



**Global Knowledge Initiative**



**2017**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

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# NOTE FROM OUR CO-FOUNDER

*A letter from GKI's Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Sara Farley*

Dear Friend of GKI,

The transition into a new year offers a perfect moment to reflect on the year behind and share our intentions for the year ahead.

2017 was a year of partnership, innovation, and expansion. In the past year, we partnered with 29 organizations in Africa, Asia, the United States, and around the world to advance problem-solving networks aimed at solving critical development challenges.

Our international partners are some of the strongest champions for collaboration, innovation, science, and research in their respective countries. We are proud to call them our colleagues and to support their work through capacity development, systems strengthening and evaluation, and network design and facilitation. Together, we have laid the groundwork for a global paradigm shift from lone solvers toiling in their silos on issues critical for sustainable development to connected partners engaged in Collaborative Innovation. Our conviction in a world of multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, interlinked actors and systems has led us to this moment. Just one year shy of our 10-year anniversary, GKI is perfectly poised to continue its strategy of radically remaking the global context of collaboration in the name of greater inclusivity, innovation, and impact.

As global challenges grow exceedingly complicated, GKI grows increasingly confident that the right combination of mindsets, skill sets, and toolsets can help collaborative problem-solving networks tackle those challenges. We hope you can join us on this journey to transform our world into one that fosters the collective efforts of 7 billion solvers! We are deeply grateful to those of you who already have.

On behalf of my entire team at GKI, here's to a wonderful 2018!

Sincerely,



Sara Farley, Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer



**Building Purpose-Driven Networks to Deliver  
Innovative Solutions to the World's Most  
Pressing Challenges**

# 2017 SNAPSHOT

*Key achievements from 2017*

## 19

### PROJECTS

GKI worked with partners on 19 new or continuing projects, which ranged from 3-day workshops to multi-year strategic or research engagements.

## 12

### STAFF

GKI grew its team to 12 staff members, welcoming new team members Chase Keenan, Jacquelin Tancredi, Katie Safford, and Shivani Choksi.

## 340

### EVENT PARTICIPANTS

GKI engaged 340 individuals from across 6 continents through facilitated workshops and trainings with our partners.

## 7

### NEW NETWORKS

GKI was excited to join and help grow 7 new networks, including the Postharvest Loss Alliance for Nutrition (PLAN) and a new innovation alliance between MIKTA countries (Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia) forged by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



## 29

### PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Key partners with whom we did exciting work in 2017 included: AECOM, African Great Lakes Region Coffee Support Program, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Bio Crops Uganda, BHEARD, Building Rural Incomes Through Enterprise, Causal Design, DAI, Dexis Consulting, Fondation Mérieux USA, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Global Cold Chain Alliance, Institute of Policy Analysis and Research Rwanda, Johns Hopkins University Global Obesity Prevention Center, LINC, Michigan State University, OpenIDEO, Pennsylvania State University, PYXERA Global, QED Group, Rainforest Action Network, Rudi International, SecondMuse, TechnoServe, The Rockefeller Foundation, United States African Development Foundation, United States Agency for International Development, University of Rwanda.

## 132

### AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS EXAMINED

In our role as the Innovation Partner for the [YieldWise Initiative](#), GKI analyzed the potential of 132 technologies and other types of innovations poised to dramatically reduce post-harvest loss in emerging market food systems.

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

*A Snapshot on GKI's Key Programs from 2017*

## Systems Research and Evaluation

GKI continues to lead the charge in helping international development practitioners [learn and apply systems approaches for sustainable development](#). In 2017, GKI worked with two teams at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to deepen their understanding of the systems in which they operate. First, we worked to inject systems methods into aid evaluation, design, and learning with our partners in the [SPACES Consortium](#). Together, we analyzed the global healthcare supply chain, exploring the question of systems strengthening for one of the largest projects in USAID's history.

Second, we conducted research on how Systems Leadership can be cultivated for greater impact in international development. Through qualitative research, we sought to answer the question, "How might we enable ourselves and others to lead systems change?". Turn to Research Highlights on page 6 to learn more about our findings!

## Network Facilitation and Design

GKI serves as the [Knowledge Management Partner for the Postharvest Loss Alliance for Nutrition](#) (PLAN), a Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) initiative. In this role, our overarching objective is to connect PLAN members to the knowledge they need to improve their operations, reduce losses in their supply chains, and ultimately bring more nutritious foods to market.

Second, [GKI was asked to join the AECOM-led Innovation Resource Facility Consortium \(IRF\)](#) within the InnovationXChange of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). In this role, GKI provides resources and tools designed to spur innovation within DFAT and across the Asia Pacific region, with the goal of bringing more sustainable, scalable solutions to systemic challenges. For a snapshot of this work, turn to Workshop Highlights on page 5.



**"GKI MAKES US SEE AND UNDERSTAND THAT WE CANNOT WORK WITHOUT INVOLVING ALL OTHER ACTORS. A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE HAS SHOWN US HOW TO SEE OTHER ACTORS AND NETWORKS THAT WE DIDN'T BEFORE WORK WITH."**

- Participant at the Postharvest Loss Alliance for Nutrition (PLAN) Deeper Considerations Workshop

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

*A Snapshot on GKI's Key Programs from 2017*

## Capacity Building and Training

GKI launched an [Improved Innovation Decision Making \(IIDM\) toolset](#) for practitioners, in collaboration with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). The IIDM toolset guides problem solvers to innovate and collaborate more effectively. GKI ran five trainings on innovation for AGRA's stakeholders working to design and scale innovative solutions in the maize value chain in Tanzania.

GKI also built a [customized immersion into innovation decision-making](#) for the United States African Development Foundation (USADF). Our three-day interactive training was designed to shift the status quo at USADF – for both US-based and in-country teams – toward “innovation as usual.” The training influenced USADF to define a new theory of change and identify opportunities for leadership to promote a culture of innovation across the organization.

## Policy and Strategy

GKI continues [its work with the African Great Lakes Coffee initiative](#) (AGLC), which supports policy change through research and knowledge-sharing in

Rwanda's coffee sector. GKI hosted five policy roundtables in Rwanda for diverse stakeholders to discuss challenges in the sector and explore possible policy solutions, using research conducted by the AGLC team as the basis for discussion.

GKI also continued its strategic support for The Rockefeller Foundation through our role as the [Innovation Partner for the YieldWise Initiative](#), which aims to halve post-harvest loss (PHL) in sub-Saharan Africa by 2021. Our work included conducting a [global scan for transformational innovations](#) needed to reimagine food systems, which is detailed on page 6 in Research Highlights.

## Social Innovation Labs

GKI built an evidence base for Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) in international development projects under USAID's Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning. Hungry to boost the evidence base that CLA contributes to development outcomes, we collaborated with [our long-term partner, BioCrops Uganda Ltd.](#), to analyze how GKI's CLA efforts support BioCrops' work to improve food security in Uganda through biotech planting materials.

**“I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS ROOM FOR IT [INNOVATION], BUT NOW I SEE THAT THE TIME IS RIPE TO SET THE INNOVATION CULTURE IN USADF. I'M EXCITED!”**

-U.S. Africa Development Foundation training participant



# WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

*A Spotlight on GKI's Facilitated Experiences in 2017*

## Education in Emergencies Challenge

GKI helped the DFAT InnovationXchange design, launch, and conduct M&E on an AUD \$2 million innovation prize focused on discovering new ways to address children's education in emergency settings. To kick off the process, GKI facilitated a Big Think workshop and a Design Sprint workshop with diverse stakeholders to refine the challenge frame and set goals for the prize.

## YieldWise Bellagio Convening on Post-harvest Loss (PHL) Innovation

In April, GKI invited global thought leaders to The Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Italy to imagine innovative solutions to reduce PHL in emerging markets. GKI facilitated a unique three-day workshop designed to invite diverse perspectives, examine prevailing opinions, and collaboratively construct innovation pathways toward an ideal future of PHL reduction.

## PLAN Deeper Considerations Workshop

In November, GKI and GAIN hosted a workshop for PLAN stakeholders to consider the adoption potential of a suite of PHL-reducing innovations. This interactive workshop was designed to help

PLAN stakeholders understand how to select innovations for different contexts by applying a Systems Thinking lens.

## University of Rwanda One Health Workshop

GKI and Pennsylvania State University facilitated a two-day workshop to build a new One Health Program at the University of Rwanda, which aims to unite all scientific-health related disciplines around common goals and efforts. GKI helped stakeholders develop strategies to tackle important challenges at the interface of human, animal, and planetary health.

## Foundation Merieux Partnership Workshop

GKI led a multi-day workshop for Fondation Mérieux, Mérieux Foundation USA, Pennsylvania State University (PSU), and PSU's Applied Biological Research Laboratory to explore the vital challenges pertinent to understanding, detecting, and controlling infectious disease globally. The partnership network emerged with a shared vision for a world in which both human and institutional capacity is sufficiently robust in every country to improve global health outcomes.

**"THIS IS THE FIRST EXPERIENCE THAT HAS MADE ME BELIEVE THAT COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION IS MORE THAN JUST A BUZZ WORD. GKI HAS DONE AN INCREDIBLE JOB IN BRINGING THIS GROUP TOGETHER AND EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO THINK DIFFERENTLY AND BUILD OFF OF EACH OTHER. THIS IS UNIQUE."**

– Bellagio Convening participant



# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

*Leading Research from GKI Teams during 2017*

## SPACES Global Healthcare Supply Chain Systems Map

GKI led a co-creation process with the SPACES Consortium to build a visual map of the global healthcare supply chain. GKI conducted stakeholder interviews and research to understand the different motivations and roles of key stakeholders. This research highlighted the key drivers of system change that either enable or thwart USAID's efforts to improve global healthcare supply chains.

## Transformational Innovation Scan Report

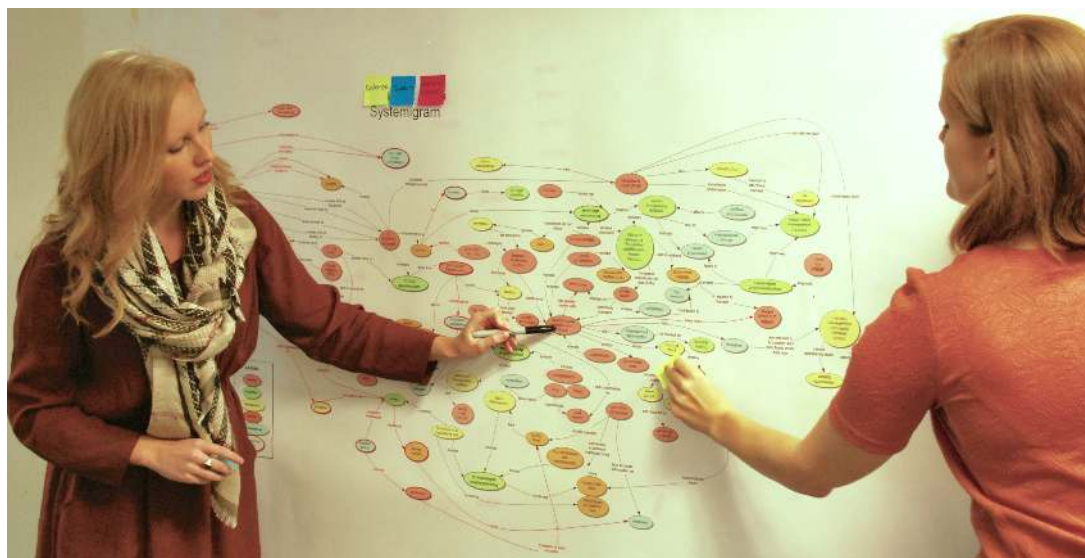
In our role as the Innovation Partner for The Rockefeller Foundation's YieldWise initiative, GKI researchers engaged experts from 50 institutions to unearth the most significant trends shaping global food systems and the innovations with the highest potential to reduce PHL and improve food systems in emerging markets. GKI [whittled down the list of contenders to 22 innovations ready for investment today to reduce PHL tomorrow](#). GKI also issued 10 Invitations for Transformational Innovation, each of which offers a provocation meant to inspire bold efforts to reshape food systems in emerging markets from now to 2035.

## Systems Leadership Research for USAID

GKI, in collaboration with USAID, conducted [research on how Systems Leadership can be cultivated](#) for greater impact in international development. This research yielded four key findings: (1) what leadership styles enable systems change in different contexts; (2) how individuals and institutions can act as Systems Leaders to activate change within systems; (3) the skills and qualities that Systems Leaders exhibit, and ways to cultivate them; and (4) how to effectively monitor and evaluate systems change.

## Capacity Development Consumer Landscape Survey

To more effectively support organizations seeking to improve their capacity development efforts, GKI interviewed experts in the field. Looking across these expert perspectives, GKI foresees future capacity development models that blend in-person training with smart use of technology-enabled, virtual support. More than training, however, the capacity building of tomorrow is a concept wedded with shared experience, relationship cultivation, and real-world application. GKI looks forward to applying this research to our future capacity development initiatives.



**"SHARING  
PERSPECTIVES  
ON A PROBLEM WITH  
DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS  
ENCOURAGES GROUP  
REFLECTION AND  
GUIDED LEARNING."**

- Transformational  
Innovation Scan expert

# MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

*Influencing GKI's Network with our Work in 2017*



## BLOG SERIES: Innovation Scanning for The Rockefeller Foundation

In August, The Rockefeller Foundation published [a five-piece series on its blog about GKI's innovation scanning work for the \\$130 million YieldWise initiative](#) to reduce post-harvest food loss in Sub-Saharan Africa. GKI shared takeaways on delivering innovation with impact, informed by our Innovation Scans.



## GUEST COMMENTARY: Agriculture Technology in the Age of Innovation

In March, GKI's Renee Vuillaume published [a thought piece on the Chicago Council on Global Affairs' Global Food For Thought blog](#) that discussed the impact of agricultural technologies in the age of innovation. The piece shared GKI's views on the benefits of unsexy innovations and the importance of shifting incentives for innovations to unleash transformational impact.



**Global Knowledge Initiative**

## TOOLSET: Improved Innovation Decision Making (IIDM)

In September, GKI [released its Improved Innovation Decision Making \(IIDM\) toolset](#) after collaborating with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to research innovation processes that support decision making during the journey from idea to impact. The toolset is designed to aid organizations and individuals seeking to build the capacity of problem solvers to innovate and collaborate more effectively.



## ARTICLE: Tips for Accessing Equity Finance in Agribusiness

In its partnership with PLAN, GKI's Chase Keenan published a [blog about accessing equity finance for Nigerian agribusinesses](#) on AgroNigeria, a leading website for Nigeria's agriculture sector. The piece advises agribusiness owners on how, when, and where to seek equity funding in Nigeria.

**"FARMERS ARE OFTEN NOT CONSULTED DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS. TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AMONGST FARMERS ISN'T LOW BECAUSE FARMERS DON'T UNDERSTAND TECHNOLOGY BUT BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T BEEN CONSULTED IN THE DESIGN PROCESS AND THE TECHNOLOGY MIGHT NOT MEET THEIR NEEDS. [GKI'S PROCESSES] ARE HELPFUL FOR AN INCLUSIVE CONVERSATION ON DESIGN."**

- IIDM Workshop participant, Tanzania



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*Opportunities to Interact with Members of the Global Community in 2017*

## **BHEARD Takes on Challenge Mapping**

In May, GKI had fun facilitated a group of PhD fellows from across Africa to use an information design tool, Challenge Mapping, to understand how research networks can tackle their interconnected agricultural challenges.

## **Teaching Systems Thinking in DC**

GKI held a workshop on Systems Thinking in May for public sector leaders in Washington, DC. We demonstrated several of [GKI's Systems tools](#) with an eye toward broadening adoption.

## **Empowering Science March Attendees to Co-Create Futures**

At the March for Science in Washington, DC, GKI engaged marchers at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) by facilitating a Futures Foresight technique to channel their vision for an ideal future and the impact that science could have on that future.

## **Showcasing GKI's Systems Tools**

GKI presented a session on Aligning Stakeholder Incentives for more Systematic Solutions at the Atlanta Conference on Science and Innovation Policy in October. We showcased the [findings from our collaborative research](#) with the Georgia Institute

Of Technology to develop the Assessing Innovation Impact Potential (AIIP) Toolset.

## **Global Development Leaders Focus on the Culture of Innovation**

GKI's Sara Farley moderated a panel on the importance of fostering a culture of innovation for organizations thirsty for impact in the development sector. The panel included leading experts from USAID, UNDP, and PACT.

## **Empowering Networks in Development Economics**

GKI's Sara Farley was thrilled to give the keynote address at the Conference on Development Economics in Bolivia in October. Sara discussed the importance of formal and informal networks to drive innovations in economic development projects.

## **Evaluation Experts Learn about GKI's Systems Mapping Tools**

In November, GKI led a session at the American Evaluation Association's Annual Evaluation Conference focused on using collaborative systems mapping tools to track and analyze change in complex systems over time.



# LOOKING FORWARD

*Grand Plans for 2018*

GKI is buckled in for another big growth year in 2018.

We're thrilled to continue our work with non-profits, universities, businesses, government organizations, and philanthropies to share the skills and tools needed to apply Collaborative Innovation across global systems. We're leading additional systems evaluation projects with the USAID SPACES Consortium in support of USAID's global impact. There is growing momentum in the international development sector away from linear thinking and toward systems approaches, and we're excited to be a part of this movement.

Our partnerships also continue with GAIN, who we'll be helping to bring meaningful policy discourse to PLAN, and Australia's DFAT, supporting the Education in Emergencies Challenge and other innovation work. We're honored to be regularly sought out to facilitate network design and strategic visioning workshops for global organizations, such as the World Wildlife Fund and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

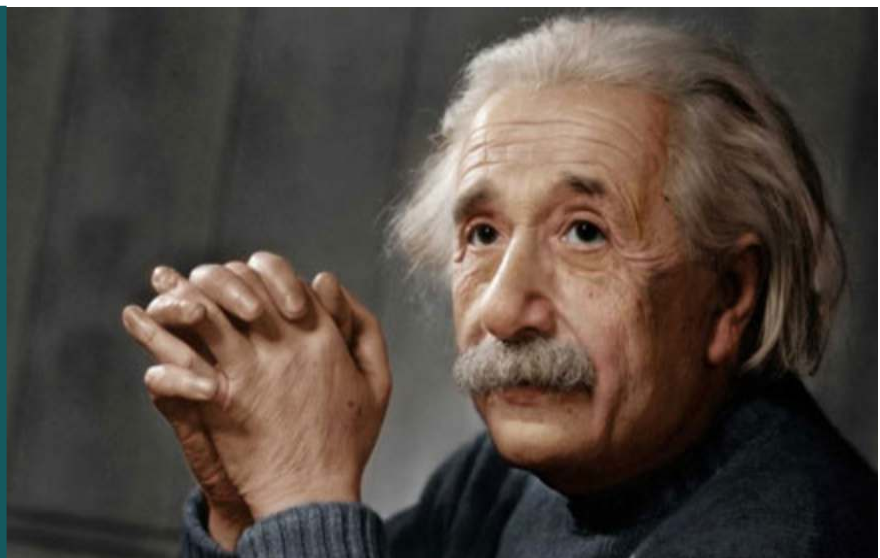
We set ambitious 2018 goals for our Capacity Development program as well, which kicked off at Virginia Tech, where we're training their researchers to build problem-solving networks for greater impact. We hope to bring our systems thinking, Collaborative Innovation, and network-building trainings to many other organizations and teams throughout 2018.

We're also rebuilding our Policy & Strategy portfolio, which supports partners working to improve the enabling environment in organizations, countries, and sector needed for Collaborative Innovation to flourish. Our legacy is in agriculture and science, technology, and innovation (STI) policy in East and Southern Africa, but we hope to expand into adjacent sectors and geographies in 2018.

Finally, and most importantly, we hope that *you* will be a part of our 2018. For partnership suggestions or requests, please contact Glen Burnett at [glen@gkinitiative.org](mailto:glen@gkinitiative.org).

**"WE CANNOT SOLVE  
OUR PROBLEMS WITH  
THE SAME THINKING WE  
USED WHEN WE  
CREATED THEM."**

- Albert Einstein





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