

GFAR Governance Review

Report

MANNET

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Aims	The aim of this report is to provide the Steering Committee (SC) with an analysis of the issues and challenges facing the governance of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and to make a set of recommendations for immediate and medium-term action to strengthen governance.
Strategy	The Forum brings together all the key stakeholder groups engaged in agricultural research for development (AR4D). It has a very clear strategic direction, as set out in the Roadmap of the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD).
Overarching conclusion	Our overarching conclusion is that we do not believe that the governance of the Forum is sufficiently robust. We fear that weaknesses in governance risk becoming an impediment to the ability of the Forum to realize its global ambitions in AR4D. We argue that the reform of governance, which was the initial premise of this review, should lead to a process of renewal for the Forum.
Perspectives on governance	We have reviewed the governance of the Forum from four overlapping perspectives: <i>global governance</i> , <i>network governance</i> , <i>institutional governance</i> and <i>stewardship</i> .
Global governance	<p>The first, global governance, relates to the aspirations of the Forum to facilitate the setting of the strategic global agenda for AR4D, to influence policy-makers in the decision-making on AR4D approaches and investments, and to ensure that research institutions engage with all stakeholders in AR4D.</p> <p>Global governance is crucial to the Forum because its core purpose is to bring about change in AR4D within its stakeholder groups. In other words, the global governance of the Forum provides the mechanism for stakeholder groups to engage in policy dialogue, to determine how to implement AR4D globally and within their own regions and/or sectors, to lead and trigger the desired change and to support each other in implementing the GCARD Roadmap.</p> <p>Global governance can only work if all the stakeholders can come together in the governing body on an equal basis and with mutual accountability for realizing the goals of the GCARD Roadmap.</p> <p>Global governance, therefore, is the driver of the purpose and principles of the Forum—and the Secretariat is the catalyst in providing support to the stakeholders in their efforts to bring about change in AR4D within their <i>own</i> constituencies.</p>
Constituent assembly	There needs to be a thorough overhauling of the global governance of the Forum and we therefore propose that the SC establishes a constituent assembly, comprising all stakeholder groups. Such an assembly, which would be an informal body, would meet in the last quarter of 2013 to develop a new “compact” for the Forum and approve a revised Charter.
Strategic Governance Working Group	<p>In order to prepare properly for this, we suggest that the SC sets up, as urgently as possible, a Strategic Governance Working Group (SGWG).</p> <p>As the membership of the SC itself is under question, it is vitally important that the SC selects a balanced, representative team, comprising all key stakeholder groups. It is critical to ensure a wide</p>

perspective of experiences and views throughout the process and the SGWG should carry out a consultative process to ensure the buy-in of all stakeholder groups.

Network governance

The second broad governance function, *network governance*, focuses on the functioning of GFAR as a forum, platform and network, and relates to the core elements of the mission statement and strategic objectives: mobilizing stakeholders and catalyzing actions through the promotion of collaborative and innovative partnerships.

Although it is theoretically possible for the governing body for the *global governance* function to take direct responsibility for the *network governance* function, this is neither desirable nor feasible. Network governance needs a small, executive management body—one that can meet regularly to monitor progress and to take management decisions.

We would call this governance body, the Executive Committee (EC) to capture the role of ensuring that SC policies are executed. The EC would be set up by the SC and report to it. We argue that the EC should be a decision-making body operating within a strategic, policy and accountability framework that is drawn up by the SC.

Institutional governance

The third broad governance function, *institutional governance*, is the classic governance of an organization or Secretariat. For a forum such as GFAR, institutional governance provides for the oversight of the Secretariat. The *institutional governance* function approves the strategy, the work plan and budget, and it appoints and oversees the work of the Executive Secretary.

Following the same logic as for network governance, we argue that the proposed EC could carry out the *institutional governance* function under the authority of the SC.

Stewardship

The fourth governance function, *stewardship*, covers the governance role with respect to the catalytic funding of AR4D initiatives and entities and the strengthening of regional fora (RFs).

We argue that the Forum needs a separate governing body to be responsible for the decision-making on the allocation of the trust funds entrusted to GFAR. We do not believe that this function should be carried out by the SC, the EC or the Secretariat, as the decision-making process must have a certain autonomy in order to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest in the decisions. In other words, the recipients of resources from the trust funds should not be directly involved in decisions affecting them.

We would call this body: the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC).

Transition

During the period while the SGWG is working, we propose that the governing body should remain the SC. The SC would have two sub-committees: the RAC (formerly the Programme Committee) and the EC (formerly the Management Team). The two sub-committees would be set up by, and would be accountable to, the SC.

Renewal

In conclusion, we would argue that the transition period should be seen as a process of renewal for the Forum. A successful SGWG will undoubtedly stimulate reflection, which will, in turn, lead to much greater engagement of all stakeholder groups in GCARD, other initiatives and the governance. All the agreements that will emerge from



this process will be enshrined in a new Charter that will provide firmer foundations for the Forum.

Background

This review of the governance of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was launched by the Steering Committee (SC) in May 2012.

The review was conceived in the context of the increasing investment in agricultural research and the evolution of GFAR into a truly global multi-stakeholder forum working to deliver the changes set out in the Roadmap of the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD).

Terms of reference

MANNET was commissioned in September 2012 to undertake this review.

The terms of reference (ToR) defined a first phase to be *an evaluation of ways in which current governance arrangements can be improved to increase the efficiency of its operation and the openness and inclusivity of its operational linkages through diverse regions and constituencies, in particular through effective networking, partnerships and representation. The Consultant(s) will collect and collate perspectives from diverse AR4D stakeholders as to their expected involvement in, and use of, the GFAR mechanism and analyze these against the GFAR governance and operational mechanisms and in terms of best practices operated in comparable network-based organizations elsewhere*¹.

In a possible second phase, the ToR envisaged MANNET working with the SC, the GFAR Secretariat and relevant external organizations to address and resolve the needs arising in the first phase of the study—including measures for revising the Charter and improving the quality of governance documents, as might be required.

Methodology

This review is based on an action research methodology supported by archival research reviewing relevant GFAR papers and other documents. The consultants² undertook more than forty semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders and office-holders—either face to face during GCARD2 in Punta Del Este, at the GFAR Secretariat offices or by telephone (see Annex One for the list of interviewees).

We also reviewed the governance of a broad range of fora, platforms and networks of a similar nature to GFAR. As would be expected, these organizations have developed many different approaches to governance. We have captured some of the common principles in our own framework for governance in Part Three.

¹ *Terms of Reference for GFAR Governance Review*. 26th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting, Accra, Ghana, 28-29 May 2012.

² The consultant team comprised Piers Campbell, Alex Eriksson and John Hailey. Judith Hushagen also reviewed the report.

Purpose of this report

The aim of this report is to provide the SC with an analysis of the issues and challenges facing the governance of GFAR and to make a set of recommendations for immediate and medium-term action to strengthen governance.

As envisaged in the ToR, this report on the first phase of the governance review is relatively high-level in its focus.

Contents of the report

This report is divided into four main sections.

Part One, *Context, Identity and Strategic Intention*, outlines GFAR mission, objectives and strategic intention and then explores some issues identified by stakeholders relating to the strategic intention, strategic priorities, ownership and identity of GFAR.

Part Two, *Observations and Perceptions on Governance Raised during the Interviews*, presents the specific concerns that have been raised with us during the interviews on such issues as legitimacy, accountability and credibility of governance processes.

Part Three, *Analysis and conclusions*, contains our analysis of the issues and challenges relating to the four broad functions of governance: global governance, network governance, stewardship and institutional governance.

Part Four, *Recommendations*, presents our short- and medium-term recommendations.

We outline the way forward in the concluding section.

Annexes

There are four annexes.

Annex One is a list of the persons interviewed.

Annex Two lists the key documents reviewed.

Annex Three provides a sample of the networks whose governance we reviewed.

Annex Four contains a briefing note on the governance of networks prepared by one of the team members.



Part One: Context, identity and strategic intention

Introduction and overview

Governance cannot be developed in a vacuum. It has to be designed in the context of the purpose, identity and strategy of the Forum.

We therefore started the governance review by examining the mission statement and strategic objectives and by gathering information on how the Forum defines its strategic intention and how it sees its recent contributions to AR4D.

We then ascertained whether there were any disagreements among stakeholders in relation to the strategic intention, strategic priorities, ownership, involvement and contribution of stakeholders, and identity of the Forum.

In summary, we found that there was broad consensus on the GCARD Roadmap but that there were quite significant tensions³ among stakeholders concerning strategic priorities, the respective roles of GFAR, as a Global Forum, and the regional fora (RFs), the relationship between GFAR and CGIAR, and the roles and contributions of the other stakeholders in the Forum. In many ways, these tensions are typical of fora, platforms and networks.

Mission, objectives and strategic intention of GFAR

Mission statement

GFAR's mission statement is:

To mobilize all the stakeholders involved in agricultural research for development and support their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote a more sustainable use of natural resources⁴.

Strategic objectives

GFAR's four strategic objectives are:

- To build consensus and strengthen advocacy for action on agricultural research and innovation priorities;
- To promote global and regional partnerships for collaborative research and innovation;
- To boost knowledge and improve communication of agricultural research and innovation;
- To strengthen and transform the institutional capacities of AR4D systems and their stakeholders.

Strategic intention

GFAR aims to provide an open and inclusive mechanism for fostering thinking and catalyzing action for change. It brings together the views and actions of those involved in the generation, sharing, access and practical use of agricultural knowledge around the world. It rallies the

³ Dynamic tensions should not be perceived as negative and can be used to bring issues to the surface and help stakeholders define the strategic direction for the future.

⁴ This text is taken from the Charter. We understand that it will be revised as a result of the governance review.

voices and collective actions of all sectors to transform and strengthen AR4D systems. GFAR works to ensure that such research serves the aspirations of local communities and it puts the needs of farmers (in particular, resource-poor farmers) at the very core of agricultural research and innovation systems.

Those involved in GFAR cover the continuum from farmers' organizations to researchers, extension workers, educationalists, private sector enterprises and international organisations working together to deliver development and change around the world.

GFAR's evolving role

In reading the documents and in discussions with the Secretariat, the following recent developments are important for understanding the strategic context.

Since the last external review⁵ of GFAR's programmes, GFAR is perceived⁶ to make an increasingly important contribution to AR4D. This can be seen in its significant role in the reform of the CGIAR and its success in bringing the voices and perspectives of partners into that process. GFAR's relevance is also shown in its role in the GCARD process, thereby contributing to the reform of the global agricultural research system. GFAR has taken on an active role in operationalizing the GCARD Roadmap, helping organize major conferences (including GCARD1, GCARD2 and the Global Conference on Women in Agriculture), developing and convening the Global Foresight Hub and the CIARD RING, as well as fostering a number of other thematic partnerships based on multi-stakeholder principles.

Throughout, GFAR promotes outcome-oriented research in a wider context of the enabling environment that is required to generate the necessary knowledge and innovation to bring about long-term impact.

Processes of regional and global prioritization through GCARD1 resulted in the GCARD Roadmap for transforming and strengthening AR4D systems around the world, which was subsequently adopted by all the GFAR stakeholder representatives.

The Roadmap was followed more recently by GCARD2, which aimed to translate 'what needed to be done' into 'how to do it in practice'. GCARD2 mobilized some 200 individual programmes to map out their work together, discuss and find and develop common ground through which many diverse institutions could address common challenges through taking forward complementary actions and partnerships at different levels.

GFAR's role in support of the global agricultural research system was recognized in the Ministerial Declarations of the 2009 G8 meeting and the 2011 G20 meeting.

In recent years, AR4D systems and thinking have changed substantially. Many new institutional configurations have arisen. There is a move to

⁵ Second External Review of GFAR, January 2007.

⁶ The Governance Review did not have the mandate to assess the achievements and current performance of GFAR as a Global Forum. This will be done by the Third External Evaluation. The comments in this section are, therefore, based on the perceptions expressed to us during the interviews (see Part Two) as well as in the documents we reviewed.

facilitate the direct voice from civil society and a realignment of agricultural research and knowledge-sharing processes towards more integrated innovation systems and new development outcomes. GFAR's evolution into a true global multi-stakeholder platform reflects these changes.

The strategic challenges

In our interviews, we found that there was broad consensus on the GCARD Roadmap as the guiding strategy for GFAR and all its stakeholders. In the remainder of Part One, we explore where there are disagreements among stakeholders in relation to the strategic intention, strategic priorities, ownership and identity of GFAR.

These strategic issues are on the edge of the governance review⁷, but we believe that it is important to outline them in this report for two main reasons: first, the issues are important for shaping our thinking on the optimal design of GFAR's governance and, second, we believe that these issues have to be resolved as part of any fundamental reform of governance.

We start by looking at *focus and prioritization* and then examine the question of *identity and roles*.

Strategic focus and priorities

At a strategic level, all sectors have accepted in principle, and are championing, the GCARD Roadmap and the transformative principles it contains. However, when it comes to implementation and the best role to be played by GFAR, the different sectors—and sometimes different individuals within a sector—have their own views and perspectives.

Implementing the GCARD Roadmap

Overload of the Secretariat

In the eyes of some key stakeholders, the GFAR Secretariat's involvement in such a large portfolio of activities suggests that it is trying to do too much with too few resources, and is consequently overstretched.

Misunderstandings over the role of the Secretariat

These concerns reflect a deeper misunderstanding about the role of the Secretariat in the Forum. The Secretariat is not the Forum—it is the catalyst in providing support to the stakeholders in their efforts, and their responsibility, to bring about change in AR4D.

The lack of strategic oversight and clear decision-making by the SC also creates a space where GFAR's committees and stakeholders increase their expectations for programme generation and delivery on a small Secretariat. At the same time, the Secretariat is being asked to mobilize resources and to play multiple implementation roles. The balance between action by, on the one hand, stakeholders and, on the other hand, the Secretariat does not, therefore, appear to be optimal.

The pressures on the Secretariat are exacerbated by different stakeholders having widely varying views on the catalytic, advocacy, enabling and dialogue roles that a Global Forum should be playing. We suspect, however, that the differences of opinion have less to do with the broad *roles* of the Secretariat, which are relatively well defined, and more to do with the *activities* taken on by the Secretariat.

⁷ However, the ToR include a reference to the broader context in Clause 1 on Page 5.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for greater clarity on the strategic focus of GFAR and on the strategic priorities for the forum as a whole, covering the activities of the different stakeholders and the Secretariat.

Identity and ownership

The second group of strategic issues relate to a certain ambiguity of the identity of GFAR as a global forum and the roles of its key stakeholders themselves in the Forum as well as in the RFs.

Regional fora

GFAR's role as a global multi-stakeholder platform is still evolving. As it has become a more inclusive and effective platform incorporating new actors (farmers' organizations, NGOs, private sector, etc.), tensions have arisen because of the changing nature of its relationship with a key part of its founding constituency—the Regional Fora (RFs).

In our interviews, the RFs were perceived to reflect a public research perspective, rather than the broader constituency required. This is seen as a strength with regard to bringing greater regional coherence and research capacity across national research institutions, but it raises questions as to the extent to which they presently reflect the composition of GFAR and the changes set out in the GCARD Roadmap.

Other sectors are demanding equal voice within GFAR and at times the RFs appear to be struggling to accommodate the needs and interests of the wider membership in their own structures. At the same time, regional groupings of other sectors are demanding to be heard in GFAR at the global level.

The RFs have different perspectives and constituencies and do not necessarily represent all the stakeholders in the Global Forum. This concern is compounded by the fact that the RFs have over 50% of the seats on the SC, which is very high in proportion to all the GFAR other stakeholder groups.

As GFAR moves to becoming an effective and more inclusive multi-stakeholder platform, it is no longer perceived as focused only on providing support to the RF (i.e. looking 'inside') and instead is gearing itself up to foster and trigger global initiatives (working into the global frame of multiple partners in AR4D). This transition reflects the change that GFAR has been through, but raises issues concerning (i) the understanding by the RFs of the identity of the Global Forum, (ii) GFAR's strategy and strategic planning processes and (iii) the roles of the different RFs. The transition also raises issues about the future strategic focus of each of the RFs and how they will ensure the participation of the broad-based stakeholders in their work.

CGIAR

The CGIAR has undergone a substantial process of reform and has adopted a new business model under which the CGIAR Consortium Board takes the lead in formulating and refining the CGIAR 'Strategy and Results Framework' in partnership with donors, research partners, farmers and other stakeholders through direct consultations and the GCARD.

CGIAR is a member of the Global Forum and has one seat on the GFAR SC. GFAR has a seat on the CGIAR Fund Council to represent the voice of those stakeholders who are not present.

We did not explore the relationship between CGIAR and GFAR in any depth. We understand that the working relationship has improved considerably in recent years and that the interaction between the different bodies of CGIAR and GFAR at different levels is both productive and complex. In our interviews, it was clear that a number

of individuals have different perspectives on the effectiveness of the relationship between GFAR and CGIAR.

The differentiation of roles between GFAR (as the global forum) and CGIAR (as the largest international research implementing agency) needs to be sharpened and better understood. This relationship is now much more integrated and complementary than at the time of GFAR's founding, in particular as seen through the joint GCARD process. However, further work needs to be done on the differentiation, and the communication, of the respective roles.

Partnerships

GFAR encompasses a very broad range of stakeholder groups. Some of these have well-developed representative bodies at the global and regional levels; others do not. There is, therefore, pressure on GFAR and these stakeholder groups to develop the necessary organizational entities and capacity to be able to perform active roles.

The strategic imperative

The Forum has come a long way during the past decade, especially in the last five years. It has achieved much and is widely recognized as a vitally important forum in AR4D. However, it is grappling with some major strategic challenges. These relate to the identity of GFAR as a multi-stakeholder forum⁸, to the roles of the RFs in GFAR, to the purpose and constituencies of the RFs⁹, to the relationship between GFAR and CGIAR, and to the strategic priorities of the Global Forum and of its Secretariat.

In conclusion, we believe that GFAR must devote its energy into building consensus on how to implement the GCARD Roadmap, galvanize all stakeholder groups to lead change in their respective constituencies, resolve any outstanding strategic dilemmas in order to ensure that GFAR and the RFs become vibrant multi-stakeholder fora—all working together in an integrated way for AR4D.

In the next part of this report, we switch the focus away from strategy to the feedback we received from stakeholders on governance.

⁸ For example, see Annex Four for a discussion on stakeholder and network models of governance.

⁹ This governance review was commissioned by the SC and we were not mandated by the individual RFs to review their own governance. It is clear to us that the RF are confronted with many of the same strategic questions as GFAR is facing and therefore we believe that there would be great value in the RF engaging in similar strategic reflections as we are proposing for the Global Forum, including a reform of their own governance.

Part Two: Perceptions on governance raised during the interviews

Introduction

Part Two describes the specific concerns raised during the interviews¹⁰ about the effectiveness, accountability and credibility of the governance processes and issues related to inclusion and representation.

The broad range of issues relating to the governance of GFAR have been grouped into six main themes:

- Election and engagement of the membership of GFAR's governance bodies;
- Representative nature of the membership of GFAR's governance bodies;
- Governance structures and associated lack of clarity as to roles, responsibilities, authority, or powers of the committees and/or the individuals who sit on them;
- Lack of overall accountability;
- Transparency of decision making and perceived conflict of interest in the way funds were allocated;
- Cost of GFAR's governance processes and weaknesses in governance support processes.

These issues described below represent the perceptions of a cross-section of GFAR stakeholders.

1. Election and engagement

First, issues were raised around the election and engagement of the membership of GFAR's governance bodies. These included:

- There is a degree of 'ad-hocism' in terms of recruitment, nominations and selection of committee members by the constituencies concerned. Transparent processes and procedures are not always followed by sectors when determining their representatives. In some cases, there is no clear single grouping and mechanism for identifying representatives, and so committee membership at times appear somewhat arbitrary with membership at times being by invitation rather than through an appropriate election process;
- Attendance at key committee meetings is irregular and there is a lack of consistency in membership of key committees or over-reliance on alternates to make up quorum—only a few key members regularly attend meetings or comment on minutes. This issue is also highlighted in GFAR's 2nd External Evaluation Report which graphically represented this in a framework of attendance¹¹. Irregularity and inconsistency of attendance appears to be an

¹⁰ Part Two responds to Clause 1 in the ToR.

¹¹ Second External Evaluation Page 53.

ongoing problem and this has an impact on the subsidiarity principle governing GFAR;

- The role of the Chair and Vice-Chair is crucial in facilitating relations between the governance function and GFAR's Secretariat. Consequently nomination and election processes for these positions need to be transparent and credible. The Charter is widely perceived¹² to specify that decisions should be taken by "consensus", and implies that elections are used only as a last resort. Whether such consensus is feasible in such a large representational body is being questioned and there is a growing body of opinion that a more formal nomination and election process should become the norm. It is encouraging that this has been adopted for the next Chair's recruitment;
- There are also questions, in light of GFAR's status as a global multi-stakeholder platform, whether it is reasonable to insist that the Chair would "continue to come from a southern NARS and the Vice-Chairperson would come from any other category of stakeholders"¹³. There are calls for the Charter to be adapted to allow for more inclusive and internationally-balanced criteria for such key governance roles. It is also noted that having a term of office of only three years is potentially limiting and mitigated against continuity and that consideration should be given to extending the Chair's term of office, for a second term of equal duration.

2. Representative nature

Second, there were concerns about the representative nature of the membership of GFAR's governance bodies. The issues included:

- Recruitment, nomination and election processes are perceived not to be well-communicated and the Charter appeared to be restrictive. As a result, membership of the SC appear to lack a clear basis for inclusion of a wider pool of non-RF stakeholders, and do not reflect GFAR's ambitions to be a multi-stakeholder platform. Specifically there is no obvious source of information on the recruitment or nomination processes, nor consistency in the election of stakeholder representatives or in how e-election processes worked;
- Membership of key committees do not necessarily reflect GFAR's status as a multi-stakeholder platform. For example, the Charter still implies that membership of a key committee such as the PC is only open to members from the RF, which is against the spirit of the guiding principles of the Forum. Although its operation in practice has been broadened out in recent years, the Charter has not yet been amended to accommodate this;
- The nature of governance in the RFs is such that not all representatives of the RFs have a mandate from the wider constituencies they represent, or are communicating effectively back to local NARS the developments in GFAR or the strategic issues it addresses. While the RFs have evolved to include non-research stakeholder representatives (e.g. a farmer representative), these are still often sole voices in what often remains a much larger association of public researchers. This is not necessarily

¹² This perception is not strictly correct. The Charter encourages consensus but allows for majority voting as a last resort where consensus cannot be reached.

¹³ GFAR Charter: 2.1.4.

problematic in itself if playing a role of a technical forum on research questions, but brings into question what constituency they specifically represent and speak for in GFAR. This raises wider issues around the governance of the RFs and the representative nature of those nominated to the SC. Clearly there are significant capacity issues that need be addressed around the accountability of the RFs and the degree to which they represent the views of the NARS and other key AR4D stakeholders in their regions;

- It was felt that there was still limited involvement by a representative range of different stakeholders in the different governance committees and meetings, and concern was expressed at their level of involvement in GFAR's governance. This issue was raised in GFAR's 2nd Evaluation Report (2007. P.54) which proposed setting up a "search" committee to short-list potential candidates. Such a committee was established in 2009 for the GFAR Chair search and again this year, but this may not be public knowledge and the principle does not appear to have been extended in all constituencies;
- The representative nature of some stakeholder nominees is questioned in that they do not have a mandate to speak for all of the constituency they represent—partly because of the absence of a nomination/election process for non-RF stakeholders, and partly because of the limited nature of formal links to constituency bodies, in particular since the collapse of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP). This is a particular concern as farmers are a key constituency for the Forum. There is a recognition that stakeholder SC members are legitimate "focal points" that participated in GFAR governance, but could not be seen as being truly representative of the wider constituency from which they came, mainly because of the obvious limitations in the nomination and election process and the complexities of engaging all members of such constituencies on a global scale. As a result, questions are raised as to whether GFAR could, as yet, genuinely call itself a global multi-stakeholder platform because, despite having more stakeholder voices in GFAR's governance, there is still a need to strengthen and make more credible links to its different constituencies. In this regard GFAR was described as being only "a half-body" or having "a strong head but no legs";
- By being open and inclusive to all perspectives and all sectors, GFAR is perceived to have a powerful role to play as the 'neutral' space for dialogue and stimulating partnership around key issues in research and knowledge use. However, behaviour in the governance structures, and perceptions of some parties being 'more equal' than others, or at worst being seen as a club of member organizations, work against the effective functioning of GFAR as the global forum 'owned' by all.

3. Governance structures

Third, there were concerns around the governance structures and associated lack of clarity as to roles, responsibilities, authority or powers of the committees and/or the individuals who sit on them. Issues included:

- GFAR's governance is seen as being relatively complex and even "top-heavy for such a small organization". This concern reflects the analysis in GFAR's 2nd Evaluation Report which stated that "there is an urgent need to streamline decision making processes within GFAR. Decisions are not reached quickly enough due to "over-



structuring of GFAR and overloading of agendas at the meetings of the committees”¹⁴;

- Some SC members are perceived to be insufficiently engaged in bring about change within their own constituencies;
- The Charter cites the Triennial meetings of GFAR as the ultimate strategy setting body of GFAR, yet this ceased to exist in 2008, to be replaced by the biennial GCARD in setting overall direction for GFAR. The Charter requires urgent revision to accommodate this significant and strategic shift;
- The functions of the SC are perceived to be overly-wide and varied for such a large, representational body. The Charter implies that the SC deals with a range of management and detailed operational and financial oversight issues, but offers little clarity on the more substantive nature of the work. In practice, the SC appeared to deal with both strategic and operational issues, as well as playing a representational role and being a focal point for external relations;
- This lack of clarity as the purpose and role of GFAR’s governance functions is perceived to be counterproductive. The ongoing uncertainty as to whether the SC was a representational global governance body (facilitating links to key constituencies, determining high-level strategy, agreeing and disseminating key messages/statements); or a board more concerned with institutional governance (oversight, advice to Secretariat, etc.) need to be resolved. Arguably if there was greater clarity on this then it would be much easier to determine the remit of the different committees;
- Linked to this is uncertainty as to the specifics of the roles and responsibilities of the different committees, and the authority and power of their membership. For example, to what extent is the PC a decision-making body in its own right or an advisory body making recommendations for the SC to discuss, reject or ratify. There is concern that the roles of the SC and the PC now over-lap or have become conflated;
- The current roles and responsibilities of the committees do not reflect the current realities of GFAR as a multiple stakeholder platform. For example, according to the Charter, the PC is intended to strengthen the participation of the ‘NARS’¹⁵ and their RFs in the Global Forum with a significant role in reviewing, planning, implementing and monitoring GFAR programmes and liaising with the research community. This clause not only fails to identify how other key stakeholders are involved in PC deliberations, nor does it reflect the fact that the PC is as much engaged in making funding recommendations as it is reviewing or planning GFAR activities;
- There is uncertainty as to the role of the Management Team and to what extent it has an oversight and performance review role, as well as offering advice and support. In other words to what extent is it the executive body to which the SC had delegated authority? The Charter implies it had more of a liaison and support function, describing the Management Team’s role as being to facilitate

¹⁴ Second External Evaluation Page 51.

¹⁵ See the earlier point on the lack of common definitions around this acronym.

interaction between the SC and GFAR's Secretariat and strengthen its management capacity.

4. Accountability

Fourth, there were issues around the lack of accountability. Examples follow:

- The Roadmap has been accepted by all stakeholders and the work plans are discussed each year. However there was a perceived lack of effective oversight of GFAR's strategy by the SC, including clarity on the specific role to be played by GFAR, expectations of the Secretariat, and clarity on the context of GFAR's work and degree of acceptance of responsibilities of different GFAR stakeholders for delivery of their wider ambitions as articulated through GFAR;
- There is no obvious linkage of the governance function to strategic priorities, and the extent to which individual SC members have responsibility for setting and tracking strategic priorities;
- The SC and MT are not perceived to be providing adequate oversight of the performance of Secretariat;
- Interviewees pointed to weaknesses in the control and accountability of the initiatives and projects funded by GRAR trust funds;
- A credible monitoring and evaluation system has been initiated but not yet put fully into practice to support such oversight and accountability processes.

5. Allocation of funds

Fifth, there were concerns around the transparency of decision-making and perceived conflict of interest in the way funds were allocated. Issues included:

- Decision-making processes are not always apparent or transparent—particularly concerning GFAR's involvement in new initiatives or ventures and how they are linked to its strategic objectives. These decisions are made by the SC, yet the resulting actions are not necessarily subsequently 'owned' by those same bodies, nor transmitted to their component members;
- The principle of subsidiarity applied across GFAR often results in confusion between regional imperatives and global or inter-regional needs. As a result, GFAR often works in reverse of the original intention as global issues being identified and addressed through composite commitments from its component parts. Moreover, the pressure from funding agencies for impact through to farm-level causes some distortions in the global strategy and role of GFAR, as does the assumption that RFs are programme-delivery agencies in themselves, rather than as fora of national implementing institutions. In this sense, implementation of actions initiated through GFAR should not be seen as having to include all countries of a region, nor to be implemented only by the bodies in the SC, which would imply a constrained membership basis, rather than an open and inclusive global forum;
- Concerns about conflict of interest were seen in the way that decisions, or recommendations on, funding awards in the PC were made by potential awardees or representatives of beneficiaries. It was also mentioned that, to avoid conflicts of interest, staff of the Secretariat should not be expected to have a funding decision-making role in recipient RFs or stakeholder bodies.

6. Cost of GFAR's governance

Sixth, there were concerns about the cost of GFAR's governance processes and flaws in governance support processes. Issues included:

- The cost of governance, at an estimated \$150,000 per year, was perceived by some interviewees as excessive in terms of number of face-to-face committee meetings held and governance processes involved. It is recognized that multi-stakeholder processes have a cost, but these mechanisms seem very reliant on expensive international travel at present;
- There are some perceptions that Board papers and minutes of previous meetings are not sent to participants in sufficient time prior to meetings. While the effectiveness of preparation of papers for the SC and reporting on SC meetings has improved in recent years, a number of interviewees noted that the Secretariat is overburdened with many demands on its time and was therefore not always able to follow through effectively on SC decisions. This challenge has been around for many years and was, for example, highlighted in GFAR's 2nd Evaluation Report¹⁶, is seen as delaying decision-making and as that report noted, "inevitably affecting the credibility of the Secretariat".

Conclusion

Stakeholders consistently emphasized such principles of effective governance as accountability, subsidiarity, transparency, representativeness, strategy, independence and integrity. There is growing awareness that if these issues are not dealt with soon, the overall legitimacy and credibility of GFAR will be questioned. The development of effective governance structures and processes is therefore crucial to GFAR's future and its strategic role in promoting AR4D.

In the next part of this report, we present our analysis and conclusions.

¹⁶ Second External Evaluation Page 51.

Part Three—Analysis and conclusions

Introduction

Part Three contains our analysis of GFAR's governance with a framework comprising four broad functions of governance: global governance, network governance, stewardship and institutional governance. We have developed this framework on the basis of the analysis in Parts One and Two, our review of governance in similar fora/networks (see Annexes Three and Four) and our experience in governance of a wide range of organizations.

Underlying premises

In light of our analysis of the context in which GFAR operates, we have based our own thinking and recommendations on the following five premises:

- GFAR is a multi-stakeholder forum, network and platform;
- GFAR is an expression of, is guided by, and furthers, the GCARD Roadmap;
- As a global forum, GFAR's primary purpose is to catalyze reflection and action by all stakeholders engaged in AR4D at the global level;
- The RFs, as autonomous fora, should share GFAR's purpose and principles and catalyze similar initiatives in their own strategic space, i.e. at the regional and sub-regional levels;
- GFAR has a secondary purpose of catalyzing and supporting the RFs, especially through capacity-building to help them become more inclusive of stakeholders, especially civil society, the private sector, farmers, advisory services and education.

GFAR governance in the Charter

The Charter defines the stakeholder constituents of GFAR in the following categories:

The National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) through their Regional Fora, the European Regional forum, the North American Regional Forum, the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs), Non-Governmental Organizations, Farmer's organizations, the Private Sector, the Donors' Community, and the Facilitating Agencies.

The Charter describes the SC as the governing body of GFAR and it gives the SC the authority to set up sub-committees as required. Two such committees are mentioned in the Charter: the Program Committee (PC) and the Management Team (MT).

The Charter describes a Donor Support Group which had no formal governance function but was created to help coordinate the donor community's support for GFAR's activities. It also defines the roles of two "facilitating agencies": IFAD and FAO.

The membership of the SC is drawn up as follows:

- 5 seats for NARS of southern regional fora (RF);



- 1 seat for the regional forum of North America¹⁷;
- 1 seat for the regional forum of Europe;
- 1 seat for the IARCs i.e. CGIAR;
- 1 seat for Farmers' organizations;
- 1 seat for the private sector;
- 1 seat for the Donor Support Group;
- 2 seats for the facilitating agencies (FAO and IFAD).

Observations on the structure of governance

We make a few comments on the current governance structure and the Charter:

- One clear omission in the Charter is a definition of National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS). We understand that NARS are commonly described, for example in FAO and ISNAR documentation, to involve all stakeholders engaged fully or partially in agricultural research for development processes, from farmers to researchers and across public, private and civil sectors. However, in some interpretations, the term is used uniquely for national public research institutions alone. This difference of perspective and usage in a widely-used acronym risks causing confusion and distortion of GFAR's perceived purpose;
- The place in the governance structure of the GCARD Organizing Committee, which has played a major role during the past four years, is not defined;
- For all intents and purposes, the stakeholder constituency working groups and the Donor Support Group are not functioning as formal structures¹⁸;
- GFAR's Triennial Conference has been replaced by GCARD and the latter's role with respect to setting GFAR's strategic direction needs to be clarified;
- The principle of subsidiarity is cited frequently but there is a lack of clarity as to what this means in terms of governance, management and resource allocation;
- There is some uncertainty as to whether the SC has more of a strategic role or an active role in oversight and institutional governance. GFAR's 2011 Annual Report refers to it as a "multi-stakeholder Steering Committee" whose role is determining actions to be mobilized and delivered through the many partnerships, collaborative networks and institutions brought together through the Forum;
- The PC appears to have taken on more of an agenda-setting and fund allocation role that seems to duplicate that of the SC rather than the roles outlined in the Charter.

¹⁷ Currently void.

¹⁸ The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development appears to have replaced the GFAR Donor Support Group.

It should be noted that some of these concerns were identified in GFAR's Second Evaluation Report, in which there were recommendations that were not taken up by the SC¹⁹.

Conceptual framework

We have developed our thinking on governance using a conceptual framework based on four broad and overlapping functions of governance²⁰:

- Global governance;
- Network governance;
- Institutional governance;
- Stewardship.

Focus

Global governance

The first, global governance, relates to the aspirations of the Fund's stakeholders to facilitate the setting of the strategic global agenda for AR4D, to influence policy-makers in the decision-making on AR4D approaches and investments, and to ensure that research institutions engage with all stakeholders in AR4D²¹.

Global governance has elements of both content (essentially, AR4D strategy and policy) and advocacy (promoting change). The key strategic and policy elements are captured in the GCARD Roadmap and are further being developed through such mechanisms as the Global Foresight Hub.

Global governance is crucial to the Forum because its core purpose is to bring about change in AR4D within its stakeholder groups. In other words, the global governance of the Forum provides the mechanism for stakeholder groups to engage in policy dialogue, to determine how to implement AR4D globally and within their own regions and/or sectors, to lead and trigger the desired change and to support each other in implementing the GCARD Roadmap.

Global governance can only work if all the stakeholders can come together in the governing bodies on an equal basis with mutual accountability for realizing the goals of the GCARD Roadmap.

Global governance therefore is the driver of the purpose and principles of the Forum and the Secretariat is the catalyst in providing support to the stakeholders in their efforts to bring about change in AR4D.

¹⁹ We suggest that the proposed Strategic Governance Working Group explore the reasons why some of the recommendations were not taken up.

²⁰ In seeking to understand the nature of the governance of GFAR, we reviewed the history of the founding of GFAR, the Charter and the key roles as expressed in the six principles of the GCARD Roadmap and the four strategic objectives of GFAR (see Part One).

²¹ We recognize that our use of the term 'global governance' may create a debate on the purpose of GFAR and its stakeholders in helping to set the global agenda and we would simply encourage this debate to happen in the context of the strategic reflection we will be recommending in Part Four.

The GCARD process with its engagement with the CGIAR and other stakeholders and its oversight of some of GFAR's strategic priorities is, in itself, part of the global governance process.

Governing body

In the context of the global governance function, GFAR needs a governance body that has the capacity to think strategically in the broad range of disciplines and approaches involved in AR4D. Such a body must be able to bring in the viewpoints of all stakeholders. Above all, it must be able to build consensus around common positions on AR4D.

The latter point is key. As GFAR seeks to develop common positions on AR4D and to advocate for change, it has to have a governing body that, first, is genuinely representative of all the key stakeholders and, second, gets involved in the development of strategy and advocacy of strategic positions.

The global governance role cannot therefore be delegated to the Secretariat. The members of the governing body must be actively engaged.

Secretariat's role

The Secretariat should be involved in developing position papers, in helping to catalyze agreement, in coordinating the Global Foresight Hub and in supporting advocacy efforts. But the governing body must lead proactively.

All of these arguments lead to one conclusion: GFAR needs a broad-based, fairly large and highly representative governing body. In the remainder of Part Three, we have continued to use the term, Steering Committee, while recognizing that the SC could be renamed as the Board at a later date²².

We discuss the implications for the nature and the membership of the SC below.

Focus

Network governance

The second broad governance function, *network governance*, focuses on the functioning of GFAR as a forum, platform and network, and relates to the core elements of the mission statement and strategic objectives: mobilizing stakeholders and catalyzing actions through the promotion of collaborative and innovative partnerships.

The governance roles are primarily concerned with prioritization and management of the medium-term plan, conferences, initiatives and programmes.

Governing body

Although it is theoretically possible for the governing body for the *global governance* function to take direct responsibility for the *network governance* function, this is neither desirable nor feasible. Network governance needs a small, executive management body—one that can meet regularly to monitor progress and to take management decisions.

We would call this governance body, the Executive Committee (EC) to capture the role of ensuring that SC policies are executed.

²² The SC is appropriate for launching the Global Forum and for leading the network. A board would be used in situations where there is a more formal ownership structure.

The EC would be set up by the SC and report to it. We would argue that the EC should be a decision-making body operating within a strategic, policy and accountability (SPA) framework that is drawn up by the SC.

The concept of a SPA framework is essential for the success of the EC. In general, the SC sets the parameters in terms of the strategy and priorities for the forum, it establishes policies and it defines the accountabilities of the key actors (EC, stakeholders and Secretariat). The EC then takes decisions within the SPA framework and is held accountable by the SC.

Membership

Members of the EC would be elected by the SC. In order for the EC to be effective, we believe that the membership should be restricted. The EC does not have to be representative of all stakeholder groups. The ability to give the necessary time and proximity to the Secretariat would be important criteria. The Chair and the SC member representing the host organization would normally be members. The EC could include members who are not members of the SC²³.

Secretariat's role

The Secretariat would play an active role in organizing the GCARD, the forum, catalyzing initiatives and supporting the efforts of the different stakeholders but, if the Forum is to be a dynamic, vibrant and active network, the Secretariat should not be placed in a too prominent profile in network management.

Focus

Institutional governance

The third, broad governance function, *institutional governance*, is the classic governance for an organization or Secretariat. In the private sector, it is called corporate governance.

For a forum such as GFAR, institutional governance provides for the oversight of the Secretariat. The *institutional governance* function approves the strategy, the work plan and budget, it appoints and oversees the work of the Executive Secretary. Institutional governance provides advice and support to the Executive Secretary, it monitors implementation and assesses performance of the Secretariat and of the Executive Secretary.

Governing body

Following the same logic as for network governance, we argue that the proposed EC could carry out the *institutional governance* function under the authority of the SC.

Focus

Stewardship

The fourth governance function, *stewardship*, covers the governance role with respect to the catalytic funding of AR4D initiatives and entities and the transformative strengthening of RFs.

We would argue that GFAR needs a separate governing body to be responsible for the decision-making on the allocation of the trust funds entrusted to GFAR.

Governing body

We do not believe that this function should be carried out by the SC, the EC or the Secretariat, as the decision-making process should have a certain autonomy in order to ensure that there are no conflicts of

²³ In the interim period, we would suggest 4-5 members: the SC Chairperson, the FAO and IFAD representatives, one other SC member and one independent member. The EC would meet at least quarterly and preferably more frequently. Meetings could be done by tele- or video-conference. CGIAR's membership in the EC would be worth considering.

interest in the decisions. In other words, the recipients of resources from the trust funds should not be directly involved in decisions affecting them.

We would call this body: the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC).

Membership

The RAC would be small. It would be set up by, and be under the authority of, the SC, which would set the SPA framework and the criteria against which decisions are taken.

As with the EC, we do not believe that the RAC needs to be representative of all stakeholder groups provided that the SC has established a robust SPA framework. The Chair and the SC member representing the host organization would normally be members. In addition, there could be one or two donor representatives and two independent experts. These experts would have significant experience or academic credibility in the area of AR4D. The Executive Secretary, as the person responsible for fundraising and development the contracts with donors, should be an ex-officio member of the RAC. This is a model commonly used by other grantors and helps improve the quality of decision making, deals with conflict of interest issues, and provides a degree of external accountability.

Secretariat's role

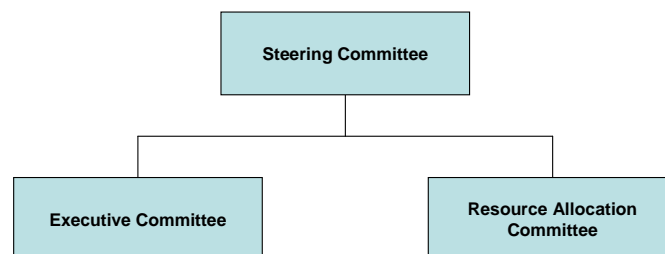
The Secretariat would continue its organizational and administrative roles, including: processing applications; advising applicants; advising the decision-making body; contracting after decision-making; and, monitoring and reporting.

The RAC should not have a fundraising role. The engine for fundraising should remain with the Secretariat who should be able to call on members of the SC and other stakeholders to lead specific fundraising initiatives. Having said this, some informal donor support body would be very useful.

Towards a governance model

The arguments outlined above lead to a streamlined governance model in which the governing body is the SC, which focuses on global governance and the establishment of robust SPA frameworks for network governance, institutional governance and stewardship.

The SC would set up two sub-committees: the EC for institutional and network governance and the RAC for stewardship.



This is, of course, only part of the governance model which would have to be expanded to include:

- Respective roles of GFAR and CGIAR in AR4D and specifically in GCARD;
- Reporting lines of the GCARD Organizing Committee in terms of the design, management, funding and organization of GCARD as well as with respect to decision-making and accountability on the use of funds dedicated to GCARD;
- Roles and responsibilities of FAO as the host organization;
- The revival of a variation of the Donor Support Group that could facilitate fundraising for AR4D and GFAR;
- The roles of the RF in GFAR.

Unity of purpose

GFAR, at the global and regional levels, must have a unity of purpose and constituencies, which implies a similar approach to governance. If this does not happen, then the principle of subsidiarity risks becoming an impediment to strengthening governance and to success of the Forum in general.

This does not mean that each RF has to have exactly the same governance system as the Global Forum but there has to be the same fundamental approach to the inclusion, involvement and participation of all stakeholder groups.

Inclusion and representation

It is vitally important for the success of any forum, platform or network to ensure the active participation of all its members and stakeholders in its initiatives, meetings and governance. This active participation has always to be balanced by the cost of participation, be it in terms of the time involved, the cost of travel and the opportunity cost.

During the interviews, many concerns were expressed to us relating to weaknesses in both participation in, and representation on, governance bodies. In our mind, these issues are also linked to the ownership of GFAR (see below). Representation is a very complex challenge for any forum/network that does not have a formal ownership structure as it inevitably raises issues about the credibility and capacity of “representatives” to present the views of their stakeholder group.

We have received a wide-range of ideas on how to improve the membership of the various governing bodies, for example:

- Nominations for key positions (Chair and Vice-Chair) should be open to members from all regions, and that in order to ensure greater consistency that consideration be given to enabling these key positions to hold office for four years (two cycles of two years), and the Vice-Chair correspondingly but on a staggered cycle so that both do not leave in the same year (for an example of such a staggered cycle see the member rotation model used in the CGIAR Consortium Board);
- Further consideration should be given to whether membership of GFAR’s governance should be based on formal relations or partnerships with established global bodies and other platforms (for example, international farmers associations or NGO umbrella bodies) which are outlined in a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding;
- Agreement on the level and profile of members and their authority in their respective stakeholder groups;

- Consideration be given to resolving the issue whether members are representative of their wider constituency, or instead participate in GFAR deliberations acting as a focal points or in a liaison role—in other words participants from a specific constituency. If the former approach is to be adopted, then more open and democratic global nomination and election procedures need be developed which in turn are supported by an extensive capacity-building process;
- As there is a desire for GFAR to develop direct representational relationship with wider stakeholder constituencies (farmers, NGOs, private sector, and so on), research needs to be commissioned into the experience of other multi-stakeholder platforms (e.g. UN’s Committee on World Food Security’s Civil Society Mechanism) and their attempts to incorporate representatives of external constituencies on a formal basis²⁴. The evidence suggests that that engaging in this way is a complex, expensive, long-term process issue that requires considerable investment of resources and political capital.

Long-term ownership of GFAR

As is common with many fora, platforms or networks, GFAR does not have a formal legal organizational identity. Its Secretariat and funds are administered by FAO under a hosting agreement. It does not have any formal ownership in terms of individuals or institutions.

These organizational arrangements have allowed the sponsoring organizations to set up and evolve GFAR with the minimum of institutional investment and have allowed the stakeholders to engage in GFAR in dynamic and flexible ways.

This arrangement is typical for young joint initiatives but it does not provide a solid foundation in times of uncertainty.

As mentioned earlier, we think that the current informal organizational ownership, with the hosting arrangement by FAO should be continued in the short-term and should be sustainable in the long-term.

However, we recognize that in the long term, GFAR may need to have a revamped and formal ownership structure with institutional members. This might consist of a global Council or Assembly consisting of a significant constituency of stakeholders which would meet every two-five years and elect an executive board. Such a meeting could be held in connection with the GCARD. This would be akin to the model adopted by many NGOs, international networks and large multi-stakeholder platforms.

But we are doubtful that such an approach would be wise in the short- and medium term. To create such a global governance structure from scratch would take an inordinate amount of time and energy, which GFAR cannot afford at the moment, especially as (i) there is insufficient consensus on—or commitment to—GFAR’s strategy and (ii) clarity on the organizational design of GFAR’s relationships with the RFs. In addition, a formal ownership structure would risk inhibiting the dynamic, flexible nature of GFAR.

²⁴ It might be possible to establish links with these mechanisms to facilitate participation in the GFAR meetings.

We recognize that this challenge represents a real dilemma but we conclude that GFAR needs what we have called a *governance transition period* to sort out the challenges it is facing.

Governance represents a major risk to the Global Forum

Our over-arching conclusion is that the governance of the Forum is not sufficiently robust and we fear that weaknesses in governance risk becoming an impediment to the ability of the Forum to realize its global ambitions in AR4D.

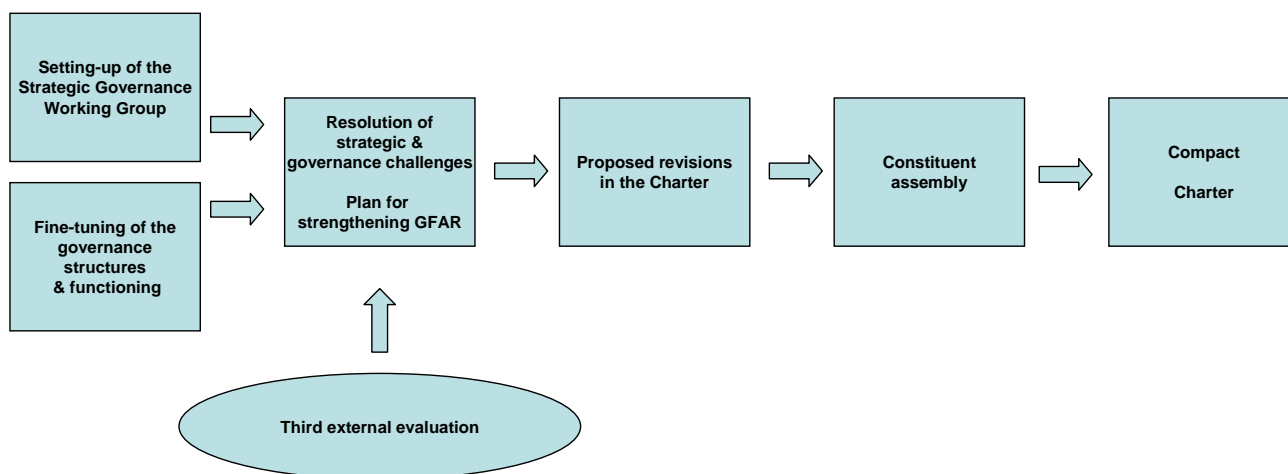
As mentioned earlier in this section: “Global governance is crucial to the Forum because its core purpose is to bring about change in AR4D within its stakeholder groups. In other words, the global governance of the Forum provides the mechanism for stakeholder groups to engage in policy dialogue, to determine how to implement AR4D globally and within their own regions and/or sectors, to lead and trigger the desired change and to support each other in implementing the GCARD Roadmap”.

Without an urgent and significant renewal of the global governance function, we believe that Global Forum may well face major challenges in the next year or two. This risk stems from our analysis that the fundamental purpose can only be exercised by all stakeholders working together in the governing body.

This risk is seriously exacerbated by the current global financial crisis and the associated rapidly-declining resources for development together with increased demands from donors to demonstrate impact and accountability. GFAR cannot afford any loss of confidence among its constituencies and donors.

The Forum must, therefore, deliver on the GCARD Roadmap and must be able to demonstrate results. The solution is to reinforce the identity of GFAR as a mechanism to facilitate all stakeholder groups working together for AR4D and leading change in their respective constituencies.

In the following diagram, we capture the process that should be followed.



Fine-tuning governance structures and processes

A process of fine-tuning GFAR's governance will enable GFAR to concentrate on some of the significant issues it faces.

We propose that, in the transition period, the governing body should remain the SC. The SC would have two sub-committees: the RAC (formerly the PC) and the EC (formerly the MT). The two sub-committees would be set up by, and be accountable, to the SC. The GCARD Organizing Committee should be linked to the EC in this interim period.

In Part Four, we make specific recommendations on the purpose and membership of the SC, EC and RAC as well as on measures to improving their functioning.

These relatively minor changes are designed to provide a reasonably effective governance machinery that will allow the Forum to perform effectively during a transition period, undergo a process of strategic reflection and answer the questions it is confronted with, engage all stakeholders, improve its programmes and services, and institute monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

Constituent assembly

Our core recommendation is to propose that the SC establishes a constituent assembly, comprising all stakeholder groups. Such an assembly, which would be an informal body, would meet in the last quarter of 2013 to develop a new "compact" for the Global Forum and approve a significantly overhauled Charter.

The members of this assembly could include some 40-50 representatives along the following lines:

- Three from CGIAR (CO, CB and FC);
- Six Chairs from the RFs;
- Seven NARS leaders by region;
- Seven NGO leaders by region;
- Seven farmers' organizations by region;
- Seven private sector leaders by region;
- One from IFAD;
- One from FAO;
- At least five from government donors and foundations.

The members would be chosen in their individual capacity and the selection would be made to ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders would be taken into account.

Strategic Governance Working Group

In order to prepare properly for this, we suggest that the SC sets up, as urgently as possible, a Strategic Governance Working Group (SGWG).

ToR of the SGWG

The terms of reference of the SGWG should include the following:

- Key strategic challenges faced by GFAR, especially those that have implications for the design of the Global Forum and its governance



as well as defining what GFAR will focus on and what it will not try to do;

- Identity of the Global Forum and the nature of the forum (see Annex Four for a discussion on stakeholder and network models);
- Ownership of GFAR;
- Roles and strategic priorities for the Secretariat of GFAR, clearly differentiating its roles from the roles of other actors in the Global Forum;
- The role of GCARD in setting the strategic direction for GFAR (as GCARD has replaced the GFAR triennial conference);
- The governance relationships with CGIAR and the roles of GFAR and CGIAR in managing GCARD²⁵;
- The purpose, name and roles of the governing body of GFAR;
- Membership of the governing body;
- The proposed transitional structure of two sub-committees (EC and RAC), their roles and membership (see Recommendations 7-9);
- Clarification of the principle of subsidiarity in GFAR's governance;
- The strategic, policy and accountability frameworks (see Recommendation 10) that would govern the decision-making of the EC and RAC;
- Definition of the NARS;
- The role of the RFs in the governance of GFAR;
- The role of the host agency, FAO, in the governance of GFAR;
- The potential roles and functioning of a donor support group for GFAR;
- The oversight, roles and membership of the GCARD Organizing Committee (see Recommendation 16);
- The functioning of the governance of GFAR (see Recommendations 11-15);

The SGWG should be externally facilitated and every effort should be made to ensure a well-prepared, thoughtful process.

Membership of the SGWG

As the membership of the SC itself is under question, it is vitally important that the SC selects a balanced, representative group, comprising all key stakeholder groups. It is critical to ensure a wide perspective of experiences and views throughout the process. However, until the revised Charter is adopted, GFAR should not try to ensure the full and formal *representation* of each stakeholder group.

²⁵ GCARD is jointly owned by CGIAR and GFAR and GFAR acts as the lead agency in terms of receiving and spending the funds dedicated to GCARD. The role of the GCARD Organizing Committee and how it reports to the SC needs to be clarified.

The SGWG should carry out a consultative process to ensure the buy-in of all stakeholder groups.

Study on inclusion and representation

We believe that a further study on inclusion and representation would be useful. The opinions we have heard on these two inter-related issues are very diverse and, as mentioned earlier, the subject is extremely complex. We believe that the views and capacity of each stakeholder group needs further investigation before decisions are taken and there has to be an in-depth analysis of the potential costs²⁶.

The SGWG should resolve the issues identified in the ToR above, draw up a plan for strengthening the Global Forum and revise the Charter.

Revisions to the Charter

We believe that the Charter needs to be thoroughly overhauled and completely rewritten. It is outdated and no longer reflects the evolution of the Global Forum. It contains a large number of incorrect information. It contains many anomalies, not the least relating to the increasing importance of the GCARD process and the combination of the GFAR General Meeting and the CGIAR General Assembly. Most importantly, it is based on a governance model that inhibits the improvements in governance that are vitally important to ensure the future of GFAR.

Revisions to the charters and statutes of fora, networks and platforms, indeed to any organization, are inevitably complex, highly political and extremely time-consuming. We therefore counsel against any ‘quick fixes’ and we argue that the Charter should only be amended after a comprehensive process of reflection and consultation.

A process of renewal

In conclusion, we would argue that the *governance* transition period that we have proposed for governance should also be seen as a process of renewal for the Forum. A successful SGWG will undoubtedly stimulate reflection, which will, in turn, lead to much greater engagement of all stakeholder groups in GCARD, other initiatives and the governance. All the agreements that will emerge from this process will be enshrined in a new Charter that will provide firmer foundations for the Forum.

Theory of change

We conclude Part Three will some reflections on our theory of change that underpins our conclusions and the recommendations that will follow in the next section:

- The governance approach, structures and processes must be derived from the strategy, identity and organizational design of the Forum;
- “Quick fixes” to the Charter risk being counter-productive unless they are based on agreement on the fundamental challenges and issues facing the Forum;

²⁶ The ToR mentioned a review of the representation and participation of different constituencies. The data generated by the interviews during GCARD2 indicated a wide range of views. We concluded that further, more in-depth, analysis was required before concrete recommendations should—and could—be formulated.

- As the roles and membership of the current governing body (the Steering Committee) will be reviewed as part of the changes in the Charter, it is wise to set a constituent assembly to approve the new Charter;
- Some immediate fine-tuning of the governance structures are easy to implement and would facilitate the functioning of the Forum;
- A transition period for governance reform could, if well-managed, provide the foundation for a process of renewal for the Global Forum.

Part Four—Recommendations

Introduction

Part Four contains our recommendations. These include four overall recommendations and twelve more specific recommendations for fine-tuning governance.

A process of renewal

Based on the analysis outlined above, our overarching recommendation is that the Forum should engage in a process of reflection on the identity, purpose and design of GFAR.

Recommendation 1—Strategic Governance Working Group

The SC should establish the Strategic Governance Working Group (SGWG) and launch a process of reflection and consultation, as a matter of urgency, on the issues we have identified in the proposed ToR outlined in Part Three.

The SC should convene a constituent assembly of all stakeholder groups in the fourth quarter to consider the report of the SGWG, develop a new compact and to adopt a thoroughly overhauled Charter.

This process should be linked to the third five-year external evaluation of GFAR which will be carried out in 2013²⁷.

Recommendation 2—Regional fora

The principles of the GCARD Roadmap, AR4D, and GFAR should be explored at the regional, sub-regional and national levels to harmonize and integrate the same approaches in terms of programme delivery, governance and organization.

In particular, the SC should encourage the RFs to engage in a process of self-reflection on how they want to see themselves evolve as multi-stakeholder fora in their own right, their core purpose, how they want to engage in GFAR and the most appropriate governance structures.

This should lead to greater clarity on governance structures of both GFAR and the RFs.

Recommendation 3—Inclusion and representation

As part of the second phase of the governance review, the SC should commission an in-depth study on inclusiveness and representation, consulting each stakeholder group for their views on how they should be involved, and participate, in the

²⁷ This process should lead to revisions in the strategic documents of the Forum: mission, strategic objectives, MTP framework and so on.

Global Forum and to what degree they should be represented in the governing bodies²⁸.

Design of the governance structures

Recommendation 4—Fine-tuning governance

The SC should strengthen the governance of GFAR by implementing the specific recommendations that follow. We believe that these can be carried out under the authority of the SC within the Charter as it stands today.

During the transition period, more long-term changes in governance should be explored within the context of the Recommendations One, Two and Three²⁹.

Recommendation 5—Roles of the Steering Committee

The SC should play a strategic global governance role, through the further development of strategy in AR4D, facilitating external relationships, incorporating stakeholder perspectives, tracking developments and providing oversight of GFAR's strategic plans, role and direction.

Recommendation 6—Membership of the Steering Committee

The number of SC members should be increased to better represent stakeholder groups or other constituencies (international farmers associations, agro-extension networks, private sector bodies and chambers of commerce, CSO networks or NGO umbrella bodies, global youth groups, universities and other advanced agro-research bodies).

In the transition period, this can be done quite informally through co-option. In doing this, the SC can commit to a review of SC membership through the study proposed in Recommendation 3³⁰.

²⁸ The study should involve a highly consultative process, involving all stakeholder groups. Such a process should, in itself, build the engagement of key stakeholders. The role of the private sector at every level in both the North and the South should be explored and developed.

²⁹ During the transition process, the Secretariat could request other fora/networks for data on the costs of their governance.

³⁰ These co-opted members should be seen as focal points with the responsibility for galvanizing the actors in their respective stakeholder groups. Their status as formal representatives of their stakeholder group should be put in abeyance for the transition period.

Recommendation 7—Executive Committee

The SC should establish an Executive Committee (EC) to replace the existing Management Team. The SC should delegate its network and institutional governance functions to the EC within a defined strategic, policy and accountability framework that should be drawn up by the SC.

The EC should oversee the Executive Secretary and the management of the Secretariat and should give special priority to the development of an M&E process to support GFAR goal of improving programme quality and promote new learning.

The EC should hold the Executive Secretary to account for his/her performance and the performance of the Secretariat.

Recommendation 8—Establishment of the Resource Allocation Committee

The SC should establish the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC) and close down the PC. The SC should delegate to this new committee the authority to take decisions on the trust funds provided to GFAR within a defined strategic, policy and accountability framework that will be drawn up by the SC. The RAC should focus explicitly on decision-making on funds entrusted to GFAR. This would mean that the more general programmatic role of the current PC would be carried out by the SC. We do not see the RAC as an advisory committee to the SC but rather as a body that is empowered to take decisions by the SC within the criteria that are drawn up by the SC.

Recommendation 9—Membership of the Resource Allocation Committee

The membership and protocols of the RAC should be drawn up to ensure that funding decisions and/or recommendations are not made by members likely to benefit from such decision. The membership should include at least one donor representative and two independent experts.

The Executive Secretary, as the person responsible for fundraising and the development of contracts with donors, should be an ex-officio member. The executive Secretary should negotiate the contracts with recipients of the funds and should act as the certifying officer for assessing their performance in achieving results and utilizing the funds.

In the interim, until the RAC is established, we recommend that, decisions/recommendations are only made if there is appropriate quorum and those PC members from regions or organisations likely to benefit absent themselves from discussions and decisions.

Recommendation 10—Strategic, policy and accountability frameworks



The SC should draw up strategic, policy and accountability frameworks for the Executive Committee and the Resource Allocation Committee.

Governance processes

We believe that there are a wide range of good practices that the new governance structures should adopt. These should be developed and put into operation immediately after the SC takes decisions on the above recommendations. A detailed code of good practice could be developed at the same time³¹.

In the meantime we make two practical recommendations:

Recommendation 11—Meetings

GFAR invest, as a matter of some urgency, in web-based modalities for holding meetings in order to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings and the transaction cost of governance; in this perspective, the EC should monitor overall governance costs provided by the Secretariat meetings and member attendance, and any investment in governance development—and the Secretariat should redouble its efforts to ensure governance meetings are supported by appropriate documentation and information provided in an accessible and timely manner.

Recommendation 12—Support to governance

The EC should monitor basic governance support-practices—specifically in terms of delivery of board papers and minutes in sufficient time, meetings scheduling, provision of requested information, supporting board recruitment, nomination and election processes; and managing the burden of governance support on the Secretariat.

Governance membership

GFAR's status as a global multi-stakeholder platform means that the membership of its key governance bodies should be more inclusive and balanced. Recruitment, nomination and election processes should open and transparent. Membership of committees should be marked by more consistency, engagement and turnover. We recognize that membership reform is a medium-term priority. In the meantime, we make three practical recommendations:

Recommendation 13—Election procedures

Governance nomination and election procedures be clearly communicated on the web and followed in practice, including clear protocols for re-election processes which are shared with stakeholder constituencies.

³¹ This would be developed as part of Phase Two of the governance review, as envisaged in the ToR.

Recommendation 14—Engagement of stakeholders

New initiatives need to be developed and continued to attract the interest of stakeholder groups in becoming actively involved in GFAR’s governance bodies. Consequently, the EC should act as a “search” committee to short list potential candidates, and “advertising” governance positions on GFAR’s website and other appropriate sites (as is already happening). GFAR needs to be more proactive in communicating its activities directly to different stakeholder constituencies, including more targeted communication and using the web and social networks to engage with these groups.

Recommendation 15—Attendance at meetings

The SC member and his/her alternate should not normally attend the same meeting, unless there is an exceptional reason.

Attendance at committee meetings should be monitored and consideration should be given to finding alternative solutions in situations where committee members are unable to attend on regular basis or fail to attend, for example, three consecutive meetings.

GCARD Organizing Committee

We conclude Part Four with a specific recommendation on the ad-hoc GCARD Organizing Committee.

Recommendation 16—GCARD Organizing Committee

The SGWG should review the status of the GCARD Organizing Committee. The Organizing Committee should report to both the SC and the CGIAR but the decision-making authority and accountability for the management of GCARD funds must be clarified. The SC should decide whether it should be a temporary or a formal standing committee.

The roles and responsibilities of this committee should be clearly defined, levels and lines of decision-making authority identified, and membership and nomination processes clarified.

It should be noted that we have not covered the roles of the Secretariat in any detail as this is outside our remit—except with respect to the support provided by the Secretariat in the governance processes.

Conclusion—The Way forward

The thrust of our argument is that GFAR is facing—or will face in the coming year—many challenges. The priority in 2013 must be to think through, clarify and build consensus around its identity, strategic intention, organizational design and then to prioritize its activities.

In order to do this, we have recommended that the SC establish a constituent assembly, comprising all stakeholder groups, which would meet in the last quarter of 2013 to approve a new Charter. In order to prepare properly for this, we suggest that the SC sets up, as urgently as possible, a Strategic Governance Working Group (SGWG).

We have therefore argued that GFAR needs to view the year 2013 as a transition period. In fact, as the real challenge is more transformative in nature, 2013 should be seen a process of renewal during which all the stakeholders engage actively in GFAR as a multi-stakeholder AR4D global forum, on the basis of the agreed GCARD Roadmap.

We submit our recommendations to the SC in the expectation that the report will generate considerable debate within GFAR which will then lead to key decisions being taken by the SC.

Once these decisions have been taken, there will be a need for detailed work to be undertaken on the Charter, the mandates and membership of the SC and new governance bodies, and the mission and strategic documents of GFAR. This work has already been foreseen by the SC as a possible second phase of the governance review.

Piers Campbell, Alex Eriksson, John Hailey and Judith Hushagen

Bath, Geneva, La Paz and Montreal

28 January 2012



1. Tom Arnold (CONCERN)
2. Mario Allegri (FORAGRO)
3. Claudio Barriga (GFAR Vice-Chair)
4. Robin Bourgeois (GFAR Secretariat)
5. Rodney Cooke (former IFAD)
6. Ali Darwish (Greenline- Beirut)
7. Kristin Davis (GRAS)
8. Philip Dearden (CITD, Univ of Wolverhampton)
9. Alain Derevier (MFA France)
10. Nikita Eriksen-Hamel (CIDA)
11. Peter Gardiner (Science Council Secretariat - CGIAR/FAO)
12. Catherine Guichard (EFARD)
13. Steve Hall (World Fish)
14. Clement Hodosain (KGA)
15. Mark Holderness (GFAR Exec Sec)
16. Christian Hoste (Agreenium)
17. Monty Jones (GFAR Chair)
18. Philip Kiriro (EAFF)
19. Monica Kapiriri (Consultant, FARA and former GFAR Vice-Chair)
20. Uma Lele (ex-World Bank)
21. Ahohiva Levi (POETCO)
22. Chiku Malunga (CADECO)
23. Ajit Maru (GFAR Secretariat)
24. Shantanu Mathur (IFAD)
25. Nora McKeon (former FAO)
26. Chris Macaloo (World Neighbours)
27. Lucy Muchoki (PANAAC)
28. Harry Palmier (GFAR Secretariat)
29. Raj Paroda (APAARI and GFAR PC Chair)
30. Estrella Penunia (AFA)
31. Prabhu Pingali (BMGF)
32. Enrica Porcari (CIO, CGIAR)
33. Thomas Price (GFAR Secretariat)
34. David Radcliffe (EU)
35. Frank Rijsberman (CGIAR Consortium)
36. Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin (IAE CGIAR)
37. Sujiro Seam (MFA France)
38. Patrick Taloboe (MTA)
39. Jonathan Wadsworth (CGIAR Fund Council)
40. Ann Waters-Bayer (ETC)
41. Gine Zwart (Oxfam Novib)

Annex Two—Key documents reviewed

We have reviewed a broad range of documents, both internal and external, relating to GCARD, GFAR governance and the Secretariat. The following documents have been referenced in this report.

The Memorandum of Understanding between IFAD and FAO concerning the Secretariat of GFAR (May 2003).

The Charter of GFAR (July 2006).

New Challenges and Perspectives for the Global Forum on Agricultural Research: The Second External Review of GFAR (January 2007).

The GCARD Road Map: Transforming Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) Systems for Global Impact (FAO 2011).

GFAR Medium-Term Plan 2012-2014: Overarching framework. 26th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting Accra, May 2012.

Terms of Reference for the GFAR Governance Review. 26th GFAR Steering Committee Meeting, Accra, Ghana, May 2012.

GCARD1 Synthesis Report and Global Author Report.

Annual Reports

Annex Three—List of networks explored

The following list provides a sample of the following networks that we have reviewed either as part of our internet-based survey or through previous work that we have done with them.

AATF

ActionAid

ALINe

Association of Women's Rights in Development

BOND - UK INGO Network

Civicus

Civil Society Mechanism of Committee on World Food Security

DEC - UK Disaster Emergency Committee (funding network of UK humanitarian INGOs)

GNDR - Global Network for Disaster Reduction

IDSN - International Dalit Solidarity Network

Provention

Social Watch

Transparency International

Annex Four—Governance of stakeholder model and network model: A briefing paper

This is an excerpt from a briefing paper prepared by Dr John Hailey, a member of the consultancy team.

Stakeholder model

The following review of the governance of both the stakeholder model and network model increasingly being adopted by global frameworks, multi-stakeholder platforms and international civil society organisations (ICSO) highlights their characteristics and the implications for governance. It draws on the work of the Berlin Civil Society Center's Global Governance Project (see Taking a Strategic Approach to Governance Reform in International Civil Society Organisations, Berlin Civil Society Centre, 2012).

The Stakeholder Model best serves organisations or collaborations whose mission is especially sensitive to demonstrating a public mandate (across dispersed constituencies) for what the organisation is and does. The model's essence is for individuals to engage meaningfully with each other. It functions as a broker in problem solving, sharing of information, learning and channelling the members' diverse expertise. Thus, the model would be of particular application for an organisation where the mission highly depends on the interaction of the organization's members, such as global campaigns and appeals.

Global platforms, multi-stakeholder platforms and ICSOs with a large base of individual members or National Member organisations that think about providing the membership at large with more - and more direct - influence on the organization's strategy and policies may want to consider this model. Ideally members should come from both the supporter and beneficiary side which would help balance fulfillment of the mission against both perspectives.



Key Characteristics

The Stakeholder Model is a hybrid with elements from the three other models. It tries to combine the governance of the traditional platform or

ICSO with democratic principles associated with social movements. If applied effectively it should increase credibility of the ICSO, increase the legitimacy of its mission and improve its impact by mobilising popular support.

In the Stakeholder Model, all formal governance bodies enjoy a public mandate from a recognized membership. The Stakeholder Model can recognize different types of mandating members - typically these are supporters, such as volunteers and individual donors and individual beneficiaries, but also National Member organisations. Nominations for election may be limited to bona fide members that are internationally canvassed and/or (self-) nominated. Candidates can be pre-selected to promote equity, gender and geographic balance, competency and other requirements. Web-based mechanisms for participation in mandating processes beyond simply voting are increasingly employed which reduces practical obstacles to direct governance.

Governance is transnational, being mandated directly from a membership located anywhere in the world. In order to accommodate individual members on both the supporter and the recipient side, conditions for membership should be tailored to the needs and resources of both. For instance, donating money, labour or know-how could be equally valued as a contribution which qualifies for membership. Thus recipients could gain equal access to the organisation's governance by contributing their local knowledge and their efforts in running a project. This would be a significant step forward in overcoming the donor centric governance of many platforms and ICSOs. The democratic principle of "one person - one vote" should be applied.

One of the most critical conditions for the success of this model is the definition of the rights individual members enjoy. In direct democracy, international governance draws authority and legitimacy from, and is accountable to, those enjoying a 'constitutional' right to select those who govern. While the right to elect representatives is a necessary condition for the success of the Stakeholder Model, recent developments show that a system which limits citizens to casting their vote once every 3 to 5 years no longer meets the expectations of many, especially younger, people. They expect to be directly involved in key decisions and do not want to leave their elected representatives with an unrestricted mandate

Global organisations wanting to establish democratic governance which fulfils today's expectations need to establish provisions for members' participation which go beyond the right to elect their representatives. The Stakeholder Model should provide members with the possibility to participate directly in discussions on issues related to the organization's mission and those of major strategic importance. Internet-based discussion platforms and voting facilities should be used regularly by the organization's governing bodies in order to canvass the position of the membership at large.

The model's viability depends on the internet-based Global Discussion Forum which would allow the different parts of the organisation - members, governing bodies, management and employees - and possibly key stakeholders and partners - to participate in discussions which would guide the governing bodies' strategic decisions. In order to use the Global Discussion Forum successfully as a broker for channelling information, expertise and learning among the members, choosing the right membership criteria is crucial. Language barriers and the high cost of IT systems also need to be overcome to make effective use of the discussion forum. Final decision making and responsibility should stay

with the elected governance bodies. However, there would be the possibility to provide the members with the power to make a small number of key decisions (e.g. changing the mission). International management operates under the direct authority of the elected Global Board of Directors.

Implications

This model offers the strongest demonstration of public accountability and legitimacy and acts as a counterweight to suspicion about foreign funding, it signals a commitment to belonging to the fabric of civil society. It can provide an answer to the political questions - 'who mandated you?' What right do you have to be here and speak?

Direct governance of a transnational body is a highly negotiation-dependent arrangement that often works against rapid, directive decision making. However, the real time nature of net exchanges may offer the prospect of more rapid feedback on critical issues that call for urgent deliberation and the endorsement of proposed decisions. An upside is demonstrated local commitment, ownership and accountability for engaging in transnational agendas. Governance relies on a Board directly elected from and by a worldwide membership. The organisation does not enjoy authority over those mandated to vote.

The Stakeholder Model only works properly if a significant percentage of members are prepared to contribute to the organization's decision making. In addition, the intermediary position of ICSOs as decision makers to, and service providers for, those who provide money in order to help others, would have to change. But this traditional concept is being strongly challenged anyway and increasingly replaced by more equitable and effective arrangements, so, why not opt for a model in which all stakeholders have a say and contribute equally?

Few global platforms and ICSOs successfully include beneficiary constituencies in governance arrangements. Through appropriate membership criteria the Stakeholder Model could and should be open to beneficiaries and thus provide those whose interests should matter most with direct access to decision making. One of the obvious advantages of internet-based "virtual" CSOs is the direct communication many of them offer between donors and beneficiaries. Bringing together both sides in the global governance and in a Global Discussion Forum could address shortcomings in accountability.

The Stakeholder Model is insufficiently described by its structure alone; it is highly dependent on governance culture and processes. Some of the conditions which are key to successful democratic global governance are:

Governance - and to some degree management - bodies need to be willing to engage with the membership at large and on a continuous basis.

Traditional donors and recipients need to be prepared to redefine their roles in the framework of an equitable partnership.

The organisation need to be ready to concede much of their power as an intermediary and allow this power to migrate to a democratic global partnership.

Most critically, the success of the Stakeholder Model depends on all, or at least the vast majority of its immediate stakeholders being open, willing to trust and ready to compromise for the greater good.

The principle of democratic governance and ‘public’ mandate can be applied to all other models. Its effect is to make public and open processes of power allocation that are often a private and poorly transparent affair inviting mistrust and (political) vulnerability. If practiced as a permanent, open and respectful dialogue among members and between members and their elected governing bodies the Stakeholder Model will strengthen the organisations international legitimacy

Network model

The Network Model is conducive to missions that require popular engagement, policy influence, agenda setting and/or knowledge production at a global level, while drawing from a broad base of experience, expertise and aspiration at the local level. This relates easily to the field of advocacy (on human rights, environmental or development issues) and popular mobilisation. The Network Model is particularly well-suited to issues/causes where drawing from a diversity of voices and capabilities is important, and where conformity and alignment (with a particular organisational architecture, programmatic approach or brand identity) is not essential.

In achieving its mission the Network Model very much depends on the active and frequent contributions of a large number of those who are part of the network. In order to secure lively participation, contributors need to have a strong feeling of ownership. And the feeling of ownership depends very much on contributors’ direct influence on the overall strategy and direction of the network. Formal governance therefore needs to be a very light touch providing contributors with opportunities to participate on all levels of the network.

Key characteristics

This model connects a set of actors called contributors. Contributors could encompass local entities, individuals, foundations, corporations, etc. A network could be constituted by just one relatively homogeneous group of contributors or by contributors from several or all of the categories listed above. Contributors may be dispersed throughout the world but they are bound together by a shared set of values and goals that they can achieve more effectively if they work together collectively. The model works optimally when it can maximize the benefits (and minimise the costs) of collaboration.

Each independent actor can preserve its own identity, constituency and programme. The network governance does not have authority over its contributors. The network embodies the shared values and goals of the collection of contributors it is composed of, and provides a collective identity that fosters cohesion among the contributors. Engagement in the network is fuelled by trust, not control. All contributors have equal status.

A Board of Directors is nominated and elected by contributors through an open election process. The election process is virtual and is informed by “internal campaigning” which requires candidates for the Board to communicate their vision and priorities for the network, so that contributors are able to hold them accountable, in the case they are successfully elected. The Board’s primary accountability is to the values and goals shared by contributors.

The network’s main principles are diversity and inclusion of voices and perspectives of contributors in the pursuit of its mission. The Board

applies these principles in its decision making process. Major campaigns, positions and strategy are based on consultation with contributors. Online network meetings are conducted for consultation with contributors, to define strategy or to agree on tactics. The regular and systematic use of crowd sourcing software and techniques maintains unity of purpose and action across the network.

The Board may initiate and manage network-wide processes of strategy development; propose criteria for and responsibilities of contributors; establish Secretariat roles and responsibilities and provide supervision to the Secretariat; maintain and develop the collective identity (or brand if existent); establish dispute resolution processes; etc.

A Secretariat implements the strategy set by the Board in consultation with contributors. It provides a node of contact for the contributors, who are connected virtually to each other as much as they are connected to the Secretariat. The Secretariat provides the logistics for contributors' communication and cooperation. It may play a role in catalysing the sharing of information, expertise and learning. The Secretariat may also compile and share information and intelligence from contributors, produce globally-relevant research and advocacy products (that connect local to global, and global to local), coordinate (but not lead) global campaigns and network-level communication, and evaluate the impact of collective efforts.

To the extent possible, the Secretariat's nodal function may be shared with particular contributors who have the capacity and interest to play that role. The model could have multiple sub-nodes that disperse some of the Secretariat's functions throughout the network. Centres of excellence could emerge on a variety of topics/functions, and these would become sub-nodes within the larger network. The Secretariat itself can be geographically dispersed if technology can offer opportunities for integration, communication and convening at low cost.

Implications

This model offers a fluid way of connecting highly independent members of organisations and individuals around shared values and goals or even a joint mission, without exerting a lot of control and establishing too many rules. Contributors can enter and exit, depending on their assessment of the value that being a contributor provides, sending clear signals to the Secretariat and the Board about what the network value is and when course corrections need to be made.

Because the model does not emphasise alignment and rules, it can be flexible and fluid, and decisions can be made speedily. Slow decision making would decrease the value of being a contributor for those who join the network with the prospect of global integration and action. Given that the Board and Secretariat are accountable to the shared values and goals of the contributors (and the contributors have mechanisms to follow Board activity and hold the Board accountable), their legitimacy is high.

Given the distribution of key roles and responsibilities between a wide range of contributors, power is similarly dispersed. Contributors do not cede power to the network organisation. They are independent individuals or organisations which join the network based on shared values and goals. The Board has very limited power. Being dependent on the feeling of ownership and the good will of contributors the Board's mostly informal power results from the degree in which it is able to read and transform the will of the contributors into leadership and action. The Secretariat's power is completely informal. It stems

from the successful logistics and support the Secretariat provides to the contributors.

The Network Model is best suited to govern internet-based activities. But “traditional” platforms and ICSOs may also wish to consider this model, possibly only for governing the virtual part of their activities: Many face the challenge that their traditional governance is not able to cope with the requirements of their internet-based activities. Decision making is too slow, ownership too tight and broad based participation too limited to fulfill the needs and reap the benefits of the internet community. As the virtual dimension of ICSOs’ work continues to gain importance and as key stakeholders’ expectations of involvement increase, ICSOs will have to find ways to avoid that the set-up and functioning of their governance impedes the required adaptations. Against this background network governance may become an attractive option, either for the ICSO as a whole or for a semi-independent virtual spin-off.

The Network Model could be adapted to a more centralized, rules-based model (if the Secretariat were provided more capacity and resources), or a more decentralized, diverse model (if multiple contributors stepped up to take on some of the roles/functions that otherwise the Secretariat would have). The model can also be adapted to be highly virtual (with elections, team-based work, and even board meetings conducted virtually) or highly personal (with many functions requiring physical presence).