**Regional sharing on *GMO and Local Biodiversity***

**Background**

Over the past two decades or so, genetically modified organisms (GMO) are pushed in many countries against the will of farmers and consumers. Health and environmental issues are emerging recently but these are ignored both by GMO developers and government regulators. With Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for monopoly control associated with GMO, biotech corporations are pushing GMO in order not only to rake gigantic profits, but ultimately to control seeds, food, and agriculture.

In recent year, government of Vietnam has opened the door to GM corn through three important institutions: 1) through different decrees passed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development; 2) academies and universities; and 3) agriculture companies. These three foundations for introduction of GM corn to Vietnam are being promoted and advertised on government. As a result, many farmers in Vietnam believe in the benefits of GM corn as the solution for alleviating poverty and increasing agricultural production in the conditions of adverse climate change.

In this context, CENDI sees the problem of GM corn as not only killing the agricultural soils, damaging the soil environment including water under the soil, and leaving behind the poisoning of all the agricultural flatland and delta regions, but also the attracting of highland farmers to displace primary forest biodiversity and local native species of rice, edible herbs, and vegetables in order to plant GM corn.

This loss of hundreds of hectares of primary forest in the highlands will needs 200 years to recover. Not only this, but the farmers will also lose their independence and become dependent on chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides supplied by outsiders. The tangible effects of this have already been seen in many areas farmers who have adopted GM corn, with increase indebtedness, loss of land, farmer sickness and death, and the deaths of animals such as fish in local streams and rivers, horses, cows and pigs, in ways that the farmers have been unable to explain.

CENDI sees the importance to focus on sharing information about the dangerous impacts of GM corn with our nationwide key-farmers network in order to secure the different Indigenous Ethnic Minority communities along the border regions of Vietnam with Laos, China, and Cambodia from the devastating impact of GMO farming.

For that reason, CENDI holds a three days regional sharing in La Thanh hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam in August 2017 (24-27 August) together with GRAIN, MASIPAG, BIOTHAI and other organisations in Vietnam and Laos to connect other farmers and organisations in the region who are challenging the development and implementation of GM crops and working for the protection of local varieties. In line with the regional sharing CENDI also plans to have an exchange of key farmer leaders to the Philippines to learn best practices from MASIPAG who have strong experiences challenging GM crops development in the Philippines by means of protecting and breeding local varieties. The exchange to the Philippines will plan later after consulting with MASIPAG farmers at this meeting.

**Objectives**

1. Strengthen farmers in Vietnam to recognize the dangers of GM corn in highland regions so that farmers can connect with other farmers both in Vietnam and in other country in the region to reject the promotion of GM corn.

2. Address how native varieties of rice, corn, and soy bean in Vietnam can be nurtured and enriched by facilitating community seed banking in those areas where the community is still rich in indigenous knowledge and living in a rich ecosystem, by applying the knowledge sharing from other experiences such as in the Philippines, Thailand and Laos.

3. Connecting farmers from the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand to sustain local native species and varieties. And to challenging the environmentally and socially destructive movement for the promotion of GM corn in the region.

**Outputs**

* A report in electronic format produced and published by CENDI in English and Vietnamese (including a list of key farmers and villages/communities in the Region where they still maintain local initiatives on native species; and a summary of impacts/challenges)
* Developing a platform for information sharing and on-going discussions among participants to strengthen the understanding of the dangers of GM corn and the ability to reject the promotion of GM corn in Vietnam and Laos (including an increased social awareness raising on problems and challenges and impacts caused by GMO.
* Develop training materials on the issue.
  + Exchange of key farmer leaders to the Philippines to learn best practices from MASIPAG who have strong experiences challenging GM crops development by means of protecting and breeding local varieties. The exchange to the Philippines will plan later after consulting with MASIPAG farmers at the meetings please.

**Dates**

A Four days regional sharing (24-27 August) will take place in La thanh Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam in August 2017[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Participants in expectation**

We expect to have 43 people can participate in the regional workshop from:

* CENDI Key farmers leaders from Vietnam (22 participants) Son La region, Lao Cai region, Quang Binh region, Central Vietnam region)
* CENDI (4 participants) including a video-man, a translator
* SPERI (1 participant) and Key Farmer in Laos (2 participants)
* GRAIN (1 participant)
* MASIPAG (1 participant) and Key Farmer of MASIPAG (1 participant)
* BIOTHAI (1 participant)
* Caritas Dalat (4 participants)
* Misereor partner and their Key Farmer from Vietnam: DWC (2 participants) and CSDM (2 participants)
* Misereor partners from Laos: SAEDA (2 participants)

**Schedule**

**SCHEDULE OF THE MEETING**

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| **August 24** | **Participant’s arrival: For International and local participants coming from outside Hanoi:**  La Thanh Hotel  226 Van Phuc street, Lieu Giai ward, Ba Dinh district, Hanoi |
| **August 25** |  |
| 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM  Overviewing problems and challenges | * **Participants introduction (villages, ethnic identity, expectation for the meeting)** * Overview presentation from Vietnam * Overview presentation from MASIPAG - Philippines * Overview presentation from GRAIN – Indonesia * Overview presentation from Bio-Thai, Thailand and SAEDA - Laos   Questions and Discussions |
| 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM | * **Overview introduction of problems and challenges faced by farmers and their communities from different regions**    + Son La region, Lao Cai region, Quang Binh region;   + Central Vietnam;   + Philippines region;   + Indonesia region;   + Thailand, Laos   Questions and Discussions |
| **August 26** |  |
| 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM  Discussions of impacts – learning from international farmers/Group working | * **Overview of impacts from Global and regional pictures (GRAIN, MASIPAG, Bio-Thai)** * Overview of (recent) impacts from Vietnam   Questions and Discussions |
| 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM | * **Sharing of impacts faced by farmers and their communities from different regions**    + Son La region, Lao Cai region, Quang Binh region;   + Central Vietnam;   + Philippines region;   + Indonesia region;   + Thailand, Laos   Questions and Discussions |
| **August 27** |  |
| 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM  Lessons learned and future of alternative resistance strategies | **Lessons from resistance strategies and alternative strategies from International farmers and people’s organizations (GRAIN, MASIPAG, Bio-Thai, SPERI, CENDI, DWC, CARITAS...).**  Questions and Discussions |
| 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM | * Different groups’ discussions and presentations to identify solutions to deal with GMO challenges and impacts with regards to social and environmental impacts from cross-farmers’ voices and learning   Discussions for common final points and Strategies for follow-up (Kartini, Kien and team) |
| **August 28** | **Participant’s departure** |

1. And one week exchange and exposure on breeding and protection of local varieties will take place in the Philippines in (month) 2017. This activity comes later.

   And for the field exchange to MASIPAG in the Philippines to learn about protection and breeding of traditional crop varieties, we expect to have 10 key farmers leaders from Vietnam and Laos to participate. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)