At the Global Knowledge Initiative (GKI), we believe many of the world’s most pressing challenges (food security, public health, education, etc.) are complex and require the engagement of individuals with diverse strengths, values, resources, and interests. We believe that addressing these challenges requires a networked approach to problem solving.

The Value of Network Facilitation & Design

Networks – formal and informal structures of interlinked actors sharing common interest or values – hold immense potential for unlocking transformative change. Unlocking this potential takes facilitation and supporting structures. GKI’s work designing and facilitating networks across the globe demonstrates that the most successful collaborations do not happen randomly. Instead, they are cultivated through a structured, facilitated process. When designed and facilitated well, networks present diverse actors with opportunities to effectively pursue shared ends. Network facilitators are essential for driving the alignment of interests, brokering new partnerships, and setting a course for strategy design. According to recent research, facilitators help enable adaptive space by facilitating the generation and movement of ideas and information across a system, creating conditions for emergence. They do this by capitalizing on two network structures associated with idea generation and flow: brokerage and group cohesion. Great network leaders build trust and a common language among actors for effective communication. USAID suggests using a facilitative approach—one that focuses on indirect interventions at strategic points within a system to strengthen the system and align the interests of actors—can lead to more effective and sustainable development results.\(^{(2)}\)

(GKI offers the following services:

- Facilitation of short network convenings
- Analysis of network leverage points
- Shared vision establishment
- Strategy development for joint action
- Collaborative innovation support
- Ongoing network management

GKI has shaped networks in all regions of the world and across many sectors. We focus on tackling complex global challenges to maximize social impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Approach to Problem Solving</th>
<th>GKI’s Approach to Network Facilitation and Design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Dense, tedious, one sided discussion</td>
<td>- Interactive, participatory, engaging convening</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Disconnected actors and misaligned incentives</td>
<td>- Resources matched to needs and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overlapping missions and duplicated efforts</td>
<td>- Clarified collaborative innovation strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Biased, arbitrary power structures</td>
<td>- Negotiated relationships and mutual power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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How GKI Facilitates and Designs Networks

The networks we facilitate and design are:

- Locally-focused
- Facilitated
- Systems-oriented
- Flexible & iterative
- Collaborative and human-centered

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\(^{(2)}\) USAID. 2017, April. Evidence Base for Collaborating, Learning and Adapting.
Regardless of whether you are hosting a convening and need a facilitator, have a network that requires support, or want to design a network from scratch, we are here to help. Named one of the world’s top 100 social innovations for the next century, GKI enthusiastically embraces opportunities to share our models and methods with others who are passionate about collaborative innovation and development.

**Contact us by emailing GKI Chief Operating Officer, Sara Farley at sara@gkinitiative.org.**