

# FROM 70 TO 75

2018 - 2023

**“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”**

**Philippians 2:5**



# Grain of Wheat

INTERNATIONAL

**A five-year plan for the development of Grain of Wheat International.**

**Lausanne / Dordrecht, 2018**

**Rob Hondsmark**

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## Introduction

The writing of this plan felt sometimes a bit awkward like you are deciding about someone else's heritage. Although I tried to be very sensitive to the history I cannot take away the consequences that in some respects, Grain of Wheat needs to change and leave its past behind without forgetting or dishonoring it. Making an organization future proof is not easy and will take a lot of energy, time, resilience and also money. With that in mind I think about what Paul said in Phill.2:5 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." It is not about us, it is not about our works, it is not about the people that we serve, our successes or failures, it is about Jesus Christ and for His glory that we do our ministry!

That is what I hope to achieve when we enter this new era for Grain of Wheat: that with respect to the past we can create better opportunities to serve the children of this world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and honor Him by what we do!

This report gives tribute to all the workers in the past and gives ideas for the future. I tried to write succinctly and do not have the idea that I am complete in what I write. The plan contains the description of our DNA and a SWOT analysis for the current situation. I also focus on the role of the International Office and staff and what will be needed in the future.

From there I present a new regional model to work with and two different entities: the International Executive Committee and the Strategic Advisory Team. Coaching and training is a topic and of course the financial situation and development of the ministry in the next five years. The final conclusions lead us to the budget and SMART time frame for the next five years. In the appendix a time schedule can be found, as well as a report on our internal and external communication and what needs to be improved in that area.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

Soli Deo Gloria

Rob Hondsmark

Lausanne, March 2018

## 1. History: lessons from the past

When World War II left countless orphans in its wake, a Swiss businessman rose to the challenge. Jean André brought the first group of 120 German children to Switzerland. Half of them were accommodated at Jura-Rosal, one of the original homes, the other half with families in the nearby village. There they were fed, cared for and taught about God's love. Then they returned to their homelands refreshed and better equipped to grow up and become all God wanted them to be. Jean André devoted much of his energy to this work alongside his great responsibilities at the head of the leading grain shipping company in his country. Later on, children from other European countries, France, Greece, Austria, the UK or Spain, were also invited to spend times of restoration in camps in Switzerland.

In 1972 Jean André purchased a park, an hour from the center of Buenos Aires, Argentina, in order to enable local churches to organize youth and children's activities there. Over the years, it has grown into a major center where thousands of people continue to gather for sports competitions, music festivals, and other events.

In the eighties, children from war-torn Lebanon were also invited to Switzerland. Soon after the Iron Curtain fell in 1991, groups of Russian children also started to come to camps in Switzerland.

Connections were established with people in Russia and Lebanon who, like Jean André, had a passion to help disadvantaged children. However, Grain of Wheat then changed its approach and started to organize locally in each country, following training of local Christians. Offices were opened in Beirut and Moscow, furthering the work of Grain of Wheat in the whole Eastern European and Middle-Eastern regions.

The founder appointed his son-of-law, André Richir, director of Grain of Wheat at the beginning of the nineties. In his turn, André Richir handed over the leadership responsibilities for the international organization to the founder's daughter, Anne-Christine André Bataillard. After 15 years at the head of Grain of Wheat International she appointed Jean-Pascal Richir, one of the grandsons of the founder as International President whom was succeeded by Rob Hondsmark from The Netherlands to guide the ministry into a new era.

In 2018, Grain of Wheat will celebrate seventy years of ministry. Nowadays, it is actively nurturing and reaching out to children in 25 nations around the world, about half of them Muslim. From humble beginnings, Grain of Wheat has become a worldwide network and powerful advocate of children's ministry but one thing has remained constant: from Albania to Argentina, from Syria to Kazakhstan, from Russia to South-East Asia, every child counts. Working through long-established relationships with local churches to provide a continuum of ministry as the children grow, the work provides long-term stability to those who are served.

This historical overview that can be found on the ministry's website as well shows a couple of important lessons. Some of them are also recognized in several official documents.

### ***Spiritual***

This ministry is a spiritual ministry and it only exists by the grace of God because He inspired the founder to establish the foundation. This means that all developments need to be Spirit driven instead of money driven. Money is helpful but God is leading. He will never do anything against the principles in His word. So the Bible and the connotations in it are always more important than any cultural or legal development! Which means that all board members and staff do need to know the word of God and need to be committed Christians. There can never be any exception in this. In every important meeting of board or staff the Bible needs to be opened for wisdom and clarity about the glory of God and to seek His direction in whatever topic is addressed. Therefore a time of prayer or devotions (and maybe even fasting) needs to be a daily practice in all offices that we have. The quoted verse from Phil.2:5 continues: *“who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.”* That is a goal and a daily challenge for all who are involved in Grain of Wheat!

### ***Local***

It is a conscious choice to work with local people and the local churches when starting a new branch in another country. We do not send missionaries! Local people do know the culture, they have the networks, know the right people and understand better what is needed. In this situation, the role of the International Office is to serve (and to lead with servant leadership).

### ***Relationships***

Jean André already realized that he never could achieve what he was called to do on his own. That has not changed. Now and in the future GWI will have to build strong relationships and partnerships with other ministries to realize the best possible situations for children and to reach as many children as possible with the gospel. That means that we have to take good care of existing relationships and be constantly aware of new opportunities for partnerships that will increase our opportunities on behalf of children.

### ***Role of the family***

This ministry is a family based ministry as it was started by one man of the family André 70 years ago and since then family members have been very much involved until today. This is the first time that GWI has a non-family member as CEO and he is not from Switzerland. That was a brave (but may be inevitable decision) The role of the family has been very important and we have to acknowledge that. It is part of the heritage of this ministry in which so many family members have been or still are involved. At the same time this involvement can be a danger for the future of the ministry. I don't want to call it a threat but we need to be aware of this fact. The knowledge and support of family members is and will be important but can they keep enough distance to give the ministry the space it needs to change and/or expand?

For the CEO it will be important to maintain good relationships with the family. He has to protect the heritage and use his skills to direct the ministry into a new era and to convince the family that this is the right direction. The full support of the International Board is necessary to achieve this.

## 2. Our DNA: vision, mission and strategy

One of the most important aspects for the survival and renewal of ministries is the understanding of the DNA of the ministry that is implemented in the board and the employees that entered the ministry later than the first group that worked with the founder. GWI has done a good job already by capturing these aspects in documents. However, documents are also a danger if they are kept in the cupboard and are not lived by board and staff.

It would be preferable to have vision, mission and strategy on the website. The latest mission statement was accepted by the International Board in 2007:

“Grain of Wheat is an international Christian organization. Its mission is to reach the maximum number of children with the message of God's love, helping them to grow morally, socially and spiritually through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is done in partnership with local churches.”

In the identity document from 2013 the International Board stated the following aspects:

### 2.1. We are Christian

#### **Bible based**

Our ministry is based on the biblical revelation of one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in the divine inspiration and the sovereign authority of the Holy Scripture, which is the Word of God.

#### **Sharing the good news**

Our ministry is centered on the belief that salvation is offered through faith in Jesus Christ alone, whilst being sensitive to the contexts in which we serve. At our clubs and camps we aim to have at least half of the children who do not have Christian homes. We aim to bring all children into a personal relationship with God and follow them up so that they can grow in their faith and be disciplined.

#### **Care for children**

We address the child as a person who is unique and valued in God's eyes. We have a

holistic approach to the child, caring for their development emotionally and physically as well as spiritually. We seek to protect children from abuse with all our staff and volunteers working under the Grain of Wheat Child Protection Policy.

## ***2.2. We are committed to children***

### **Age group**

Our priority is to reach children from 4 to 14 years old, while ensuring continuing Christian input for children who have become adolescents, by linking them to other organisations and church groups.

### **Type of children**

We work with children from all backgrounds, race and religion while giving special attention to the underprivileged.

### **Family**

We seek to reach the child and his/her family. We recognise that the most important place for a child's care and spiritual development should be the family. We try not to disconnect him/her from his/her immediate environment within the family. We seek to follow up children through home visits and developing relationships with the parents where possible.

### **Child centred activities**

We have developed a range of activities which enable us to provide introductory programmes for children and programmes for sharing the Good News, follow-up and discipleship. These include creative arts activities, neighbourhood and school events, fairs, distribution of aid, camps, clubs, home visits, children's magazines, children's telephone stories and websites. We seek to have a strategic approach to reaching and following-up children.

### **Long term commitment to children**

We use our activities to initiate and accompany children on their spiritual journey through four phases:

1. Having an introduction to Jesus
2. Responding to the message of Good News
3. Growing in maturity
4. Living out their faith and using their gifts

## ***2.3. We are international***

 **International partnership**

Grain of Wheat is an international partnership where each national organization works within the context of the Covenant of Partnership. The Grain of Wheat ministries in different countries work in relationship with the central organization in Switzerland and with national Directors from other countries.

 **Global strategy**

We keep in mind that we must be part of a global vision and strategy to reach all children. We seek to be actively involved in appropriate regional initiatives and global movements such as KidsGames, the Lausanne Movement and the Global Children's Forum as well as REC, Reaching Europe's Children.

 **Financial accountability**

In our accountability for the resources that God provides through local and international donors we have a policy of transparency and openness which is applied to all aspects of the organization, to finances and to activities. We publish regular reports and consolidated budgets and accounts. We are compliant to the Swiss and US regulations and obligations.

## ***2.4. We are national***

 **National leadership**

In order to ensure good local integration of the ministry and a sense of ownership the members of the Board, the Director and co-workers are from the country.

 **National strategy**

We are engaged in a long-term work in each country. We seek to progressively develop a national ministry strategy through the country which implements our activities to help children through the four phases of their spiritual journey, according to the cultural context and the capacity of the country. (see points e. and f. in Section 2) The main part of our work is done in the country where the ministry is based. We aim at a self-supported ministry in the country.

 **Working with churches**

Grain of Wheat is an interdenominational ministry. We seek to work hand in hand with the local church in applying the strategy of Grain of Wheat, being ready to serve the church wherever possible. We aim to integrate children into the local church for discipleship.

 **Training**

To serve the churches and ensure the quality of our activities we emphasize the importance of training and provide training events for children's ministry leaders and local children's workers.

 **Partnerships**

We seek to cooperate with other ministries where appropriate, as we are all part of the Body of Christ. Whenever appropriate, we enter into partnership with other Christian organisations where together more can be achieved than on our own.

 **Excellence**

We strive for quality in all aspects of our ministry - in our training, activities, staff development and administration. We seek to remain innovative and to make the best use of modern technology.

As stated above, documents are also a danger if they are kept in the cupboard and are not lived by board and staff. So, what can we do with these documents? I suggest we develop and implement a philosophy orientation or training.

***Philosophy orientation***

The philosophy orientation that needs to be developed has as goal "to help staff and volunteers fulfill their God given assignment and to insure appropriate stewardship of Grain of Wheat resources through the development and administration of policies, procedures and programs."

A philosophy orientation in this way helps the organization to keep the course.

Everyone within the Grain of Wheat family needs to know the Mission Statement, principles that guide our work, our statement of faith and our core values. Also important are guidelines for fundraising.

In this orientation, we should also implement the way we are governed by boards and advisors and the role they play. Therefore not only staff and volunteers should go through this but also board members.

With regards for cultural background and difficult situations for Christians in some countries we should also train people in biblical values like marriage, children as gift from God, abortion, divorce etcetera as long as it has its influence in the way we address children.

To maintain the importance of the orientation it should be repeated every five years or so and have a regular adaptation when developments require so.

## **3. Role of GWI Office and staff**

The ministry started in Switzerland and the International office is still the “oven” where we bake the cake. What does that mean for the ministry and what is the International office doing? What would/should be changed?

### ***3.1 Catalyst***

The International Office is not the headquarters that tells every country what to do and how to do it. It is not now and will not be in the future. But: many country directors have responded that they need direction and support from the International Office. In that sense the IO can be the catalyst to get things going. That means that the IO needs to know what is going on in the countries to fulfill that role. Countries are used to write their reports, but I would love to see some more strategic content to improve projects and long-term strategy.

### ***3.2 Bank, fundraising***

The IO is functioning is a bank because it is responsible for the international fundraising for projects in the different countries and the allocation of the money to the countries. This requires a high level of accountability and professionalism to work with all these funds. If this role increases in the future (which is needed and expected) we need more financial knowledge in the IO.

### ***3.3 Protector strategies, DNA, history***

The IO is the protector of the strategies that were developed through the years and also of the DNA and the history of the ministry. Now that the relationship between the family and the ministry has changed with a new CEO it is even more important that the core values are protected and lived out in the countries. This is what gives GOW its identity. So additions - like some new core values - are possible but the foundation of the ministry needs to remain the same. As written before we need to develop a philosophy training to realize this. In accordance with the idea of training in many topics to improve quality the IO might need a trainer who can develop new curricula and train the country staff.

### ***3.4 Director: changes, keep track, etcetera***

The new International Director/CEO was hired with the instruction and mission to make the ministry future proof. This requires a lot of understanding of the history of GOW and its intercultural mission before starting to change things. Now with this plan a couple of things have become clear. In the SWOT analysis I already wrote about the challenges regarding

fundraising, Christianity and the intercultural differences. Changes we need to make are our goals for the next years as well:

- ✚ better understanding for all directors that they are part of a family
- ✚ change in reporting (adequacy, quality and frequency)
- ✚ working alongside the core values
- ✚ innovation
- ✚ in-country fundraising
- ✚ self-sufficiency within (how many?) years
- ✚ better integration of Christian principles and marketing

These changes will be different from country to country. Some of them are really working hard and doing well, other countries need more support and direction from the International Director / office. The expectation is that if we improve communication we come closer to them and are able to support them better in changes that we require. See the attached time schedule for the expected changes in time.

### **3.5 Additional role: training, expanding, communicating**

In addition to the banking role and being the protector of the ministry, the IO is also responsible for training, the expansion of the ministry and the communication. Content wise I write about these topics in different paragraphs in this plan but when it comes to the initiation and continuation of these three topics, the IO is leading and directing. This requires an up-to-date information and knowledge and high-level communication skills. When the ministry expands this will be even more important and probably brings up the need for an expert in these areas.

### **3.6 Expanding opportunities: reasons (why not)**

Although not the first goal we need to consider the fact that “stagnation means decline”. So as soon as we have maintained balance in ministry we need to think about expanding opportunities. Some options are quite close to what we are doing right now. For example, the German speaking part of Switzerland. We already started a taskforce Switzerland with the goal to build a stronger constituency in Switzerland. The German speaking part is part of this plan. From there Germany is not far. A similar development we see in the Middle East where GOW is involved in other countries than only Lebanon.

Western Europe needs our attention as well, for ministry purpose and for potential donors.

To my opinion we see several reasons for potential expansion: because of a natural development (like in the ME), because of a request from an existing ministry in a country or because of a strategic decision. All potential expansions always need to be implemented in a plan and budget. That prevents the danger of starting something without having considered the pro’s and contra’s for the ministry.

### 3.7 Closing of a ministry/country

It can happen that it is unavoidable to close the ministry in a country that we are working in. Of course, that is not what we want but we will have to make this decision in the following situations:

- ✚ Abuse of children
- ✚ Continuous budget problems without a chance for change
- ✚ No accountability or proper reporting
- ✚ Unacceptable spiritual directions or lose of the spiritual content of the ministry
- ✚ In-country developments like new laws that make it impossible to work
- ✚ Local leadership that no longer conforms itself to the ministry

The IB will take this decision on advice of the CEO. An official document on this will be written and send to all countries. It will also be a part of new agreements that we sign.

**Goal:** document written and implemented before end 2018.

## 4. Coaching and Training

Coaching and training are often used interchangeably, and that leads to confusion, especially when words like "mentoring" and "counseling" are added to the mix. It's not so much that managers don't know the differences between coaching and training but that so many of their actions imply that they don't.

Just to put us all on the same page, let's make the distinction between coaching and training right up front. Essentially, training is about transferring knowledge while coaching is about enhancing knowledge (or skills)—development, in other words.

Obviously, coaching is a way to *apply* learning in an informed way. Training hopes that learners will remember knowledge, so it can be applied. In the case of sales reps, remembering and being able to apply knowledge will improve performance and productivity.

For these reasons I am planning to do training in the countries offered from the IO. Not only the already mentioned Philosophy training but also other trainings that we can provide or develop. We should think about trainings with content about children but also board and director training which is in many cases neglected but the foundation of the ministry (!). We can make use of the knowledge and trainer skills that we already have in GOW.

A big mistake in training is that it is only done once. Repeated or succeeded training creates a higher level of quality. And every new staff member needs to go through a variety of trainings to maintain the quality level we want.

*“The only problem is that humans don't remember very well. One source says that research shows an average of 50 percent of the information received in a presentation is forgotten within one hour. After 24 hours, on average, 70 percent is gone. And within a week a staggering 90 percent is nowhere to be found.*

*Since the best coaches do so frequently and on an ongoing basis, coaching is one way to impact the fact that even the best of employees will simply not remember valuable information. Training is not enough. So we'll say it again: It's not so much that managers don't know the differences between coaching and training but that so many of their actions imply that they don't.*

*Perhaps no one really thinks or says aloud, "Why should I invest time, effort and money in coaching someone who has already been trained?" But when coaching is nonexistent, haphazard, inadequately funded or rests several rungs from the top of the priority ladder, this might as well be what is said.” (meetmaestro.com)*

We have to develop internet training and make use of social media or E-learning.

Coaching is provided through the Regional Model with coordinators who can coach country directors. And of course in country coaching is done (or need to be done) by directors to staff and by staff to volunteers.

**Goals:**

- ✚ philosophy training for all directors by end 2019
- ✚ philosophy training for all staff and volunteers by end 2022

## 5. Financial

### 5.1 Switzerland

The fundraising in Switzerland is vital for GOW and needs to be secured in the first place. So good relationships with donors are important. Next to maintaining, expanding is key. We see several options for this: new foundations, churches, individuals and the German part of Switzerland. To start working on this we begin the “Taskforce Switzerland”. It’s main goal is *“to create a culture in which donors feel welcome and special, to connect with new potential donors, to visit churches and to explore options in German speaking Switzerland.”*

**Goal:** double the support from Switzerland within 5 years.

### 5.2 USA

GOW US fundraising opportunities are enormous, but someone has to take the lead and understand the way fundraising is done in the US. In the meantime, the CEO will take this role to help the board get to the next level.

**Goals:**

- ✚ Well-functioning board before the end of 2018
- ✚ Church tour in 2019 and 2021
- ✚ Large donor event in 2020 and 2022 (e.g. concert)
- ✚ Fieldtrips with Swiss office
- ✚ Raise at least 1 million US in 2022 for projects

### 5.3 Other opportunities

We need to think “out of the box”. What can we develop to raise more awareness for GWI? We can work with our own resources: newsletter, social media etc. Very important. But we also need to find new ways to inform the Swiss (and others?) about our ministry. Think about selling resources (e.g. books) or offer training to churches or other ministries. It would be a good challenge to grow into the position of “expert in children’s ministry”. What do we have to offer to third parties? This is also important for the US board.

I called the year 2018 the year of INNOVATION. I expect directors to start thinking and act in an innovative way in projects and fundraising. We cannot continue in the same way, we need to find new ways to attract donors to our ministry. During the directors meeting in Barcelona, this will be an important topic.

## 6. Partners in ministry

Because it was realized from the beginning that partnering with other ministries was important, GOW always worked in partnerships. In the last annual reports it is shown how many partners there are. Of course some of them are more important than others but the strategy is clear: do not operate solely if it is possible to work together.

I chose not to write about the different partnerships we have but leave it with the notice that also in the future partnerships will remain very important.

No major changes are needed in the nearby future but GOW will keep its eyes open to see if new opportunities for partnership appear.

## **7. Summary and final conclusions**

### **7.1 Summary**

This plan is for the next five years and shows the following important things: GOW has a long and rich history of seventy years in which the DNA of the ministry has been established and cultivated. Yet the SWOT analysis shows that to make the ministry future proof it is required to improve several important parts of the ministry.

In the first place the internal and external communication needs to be updated and upgraded. Teams in the countries remark that they don't feel part of an international family and that way we might lose them. We asked a specialist to write a report with an analysis and recommendations which is attached to this plan as a whole and partly integrated in this plan.

GOW needs to pay more attention to training and coaching. Especially the so called Philosophy training is important to implement. This training has to be developed and every director, board member, staff and volunteer has to go through it to understand the DNA of the ministry in its fullest. That makes sure the DNA will also be kept alive in the future.