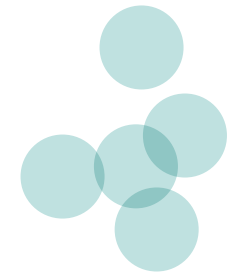




# **GDL 2025: Diplomacy 4.0**





Global Diplomacy Lab

## GDL 2025: Diplomacy 4.0

*“However beautiful the strategy,  
you should occasionally look at the results.”*  
— Sir Winston Churchill

**Five years ago, the Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL) was founded to advance more inclusive and agile formats of diplomacy and international cooperation to deal with cross-border and global challenges. By bringing together experts from a wide range of sectors and disciplines, GDL is tapping into their knowledge and skills, thus forming creative and interdisciplinary communities that could function as a global taskforce on standby. Since then, GDL has established a global ecosystem characterised by mutual accountability, respect and inclusiveness, and has delivered positive transformational change. To maintain its effectiveness, GDL has established the following strategy.**

## Our starting point: traditional diplomacy

Diplomacy is defined as the conduct of relations between states by peaceful means, such as negotiation and persuasion.

Traditionally, diplomacy is carried out by government officials – diplomats – who negotiate treaties, trade policies, and other international agreements. In this context, the emphasis is on power and how states can maintain it, or balance it, in relation to other states. Diplomacy still focuses largely on power as a zero-sum resource, which discourages a more integrative or cooperative approach.

However, the world is changing rapidly. We live in an increasingly complex global environment that is simultaneously becoming both more interconnected and more fragmented. While states remain at the centre of power in the international system, non-state actors, striving for influence, have begun to play a more prominent role. In foreign policy, government-to-government relations alone cannot keep pace with the profound political, economic, social and technological transformations taking place.

## Our result: a new form of diplomacy

In this context, an intermediate space has emerged, linking the local with the global. This is shaped by the participation of actors such as local governments, NGOs, foundations, companies and cities, whose activities influence decisions related to international policy; therefore, these actors are taking on the roles of non-traditional diplomats. Based on this understanding, we believe that diplomacy must adopt a more inclusive mindset: one which seeks collaborative solutions to shared challenges in a positive-sum game, allowing all relevant parties involved to participate and benefit.

Therefore, GDL develops a new approach for diplomacy. It utilises innovative methodologies to reconcile the interests of multiple stakeholders and to build trust. It allows governments to operate as sovereign actors and simultaneously leverages the influence and potential of other actors through a new diplomacy track, with the ultimate goal of achieving the SDGs. **We call this approach Diplomacy 4.0<sup>1</sup>**. The core focus of Diplomacy 4.0 is on linking global and local opportunities and challenges through the various GDL events. To enable all relevant actors to engage in this new form of multi-stakeholder and cross-domain cooperation, a Lab is needed to experiment, to find out what works and what doesn't – thereby building upon the capacities of actors (individuals and organisations) to engage in this new diplomacy.

<sup>1</sup>Diplomacy 1.0 = government-to-government; Diplomacy 2.0 = so-called track 2 diplomacy, i.e. government-to-government plus experts from relevant fields; Diplomacy 3.0 = people-to-people dialogues, i.e. NGO to NGO, business to business. Diplomacy 4.0 = multi-stakeholder, i.e. bringing all actors together; all participate and are heard, i.e. the sum of Diplomacy 1.0 to 3.0.

## Value proposition

GDL catalyses inclusive diplomacy and drives global and local change through a member-driven approach as well as a diversity of thought and methodologies, thus achieving impact at the level of individuals, institutions and on policy.

## Our impact

GDL aims to enable traditional and non-traditional diplomats to collaborate in innovative ways and design inclusive responses to global and local challenges for sustainable development. In their respective work context, individuals and organisations are leveraging the networks and using the formats, methods and lessons learned developed in the GDL setting, thus bringing Diplomacy 4.0 into fruition beyond GDL.

GDL achieves this by:

- **creating a diverse community** of practice from the fields of diplomacy and government, civil society, academia and business, and by building its members' capacities, fostering mutual learning and thought leadership, and catalysing action in their respective spheres of influence;
- leveraging the knowledge and experience of its diverse membership to **develop and pilot innovative solutions** for inclusive diplomacy through its Lab approach and by identifying lessons learned and best practices;
- using this emerging body of knowledge and the capacities of its members to **support and advise organisations** around the world in addressing their development challenges through innovative methods.

While impact always occurs at various levels, GDL focuses on the following **areas of impact creation** in order to improve effectiveness, efficiency and agility:

- To create impact at the **individual level**, GDL implements events and activities at regular intervals, enabling all members to enhance their understanding of key global issues, improve their intercultural, interpersonal and discursive leadership and problem-solving skills, stimulate mutual learning and build their capacity to apply innovative methods. Other events include workshops and webinars organised by members for the GDL community. GDL also connects the individual with resources and fellow members at a global level.

- To create impact at the **knowledge level**, GDL invites “challenges”, issues that external organisations may be facing that require help in reframing and/or resolving, and implements advisory projects, such as GDL Lab formats. These involve smaller teams of selected members, working in partnership with the challenge holders. In these projects, members **contribute their skills and create knowledge** by developing solutions and channelling their learning back into the GDL community.
- To create impact at the **systemic level**, GDL strives to work with diplomats, governmental and non-governmental institutions and **to contribute the knowledge created by GDL** to organisational development, diplomatic strategies and conduct at a global level. GDL also provides thought leadership based on the wide-ranging expertise of its members.

## Agenda for Change

To achieve and improve its impact:

- GDL, its partners and members work together to engage traditional diplomats and their institutions and put them and their needs at the centre of GDL.
- GDL develops methods and processes to measure the impact of all its activities and ensure continuous learning and improvement. All activities implemented in the GDL framework will fulfil a set of standardised criteria which include impact logic, methodology, funding responsibility and relevance with regard to diplomacy.

- GDL provides a platform to bring members together on a regular basis. The goal of this platform is to strengthen the community and improve mutual learning, and also to introduce new projects, such as decentralised Labs, consider lessons learned from ongoing and past activities, and discuss new topics.
- GDL streamlines its governance, decision-making and implementation processes to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness. It regularly evaluates its operation and makes adjustments where necessary and feasible.
- The Elected Members of the GDL Advisory Council (EAC) develop an action plan for the operationalisation of this strategy on a biannual basis, seek the consent of the members and report regularly on its implementation.

As a result, GDL will focus on the following strategic areas over the next five years:

- Developing an Impact Statement;
- Achieving sustainable impacts through Diplomacy 4.0;
- Enhancing the member-driven approach;
- Fostering strong relationships with and among committed partners;
- Developing a sound and effective support structure.

Strategic Priorities	Indicators	Envisaged Results
<b>1. Develop an Impact Statement</b>	Create a framework to capture GDL's impact.	Please see Annex A.
<b>2. Achieving sustainable impacts through Diplomacy 4.0</b>	GDL activities achieve demonstrable impacts and contribute to the goal of GDL (promoting Diplomacy 4.0).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign Ministries use formats and methods developed by GDL in five diplomatic endeavours.</li> <li>• GDL events and activities are selected transparently, with member input, and using standardised criteria.</li> <li>• GDL events are chosen based on those which best align with Diplomacy 4.0.</li> <li>• Sustainability, equal opportunities, diversity of the GDL itself: Since the Labs will focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the GDL strategy should also strive to make the GDL as SDG-compliant as possible.</li> <li>• Member-led funding contribution</li> <li>• Communication strategy regarding learning and insights</li> </ul>
	Members gain a greater understanding of key global issues, improve their skills and build their capacity, and joint learning is stimulated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The GDL events and activities address members' needs, in terms of both content and methodology.</li> </ul>



## 2. Achieving sustainable impacts through Diplomacy 4.0

Partnerships are established with key diplomacy stakeholders to enhance their understanding of Diplomacy 4.0 and how it can be used to improve their organisational learning, strategy building and implementation.

GDL has set up several strategic partnerships with stakeholders in order to:

- provide them with expert knowledge and expose them to innovative perspectives and approaches;
- help them to access international networks;
- contribute to the development of their adaptive capacities and agility.

There is active engagement with the SDGs with the aim of identifying issues at the intersection of global and local opportunities and the challenges to be addressed.

- GDL is recognised as a pre-eminent thought leader on the link between the global and local levels.
- GDL's events and activities demonstrate an explicit link to the SDGs.

A process of continuous learning and reflection applies to all GDL events.

- GDL provides a platform for diverse voices, views and opinions and fosters their development.
- Members co-create new methods and further develop the concept of inclusive diplomacy.

A body of knowledge is generated that can be of significant value beyond the immediate scope of GDL.

- GDL has contributed to the learning outcomes of traditional and non-traditional diplomats and their organisations as well as to scientific work on diplomacy.
- Annual reports have shown that impact has been achieved on these levels (based on qualitative and narrative evidence).

<p><b>3. Enhancing GDL's member-driven approach</b></p>	<p>GDL is a well-recognised and diverse global platform.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When selecting members, partners ensure diversity and inclusion with regard to gender, geographic distribution, expertise, race and ethnicity, and ability.</li> </ul>
	<p>Members receive support in managing the scope and intensity of their commitment to GDL.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every GDL member has signed the Members' Values and Expectations Charter.</li> <li>• Every GDL member who has committed to participate agrees to the terms of engagement. This includes a certain number of pro-bono hours of commitment.</li> </ul>
	<p>A member-driven approach is taken regarding GDL activities, events and funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members engage in planning and implementing GDL events and activities in a co-creation process involving members and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Members engage in fundraising activities for GDL and/or individual events they plan.</li> </ul>
	<p>Members contribute their knowledge, skills and networks, thus helping to improve and advance GDL.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GDL has effectively leveraged its members' expertise (e.g. on SDGs, facilitation methodology or communication training) and has made pro-active use of its members' (local) networks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Fostering strong relationships with and among committed partners</b></p>	<p>A partnership strategy is developed with respect to leading partners, strategic network partners and service partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An effective partnership strategy is in place, wherein at least the following partners are distinguished:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leading partners who provide funding and legitimacy to GDL;</li> <li>• strategic network partners who provide GDL members with opportunities to share GDL's approach and methodology;</li> <li>• service partners who provide a wide variety of services, depending on GDL's needs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The partners' relationship to each other is based on four criteria: representation, reciprocity, responsibility and responsiveness.</li> <li>• Representation of (traditional) diplomats is assured.</li> </ul>

## 5. Developing a sound and effective support structure

### Communication:

Impacts and members' contributions are documented and shared.

- A communication strategy is implemented.
- GDL activities and impacts are effectively showcased to external audiences.
- GDL uses social media to communicate its key messages, with members making an active contribution.
- Members and partners use their communications to improve visibility, branding and marketing.

### Governance:

GDL's governance is strengthened as a result of a focus on the roles and responsibilities of all actors; the member-driven approach is embraced by all.

- A member-driven governance structure and processes are in place which ensure:
- clear roles and responsibilities for all actors (Member and Partner Charters) and accountability mechanisms;
  - transparent criteria for the selection of GDL members, ensuring diversity and inclusion with regard to gender, geographic distribution, expertise, race and ethnicity, and ability;
  - GDL events and activities are selected transparently, with member input, and using standardised criteria;
  - representation of classical diplomats.

### Financial sustainability:

Partners and members share responsibility for funding.

- A sustainable business model based on the value proposition is developed which provides multiple revenue streams.
- A fundraising strategy is co-designed by members and partners and jointly implemented.

## Communications strategy

GDL will make concerted efforts to showcase its activities to targeted, external stakeholders, communicate its main goal of promoting Diplomacy 4.0, establish new partnerships, and demonstrate impact. This could take the form of storytelling in innovative formats (e.g. lightning talks, pop-ups), providing a platform for GDL expert member voices at established fora, and curating by members, with the overall aim of increasing GDL's visibility.

## Governance

GDL has an effective governance structure. In the next five years, it will further improve its governance by refining the roles, responsibilities and participation levels of all members, partners and other stakeholders of member-approved charters in each respective area. When selecting new members, the Advisory Council will ensure diversity with regard to geographic distribution, expertise, race, gender, ability, ethnicity, socio-economic status and culture. The Advisory Council will also ensure that traditional diplomats are represented in the governance of GDL. The Advisory Council will establish a process which is **transparent** to members when shortlisting and selecting GDL-approved events and activities.

## Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability is the shared responsibility of partners and members. Partners ensure the base-level funding. In the case of events proposed by members, responsibility for funding is shared. This can include external fundraising.

## Next steps

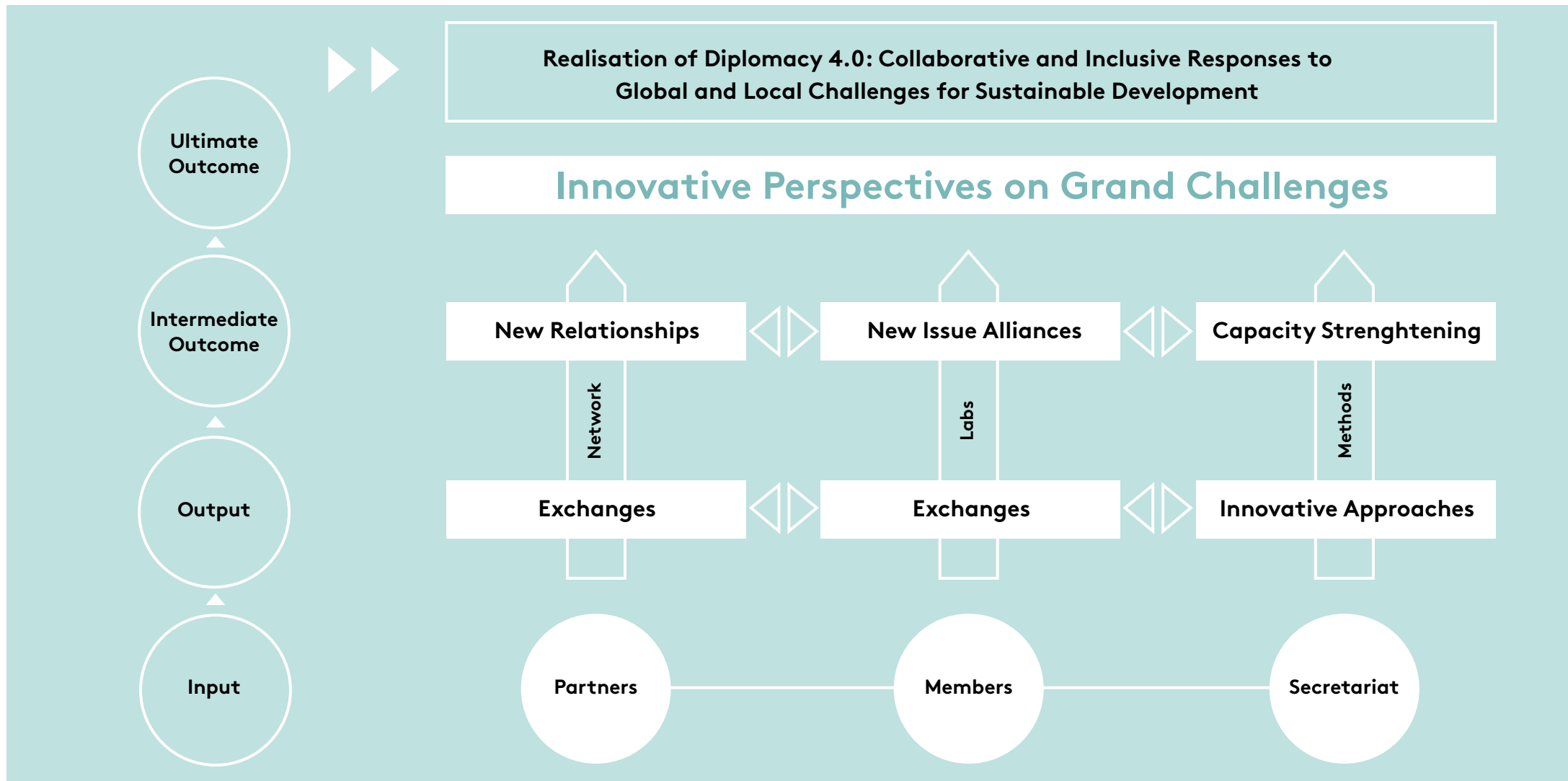
- The EAC will produce an **implementation plan** for this strategy and report to the GDL Advisory Council (AC) annually. The implementation planning process, including criteria for the global-local interface, impact, value proposition and diplomacy, will be transparent to members.
- To achieve **impact**, GDL will create a set of **standardised criteria** for activities which include strategic relevance, impact, shared funding responsibilities and support of Diplomacy 4.0.
- Establish a process for shortlisting and selecting GDL-approved events and activities which is **transparent** to members.
- Develop a **communications strategy and implementation plan**.
- A **Members' Values and Expectations Charter** needs to be developed, focusing on membership and participation in activities. This charter should include the time, resources and funding members can expect to contribute.

## Developing the strategy

This strategy document was designed via a member-led stakeholder feedback loop including interviews with partners and members, member surveys and webinars. The collaborative process during which the GDL worked with the Rotterdam School of Management's Partnerships Resource Centre at the Erasmus University is documented in **Annex B**.

# Annex A

## GDL's Impact Statement



## Annex B

### The story of GDL's strategy development

By Marieke de Wal and Stella Pfisterer

*In the summer of 2019, in warm and colourful Accra, Ghana, a group of GDL members and representatives of the GDL Secretariat and the GDL partner institutions meet for the first time to work on a new strategy. The workshop starts with a circle conversation about the value of GDL. Different points of view are discussed, varying from the personal connections members were able to make, the interesting other perspectives that are brought to the table, the chance to exchange challenges and opportunities. Then they are asked to think of a metaphor: which image or story best reflects the meaning of GDL? One of the participants starts talking about a journey, a search for the unknown: "it is not about where GDL is going but more about which way to travel. It is like building the boat while sailing."*

## A challenging assignment

GDL wanted to take stock and decide on its future direction. While members and partners experience a great drive and commitment to be part of the GDL community, there were different perceptions on how far, and at what level, GDL's activities achieve tangible and measurable impact. The five-year anniversary of GDL provided the right moment to reflect on what GDL has achieved so far and what its future goals should be. The assignment was challenging: GDL's future strategy must be supported and owned by its members. At the same time, it should leave enough space for new members to co-shape the GDL further in the years to come. A group of selected GDL members, facilitated by the Partnerships Resource Centre, worked on it for more than a year.

## A co-created strategy

Formulating the strategy for an experimental platform such as GDL requires a tailor-made approach. It was determined by three interrelated key aspects that characterise GDL.

GDL is a **member-driven platform**. In other words, GDL leans on a self-managed network in which members are responsible for delivering, supported by a Secretariat but without the usual managerial supervision or accountability mechanisms. On the one hand, this allows the strategy development freedom and creativity. On the other hand, the lack of clear guidelines can feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable. The most important reference point was the members. Therefore, the strategy approach required various mechanisms for involving members throughout the process. Ultimately, the strategy should be owned by the GDL members.

GDL is characterised by **diversity of ideas and approaches** due to its wide variety of members. With more than 200 members in 2020 – some more active than others – and some 40 new members joining GDL every year, this issue was a key challenge for the GDL strategy process. Feedback loops by members and partners were integrated into the strategy process. This required building on each other's ideas instead of pushing own ideas and preferences. An important element for decision-making was consent. This means that, while members may not fully agree with a decision that has been made, they can live with it. But it is important that members had the possibility to contribute their ideas and opinions, also later on in the implementation of the strategy.

GDL develops new formats and processes for a more inclusive diplomacy. It is **not known how exactly this will look** in five years from now, or how diplomacy and the notion of inclusivity will evolve during this period. GDL is therefore not a project with clearly defined outcomes and indicators that can easily measure and attribute the impact of its activities. It goes beyond well-known strategy formats. Above all, it requires courage to work with the unknown. It also requires the members' confidence that the strategy group will work on their behalf.



## What comes next?

Identifying and developing this approach – building the boat while sailing – was from time to time challenging, but a valuable learning experience for all involved. The final strategy document envisions a Diplomacy 4.0 and embraces a wide variety of ideas that represent the diversity of GDL members and partners. The next step will be to operationalise and execute the strategy within the next five years. Every member is welcome to take ownership and responsibility for this process.

The Advisory Council selected GDL members Marty Castro (chair), Eirliani Abdul Rahman, Johannes Braun, Theresa Carrington and Elsa Marie D’Silva to be part of the Strategy Group (SG). Senta Höfer participated on behalf of the Secretariat. The SG worked closely with Marieke de Wal and Stella Pfisterer of the Partnerships Resource Centre (PrC) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands.

The PrC is a flagship research centre of the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), in the Netherlands. PrC’s collaborative action research approach incorporates innovative and state-of-the-art insights concerning multi-stakeholder engagement and continuous (but structured) iteration processes between theory and practice. Recently, PrC’s researchers Marieke de Wal and Stella Pfisterer collaborated with the GDL Secretariat and member groups to develop their next 5-year strategy.

## The story of collaboration between the GDL and the PrC: One GDL story, all GDL stories

By Marieke de Wal and Stella Pfisterer

*Afterwards they all agreed that it had been an extraordinary evening, something they had never experienced before. It was early February, just an ordinary Monday evening in wintry Berlin. More than twenty GDL members gathered at the dinner table. While it had been raining the whole day, they had worked hard on the new strategy and the programme for the Summit that was supposed to take place in May to celebrate GDL's fifth anniversary. The facilitators had given each of those present a question in advance: think about your most memorable moment at the GDL. When was it, what happened, and why is it so memorable for you? The assignment was to keep the request secret and to find a suitable moment to tell their story during dinner.*

*That was exactly what happened: they told each other their stories. Sometimes funny, sometimes inspiring and often moving stories. Stories full of new insights, lessons, challenges, surprises. Stories about what they had experienced and learned through GDL. The conversation started and went on, people listened closely, profound questions were asked. There was no discussion leader, no chair(wo)man. The group led the conversation collectively. It was an exciting and at times touching conversation with more than twenty people without mutual interruptions or side discussions. It was an experience in which all the unique characteristics of GDL came together: the members were leading, there was room for each and every voice, and, by using the potential of the group, an impactful conversation started.*

## Collaboration drives innovation

For over a year, the Partnerships Resource Centre collaborated with GDL as its knowledge partner. The joint learning question was: how can cross-sector collaboration be a driver for innovative thinking and practice in developing the future strategy for GDL? The challenge for the PrC researchers was to facilitate a collaborative process.

This appealed greatly to the PrC's adaptability and willingness to move along with the process. Because although it was clear what should be delivered – a co-created and co-owned future strategy – there was no clear idea about the way forward. In fact, it turned out that participants had very strong and sometimes very different views of what GDL's strategy should be and how to develop it.

## Dealing with uncertainty is key

Early in the process, it became clear that dealing with uncertainty and balancing tensions is crucial. It is not known what future diplomacy should look like. GDL explores exactly this: what is needed in terms of competences, capacities and resources to formulate the new agenda for collective action? However, this exploration is likewise characterised by uncertainty.

Committed GDL members are driven by the conviction that collaboration is necessary to develop new ideas, approaches and methods. But how that should be done, never mind what this new way of working will look like, is as yet unknown. In that process GDL deals with at least three tensions.

## Doing things differently

There is a clear appetite for doing things differently. Because the way we were thinking and acting is not effective any more, there is a need for new perspectives, additional voices, diverse points of view. But how to mix and mingle them? In a way, everyone is attached to how he or she has learned to do things. Bringing together people from various backgrounds and cultures and with different fields of expertise, as GDL does, is an important first step.

## Diversity is the basis

Within GDL, members expect to be seen and heard. In fact, the recognised value of their specific perspective is exactly why they contribute to GDL. Inclusivity is key. However, it is not about adding up the individual perspectives; it is about creating a collective new point of view, in which everyone can recognise themselves. A new starting point, based on the variety of inputs.

## Process versus impact

Based on the urge to do things differently and building on the variety of perspectives, the focus is often on new methodologies. New ways of interacting, involving head, hands and heart. But the focus on process can clash with the need for concrete results. GDL members also feel an urgency to act.

## A balancing act

It is not about choosing one over the other. Striving for concrete impact is not possible without paying attention to the process. And vice versa. The challenge is in the balancing act. By experimenting, by providing and holding space to fully experience these tensions. That was what PrC's facilitation was all about: an excellent and thorough stocktaking and preparation, stepping back where appropriate, with full confidence in the potential and capabilities of the group.

Like that balancing act on that Berlin Monday evening. Where GDL members balanced each other's stories. By appreciating them all equally. By being open to what happened at that moment. To jointly create an experience that had profound impact, on both an individual and a collective level.

That sums up what GDL is about: allowing members to create meaningful connections, to exchange experiences, to share their stories. That is how a movement is created: the first and consecutive steps – towards an inclusive and sustainable diplomacy.

## Annex C

Memo: Ideas and Guidance on the GDL Strategy 2020–2025

To: The Global Diplomacy Lab Elected Advisory Council

Date: 18 February 2020

### 1. Introduction and purpose

The following strategic plan is based on the evolution of GDL over the last five years and not to be understood as a revolution. The dozens of interviews and exhaustive member feedback loops conducted over the past year revealed that GDL should not fundamentally change what it is doing today. However, four issues were consistently identified, indicating that strategic enhancements were needed.

Based on stakeholder feedback and discussions, the Strategy Working Group developed the following four-part strategic framework:

- A clear definition of GDL's unique vision of diplomacy after 5 years: a **definition of a more inclusive diplomacy**, what we call "Diplomacy 4.0", delineating GDL's approach towards real world challenges.
- A clear **value proposition**: a proposition encapsulating the value that GDL and its unique member-driven processes bring to the world.

- A clear definition of **GDL's intended impact**: There is a need to develop streams of value-creation which will help achieve impact and to clearly define the two types of impact which emerged during the first five years of GDL's existence. These can be classified as **internal** (relating to GDL membership and partners) and **external** (e.g. relating to challenge holders). The impact typology developed in the strategy will allow GDL's methodologies and our member-driven processes to contribute to a more agile form of diplomacy.
- Enhanced **transparency**: a clear framework for transparency, achieved through standardisation of governance and related processes.

**Purpose of this memo:** To inform the ensuing discussions and support the implementation of the strategy, we have compiled some of the main lessons learned and proposals for implementation developed over the past year in this memo. We trust you will find them useful.

## 2. Impact

While GDL has always had some impact at the **level of challenge holders (external organisations)** as well as at the **personal level (for both members and internal challenge holders)**, GDL Lab formats attempt to achieve equal impact at both levels at the same time. However, due to time constraints and limited resources, it is not possible for GDL Labs to be fully effective or excellent in either category. We felt strongly that both areas of impact creation (value added by GDL) could be strengthened by establishing separate formats that focus on the respective categories. While there is always some overlap, these impact categories are **separately defined** in the following section for reasons of **conceptual clarity**. Their **structural implications** are laid out further below followed by thoughts and proposals on communication, learning and the business model.

## “Internal” impact = change at the level of people (individuals)

**Main target group:** GDL members, individuals representing challenge holders and local partners (participating on their behalf).

**Activities:** One larger event as a platform enabling individual members to engage with GDL and each other and helping to build a community of like-minded leaders. It is important to note that this event has no specific challenge holder but empowers members, builds their capacities and serves as the “home base” from which GDL members (e.g. in teams) then undertake different ventures and implement projects in order to achieve external impact (see section on GDL Summit below).

### Outputs:

- Learning through capacity-building processes and external inputs.
- Learning through interaction with other members.

### Outcome:

- GDL members’ capacities and skills increased.
- Access to networks enabled; networks expanded.
- Thought leadership and inspiration generated.

**Action catalysed** (Important note: see section on the Summit below – one important outcome of the Summit would be that **GDL would take decisions on projects and motivate members to engage and participate in them, thereby laying the foundation for external impact.**)

### Impact:

- **Change in members**, which will be borne out by their participation in GDL projects with the aim of achieving external impact.
- **Change in people** (members and potentially other participants), which will lead to impact through their professional/pro-bono work.



## “External” impact = change at the organisational level (processes, policies)

- **Main target group:** local partners/challenge holders, but also leading partners (e.g. the Federal Foreign Office).
- **Activities:** depends on the challenge; needs to be developed by the selected GDL team; concept needs to fulfil GDL pre-set criteria.
- **Output:** GDL team develops recommendations, reports and specific outputs as agreed upon with the respective challenge holder.
- **Outcomes:** challenge holder **adopts and implements** recommendations developed by GDL (the respective GDL project team).
- **Impact:** measurable change in policies, processes, usage of new formats and methodologies by the challenge holder, contributing to the development and dissemination of products.

## 3. Structure of GDL

In order to achieve the refocusing on internal and external impact described above, changes in the structure of GDL should be implemented. Instead of two Labs a year as the central structure of GDL, we recommend that GDL should maintain a **regular “Summit” format and carry out more decentralised and probably smaller regional Labs and other activities.**

### 3.2.1. GDL Summit

**Aim:** to engage members on a frequent basis, especially those who cannot commit to two Labs per year.

**Frequency:** should take place at regular intervals, preferably once per year, in Berlin.

All members should get the opportunity to attend a Summit regularly to keep them connected, foster a sense of community, catalyse action to boost external impact and also increase transparency with regard to governance. The Summit will strengthen impact creation at the individual level and serve governance-related functions (such as voting).

For example, the Summit can provide a safe space for members’ learning, allowing them to share their expertise and receive feedback from other members on issues relating to their professional lives and/ or pro-bono activities (“marketplace”). Through workshops and seminars, members can improve their methodological skills and capacities (capacity building) and apply these in the context of GDL activities. The Summit can provide a platform for members and new and existing challenge holders to pitch new projects (Labs, other activities and events). This can be followed by member selection of (smaller) teams of members to work on these projects.

The implementing teams can organise reporting sessions on ongoing Labs/activities/events (projects) to inform the members and solicit feedback and advice as well as initiate discussions of lessons learned. The Summit can also provide a platform for members to vote on new projects, EAC membership, etc., which should be complemented by online voting for members who cannot attend in person.

### 3.2.2. Activities (GDL projects)

**Aim:** to tackle real life development challenges using Diplomacy 4.0 through a variety of formats/ methodologies and to achieve sustainable external impact.

**Frequency:** several per year.

These activities would take place throughout the year, in a decentralised manner, with each encompassing a smaller number of members. They can take the form of Labs, but other formats can also be used depending on the topic and context (e.g. one-off events or products such as conferences, publications, etc.). Participants in these activities can be selected based on narrower criteria (e.g. specific expertise, regional knowledge, language skills) and may be required to commit to a certain number of working hours, cost-coverage and other obligations. These requirements will be stipulated in a document entitled “Project participation terms” and should be signed by the member before she/he can participate in the project.

**To ensure impact, quality and alignment with the strategy, these projects require approval by the EAC – if no GDL funding is required. If GDL funding is required, members will need to give their approval via online voting (see below).**

### **3.3. Selection of projects/alignment with the strategy/ quality assurance**

Proposals for all branded GDL projects (events, Labs, etc.) should be submitted to the Secretariat for approval based on a catalogue of criteria which will need to be drawn up. For this purpose, the existing template for Lab proposals needs to be amended. It should include a description of the impact logic, the contribution to GDL's goal and strategy (e.g. Diplomacy 4.0 or the global/local nexus), and information on member-generated funding (e.g. external funding, fundraising activities). Proposals that require GDL funding should be pre-screened by the Secretariat/EAC and a shortlist sent to the members for online voting.

To keep the process simple, other GDL activities (e.g. short-term or one-off activities) only need approval by the EAC. Proposals could be submitted at pre-defined times, e.g. quarterly, before face-to-face or virtual EAC meetings, at any time, and/or when the EAC issues calls.

### **3.4. Selection of members through the Advisory Council**

While the AC prioritises selection from the partners' networks, the selection criteria should be published and the guidelines and instructions for selection discussed with and approved by the members. Here, a timeframe may be specified. For example, for the next two years the focus could be on particularly under-represented regions and sectors, such as East Asia or the business sector.

## 4. Communications plan

Communications should reflect GDL's core values: member-driven, innovative, diverse, transformative. They should be in line with GDL's Values and Expectations, which are to be agreed on (see strategy).

- **Internal:** The communications strategy should enable members to connect with each other to foster a stronger sense of community, and provide a platform for collaboration and partnership as well as access to expert resources within the network. Currently, WhatsApp, email and blogs are how we communicate internally with other members. Members need to make greater use of the Directory of Experts for networking purposes.
- **External:** GDL needs to communicate effectively with the external world. This communication will include Diplomacy 4.0, lessons learned from the Labs and publications showcasing the expertise of our members. Currently, our Lab reports, social media (Twitter) and website are the tools we use for this purpose.

## 5. Business model

Establishing a business model is essential to GDL's survival. This strategic plan includes the sharing of responsibilities between members and partners regarding raising funds, identifying grant opportunities and establishing contact with new partners. A comprehensive business model should include three forms of income for GDL. These may include donors, grants and leveraging the expertise and communications of members in the form of pro-bono strategy work with external partners. These external partners would then pay GDL for access to the input and recommendations of these members.

## 6. Learning

### Reflection in action

We use this term to refer to reflection during GDL events which can improve members' learning experience. For example, Lab participants can request a time-out from Lab activities to reflect on a key piece of learning. Reflection in action plays a key role in ensuring that a diversity of voices, views and opinions are heard. It also helps individuals examine and develop their own opinions and better gauge their own ability to contribute.

### Reflection on action

This type of reflection involves a thoughtful examination of how practices can be improved following a GDL event. Ideas and outcomes are shared with key stakeholders. Reflection on action involves collecting and reacting upon the comments of stakeholders regarding their changed practices through a feedback loop.

### Organisational learning documentation

In order to capture our learning and build on our successes, we are continuously developing our organisational memory and establishing a library of resources for both internal and external use. This is reinforced at every Lab and through an annual newsletter/publication.

- **Lab case books:** In terms of learning outcomes, it is important to document what members have learned from GDL projects (e.g. events), including how new skills and knowledge could be applied to one's work situation, at other events or as a contribution to the (inter)national debate.

- **Case books on methodology:** GDL uses effective methodology formats which can be shared internally and externally. These are critical in fostering a sense of community, creating safe spaces and intensifying collaboration. GDL could publish a report on members' own reflections and experiences on the use of methodologies at various projects and events.
- **Expert analysis/perspectives:** The GDL membership is diverse and covers numerous sectors. The expert opinions and viewpoints of our members can be captured through blogs, webinars, op-eds and talks. These could be tailored to internal audiences to enhance their understanding of global/regional issues or communicated externally.
- **Vlogs and GDL speeches (TED-style talks):** Members can make an important contribution by preparing talks, webinars, blogs and articles that communicate GDL's activities to a wider audience. Another proposal is for GDL to create a format entitled "GDL Speaks", based on the model of TED talks, to draw in a wider external audience. This would be an effective way of showcasing GDL's work as well as communicating methodologies for facilitating discussion, co-creating and other processes.
- GDL should step up efforts to showcase its work to targeted external audiences.
- GDL's partners should leverage their social media profiles and make use of their respective communication teams to increase visibility and for branding and marketing purposes. If (social) media training should be necessary, GDL can check whether this can be provided by a member.
- In order to address GDL's need for more focused and frequent communication, a dedicated communication officer could be appointed.

