

The Future of Global Action Networks: *The Challenges and Potential*

A Report to USAID – GDA

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The Future of Global Action Networks: *The Challenges and Potential*

Introduction

Until recently the nation state and its intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) have been seen as the key agents to address issues of common good and the public common. However, over the past few decades, as the pace of globalization has increased and environmental issues have grown, the limits of the nation-state have become increasingly apparent. Substantial disparities in wealth and seemingly intractable poverty in large regions, global health threats (e.g., AIDS and bird flu, pollution of the seas, and the growing pace of climate change are only a few examples of issues that seem to indicate a new approach to global governance is needed.

One common response is to support strengthening of the power of IGOs; another is to call for developing a global system of representative government. Others say that strengthening global market mechanisms is the answer. Yet another approach is to develop global multi-stakeholder networks. Here the focus is on this last approach.ⁱ Although generally out of the limelight, the examples presented suggest there is substantial progress in developing this social innovation, with remarkably low cost.

About four dozen of these examples have been found. This paper draws from a comparative analysis of 19 of them, other writings about these networks, and information gathered through conversations and meetings with leaders of global action networks (GANs)ⁱⁱ.

The Rise of Global Multi-Stakeholder Networks

The end of the Cold War was a critical event in the development of global multi-stakeholder networks. Before the Cold War, three particularly interesting and enduring networks were established that categorically mix stakeholders for global problem solving. The year 1863 marked the founding of an NGO with intimate government involvement that is today known as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In 1919, the government-labor-employer body today called the International Labor Organization was established. And in 1948 the World Conservation Union (IUCN) brought together governments and environmental NGOs.

The Cold War halted development of such strategies for global problem solving. But at its end, conditions were substantially different and richer for these strategies. Global transportation and communications and global organizations for business, government, and civil society had grown tremendously. The subsequent round of global multi-stakeholder network creation is associated with the “international regimes” of Young,ⁱⁱⁱ the “governance without government” phenomenon in the 1990s,^{iv} and the “government as networks” phenomenon^v noted more recently. From a political science perspective, Reinicke refers to these multi-stakeholder networks as “global public policy networks.”^{vi} From a global problem perspective, Rischard labels them “global issue networks.”^{vii} They are agents that Rosenau describes as addressing the “social-ecological development challenge.”^{viii} Looking at issues of accountability, Zadek and Radovich refer to “collaborative governance.”^{ix} With a focus on networks as societal learning and change systems, they have been labeled global action networks (GANs).^x

Global Multi-Stakeholder Networks as *Global Action Networks*

With a vastly more supportive development environment since the fall of the Soviet Union, GANs today include Transparency International with an anti-corruption agenda, the Forest Stewardship Council which promotes sustainable approaches to forestry, the Global Water Partnership which is an agent of integrated water resource management, and the Microcredit Summit Campaign which is promoting microcredit as a strategy to address extreme poverty.

Through web and document searches, meetings, and interviews, data have been collected on 19 (see Appendix A) of these networks to give a description of the field today. All the networks have been in operation for at least four years and three pre-Cold War networks were not included because they were formed in a much different context. After reviewing a total of 30 networks, these 19 were chosen as representing particularly interesting and important examples that reflect the five definitional characteristics of GANs. However, two cautions are necessary when using these examples and reviewing the descriptions below. First, the examples fit the definitions “more or less.” Part of the goal of the analysis is to assess this very question of definition, so a significant range is included. Second, as in any quickly changing field, descriptions and details themselves are rapidly changing. For example, budgets for organizations can shift 50 percent from year to year. This is not simply a product of financing successes, but of changing strategies (e.g., shifting from a centralized to decentralized network) and cycles of activities that are not annual (e.g., holding a global assembly).

In terms of achievements, the GANs cite very diverse indicators. For all, simply putting their issue on the global agenda is important. The Forest Stewardship Council cites \$10 billion in products traded with its label and 74 million hectares certified. The Access Initiative points to assessments undertaken for nearly 40 countries, and new freedom of information laws and enhanced transparency in many of them. The Global Water Partnership points to an external review that stated clearly that GWP provides good value for the donors’ money. The Global Reporting Initiative refers to 800 corporations that are using its framework, and 20,000 individuals who have joined. The Microcredit Summit Campaign says that by 2006 it will reach its goal originally set for 2005 “...to reach 100 million of the world’s poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services.” However, the achievements are much broader than these issue-focused outcomes described, as is described in more detail below.

The size of the networks is difficult to describe, given their diverse ways of organizing resources and the fact that all of them depend on leveraging resources from their participants. In terms of direct resources, they are very modest in size, but they leverage many uncounted resources through their participating organizations. For the 17 GANs providing staff size, the average was 25; annual operating budgets start at \$0.63 million and averaged \$9.9 million. However, removing the Global Fund, an outlier in terms of staff and annual operating budget sizes, these averages became 18 staff and budgets of \$4.2 million. This modest scale makes their global achievements all the more remarkable.

With this overview, GANs can be described through five definitional qualities:

1. A global framework for action
2. A public good imperative
3. A systemic boundary-crossing action strategy.
4. A change agent role
5. An interorganizational network structure

These qualities are explained in more detail below. Following that, core competencies needed for GAN development are described, some of the lessons in GAN development are identified, key challenges are listed, and the report concludes by speculating on the future role of GANs.

Characteristic 1: A Global Framework for Action

Although the GANs aspire to be global, most are active in fewer than 50 countries. Four factors influence how global they are:

- *Funders as Donors:* Several of the networks – such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (the Global Fund) – are products of a donor agency framework of Northern countries working in Southern countries. Therefore, although these networks can be “global,” an important asymmetry exists within the global nature between “donor” and “recipient.” Of the 19, all are active in Southern countries but only 11 are in Northern ones in terms of programs.
- *Stage of Development:* Obviously, a global network does not spring up overnight. Even when sponsored by an existing global network, substantial effort and time are required to give life to a new initiative globally.
- *Local Robustness of Stakeholder Organizations:* As “multi-stakeholder” networks, the GANs depend on legal and cultural frameworks that permit and encourage diverse stakeholders to form independent organizations. In China and the Arab countries, there are still significant difficulties in developing civil society and business organizations. In some countries, the question is more about the capacity of local stakeholder groups, and this is one reason many of the GANs become involved in building their organizational capacity.
- *GAN Membership Strategy:* Some of the networks are closed to new members, set significant hurdles to membership, or are very specialized. For example, although anyone can join the Ethical Trading Initiative, companies must agree to monitoring and ethical performance standards that many would find overly onerous. Building Partners for Development in Water and Sanitation is quite specialized and would not be of interest for countries committed to public sector planning, development, and delivery of water and sanitation services.

GANs’ global orientation makes them agents for development of global citizenship. They are addressing the complex issues involved in being a “global” organization, where “global” is a place that is distinct from “local.” A GAN is not simply the sum of all the local places in the way

that IGOs are for nation states, nor does global mean the top of a hierarchy directing the locals. Rather, GANs are networks of local nodes and a global, more interdependent one that form a coherent whole.

Definitional Characteristic 2: A Public Good Imperative

None of the GANs is a for-profit organization. Their multi-stakeholder character means they must be able to integrate diverse goals. Their formal organization is almost always as an NGO (or a program of one), or occasionally as an IGO as is the Global Compact. Their issues in some ways reflect divisions not uncommon with governments and their agencies and ministries. However, the issues are often relatively specialized. For example, rather than a ministry of health, GANs are constructed around specific health challenges and diseases; and rather than a ministry of public works or water, the Global Water Partnership and World Water Council have much narrower, distinctive, and complementary roles. On the other hand, some of the GANs focus on cross-cutting issues that traditional governmental structures have great difficulty addressing. As examples, the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development and the Global Reporting Initiative are concerned with triple-bottom-line (economic, social, and environmental) outcomes.

GANs' vision, missions, and goals (see Appendix A) are to produce varying mixes of public goods and services, rules, and resource transfers.^{xi} They are united in their focus on (1) sustainable development, and (2) filling in global governance gaps.^{xii} GANs are united in their vision for a world that is socially equitable and just, and environmentally healthy. *Unsustainable* development is in part the product of our organizational structures. Traditional organizations are created around very narrowly construed tasks and responsibilities. This is reflected in specialization between organizational sectors, with distinctions within sectors between such entities as disciplines, divisions, departments, ministries, and functional lines. These types of separations are products of the traditional scientific paradigm that investigates phenomena and organizes production by continually dividing into parts. GANs, in contrast, aim for a holistic paradigm that brings all the parts together in their particular issue arena. They are not grounded in the perspective that we should do away with the organizational structures that result from the traditional scientific paradigm, but rather in the view that there is a need for organizations (GANs) that create perspectives of "the whole" and spur the parts to be accountable to it; this is key to address the sustainable development challenge.

The other public good need GANs are addressing is the creation of global issue arenas. This means they are fully engaged in addressing governance gaps that result from an international world wherein the nation-state is the largest governing unit that is directly accountable to citizens. However, we are increasingly global citizens with global concerns and visions, and issues that are increasingly global in nature. Organizationally, we do not have adequate ways to respond to this change. The record of IGOs in which national interests dominate and no one speaks for the whole suggests their abilities fall far short of the need to craft global responses. The challenges faced by European Union indicate that the likelihood of a new global federated state emerging is a very distant prospect at best. In this global governance gap, GANs are developing as new vehicles for citizen participation, at least at the organizational level.

Given their multi-stakeholder structure, GANs are unencumbered by the rules and etiquettes that burden the IGO processes, the political correctness that can paralyze civil society, or the bottom-line focus of business that can result in painful destruction in the midst of production of questionable value. GANs are *not* focused on a grand democratic project in the institutional sense of a one-person-one-vote. However, to work successfully, GANs are totally dependent on generating trust and legitimacy, which requires them to develop global mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and participation. This means that issues of voice and representation are closely connected with the substantive issues of GANs' focus. GANs have very complicated and often multi-layered formal and informal rules of engagement, especially when it comes to voting for, representing, or creating legitimacy for the rules.

Despite the public purpose focus of a GAN's overarching sustainable development and global governance mission, GANs must be understood as having a second level of outcomes. This mission must encompass the individual objectives of organizations that participate in it. For example, the corporation Unilever participates in the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) not only to develop *sustainable* fisheries, but also to develop ones that will also be *profitable* for it. Success in a GAN is determined by collective commitment both to the *over-arching goal* and to *supporting each other to reach at least some of the individual objectives*. This emphasizes the importance of clearly articulating these two different sets of goals and ensuring collective commitment to them.

Definitional Characteristic 3: A Systemic Boundary-Spanner Strategy

GANs represent a strategy to address a critical issue by bringing together the stakeholders in an issue to define that problem/issue, develop a solution, and implement it. "Systemic" means a group of independent but interrelated elements comprising a whole. GANs are creating global systems to address particular issues. This involves developing global ways for organizations and people who are working in a "problem domain" to "sense" the domain's direction in terms of actions to address the problem, and to determine their role in giving and supporting the direction.

GANs set boundary definitions for these domains to decide who is "in" and who is "out," and the boundaries can shift as the GAN develops. For example, the Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10) was originally narrowly conceived as a multi-stakeholder initiative to support a particular methodology developed by The Access Initiative (TAI) for ensuring that people have a voice in the decisions that affect their environment and communities. However, PP10 concluded that its real value would be as a much broader umbrella network for stakeholders using various methodologies to realize the objective – which meant enlarging participation to include those working with the Aarhus Convention. Similarly there is talk within the Forest Stewardship Council about creating mechanisms to involve stakeholders beyond its three chambers of business, environmental NGOs, and social NGOs.

Perhaps the most obvious boundaries GANs' system-building work needs to span are diverse interests, organizations, and nations. But there are several other types of important boundaries that GANs span. They are all bridging North/South (developed/undeveloped) country divides – sometimes reflecting the traditional donor/recipient one, but increasingly having a sense of true "globalness," with more peer-like relationships. Another classic divide spanned is rich/poor at all

levels – individual, group, organizational, organizational sector (business-government-civil society), country, and region. Wealthy corporations with substantial resources work side-by-side with NGOs in many GANs. One study demonstrated the importance of bridging the divides between policy-makers (usually governments and international NGOs), techno-experts (scientists, business people, and engineers), funders (foundations and donor agencies), and communities (local activists and community members).^{xiii} And of course being global, GANs also aim to span cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences, and the diverse values embedded in these. GANs’ success also hinges on being successful as “global/local” boundary spanners.

In many ways, GANs are the first truly global assemblies. And unlike some traditional global boundary spanners that depend on creating strong collective identities (e.g., religious organizations), at least as important for GANs is the ability to preserve the distinct identities. If people coming from the diverse perspectives cannot successfully articulate their identities and represent them, and mobilize the resources of their stakeholder group, their value to the GAN will be lost.

Definitional Characteristic 4: A Change Agent Role

This is perhaps the most complicated of the attributes. It is difficult to explain and to assess. It results in part from the need to innovate in order to move “stuck” and large-scale issues. It also results from GANs’ boundary-spanning role, which requires capacity to handle great diversity and manage paradoxical interests. Participants must be inspired to change their behavior to address the key issue of concern, commit human and other resources, and develop a common good vision that will include success for them as well.

The very founding of a GAN indicates that people concluded change was needed in an approach to global-scale issue. However, it is also important to distinguish between types of change in terms of “depth.” Societal learning and change theory suggests that if key subsystems of all of society are being brought together, the potential for change is much deeper.^{xiv} The key subsystems are the social subsystem represented by community-based organizations (NGOs, religious, labor), the economic subsystem led by business, and the political subsystem represented by governments and their agencies. Of course, achieving global change is particularly challenging because of the need to bring together the different geographic and organizational levels, as well.

Change has been classified as being of three types (Table 1). Clarity about the type being pursued is critical because the types require different strategies, methodologies, and tools. First order change is doing more of the same. The very formation of a GAN indicates that change of at least the second order is being promoted because it represents doing something in a very different way. Second order change involves redefining the rules of the game. For example, the Global Fund is basically a mechanism for funders to pool their resources and take a more systemic and global perspective to improve coordination and effectiveness (first order change would be when one funder would simply expand the budget). But the funding mechanism as a key driver has not changed and the approach can basically be described as one of “reform” under the direction of stakeholders, who by and large maintain their traditional power relationships.

Table 1.
Types of Change in Problem-Solving Initiatives^{xv}

Criteria	First Order Change	Second Order Change	Third Order Change
Desired outcome	"More (or less) of the same"	Reform	Transformation
Purpose	To improve the performance of the established system	To change the system to address shortcomings and respond to the needs of stakeholders	To proactively address problems and seize opportunities from a whole-system perspective
Participation	Replicates the established decision-making group and power relationships	Brings relevant stakeholders into the problem-solving conversation in ways that enable them to influence the decision-making process	Creates a microcosm of the problem system, with all participants coming in on an equal footing as issue owners and decision makers
Process	Confirms existing rules; preserves the established power structure and relationships among actors in the system	Opens existing rules to revision; suspends established power relationships; promotes authentic interactions; creates a space for genuine reform of the system	Creates a microcosm of the problem system, with all participants coming in on an equal footing as issue owners and decision makers
Role of government	Within current polices and rules/laws	Requires new policies and rules that can be developed with leadership of government	Requires fundamental shift in respective roles of government, business, and civil society, and an extra-governmental process

Third order change involves basic power realignments, re-visioning of how organizations and people relate to one another, and developing fundamental change in relationships and organizational boundaries and roles. Third order change addresses "systemic barriers." Often non-systemic barriers (e.g., money) come up as blocks to talking about more fundamental change challenges. For example, in the Global Fund the funders are still in a privileged decision-making role. Systemic change is about changing norms, practices, organizational structures, and decision-making processes. The Forest Stewardship Council, for example, represents a third order innovation because it is based on the premise that business, environmentalists, and social activists must find a very different way of operating (collaboratively). These distinctions are further elaborated in Table 1.

The implication for GANs is that to be successful third order change agents they must be open to engaging all stakeholders as peers – in contrast with IGOs whose membership is restricted to governments, and business, and NGO networks that have similar restrictions. However, not all GANs are technically owned by all three sectors. The Global Compact, for example, is technically owned by the United Nations, and the Microcredit Summit by an NGO. Although most GANs include as owners at least two organizational sectors, they do not always include all three. For example, the Forest Stewardship Council is formally a business-NGO initiative, and IUCN an NGO-government network. However, in most cases (including the Global Compact,

FSC, and IUCN) a sense of co-ownership of all three sectors is increasingly reflected in the way they actually work, and the trend is toward reflecting this in formal organizational structures.

Microcredit Summit Campaign Change Actions

1. Overcoming the “birds’ eye view of poverty”: From most people’s perspective, “everybody is poor” and there is not much distinction – which means there is not sufficient focus on the poorest.
2. Creating a system of accountability: Bureaucracies and specialists do not want to be held accountable or measured 1-10 years from now.
3. Promoting radical aspirations: Most development agencies do not even consider “ending poverty” as a goal. They just think about what they have to do that day, etc.
4. Challenging the Status Quo: Donor agencies become irritated by a continual focus on the poorest. U.S. legislation to focus on the poorest was initially opposed by 18 of 21 U.S.-based microfinance groups working overseas.
5. Maintaining some stealth: One does not want the system studying what one is doing if working on systemic change because the system would resist it.
6. Getting to systemic barriers of poverty, rather than thinking of “money” as the only critical barrier.
7. Maintaining the radical edge: Grameen Bank Founder Muhammad Yunus said he did not have a strategy, he just kept moving ahead by doing the opposite of banks – lending to the poor and women, providing collateral-free loans, going to villages, and being illiterate-friendly. If a microcredit campaign did not exist to create a distinct community, many microfinance organizations would take on a form similar to traditional banks.
8. Addressing geographic imbalances: 90 percent of the poorest reached by microfinance are in Asia, but proportionately it should be 66 percent in Asia. However, the region is more successful because it is more practitioner-driven, whereas Africa and Latin America are driven more by government and IGO agencies.

Certainly, the “more or less” systemic change agent quality is also reflected in the relative participation and control of the various sectors. For example, although most of the large health care GANs are formally multi-sector, the government sector clearly dominates. This restricts their capacity to be third order change agents. In some GANs, such as GRI, intricate formal representation structures have been created to try to achieve the right balance.

However, there is significant interaction between the three orders of change, and although third order change capacity is a defining characteristic, GANs are very involved in the other change orders as well. For example, first stakeholders go through a third order change process to define a collective vision and then implement it at test sites. Questions of expansion and scaling up then arise. This involves continually expanding the number of stakeholders, who must go through their own third order change process. However, for the GAN as a whole, the challenge is how to implement a defined strategy as first order of change.

Another example is Transparency International working with the OECD to create a convention on corruption, in which it would have an important role in implementation and follow up. This represents third order change in contrast with traditional Secretariat monitoring processes, and reflects an admission by government that it cannot do it all on its own. But the ongoing application is a lower change order of expanding this partnership norm.

The reason the distinction between change orders is important is because they require different strategies and methodologies. First- and second order change, for example, rely heavily on negotiations, mediation, and learning from past experience. Third order change involves visioning, future planning, and experimenting with a much broader range of unknowns.

The basic change theory behind GANs is that multi-stakeholder participatory processes should lead to better policy, norms, and implementation. This often puts GAN leaders in difficult positions because the status quo will find them irritants as they push for change. One GAN leader referred to this as “maintaining sustained antagonism.” GANs must be irritants, - but maintain stakeholders’ engagement.

Definitional Characteristic 5: An Interorganizational Network Structure

Operating at a global level, the role of individuals as participants and members in the networks is very marginal compared with the role of organizations. Transparency International began as a network of individual members and they still have a modest (and diminishing) role. But it quickly shifted to a network where a specific organization is usually accredited as national chapter. In some cases, the distinction between individuals and organizations is finessed. The Global Reporting Initiative, for example, specifies that individuals do *not* represent an organization’s interests, because of concern that this will undermine the needs of “the whole” – but in fact, “Organizational Stakeholders” is a key membership category.

Usually GANs are born of organizations coming together. These can be independent individual organizations or associations of organizations – the GAN then being a network that includes networks. But GANs’ work involves anointing, strengthening, or even creating its constituent organizations or networks. For example, The Access Initiative organizes groups of NGOs (usually three) in a specific country to form a local TAI-(country name) network.

The early stage of development of GANs as a new type of organization is reflected in the great innovation and variety of governance structures. Although some variety is undoubtedly the product of personal idiosyncrasies and differences in issues, variation also reflects experimentation. Given the dictum that structure should follow strategy, this variety also reflects experiments with different strategies and theories of change.

The core values that influence structure are accountability, transparency, and equitability. Subserving to these are the three concepts of membership, participation, and representation. GANs’ boundary-spanning and global characteristics mean a great diversity of organizations must be engaged – organizations that operate with a diversity of decision-making processes. People who hold dear the traditional equation of democracy as a one-person-one vote system will find many insurmountable challenges to operationalization. However, without mutual trust among stakeholders and commitment to the legitimacy of decision-making processes, a GAN will fail.

This latter point is particularly evident with the roles of “participation” and “membership” – both are associated with obligations and rights, but the latter with formal “rights” to vote in elections for board members. In all GANs, membership is primarily associated with “organizations” or with a regional unit (e.g., a national chapter). Some organizations see mass membership as a

particularly important strategy (Table 2). For example, the Youth Employment and Microcredit Summit campaigns see increasing participation as a measure of success. These types of organizations openly promote participation and have hundreds participating organizations.

Table 2
Membership Strategy Types

Mass Member	Critical Conditions	Closed
8	5	6

Table 3
GAN Control Sectors

NGO	IGO	NGO/Biz	GNO/IGO	All
5	6	6	1	1

Five of the GANs surveyed have quite significant requirements for membership. Any company joining the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) must agree to apply the ETI code of conduct to its global supply chains; to become a member of PP10 requires making specific and significant commitments to support its goals.

For a third category, membership is confined to a small group. For example, NGOs maintain control of Social Accountability International and the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, The Marine Stewardship Council has a self-perpetuating board, and donors maintain control of financing GANs.

In some cases local/regional structures have a mass member strategy where the global structure is closed, as with the Global Compact and Youth Employment Summit. In both these examples, the formal accountability between the two is tenuous.

This all leads to the question of control described in Table 3 and issues of stakeholder representation. Members are often grouped into categories on the basis of (1) geography and/or (2) stakeholder group. Nine of those surveyed formally aim for representation by the latter method. The Microcredit Summit Campaign has 15 “Councils,” the Marine Stewardship Council has eight “issue groups” in two categories, and the World Water Council has five “colleges” (see Appendix B).

A View of the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development

It is no longer about *who* they represents (they do not claim to represent anybody) or *who they side with*. They are viewed as a trusted “idealist” institution by trade policy knowledge communities with a utopian aim that serves as a conscience of the trade system. They achieved this status by playing the role of honest broker and convener for years, as well as by being a provider of alternative and integrative problem-solving opportunities that contributed to its long-term perspective and SD vision.

These multi-stakeholder bodies can be advisory or truly in control. One stakeholder group often holds actual control of the GAN. This is done through legal control, such as making the GAN a “project” of an NGO or IGO. Sometimes this is done through the number of people from specific interest groups on the board, which is sometimes clearly swayed in favor of donor agencies, for example with the Global Fund. Of the groups surveyed, when analyzed by organizational sector, only one (BPD for Water and Sanitation) has a leadership group that formally has all three sectors.

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Although GANs must be innovative, they cannot be cavalier with processes that will give rise to questions by their stakeholders about their legitimacy. To maintain legitimacy, they are in continual dialogue with stakeholders as a critical way to maintain accountability to their mission, to their stakeholders, and between stakeholders. GANs present a new vehicle for accountability across borders that can address problems of intransigent governments. They are pioneering new transparency mechanisms and tend to purposefully err on the sides of inclusiveness of voices, access to information, and participation in decision-making processes.

The Work of GANs

The most basic task of GANs is to put an issue on the global stage. Transparency International made corruption an issue when it was difficult to talk about in part because of complicit IGO involvement. The Youth Employment Summit Campaign has made its issue a global one for governments and other stakeholders. GANs act as global stewards to promote attention and action for their issues.

One way to understand the work of GANs arises from comparing them with the dominant traditional global governance mechanism – IGOs. In Oran Young’s terms, IGOs represent “collective action” strategies because they are the product of government representatives writing rules and then trying to apply them. IGOs come from a constitutional law model. GANs, in contrast, represent a “social action” strategy because they are the product of stakeholders in an issue experimenting to try to develop responses to key issues and then drawing out generalizable knowledge. GANs come from a common law model.

In other words, rather than taking action based on a theoretical description of the way things should work, as IGOs tend to do, GANs are much more practical and focus on development of applied knowledge that is socially embedded with the issue stakeholders. Since the stakeholders collectively develop the “solutions,” they know their role and responsibilities and have agreed upon them. This is very different from knowledge being developed by “experts” who write it up in reports that often do not reflect the system stakeholders’ perspectives. This is why the issue of “enforcement” is so often pointed to as necessary (but usually impossible) in traditional IGO processes. For GANs, it is much less important because the way they do their work builds stakeholder understanding about, and commitment to, the solutions.

For example, the Marine Stewardship Council focuses on specific fisheries and connects stakeholders so they can create collective commitment to a process for managing fisheries. This requires ongoing experimentation. MSC is now leading multi-stakeholder experiments with issues about fishing practices’ impact on bird life. This multi-stakeholder strategy is true even for those GANs (e.g., the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development) that focus on IGO (WTO) rules. ICTSD tries to influence trade policy through multi-stakeholder dialogues, and to build sufficient shared understanding drawn from those experiments, so that a “tipping point” is reached and the formal rules are changed.

The Work of the Forest Stewardship Council

The greatest contribution that FSC makes is to provide a platform for diverse stakeholders to build trust and develop collaborative approaches to forest sustainability.

Therefore, although GANs address a great range of issues, they share commitment to multi-stakeholder learning and change processes. These processes can prove highly complementary with the work of governments and IGOs. The Commission on Sustainable Development recognized this with its promotion of “Type 2” partnerships – envisioning that GANs would provide critical support for implementing international conventions, as TAI/PP10 do. However, to realize this potential requires much more flexible engagement of stakeholders in defining and revising conventions. GANs can have a critical role in sustaining consultative processes with IGO activities, as well.

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Similarly, GANs can develop critical innovations to a stage at which governments can integrate them into their own policies. There are numerous examples of standards developed by Transparency International, the FSC, the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, and others being adopted by governments. The Global Reporting Initiative was faced with government absence – not resistance, but there was “no one home” in terms of the broad-based transparency of corporations. GRI moved to fill the vacuum, and over time, expects the government to codify its work.

One study of Global Public Policy Networks grouped them into three categories based on activities to produce public policy: *negotiating* networks that develop global norms and standards, *coordinating* networks that facilitate joint action strategies, and *implementing* networks that facilitate application of IGO agreements.^{xvi}

This work requires development of two types of activities. One is developing the traditional “expert” and physical science knowledge associated with the issue. But the other, which is less appreciated, concerns development of the necessary social relationships to address the issue. GANs develop the physical science knowledge by developing social relationships to ensure that the technical knowledge is socially embedded and that there is capacity and the necessary commitment to act exist.

Another paper looking at multi-stakeholder partnerships from the perspective of governance and accountability classified them into different categories focusing on: the direct delivery of public services and infrastructure; effectively increasingly large public resource transfers, particularly trans-border; and the co-design, promotion, and stewardship of new rules for market and non-market actors. That study also noted that these distinctions increasingly are converging and creating hybrids.^{xvii}

As agents for global problem-solving, GANs’ activities can be summarized as being five different types (Table 4). Most of the GANs surveyed engage in more than one of these. However, usually one is core to the rationale for bringing stakeholders together and dominates a GAN’s life.

The dominant activity is *global system organizing*. This means creating activities such as meetings, information networks, and shared tasks that bring diverse organizations into increasing contact. This builds the ability of organizations participating in a GAN to work together, as they become more familiar with one another and develop their own relationships. This produces growing coordination and synergies. This in turn leads to new norms, procedures, and rules of varying formality. Of the 19 organizations surveyed, 17 do this type of work.

Table 4
Key Activities

(A GAN usually has more than one strategy) N = 19	
System organizing	17
Learning	11
Shared visioning	12
Measures	9
Financing	4

The two exceptions – BPD for Water and Sanitation and the Ethical Trading Initiative – focus on *learning* activities among a modest number of core stakeholders. “Learning” means research (usually action research), sharing knowledge and information, and capacity building. It also means taking a systems approach to test rules against policy objectives, going back to review rules against outcomes, and then rewriting them as appropriate.

Particularly important is building capacity of participating organizations to effectively address the issue of the GAN. Mature GANs possess technical physical-science knowledge and knowledge about change strategies. At a local level, people see their local organizations are taking action, and do not think of the action as being driven by a foreign one.

For the Fair Labor Association (FLA) in Cambodia, this meant building the capacity of employers, government, and NGOs to do labor inspections. As an organization comprising employers and NGOs who are striving to improve standards, FLA has substantially greater credibility than either one of the sectors could have on its own. FLA catalyzes the process, then steps away.

Shared visioning is an activity closely associated with system organizing, but it is a more categorically directed activity and involves collective planning, dialogue, and consensus-building initiatives, as described earlier for GANs’ change agent role.

For ten of the GANs, *measuring* of one sort or another is a core activity. For the Marine and Forest Stewardship Councils, this means a formal system of certification. For Social Accountability International and Fair Labor Association, monitoring is important. For The Access Initiative, assessing a country’s performance is a key tool for developing change.

Four of the GANs have an important *financing* function. For the Global Fund, GAVI, and GAIN, this is their *raison d’être*; for the Global Water Partnership, financing runs parallel in importance with other activities.

The Required Competencies

As a new type of organization, GANs' development is hindered by insufficient knowledge about how to address critical development challenges and by lack of people with the highly specialized knowledge and skills necessary for their development. Moreover, because of lack of understanding about the distinctive qualities of GANs, knowledge is often drawn from inappropriate sources. For example, an IGO Secretariat is often the mental model for development of a GAN. However, governments and even IGOs are a minority of participants (or are even absent) in most GANs, and a GAN's existence is not tied to intergovernmental conventions and processes. The work of GANs is very different from that of IGOs. Therefore, adopting IGO-type structures and procedures is very inappropriate and will undermine GANs' ability to be agile – a light network rather than a weighty bureaucracy.

Eight capabilities that GANs must possess to be effective and key questions associated with each are described below (Figure 1).

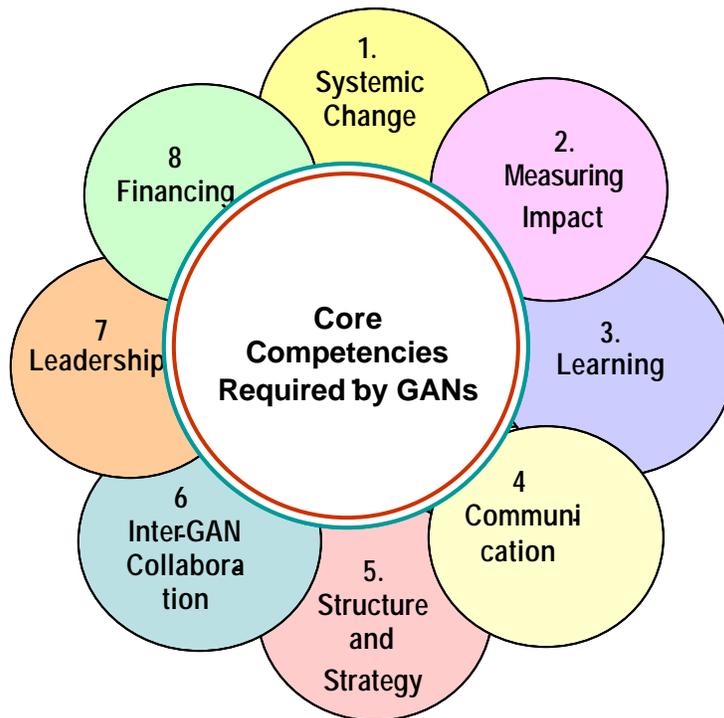


Figure 1. Eight capabilities that GANs must possess.

1. Deep Change

As already described, GANs' missions focus on change and the development of new ways of addressing critical issues. To produce innovative approaches and spread them widely, GANs must be proficient at addressing problems from a whole-system perspective. This involves various types of change and change processes. It demands addressing critical questions, such as - how can GANs' change efforts engage broad numbers of people, realize the depth of change, and sufficiently sustain the change process for the long periods necessary? GAN-Net is co-leading

development of a global community of practice to develop knowledge and capacity in the arena (see www.generativedialogue.org).

2. Measuring Impact

Of all the competencies, this is the one that is most often mentioned by GAN participants as a priority. Measuring impact is a critical activity for effectively reaching objectives - both for internal management and for describing achievements. This activity is well developed in businesses and increasingly in governments and NGOs. But GANs face particularly formidable challenges in developing measurement methodologies for several reasons, including:

- Their goals are relatively long-term - 5 to 20 years are typical time horizons.
- Their goals are hard to define operationally - and they shift as more is learned about the issues addressed and how to affect them.
- Their success depends on “secondary impacts” on widely distributed network partners and multi-sector stakeholders, as well as on the direct influence of core products and services provided to targeted people and organizations.
- Their products are often “intangibles” (e.g., the production of new knowledge, and relationships among stakeholders).
- GAN resources are limited, but the systems they aim to affect are very large.

These challenges suggest that GANs need measurement methodologies that go beyond traditional approaches, while building on their strengths. Developing robust, credible measures is critical to the management and funding of GANs. Measures tailored to the unique aspects of GANs are essential to their development and ongoing renewal as distinctive, network-based organizations. Furthermore, if their success is determined by traditional impact measures, they are likely to evolve into traditional organizations with more limited capacities.

Measuring impact must be connected to the change strategy. For example, the Global Water Partnership has an approach called “Integrated Water Resource Management” that involves bringing sectors together, changing behavior, and in turn producing more changes in behaviors among secondary stakeholders. Stakeholders talking to each other and building understanding of the global impact on water systems as a whole produces better management of resources and better drinking water quality (e.g., the reduction of sickness from waterborne diseases). This in turn means, for example, that more girls will go to school because their parents are less likely to die and because they themselves have fewer health problems. Measuring impact requires a longer term vision (e.g., more girls attending school), but the challenge lies in the fact that GWP is not working with girls, and has to measure the people and tasks with which it works directly in order to lead to that longer term change. The change model has to look progressively and incrementally at change over time.

None of the GANs investigated had an impact measurement methodology that they feel is appropriate. Four approaches were presented as options:

- 1) Traditional impact measurement approaches focus on progress toward long-term goals described in mission statements (leading to identification of the problems listed above).^{xviii}
- 2) A capabilities-based approach with Keystone, which takes the *unit of measure* as the ecosystem around an organization - describes capabilities with respect to specific change challenges, assesses their current strength, and then develops strategies to further strengthen them, as appropriate for the shifting capability needs in its new development phase. Any measurement approach must be able to reflect this shift from early-stage to the more mature-stage capability of broadening and deepening stakeholder engagement (see www.keystonereporting.org).
- 3) A systemic-leverage index approach with the Institute for Strategic Clarity focuses on ongoing measurement of the health of the system the GAN represents. It creates indices measuring health at critical points in the system (e.g., with specific stakeholder groups and geographic regions) (see www.instituteforstrategicclarity.org).
- 4) An Outcome Mapping (OM) methodology developed by the International Centre for Development Research systematizes anecdote collection. A GAN first identifies key people and the desired changes. Then it should identify “progress markers” that describe the logical progression over time and lead to changed behaviors, and use them as a basis for monitoring reflections (see www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26586-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html).

3. Learning

Much of GANs’ work involves development of new knowledge and capacity building. Learning is an issue for individuals, particular stakeholder groups, and the entire network. How do we create effective learning processes and routines to build the needed new knowledge and competencies? How do we record and disseminate effectively across very different language and cultural groups? How can concepts such as “learning organization” and “community of practice” be applied to GANs? How do we create pilots in diverse locations, and yet have them learn from one another?

One project envisioned GANs as communities of practice (CoPs). The local activities are a local CoP, and the GAN as a whole is a CoP of many CoPs.^{xix} This conceptualization introduces a very light structure, but provides guidance to ensure the GANs incorporate a minimal number of common elements throughout their network that are necessary for robust interactions.

4. Communications

GANs have two communication challenges for GANs: one involves using leading technology, and the other involves creating effective and compelling content. The communications competency raises questions such as the following: What new technologies can facilitate global communications and also reduce travel and personnel costs? How do we introduce new technologies? How do we manage multi-lingual environments? How can global surveys be

conducted economically? How do we create effective communications between different parts of our network, rather than having them come through a central channel?

Surprisingly, none of the GANs is very advanced with e-technologies, and none has integrated e-conferencing, for example, into its work processes.

5. Structure and Strategy

This relates to the question of organizational structure described in more detail earlier. The way a GAN is organized should reflect its strategy and encourage both effectiveness and accountability. GANs have developed a range of approaches to governance, planning, and structural challenges. How can strategy be developed so it engages and influences a broad range and large number of stakeholders to create a global system? What are the roles for virtual platforms, global meetings, and new technologies to engage people? What are the leading organizing approaches, when should one be used rather than another, and how can the current limitations of governance models be expanded? How can we further advance understanding about the various types of networks that make up GANs? Such network types include information, knowledge development, projects, social change, and generative change. How can leading tools (e.g., social network analysis, partnership assessment frameworks, and complex systems methodologies) support GANs' development?

6. Inter-GAN Collaboration

This is perhaps the most visionary of the competencies. GANs share important values and ways of working that can make working together rather easy. And because each GAN focuses on a unique issue (e.g., water or corruption), as a whole GANs cover a wide range of issues critical to the world's future. By focusing their energy collectively in a particular location, they can make a substantial contribution to improving lives and the environment. However, this raises issues about how to initiate and maintain such actions.

A project investigated the potential and strategy for developing this competency and found a very strong response from participating GANs.^{xx} Representatives from eight GANs (including people working in the country, plus some regional GAN representatives) quickly identified one-on-one partnerships, a region of the country where they could all collaborate, and four key capacity-building topics they wanted to work on together: (1) measuring impact, (2) deep change strategies, (3) engaging governments, and (4) creating interorganizational synergies.

7. Leadership

Like all organizations, at different stages of development GANs emphasize different types of leadership. However, at all stages, GAN leaders must have dispersed, visionary, collaborative, and entrepreneurial qualities and skills. The traditional solitary leader model will not work. Leadership and initiative must be nurtured among GAN members and staff for GANs to realize their promise. How can these skills be nurtured and developed with the diverse stakeholders and experts that GANs engage? What are cultural challenges of leaders in a global world that values

diversity, and how can these challenges be addressed? How can ambiguity, dilemmas, and paradoxes inherent in much of GANs' work be addressed while maintaining visionary direction?

A GAN Leader on Leadership

"Different stages of GANs need different types of leadership, and so do different types of GANs. Initial stage needs inspiration (heroic), but later needs implementation (technical)...an inspirational leader might be compromising the organization's mission by staying inspirational."

There is ongoing tension between the need for charismatic and inspiration leadership and the need for a leader who can be collaborative, master technical issues, and is skilled in exercising leadership using distance communications technologies. Moreover, leaders must be skilled in working with business, government, and civil society. GANs' global role also raises the issue of the importance of leaders representing global diversity and working experience. Leaders participating in the project noted the lack of women, Southern, and non-white participants. The diversity of demands and GANs' collaborative logic raise issues about whether traditional models with one person identified as leader should be followed, or whether "co-directors" should be developed.

8. Financing

Traditional business is funded by profits, government by taxes, and NGOs by donations. GANs are combining all these strategies to build an economic model appropriate for their multi-stakeholder quality. However, how to do this well is still unclear. Moreover, how to maneuver as global organizations in a world where most funding is at best regional also creates challenges. And what models are emerging for financing local GAN activity versus global activity? How can funders' understanding of the value of developing GANs as networks be enhanced?

The Developmental Process of GANs

One ongoing question for GANs is whether they are temporary or permanent fixtures of the global organizational landscape. There is almost universal consensus that as a *type* of organization they will be a permanent fixture. The need to engage a broad range of stakeholders to address critical global issues is well recognized. However, some individual GANs may come and go while other individual ones may be permanent. There are two reasons some disappear. One is that the issue they have focused on has been addressed, or the ongoing work has been institutionalized with other organizations (e.g., governments integrating GANs’ activities into their own). This reason seems relatively unlikely given the history of GANs to date: the networks and knowledge they build are so valuable that they have an ongoing role in global issues and they tend to shift their focus to new issues related to their original mission.

The other reason a GAN can disappear is that it has not successfully addressed a critical development challenge. Looking at the history of GANs – the average age of the 19 surveyed is 8 years and the oldest is 15 years old – three four developmental stages with distinct challenges can be discerned.

Stage 1: *Initiating*

The GANs have three types of initiating paths. One emphasizes a period of two to three years of consultation and mulling over by various stakeholders for an issue. The FSC had three years of discussions among timber users, traders, and environmental and human rights organizations who had identified the need for an honest and credible system for identifying well-managed forests and products made from them.

A second group of GANs arises out of the imagination of one or a couple of organizations. For example, the Youth Employment Summit is the product of the Education Development Corporation, and WWF and Unilever birthed the MSC. When one organization has a leading founding role, the GAN often starts as a “project” or “program.” For example, the Microcredit Summit Campaign is still legally a project of an NGO called Results Education Fund, and the Global Compact remains structurally attached to the United Nations Secretary General’s office. Transparency International, on the other hand, was very much the work of an individual, Peter Eigen.

Table 5
Lead GAN Founding Sector

Gvt/IGO(s)	NGO(s)	NGO(s)/ Business(es)	Other
7	7	3	2

The third path can occur when there is already a relatively well-developed “global space” for the participants. For example, global conferences on the topic of water issues were organized from time to time, which led to the realization that more

formal and permanent organizational arrangements would be valuable. This led to the formation of the Global Water Partnership and the World Water Council.

Both governments and NGOs are dominant initiators of GANs (Table 5). Government is clearly dominant with health issues and when very large sums of money are involved. NGOs are more dominant as founders with environmental and social concerns and when the need is to mobilize widespread grassroots action. The three NGO/business-initiated GANs are all also in the sustainable development arena.

At this stage, one critical challenge is to inspire participation of a sufficiently representative group of organizations from among all the stakeholders, with a sufficiently broad range of views, so that it can be seen as “legitimate.” However, the size must also be sufficiently small that the new GAN does not become overwhelmed with coordinating among the stakeholders. It helps, of course, if stakeholders are already familiar with one another. The founding group will tend to be small if stakeholders do not have a history of working together (e.g., as with the Marine Stewardship Council), and larger if they do, as with the Global Water Partnership and World Water Council.

To attract diverse stakeholders, the initial definition of “the problem” must be broad enough to encompass a wide variety of views and yet narrow enough to provide focus. At this stage, the initial discussions can be likened to a focus group – the goal is to identify the breadth of views about an issue and the initial definition of the stakeholders.

Another challenge at this stage is to avoid paralysis with questions about the permanent structure of the GAN, and to begin “doing things” together to address the issue of concern. The way a GAN is organized should arise out of the experiences of how to do the work. However, people often find the ambiguity of this approach difficult and want to build a structure based on theories about how it *ought* to be. Such theories can often lead to an overly complicated and burdensome structure that actually inhibits the way the work gets done. This can be seen in some of the very elaborate stakeholder groupings and voting processes in GANs.

A third initiating challenge is to mobilize the resources necessary to go through the expensive and time-consuming process of consultations and collective discussions. A founding stage requires participation of very senior people from stakeholder organizations, and their time is a scarce commodity. Developing a GAN cannot work as simply an “add-on” to a full-time job. The GAN must present a way for the participants to fulfill their core responsibilities so participants’ organizations understand the importance of spending time on GAN development. Typically, at this stage funding comes from foundations, donor agencies, and the founding organizations (which usually donate staff time and travel costs). One key challenge is to ensure global and sectoral representation, which usually means providing funds for at least travel for Southern NGOs.

Particularly problematic for GANs throughout their development, if they are not founded by governments), is the effective engagement of governments and IGOs. Governments tend to have difficulty working in peer-like relationships with businesses and NGOs, and accept that although they have a critical role of legal rule formation and enforcement, they cannot do the job on their own. The continuing mental model for governments is that they control and direct, rather than collaborate and co-create. Businesses and NGOs, although often portrayed as adversaries, are much more used to working in collaborative and partnership relationships and find working

together easier. Where government has a role, it is usually dominant and others are expected to accept a subordinate relationship (e.g., the Global Compact and the global health initiatives). There are several notable examples where governments were expressly not invited to participate formally, such as with the Global Reporting Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council.

Stage 2: Defining the “Problem” and “Solution”

The issues that GANs are addressing are complex global ones. Typically, individual founders think they understand the problem, but initial discussions invariably disclose an unsuspected breadth of perspectives. The stakeholders forming the GAN must have a shared understanding of the problem. Developing this shared understanding among a small core group of diverse founders is a key developmental step – the understanding will continue to grow throughout the GANs’ life, but an initial shared understanding must be developed with founders.

This task of problem definition is wrapped up with “putting the issue on the global and local agendas.” The process of developing a shared understanding involves raising the issue with organizations around the world - creating a global discussion about the topic and its relevance to diverse stakeholders. The Youth Employment Summit raised its issue globally and increased attention to the huge youth population bulge of Southern countries.

A key implicit strategy in GANs’ founding is to create multi-stakeholder solutions. However, how to structure the stakeholders’ working relationships (e.g., issues of board structure, relationships between constituencies, ensuring global to local integration) all take significant time to address. During this stage, there is a relatively small founding group of stakeholders who lead the activity. In most cases, stakeholders collectively explore their diverse perspectives and design their organizational structure over a period of about five years. This stage provides important lessons about how to structure the GAN, drawn from doing the work together.

Another task is developing ideas about how diverse stakeholders can work together to address the problem. Usually this begins with a focus on a physical technology solution – a solution that focuses on a definable process of learning, capacity development, and measurement. This very often means case studies, dissemination of a particular technological approach (e.g., microcredit), and assessment-based processes. These processes include construction of indices (Transparency International); measurement frameworks (Global Reporting Initiative); monitoring (Fair Labor Association, Social Accountability International); certification processes (Marine and Forest Stewardship Councils); and financing mechanisms (the large health GANs, such as the Global Fund and the Global Alliances for Improved Nutrition and for Vaccines and Immunization).

These physical technology solutions are largely theoretical at the beginning of this stage. The theories are transformed into a series of experiments and actions, to test how they can be applied. This means finding beta sites with organizations that are willing to be involved in the development, and creating an initial network.

These physical technology solutions are not the most innovative aspects of GANs. More innovative is the global application and social technology behind GANs - the idea that stakeholders in an issue, who are often traditionally adversarial, should get together globally to

develop the solution to a critical common good issue. This contrasts with traditional approaches that place government at the center for this activity. In fact, government is often not even directly involved or plays a modest role (e.g., the Marine and Forest Stewardship Councils, the Ethical and Global Reporting Initiatives, and Social Accountability International).

At this stage, one challenge is to avoid jumping “to the solution” too quickly and being impatient with the dialogue necessary to really hear and comprehend various viewpoints. This means, at this stage, skilled facilitators who can work well cross-culturally are particularly important. Too often people do not appreciate the challenges of working across sectors, languages, and ethnicities, and hire support staff who are like them or who only have experience in one sector.

Another challenge is to have enough “mass” to actually get the key issue on the global stage. Participants may discover that they have included too narrow a perspective about a problem to meaningfully engage the number of stakeholders necessary. They may end up being seen as a NGO caucus or as a particularly narrow geographic (e.g., European, American) group.

Also, a GAN at this stage can fail if it is dominated by linear thinking and details. The process of problem definition is an iterative one that is wrapped up with experiments about the definition of the solution. Of course the GRI began with a broad understanding that something was needed to harmonize and promote triple-bottom-line accounting globally, but the current concept of “guidelines” only developed out of numerous discussions and today there continue to be new versions. The Global Water Partnership founders were interested in integrated water resource management (IWRM) as a “solution,” but the meaning of IWRM in diverse settings and creating a shared meaning has have been a major part of GWP’s work.

Another danger at this stage is a desire to be “global” too quickly. People may be too action oriented and become impatient with the need for beta-site development to test and refine “solutions,” and become over-stretched geographically. This over-stretch will sap resources because of the cost of travel and meetings, and the time necessary for communications and holding the network together.

Stage 3: *Developing the Broader Change Infrastructure*

The average GAN is somewhere in this stage. Some (e.g., BPD for Water and Sanitation and the Ethical Trading Initiative) are of an age that would suggest they should be in this stage, but they are still working with an initial learning set of activities. They have not adopted the broad “system-organizing” agenda that characterizes this stage, and it is not apparent to them that a GAN must pass into this stage.

At this stage, solutions have been tested and the challenge is scaling up. A report on the Global Compact as it entered this stage pointed out that a substantial number of “national networks” had arisen as an under-recognized resource, and one focus in this new stage is to further develop the network with more countries. For the Global Reporting Initiative the key unit is corporations rather than nations, and it focuses very much on the number of corporations using its framework.

However, there are two developments at this stage that would not have been anticipated by many GAN founders. One involves scaling up by scaling out – broadening of the core solution in ways

that were not obvious to the founders. For example, the Forest Stewardship Council is now developing the concept of certified watersheds. Transparency International became adept at supporting its national chapters to develop legal infrastructure, and has succeeded in institutionalizing its concerns with global organizations (e.g., the OECD, which now has an anti-corruption convention).

The second development is the shift from a focus on physical technical solutions to a social solution focus. Typically, early GAN leaders come with physical science backgrounds (e.g., medical doctors and forestry, labor, environmental science, and measurement specialists). At this third stage of development, GANs must build their managerial, network, and change development competencies. The chores are not development of the technical solutions (although these continue to be refined), but seeing their use and application on a grand scale.

This social technology orientation is a critical and difficult shift for GANs. It means shifting focus from refining assessment approaches and promoting “fixes” (e.g., microcredit and integrated water resource management) to taking learning processes to a deeper level that can realize significant systemic societal change. The challenges GANs are facing are not simply about what we are doing in the world; they are also about how we *are* in the world as individuals, organizations, nations, and global society.

The networks must become more decentralized if they are to reflect their empowerment missions and maintain their agility. They must learn to communicate between the parts (e.g., national chapters, participant organizations), rather than having a centralized mindset of working through the global secretariat. GANs are leaders in moving from the twentieth century world, where organizations were the dominant unit (e.g., in the form of governments, corporations, and community-based ones) to a world in which networks are the key organizing logic.

With this comes the challenge of being both local and global – “glocal.” A number of innovations are emerging to try rather than develop traditional hierarchies with either the local or global “in charge.” Most of the GANs are to a remarkable extent self-organizing and give real meaning to the concept of “subsidiarity.” Stakeholder groups and regional/national units (e.g., chapters, country coordinating mechanisms, regional partnerships) are almost always self-governing, with minimal accountability structures upward.

At this stage, when GANs start emphasizing the social organizing and change technologies, and connecting and developing the strategies and competencies in this field, they have significantly broadened their problem definition and concept of solutions. One clear challenge at this stage is to categorically develop the needed social technology skills. Founders, being focused on a physical science solution, can become overly fixated on refinement of the particular tool (e.g., an assessment methodology). They may forget that the goal is not a super-accurate methodology, but real change. Usually, being physical learners, founders are uncomfortable with such social technologies as social network analysis, deep change processes, network dynamics, and systems of accountability. A new skill set needs to be developed, and this means a comparative loss of status for those who thrive with physical science.

Perhaps the most obvious challenge at this stage is managing stakeholder groups that are at different stages of development. With the oldest participating organizations, the GAN must

generate activity that is shifting into the social change emphasis, while at the same time the GAN must bring in new participants who will focus on the physical science activity. The mix will become increasingly complex as the GAN continues to expand.

By this time the initial funders are often tiring of providing support, and one key challenge at this stage is for a GAN to develop an economic model of sustainability. So far, there is no easy solution to this challenge, but the answer lies undoubtedly in two directions. One is to creatively integrate the traditional donation-funding of civil society, profit-based funding of business, and taxation-based funding of government. The other is to push these funding strategies into new directions. For example, this year for the first time, 12 national governments agreed to place a fee on international travel to support international development.

Also at this stage the founders may have trouble letting go. At this stage, the network grows substantially in scale and the old familiar ways of working with a relatively small group must change in favor of more institutionalized and formal accountability and transparency processes. Otherwise, the GAN will be seen as a “clique,” others will find entry difficult, and the GAN will be unable to attract new participants.

Table 6
Development Stages and Activities

Initiation	Problem/Solution Definition	Infrastructure Development	Realizing the Potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visioning • Convening • Identifying leadership stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining the problem • Piloting a core physical technology solution • Building initial centralized network piloting structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadening application of the physical technology solution • Deepening understanding of the problem and social technology solutions • Increasing network membership and decentralizing structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a global system • Enhancing legitimacy • Creating inter-GAN connections • Creating global action norms

Stage 4: Realizing the Potential

As a new type of organization, probably none of the GANs has reached its full potential. And as a group, they have hardly started to interact, so their collective impact on the global scene has not yet been felt. However, a few of the GANs appear to be moving into a more advanced developmental stage 4. Their experiences, conversations with executive officers in this project, and data from other projects suggest some outlines for GANs' potential 10 to 15 years from now. The following description is based on the hypothesis that GANs *do* continue to develop and grow – and, of course, many reasons they may not are outlined as challenges to this stage of development.

Fifteen years from now, a much stronger sense of global citizenship will likely be shared worldwide, as a complement to our particular ethnic, linguistic, and national identities. When people look back at the rise of global citizenship, GANs will likely have played an important role. They are stimulating actions that reflect global and local concerns, and thereby becoming critical globalizing and integrating agents of diverse viewpoints and resources. We will shift from an *international* organizing framework to a much more global one.

One image of the future of a GAN is as a global membrane that will attract organizations around the world that are working on a particular issue. Reluctant participants will be caught up and find themselves working within systems structured by GANs. A forest company, for example, may not participate directly in the Forest Stewardship Council, but it will find itself working with a market and regulatory framework that are heavily influenced by the FSC. Within this model, with regard to particular issues, GANs will be robust global systems of accountability, knowledge development and sharing, and governance, offering open and easy access to others. They will be sensing and guiding mechanisms for identifying emergent opportunities and challenges regarding their issues, and for developing responses.

GANs-as-global-membranes will support resource transfers, production of public goods and services, co-creation of rules to address global inequities, wealth development, and effective governance. Creating “alignment” within their issue system is a key task – they will be negotiators, arbitrators, and change agents skilled at smoothing the connections between diverse interests of their particular issue system. They have the ability to do this without requiring homogenization because they are agents that support diversity within globalization with an emphasis on subsidiarity. GANs are known for providing a trust and reputation network that facilitates the flow of knowledge and resources with low transaction costs.

We will undoubtedly have many more GANs in specialized issue areas, as globalization heightens concerns about inequity and poverty, and mounting environmental pressures increase the demand for globally coherent and large-scale action. The era in which nation-states were seen as solely responsible for issues of peace and security, for example, will likely be bypassed by strategies to bring together stakeholders to collaboratively address tensions, as can be seen with the recent founding of the Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict. Disaster relief systems that are arising in response to increasing climate variation will be increasingly integrated into systems with dense ties between all actors, in contrast with the traditional response systems of government and their contractual relationships with NGOs. In the field of

international finance, new collaborative mechanisms will build on recent activities (e.g., the Equator Principles).

GANs will be weaving new global issue systems of accountability. As diverse actors work collaboratively in a GAN, they increase their interdependence and understanding of the global whole. Traditional hierarchical organizations operating locally and globally will find participation in GANs a highly compelling strategy for realizing their individual objectives. However, although they will find great rewards from participating from the inside, they will also find participation requires increased sharing of information, transparency, and accommodation of diverse goals.

Today's GANs are still struggling to be "global." The challenge has many dimensions – geographic, cultural, "glocal," linguistic, and contextual issues of the problem they are addressing. When they are successful, they will reflect Friedman's hypothesis that "the world is flat" with fluid connections between the various nodes.^{xxi} The connections will be particularly robust in four different ways. One is interpersonal – people will find the networks rich sources of personal relationships in which traditional connections will be less driven by hierarchy (which will continue to exist within organizations) than by shared interests. A second level of connections will be local to local – people working on an issue in a community or organization on one part of the planet will easily connect with people elsewhere in the network. There will be similarly robust connections at regional and global levels. All will be facilitated by a network logic that will ease flows of information, resource exchanges, and action between the levels.

As a group, GANs will have developed many inter-GAN contacts that build on ones of today (e.g., between the GRI and Global Compact). The Youth Employment Summit and IUCN will find shared interests in developing youth employment initiatives with an environmental orientation. The Marine Stewardship Council and the Microcredit Summit will find shared interests in developing sustainable livelihoods for small fishers. The one-on-one exchanges will be facilitated by the fact that the GANs have a common organizing logic and value set. These will help many GANs work together more ambitiously at the regional and global levels. What at one time were numerous unassociated networks will increasingly become collective global governance forums in which the global social contract will be in ongoing development and implementation. It will function not as a set of distinct directives from the top down, but as a fluid system addressing problems and opportunities.

Gradually, the myriad of certification processes and voluntary regulations will become a collaboratively developed system with a few clear principles and easily accessed interpretations that reflect environmental, social, and economic concerns. With increased alignment among stakeholders within an issue system, GANs will be dealing with the challenge of alignment between issue systems and distribution of resources.

As a group, fifteen years from now, GANs could well be the critical mechanisms for addressing global governance gaps of participation, ethics, communications, and implementation. Today, the Forest Stewardship Council is the closest we have to the World Ministry of Forests; the Global Water Partnership and World Water Councils have a similar role with water. Collectively, the large-scale health GANs may be seen functioning with the World Health

Organization and governments as key stakeholders rather than controllers. Stakeholders in an issue system will know how to easily participate directly in the appropriate GAN.

Another benefit of GANs collectively interacting is that they can learn much more quickly from a broader range of experience. By working together, they will much more cost-effectively develop the new knowledge and innovations needed for their development. And by having an identity as a community, they will develop and make legitimate their unique potential.

Of course, some of today's GANs will fail to address early developmental stage challenges and close their doors. Others may be wrapped up when they consider their mission accomplished. Those that want to make stage 4 a reality will face four particular challenges.

Impacting the *Global Issue System*

Up to this stage, GANs are basically prototyping, planning, and building infrastructure for change. Transparency International and its chapters have developed national legal frameworks and international agreements designed to realize change. The Global Reporting Initiative has developed a framework for corporate reporting standards and a system for its propagation. Social Accountability International and the Fair Labor Association have developed monitoring processes, knowledge, and relationships that may be framed as being at the advanced "pilot project" level to address concerns about labor standards that have produced strategic, intellectual, and social frameworks. And these GANs are all able to point to anecdotal impacts. However, they increasingly realize they do not have the tools to measure their global systemic impact - and they likely are just now achieving the stage in which this impact can be significant.

Imperfections are often overlooked if a strategy works. GANs are a very elaborate strategy that demands patience and resources, and they still lack even a good system for measuring their impact, describing their value, and guiding their priorities and direction. At stage 4, they must be able to develop such a global system as well as their competencies in the other arenas, have substantial impact on their issue, and demonstrate positive trends.

At this stage, the real challenge is to reach scale and not simply be an interesting experiment, but to become the "go to" place for working on the GANs' issue. This means overcoming potential competitors – the most successful and GAN-like way of doing this is to incorporate them. The GAN must be seen to include "leaders" in various stakeholder arenas, both globally and locally. By this stage, they must have a sufficient mass of participation that they have overcome the possibility of being marginalized or ignored.

Governments have an important role in GANs' stage 4 scaling-up success. By then, GANs should be able to point to "success" where their innovations in regulations or service delivery are integrated into the functioning of national and international governmental organizations. When governments and a GAN work together well, the impact can be substantial. For example, the Microcredit Summit Campaign credits legislation that the U.S. government passed - as making a critical contribution to shifting its global funding focus to the poorest with a disciplined measurement framework. However, more common are stories in which governments perceived GANs as competitors. Undoubtedly, in some cases, some government functions can be better

managed by GAN affiliates, but within a GAN, governments retain their clear authority rooted in the ability to pass and enforce laws.

A more subtle problem occurs when governmental organizations take advantage of GANs without providing them any resources. For example, there are several examples of GANs developing certification and assessment programs that governments tout as their own while refusing to support the GANs in any way. And, of course, the reverse problem occurs when a government becomes involved with a GAN and wants to control it. The value of a GAN is lost if it simply becomes another intergovernmental organization.

The governmental challenge has particular cultural and national aspects. GANs are notably most successful in countries in which democracy is most developed and multi-stakeholder processes valued. This means that some operations in some arenas (e.g., Russia) are problematic, and other operations are even more so in countries (e.g., China and Arab nations) where NGOs are very weak and government seeks to control society much more broadly. By stage 4, GANs must begin to find ways around these problems if they are to have a global voice.

Enhancing Legitimacy

Of course, substantial legitimacy comes with having impact. However, because GANs use participatory processes, legitimacy also requires creating systems of accountability and effective governance mechanisms. As a GAN expands the number of participants in stage 4, it faces substantially increased coordinating challenges. To retain agility and avoid simply adding to earlier structures based on assumptions of fewer participants, GANs at this stage should review their governance structure and even their issue definition.

The issue definition may involve renewal of mission, strategy, or goals. For example, the Microcredit Summit recently concluded it will reach its original goals in 2006. It retained its poverty mission and microcredit strategy, but identified two new 10-year goals to provide renewed focus. The Forest Stewardship Council is currently contemplating a shift in its governance structure because it wants to engage a broader number of stakeholders than those originally envisioned – a shift needed if it is to truly be *the* global system in forest sustainability.

Accountability and governance at this stage become even more important because new mechanisms for generating trust must be developed. The relatively close relationships people enjoyed in a GAN before it became a truly global system and that were the basis for trust will be increasingly difficult to maintain. Transparency International is experiencing this now as it pays more attention to accreditation processes for its system of national chapters.

Strengthening the legitimacy of GANs requires ensuring people see themselves as active participants in GANs, rather than simply consumers of its activities. Further development of stakeholder engagement mechanisms is required so GANs' value chain truly reaches to the local level. More formal stakeholder caucuses supported by new communications technology would build further support processes for GANs. The trend toward self-organizing national units for GANs suggests stakeholder groups need to take leadership for organizing these. Most GANs have some form of stakeholder group definition, and these distinctions will likely grow in number and activity. If the activity of stakeholder groups diminishes, it is likely a signal the

GAN is losing touch with its grassroots or not performing activities that are valued and relevant for the stakeholders. In voluntary associations such as GANs, stakeholders do not usually rebel, they just fade away – and with them, legitimacy.

Increased participation must occur, while avoiding cooptation by any particular group and balance achieved between being a movement and being an organization. For example, GRI must avoid being overtaken by accounting organizations, the Marine Stewardship Council must not be seen as a hand-maiden for the fishing industry, and the Global Compact must not be seen as an agent of business.

Creating Global Action Norms

GANs' core operating logic is grounded in some distinctive values that contrast sharply with the dominant ones in most organizations. In contrast to the traditional “government-in-charge” governance model, GANs stress multi-stakeholder collaboration. Business and civil society are peers, and each has its distinctive competency and responsibility. Of course, government is responsible for laws and formally establishing legal frameworks, but business is responsible for economic products and civil society is responsible for community values and justice. This sort of mutual respect for functions leads to appreciation of *interdependence* as a key value, in juxtaposition to the tradition of independence.

This is the logic behind the statement that “The Global Fund (on HIV/AIDS) recognizes that only through a country-driven, coordinated, and multi-sector approach involving all relevant partners will additional resources have a significant impact on the reduction of infections, illness, and death from the three diseases. Thus, a variety of actors, each with unique skills, background and experience, must be involved in the development of proposals and decisions on the allocation and utilization of Global Fund financial resources.”^{xxii} However, one suspects that the systemic change challenge this represents - the contrast with traditional (Figure 2a) ways of operating - might be insufficiently appreciated.

The implications of this shift are described in Table 7. It emphasizes the importance of GANs continuing to move in this stage toward a much more decentralized network, as shown in Figure 2b.^{xxiii} Today, in general, GANs still operate with a centralized global secretariat model, which is not surprising given the common mental model they have followed is secretariats of IGOs. However, that sort of model will not work for the diversity and mutual accountability GANs embody. In the stage 4 model, decisions at the global versus local levels are not part of a hierarchy, but simply different places in a network. Responsibility for common tasks is distributed to promote ownership throughout the system, and there is high degree of autonomy, with a shift from the “coordinating” model behind the secretariat structure to a “coherence creation” model in the polycentric structure.

The goal is to have interventions that move an issue system in a particular direction through strategically selected activities. A GAN identifies key challenges and opportunities to address to move an issue forward, facilitates a modest group of stakeholders to address them, and connects the learning to the rest of the system in strategic ways.

However, this increased participation must be undertaken while maintaining a very modest scale of organization in any one location. The mental model of large centralized IGOs must be avoided in favor of dispersed networks, or the GANs will lose their critical agility and resilience

Table 7
The Emerging Global Action Norms^{xiv}

What is Dying	What is Developing
Atomistic (reductionist) as the approach	(Whole) systems thinking
Linear and mechanical mental models	Circular and biological mental models
International structures	Glocal
Negotiations as deep change	Collaboration for systemic change
Hierarchy as dominant	Hierarchy embedded in networks
Power as brute force	Power as knowledge/education/information
Accountability as a product of legislation	Accountability as the product of interdependent relationships grounded in transparent and participatory practices

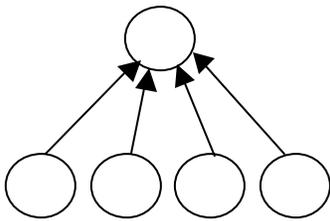


Figure 2a. A centralized network

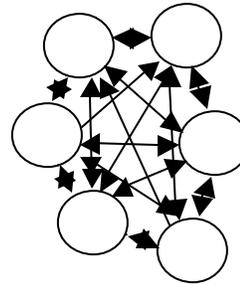


Figure 2b. A polycentric network model

Creating Inter-GAN Activity

This challenge can be framed as developing GANs’ collective global governance potential. It arises from a common quality of GANs’ public purpose vision for a world that is socially equitable and just, and environmentally healthy. It also arises from the other shared qualities that make interaction easy.

Already GANs have begun interacting and reinforcing one another’s activities. For example, Transparency International has succeeded in realizing integration of corruption into the Global Compact’s principles, and the Global Reporting Initiative has an official collaboration with the Compact. In an experimental meeting in March 2006 that brought together eight GANs to consider collaboration in Guatemala, within two days, each established opportunities with an average of three others, they identified a sub-region of the country to in which to develop more comprehensive and long-term collaboration, and they identified common capacity-building interests.^{xxiv}

Inter-GAN relationships appear to hold enormous potential for the separate GANs to scale up and make their imperatives part of global society. Transparency is important in forestry, microcredit can be an important tool in developing sustainable forestry approaches, and youth is a critical constituency for building a sustainable future for forestry.

GANs are developing into increasingly complex webs of organizations that possess relationships that extend both global-local and across organizational sectors – what Reinicke calls “horizontal and vertical relationships.”^{xxv} Collectively, they represent a collection of public issue networks that could develop into a much more effective global governance network than anything envisioned by the traditional global government model. Of course, this brings up enormous issues: How do we ensure accountability? How do we ensure ongoing flexibility? Can we make sure they do not simply become an oppressive global bureaucracy? What will be the inter-GAN collaborating mechanisms? How will they work at the local level? At the global level?

If successful, this will make GANs a central force in global governance. They will be placed in the historic context of national-level social contract negotiation between labor-government-business that had a particularly potent life in the decades following World War II. However, given the absence of a “global government,” the participants will act much more like peers rather than in the traditional “government-as-governance” model. The GANs will be global issue systems. This type of direction can be seen behind PP10’s and the Forest Stewardship’s interest in embracing a much broader constituent group than was initially envisioned.

Conclusion

Whether GANs will successfully develop their potential as leading structures in a new global organizational architecture is still an open question. They may be subsumed by a reinvigorated set of intergovernmental institutions, such as the United Nations and those of Bretton Woods. GANs may prove incapable of engaging a sufficient number of stakeholders in a sufficient number of issue domains for them to become a critical global organizing logic. GANs may simply become another set of global bureaucracies and talk shops. Individually, they may never develop the type of impact-measuring systems that provide the needed types of feedback. They may simply become accountable to elites, rather than to citizens globally. Already we see danger signs that some are chasing out the “movement” and “deep change” parts of their missions and potential because it is easier to flow with the status quo, maintaining sustained antagonism involves pain, and their change competency is insufficient.

However, the norms that are giving birth to GANs are also part of a much broader set of global changes associated with new information technologies, an increasingly globalized economy, and greater ease of travel. The collaborative governance model they represent is one that is increasingly active at the sub-national level as well, mainly because they are more effective than many traditional state-driven solutions.^{xxvi} And perhaps the strongest driver of GANs’ development is that they hold the promise of being critical for sustainable development. GANs may not become *the* dominant global player, but neither are they likely to be insignificant.

Realizing GANs’ potential represents a substantial challenge. However, underestimating the capacity for dramatic change in global governance would be a mistake. The transformation from empires to a nation-state global system only occurred with the end of the British Empire after World War II and the more recent break up of the Soviet one. At the beginning of the twentieth century, four-fifths of the world’s population lived under monarchs or empires; as late as 1950, 70 percent of the world lived under non-democratic rule, which today is considered pervasive and the norm.^{xxvii}

We know our current global action structures are now producing the outcomes we want. War is still too common, poverty too widespread, inequity too great, environmental destruction too common, climate change too threatening. Dissatisfaction with the status quo and visions for how we can create a much better world are, more than anything else, the parents of GANs.

Appendix A

GANs Included in the Comparative Database

* Indicates participants in *Our Global Futures* project

Name	Mission
Building Partnerships for Development in Water and Sanitation – BPD (Ken Caplan)*	To study, explore, and promote tri-sector partnerships as an approach that would more effectively meet the water and sanitation needs of poor communities
Ethical Trading Initiative – ETI	To promote and improve the implementation of corporate codes of practice that cover supply-chain working conditions
Fair Labor Association – FLA (Auret van Heerden)*	To combine the efforts of industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and colleges and universities to promote adherence to international labor standards and improve working conditions worldwide
Forest Stewardship Council – FSC (Heiko Liedeker)*	To promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition – GAIN	To improve the nutritional status of one billion people, of which 700 million are at risk for vitamin and mineral deficiencies, over the period 2002-2007, primarily through fortification of commonly available and consumed foods
Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization – GAVI	To save children's lives and protect people's health through the widespread use of vaccines
Global Compact	To promote responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalization
Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria – Global Fund	To finance a dramatic turnaround in the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria
Global Reporting Initiative – GRI (Ernst Liedeker)*	To promote international harmonization in the reporting of relevant and credible corporate environmental, social, and economic performance information to enhance responsible decision making (the GRI pursues this mission through a multi-stakeholder process of open dialogue and collaboration in the design and implementation of widely applicable sustainability reporting guidelines)
Global Water Partnership (Emilio Gabrielli)*	To support countries in the sustainable management of their water resources
International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development – ICTSD (Ricardo Melendez)*	By empowering stakeholders in trade policy through information, networking, dialogue, well-targeted research, and capacity building, to influence the international trade system so it advances the goal of sustainable development
Marine Stewardship Council – MSC (Rupert Howes)*	To safeguard the world's seafood supply by promoting the best environmental choices

Microcredit Summit Campaign (Sam Daly-Harris)*	To reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially the women of those families, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the year 2005
Partnership for Principle 10 - PP10 (Frances Seymour – also TAI)*	To commit to translating access to information, participation in decision making, and access to justice as key principles of environmental governance into action by promoting transparent, inclusive, and accountable decision making at the national level.
Social Accountability International – SAI	To promote human rights for workers around the world as a standards organization, ethical supply chain resource, and programs developer
The Access Initiative – TAI (Frances Seymour—also PP10)*	To ensure that people have a voice in the decisions that affect their environment and their communities (TAI partners promote transparent, participatory, and accountable governance as an essential foundation for sustainable development, and access to information, participation in decision making, and access to justice as key principles of environmental governance)
Transparency International – TI (David Nussbaum, Casey Kelso)*	To create a world in which government, politics, business, civil society, and the daily lives of people are free of corruption. Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.
World Water Council – WWC	To promote awareness, build political commitment, and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels, including the highest decision-making level, to facilitate the efficient conservation, protection, development, planning, management, and use of water in all its dimensions on an environmentally sustainable basis for the benefit of all life on earth
Youth Employment Summit Campaign – YES	To build the capacity of young people to create sustainable livelihoods, and to establish an entrepreneurial culture in which young people work toward self employment

Participants in Our Global Future also included:

Rick Samans - Managing Director - Global Institute for Partnership and Governance of the World Economic Forum

Appendix B

Illustrative Membership Categories

Marine Stewardship Council: Interest Groups

PUBLIC INTEREST CATEGORY

Scientific, Academic & Resource Management Interests
General Conservation NGOs & Interests
Marine Conservation NGOs & Specialist Interests
General Interests & Organisations

COMMERCIAL & SOCIO-ECONOMIC CATEGORY

Catch Sector Interests
Supply Chain & Processing Interests
Retail Catering & Distribution Interests
Developing Nation & Fishing Community Interests

Forest Stewardship Council: Chambers

The **Social Chamber** includes non-profit, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples associations, unions as well as research, academic, technical institutions and individuals that have a demonstrated commitment to socially beneficial forestry. This means that they support forest management and believe in delivering forest products to the market in a way that does not infringe on the rights of other stakeholders.

The **Environmental Chamber** includes non-profit, non-governmental organizations, as well as research, academic, technical institutions and individuals that have an active interest in environmentally viable forest stewardship.

The **Economic Chamber** includes organizations and individuals with a commercial interest. Examples are employees, certification bodies, industry and trade associations (whether profit or non-profit), wholesalers, retailers, traders, consumer associations, and consulting companies. Applicants with economic interests must have demonstrated active commitment to implementing FSC Principles and Criteria in their operations.

World Water Council: Colleges

- Intergovernmental institutions
- Government and government authorities
- Enterprises and facilities
- Civil society organizations and water users associations
- Professional associations and academic institutions

Endnotes

- ⁱ For an overview of potential future structures see Khagram, Sanjeev. 2006. "Future Architectures of Global Governance: A Transnational Perspective/Prospective." *Global Governance* 12:97-117.
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