

LINK: Locating challenges, enabling local solutions, and connecting international networks to solve critical development challenges



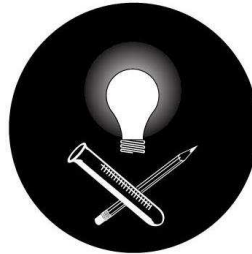
Why do solvable challenges—in health, education, agriculture, and other areas—often stymie those who passionately hope to solve them? Social and economic development challenges are complex, resulting from multiple, compounding causes. While some general approaches to confront them may exist, effective solutions are often context-specific, and require diverse, specialized knowledge and resources. For many such challenges, a lack of political or donor will—or a mismatch between status quo efforts and needed, innovative solutions—means that resources are wasted, or fail to address the true needs. Efforts to tackle complex issues fall behind the rapidly changing landscape, with scant resources—or the wrong resources—being brought to bear. The cycle of poverty continues. The gap between rich and poor grows. Solvable challenges remain entrenched.

But it doesn't have to be this way. GKI believes it is not a failure of intellect, nor a lack of resources, that keeps us from solving complex challenges. Rather, the failure lies in *how* we connect committed individuals and their resources—technologies, expertise, finances—to fill these gaps. We believe impact will be achieved when our problem-solving networks are as multi-faceted as the challenges they seek to solve. With experience launching such networks across Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, GKI offers a high-impact way to partner globally. We call our approach **LINK**: the Learning and Innovation Network for Knowledge and Solutions. LINK operates on three fronts:

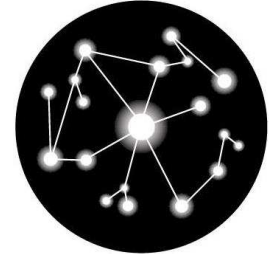
Locate



Enable



Connect



We Locate:

- High potential developing country innovators with a development challenge to solve, and skills and networks needed to deliver solutions
- Global partners with specific expertise and resources to add value to problem solving efforts
- Existing innovations, ongoing initiatives, and other resources relevant to the challenge and network

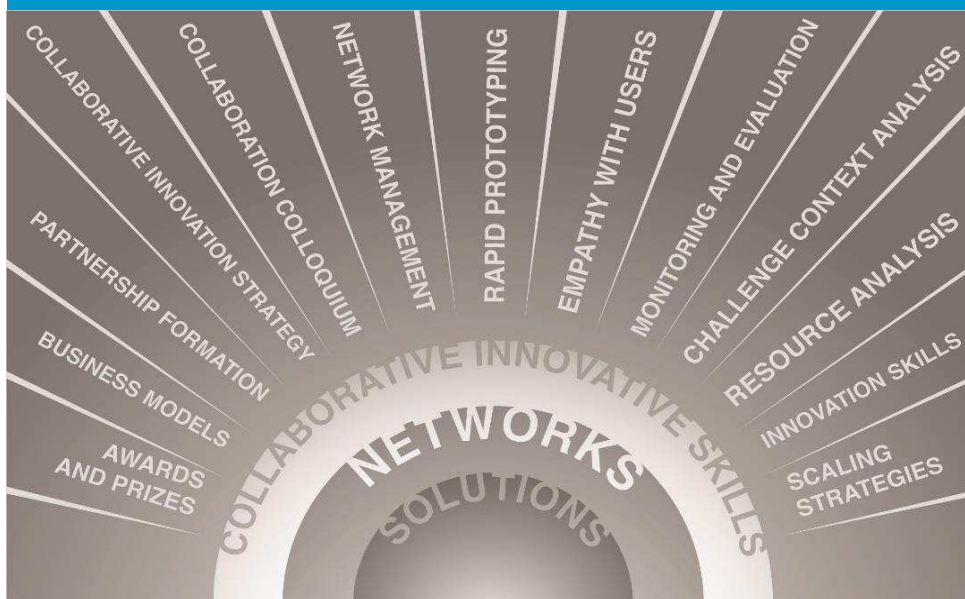
We Enable:

- Network-wide goal-setting and planning
- In-person collaboration via field visits, design sessions, and workshops
- Skill building among network members to help them transform great ideas into impact
- Effective communication across distances, and cultural and disciplinary divides

We Connect:

- Individual, often separate, efforts into harmonized problem solving strategies
- Network goals to metrics to monitor progress and measure success
- Network members to a growing array of partners to build momentum and attract resources
- Network success stories to the global community through knowledge sharing

What LINK Delivers and How



Building International Problem-Solving Networks with GKI

Do you want to explore a new model for solving development challenges through purpose-driven networks? GKI wants to help.

Named one of the world's top 100 social innovations for the next century by The Rockefeller Foundation, 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

Case Study: LINK for Rwandan Coffee

Having emerged from the atrocities of genocide, in the early 2000's the rise of Rwanda's specialty coffee industry offered hope for economic renewal. It represented opportunity for the country's smallholder farmers, with many receiving higher incomes than had been available previously. Against this promising backdrop, however, coffee roasters began encountering a mysterious potato odor—called the "potato taste defect"—emanating from Rwandan coffee. This defect reduces the value of coffee, which buyers suggest costs Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo nearly USD \$16 million annually. Experts found themselves with little explanation for the causes of, and few ideas of remedies to, the defect, despite the potentially disastrous effects on the industry. Coffee farmers faced the risk of losing their livelihoods, despite gains that had been made. However, because of the complexity of the challenge and due to a lack of shared vision between coffee companies, government, and others needed for a solution, it lacked a comprehensive response. Each coffee company attempted to address potato taste on its own, and government institutions lacked a clear picture of the varied resources and knowledge needed to solve the challenge.



As concern about the defect grew, a team from the University of Rwanda—led by entomologist Dr. Daniel Rukazambuga—decided to act. But they knew the complex challenge extended beyond their influence as academics. They needed partnerships with coffee buyers, farmer training experts, and technology developers to effect real change. The University of Rwanda team enlisted GKI to help build a problem-solving network whose membership mirrored the full range of issues represented by the potato taste challenge. The network grew from the university's strengths, with GKI taking care not to duplicate resources already in play. The goal was to add value with each new partner identified.

Thus began a shared journey of network development that now spans four continents. Institutions such as University of California, Riverside, Cirad (France), and Seattle University conduct research on causes and potential solutions to the defect. Companies like Starbucks Coffee and Rogers Family Company train farmers and assist with applied research. Government institutions such as the Rwanda Agriculture Board research strategies to manage pest infestations thought to be linked to the defect. The US Agency for International Development recently announced a partnership with Michigan State University and GKI to expand work on potato taste. Importantly, only a small amount of seed funding catalyzed these efforts.

Timeline: The story of LINK Rwanda

