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# Chapter 7

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## GAIN methodology to enhance producer organizations' capacity for market integration: Applications to West Africa\*

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\* Correct citation: Elbehri, A., M. Lee, C. Hirsch, and M. Benali (2013), ***GAIN methodology to enhance producers organisations capacity for market integration: Applications to West Africa***, In: *Rebuilding West Africa's Food Potential*, A. Elbehri (ed.), FAO/IFAD.

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>2. Description of the GAIN methodology</b>	<b>214</b>
2.1 Principals of the GAIN methodology	215
2.2 Description of the steps of GAIN methodology	217
A. Identifying the PO	217
B. GAIN diagnostic workshop	218
C. Consultations with partners	221
D. Development of a roadmap for the OP	222
<b>3. Application of GAIN to Tien-Tieetaa Union in Burkina Faso</b>	<b>223</b>
3.1 Selection of the producer organization and area of intervention	223
3.2 GAIN Diagnostic workshop	224
A. Economic activities and PO members' main occupations	224
B. Capital, means of production, and PO's internal capacity	225
C. Structure and governance	227
D. PO's level and modalities of market integration	228
E. Analyzing the PO's partnerships	228
F. Common vision for the PO	232
3.3 Consultations with partners and development of new strategic road map for the PO	236
3.4 Conclusions and follow up by Tien-Tieetaa Union after GAIN	239
<b>4. Brief comparative analysis of GAIN application to West Africa</b>	<b>240</b>
4.1 Main economic activities of the PO studied	240
4.2 Governance and decision-making modalities	241
4.3 Level of autonomy of the organizations	242
4.4 Level and modalities of market integration	243
<b>5. General conclusion</b>	<b>244</b>
5.1 Scope of GAIN application	244
5.2 Possible extensions to GAIN methodology	246

## 1. Introduction

Constraints faced by smallholders – be they women or men – in accessing markets and improving their revenues are well known and easy to enumerate. Finding workable solutions to these constraints remains a challenge. Small farmers face a number of constraints in terms of access to markets such as the lack of means of production (arable land, water, equipment, financial resources), poor access to education, training and modern technology and weak bargaining power. Women face additional challenges, including cultural and legal discrimination giving them or not access to production inputs, financial services, education and technology.

The situation is very similar in many developing countries, particularly in Africa. A major obstacle to achieving agricultural development and inclusive value chains is the lack of effective and self-reliant producer organizations. In West and Central Africa, farm organizations form only a small portion of the farm population, and when they exist, they are often structurally weak, lack good governance and the endogenous capacity to be self-reliant and sustainably deliver the economic services required by their members. In most cases, these organizations remain too dependent on external support that often lacks safeguards to ensure long term sustainability.

Following the food crisis of 2007-08, during the World Summit on Food Security organized by FAO in November 2009, Member States reaffirmed the need to better integrate small farmers – be they women or men – in agricultural markets. This recommendation came out of the bitter fact that, in most cases, despite the soaring food prices starting in 2007, small farmers in poor countries have not been able to respond by increasing their production. The expected production response to price increases did not occur. This showed that agricultural markets do not work - at least not for small farmers.

To correct this huge market failure, policies need a strategic correction and redirection toward staple food value chains and food strategy based on diversification as the surest way towards food security. Such process in fact started in 2000 when the Millennium Development Goals were established followed by the regional agricultural policies such as the African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP); however the crisis of 2007-2008 has given more urgency to this shift.

Developing markets that include small farmers requires a concerted effort involving government, the private sector and agribusiness, as well as producer organizations (POs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), etc. Producer organizations play a key role in ideally helping their members to be less isolated and to increase their social capital and self-confidence (especially for women). In addition, the PO can facilitate producers' access to training, loans and marketing of products on the market, while reducing their transaction costs and increasing their bargaining power. Thus, by organizing themselves, small producers are better able to overcome the constraints they face individually and take advantage of market opportunities. In order to be effective, these policies and programs of action must be based on functional small producer organizations that have clear economic objectives and are self-empowered with sustainable capacities. These will give them the possibility to interact and negotiate with economic, financial and institutional partners.

In West Africa, as elsewhere, during the last 25 years, a wide range of producer organizations, mainly associative institutions and agricultural cooperatives, have emerged and come to fill a void created by the gradual decline of public investment, management and support to the agricultural sector. The performance evaluation of these organizations shows that they are relatively limited. This is due to a number of reasons: the conditions and motivations for which these organizations were set up (often

in response to time-limited projects); unsuitable structures and an internal lack of good governance limiting effectiveness; a lack of individual skills and talents necessary to properly manage themselves and to develop partnerships, often combined with a lack of collective vision that would mobilize members around economic goals and clearly define the services that each organization should offer to its members. In addition, most of these organizations lack autonomy, especially at the financial level, and do not have the capacity to mobilize resources directly from their members. This makes them dependent on external support that comes in sparingly, in a temporary fashion, and is often related to requirements or conditions that have nothing to do with the real and internal needs of these organizations' members.

There are a few effective approaches and diagnostic tools that can be used to diagnose and design a progressive path for producer organizations that leads them to a situation of autonomy and economic efficiency within a framework of institutional sustainability. Within projects, the efforts of development partners to assist and financially support certain organizations very often end up creating situations of dependency in relation to external assistance. Thus, when the external financial support stops, organizations often tend to fall into a passive phase resulting in the inability to continue to operate independently.

A new methodology called GAIN (Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs based) by FAO to provide an effective assessment tool for initiating endogenous structural changes within a producer organization (Elbehri *et al.* 2013).<sup>2</sup> Using a participatory and iterative approach, GAIN combines an internal assessment of the organization with an analysis of its immediate environment in order to initiate a gradual process of economic self-empowerment. This takes the OP on the path of more reliably supporting its members' economic needs and playing a more active role in the local economy.

The GAIN methodology was designed to address three interrelated concerns:

- Finding an effective approach to enable small farmers, be they men or women, to become better integrated in the market and reap the ensuing benefits;
- Formulating within the AII-ACP project in West Africa modalities that can develop staple food value chains through capacity building of inter-professions and member umbrella organizations, including producer organizations;
- Drawing on lessons learned from the exemplary organization SEWA in India as catalytic agent to induce an effective institutional change in African organizations.

This chapter describes the GAIN methodology, review its application in three West African countries, with a detailed description of the Burkina Faso case study (with Tien-Tietetaa Union). The chapter concludes with an assessment of GAIN effectiveness and potential additional fields for its application.

## 2. Description of the GAIN methodology

The GAIN methodology is based on three main components:

- 1). Internal assessment of the organization and its immediate environment
- 2). Development of a strategic action plan by the members of the organization
- 3). Monitoring and implementation of the action plan by the PO

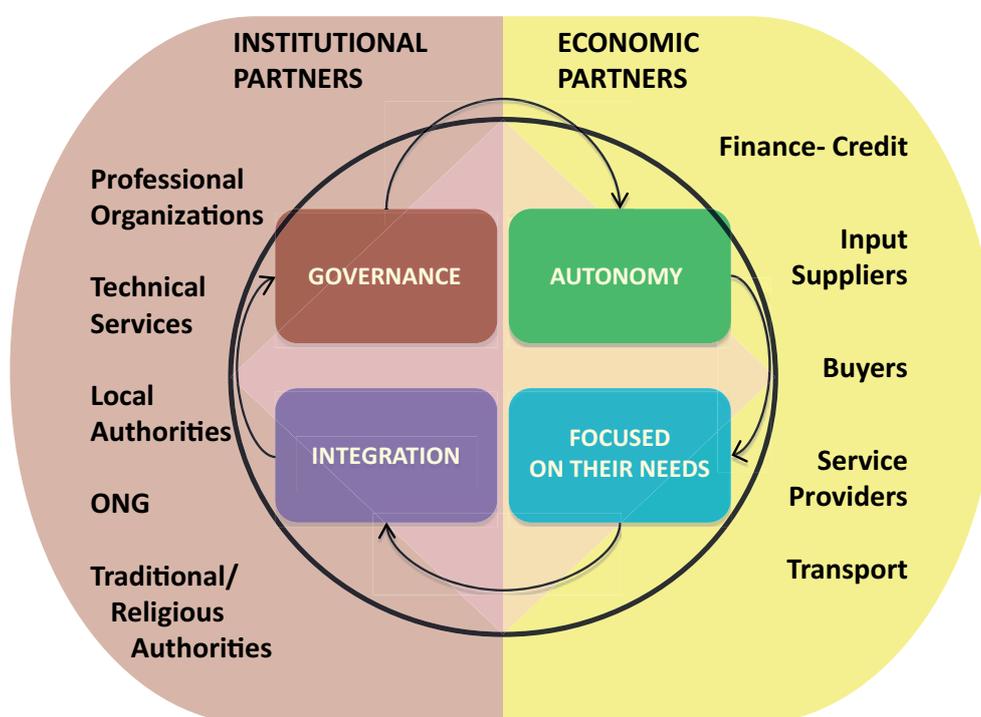
<sup>2</sup> See FAO report (2013): "GAIN Methodology: Diagnosis and Design of Change Processes within Producer Organizations" by Elbehri Aziz, Maria Lee, Carina Hirsch, and Marwan Benali.

## 2.1 Principals of the GAIN methodology

The GAIN methodology enables users to evaluate any producer organization at the functional and institutional level. With this assessment, PO members will be able to build a new vision and design a structure that allows their institution to become economically efficient and gradually sustainably autonomous and benefit all its members through democratic governance.

The methodology's conceptual framework distinguishes two levels of analysis: (1) an internal assessment of the PO and (2) the analysis of its economic and institutional environment. This conceptual framework is shown in figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Representation of the PO and its immediate environment by GAIN (source: authors)**



This double analysis of the PO follows three main steps:

**STEP 1:** Endogenous assessment of the PO

**STEP 2:** Consultations and Validation by economic and institutional partners

**STEP 3:** Reconciliation between the PO's vision and partner requirements for a strengthened partnership.

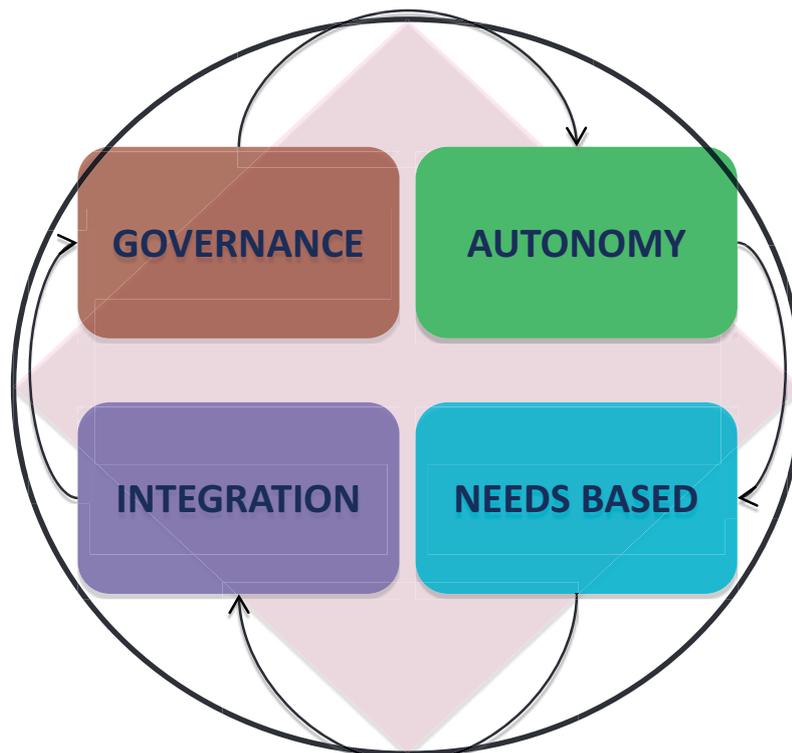
The final product is an action plan or roadmap from and for the PO validated by its major partners.

The GAIN methodology's endogenous assessment of OPs is based on four guiding principles that are considered essential for the sustainable development of an effective organization: good governance, empowerment, an integrated approach and giving priority to the needs of its members. These four principles are actually successfully applied in thriving OPs, such as the Indian organization SEWA and consist in:

- **Effective governance** through expanded sharing of responsibilities between the members of the organization, bringing about an increased commitment of each member to the organization and flow of information from grassroots to the executive management and vice-versa; in other words, governance that is based on its members' accountability and not just on a centralized decision-making system in the hands of one or two people in the organization.

- **Increased empowerment** of the organization and its members. The organization focuses on gradual empowerment in terms of human and financial resources capacity. Strengthening technical skills and members' decisions are established as a priority, giving members the ability to find solutions for themselves and mobilize resources (capital, financial services provided by the organization to its members, setting up savings and loan mechanisms).
- An **integrated approach** taking into account the need to improve living conditions (health, education, housing, etc.) and economic opportunities for members. This approach is judiciously combined with programs and activities that aim to improve access to information, provide targeted training based on needs and facilitate access to means of production. These activities are implemented with a view to empower members and render them more accountable. This principle of integration also implies that the organization build strategic partnerships with local economic opportunities.
- **Priority given to the needs of members.** Priority needs of members guide the organization's activities, be it in terms of choice of training programs, granting of loans or engaging in activities initiated and financed by external institutions. Activities and services are more likely to benefit members in the long term and last over time if they respect the priority needs of members of the organization.

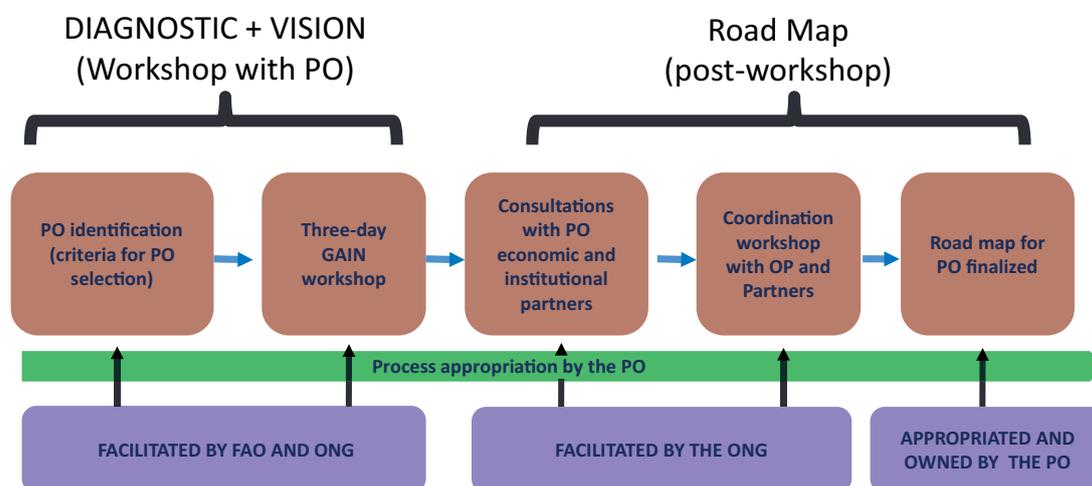
**Figure 2. The 4 principles of the GAIN methodology (source: authors)**



## 2.2 Description of the steps of GAIN methodology

The different steps of the GAIN methodology are depicted and explained below:

**Figure 3. Main steps of the GAIN methodology (source: authors)**



### A. Identifying the PO

There are a number of circumstances that allow initiating the GAIN methodology in a given geographic area. Starting this process may follow up on a local initiative, be part of a national development or rural program, or even in response to sudden economic, political or environmental changes, or simply upstream of an investment program that requires the active participation of farmers and their organizations in its implementation. Launching the GAIN methodology can also be very useful when producers have access to new market opportunities in the region requiring first and foremost a functional organization that can facilitate access to loans, information, training, etc. All these circumstances may be a prerequisite to justify the launch of the GAIN methodology for one or more POs. The initiator of GAIN can be the state, an NGO, an umbrella organization or any third party, as long as they have the required human resources and skills for a successful application of this methodology.

The preliminary criteria for choosing a PO that may benefit from a GAIN assessment are that the status and functionality of the PO should be consistent with the program objectives, investment or development activity requiring an upstream GAIN assessment. In addition, members should come together around one or more economic functions of the organization. These economic objectives must also be aligned with the general objectives of the initiating project, program or activity. Lastly, once the organization is identified (with the assistance of a local professional organization, NGO, government agency, etc.), enough members of the chosen organization need to participate in the GAIN assessment workshop to ensure a collective result. The selection of participants must also meet certain criteria such as a balance between leaders and members (preferably the most active), between men and women, and also between representatives of the different groups within the PO.

Once the PO is identified, a workshop is organized with the assistance of a facilitator (FAO; local NGO) in order to assess the internal situation and the organization's current relations with economic and institutional partners. In the case of the three test interventions performed and described in the next chapters, the assessment workshop lasted two and a half days and brought together thirty members of the producer organization and a team of six to eight facilitators, rapporteurs and translators (in local language).

## **B. GAIN diagnostic workshop**

### **a) Internal analysis of the PO**

The main component of the GAIN methodology is to organize a three-day assessment workshop to examine the PO's current situation and its relations with its direct economic and institutional partners. The first part of the workshop aims to have all the participants assess the internal governance of the organization, the capacity for self-management and the ability to mobilize its own resources to respond to the members' economic needs, as well as the organization's ability to develop a joint approach so that its members may better integrate the market.

The PO's internal assessment begins with an evaluation of its strengths and internal constraints in relation to major income-generating activities, the roles and responsibilities of different members (distinguishing men, women and youth), the general productivity level, the current state of production and market surplus, and the types of relationships with the market. This first assessment step lasts one day and is sub-divided into four sub-themes:

#### **The main income-generating activities for members**

- Farm income generating activities
- Non-farm income generating activities
- Distribution of tasks / responsibilities (men/women, individual/group, family labor/employee)

#### **Internal resources, capitalization and members' expertise**

- Capital: land, animals, water, machinery, storage facilities, etc.
- Skills: Members' experience/expertise, types of training received (technical, economic, management, leadership), training providers and beneficiaries among members;
- Social capital: support groups, degree of group(s)' solidarity and social cohesion, etc.
- Production techniques (inputs, machinery, animals) qualitative assessment of the productivity level of major agricultural activities;
- Loans (who has access; eligible activities; conditions);
- Internal savings (individual and group).

#### **Internal governance, structure and decision-making and information sharing modes**

- Formal structure of the PO (governing body, roles and functions);
- Forms of governance and sharing of responsibility among members (decision-making terms, information flow, relations between leaders and members);
- Level of members' participation (membership, frequency of meetings, etc.)

#### **Level of market integration, market surplus, sales and ability vis-à-vis the market**

- Importance of surplus for market from crop/agricultural products (crops; consumption/sale ratio);
- Products specific for market (farm and non-farm);
- Access to market information;
- Marketing methods (grouped - individual sales, frequency/sale period, sales points, storage possibilities, etc.)

These four sub-themes are summarized in Table 1 below.

For each of the above topics, the facilitators' role is to formulate the questions, take notes, organize, clarify and sort the answers and ensure a wide participation of participating members.

**Table 1. Main components of the internal assessment of the PO (according GAIN)**

<b>PO'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm income generating activities (from crop)</li> <li>• Non-farm income generating activities (non-crop)</li> <li>• Distribution of tasks/responsibilities (men/women, individual/group, family labor/employee)</li> </ul>
<b>CAPITAL AND PRODUCTION MEANS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital: land, animals, water, machinery, storage facilities, etc.</li> <li>• Skills: Members' experience/expertise, types of training received (technical, economic, management, leadership), training providers and beneficiaries among members</li> <li>• Social capital: support groups, etc.</li> <li>• Production techniques (inputs, machinery, animals)</li> <li>• Loans (who has access; eligible activities; conditions)</li> <li>• Internal savings (individual and group, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>PO'S STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal structure of the PO (governing body, roles and functions)</li> <li>• Forms of governance (decision-making terms, information flow, relations between leaders and members)</li> <li>• Level of members' participation (membership, frequency of meetings, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>MARKET INTEGRATION BY PO AND MEMBERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of crops' market surplus/agricultural products (crops; consumption/sale ratio)</li> <li>• Products specific for market (farm and non-farm)</li> <li>• Access to market information</li> <li>• Marketing methods (grouped - individual sales, frequency/sale period, sales points, storage possibilities, etc.)</li> </ul>

This exercise is followed by a SWOT assessment (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), inviting participants to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their organization and its members, for each of the topics covered in the session. The answers are listed on a two-column matrix: the relative strengths and weaknesses of the PO vis-à-vis the main topics discussed.

### ***b) Analyzing the PO's partnerships***

The second part of the assessment workshop analyzes relationships between the organization and its economic and institutional partners. This exercise can be done with all participants (in plenary) or in groups of 10 participants. The first step is to list all the actors with whom the organization is directly or indirectly linked. Afterwards, participants are invited to comment and give their assessment of the successes and difficulties encountered with each partner.

Subsequently, the facilitators help identify the different types of partners following a number of criteria, including:

- PROXIMITY: locally based partners (area, district) or national
- TYPE of partnership: economic or institutional. An economic partnership involves commercial or contractual transactions with banks, suppliers, buyers, etc. Institutional partners include government departments, local authorities, the municipality/city council, local or national professional organizations, NGOs, religious or traditional authorities, etc.
- TEMPORALITY: current or past relationships (ended)

For each of these cases, the PO members accurately describe the nature of the relationship with the partner organization, and rank partners according to their importance and depending on whether relationships are successful or problematic. Finally, they identify the key partners with whom the PO wishes to continue or strengthen relationships in the future.

When this exercise is conducted in small groups, the facilitators then coordinate the restitution in a plenary session for all participating members. During the session the main points of the organization's internal assessment and the most important economic and institutional partners previously identified are summarized. This restitution and validation for all the PO members is very important as it sets up the discussions for the next and final step of the PO's assessment - namely the development of a shared vision of the organization by the members in a framework defined by the facilitators.

### **c) Common vision of the PO**

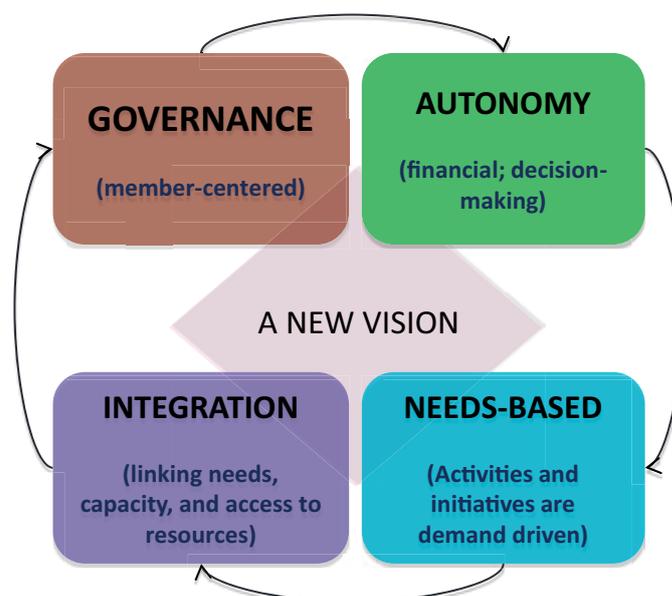
The third part of the assessment workshop is dedicated to developing a new vision for the PO based on the core principles of the GAIN methodology: decentralized governance, economic independence, activities geared to benefit the members, an integrated approach and the PO's capacity and functionality. PO participant members are first invited to propose new suggestions for their organization and then rank these in order of priority during a group working session. On this basis, two or three priority proposals are selected for a profound and detailed analysis using the four principles of the GAIN.

Participants are divided into sub-groups of 10 to 15 members joined by one or two facilitators, a translator and a rapporteur, to analyze one of the selected proposals.

The group analysis for each proposal is conducted by imposing each of the four core principles of the GAIN methodology as a benchmark, one by one. As a result, the winning proposal is considered by the group vis-à-vis the principle through a double lens, namely first the relationship of the proposal with the principle, and then how the principle can modify the proposal's specification. The proposal is submitted to the following specific questions for each of the four principles:

- GOVERNANCE - Is the OP's present type of governance suitable to implement the proposal? What changes in terms of governance are necessary to ensure that the proposal can be carried out?
- PO's AUTONOMY - What internal resources can the members of the organization mobilize to implement this new vision? At the same time, to what extent can the new vision improve the economic autonomy of the PO's members?

Figure 4. The GAIN iterative scheme for the development of the PO's new vision (source: authors)



- INTERNAL NEEDS - What priority needs of the organization and its members can this new proposal meet?
- INTEGRATION - The principle of integration requires to consider how the PO's members intend to link training needs, strengthening members' capacity, access to means of production, and restructuring their governance to implement their new proposal.

This group exercise ends with the development of an action plan or roadmap in the form of a table with two columns (short and medium term) and two lines (PO's internal activities, and activities to be undertaken with external support). The final part of the assessment workshop consists in the members of the group filling out the table with the help of the facilitator, thus laying down the final development stage of the new vision.

Road map to implement the new proposal	SHORT TERM ACTIVITIES (3 MONTHS)	MID TERM ACTIVITIES (6 MONTHS)
EXCLUSIVELY BY THE PO		
WITH EXTERNAL SUPPORT		

The results of the group work on the vision are briefly presented and the next steps of the methodology are explained to PO members in a plenary session that closes the assessment workshop.

A first report is prepared following the workshop and is used as the basis for the consultations that follow with both current and potential partners as identified by PO members during the common vision exercise.

### C. Consultations with partners

Key stakeholders who may be consulted have been identified during the assessment workshop. These partners may represent a sample of all the current and potential partners. The outcome of the consultations and monitoring with partners is reconciled with the new vision of the PO, while fully taking into account the partners' possibilities, opportunities and expectations, in order to elaborate the final plan of action for the OP. These consultations will assess partners' points of view and relations with the PO while allowing them to outline their own strategies and requirements that may facilitate collaboration

or develop new economic, financial or other relations; these should meet the PO's expectations for its future development. In regard to consultations with existing partners with whom more successful and stronger relationships are possible, the objectives of these consultations can:

- clarify and identify the points of contention between the PO and the partner;
- identify opportunities for improvement or implementation of more profitable relationships with the partner, while more precisely defining the conditions that the PO must meet to engage in closer partnerships that will enable it to continue existing activities or implement the new action plan.

These post-workshop individual consultations do not follow a rigid framework but should at least aim to:

- gather the partner's point of view on its relationship with the PO (or with similar POs); identify the partner's conditions and requirements to engage in collaboration or a closer partnership with the PO;
- understand the overall strategy of the partner vis-à-vis the OP; clarify how the partner's strategy has commonalities with the PO's and what are the points of disagreement; when the PO has previously identified problems or blockages with the partner, gather the partner's own reading of the causes of these difficulties;
- assess the extent to which the partner may be involved in the implementation of certain elements of the new approach developed by PO members during the assessment workshop and what the PO must do to ensure a commitment from the partner.

The information gathered from these consultations should be analyzed in order to identify which of the partners' strategic elements may be entry points for an effective collaboration between the partners and the PO. This requires identifying the prerequisites to developing successful partnerships. When appropriate, causes of conflicting relationships should be identified to reduce misunderstandings or disagreements and build new and stronger partnerships.

#### **D. Development of a roadmap for the OP**

The last step of the GAIN methodology process is to organize a coordination workshop between the PO members who participated in the assessment workshop and the partners that have been consulted. The initiators of the GAIN methodology (e.g., FAO) will facilitate this one-day workshop.

The assessment workshop results and the information from consultations with partners are presented and discussed. This will further clarify each party's position and help the OP to better understand what steps are necessary to implement its action plan developed during the assessment workshop. A final session will be dedicated to a free exchange and sharing between participants (PO and partners) to identify opportunities for collaboration or future partnerships, clarify the preconditions and operational procedures, and establish communication procedures and necessary information exchanges that will ensure success.

Following this coordination workshop, a report constituting a new strategic plan for the PO is finalized and submitted to the PO who becomes its owner, validates it and implements it at its own pace and according to the new partnerships resulting from this process.

### 3. Application of GAIN to Tien-Tietaa Union in Burkina Faso

#### 3.1 Selection of the producer organization and area of intervention

In Burkina Faso, the Ten-Tietaa Union, representing women and men grain producers in the district of Dissin, was chosen to test the GAIN methodology. The choice was made with the help of a local NGO, SOS Sahel of Burkina Faso. This NGO has been chosen as FAO's local partner to co-facilitate the process. The assessment workshop was attended by 30 members of the Ten-Tietaa Union and was held in Dissin from 3 to 5 November 2011. Union members attending the assessment workshop were chosen amongst the leaders and the most active members exemplifying various grassroots groups along with a strong representation of women members. Other significant criteria were experience, the ability to express ideas, and the trust in the group.

Prior to the GAIN assessment workshop, the management of SOS Sahel had preparatory sessions with Union members where they explained the objectives of the GAIN methodology, namely:

- 1). Assess the organization at a strategic and institutional level by analyzing the current internal situation of the organization, combining the study of governance tools, the Union's means of production and its ability to meet its members' needs;
- 2). An analysis of its partners and of the external environment in which the Union operates to determine the causes of the current problems that it encounters in its interactions with these partners and future opportunities for partnership;
- 3). Having the Union members develop a shared vision;
- 4). Formulating an appropriate plan of action that can be implemented by the PO members.

The Ten-Tietaa Groupings Union (UGTT) was founded in 1992 as a producers' organization and was officially recognized on 9 February 1999. In the local language, Dagara, Ten-Tiétaa means "mutual support among members." There are approximately 4 000 members (men and women) organized in 135 farming and forestry-pastoral groups including 61 men and 74 women groups from 22 villages, mostly located in the district of Dissin with a few in Ouessa. The district (or commune) of Dissin is located in the Loba province in southwestern Burkina Faso, a few kilometres from the border with Ghana. The UGTT is an organization of pre-cooperative groups of farming and forestry-pastoral production whose aim is to create favourable conditions for better self-management of its members.

The stated objectives of the Union are to promote and provide advisory support to the grassroots groups on how to reach sustainable rural development. One of the major challenges faced by the Union is the fight against poverty and the reduction of food insecurity that affects nearly 80% of members.

Former youth groups, named Naam, originally set up to fight against youth unemployment founded the Union. It was officially established in 1999 under the leadership of the German NGO Agro-Action, now called Welt Hunger Hilfe. Initially, the Union's creation was kindled with the food security objective. Indeed, the Dissin region had experienced poor harvest seasons and producers did not always meet their food needs. Producers then decided to organize themselves under the slogan - "Strength through unity" - with the aim of being taken more seriously by public authorities but also to acquire better capacity to overcome the difficulties they faced in terms of food security, access to drinking water and youth unemployment.

Today the main activities of the Union include the implementation of food security, livestock, environment and microcredit for women micro projects, and training on HIV/AIDS.

### 3.2 GAIN diagnostic workshop

The assessment workshop is the first of the three main components of the GAIN methodology. A comprehensive assessment of the Union divided into three segments: (a) internal analysis of the organization, (b) evaluation of the PO's partners and (c) the PO's vision of the future.

#### A. Economic activities and PO members' main occupations

First, the Union members' main activities and occupations were identified. These activities were then divided between the farm and non-farm income-generating activities. At the group level, activities are extremely varied even if maize, sorghum and groundnuts prevail; the other cultivated crops are cowpeas, cotton, rice, soybeans and vegetables. Among these activities, peanuts, rice, sorghum, maize and cotton are grown in groups in collective fields, and in individual fields, while groundnuts, rice and maize are only grown individually. Women's groups are very active in these crop activities. The non-crop activities are mainly pork and poultry production, but also a multitude of small businesses such as soap, petrol or basketry. Some male groups also mentioned vehicle repairing. Most of these non-farm activities are carried out both collectively and individually, except for soap and baskets that are produced and sold as a group.

**Table 2. Main income generating activities of the UGTT members**

Crop farming activities	Non-crop farming activities
<b>Individual:</b> Corn, peanuts, and rice crops	<b>Individual and group:</b> Livestock (pigs and poultry) Small businesses, e.g. soap, oil or basketry
<b>Individual and group:</b> Maize, sorghum and groundnut crops Cowpea, cotton, rice, soybean and vegetable crops	Vehicle repair for some male groups Only done in groups: soap, basketry

In the past, Union members participated in projects to restore land and build water conservation structures in the context of development projects funded by European donors. The Union has also set up a receipt system (warehouse receipt) to better manage the internal storage of cereals and facilitate access to loans. (As a formal structure, the Union has created technical committees: a managing well water committee, a storage warehouse warrantage committee, a hygiene committee, and a vegetable crop production committee). In addition, members have received training on hygiene promotion, nutrition and preventing HIV/AIDS. Following these training programs on HIV/AIDS, the Union has developed the ability to implement a screening program and give advisory support to groups with a better understanding and consequently, strategy to combat HIV/AIDS.

Some Union groups have also received training on erosion control techniques, advice on the use of improved seeds, as well as training on agro-ecology. In the livestock sector, the Union provides support to write applications for obtaining capital loans, as well as technical support to farmers setting up micro-pig farms. The Union also offers microcredit to its members, especially women, for recognized income generating activities. Each year, more than 400 women receive micro loans.

The Tien-Tietaa Union is well organized and has good social cohesion, making it very attractive to donors and projects. Several of its land use and local environment protection programs receive support as well as reforestation, plant care, water and sanitation activities, integrated food security programs at the village level, and the Union participates in a project against child trafficking.

## **B. Capital, means of production, and PO's internal capacity**

### ***a) Capital and Union members' means of production***

Access to means of production could be greatly improved. The majority of Union members (nearly 99 percent) are landowners, but women have too little or no access to land ownership. The only exceptions where women can access land are when the Union intervenes on certain plots or when the state inherits plots following inheritance disputes. Soil quality is also very variable and some plots are too degraded to be cultivated. The lack of water is a recurring problem. Producers cannot adequately maintain many crops and obtain low yields due to the lack of irrigation.

The most preoccupying aspect of crop production is the often-mentioned poor quality of inputs. Seeds are purchased from local merchants and SOFITEX or obtained through personal production or barter between different producers, but quality seed is rare or insufficient or not made available in good time to Union members. Finally, its rather excessive prices make them unaffordable for most producers, given their small budget.

For Union members, another disabling aspect at production level is linked to the tools and materials used. These are unanimously considered obsolete or unsuited for the participants' work. They are *dabas*, knives, wheelbarrows, carts, picks, shovels, machetes or even rickshaws. These obsolete tools are unfortunately not sufficient to ensure sustainable and efficient production, and the few tractors hired by the Union cannot compensate for them. Most of the labor is family-based (90 percent) although some of mutual service practices between producer groups have been possible. According to producers, this workforce remains inefficient and unskilled, as it limits itself to manual labor.

In summary, irrigation water access does not seem to be a major problem (except in some rare cases for water linked to production and agricultural activities); if men have guaranteed access to land, access to land for women is problematic and some members still have difficulty accessing quality inputs (often due to lack of funds) or even sufficient quantity given their needs, particularly because of a compatibility issue with long cycle inputs. The equipment used was also strongly criticized for its obsolescence.

### ***b) Access to training***

Many courses are offered to Union members, often through NGOs (SOS Sahel), the support of donors and government services. The types of training received include: building stone barriers, the how and why of manure pits and manure management, training in vegetable production, good equipment management, soap making, seed production, literacy, borehole and well management, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, warrantage, hygiene, management of water points, loan management, monitoring and evaluation of activities and/or family farm management. This training covers both farm and non-farm activities. Union members are also satisfied with the way training is allocated. The village community, the Union, the Ten-Tiétáa communities, women or producers decide who attends these sessions, depending on what is offered. Indeed, a strong tendency towards specialization seems to be emerging within the Union. In other words, when one of the Union producers has been trained, he will be given priority for all other similar training so that he/she may specialize in this area and increase his/her capacity to disseminate knowledge within groups and different villages. These courses are widely passed on, beneficiaries

having a “moral obligation” to share the results with other group members through further training or other informal learning processes. However, some training needs expressed by Union members are not met, such as project management, mastering technology, account management, food conservation or livestock production. But overall, the Union can boast it has received a wide range of training courses that have benefitted its members.

### c) Access to credit

Union members are quite concerned about accessing loans. Women obtain microcredit with the guarantee of the Union but men have not been able to get access, as the Union will not act as guarantor due to men's reputation for poor creditworthiness. In addition, the credit lines that the Union and women members can access through the Caisse Populaire are only possible thanks to a protocol with a German NGO that deposited a microcredit guarantee fund for the Tien-Tietaa Union women members. This arrangement allows the Caisse Populaire to disburse loans at a much lower risk. To meet the challenge to access loans, Union members are asked to carry out continuous awareness building on this issue and regular monitoring of the management of loans granted to men. The starting point is to generate greater agricultural yields bringing about a merchant surplus coupled with the necessary guarantees (warrantage) to obtain a loan. The use of funds obtained through credit is quite eclectic, combining both agricultural activities and alternative activities that relate more to household management or other aspects of personal life. Thus, credit is often used toward children's education or refurbishing of homes. Credit also widely supports agricultural activities: for example maize, rice, cotton or livestock activities. Opening a storage warehouse is also eligible for a loan. The credit is mainly obtained from the Caisse Populaire that remains the Union's preferred partner (something we will consider in the next section on the Union's partners). Members face other difficulties linked to loans such as procedure delays, outstanding repayments and trust deficiencies in some groups. In general, Union members define poor access to credit - and by the same token dependency on financial institutions - as a major obstacle to the purchase of sufficient production equipment.

Table 3 below summarizes the Union's assessment concerning its capitalization, resources and expertise.

**Table 3. Strengths and weaknesses of the Tien-Tietaa Union's capabilities and resources**

Land	
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of members (men) are landowners.</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women do not have access to land ownership; with some exceptions.</li> <li>Very degraded soils, lack of water and irrigation systems.</li> </ul>
Inputs and production means	
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeds available on the market.</li> <li>Mostly family labor, self-help and support groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor quality; difficult access to costly quality seeds in a timely fashion.</li> <li>Obsolete equipment and tools, poorly adapted, low productivity.</li> <li>Lack of skilled labor.</li> </ul>
Training	
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide range of training received in the context of development projects.</li> <li>Technical assistance from NGOs (SOS Sahel) and government services.</li> <li>Rational and judicious allocation in members' selection for training.</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several training needs expressed by members have not been met.</li> </ul>
Credit	
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The credit is mainly obtained from the Caisse Populaire, who received financial support from a German NGO.</li> <li>Most beneficiaries are women, with the Union acting as guarantor.</li> <li>Credit is used for farming or other income-generating activities and for basic consumption (children's education).</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men do not have access to loans (lack of creditworthiness, no guarantee from the Union).</li> <li>Difficulties with procedures; trust issues among some groups.</li> </ul>

### C. Structure and governance

The Ten-Tietaa Union is well structured and governed by sound entities. The 135 groups (men and women) are "led" by a board of three members: a president, a secretary and a treasurer. The Executive Bureau (EB), at the top of the Union, is composed of 12 members, including 6 women. The Executive Board includes one member in charge of women's affairs, another responsible for economic activities and another in charge of information. All members are elected for a term of three years renewable once. The EB is the Union's executive body, responsible for planning and implementing actions, reports to the General Assembly while also being responsible for the smooth running of the Union. The EB is in charge of reviewing and selecting loan request applications before they are submitted to the Caisse Populaire of Dissin and also fully monitors the granting of loans. In villages, the Ten-Tietaa committees (CTT) assist the EB in building awareness on respecting commitments in relation to maturity dates of the loan as set by each beneficiary. These committees provide a space and transmit information between the EB and grassroots groups. Each village has a CTT and they total 28. CTT are also involved in mobilizing groups in villages, identifying groups' constraints and needs as well as difficulties, which they communicate to the EB. Committees are elected for a term of two years, renewable once. The CTT are responsible for screening loan files or other project ideas and forwarding them to the EB.

The General Assembly (GA) meets annually with 3 delegates per group. The GA defines the yearly main lines of action and mandates the EB to implement actions supported by several specialized committees: 52 water point committees, 7 warrantage warehouse management committees, one hygiene committee, and one vegetable crop committee.

Discussions between Union members on internal communication reveal that it works quite well. The internal communication strategy is mainly based on the publication of circulars sent to committees, on town criers, on word-of-mouth, or on church meetings (Union members are predominantly Catholic). A communication structure has also been set up with stocktaking meetings and relay women in the villages. Phones and local radio stations are also used but to a lesser extent, due to the limited access of Union members to these two technologies.

The SWOT analysis on the Union's governance highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. Strengths show that the Union has a sound structure with bodies operating well. Thus, GAs occur on a regular basis and the role of various management committees is respected. The Union generally demonstrates democratic behaviour. The Union owns a significant amount of land and material goods as well as its headquarters, premises, conference rooms and drying units, perceived by its members as valuable assets to ensure good governance.

In terms of weaknesses, members identified structural and functioning flaws in the organization. At first, the flow of information was sometimes perceived as insufficient to ensure effective governance. In addition, certain technical committees (e.g. water point management) show poorer performance. It was also noted that the EB is not always operational, with challenges in bringing its members together or in contacting them. Some participants also criticized the Union's finance management. It appears, however, that members are very pleased with the Union's institutions and perceive them as solid, especially in terms of internal communication, deemed quite satisfactory. This seems to be the cornerstone of the organization's success with the two monthly meetings of the EB. The CTT also meet regularly and allow regular exchanges of information at group level.

#### **D. PO's level and modalities of market integration**

The lack of market integration is one of the Union's major weaknesses. The main reason is the fact that most members produce to meet their consumption needs with a variable surplus, which is therefore not always sold. This situation has not allowed members to develop assertive and regular business relationships. When members do sell the excess on the market, they do so individually and in small quantities without the ability to weigh on prices or without the benefit of group sales.

Warrantage represents a real opportunity for the Ten-Tiétaa Union in terms of marketing procedures and production sales, as it may really profit from better selling prices on the market, given that it is one of the few organizations in Burkina Faso to carry out this practice. Drying vegetable crops is also a process that can be developed to improve its sales force. However, the Union has low storage capacity, which obviously limits warrantage, whose management remains inadequate. Members came back to the lack of reliable price information in the marketing discussion because it greatly hinders the Union from being in a position to sell products at an optimal price. The Union does not know the market situation well and, therefore, cannot seize existing commercial opportunities, wasting the small surplus it produces.

*Information on prices and markets* is not available to producers. There is no adequate sales information system (SIC) or market information system (SIM) that would be sustainable enough to provide continuous and timely information to producers. The information is not spread fast enough compared to the volatility of market prices or marketing opportunities (e.g. sales and other outlets). This is largely due to the lack of use and access to means of communication and modern media such as radio, internet or mobile phones. A few survey operations on market prices have been mandated by the Union or by the Ministry of Agriculture's local branches but overall, word-of-mouth is what prevails in these particular situations, despite its limitations (slow, low reliability etc.).

The Union seems better organized and holds extraordinary GAs or specific meetings when looking at input prices. Phone and word-of-mouth are also used in this case. However, the necessary information to bring about good marketing remains insufficiently disseminated within the Union and does not allow it to seize existing business opportunities.

Finally, market integration is hampered by a number of constraints upstream and downstream of production: upstream, lack of access to quality inputs at the right time, access to land especially for women, access to loans especially for men, and access to appropriate equipment; downstream, the absence of bundling that would enable it to sell the best price and lowest cost in the surrounding markets.

#### **E. Analyzing the PO's partnerships**

During the second stage of the GAIN assessment workshop, participating members of the Union were invited to list all the partners with whom they have relationships. These partners along with the services they provide or the kinds of relations they have with the Union are summarized in Tables 4 and 5; Table 4 for local partners and Table 5 for partners at national level.

Table 4. Local partners of the Tien-Tietaa Union and services provided

PARTNERS		SERVICES	
Type of partner	Partners	Services	Type of services
<b>Institutional Partners</b>	Municipality	Land tenure security Assignment of developed areas Improved seeds	Production support
	Ministry of the Environment	Reforestation	
	Ministry of Livestock	Veterinary Services	
	Technical Support Zone	Technical support, access to inputs	
	Wayel Association	Mutual service	Access to financing and loans
	CIDI Association (coordination of Total Development Initiatives)	Training in livestock production	Capacity building
	Ministry of education	Literacy courses in villages	
	Plan Burkina	Training and other educational aspects	
	FAYENTORAN	Strengthening capacities	
	AJC Association (Conscious Youth Association)	Family planning support	Social Services
	Dissin Health and Social Promotion Centre (CSPS)	Hygiene services	
	Catholic Mission	Information dissemination Centre	Communication and information
SOS SAHEL International	Overall support	Overall support	
<b>Economic Partners</b>	Caisse Populaire Crédit	Credit	Access to financing and loans
	Crédit Sud Crédit	Crédit	
	King Agro	Group purchase of inputs	Upstream of production services
	Tropic Agro (Group purchase of inputs)	Supply of inputs	
	Private processors	Processing	Downstream of production services
	Local and traders from Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso or Ghana	Sale of production	

**Table 5. National partners of the Tien-Tietaa Union and services provided**

PARTNERS		SERVICES	
Type of partner	Partners	Services	Type of services
<b>Institutional Partners</b>	Agro-Action	Overall and financial support	Overall and financial support
	National Federation of NAAM Groups	Connects the Union with other institutional and economic actors	
	European Union	Funding	
	ANPE	Youth training	Capacity building
	Diobass	Support to resource conservation	Production support
	Dreyer Foundation	Protecting moringa cultivation	
	PAFER	Lowland reclaiming	
	PIGPE	Irrigation and water point management	
Afrique Verte	Market research Group sales	Marketing support	
<b>Economic Partners</b>	INERA	Supply of improved inputs	Upstream of production services
	SOFITEX	Supply of inputs	

The Union members identified a large number of partners at both local (district) level and beyond. They are: local representatives of Ministries, the city council and the municipality of Dissin, the European Union, NGOs (Association AGC organization Fayenteren, Welt Hunger Hilfe, Wayel Association, CIDI association, Dreyer Foundation). There is also the Caisse Populaire and Crédit Sud King Agro and Agro Tropic, the Catholic Mission and the National Federation of Naam Groups, which acts as the Union's connector with other institutional or economic actors.

Two observations can be drawn from these lists. Firstly, "local" actors are dominant, reflecting the low projection of the Union beyond the district of Dissin, especially as most of the players considered as "external" to the area have tended to come into the municipality in order to deliver their services. Secondly, institutional partners predominate denoting economic, financial and development support relations aimed primarily at strengthening the capacities of Union members. In addition, the relatively limited number of business partners indicates that the Union is not truly able to project itself commercially. Moreover, except for those involving traders, relations with economic partners are often related to upstream production, namely the purchase of seeds (INERA), pesticides (King and Agro Tropic Agro) and loan requests (Caisse Populaire and Crédit South).

The pre-dominance of institutional partners who provide services and support to Union members confirms that the Union is heavily dependent on external actors for its running, if not for its actual existence. This shows that the Union appears to be strongly assisted and supported by institutions and organizations in the vicinity. The strong institutional structure is an attractive factor but could also be the consequence of repeated external requests that require beforehand a formal and functional organization that can fulfil the requirements enabling it to benefit from development project offerings. However, the limited list of business partners reflects the Union's lack of significant economic and financial autonomy.

Following the participants' enumeration of the various economic and institutional partners, be they local or national, a detailed analysis of the Union's main partners was conducted.

### **a) Institutional Partners**

Relations with the Ministries, the city council and the municipality of Dissin are considered positive because they lead to real results for the Union. The Ministry of Agriculture supports Union producers through its departmental service both upstream and downstream of production. Thus, the Ministry provides producers with subsidized fertilizer and seeds as well as training in agricultural techniques. Downstream of the production, department officials provide technical support such as crop monitoring and production and also in terms of pest management. However, the Ministry's human resources and capacities are too scarce at times to ensure optimal support and monitoring of Union members. This causes occasional delays in the delivery of improved seeds and fertilizer, or a lack of mobility for Ministry staff that should provide continuous technical monitoring on the ground.

The municipality of Dissin has been also strongly involved in the development of the township, in the Union's life and daily efforts for the past five years. The city council intervenes heavily in the area of tenure security or in assigning developed areas (especially important for women), on the basis of ad hoc interventions and upon requests. The municipality also provides improved seeds to Union producers.

Among non-governmental organizations, the German NGO, Welt Hunger Hilfe (ex-AgroAction) has provided a lot of support to the Union, including creating a guarantee fund for members to directly obtain loans from the Caisse Populaire. This NGO has continually backed the Union for 12 years, through the following initiatives: soil restoration and the provision of more efficient production equipment. In addition, it provides training and literacy sessions for Union members. The Union's relationship with this organization is extremely positive and has contributed to improving the lives of women and increasing yields through training and provision of equipment.

### **b) Economic partners**

In regard to economic relations, La Caisse Populaire remains one of the most important partners of the Union insofar as it has provided loans to groups for 11 years. Groups must be members of the Union to obtain a loan from the Caisse Populaire. Applications are in fact difficult to make despite the Union's intermediary efforts for its members. Indeed, members highlighted several issues and emphasized that delays in the granting of loans are often related to the cumbersome loan administrative procedures and difficult access to information. Participants also complained about interest rates being too high, making repayments difficult and undermining further the solvency of Union members. These interest rates are non-negotiable, darkening prospects of improving relationships with the Caisse Populaire.

Union cotton farmers have a strained relationship with the Société Burkinabe Fibres Textiles (SOFITEX). This company grants access to inputs (especially seeds and insecticides) on credit in return for being paid back in cotton. According to producers, the problem, is that upstream good quality input prices remain much too high especially as the selling price of cotton is very low and this generates losses for producers. SOFITEX (which has a monopoly on cotton purchase at national level) imposes fixed prices precluding flexibility and producers have little means to discuss or negotiate. SOFITEX applies the same rigidity when imposing certain deadlines which determine sales periods that do not correspond exactly to producers' expectations and cause delays in receipt of payment. However, in some cases, they have the opportunity to engage in early sales, that is to say, sell a small part of their production in advance and receive payment immediately.

There is a large range of traders with a variety of scale (local, regional, national, international) and products] with which Union members constantly interact. However, during the assessment workshop, overall relationships between producers and traders appear to be rather difficult. In fact, traders are in a position of strength and use many tools to enhance their status and maximize their profits vis-à-vis producers. Traders impose very low sale prices that rarely reflect the actual production value and thus contribute to creating a loss of earnings for producers and unpleasantness during transactions. Relationships are also too rigid with merchants with whom the terms of price negotiations are not to the benefit of producers. These difficulties as a whole show the weak marketing capabilities of the Union. This analysis confirms that, in general, relations with business partners mirror the Union's low economic and market power. On the contrary, relationships with institutional partners are generally positive. Union members value these relationships despite a few difficulties inherent in the sometimes limited capacity of these institutional partners. Similarly, the Union's solid structure facilitates the stability of its relationships with institutional partners.

## **F. Common vision for the PO**

The third and final phase of the assessment workshop began with a session in which participant members were invited to propose and develop a new vision through concrete and feasible proposals, subject to a rigorous analysis of the GAIN principles. First in plenary session, each member was invited to write out one or two proposals they wish to see the Union achieve. Then the proposals were listed and catalogued and subject to analysis and classification so as to extract a few flagship proposals approved by a majority of members. At the end of the meeting, four new proposals were selected for more detailed analysis in subgroups. These were:

1. Establishing a federation
2. Creating an internal mutual for the Union
3. Establishing seed production within the Union
4. Better marketing of agricultural products

Subsequently, participants were divided into three groups (10 members each with a facilitator, a translator and a rapporteur), each group dealing with one of the four proposals. The first group (which considered Creating an internal mutual for the Union) briefly discussed the fourth proposal (Establishing a federation). During the sub-groups meetings, the new proposals were scrutinized according to the GAIN scheme and its four principles, namely: decentralized governance, economic independence, activities geared to benefit the members, an integrated approach and the PO's capacity and functionality. The analysis was completed by identifying implementation stages for these proposals and separating what actions are to be developed in the short term (less than three months) and medium term (between three months and one year), depending on the Union's internal capacity and/or the need to use external support. The results of this exercise for each of the four proposals are presented below.

### **a) Establishing a federation**

The sub-group explored how to transform the Union into a federation in order to expand their base beyond the township of Dissin and join or partner with other unions. In addition, it is important that the Union comply with the rule of law, in particular Law 14 that regulates cooperative societies and groups in Burkina Faso.<sup>3</sup> The Union would also like to grow by incorporating existing federations or by organising itself around value chains and incorporating new sectors such as fishing.

<sup>3</sup> This law was complemented in 2004 with Decree No. 2004-040 that establishes modalities for the establishment, recognition, organization and functioning of Unions, Federations and the Confederation.

The Union already has substantial resources to undertake this transformation, such as its strong organizational structure. Similarly, its effective internal communication channels can be useful to support and convey awareness operations that will persuade Union members of the need to mobilize resources or increase group contributions. This desired governance transformation has important implications for the Union, as it will have to reorganise itself in various value chains and create technical committees by industry and municipality.

### **b) Creating internal savings and credit for the Union**

During the assessment workshop, Union members mentioned that they faced great difficulties in accessing credit and therefore proposed the creation of an internal savings and loans mutual fund. This need was evident because of their strained relationship with the Caisse Populaire. By setting up a mutual and an internal loans system, the Union would take a big step towards greater economic independence.

At first, creating an internal mutual fund requires mobilizing enough money to constitute a large enough fund. In the medium term, it will be essential to mobilize larger annual contributions, without relying on external funds in order to maintain a degree of autonomy.

In terms of activities, the first step is to educate Union members about how to start the mutual, its added value and the importance of developing it with the Union's own funds, that is to say through increased contributions. In the medium term, the Union plans to establish savings and loan accounts that it would self manage. To do this, it will set up specific training to develop the members' capacity to draw up and manage accounts. A study trip with an organization that already has its own mutual fund could also be organized, for example with an organization like SEWA, which has its own bank controlled by women members, who act as custodians and loan beneficiaries.

This course will obviously involve changes in the Union's governance. Participants proposed to set up a management committee of the mutual fund or a mutual savings and loan committee. This committee, under the control of the EB will be organized into several branches, each branch corresponding to a village. A manager will be recruited for each branch while the committee will receive specific financial management training. A monitoring committee could also be set up and would consist of an accountant and a storekeeper (for warrantage).

This proposal is laid out into a plan (or roadmap in Table 6 with timelines. It also identifies internal resources to mobilize.

**Table 6. Timeline for savings and credit proposals**

	Short term (three months)	Medium term (6 months and more)
<b>Own resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitize members on creating the mutual fund and why.</li> <li>• Mobilize village committees (communication channel).</li> <li>• Create a savings and loans committee.</li> <li>• Organize an Extraordinary General Assembly (to set the amount of individual contributions).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilize contributions.</li> <li>• File the request for approval with competent authorities.</li> </ul>
<b>External support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire an expert to conduct a feasibility study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilize external support and seek specialized training for the staff of the Management Committee.</li> <li>• Organize a study tour to visit an organization that already has a mutual fund.</li> <li>• Seek external help to apply for accreditation (legalization).</li> <li>• Contract an expert to audit the accounts.</li> </ul>

### **C) Establishing seed production within the Union**

Seed production within the Union addresses the need to increase yields and reduce costs related to the purchase of inputs. Seeds available for Union producers are sometimes insufficient and often of poor quality. Union members will gain more autonomy and be able to produce better if they develop the capacity to produce their own seeds. Members identified maize, rice, cowpea, sorghum and soybeans as priority products for marketing, putting these at the forefront of their own seed production. Participants also identified their own specific needs to implement this. Thus, to produce quality seeds, the Union must equip itself with adequate production equipment (including fertilizer and seed base), processing equipment as well as premises to stock seeds. Training in composting would be most beneficial. Finally, important standards regarding the land are to be observed, as it must be sufficiently far from other agricultural land by being separated by a minimum of five contiguous hectares of land. The Union must therefore find this land before starting any activity.

Some of the resources needed to achieve such an objective may be mobilized internally. Indeed, the Union can use part of its estate for the land and the compost pits. The Union also already has the human capacity and knowledge required to perform the necessary reforestation. However, external resources must be mobilized for technical support such as mentoring by the Ministry of Agriculture's staff (for advice, monitoring, training) or seed certification, which is done by the same Ministry. As illustrated in the results of the stakeholder analysis, good relations with the Ministry of Agriculture should facilitate obtaining these resources.

Once all the resources have been mobilized, Union members will need to implement activities: firstly, the Union should identify potential seed producers within its members and provide training in composting. Secondly, efforts should focus on which agricultural production should be chosen, that is which products should be prioritized in terms of seeds, as well as necessary resources for each (What soil? What inputs? Any storage premises?). Once all of this is done, it will be very important to obtain the seed certification from the Ministry of Agriculture and finally to prepare the marketing of these seeds, in particular by applying the Union logo that will allow seed producers to develop a brand and stand out in the market. In most cases, these activities can be performed with the Union's internal resources, while external resources are within its range (training and certification).

In short, establishing seed production within the Union can be done autonomously even if it entails some governance implications, such as the need to create a management committee for monitoring seed production activities. It will be set up according to procedures already established by the Union and will not only be responsible for monitoring operations but also for marketing any seed production surplus. All the different seed crops should be represented on the management committee, with one member responsible for each crop. The options available to achieve autonomous seed production quality are well within the scope of the Union.

The action plan for this proposal is as follows:

**Table 7. Timeline for seed production proposals**

	Short term (three months)	Medium term (6 months and more)
<b>Own resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potential seed producers among members.</li> <li>• Identify target crops for seed production.</li> <li>• Choose of seed varieties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify quality land, meeting criteria for seed production.</li> </ul>
<b>External support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the techniques of seed production with the National Union of Seed Producers of Burkina Faso.</li> <li>• Solicit support from agricultural services agencies (training and technical support).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop basic seed (sign necessary agreements with the National Seed Union).</li> <li>• Seek INERA's technical support (seed certification).</li> <li>• Set up specifications for the production and marketing of seeds with the help of an expert.</li> </ul>

#### **d) Starting collective marketing of agricultural products**

The Union could address one of the main weaknesses identified during the assessment workshop by improving the marketing of its agricultural products. Union members show little marketing capacity characterized by highly variable individual sales, often at farm gate and without sufficient knowledge about markets. In particular, participants explained that the Union should focus its efforts on peanuts, rice, soybeans and corn, as their commercialization is still marginal. They also discussed the needs they must meet in order to fully develop this marketing potential that is mainly focused on finding opportunities and securing transportation. Participants also noted that processing units such as drying units are important in this process, as are the related transformation strategies. Finally, Union members need to have sufficient information on applicable prices and those applied in markets and also need to receive additional training in marketing.

The Union identified the crops that can provide production surpluses. In addition, warrantage (which allows producers to preserve and store their production to then sell it at the best price) is an important tool to establish better marketing. However the Union needs to further develop its negotiation capacity vis-à-vis traders.

Union members also identified the main activities they need to develop that will ensure effective and especially sustainable marketing, by starting with finding consumption niches and then sensitizing members of the concerned crops to ensure quality production surpluses. The Union must also reorganize some of its activities by setting up bundled sales and promoting warrantage operations. Finally, in order to better manage resources obtained through these sales, Union members would like to receive training in operating account management. This activity requires mobilizing external support and resources.

Some changes in the Union's governance are essential to support these group marketing activities. Thus, the Union should revitalize its price committee to become the main entity responsible for marketing operations within the Union. In this context, it would be in charge of identifying the products and the quantity to stock and sell, with the notion that only products that are to be sold would be warranted, while the rest is kept for consumption. This price committee would thus become an umbrella marketing committee for all operations and activities related to the sale of products.

The group marketing action plan developed by the Union is as follows:

**Table 8. Timeline for collective marketing proposals**

	Short term (three months)	Medium term (6 months and more)
<b>Own resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a census of its marketable products, including promising crops.</li> <li>• Strengthen processing and marketing capacities of women.</li> <li>• Identify products that will generate the best possible returns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revitalize the existing price committee (governance) and turn it into a marketing committee (managing stock surplus inventory).</li> <li>• Create sales outlets with bundling of products.</li> </ul>
<b>External support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission an expert for a feasibility study and measure the actual capacity of the Union.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek technical support from experienced organizations such as Afrique Verte (specializing in "cereal banks").</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Consultations with partners and development of new strategic road map for the PO

Following the assessment workshop with the Union, SOS Sahel interviewed the main partners on their relationships and perceptions vis-à-vis the Union and their perspectives on the new vision and proposals developed by the Union. The partners' responses are summarized in Table 9:

**Table 9. Partners' perspectives vis-à-vis the Tien-Tieetaa Union (bilateral consultations)**

<b>Union visibility, strengths and weaknesses with partners:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good image of the Union</li> <li>• Good audience with projects and NGOs</li> <li>• Well structured organization, unique in the Southwest region</li> </ul>
<p><b>Union strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good governance with bodies that work well</li> <li>• Strong presence of women with loans supported by the Caisse Populaire</li> <li>• 100% repayment of loans by women</li> <li>• Participates in the development of the Municipal Development Program (MDP)</li> <li>• Developing capacity in warrantage, reforestation, nutritional education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses of Union:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Union has reached a level of stagnation in its capabilities</li> <li>• Low level of education of members and leaders</li> <li>• Little monitoring with development partners</li> <li>• Men's loan needs are not satisfied</li> <li>• Union strongly dependent on external support (very low economic autonomy)</li> </ul>
<b>Possible changes to achieve the new vision and partners' contributions:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract new members</li> <li>• Encourage turnover of leaders within bodies, including grassroots groups</li> <li>• Increase the amount of loans granted to members by increasing the Guarantee Fund at the Caisse Populaire</li> <li>• A mutual fund is possible, but must take into account competition from the Caisse Populaire</li> <li>• Expect to overcome very stringent conditions from the Ministry of Economy and Finance to obtain legal status; need to develop appropriate statutes, have skilled personnel, appropriate premises and equipment, promote savings and cumulatively provide loans</li> <li>• The amount of annual loans granted to all Union members</li> <li>• Improve the skills of members of the Executive Board with experts in finance and credit</li> <li>• Search for partners to contribute funds in addition to membership fees</li> </ul>

**Table 9. Partners' perspectives vis-à-vis the Tien-Tieetaa Union (bilateral consultations) Cont.****Other possible partnerships:**

- The town of Dissin is ready to provide support to the Union with a campaign to raise public awareness for new members
- District technical services can assist the Union in production techniques (e. g. veterinary services and bio-digester for methane gas, electricity and compost)
- Afrique Verte may accompany and support the Union in restructuring its marketing and setting up cereal banks
- The Dreyer Foundation offers to cooperate with the Union to let it have use of its rice huller
- The Caisse Populaire de Dissin could assist the Union in loan management through a "win-win" Memorandum of Understanding

Following bilateral consultations with key current and potential partners, SOS Sahel organized a feedback workshop gathering together members of the Tien-Tieetaa Union and its partners in order to finalize the action plan. The results of the assessment workshop including the Union's proposals were submitted for validation to partners who expressed their perspectives, expectations and requirements to foster win-win collaboration. The results of the workshop with partners and the Union's finalized Action Plan are presented in the appendix to this chapter.

Regarding the setting up of a mutual savings and loan fund, it was decided to first reorganize and train Union members. The mutual fund would be financed by members' individual and collective contributions and also by potential financial partners and would have its own own premises.

As for setting up seed production, the Union will first seek to identify varieties and then find producers able to invest in the strategy and thirdly to implement the necessary technical training. Acquiring all necessary certificates and certifications to obtain legal recognition is also important. Seed distribution should also be planned and establishing or strengthening relationships with such key institutions as the National Union of Seeds should not be overlooked.

To better market local products, the Union will focus its reorganization on finding and/or strengthening partnerships to improve access to markets, for example Afrique Verte for grain markets but also with processors and other influential actors on market linkages. Certain financial aspects will also be dealt with in accordance with the goal of having a mutual funding (opening a bank account, guarantee fund, etc.). Efforts will also be made to give the Union better visibility, in particular in the market.

Finally, in relation to transforming the Union into a Federation, it was agreed to start reorganizing the Union and the groups by value chain and to increase efforts to meet legislation requirements, which would then allow legal recognition of the future federation. Awareness building and appropriate training will also be implemented while necessary affiliations will be established.

**Table 10. Tien-Tietetaa Union's Plan of Action after consulting with partners**

Scheduled Activities	Partners/actors
<b>CREATING A SAVINGS AND LOANS MUTUAL FUND</b>	
Commission an expert for a feasibility study and measure the actual capacity of the Union.	EB; Women and men facilitators (Union)
Member training, organization, and operation of a mutual fund (March-June 2012)	Micro-finance structure
Women and men facilitator training on savings and loans (July-December 2012)	Women and men loan facilitators (Union)
Feasibility study (2012)	Union EB and SOS SAHEL
Encourage savings and loan groups (2013)	Union
Seek approval from the Ministry of Finance for savings and loan groups (2013)	Bureau, women and men loan facilitators, resource people
Generating equity capital (5000 F CFA shares, savings, etc.) (2013)	Members, Union Bureau, facilitators
Seek support from financial partners to launch the savings and loans (2013)	Union bureau, identify a member who will be in charge of partnerships
Have management technicians and security staff (2013)	Union; technical and financial partners
Equip adequate premises (2012-13)	Union bureau
Logistics for the mutual (equipment, motorcycles, vehicle) (2012-13)	Union bureau
<b>SEED PRODUCTION BY THE UNION</b>	
Sensitizing seed producers (January 2012)	Union, technical services
Identify varieties and producers able to produce seeds (January - February 2012)	Union, technical services
Training on seed production techniques (March - April 2012)	INERA, Controllers
Certification for seed production, purchase of basic seeds from INERA (April -May 2012)	Producers, technical services
Organize and recognize seed producers by seed variety (May - June 2012)	Union, technical services
Technical monitoring of seed producers (May - November 2012)	Controllers, INERA, agricultural services
Define a distribution system for seeds produced for Union members (November 2012)	Union
Contact the National Seed Union (March - April 2012)	Union
Affiliation of seed producers to the National Seed Union (May - June 2012)	Union

**Table 10. Tien-Tietetaa Union's Plan of Action after consulting with partners (contd.)**

Scheduled Activities	Partners/actors
<b>GROUP MARKETING</b>	
Technical management mentoring, developing working tools and training (2012-13)	Union, Caisse Populaire
Negotiate a partnership to access cereal markets (2012-13)	Afrique verte; SOS Sahel
Training of resource persons to develop projects, and identify partners (2012-2013)	SOS Sahel
Support to the creation of the guaranty fund (mutual) (2012)	Crédit Sud; Caisse Populaire
Define the types of loans (production, food security, IGA) (2012)	Union Bureau, Caisse populaire
Set up an account in the name of the mutual fund with the Caisse Populaire (2012)	Union Bureau, Caisse populaire
<b>TRANSFORMING INTO A FEDERATION (OF UNIONS)</b>	
Sensitize/Inform on the transforming the Union into a federation (January – February 2012)	Union, municipality, district technical services
Literacy training for group members (January - April 2012)	Union, Provincial Directorate
Training members in PO management (March – April 2012)	Union, Agricultural services
Create new warrantage groups (January - December 2012)	Union, technical services
Reorganize groups by crop sector (June - October 2012)	Union, technical services
Drawing up of legal statutes for the federation	Controllers, INERA, agricultural services
Convene federation constituting assembly	Union, technical services
Undertake administrative action to obtain legal recognition of the federation	Groups and members of Unions
Affiliation to the Confédération paysanne du Faso CPF (janvier 2013)	Union

### 3.4 Conclusions and follow up by Tien-Tietetaa Union after GAIN

The assessment workshop, the consultations and the feedback workshop helped develop a vision and goals for the Union. It also clarified the type of collaborations needed with institutional and economic partners to achieve these objectives and to establish a roadmap with specific timelines.

To ensure that the Union has the internal capacity to implement the action plan, five Union women leaders had the opportunity to make a training trip to SEWA, in India. This NGO offered a program of visits and training provided by local trainers and leaders during several field trips during which the Tien-Tietetaa Union women leaders learned how the SEWA savings and loans system is operated from the village all the way up to the SEWA Bank in Ahmedabad. The visitors from Burkina Faso were very impressed with several of SEWA's operating elements. The first concerns the specialization by value chain, thus rendering the structure more efficient as common needs and problems are shared. The

second concerns the important role of savings, which is one of the cornerstones to empower the organization and its members (including conditionality links forged with credit). The five Union leaders were able to understand better the practices of SEWA in regard to governance, savings and loans, the fundamental role of appropriate and continuous training for rural women who are often illiterate, and especially to their democratic and decentralized governance with a flawless information flow between all members. Based on this training trip, Tien-Tieetaa women leaders have resolved to initiate the following changes in their Union:

- 1). Reorganize the Union in value chain, drawing on the SEWA model, so that members involved in the same value chains, and thus having the same needs and constraints, may interact more efficiently.
- 2). Systematize the relationship between loans and savings. Information sessions are planned to educate members about it.
- 3). Provide training for grassroots leaders starting with the three leaders in each village, and focusing specifically on their roles and responsibilities.
- 4). Consult with experts in order to receive advice and technical assistance to transform the Union into a federation.

The new vitality within the Union generated by the GAIN assessment and the wealth of knowledge and broadening of the Union leaders' outlook after the trip to SEWA has given a real boost to the Union. The durability of the momentum created will have to be monitored and it will be useful, in the medium term, to take stock of the objectives and timelines laid out in the Union's roadmap to assess if the changes stimulated by using the GAIN methodology had an impact on improving farmers' access to markets and food security.

## 4. Brief comparative analysis of GAIN application to West Africa

Beside the Tien-Tieetaa Union in Burkina Faso, the GAIN methodology was also applied to two other producers' organizations namely in Cameroon (Union of producers in Noun District) and in Mali (Union of cooperatives "women in action"). All three organizations were subjected to exactly the same GAIN methodology and below is a short summary of the main findings across the three experiences. The focus of this section is on the reliability of the GAIN methodology and effectiveness of its approach.

### 4.1 Main economic activities of the PO studied

The three cases examined by the GAIN methodology in Burkina Faso, Cameroun and Mali present three very contrasting situations, when considering their agricultural potential, the main agricultural activities practiced by the members as well as non-farm income generating activities. Table 11 below provides a summary:

**Table 11. Key economic activities of the studied producer organizations**

<b>Umbrella organizations</b>	<b>Noun CIG Groups</b>	<b>National Union « Women in Action »</b>	<b>Ten-Tiétaa Union</b>
<b>Country</b>	Cameroun	Mali	Burkina Faso
<b>Main Agricultural Products</b>	Maize, cassava, rice, vegetables and coffee	Millet, sorghum, cowpeas, rice, vegetables (tomato, onions)	Maize, sorghum, groundnuts, millet, rice and cowpea, cotton, vegetables
<b>Agricultural potential</b>	High, good agro-climatic conditions	High along the river, lower in the North	Land degradation, water scarcity
<b>Main non-field products</b>	Livestock	Grain processing, cloth dyeing, fishing	Livestock (pork, etc.), small scale trading

## 4.2 Governance and decision-making modalities

The three GAIN workshops highlighted the importance of individual members' commitment to ensure that their organization's operations be effective. If all workshop participants claim that "unity is strength", it remains true that responsibilities are often in the hands of a few individuals. Structuring organizations effectively requires building awareness for all members regarding their individual and collective roles and responsibilities and training in leadership and team spirit building.

The Ten-Tiétaa Union of Burkina Faso was the most structured and has the strongest governance of the three organizations that were analyzed. It is structured around different levels of decision-making and information sharing to facilitate implementing services tailored to the needs of its members, particularly in terms of training and access to credit, especially for women. In contrast, the Noun Departement Producers Union in Cameroon has no strong formal structure and is almost informal. Leadership is centralized and the relationships between different groups are not very clear. This is why member participants took advantage of the GAIN assessment workshop to develop a more formal structure, namely a formal cooperative. In Mali, although "Women in Action" Cooperative Union is formally and legally registered, it does not seem to truly function, apart from the president and founder's initiatives and dynamism; members have complete trust and admire her for her ability and strong personality. During the GAIN assessment workshop, this waiting to have an organization that has existed for two years really work gave participants additional motivation to address its future governance and make it a major focus of the new vision.

Beyond the type of structure, the effectiveness of an organization lies in its ability to put its members, men and women, at the centre of its concerns by giving them the means to claim ownership of the organization to which they belong and empower themselves. The three organizations highlighted the existence of local know-how but how this knowledge may be better used within organizations and between members remains to be defined. The Ten Tiétaa Union has focused on strengthening the technical capacity of its members by strategically having some trainers become specialized to then disseminate knowledge. Nevertheless, this strategy takes little account of marketing skills. In contrast, in the case of Cameroon, the choice of the CIG structure has given greater attention to developing business activities, negotiation skills and bundled sales. In Mali, training is organized on an ad hoc basis on technical issues (micro-gardening) depending on financial opportunities or technical partnership offers.

In all three cases, the GAIN methodology helped highlight how important it is to strengthen technical, financial and "management" capabilities of members of an organization. Combining these aspects is essential to strengthen the empowerment of individual members and to ensure that the organization may fully play its role as a service provider.

**Table 12. Comparative governance of the three studied producer organizations**

<b>Umbrella organizations</b>	<b>Noun CIG Groups</b>	<b>National Union « Women in Action »</b>	<b>Ten-Tiétaa Union</b>
<b>Governance</b>	Unstructured group with CIG loosely interrelated	New formal union, but not yet functional. Union with cooperatives scattered over different regions	Very well structured Union with specialized village committees and functioning executive bureau
<b>State of internal flow of information</b>	Smooth flow of information on sales but little on governance (group meetings, informal meetings between groups, word of mouth)	Informal and individual flow of information among members	Good flow (meetings, word of mouth, flyers, low use of radios and telephones) Weakness of commercial information
<b>Training</b>	Negotiation of labor for plowing activities; Trading market negotiation for the sale of maize; Purchasing and sales bundling	Ad hoc training depending on opportunities (e.g. micro-gardening, literacy)	Strengthening of technical, human and financial management capabilities. Training of trainers. Lack of training in the field of marketing

### 4.3 Level of autonomy of the organizations

The analysis of the three PO's partners revealed a common thread among them: they have a strong dependence vis-à-vis a variety of public or semi-public partners. As for the partners, the differences between the three organizations are largely due to the degree of market integration, more developed for the Noun Department Producers Union in Cameroon while it is almost non-existent for the Tien Tietetaa Union of Burkina Faso.

In addition, the three organizations need to establish new partnerships with institutional actors (e.g. access to training, information, land, participation in the development of policies and programs) and even more so with economic actors (e.g. training, inputs, commercial contracts) to develop. The effectiveness of these partnerships depends on several factors, including the objectives and interests of selected partners and the organizations' ability to influence the content and modalities of such partnerships based on their needs and vision. In the case of Burkina Faso and Mali, organizations have closer relationships with institutional partners than with the economic ones. By contrast, in the case of Cameroon, economic partners are favoured while institutional ones are perceived with mistrust. However, in all cases, weak bargaining power results most often in open trade transactions occurring on a case-by-case basis (less ability to build regular relationships with commercial buyers).

The development of a new vision accompanied by an action plan (or roadmap) as those developed during the GAIN assessment workshop is a first step towards a greater ability to negotiate with partners and possibly choose which one(s) to appeal to for technical or financial assistance. Specific situations will entail developing, strengthening or renegotiating partnerships that allow members to develop marketing strategies, diversify their income-generating activities beyond farming or strengthen their organizational or leadership capacity. This process should take into account existing financial and human capabilities within organizations. This new vision must be carried out in parallel to the establishment of mechanisms that will improve organizations' governance and strengthen their autonomy, especially at the financial level. These mechanisms may include a greater pooling of member resources (strengthening "tontine" in Cameroon, creating a fund from individual members' contributions in Mali), the establishment of decentralized coordination committees (Mali) or mutual savings and loans institutions (Burkina Faso).

**Table 13. Key partners of the three studied producer organizations**

<b>Umbrella organizations</b>	<b>Noun CIG Groups</b>	<b>National Union « Women in Action »</b>	<b>Ten-Tiétaa Union</b>
<b>Institutional</b>	Rather weak and poorly perceived relationships with institutional partners	Particularly good relations with the Ministry of Agriculture and municipality	Good relationships and significant financial and technical support from NGOs, Ministry of Agriculture, municipality
<b>Economic relations</b>	Good bargaining power including maize sales bundling	Low bargaining power with traders	Few: Private Companies for the purchase of seeds and fertilizers and Caisse Populaire. Low bargaining power with traders and Caisse Populaire

#### 4.4 Level and modalities of market integration

In all three organizations, members deal with similar agricultural value chains. However, agro-climatic and land conditions are more or less favourable and have an impact on the level of vulnerability of producers and the types of risks they may be willing to take. For instance, in Cameroon, Noun producers have fertile land and generally good quality seeds, which gives them surplus production and allows them to focus their attention on marketing.

In contrast, the Tien-Tietetaa Union and the “Women in Action” Union are characterized by low market integration (except for the cooperative “Women in Action” Bamako). The low level of productivity, the lack of adding value to products, poor quality, surplus variability in terms of marketing, as well as the organization’s inability to access information on the market are all causative factors.

Cameroon’s experience shows that developing strong relationships with business partners can increase the bargaining power of producers to access certain means of production such as labor and inputs; establishing grouped sales of products seems to facilitate negotiating better prices with traders. However, the opportunity to develop some markets is limited by the lack of structure between groups, collective commitment and rigorous management services provided by the umbrella organization. Setting up information sharing systems along with greater transparency to increase the level of trust and cooperation on these commercial transactions were discussed by the three organizations during the GAIN workshops.

**Table 14. Product marketing practices of the studied producer organizations**

<b>Noun CIG Groups</b>	<b>National Union “Women in Action”</b>	<b>Ten-Tiétaa Union</b>
Bundled sales and diversified clients	Small quantities sold on local markets Weak bargaining power	Remains subsistence agriculture with small surplus for sale Individual sales Warrantage practice

## 5. General conclusion

Policies and development programs need effective producer organizations that can ensure good governance, capacity building and empowerment of their members if they want to have an effective impact and sustainability. Similarly, organizations need an environment that enables them to grow. From this observation, the GAIN methodology is an innovative tool that empowers members of these organizations to find their own answers.

This chapter has presented a new methodology called GAIN (Self-Governance needs-Integration-endogenous) developed to diagnose and induce endogenous transformation of producer organizations. The aim is to facilitate economic transition for POs by supporting economic development services to members autonomously, efficiently and sustainably. The main original motivation was to facilitate a better market integration for small farmers through organizations such as unions of cooperatives and POs.

The basis of the GAIN methodology comes from time and again observing malfunctioning POs in West and Central Africa during the All-ACP project for the promotion of staple food value chains. In contrast to these failures, the highly successful Indian women's organization SEWA is considered an exemplary model of sustainable and effective integration for small farmers and rural women in the rural economy.

Applying GAIN in three different countries and with contrasting organizations has shown that it can be used effectively to establish a shared and global assessment of an organization along with strategic priorities for the future. It also has the potential to be used with organizations at different levels, be they more or less formal or structured, by tailoring questions to the specific context and the ability of participants.

For most of the participants in these GAIN workshops, this was the first time they were faced with an assessment exercise where they were given the right to speak and the time to express themselves. This makes this workshop a training experience. The merit of this methodology is that it is built on making organization members more responsible and on encouraging them to develop their own solutions. There are no funding or finalized projects at the end of the workshop; participants and their organizations need to take control of the collectively discussed proposals and organize themselves to implement them. This is the first step in a long process of change that requires building long term relations with local partners. Presenting SEWA's successful experience in this area is a very strong argument that inspired participants as it shows that the ability to change and to complete this process is in each and everyone's hands.

### 5.1 Scope of GAIN application

The GAIN methodology presented in this chapter has been designed for producer organizations at an intermediate level of organization that is to say, halfway between village groups (such as common interest groups) and national organizations (platforms, federations, inter-branch organizations). This choice was dictated by our initial goal to develop an effective assessment tool that can help small farmers to better integrate the market and enable higher economic returns for the activities and occupations of these POs' members. These criteria influence the choice of POs and the member participants as well as the role of NGOs that are chosen as facilitators and local organizers of the methodology.

The prerequisites that are required to ensure that the GAIN methodology is successfully applied are listed here below.

### **Choosing umbrella organizations and selecting participants**

Producer organizations targeted by the GAIN methodology must have an economic function and current or potential relationships with the market, and their members must be able to not only produce but also process and market their products.

- The degree of formality of the structure may vary, but some form of association must exist between the members (or grassroots groups) even if it is partial, limited or informal;
- Once the PO is identified, the selection of participants for the GAIN workshop must reflect the various components of the organization, including an adequate representation of women members, a representation of major crops, value chains or income-generating activities, as well as a balanced representation between management and simple PO members;
- This level of representation must bring about a wide contribution to the assessment and ensure that the results of assessment workshop take into account the sensitivities of all the PO members (and not exclusively those of management).

### **Local support for the implementation of GAIN**

- The conduct of the assessment workshop requires an intensive group effort and hence the need to mobilize sufficient resources to succeed. In addition to the main facilitators (minimum 3), the approach requires the same number of translators, rapporteurs and administrative and logistical support. It is often more efficient to team up with a local partner organization (NGO) that has or can mobilize the necessary human resources, knowledge and field experiences with the PO to ensure the proper conduct of the GAIN assessment when it is initiated by an extra-national (e.g. FAO).
- Two activities are necessary prerequisites before starting the GAIN assessment, once the local NGO is identified and the list of people to mobilize is established. The first is to provide training for the team of facilitators (initiator and local NGO). This training includes both the philosophy and principles of GAIN in its various steps and procedures. During this training, the emphasis is on the leading role of PO members that will have precedence in the GAIN assessment workshop process. The organizers only play a facilitator role to guide the discussions and deliberations between PO members.
- The second preliminary step is conducted by the local NGO with the PO to:
  - have a better knowledge of the organization and understand members activities;
  - present the objectives and expectations of the assessment workshop and the active role that PO members are to play in its conduct;
  - establish a list of participants in the PO on the above listed criteria;
  - assess translation needs and the choice of methodological tools based on the selected participants' capabilities and the geographical context of the workshop.
- The logistics of the workshop should be carefully prepared by the local NGO in collaboration with the initiator (FAO), taking into account the requirements for a three-day workshop with 30 participating members and a team of six animators / facilitators, three rapporteurs and three translators (depending on local language requirements).

Whichever way the GAIN methodology is used, it is important to remember that the first precondition is that the organization and its members have to truly want change and, secondly, that the local environment offers opportunities for growth. The impact of this methodology on institutional change processes and ultimately small farmers' livelihoods depends on the energy and resources that they can mobilize within their organizations and then with partners. Although the environment plays an important role, change can only come from within and from grassroots members through a process of

experimentation and adjustment, over time. This process is driven by the belief that when producers, men and women, put their energies and skills to set common goals and benefits, they are able to find sustainable solutions.

## 5.2 Possible extensions to GAIN methodology

The GAIN methodology started out with the explicit goal to provide an effective tool to facilitate integration of small farmers into markets. However, it is obvious that the possible fields of application of the GAIN methodology go beyond this goal. Firstly, the GAIN methodology can be applied with producers organizations, groups, associations or cooperatives for a range of objectives developing new market opportunities through certification, management of common resources (water, land), management of renewable energy projects, or better coordination to adopt new techniques to better adapt to climate change. In each of these cases, the GAIN methodology and its stages can be appropriately adjusted or adapted to suit a particular situation.

The GAIN methodology can also be adapted to broader organizations such as platforms, federations and inter-branch groups. In this case, even if the overall conceptual framework of the GAIN methodology and the underlying principals remains the same, some changes would be needed. Particularly, the organization's internal assessment themes and sub-themes can be adjusted depending on its features and functions and on the final goal. For example, the sub-theme "market access" may not be applicable to an inter-branch group or a national federation. By contrast, other sub-themes can be introduced depending on how the methodology needs to be applied to specific organizations. The coordination phase with partners can focus on institutional partners rather than economic partners. However, the consultation process is broadly the same, including reconciling expectations and goals on either side as per the GAIN methodology.

The GAIN methodology could also be applied to better understand the barriers to change that can be linked to power relations, roles of men and women, conflicts of interest and personal motivation within an organization. It is important to understand the informal aspects, often "invisible" to then be able to better support organizations in their democratic development and their ability to represent their members.

The methodology could also be applied in analyzing in more detail favourable or restricting factors affecting an organization (climate, political situation, infrastructure, etc.) as well as legislation and national and local policies issues. This could point to ways for improving better linkages between producers' demands with requirements from national and local authorities. This could also strengthen the participation of organizations in the process of developing policies that affect them.

Finally, the GAIN methodology can also be used as a tool for a sectoral development strategy under the rubric "Strengthening capacities of small producers and their organizations." For example, all national investment strategies and programs call for strengthening the capacity of farmers and their organizations to better organize and equip themselves. GAIN can be an effective instrument in the first phase of such processes. In this case, the GAIN methodology can be adapted to include training program that allows a larger number of NGOs and other support organizations to acquire the necessary skills to conduct the GAIN assessment and therefore benefitting a larger number of qualified POs.

Accordingly, a training program on the GAIN methodology can target NGOs, representatives of professional organizations, state agents, including those responsible for outreach and technical advice and

other technical support staff providing support to POs. The final goal of these courses is to generalize the practice of the GAIN assessment as a necessary prerequisite that ensures that POs actively participate in development programs or investment initiatives within the framework of national development policies and strategies.

In summary, the GAIN methodology can be applied for other uses or purposes such as:

- (i). Participatory evaluation of producers' organizations' capabilities and capacity building needs;
- (ii). Informing policies and development programs whose aim is to create an enabling environment to strengthen organizations;
- (iii). Strengthening the governance of organizations, not only to facilitate better access to the market for their members but also for other purposes such as access to local basic services (health, education, training, etc.), climate change adaptation and responsible natural resources management.



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# Part 2

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FOOD VALUE CHAIN  
COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

