

*Panel for ISTR Meetings, 2008*

**International Advocacy Network Governance and Architecture:  
Implications for Performance and Accountability**

In the last quarter century, international civil society advocacy organizations and networks (IANGOs) have emerged as important actors in identifying transnational problems, articulating transnational norms and expectations, formulating international policies, and implementing and monitoring compliance with international agreements. Many analysts see this pattern as more than a short-term phenomenon, especially given current patterns of globalization and technological change and the difficulties of existing institutions in coping with many transnational problems.

Researchers during the last decade have paid increasing attention to the challenges of organizing transnational civil society associations. Some have focused on international NGOs involved in humanitarian response and poverty alleviation (e.g., Lindenberg and Bryant, 2001). Others have investigated more heterogeneous samples of transnational civil society organizations (e.g., Young, et. al. 1999). Still others have looked at the strategies and tactics of transnational advocacy networks (e.g., Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2001, Florini, 2003). More recently, there have been attempts to analyze the history and forms of transnational civic organizing and its global impacts (Batliwala and Brown, 2006), as well as to examine the accountability issues of transnational civil society organizations (Jordan and van Tuijl, 2006). New literature has also examined the broader challenges of global accountability as a social construction (Ebrahim and Weisband, 2007). But relatively little attention has been paid to how their governance and architecture affect the advocacy and accountability results of transnational civic actors.

The proposed panel grows out of a comparative research project that is analyzing the governance and architecture arrangements of international advocacy NGOs and networks (IANGOs) and exploring the impacts of those arrangements on their advocacy performance and their accountability to key stakeholders. The project has constructed case studies of governance and advocacy in ten IANGOs that seek to influence policies on a wide range of topics, including human rights, environmental issues, poverty alleviation, good governance, and women's rights. The sample includes organizations from the global South as well as from the global North as well as organizations with a broad range of architectures and advocacy targets.

The patterns of governance across the cases vary with their histories and the nature of their advocacy targets and strategies. In some cases national members were created by the IANGO. Transparency International, Amnesty International and Action Aid International, for example, fostered the emergence of national branches. In other cases national member created the IANGO. Oxfam International and Greenpeace International emerged to serve the goals of national member organizations. Others were created to serve the needs of social movements, such as SDI, WIEGO, and AWID, or at the

initiative of foundations or donor agencies, such as Social Watch and CIVICUS. Their histories of creation and support have helped to shape the governance of these IANGOs..

Some IANGO architectures have also been shaped by the nature of their advocacy strategies and targets. Thus IANGOs that have focused on targets that require adversarial advocacy campaigns, such as Amnesty International, Transparency International, Oxfam International and Greenpeace International, are often organized with federation architectures that put considerable governance responsibility at the center. Others that emphasize collaborative relations with their targets, such as WIEGO and AWID, have architectures that position them as support organizations to wider networks or movements that share their goals and values.

The panelists will examine how these governance and architecture dimensions affect aspects of IANGO advocacy performance and accountability to their stakeholders.

### **Panelists**

L. David Brown, Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University  
Srilatha Batliwala, Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University and  
Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)  
Alnoor Ebrahim, Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University and  
Harvard Business School

### **References:**

- Batliwala, Srilatha, and L. David Brown, Eds. *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction*, Hartford CT: Kumarian Press, 2006
- Clark, John, ed. *Globalizing Civic Engagement: Civil Society and Transnational Action*. London: Earthscan, 2003.
- Ebrahim, Alnoor, and Edward Weisband, *Global Accountabilities: Participation, Pluralism and Public Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007
- Florini, Ann, Editor, *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*, New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000
- Jordan, Lisa, and Peter van Tuijl, *NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles and Innovations*, Sterling VA: Stylus Publishing, 2006
- Keck, Margaret, and Kathryn Sikkink. *Activists without Borders*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Khagram, Sanjeev, James Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds. *Restructuring World Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Lindenberg, Marc, and Coralie Bryant. *Going Global: Transforming Relief and Development NGOs*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2001.
- Young, Dennis R., Bonnie L. Koenig, Adil Najam, and Julie Fisher. "Strategy and Structure in Managing Global Associations." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 10, no. 4 (1999): 323-43.

*ISTR 2008 Abstract*

**Evolving Governance in International Advocacy NGOs and Networks**

L. David Brown  
Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations

This paper will focus on the evolution of governance in international advocacy NGOs and networks (IANGOs). It seeks to advance a growing literature on the roles and characteristics of civil society organizations and networks that operate across international borders (e.g., Batliwala and Brown, 2006; Florini, 2001; Young, 1999). It will examine the challenges facing leaders of such organizations in constructing effective governance and architecture arrangements.

Governance of IANGOs involves structures and processes for making “big decisions” about issues like missions, strategies and accountabilities that affect their activities and impacts. Many IANGOs have governance arrangements—General Assemblies, Boards, International Secretariats, national affiliates—that appear quite similar. But this investigation suggests that the actual practice of governance varies considerably in how boards are selected and held accountable, how power is distributed among actors, and how architectures are constituted to serve different advocacy strategies and targets. The paper will briefly explore the differences in governance arrangements and their implications across ten cases.

IANGOs face complex, ambiguous and rapidly changing contexts. Many of them must continually adapt and reinvent their governance and architecture arrangements to survive and be effective in their campaigns. Governance evolution must balance global, national and local strategies, integrate volunteer and professional priorities, align Northern and Southern interests, manage brand risks posed by diverse affiliates, and respond to target and context challenges. The paper will examine some of the architectural alternatives that IANGOs have evolved, discuss the forces underlying these alternatives, and explore leadership and change processes involved in constructing and reconstructing IANGO governance and architecture.

**References:**

- Batliwala, Srilatha, and L. David Brown, eds. *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2006.
- Florini, Ann. *The Coming Democracy: New Rules for Running a New World*. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2005.
- Young, Dennis R., Bonnie L. Koenig, Adil Najam, and Julie Fisher. "Strategy and Structure in Managing Global Associations." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 10, no. 4 (1999): 323-43.

**Tradeoffs in Structure, Knowledge and Voice:  
Challenges Facing International Advocacy NGOs**

Alnoor Ebrahim

This paper is part of a panel on the architecture and governance of International Advocacy NGOs (IANGOs). The focus of this presentation will be on three pairs of propositions emerging from the research. Each pair focuses on a tradeoff faced by organizations as they shift from being a loose collection of national actors with their own policy agendas to a more tightly coordinated set of global policy actors within a federation.

*A. Tradeoffs in the structure of campaigns*

1. Effective local advocacy requires bottom-up participatory campaigns
2. Effective global advocacy requires top-down and heavily disciplined campaigns.

*B. Tradeoffs in the knowledge of campaigns*

3. Effective local advocacy builds new knowledge to empower grassroots actors.
4. Effective global advocacy uses expert knowledge to target global policy actors.

*C. Tradeoffs in the voices/interests of campaigns*

5. Effective local advocacy relies on the voices of grassroots actors to express their interests.
6. Effective global advocacy relies on the voices of global elites, who claim to speak for the interests of grassroots actors.

Taken together, these three pairs of tradeoffs suggest that NGOs which expand from local or national advocacy to global campaigns are likely to face very serious tensions in their work. The paper and presentation will examine how some organizations attempt to mitigate the negative effects of some of these tradeoffs, and the new capacities that they have had to build to do so. Some of the organizations in the study have successfully transitioned to becoming effective global policy actors. But others have chosen to retain closer ties to the grassroots, even as they have become globally federated actors. The broader implications for understanding their effectiveness and their theories of change will be explored.

*Sample References:*

- Brown, L. David. 2001. "Accountability, Strategy and International Nongovernmental Organizations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30:569-587.
- Ebrahim, Alnoor, and Edward Weisband (Eds.). 2007. *Global Accountabilities: Participation, Pluralism, and Public Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fox, Jonathan A., and L. David Brown (Eds.). 1998. *The Struggle for Accountability: The World Bank, NGOs, and Grassroots Movements*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

- Goetz, Anne Marie, and Rob Jenkins. 2002. "Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda. Background Paper for the Human Development Report 2002." New York: United Nations Development Programme. Background Paper for the Human Development Report 2002 <http://hdr.undp.org/publications/papers.cfm>
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- Khagram, Sanjeev, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink (Eds.). 2002. *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

## Do Constituency-based Transnational Organizations Do it Better?

Srilatha Batliwala

This paper is part of a panel on the architecture and governance of International Advocacy NGOs (IANGOs), and grows out of current research at the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University, on the governance and architecture of IANGOs. It will examine whether transnational formations created by organized grassroots constituencies or “primary stakeholders” create more accountable governance systems and better advocacy impacts than other IANGOs as a result of their architecture. These questions will be examined through three propositions:

1. That grassroots constituencies form *more downwardly accountable and democratic* governance systems than other IANGOs in their global coalitions / networks / organizations;
2. That grassroots IANGOs choose advocacy *targets* that hold direct power and influence on their constituents rather than targets and institutions with more generic but less direct impact on their members; and
3. That their downwardly-accountable governance structures influences the *advocacy strategies* of grassroots IANGOs in very particular ways at variance with other transnational organizations concerned with social justice.

The paper will attempt to explore these propositions through the evidence generated by the IANGO case studies conducted by the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations over the past year, as well as the case studies of grassroots transnational organizations undertaken by the author since 2003 (unpublished). The purpose is to explore the significance of differences – if any - in governance structures, advocacy targets and advocacy strategies between grassroots transnational entities and other transnational civil society organizations that seek socially just and rights-affirming policies at the global and national levels.

Sample literature:

- Appadurai, Arjun, *The Capacity to Aspire*, in V. Rao and M. Walton, Eds., *Cultural and Public Action*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004
- Batliwala, Srilatha, *Grassroots Movements as Transnational Actors: Implications for Global Civil Society*, *Voluntas*, Volume 13(4): 393-409, December 2002
- Batliwala, Srilatha, and L. David Brown, Eds. *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction*, Hartford CT: Kumarian Press, 2006
- Ebrahim, Alnoor, and Edward Weisband, *Global Accountabilities: Participation, Pluralism and Public Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007
- Edwards, Michael, and Gaventa, John, Eds., *Global Citizen Action*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienr Publishers, 2000

- Florini, Ann, Editor, *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*, New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000
- Jordan, Lisa, and Peter van Tuijl, *NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles and Innovations*, Sterling VA: Stylus Publishing, 2006
- Keck, Margaret, and Kathryn Sikkink. *Activists without Borders*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Khagram, Sanjeev, James Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds. *Restructuring World Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.