

External Evaluation Response

Introduction

The GNDR Secretariat commissioned an external evaluation of the network to be undertaken in July 2015. After discussions into various different methodologies, Outcome Harvesting, a particular participatory tool of Outcome Mapping, was determined to be the most appropriate. A small team from the Global and Regional Hubs was put together, supported by two external consultants, experts on Outcome Harvesting.

The harvesting itself began by looking into internal reports and documentation for particular outcomes, or stories. This harvesting continued at Regional Consultations which were to inform the new 'Stronger Together' Strategy 2016-2020. Participants were guided through online surveys, and Secretariat and Global Board members were also invited to include their notable outcomes from 2012-2015 period of the network. In total a database of over 180 individual outcomes were recorded. These included successes of the network, unintended outcomes, and also unexpected or negative outcomes. Six separate outcome stories were formed, which were substantiated by actors external to the network. This internal consultative process has helped to inform and shape the new strategic period, as particular successes, and areas for improvement were identified by network members.

The external evaluators made a number of points for recommendation which we have begun to address, see response boxes below:

1. GNDR's vision, mission and purpose. GNDR has experienced an immense and rapid growth and it will be important to allow its purpose to evolve in line with its growing and diversifying membership. The network may benefit from a review of its high level objectives, based on an analysis of their participants and member needs, helping them to better define and communicate its niche within the DRR and the wider development world.

GNDR has reviewed the vision, mission, purpose and high level objectives in the strategic review process.

The newly established Communications Working Group will take responsibility to ensure that this content is understood across all regions of the network.

The Communications Working Group will also ensure this is communicated effectively and developed in conjunction with other networks and constituencies. For example, discussions with CAN International are ongoing.

2. GNDR's membership and strategic partners. The diversification of GNDR's membership offers great opportunities, but there are also challenges. How can GNDR adequately represent its various member groups and other stakeholders, find a shared vision/purpose, and foster and maintain its cohesiveness? Is GNDR's membership system still adequate? Who are the optimal strategic partners?

The Membership Working Group has begun to address these questions on membership structure.

The GNDR Secretariat will continue to discussions with strategic partners beyond current members, and potential new members. These alliances are to be developed with key stakeholders such as The Start Network, or across activities such as fundraising or thematic roles.



3. GNDR network functions. There is evidence in the evaluation data that as an 'action and learning network' GNDR has successfully fostered and added value to its members' work: through its VFL/AFL/Frontline programmes it has built its community, connected to other stakeholders, but also had impressive achievements in advocating the network's goals and using its evidence base at the global policy level. More recently it has expanded its activities in knowledge management. With the planning for its new phase under way it may be useful to review network type and functions and define more clearly what the best mixture of action, advocacy and knowledge management objectives and strategies will be, considering both GNDR's overarching goals and its resources.

These thematic points will be discussed with the whole Secretariat during scheduled planning days in August 2016.

4. GNDR formal structure, management and governance. The evaluation data confirmed that GNDR showed adaptive management responses to the growing network, changing from an informal, centralized management and governance form to a more regionally representative, decentralized structure. However, this process does not seem to be completed, the new structures have not yet led to the hoped for results, instead they seem to cause some confusion and tension. It will take a great level of awareness, sensitivity and openness of the network's supporting staff to respond to the different needs of the regions and provide clear guidance in order to clarify operational and governance roles and responsibilities. This also offers the opportunity to review and, where necessary, strengthen network infrastructure for decision-making and communication, and look at leadership and line management roles in order to maintain high levels of motivation, respect and trust, which is often challenging in a global, distributed, multi-cultural setting.

GNDR Secretariat has upgraded its policies and procedures in order to comply with donor regulations having discussed with the Global Board.

The GNDR Secretariat is also in a period of organisational change, understanding the capacities and competencies required to implement the new 2016-2020 strategy. Organisational structures will be considered in how to best support this transitional period.

The Communications Working Group will ensure that the GNDR Global Board, Global and Regional Hubs are communicating effectively across all teams to eliminate confusion.

5. GNDR's M&E System / Theory of Change. While GNDR's Strategy 2012-15 was developed using a logframe for monitoring its results, we were able to evaluate GNDR mainly using an OM inspired approach (OH). Outcomes based approaches can help review or develop a program's Theory of Change and provide a framework for ongoing monitoring, reflection, learning, adaptation and evaluation of the strategies used. Measuring the specific value added by a network is always difficult, but easier when based on a clear understanding of the strategies the network uses to leverage its various network advantages. In addition, being clear about the project logic, i.e. who exactly GNDR is trying to influence, how it anticipates achieving such changes, and who in GNDR should be involved in this work, will be useful both for focusing efforts on desired results and for reflecting on challenges and celebrating achievements. Thus, as an action-learning network, we believe that GNDR may benefit greatly from expanding its M&E efforts, using the evaluation data and findings to inform an out-comes based approach to developing a Theory of Change and associated M&E framework.

GNDR Secretariat has committed to looking into an appropriate monitoring and evaluating framework as part of the strategic planning agenda for the implementation of the new strategy 2016-2020.