and align national and global agendas to maximize the power of transnational influencing.

# OXFAM MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

## GROW Campaign Evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean

### Introduction

Oxfam's Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is one of the laboratories for the implementation of the change process towards the vision of Oxfam in 2020. In this space, the regional team and the country directors together play an important role in defining a regional-level influencing strategy and elevating Oxfam's influencing potential through program and campaign efforts, in addition to supporting the new One Oxfam operating structure in each country.

Recognizing the enormous work that the GROW campaign has done in LAC, we find it important to reflect on the achievements and learning produced in order to apply lessons to current and future influencing work in general, as well as for the newly-launched Even It Up campaign in particular. As such, in 2015 Oxfam's LAC regional leadership commissioned an external evaluation of the GROW campaign in the region.

While the GROW campaign per se has officially concluded as a regional priority as a result of the regional focusing exercise that includes a commitment to the Even It Up campaign, the challenges and significance of the topics and social processes uncovered in each country remain relevant. LAC's priority focus on inequality provides an important lens of analysis for Oxfam's narrative on the topics that countries prioritize.

Oxfam LAC established an evaluation committee to accompany and guide the process of analyzing results, conclusions, and institutional implications. This committee was made of six people representing regional and national perspectives<sup>2</sup>. The committee undertook a detailed review of the results, conclusions, and strategic implications of the evaluation, including a validation workshop that added important nuance and depth to the analysis, leading to common action points. Given the context of the transitions in Oxfam in general, and particularly for campaigns in LAC, the committee set out to discuss the strategic implications of the analysis and think together about the steps that Oxfam will take in the future, rather than receiving very specific recommendations.

The content of this Management Response to the GROW evaluation in LAC comes mainly from the deliberations of the committee.

### Assessment of the quality of the evaluation

We thank the consultant Gabrielle Watson for her professionalism, and we are grateful to all of the participants in the interviews and validation processes. We believe that the evaluation is of high quality, and it underscores important learnings and reflection points for management. The evaluation was designed with a participatory and flexible format to adjust to budget realities and the availability of time and information in each country; this flexibility was especially important given the Oxfam 2020 transition process. The methodology and implementation of the evaluation were sufficiently solid and rigorous, considering the ambition of including many countries and topics over several years, without seeking to provide representative coverage of all of the GROW campaign actions in all of the LAC countries.

---

<sup>2</sup> The GROW coordinator in Honduras and El Salvador, EU GROW LAC Project Coordinator, GROW Campaign Coordinator for LAC, LAC Influencing Officer, MEL Coordinator for LAC. The Director and Deputy Director for Programs played an important role, although they were not formally part of the evaluation committee.

We believe that the final version of the document effectively includes the feedback from the evaluation committee and several countries, and we agree in general with the findings and the strategic implications of the evaluation overall.

In this response, we point out some of the achievements we believe to be most significant, and then the challenges to face in the future, with the actions that we propose to address them. We also add certain nuances to the analysis in which we identified alternative interpretations or opinions.

## Highlighted achievements

We are pleased that the evaluation has documented important achievements in areas in which Oxfam has prioritized its work and efforts.

- The contributions that Oxfam and its allies have made toward significant advances in agriculture policy for small farmers, particularly women, and in highlighting land conflicts and land concentration; many of these achievements are partial victories set within longer processes.
- Oxfam has shifted the terms of the debate on topics that previously had scarce political visibility (land, food security), with credibility and legitimacy.
- The regional and country teams have significantly strengthened civil society coalitions that promote the interests of small farmers and women.
- We also highlight that the strategy of working through strong and diverse alliances without Oxfam or GROW branding has frequently been an important factor for success, and we note the time and processes that this implies.
- Oxfam's influencing capacity in LAC evolved considerably over the course of the GROW campaign, likely driven by the development of strategies, analysis, team-building and joint reflection with coalition allies. There was effective innovation and influence in the areas of coalition support, sharing agendas, promoting people and digital themes and campaigns.
- It is important to note that the GROW campaign at first did not prioritize advocacy with regional stakeholders and processes, as the main opportunities for policy change were identified on a country level; the European Union-supported GROW LAC project later gave rise to greater regional-level influencing.

## Challenges and actions for influencing work in LAC

Thanks to the reflection generated through this evaluation, we recognize and take note of the following challenges as we prioritize our work for the future and seek to continue to evolve and learn from our accumulated experience. The evaluation committee proposes that the regional team take the following actions:

**A. Achievements in capital and sustainability:** We celebrate the fact that the GROW campaign has left an important legacy of human and political capital. Although the decision was made to end the campaign in its current form as a regional priority, GROW issues continue to be addressed in the countries, framed in other ways (for example: land and inequality, rural women and gender justice, climate change adaptation, and food security and resilience), as part of national influencing agendas. This mitigates the risk identified of making an abrupt shift in course to address totally new themes.

It is also worth mentioning that 2016 is a transition year from the GROW campaign and the final year of the European Union-supported GROW project, as well as year one of the regional program on Sustainable Food Systems.

**Action-Transition:** *A transition will be undertaken through late 2016 considering the continuity of relevant regional processes and networks that the campaign has supported, especially through EU GROW LAC.*

**B. Regional and sub-regional influencing strategy:** In the process of developing regional and sub-regional influencing strategies and engaging with regional topic-based teams, the regional team should consider the capital built in the following themes and spaces in order to have strategic discussions on how and where ongoing work should be focused.

The overall programmatic framework in LAC countries reveals a priority focus on Access and Control of Natural Resources, Women's Rights and Gender-Based Violence, and Resilience, with a cross-cutting focus on tax justice and active citizenship. In this sense, the regional-level programmatic priority focus on sustainable livelihoods is diminished, although several of its key issues remain in country-level agendas. Based on the work of the GROW campaign, we believe it is worthwhile to consider how we can best build on the achievements thus far in the following specific themes:

**Action on land and agribusiness:** *Oxfam will address the topic within the regional and sub-regional influencing strategies for South America, as well as link it to the Even It Up campaign. Specific spaces for discussion through late 2016 will be used to establish how to include these themes, and at what intensity. Lastly, initiatives such as those around Cargill in Colombia, Curuguay in Paraguay, or Polochic in Guatemala will continue.*

**Action on women's rights:** *Oxfam will consider GROW rural women's organizations allies as important actors in deeper issues around gender-based violence which continue to promote the concrete policy changes that GROW sought.*

**Action on agriculture and climate resilience:** *By the end of 2016, Oxfam will Integrate and foster the work on resilience undertaken through GROW in the humanitarian influencing agenda, especially on a sub-regional level in Central America; Oxfam will link strategic issues such as investment in agriculture with the group working on food systems.*

**C. Learning on the private sector:** Oxfam's LAC leadership team believes that work to engage with the private sector requires deeper reflection, and finds that the analysis of the work with the private sector would benefit from a finer assessment in future evaluations to see if there were political opportunities left on the table, or efforts with the private sector that could have been done better. It is important to mention that there was a deliberate analysis behind the decisions made around private sector engagement, identifying where we could have the greatest impact with the resources at our disposal.

Despite this, we recognize that even after multiple global, regional, and national-level discussions on how best to address the private sector, this is still an area in which Oxfam must develop a more sophisticated and clearer approach with multiple formats to engage with such a diverse and important actor. This is of high strategic importance, especially given our work on political capture and the role that the private sector plays in distorting the democratic process.

**Action:** *Oxfam will continue to develop its thinking on political capture as a core element to contribute to more structural change. Greater investments will also be made in power analysis.*

**D. Capacity-building for influencing:** The evidence generated through this evaluation provides important input for the capacity-building plan for influencing, which was already slated for development. The capacity-building plan includes several learning modules in different fields, and the evaluation findings will be considered and included, along with the suggestion of producing a more explicit definition of influencing and the conceptual framework for influencing in LAC. In particular, we note these findings for inclusion:

- Prioritizing investments in key competencies for personnel to produce more structured designs (particularly in power analysis and theory of change) and strategic review (MEL) in order to fine-tune more focused and relevant influencing tactics.
- Technical training for influencing: Work with the media, messaging, research, and influencing with congress and other official spaces.
- While the evaluation itself did not emphasize these findings, during the validation workshop the evaluation committee stressed the need to improve the quality of our research, especially in order to produce evidence and policy analysis as a foundation for our proposals.

**E. Learning for the Even It Up campaign on a regional/country/global level:** Much of the learning from the GROW campaign is relevant for all of the influencing work in LAC. Nonetheless, we have identified specific learning that can be directly applied in the Even It Up campaign under way, and in the future in the campaign on Violence against Women that is in its design stage.

***Action on structure and operations on a regional level:** The learning on efficiency and structure, along with the need for an appropriate MEL system, will be discussed in developing the regional Even It Up campaign plan for 16/17. The process of recruiting a capacity-building officer is already underway.*

***Action on the Even It Up country-level campaign model:** We will continue to be flexible in the campaign model, avoiding a dichotomy between campaigns and influencing. We will also seek to set common priorities among countries, linked to working themes, to avoid a scattered impact. We will continue to use a model of working with diverse and unbranded coalitions to drive agendas of policy change and influencing; we will be selective and cautious in measuring out the necessary effort and resources.*

***Action on global-level linkages with the Even It Up campaign:** We believe that it is important for LAC to have greater visibility and linkages in the global-level design and decision-making spaces in the campaign. We also consider it necessary for the regional team to aid national teams in taking a greater role in regional and global spaces. Global campaigns and regional initiatives should contribute to changes in the countries. Lastly, we will continue to encourage relations with offices in Washington, the EU, or affiliates to support influencing work in LAC countries.*

## **Dissemination Plan**

We plan to share this evaluation with various stakeholders and in different formats, highlighting different messages for each audience. For many of the decisions and actions described above – especially B.) Sustainability on several topics and E.) Even It Up – time must be taken for deeper sharing and discussion, with strategic decision-making for country-level work. The evaluation opens a space for discussion in which the teams can decide the specifics of what should be integrated from the work of the GROW campaign, and how.