Re-envisioning TAI for the Next Decade

Report on Learning from Phase 2: Investigating the Network

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Introduction

The purpose of the Re-envisioning process is to support the TAI network in developing a strategy for its second decade. Many questions are on the table. For example: how can TAI build on the work it has done so far to advance its goal of implementing Principle 10? What role should TAI's signature intervention, the assessment, have going forward; and how might the assessment and its use need to change in order to play that role effectively? How might the governance of the TAI network need to change to better reflect its values and support its goals? How does the network measure its success? How does it support learning?

The Re-envisioning process has unfolded in two phases. The Annex to this report provides details on participants, roles and Phase 2 activities. In Phase 1, TAI's consultants interviewed 19 people across the network and led a re-envisioning workshop with the CT at its Washington DC meeting, April 23-24, 2009. In that meeting the CT articulated the questions for a broader inquiry in the TAI network in Phase 2, which began in July and will culminate in a re-envisioning strategy session at the CT's next meeting in Delhi, India October 14-17. For Phase 2 we have interviewed 27 people (see Annex for a list of interviewees) and conducted two re-envisioning workshops: in Lima, Peru, as part of the TAI Latin America regional meeting (facilitated by Andrea Sanhueza and Joe Foti); and with TAI Macedonia. On October 9 we will lead a re-envisioning workshop for TAI Nepal and bring a report of that conversation into the CT meeting in India. Phase 2 will conclude with a report on the strategic decisions made there.

This report is based on what we heard from TAI members in the many conversations that took place in the course of these activities.[1] It does not offer recommendations. Rather, our aim is to present our findings regarding the perspectives and thinking that exist within the network in ways that we hope will spark productive turns in TAI's strategy conversations. We take seriously the assertion by one network member that the direction of TAI's future development does not have to be provided by consultants

[1] For this report, we have drawn on our notes to construct statements representing the views we heard in the interviews. Although they are presented in quotation marks, these are not verbatim quotes but closely follow our notes.. All Phase 2 interviewees have reviewed and agreed to these notes. We also agreed not to attribute specific statements to individuals and to restrict circulation of the notes to our joint TAI-GCC research team (see Annex). We created this level of confidentiality in order to encourage the open reflection and conversation.

from the outside: "We have all the expertise in the CT and the Secretariat and the network. Conversations and dialogue are the source of ideas and we need the space within TAI to develop them."

The format of the report follows a protocol developed within the Generative Change Community (www.gc-community.net). The goal of this protocol is to facilitate a systematic way of thinking and talking about change strategies that 1) involve working in complex environments and 2) engage people from different backgrounds and perspectives in their development and implementation. Through our inquiry across the TAI network, we have sought to develop a foundation for shared understanding of the CONTEXT within which TAI is operating and the INTENTIONs that motivate and direct TAI's efforts.

With that as background, the bulk of this report focuses on STRATEGY. We look first at the assessment as the core element of the strategy for change—the assumptions, or "theory of change," behind it; the experience with it on the ground in different contexts; and how that experience might inform TAI's strategy going forward. Second, we address the question of "deepening vs. broadening" in TAI's strategy for the next phase of the network's evolution. Third under strategy, we consider TAI's network strategy in terms of the functions the network is playing and might play in helping TAI members work toward their common goal. We also consider the governance of the network in terms of the roles the different parts of the network are playing and might play in the different functions. Finally, we look at LEARNING in the network. This section looks at how TAI is going about capacity development, learning across the network and "measuring success," a critical aspect of learning to increase the effectiveness of TAI's work on the ground.

Context

In addition to discussing what questions the network should ask itself in order to reflect, review and re-envision TAI for its second decade, our Phase 1 interviews explored the current context within which TAI is operating and how it might be changing. Some clear themes emerged from this inquiry.

Diversity within the network

TAI is operating in a complex context. Different histories, cultures, political systems and stages of development in terms of democracy, environmental movements, and traditions of participation make for very diverse contexts in different countries and regions. Because of these differences, the work itself varies in terms of capacities, opportunities and necessary activities. People say this variety is the source of important learning, for example at global meetings, when they hear about issues that others in other countries are dealing with in different contexts, or compare notes on different approaches to shared challenges. TAI members are mainly NGOs and research institutes that work on topics from environment to human rights, but within that general description there are many variations. For example, in some countries, TAI member organizations are close to government, founded by former government officials or headed by people also working with the government, raising the question for some others about the meaning of "non-governmental organization." In some countries, TAI members work in collaboration with business or business associations, whereas in most countries the situation is that companies are not natural targets or allies in working for access rights. TAI member organizations are also diverse in other ways, for example, in the professional backgrounds of the people leading them, their size, visibility and influence, and in their levels and sources of funding.

All of this diversity presents some significant challenges to moving the network forward. One person likened TAI to an ocean liner – "difficult to change course quickly." Another expressed the concern that, "you end up with the least common denominator in decisions – which keeps TAI less clearly defined than it should be." Several people mentioned that TAI does not have a clear, or very well known, global public image, a challenge for creating a global brand.

Global trends

A number of global developments seem to present opportunities and some additional challenges for TAI. One view we encountered in the secretariat suggested that increasing levels of development in emerging economies lead to growing groups of middle class families, creates a favorable context for TAI's work, because this is a group that typically becomes interested in access related issues. We also heard the view that climate change as an issue area where TAI can make a contribution through advocacy for access rights.

An issue of concern to many in the network is the **s**hifts that many see in the sources and availability of funding. Availability of funding often depends how "popular" a particular country is to donors, for example, in Eastern Europe it is a problem now that so many countries have joined the EU. Basically, in all countries that are not considered "poor," TAI is, or may be, experiencing difficulties in raising funds, at least from development budgets. In addition, a change in policy focus in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office has dried up funding streams for a number of TAI national coalitions this year. The current World Bank DGF grant, which WRI/TAI has been sub-granting to members, is limited to certain types of activities and is running out in 2010. In some of our interviews, people also mentioned the global financial crisis as a reason for funding difficulties. Because of these shifts, the consistency of funding emerged as an issue of concern for some TAI members. "There is much to be done to promote the network that cannot be done because of lack of funds," said one interviewee. "The network must become stronger materially to remain strong in other ways."

Within the UNECE region, most Member States have adopted the Aarhus Convention, and many TAI members in Europe in particular are involved in various pieces of collaboration with the Aarhus Convention Secretariat and are active participants in the Convention process. In addition, Aarhus has been opened for signature by non-ECE countries, and some TAI members outside Europe and North America may lobby for their governments to join the Convention. For many, the Aarhus Convention and process raises the question of whether TAI should work on establishing similar regional, legally binding agreements on access in other parts of the world, or on striving to establish a global convention. Some people believe that TAI, especially the global secretariat, can and should play a role in supporting such developments, mainly by lending expertise in collaborating with relevant institutions. Others argue that the focus of TAI is to bring about change at the national level, which can be done faster and more effectively working at that level rather than via a "trickle-down" approach of creating regional or global conventions.

Another concern is the future of the Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10). PP10 was actually conceived as a sister network to TAI in which governments are key members. Its members had to make concrete commitments to advance Principle 10, and the idea was to create a political support group at the international level and also to support the civil society network. There was also the hope of generating government financial support for implementing recommendations that come out of TAI. Now the future prospects for this beneficial relationship seem to be in doubt.

Evolution of the network

Another part of the context for the re-envisioning process is the sense that the TAI is maturing as a network and needs to pay attention to issues of governance, ownership and participation. The CT is more involved in directing the network than it was during the phase of intense development and piloting of the assessment methodology. In our conversations we heard appreciation expressed for the flat, lean governance structure of the network. We also heard that that the trend toward greater self-direction by the network should continue and should also extend beyond the CT. People don't want to see more bureaucracy. On the other hand, many said they would like to see greater access to information on key issues and decision making within the network – to some a matter of "practicing what we preach."

Intention

As self-described in *Voice and Choice,* TAI is "dedicated to ensuring that people have the right and ability to influence government decisions about the environment and natural resources" through promotion of the "access rights" derived from Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. We found strong alignment behind this statement of purpose in our interviews. When people talked about the common values that hold the global network together, they talked about this shared mission. "The common goal of The Access Initiative is improving environmental governance through looking at access with its three pillars of information, participation, and justice. This is the really the goal and the common value that we need to bear in mind," said one TAI member. Said another: "The commitment to work on access, with or without funding—this is the basic value."

Strategy 1: the TAI assessment and change

The original strategy concept of TAI, was one of "norms cascade," modeled on the movements to abolish slavery and win women's suffrage. The assumption underlying this strategy is that, as more and more countries establish a higher standard of access, other countries will follow until a point will be reached (a "tipping point") at which the new norm becomes the accepted standard. The assessment was central to this strategy. Its explicit role was to document gaps in access rights a country, so as to be able to both pressure and help governments in raising the bar on implementation. Longer-term goals for the assessments were, through repeated updates, to monitor and track access improvements or backsliding in a country and to test the underlying assumption of principle 10 that public access and participation lead to better decision making and outcomes.

The norms cascade theory came into question when an outside evaluation indicated that TAI had done a good job at developing and demonstrating its assessment toolkit but had not produced much "change on the ground." At its 2006 meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, the CT took up the question: "are we about assessments, or are we about change?" The answer was "change," and since that time TAI has devoted attention and resources to building capacity for and supporting advocacy to push for action on closing the gaps identified in the assessments. The makeup of the network shifted to include more advocacy-oriented (vs. research-oriented) NGOs; the secretariat developed advocacy tools and trainings and created a web site to help diffuse learning across the network; new funding from the World Bank was targeted less on assessments and more on follow-up activities. "Now there is more balance between assessments and advocacy," says Lalanath de Silva. Looking ahead to the TAI's second decade, however, the role of the assessment in change remains a critical one and was an important piece of our inquiry for the re-envisioning process.

Looking at Assessments through the Lens of Four Dimensions of Sustainable Change[2]

In the Re-envisioning workshops, we have used a framework to spark conversation about the underlying assumptions, or "theories of change" people hold about TAI's work. This framework posits four separate yet interrelated dimensions of change. Drawing on Phase 1 interviews and conversations at the CT meeting in April, these dimensions may be described in the TAI context as follows:[3]

> **Change in individuals:** In order to contribute to making Principle 10 a reality, TAI works to transform individuals through learning about the three pillars of access and through capacity building for research, assessment and advocacy.
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> **Change in relationships:** In order to contribute to making Principle 10 a reality, TAI works to transform relationships by forming national coalitions among NGOs (to be more powerful) and through NGOs challenging governments and working with them to change laws and increase participation.
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> **Change in cultures:** In order to contribute to making Principle 10 a reality, TAI works to transform culture by changing the 'rules of engagement' among citizens and government, civil society organizations and public institutions, and by changing what a society considers appropriate levels of access.

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[2] This framework was developed by Philip Thomas in 2007. It integrates the literature on social conflict and conflict transformation and the four-quadrant model of Ken Wilber's Integral Theory. Each quadrant represents a distinct approach, or entry point, to change (Lederach, J.P. 2007: *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, and Learning Toolkit,* The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. Wilber, K. 2003: *Introduction to Integral Theory and Practice: IOS Basic and the AQAL Map).*

[3] From TAI Core Team Meeting, TAI in the Next Decade – Re-envisioning, April 23-24, 2009, p. 5.

Change in structures and systems: In order to contribute to making Principle 10 a reality, TAI works to transform systems, structures, processes and mechanisms through legislation and through reform of institutions and practices.

In our interviews in Phase 2, we used this framework to structure our inquiry as we talked to people in all parts of the TAI network about their experience with the assessment and their observations of how it contributes to change. In these conversations, we found a high degree of consensus in the network that the main role and purpose of conducting the assessment is to make change in the dimension of **structures and systems** by identifying gaps in legislation, institutions, procedures and financial resources in relation to access to information, participation and justice. At the same time, virtually everyone we talked to indicated that working on the assessments had developed **individual** capacities with TAI member organizations, and for many, those enhanced capacities enabled them to shift the thinking of individuals in government about working with NGOs. Closing access gaps in many cases also includes building capacities, for example, in the case of judges receiving training on access related matters. There was also a consistent pattern across the network of change in **relationships** through the forming of coalitions and the interaction with diverse stakeholders and with government.

In regard to the **cultural** dimension, we talked to a few people who saw changes in community attitudes, particularly as the result of focused case studies. Some others noted shifts in the collective thinking of government agencies as the result of working with TAI. In some countries, the growing influence of and respect towards the media was mentioned as a result of conducting the assessment. Significantly, though, in every region we encountered the view that working in this cultural dimension to build "the demand side" for access rights is an important element of the work TAI needs to do going forward.

It seems that TAI has so far understood conducting the assessment as a diagnostic phase that creates the basis for the following advocacy phase in which actual changes are suggested and initiated. However, our conversations revealed that a number of significant changes are already being initiated and achieved in the process of conducting the assessment itself – by the time the diagnosis is presented, changes have already been made. Based on this finding, TAI can choose to conducting assessments more consciously as an intervention, and can continue to learn how to do this work more effectively by viewing the assessment more explicitly as action research.

Possibly, with the data gathered in this re-envisioning exercise about the kinds of changes the assessment can help to bring about, TAI can consider developing a more targeted, context-specific approach to decisions about when an assessment makes sense and what parts of the assessment might be most appropriate. The four dimensions framework may be a useful part of context analysis in these cases, as a way to match areas of need and opportunity with the possibilities for bringing about change through the assessment process.

The table below presents a sample of what we heard in our interviews about change in each of the four dimensions. We also offer a reformulated statement of the guiding assumption in each dimension based on these conversations.

Change in the TAI Network – Four Dimensions

CHANGING INDIVIDUALS	CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS
Assumption: Governments, NGOs and society are made up of individuals. Their capacities, mindsets and emotions determine what change is possible. **Understanding – of access and its three pillars, research methodologies, advocacy – is the basis for action.** **"**TAI partners "are people who can engage in action in the field, not purely research-oriented groups. This is a success factor in our work, I believe. [The assessment training] draws people's attention to additional issues . . . and helps them understand the interrelationship between information, participation and justice." It gives a "fundament for action." **The capacities of TAI partners enable both confrontation and cooperation with government:** "We shame the legislators on their poor performance on environmental democracy AND we give them advice, based on experience from other countries, for how to move forward to address that." "In contrast, NGOs often have more enthusiasm than expertise, or are mostly protesting rather than making suggestions; and governments regard them much less." **Follow-up work on capacity development of judges is a strategy focused on changing individuals**	Assumption: Achieving and realizing access rights in practice requires cooperative relationships between government and civil society and among the different stakeholders in society. **Common language and shared understanding of access rights enables communication across sectors**. "Someone who has worked on an assessment knows all the ideas and language." "[Working with coalition partners and advisory committees on the assessment] **opened us to different views** because we included people from variety of stakeholders. And now, with the advocacy work, we can draw on this, the network is ready to come in and join us. **Because government officials were engaged in the process, they owned the results**."The big change is a partnership between civil society and government." "The purpose is to bring together the many stakeholders except the government and then, in the review panel, also the government – and that **gives the assessment also a mediation role, between civil society and government.** Conducting the assessment creates a consensus: this is how access in our country works. Once there is an assessment that states weaknesses, and the government also feels an ownership of the assessment, then the government is forced to initiate improvements. **The methodology allows finding common ground.**"

Change in the TAI Network – Four Dimensions

CHANGING CULTURE	CHANGING STRUCTURES & SYSTEMS
Assumption: Public demand for access rights is required for these rights to be practiced sustainably; a complementary culture shift in government is also needed to secure the supply side of environmental rights. **The demand side of access rights is critical. "**Things never happen without the public pressure that is also helped and supported and made visible through the media." "When there is awareness in communities of environmental issues and programs on the environment, the authorities are also awakened to take specific actions. They look for a community making a demand for it." **Partnering with the media, as one increasingly empowered actor in society, is a strategy focused on cultural change** "**Doing assessments as a participatory exercise we are also building the capacity of communities and individuals to become citizens** – understanding that what the government does in terms of access is their right, not a favor granted by a benign government." **Changing the collective mindset in government makes different outcomes possible. "**In the beginning, the government officials were afraid that we were going to criticize the government, but they then saw we are actually making a contribution and welcomed policy recommendations." "When the authorities begin to realize that public participation might help address issues rather than just get in the way, that will contribute to environmental democracy."	*Assumption: Embodying access rights in structures and systems such as law, policy, procedural practices and financing is essential for sustainability. The information provided by the assessment is the necessary foundation for achieving structural changes.* In many developing countries where the rule of law is relatively weak, there is instability as governments change. So **getting access rights incorporated into laws is essential.** The assessment gathered evidence that could become the basis for recommendations for improvement. I question whether it is worthwhile being a TAI partner without doing an assessment, because **it is essential to develop the information and develop a strategy**. **The power of information to create change. "**Sometimes we did not wait for the assessment report to come out to inform the media of our findings, but the process of collecting data already brings out a lot of issues. This itself can bring about a lot of change that we aim to achieve – we are achieving changes already!"

Future Strategy Considerations for the Assessment

Our inquiry into the role of the assessment in TAI's work also addressed the question of whether that role should change in the future: Should conducting a TAI assessment be a threshold for membership? Does TAI always want to strictly follow the process of national coalition building – assessment – advocacy? Could conducting a minimum diagnostic of access be sufficient to start?

No one we talked to argued that the assessment should be dropped—a result that is not surprising given the concrete changes coming out of the assessment work. At the same time, we found people to be open to the idea of flexibility in the timing of when an assessment is conducted, depending on the particular country context. "Maybe the sequence can be altered," suggested one TAI member. "Doing an assessment should not be a pre-condition for membership, but there should be the will and intention to do one eventually." Others suggested flexibility about the form of the assessment. In the words of one interviewee: "Organizations that want to join the network may not have the right conditions for doing an assessment. This constraint could make it very difficult to grow the membership of TAI. We need to think of more flexible ways, for example, if the organization can just do a single case, or if they can do things to build capacity in a different way."

Strategy 2: TAI's Network Strategy – Broadening vs. Deepening

One of the questions posed by the CT for the Re-envisioning process was, "Should TAI continue to expand into more and more countries, or should it focus on deepening the work in existing partner countries?" While there are some who stated clearly that 47 countries is enough to constitute a global network and the focus should now be on building capacities and relationships among existing TAI country members, most people we talked to in the TAI system did not see this as an either-or choice. Somehow, they suggested, TAI must find a way to pursue both avenues of development.

Broadening

One person we talked to stated boldly, "The mission of the TAI secretariat should be that every country in the world should have an assessment." Another asserted that "TAI needs to expand in order to maintain global funding." However, the most common view by far is that whatever expansion TAI pursues should be done selectively. As one person put it, "Expansion shouldn't just be offered to constantly add new countries. But there is a value in it, at least in certain regions and countries."

A TAI member in Europe argued that more members are needed in that region so that TAI can "carry more weight" there. A different rationale for adding new member countries was expressed by one secretariat member, "There are some places, like China and the Arab world, where it would be a significant experiment to see how the assessment plays out. Can we say these are universal principles that apply even in those settings?" The idea of expanding to include a representative sample of country contexts is also captured in this vision:

We need to take a regional perspective and divide the whole of TAI work internationally into regions, and there select the countries most representative of the different sub-regions and cultures (like SE Asia, Central Asia, etc) and work in those so that we have all the variety represented within TAI. Then, we could come out with a representative regional perspective and link with international perspective and build the international movement.

A few people also emphasized that expansion should not occur without a rethinking of TAI's approach. On one hand, some suggested, the assessment should be simplified so that it could be less expensive to do and require less support from the secretariat. On the other hand, "there should be a transition from focusing on the tool and refinement of that to focusing on the purpose of the tool, which is to create change. So, in doing future assessments in new countries, TAI should approach it in a more change-oriented way rather than just a tight focus on the assessment methodology." Or, perhaps back away from the assumption that an assessment must always be the entry point: "With a rigid theory of change, there is a limit to how many countries you can go into because not all would be appropriate for the assessment approach. With a flexible approach to in-country strategy there is no limit to how many countries you can work with, it depends on funding."

Deepening

In our conversations, when people talked about "deepening the work," most often we heard it described loosely as "moving from assessment to advocacy." Hearing about the work itself, we realized this can mean different things in different country contexts. In some cases, it involves working closely with the media to bring pressure to bear on specific issues and create greater public awareness of access rights. In others it means projects engaging communities, for example, in public campaigns on local environmental issues like pesticides or pollution. In still others "advocacy" entails creating programs for TV and radio or organizing public workshops and even mass public events.

Given this reality, it is perhaps not surprising that there is strong sentiment across the network that the responsibility for leading the deepening work should rest at the regional and national levels. "This decision has to come from the grass roots," asserted one TAI member. "Every country has such different contexts and needs, so the secretariat can only provide some general support." Another person suggested that the advocacy tools developed so far by the secretariat could be pilot tested in one country per region to develop them further and start developing training materials.

Another perspective we heard on this issue is that having the leadership come from the regional and national levels would itself be an important piece of the deepening work. "Deepening may mean strengthening the regions," suggested one person we talked to. "Currently, we built the network in the country, and we have the international network, with the CT. But regionally, our network is not really strong." To some, this is a necessary step in the evolution of the network toward greater regional autonomy and less dependent on the secretariat, as envisioned in the decentralization of TAI: "Where they have done the assessment, they have the relationships, the national coalitions and regional partners now need to raise the money themselves for their two or three priority issues, working together with the other stakeholders. If they raise their own money, they also build more power for themselves, more independence."

The strategic choices around broadening or deepening constitute one area of TAI's activities where the question of roles has become important. In this aspect of network strategy there seems to be a fair amount of agreement, at least conceptually, that the national coalitions and the regional leads need to step into a greater leadership role in deepening, with support from the secretariat. We take up the question of roles more fully in the next section, which considers a broader array of network functions.

Strategy 3: TAI's Network Strategy – Network Functions and Roles

The topic of network strategy emerged in the course of our inquiry and analysis. A number of questions formulated by the CT for the second phase of the re-envisioning inquiry related to the question of how the network should be governed, for example: "Should TAI have a more formalized governance structure? Why, or why not? What would the benefits be (e.g., accountability relationships, collective decision-making)?" A few people suggested that TAI could benefit from rotating CT membership or expanding it, for example to include representatives from sub-regions. In general, however, this question did not uncover a widespread desire to change the governance of the network, and a number of members responded with a concern that "more formalized governance" would mean burdening TAI with added bureaucracy.

Yet there are clear ideas and often strong opinions on many topics relating to how the network could be managed better, function more smoothly, become stronger, particularly at the regional level. To help make sense of this important wisdom in the system, we have turned to a framework developed by the Overseas Development Organization (ODI) that it calls the network functions approach.[4] Looking at our findings through this lens can support strategic thinking about the different sets of activities going on within the network, their relative importance in achieving its mission, and the roles different parts of the network play in enacting them.

The network functions framework defines six key ways in which networks support their members in pursuing a common mission. Five of these we see as highly relevant to TAI.[5] The tables below lay out these functions with the ODI definitions, how they apply in the TAI network and comments from our interviews that speak to the value of or need for what these functions provide.

[4] Ben Ramalingam, Enrique Mendizabal and Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop, "Strengthening Humanitarian Networks: Applying the Network Functions Approach," ODI Background Note (April 2008), accessed September 28, 2009 at: http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/579.pdf.

[5] We have only used five of the six functions in the ODI framework because we did not see in our findings an indication that TAI plays the function of *filtering*, which ODI defines as "organizing and managing information for members which is worth paying attention to."

1. Community Building

ODI Definition	Promoting and sustaining the values and standards of the network
In TAI this means	Linking people committed to the 3 pillars of P10
Overview	The sense of value in belonging to a network is strong within TAI, both for the sense of connection to and moral support of like-minded people and for the practical benefits of gaining access to a global community. The network is strong in "promoting and sustaining commitment to the value" of access rights. However, the main critique of governance that surfaced in our conversations—insufficient information about issues and decisions flowing through the system—was expressed by many in terms of a gap in sustaining the value of transparency. It is also a barrier to greater ownership of the network by its members. Getting better at "practicing what we preach" is something many TAI members hope to see in future.
What we heard	"TAI is a **network of individuals committed to change**; the network is necessary because the work they are doing is so demanding **they need the support of others**." "**Working in a network itself is an important value**—a belief in the need to learn from and mutually support other partners. We should have other values, such as transparency within the network governance as well as in what the network promotes. There needs to be more transparency, for example, in the region when funds come in for regional work. Transparency and accountability are values that need to be strengthened in TAI."

2. Learning and Facilitating

ODI Definition	Enabling network members to acquire new knowledge and develop practical abilities
In TAI this means	Capacity building for assessments and advocacy; the learning network
Overview	We address learning and capacity development in the final section of this report.
What we heard	"**Where TAI might go revolves around the challenge of building capacities** – identifying capable NGOs, knitting them together, etc. to produce sustained advocacy. The question is where to find the human capacity to execute this strategy." "The methodology is important for standardizing the quality of the work. In some cases, the CT has helped to train countries to use that. This is important for the governance of TAI – **maintaining a standard that has been shown to work well in engaging government**." "At the moment, **the training materials are focused on the TAI methodology** rather than the goals and issues at hand. The training methodology is also too much presentation, no interaction, no exciting exercises, active problem solving, etc. It is not dialogic at all."

3. *Investing and Providing*

ODI Definition	Offering a channel through which network members can get the resources they need to conduct their activities, mostly by connecting donors, thematic experts, and trainers with network members
In TAI this means	Securing funding
Overview	As the quotes below the table suggest, this is an area of great concern to all. The questions people hold about fund raising seem to center on what roles different actors in the network can and should play and how TAI as a whole can strengthen its ability to make a good case to potential funders.
What we heard	"**The regional partners shouldn't always come to WRI but should raise their own money**. This is equally about culture changes within them. So where they have done the assessment, they have the relationships, now they need to raise the money themselves for the 2 or 3 priority issues, working together with the other stakeholders. Either they believe in this stuff – and should raise the money to move forward – or they don't." "The **network must become stronger materially** to remain strong in other ways." As in many areas of TAI's work, **fund raising capacity is context-specific**: From one TAI member we heard:"When you want to launch a project and need to raise funds, being part of the TAI network is an advantage." From another, in a different region, we heard: "It has been impossible to raise funds to carry TAI work forward—the TAI name has not helped with this—so we have had to use funds from other projects to do the work of closing the gaps identified."

4. *Amplifying*

ODI Definition	Turning a private or complex message into a public or more understandable one—to disseminate a message or idea, or as part of a two-way communication-feedback process
In TAI this means	Developing the TAI brand
Overview	We heard from many people in the system about the need to create a stronger global brand that conveys clearly the international character of TAI and what its work is all about.
What we heard	"A **global brand would help us very much**. We want to be shoulder to shoulder with the big and powerful organizations in our country. We want to become a high-level, highly visible, highly respected brand. The first step that should be taken in the direction of achieving this goal is for the national coalitions to be registered as official TAI organizations in their own countries. In this way we will create a TAI brand all over the world which would be recognizable by its unification and its way of working." "I am surprised that TAI is not more **visible globally.**" "One challenge is, what are the bonds that keep us together beyond the assessment? Perhaps we have not been able to communicate that **this is about something much bigger than assessment and data gathered**, but everyone has a different articulation of what that bigger thing is about."

5. Convening

ODI Definition	Bringing together individuals and groups from different nationalities, disciplines and practices to allow the development of more systematic and sustainable linkages among them
In TAI this means	Regional and global meetings
Overview	This is another area where there seems to be a near universal sense of need, in this case for more meetings, particularly at the regional level.
What we heard	"The **regional meetings are especially valuable** because we can all speak Spanish, meet people and build relationships, and learn from each other. Global meetings are also important but regional ones have been primary in Latin America. We hear that this has been the case in other regions as well. This dynamic does not seem to be well recognized within global TAI." "In global meetings the issues we hear about in other regions are so different and surprising. **We learn from the other regions and also realize the need for region-specific approaches to advocating**." "The question is how do people share? How can TAI help people learn from each other? **Face-to-face meetings are expensive but very worthwhile** and can generate some excitement. They create a sense of solidarity, a sense of understanding what's going on elsewhere, the possibility of those who have developed good practices to share them with others."

Roles and Responsibilities in the Network

ODI suggests that networks using the network functions approach for self-analysis and planning consider how roles in performing each function are balanced between "support" or "agency:"

> "For each function, determine whether the network exists to provide a Support role – supporting members to perform certain activities – or an Agency role, as an active agent undertaking activities on behalf of the members (for example, as an active Secretariat, or an empowered Board). For most functions, most networks are likely to be balanced somewhere between the two extremes of 'Agency' and 'Support' and this should be reflected in the analysis of the functions."[6]

The re-envisioning inquiry was not designed to support a rigorous analysis of the balance between these two roles.[7] However, most of the conversation about governance seems to be cast in terms of roles. For example, most people look to the Secretariat and the CT to improve the flow of information in the

[6] Ramalingam, Mendizabal and van Mierop,"Strengthening Humanitarian Networks," p. 5.

[7] The ODI authors suggest calculating or estimating a ratio of Agency:Support for each function, for example 50:50, 60:40 or 80:20 .

TAI network. People look to the Secretariat to take the lead in providing funding, and seem mainly to want greater transparency about decisions regarding allocation. Yet there are voices calling for establishing a greater balance in this role. "The sustainability of anything depends on funding," said one person we talked to. "A culture change is needed. The TAI partners shouldn't look at WRI for continuous funding." Another person put it this way: "It would help if the regional network felt and took more responsibility for fundraising and that didn't fall so completely on WRI. This would look like greater cooperation between the regional coordinators and WRI in going out to find funding for the 10-year strategy that comes out of this process."

Another strong theme in our conversations that relates to roles is the desire for stronger regional governance – more meetings at the regional level, more joint projects and study visits within regions, more communication and coordination from regional nodes. One person we talked to made a forceful case for making the role and responsibilities of regional leads much more clearly defined, in order to support a higher level of performance. Another argued that strengthening TAI at the regional level is essential to complete the decentralization initiated a few years ago: "Funding this is a challenge, but it is important. There needs to be strength at the regional level to implement decisions made by the CT at the global level. It is a weak system now that relies so much on the global secretariat."

We think that clarifying the functions and roles tentatively set forth here can make a useful contribution to the work of setting a network strategy for the next decade. It will involve thinking through more fully how the different network functions contribute to success in achieving TAI's objectives, what is needed to make the activities in each function more effective, and the roles and responsibilities of different parts of the network – the network members, the regional leads, the CT and the Secretariat.

Learning in the TAI Network

From our conversations across the network, it is clear that learning is a highly valued aspect of participation in TAI and a high priority for its future development. We have gathered information on various aspects of learning in this inquiry. We explored capacity development as part of looking at the role of assessments and the emergence of advocacy as a key element of TAI's work. We also asked about learning across the network and how the support for that, for example on the web site and in the communities of practice, is working and can be strengthened. Finally, through an inquiry into how TAI partners "measure success," we explored how people are going about the critical task of learning how well things are working on the ground – essential knowledge for increasing effectiveness. All these aspects of learning need to function well in order to make the network as effective as it can be in achieving its goals.

Capacity development

As reported above, we found in our conversations with TAI partners that working with the assessment, including the training associated with it, consistently produces significant capacity development within the national coalitions conducting the assessment and also within government as part of the review process.   This finding suggests that, as the network contemplates the future role of the assessment, one important part of the calculation will be how to maintain this core learning benefit.

Now, however, the attention of the network is focused primarily on developing capacity for follow-up activities aimed at closing the gaps in the realization of access rights identified by the assessments – termed "advocacy" in TAI language. The secretariat has begun developing "tools for advocacy," and the main topic of the July 2009 Latin America regional meeting in Lima, Peru was developing a strategy for advocacy applicable in the region, and potentially more broadly within TAI. Clearly, there is consensus in the network that this is important, pressing work. In different regions, we also heard the desire that – in contrast to the development of the assessment and related trainings – this work be done collaboratively between the network and the secretariat. As one TAI member told us, "We want to get involved in the development of new methodology. It is important to involve the network partners rather than have a secretariat-led process." In line with this aspiration, the Lima meeting produced a plan for a subsequent working session to take up the question of advocacy strategy and the "10 Tools for Advocacy" materials that the secretariat has developed. This meeting will take place in Latin America but include TAI members from other regions as well.

It seems that, with these steps toward co-development of strategies and tools for advocacy, TAI is actively engaged in working out a suitable balance between Agency (the secretariat holding responsibility for capacity building in the network) and Support (the secretariat supporting network members in taking up this responsibility).   An important question is what role the CT – as an entity outside of the secretariat that, like the secretariat, can work from a global perspective – might play in providing support. For example, from one person we heard the suggestion that the CT should revive its working group on learning and revisit the learning agenda it created two years ago. "There is no need for a broad poll. We should finish what we started in 2007." As with other key functions, working out how the roles and responsibilities of these different parts of the TAI system will be an important part of developing TAI's learning strategy.

Learning across the Network

The opportunity to learn from people doing similar work across the region and around the world seems to be one of the great attractors for participation in the TAI network.   For example, one member of the secretariat shared this perception of the energy in the network: "Last week I sent out an email on the listserv asking whether stimulus spending on infrastructure is resulting in rollback on environmental standards. I got 20 responses right away. This is what people want to participate in and contribute to!" In our conversations with other TAI members, we found a similar enthusiasm for cross-network learning. TAI members in all regions value the opportunities they have and have an appetite for more.

As reflected in the table on the Convening function, many TAI members we talked to said that face-to-face meetings are the best mode of learning, both within regions and globally. Network members also have a positive view of the TAI web site and online communities of practice as an avenue for sharing and learning. At the same time, most recognize that there is much room for improvement in their level of active use of these online resources. "In terms of getting the most up-to-date tools, the web and the communities of practice are critical," one TAI member told us. "We all need to start to use this resource more, get over the barriers to doing that – it is important, it is there, it is very efficient."

Some people we talked to noted steps the secretariat might take, for example continuing its efforts to make the web site work better and be more user friendly, or circulating more information through emails and bulletins," so we can become aware of materials even when we are not specifically looking for something." Several TAI members in the Latin America region mentioned language as a barrier to participation in online forums. For African TAI partners, the high cost and poor quality of connections to the Internet can be a hindrance. In short, in building the network's learning capacity, TAI is facing barriers that are significant and also common challenges for geographically dispersed networks learning how to make use of virtual tools.

Learning through Evaluation: Measuring Success

TAI members care a great deal about making an impact on access rights. Developing ways of measuring success is an important part of creating a learning process that will contribute to that goal. As part of the re-envisioning process, the CT wanted to hear from the network how people are thinking about and going about this critical task.

One question the CT asked is, "How can you know that what TAI did actually led to a particular change?" Among the people we talked to there is high level of agreement on the response to this question: in most cases, it is impossible to know for sure. In the case of concrete, visible outcomes such as the passage of a law it is difficult to go beyond saying that TAI's work *contributed* to the outcome, because so many factors are influencing it, often over a period of many years. "It is not possible to attribute 100 percent of a change to some activity," one TAI member told us. "It is only possible to say that it made a contribution to do the TAI assessment and the advocacy." This is even more the case with the many outcomes that are intangible and often invisible such as changes in attitudes: "Ultimately you are looking at changes of cultures and behaviors – lots and lots of factors contribute to such changes, lots of things come together for that, many of the factors you can never have control over."

This difficulty notwithstanding, TAI members are engaged in evaluating the impact of their work. In many cases they are doing this by identifying visible indicators of success – changes that point toward achievement of the ultimate goal but may be more easily measured. For example, in the Latin America regional meeting last July, the group discussed a number of cases illustrating different advocacy strategies and realized, as one person told us:

> It is important to pay attention to the small or medium accomplishments of the strategy along the way. *For example, you may have the goal of getting access rights in the constitution. You may not succeed in that but may build key relationships, raise awareness, etc., and these are important outcomes. This is especially true in Latin America where democratic institutions are still weak. So if there is an impact on a particular ministry it can be important. So, what is*

needed is to be clear on indicators starting out and have those include those intermediate outcomes.

Indeed, as we found in our conversations about the assessment and reported in the Four Dimensions of Change diagram, there are many such "intermediate" outcomes of TAI's work. It seems that by naming them and recognizing how they contribute to the overall goal of realizing access rights or a sequence of strategic steps towards change, as the group did in Lima, TAI can begin to address its need (implied in the CT's inquiry) for a more consistent approach to evaluating impacts beyond outputs such as the assessment reports.

Annex: TAI Re-envisioning Process – Details

Many people have participated in TAI's re-envisioning process, and we wish to acknowledge their contributions here. In addition, we provide below an overview of all Phase 2 activities and the interview questions for Phase 2.

Action-Learning Team

TAI MEMBERS

Lalanath de Silva (Phases 1 and 2)
Joe Foti (Phases 1 and 2)
Monika Kerdeman (Phase 2)
Linda Shaffer-Bollert (Phase 1)

CONSULTANTS

Minu Hemmati, the Generative Change Community (GCC), lead consultant
Bettye Pruitt, GCC (www.gc-community.net), consultant
Philip Thomas, GCC, advisor, Phases 1 and 2
Steve Waddell, iScale and Networking Action (www.networkingaction.net), advisor Phases 1 and 2
Sanjeev Khagram, iScale (www.scalingimpact.net), consultant Phase 1

Individual Interviews

CT MEMBERS

Andrea Sanhueza, Chile (Phases 1 and 2)
Juan Carlos Carillo Fuentes, Tomás Severino, Olimpia Castillo, Mexico (group call – Phases 1 and 2)
Somrudee Nicro , Thailand (Phases 1 and 2)
Ritwick Dutta, India (Phase 2)
Arthur Bainomugisha (Phase 2) + Sophie Kutegeka (Phases 1 and 2), Uganda (group call)
Csaba Kiss, Hungary (Phases 1 and 2)

NETWORK MEMBERS

Name	Country	Region	Phase	Remarks
Ms Yen Nguyen Hoang / Mr Nguyen Ngoc Sinh	Vietnam	SE Asia	2	Preparing assessment; provided written interview; answered additional question via email
Mr. He Jun	China	E Asia	2	Preparing assessment,; active
Mr Ram Charitra Sah	Nepal	South Asia	2	Assessment completed; active

Mr Michael Ewing	Ireland	Europe	1 and 2	Post assessment; active; large
Mr Kiril Ristovski	Macedonia	Europe	2	Recent assessment; active; small *(also included in national coalition workshop)*
Ms Piret Kuldna	Estonia	Europe	2	Post assessment; active; small
Mr Alexander Kashumov	Bulgaria	Europe	2	Post assessment; not active
Mr Augustine Njamnshi	Cameroon	Africa	1 and 2	Post assessment; active; expanding to francophone Africa
Mr William Chadza	Malawi	Africa	2	Post assessment
Ms Teresa Flores	Bolivia	Latin America	2	Multiple assessments; active
Mr Daniel Barragán	Ecuador	Latin America	1 and 2	Multiple assessments; active
Ms Isabel Calle	Perú	Latin America	2	Post assessment; active

SECRETARIAT

- Lalanath de Silva (Phases 1 and 2)
- Joe Foti (Phases 1 and 2)
- Jake Werksman (Phase 2)
- Monika Kerdeman (Phase 2)
- Linda Shaffer-Bollert (Phase 1)

OTHERS

WRI Leadership: Manish Bapna, MD

Funders: Dr Kulsum Ahmed, the World Bank (Phase 2); Ralph Taylor, Metanoia Fund (Phase 1)

Co-founders: Dr Sándor Fülöp (Phase 2); Frances Seymour and Elena Petkova (group interview, Phase 1)

Persons we contacted but did not succeed in interviewing:

- Ms Lorraine Gatlabayan, Philippines
- Ms. Rizwana Hassan or Ms Bahreen Khan, Bangladesh
- Benson Ochieng, Kenya
- Maurice Odhiambo Makoloo, Director, Institute for Law & Environmental Governance
- Luis Balmore Amaya, El Salvador

Phase 2 Activities, July – October 2009

Data sources	Details	Team	Recording / repository
Interviews	Core Team: 9 (6 interviews) Secretariat: 4 Network members: 11 Written interview from group meeting: 1 (Vietnam) Funder: 1 WRI leadership: 1 Founder: 1 TOTAL DONE: 28 (in 25 interviews) Plus possibly: other Nepalese members in October Individual interviews requested, no response or no sufficient response: 5	Interviews have been conducted by Minu, Bettye, Minu+Bettye, and Bettye+Philip	Notes from interviews; including review of the notes from interviewees All shared w/ AL team after approval from interviewees
National coalition workshops	Macedonia: Sept 2, (6 people) Nepal: Oct 9 (20 people expected)	Facilitated by Minu (Macedonia) and Minu + Bettye (Nepal)	Notes from workshops (Minu + Bettye+ staff support from

			coalition)			
Session at regional meeting in Latin America	Theory of change session with 4 quadrant exercise; discussions about TAI method and advocacy (18 people)	Joe and Andrea Sanhueza	Notes from a conversation between Joe and Minu about the meeting (Minu)			
Blog	Role and purpose of assessment	Prepared by Minu (1); Bettye (2,3)	Blog pages + 7 comments			
AL team calls	4 Aug, 1 Oct	Participants: From TAI: Lalanath, Joe, Monika From GCC: Minu, Philip, Bettye Steve Waddell				
CT call	2 Sept		Minutes (w/ input from Steve)			
Materials	Voice + Choice Regional Reports Website materials		Website			

TAI Re-envisioning Process: Phase 2

Interview Guide for Investigating the Network

The TAI assessment and dimensions of change

- In your view, what is the main role and purpose of conducting the TAI assessment?

  And – apart from what we discussed so far - what other effects does it have to conduct the assessment? What else changes, or can change, through conducting the assessment…?
- Which other changes does TAI aim to achieve? Is there anything else that we haven't discussed yet? And how do you (or does TAI) go about achieving those changes?

Membership and sequencing: Should conducting a TAI assessment be a threshold for membership? Is this necessary? Do you always want to strictly follow the process of national coalition – assessment – advocacy? Could conducting a minimum diagnostic of access sufficient to start?

Deepening / broadening: Should TAI continue to expand into more and more countries, or should it focus on deepening the work in existing partner countries?

Stakeholders

- Targets of change: Who are your target groups / individuals – governments, NGOs, media? (*boundary partners*)
  (And does, or should, this include governments of fragile states and/or non-democratic states?
- *Strategic Partners*: Who are your strategic partners – with whom are you forming alliances? Are here others with whom TA should work together more closely?

Governance, ownership and trust

- Should TAI have a more formalized governance structure? Why, or why not? What would the benefits be? (e.g. accountability relationships, collective decision-making)
- In previous discussions and in the Core Team, it was said that fostering more ownership and trust within the network would be good. Do you agree? How could that best be achieved?
- Should TAI invest more in facilitating and supporting national coalitions?

TAI Learning Processes

- The Core Team has been discussing options for improving the learning across the network, e.g. developing the new website. What else could be done to foster learning between national coalitions, regions, and among the global network of TAI?
- How can the Communities of Practice be improved, become more useful, and more used? What are the barriers, and how can we address them?

Measuring Success

- How can changes in access be attributed to TAI? How can you know that what TAI did actually led to a particular change?
- What does success look like, and how can it be measured?
- Should TAI be trying to assess “outcomes” rather than “outputs” – e.g. (reports on) access to justice vs. justice practiced / experienced by people?

Values and common ground: What is the core essence of TAI? What common values and shared goals actually hold the network together?

Developing TAI: What would you change in TAI for the next decade?