



Reform & Renewal

Constituent Assembly 24-26 August 2015

Redefining Collective Action

Discussion Paper #2

GFAR Strategic Governance Working Group
July 2015

Summary: *In August 2015, stakeholders of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) will come together as a Constituent Assembly to consider the strategic direction and future governance of the Forum. To help guide and inform discussion, background papers have been prepared on each of the four topics to be addressed at the meeting.*

*GFAR provides its constituencies the opportunity to engage in collective actions where they can bring their capabilities together for development success. Yet within the Forum, the concept of “collective action” is not well defined or understood. The purpose of this paper is to clearly **define collective action in the GFAR context, and to highlight its value to all stakeholders** –public, private, producer and civil society sectors.*

Key decision-points at the end of the document will form the basis for further discussion.

Introduction

As a unique global forum, GFAR aims to bring together the multiple stakeholders involved in the generation of, access to and use of agriculture-related knowledge at all levels. GFAR provides its constituencies with the opportunity to engage in *collective actions* where they can bring their resources and capabilities together for development success.

But what constitutes a collective action? How can we ensure that our actions are truly inclusive and equitable and that every relevant stakeholder has a seat at the innovation table?

The MANNET Review, commissioned by the GFAR Steering Committee in 2013, recommended changes to GFAR governance to ensure it is more effective and more robust, and representative of all its stakeholder groups. It also recommended a number of strategic issues be addressed as they impacted on governance. **The recommendations of the MANNET Review were accepted with due clarifications and amendments by the GFAR Steering Committee in its 2013 meeting in Istanbul.**

As a result of these recommendations, the GFAR Strategic Governance Working Group (SGWG) is leading a process of strategic reflection and renewal. It has prepared four discussion papers for the consideration of those attending the Constituent Assembly, on four inter-related themes.

1. Renewing GFAR's Role and Purpose
- 2. Re-defining Collective Action**
3. Reframing Governance
4. Resourcing the Global Forum

A key outcome of the review was that new governance arrangements need to consider how **GFAR's role** can now be clearly delineated in structures and processes, with the Forum's role and **actions** owned, delivered and reported on by the constituencies concerned, who are directly accountable for delivery to agreed GFAR goals.

Discussion Paper 1 examines the Forum's evolving role, which leads us to re-examine our ways of working. The purpose of this paper is to clearly define collective action in the GFAR context, and to highlight the value to all stakeholders – public, private, producer and civil sectors – of working as a truly inclusive movement for change. Key decision-points at the end of the document will form the basis for further discussion.

The GCARD Road Map, formulated and agreed to by thousands of stakeholders across the agricultural sector, clearly states the need to ensure equitable partnership and accountability among all stakeholders and to make better use of agricultural and agri-food knowledge and capabilities around the world. The interests of farmers and consumers are central in effectively shaping and implementing research and innovation.

By their nature, actions by individual sectors will find it challenging to achieve impact at scale. To achieve this, it is increasingly recognized and required that research and innovation initiatives need to be better integrated, inter-sectoral and make more efficient and effective use of existing knowledge, capabilities and experiences around the world. All constituencies are seeking a demonstrably inclusive and equitable approach to agricultural research and innovation, one that involves and puts the intended beneficiary – farmers or other actors – at the start and heart of the process of change, rather than at the end.

What is ‘Collective Action’? A New Definition

In the context of GFAR, it is suggested that a GFAR collective action be defined as follows:

“A collective action is a set of coherent and coordinated actions initiated by three or more GFAR constituencies¹, which agree to commit resources together towards clear areas of change in agricultural innovation systems and their role in development. The collective action has to align with GFAR’s objectives and directly contribute to the delivery and achievement of the Forum’s outputs and outcomes.”

The related value proposition for GFAR, operating globally and across regions, is:

“The Global Forum uniquely catalyzes, and assures by transparent mutual accountability, the equitable involvement of all constituencies in collective actions. The Global Forum engages the voice of the people to make agricultural research and innovation systems more sustainable, accountable and responsive to development needs.”

Collective signifies that multiple constituencies have agreed to work together and share resources. Action indicates that the constituencies initiate and conduct a set of related, resourced activities together or jointly. This may fall within any of the areas of work of GFAR, be it a common sharing of knowledge, tangible policy or other processes in particular contexts, collective advocacy, joint action in capacity development or specific partnerships in innovation platforms at various levels.

Collective Actions at Work

A renewed Global Forum of all sectors would deliver “GFAR Collective Actions” to foster change in the international, inter-regional, regional and national systems concerned, catalyzing funds and actions through, for instance, the proposed Agricultural Innovation and Enterprise Facility. More detailed consideration of the issue of resourcing is provided in Discussion Paper 4. Collective action via multi-stakeholder innovation platforms will help ensure more integrated, locally inspired and stakeholder-driven responses to strengthen research and innovation systems at various levels, geographic scales and thematic foci.

A Partners Assembly, as proposed in the governance options outlined in Discussion Paper 3, would provide the strategic direction needed to ensure this better integration. The GCARD consultation process will capture demand and co-ordinate collective actions. Collective actions endorsed in national systems or at trans-national innovation system levels, could be referred to the Facility for support.

GFAR provides its constituencies the opportunity to engage in *collective actions* where they can bring their resources and capabilities together for development success, creating synergies, efficiencies and mutual benefits and enabling delivery in each of the multiple arenas required for impact at scale. **Six principles are proposed here** that can help all those involved in GFAR contribute to mutually supportive and accountable development outcomes. A GFAR collective action implemented as proposed will produce results that could not be achieved without the existence of the Forum, because partners would not otherwise have been able to engage in these actions and at this scale.

¹ Whether at national, regional or global levels

PRINCIPLES OF GFAR COLLECTIVE ACTION

1. In a GFAR Collective Action, “Collective” indicates that at least three GFAR constituencies have agreed to work together and share resources towards a common purpose. “Action” indicates that the constituencies jointly initiate a set of coherent and coordinated actions together.
2. A GFAR Collective Action involves and includes the resource-poor as stakeholders and aims to bring a positive impact on the lives of the poor smallholders/producers.
3. Constituencies involved in a GFAR Collective Action agree to commit and mobilize resources together to strengthen and transform agricultural innovation systems and to enhance their development benefits.
4. The Collective Action has to align with GFAR’s objectives and directly contribute to the delivery and achievement of the Global Forum’s outputs and outcomes, as described in the GCARD Road Map and GFAR Medium Term Plan.
5. Branding of Collective Actions is required that recognizes the contributions of all partners and attributes the results and outcomes to the Forum and the contributing partners.
6. The Collective Actions are articulated with appropriate development actions and policy processes at country, regional or global levels.

Branding Collective Actions

A GFAR collective action implemented as proposed will produce results that could not be achieved without the existence of the Forum, because partners would not otherwise have been able to engage in these actions and at this scale. The sum is greater than the individual parts, the actions of the individual constituencies.

It is important that organizations are able to express their own values and be credited for their roles, while also demonstrating their commitment to these collective actions. Associating collective actions with the GFAR brand can enable this to happen and build a greater scale of recognition and impact all round. This implies operating to a common GFAR ethos of multi-stakeholder involvement and inclusion of the resource-poor as stakeholders, rather than a formal administrative certification process.

GFAR collective actions demonstrate our joint contributions to change through the Global Forum, and a branding of collective actions is required that recognizes the contributions of all partners and attributes the results to both the Forum and those partners.

By linking GFAR collective actions to outcomes of the GFAR Medium Term Plan, the clear contribution of the GFAR partners to global development outcomes will also be easier to demonstrate.

Engaging in collective actions requires that partners have an enabling environment and the capacity to do so on a fair and equitable basis. Some constituencies may need some support before and while engaging in GFAR collective actions. For example, farmer organizations may need strengthened capacity to engage in foresight, while a regional forum may need strengthened capacity to become wholly inclusive, to engage in institutional and strategic reforms, or to coordinate collective actions at regional level. Hence, in the GFAR Theory of Change, the principle is one of a ‘ripple’ effect, from actions fostered by discussions and programs fostered by the collective within the Global Forum and implemented among the partners in GFAR.

Why is collective action important?

GFAR provides its constituencies² the opportunity to engage in *collective actions* where they can bring their resources and capabilities together for development success.

While the concept of collective action, along with related concepts of partnership and inclusivity, is widely recognized in GFAR key documents, “Collective actions” has only recently been defined in the context of GFAR’s actions. An operational framework for it has been agreed among constituencies as the GFAR [Medium Term Plan](#)³. As a result, the Forum has only recently been able to show the true value of its collective actions.

Prior to agreement on the GFAR Medium Term Plan, GFAR’s diverse partners might have considered that any activity that could be related to the Forum’s global program of work or plan of action was *de facto* a contribution to collective action. Thus, an individual action related to an outcome of the Medium Term Plan would be a “collective” action. However, collective action implies going beyond a simple sum of individual actions.

The public sector, including public research, extension and education organizations and governments; the private sector, which can include the large, multinational corporations, national corporations and businesses and small, medium and micro enterprises; farmer organizations, cooperatives and producer organizations, and civil society, consumer and non-government organizations all play a role in GFAR collective actions.

A core element of the GCARD Road Map is to “ensure equitable partnership and accountability among all stakeholders” and for the interests of farmers and consumers to help shape and implement research and facilitate innovation. Increasingly, donors are looking to more integrated, inter-sectoral development initiatives to achieve impacts at scale. They seek a truly – and demonstrably – inclusive and equitable approach to agricultural research and innovation, one that puts producers – and in particular smallholder producers – at the centre of the innovation process, rather than being seen as “beneficiaries” or “end-users” from someone else’s innovation process.

GFAR is mandated to foster the engagement of diverse individual organizations and networks to work together in activities, at national, regional or global levels, which contribute to an agreed development goal. The concept of partnership is central to “collective action” and the essence of a renewed Global Forum.

Conclusion

GFAR has the capacity and mandate to engage and catalyze the interaction of diverse individual organizations and networks to work together with a common purpose, in activities, at national, regional or global levels, which contribute to an agreed development goal. This recognizes partnership as central to “collective actions” and is the essence of a renewed Global Forum.

An action that demonstrates the characteristics of a GFAR Collective Action can foster change in international, regional and national systems. A GFAR Collective Action has the potential to become a recognized international standard, underpinned by mutual accountability processes as an assurance for, and an essential contribution to, sustainable development.

² See Discussion Paper #1 (GFAR’s Role and Purpose) for those sectors that are considered constituencies

³ http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload//311378/MTP_final.pdf

Discussion Points

- 1. Are the six principles stated above sufficient to guide the way that GFAR operates? If not, what additional principle(s) should be included?**
- 2. How well do you feel the GFAR value proposition fits within the context of GFAR Collective Actions? If you don't agree with the proposition as stands, what changes do you feel could improve it?**

Decision Points

Agreement on the definition and principles of GFAR Collective Actions

and

Agreement on the GFAR Value Proposition