

STRATEGY 0.1

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this document is to outline GAHI's core strategy. This is version 0.1 – it will change. As GAHI becomes increasingly operational, our commitment is to continuously iterating this strategy, openly, as we learn from success and failure, from our partners, and from the people we serve.

DEVELOPING THIS STRATEGY

This strategy is built on (i) the process building up to the World Humanitarian Summit; (ii) the work done by the Global Prioritization Exercise; and (iii) GAHI's Stakeholder Analysis. It also draws on nearly 100 meetings, with over 60 entities, including a number of thematic sessions at the WEF's Sustainable Development Forum.

It also draws on numerous examples of independent research in the innovation sphere, including those of the European Union on public-sector and responsible innovation; research by ALNAP and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative on humanitarian innovation; and by Stanford Change labs on innovation more broadly.

GAHI'S VALUES

GAHI is anchored in five basic values:

1. People-centered – GAHI embraces the fact that people must be at the center of our work. Change in the humanitarian system must place people and communities, with particular attention to women & girls, at the heart of response, and empower them to lead and shape emergency response.
2. Humility – GAHI believes that there is no single approach to scale that will work across different issue areas. GAHI does not have the answers; rather we facilitate and convene humanitarian stakeholders in their quest for these answers.
3. Ethics – GAHI holds itself, and its members, to the highest possible ethical standards. We see our task as helping to develop and propagate standards for responsible, ethical innovation.
4. Transparency: GAHI must be transparent. We must be open about success, failure, challenges.
5. Service – GAHI is a service provider for the humanitarian community. We do not seek attention or credit; we seek impact.

WHAT DOES GAHI DO?

GAHI has a single task: help bring innovations to scale in the humanitarian system.

HOW?

Change at scale looks very different to an idea that is in incubation. At first, innovation may take the form of a new tent, or a new way of delivering education in camps, or a block-chain-based system that allows transparency for smaller NGO's. Taking such an idea to scale may require changes to procurement processes, camp management manuals, and international payment systems. Research has identified three key obstacles to innovation:

1. Evidence – The fragmented humanitarian community does not have a model that allows it to 'price' an innovation – to determine the potential impact and relative effectiveness of a new solution when compared to an existing technique. The story of evidence for GAHI is not, therefore, why innovation 'x' has worked in location 'y'. Rather it answers the question: what have we learned from the attempt to implement innovation 'x' about:
 - a. its potential to leverage the opportunity / solve the problem we are examining;
 - b. its ability to work elsewhere, and what else we need to learn; and,
 - c. how we must adapt the idea to better serve.

GAHI must therefore work closely with a global research network to produce actionable analysis of innovations that enables stakeholders to embrace change. We are committed to institutions in affected and/or neighbouring countries conducting significant portions of this research

2. Process – For the required changes for impact at scale, the right stakeholders must be engaged from the early stages. They should be engaged in the process of curation – identifying which initial ideas should be taking to a wider audience; in designing the ‘pricing model’; in understanding and acting on the lessons from initial expansions; and in designing system-level changes that will enable significant impact. This requires GAHI to have a robust and long-term convening process.
3. Political – none of the above will happen without consistent political signals around the need for change that create an authorizing environment for experimentation – that empower and encourage the global heads of policy at major organizations to embrace risk and innovation. GAHI must equally work at the global level to secure political commitment – from major actors, and those who fund them.

In order to overcome these obstacles, GAHI’s work will be organized around concrete problems or tangible opportunities. GAHI’s convening should create an authorizing environment for experimentation; our processes must deliver robust learning, and product iteration and process adaptation based on this learning. Our identity as an alliance recognizes the need to engage a broad set of agents to ensure viable, legitimate and relevant change. These are well-documented elements of successful change.¹

GAHI must be equally be at the forefront of responsible innovation – not merely ‘not experimenting’ on people – but ensuring that our exploration of ethical issues encompasses “questions of uncertainty (in its multiple forms), purposes, motivations, social and political constitutions, trajectories and directions of innovation.”² Finding the right governance structure for these issues will be critical, and finding ways to help the humanitarian system build standards for ethical innovation is a core goal.

WHY GAHI?

The last decade of increasing support to innovation has shown significant support for the first stage of innovation – incubation. But the challenge of achieving scale, and of overcoming the complex misalignment of resources, interests and incentives that limit change, requires a different set of processes and resources.

GAHI’s competitive position stems from its attention to this specific part of the innovation cycle, and from being a neutral convenor and facilitator. GAHI seeks impact within each problem/opportunity area; but should not promote any single product or idea. By staying neutral, GAHI can provide political space and an authorizing environment for donors and aid agencies alike to experiment, and a feedback loop that ensures that people affected by disasters can provide feedback.

The ability of a GAHI convened process to enable experimentation from donors to the field is essential. Donors are arguably more able to invest in a collective process that seeks to solve a problem/embrace an opportunity, than in a series of individual opportunities. Collective processes help immunize all stakeholders from the potential inability of an individual innovation to reach scale by increasing the overall likelihood of a desirable outcome.

PATHWAYS TO IMPACT

GAHI, in line with its principles, does not believe in a top-down process of innovation. Rather, GAHI will identify opportunities where (i) there is a recognized need for new approaches and ideas; (ii) innovation is already occurring, particularly in the field; and (iii) loose coalitions are emerging, signaling an intent to engage at scale.

¹ Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., and Woolcock, M., “Escaping Capability Traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation” CGD, 2011.

² Stilgoe, J., Owen, R., and Mcnaghten, P., “Developing a framework for responsible innovation.” <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2013.05.008>

Once the right area of opportunity has been identified, GAHI's process has five basic elements:

1. Inventory: Running an open and transparent process to identify innovations;
2. Curation: Using a robust, vetted methodology to identify scalable innovations;
3. Scaling: Systematically testing innovations while learning about their value;
4. Evidence: Marshalling evidence to determine the right pathway to impact;
5. Change: Securing the systemic change required to deliver at scale.

Early discussions point towards four major areas of opportunity. The precise nature of the process will be determined by the members of each convened process, and its specific circumstances. For example, a process looking at ensuring that no migrant/refugee/IDP misses more than a month of education will look more like the above, then a process to certify smart-city software for emergency-management.

CONVENING OPPORTUNITIES

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

O: New tools and technologies can help ensure that migrants, refugees and IDPs do not miss more than a month of education.

O: There are more effective ways to link training for migrants, refugees and IDPs to relevant jobs, and to ensure these approaches acknowledges the realistic duration of displacement.

O: The right to information offers migrants, refugees and IDPs the ability to center themselves at the heart of response, rather than as recipients of aid.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO DELIVER ON THE GRAND BARGAIN

O: Block-chain and digital identity solutions can enable people to better shape the assistance they receive, and thereby transform how, and how effectively, humanitarians deliver assistance.

O: Artificial intelligence and machine-learning can help humanitarians make better decisions.

O: Technology can help share local knowledge and empower locally-led response

URBAN RESPONSE

O: Technology offers better risk-management for cities facing increased migration & disaster frequency.

O: Smart city software could offer significant gains in disaster preparedness and response.

O: Collective learning can help cities deploying differentiated strategies in the face of similar risks.

DULL DISASTERS / RISK MANAGEMENT

O: The ability to price risk globally allows public-private partnerships to insure critical infrastructure, and enable investment in independently validated risk-reduction.

NEXT STEPS

GAHI aims to establish its first thematic convening by July 2018. To this end GAHI is:

1. Actively identifying priorities for engagement among current and potential members;
2. Developing a concrete convening process;
3. Strengthening its relationships around the production and provision of evidence;

Once a core group of members has collectively committed to the multi-year process of work on an opportunity area, GAHI will: (a) convene the humanitarian community around specific outcomes; (b) support the provision of political signals that create space for experimentation; and, (c) facilitate the collection of evidence that enables change and impact at scale.