Window on the World

JENNIFER JEANNE JOHNSON

This edition of the Window on the World casts a Rio+20 and MDG lens to surface institutions, portals and networks of value.

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

www.stakeholderforum.org/sf/

Stakeholder Forum (SF) is a not-for-profit international organization whose agenda since 1992 has been to advance sustainable development and promote global stakeholder democracy. Its website broadcasts this history by providing examples of well-known SF contributions framed by its four core competencies: global policy and advocacy; stakeholder engagement; capacity development; and media and communications strategy.

Communication strategy, however, needs to reorganize and maintain its content offering. The website's homepage offers timely news and provides some insight into the organization and its connection with sustainable development policy and its stakeholder commitment. The site's first tab is 'About Us'. Ensuing tabs are 'Our Work', 'Our Publications', 'Our Media' and 'Contact Us' – followed by 'News' and 'Archive'. The question quickly arises: What about *me*? What about *the other 'us'*? The site's focus seems to be on servicing its traditional clients such as the UNEP (SF is a member of the UK national committee for UNEP, which continues to be its core function) and other UN institutions, which could explain why there is not more orientation for the first-time visitor or non-institutional visitor – even though they might benefit most from the abundance of information gleaned over more than 20 years of helping people understand and engage with sustainable development.

Suggestion 1: Link Different Types of Users

It is more than understandable that SF would not want to carry the burden of organizing and offering such information itself. Logically, then, SF should be in the electronic-linking business. Linking, after all, is much of what SF does inasmuch that it serves as a bridge between institutions and the populations they represent. If SF could link with the specific forums in each of its four core capacities, as well as with the UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform on sustainability content, it might be helping stakeholders most effectively to find their feet in a holistic sense *versus* in terms of specific agendas. SF could also link its electronic presences (*viz.* website, twitter, LinkedIn and facebook).

Development 56(1): Window on the World

Suggestion 2: Searchable Content

Although the site provides a homepage offering electronic newsletter signup (which begins issuing content almost immediately and appears in the inbox with the generic 'newsletter' title) and featuring news and current SF publications, much to most of the rest of the site is very dated and what is available cannot be easily searched. Notably, there is no global site search function. Search boxes only appear on a few of the web pages, and most of these are dead. The linking system is broken. Second counsel: Link within its own site, provide search capability, and keep updated.

Suggestion 3: Best Practices

Even though SF is a revered organization and has been essential to citizen engagement in UN and other forums, its electronic presence needs to match its name and vital contribution. With offices in London and New York and a network of consultants around the world, SF began as the National Committee for UNEP in the United Kingdom. The organization still serves that function, but has broadened its services, thus the rationale to officially change the name to embody the stakeholder function in 2000.

It uses its content expertise to produce a variety of publications. The Green Economy Papers consider the topic at large, as well as eight principles of green economy including trade, growth, global inequality, and food security, indicators beyond GDP, living within limits, and managing natural capital.

One of four magazines officially recognized by the UN Secretariat, *Outreach* magazine serves as a conduit for various stakeholders. SF produces *Outreach* in conjunction with various international meetings on the environment and through events offered by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UNEP Governing Council, the World Health Organization Health and Environment Conference and so on. SF also produces live podcasts from UN conferences and events. (The library currently includes about 75 titles.). Those interested in reviewing pre- and post-Rio+20 multi-stakeholder CSR activities can browse *The*

Dialogue on a Convention for Corporate Social Responsibility and Accountability. Environmental stakeholders will find the Negotiating and Implementing MEAs resource useful. UNEP engaged SF to produce the guide to aid NGOs and other advocates to influence the development and implementation of MEAs. The Capacity Building Hub offers a variety of online training tools to help. The *Pocket Guide to Sustainable Development Governance* addresses the knowledge gap on the history and dynamics of global governance for sustainable development.

As a stakeholder organization that prizes public participation, SF needs to ensure that its website is not difficult to navigate, has no broken links, and really welcomes, situates and mentors new or returning visitors.

Publications available from the site include: The Post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals Processes (2012), A Pocket Guide to Sustainable Development Governance (2012), Review of Implementation of Agenda 21 (2012), Challenge Papers Series (2011) regarding priority areas for Rio+20 and beyond, Global Environmental League Tables (2010), How To Lobby (2009), The Stakeholder Empowerment Project report (2009), Negotiating and Implementing MEAs: A Manual for NGOs.

The Widening Circle (TWC): Campaign for a Global Citizens Movement

www.wideningcircle.org/

TWC is an action campaign to advance a global citizens movement for global transition – what TWC calls The Great Transition. The initiative is in response to civil society's fragmentation and the overriding, short-term interests of national governments and multinational corporations. TWC seeks to awaken a new social actor: a vast movement of global citizens expressing a supranational identity and building new institutions to reflect their shared concerns. The Global Citizens Movement galvanizes global transition to a unified global society and to a sustainable, desirable, peaceful world. To aid with this Great Transition, TWC is working to: first, encourage the reprioritization of global values such that quality of life,

human solidarity, and reverence for nature are most esteemed; and second, catalyse bottom-up, grassroots support for the MDGs and other initiatives addressing such global challenges as, geopolitical conflict, economic instability, oppression and involuntary migration, and climate change and ecosystem degradation. TWC organizes at global, regional and local levels. These ever-widening circles engage volunteer coordinators, representatives, counselors, allies, and funders in a process of co-creation.

TWC is strengthened by theory and practice of seasoned contributors from Tellus Institute, as well as its 'Circle of Allies' organizations, including Committee for a Democratic UN, Earth Charter, Forum for a New World Governance, The Global Citizens Initiative, Global Sustainability Solutions, Ibase Betinho, Kosmos Associates, The Pachama Alliance, The Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, The Great Transition Initiative, and Transition United States. The website does a good job of presenting the initiative's historical foundation. It suffers, however, from a lack of updated information and a clear 'pulse-point' in terms of the here and now presence. The Great Transition Initiative, in contrast, indicates new information contributions and provides a participant contribution section. (www.gtinitiative.org/).

Documents from the site include: Imagine All the People; Planetary Praxis: On Rhyming Hope and History; Dawn of the Cosmopolitan: The Hope of a Global Citizens Movement; a Great Transition scenarios; and a link to the Earth Charter.

United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD)

www.unosd.org/

UNOSD supports governments in implementing international agreements on sustainable development. Examples of such agreements include the Rio +20 outcomes, the Rio+10 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and Agenda 21, borne from the original Rio, Earth Summit. Uniquely positioned – institutionally as well as geographically – to aid in the dissemination of information about sustainable development ideas and practices, UNOSD promotes sustainable development through its

knowledge exchange portal, research and policy analysis, capacity development, and partnerships. In terms of implementation, UNOSD leverages world-leading institutions and experts through its nesting within the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It also helps synergize sustainable development research and practices within the UN and with researchers, capacity-building institutions, and other centers of expertise.

Publications available from the site include: Guidebook to the Green Economy (2012), Issues Paper on Strategies for Sustainable Development (2012). Documents include: The Secretary-General's High-Level Group on Sustainable Energy for All: Report of the Co-Chairs (2012) and Bridging Knowledge and Capacity Gaps for Sustainability Transition (2013).

Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

www.ophi.org.uk/

OPHI is an economic research centre with in the Department of International Development at Oxford University. OPHI's work is grounded in Nobel prize-winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen's capability approach to economics. OPHI works to implement this approach by creating real tools that inform policies to reduce poverty. OPHI broadens poverty measurement beyond traditional one-dimensional measures (viz. poverty, wellbeing, inequality) to incorporate a multidimensional economic framework. This framework improves data on poverty by considering health, education, living standards, quality of work and more innovative dimensions. Accounting for numerous inputs of poverty, the methodology, thereby, provides insight to ultimately reducing poverty. To that end, OPHI offers academic courses and technical training programmes and collaborates with universities, development agencies, governments and other research institutions and policymakers.

The site offers numerous publications, including papers from 2013 and earlier. Sample titles include: Where do the World's Multidimensionally Poor People Live?; Measuring Acute Poverty in the Developing World: Robustness and Scope of the Multidimensional Poverty Index; the Women's

Development 56(1): Window on the World

Empowerment in Agriculture Index; and Monitoring Progress in Child Poverty Reduction: Methodological Insights and Illustration to the Case Study of Bangladesh.

Post-2015.org

post2015.org/

Post-2015.org asks the question we all wonder and seek to answer: 'What comes after the MDGs?' Post-2015.org tracks key documents, reports, ongoing research, and upcoming conferences and events related to the post-2015 development agenda. These traditional and academic resources are complemented by opinion sections. A countdown calendar measuring the months to go until the expiration of the UN MDGs keeps all in perspective. The 'Future Goals Tracker' reports on different organizations' (178 at time of this writing) cross-sector, single-sector and other framework initiatives ranging from economic growth to peace and security. The site community can request more information on select initiatives, and even contribute to content.

Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is an independent UK think tank on international development and humanitarian issues, manages post-2015.org, ODI collects and coordinates posts to both the web portal and the Twitter account. Contributions – particularly in the form of research, policy papers or other relevant materials are requested.

This is an incredibly rich, consistently updated and searchable source. The search tool requires exact phrases, however, (viz. entering 'OLPHI' will not yield 'OPHI' results.) It also is unique in terms of its being a vibrant forum with data offered in numerous formats.

Rio+20: The Future We Want

<http://futurewewant.org/>

The Future We Want (FWWW) project has an ambitious goal: to engage people around the world in an exercise to envision how societies can build a future that promotes prosperity, equity and improves people's quality of life within the Earth's life support systems. At publication time, this engagement had reached 1.4 million. The FWWW site's

'What's Next?' tab at the top of the page highlights the forthcoming model for sustainable urban development in the United States. The US model for urban sprawl is being replicated around the world. We know this to be unsustainable. Here is where the site's leveraging the re-imagination process is useful: Sometime in 2013–2014 the site will visually depict its reimagined development for Kansas City, the US city with the highest freeway mileage. The section entitled 'Story Board' offers informative and inspirational videos depicting sustainable development from around the world. The 'Resources' section offers everything from climate communications tools to solar energy information. Sustainable development can be difficult to visualize. For this reason, the UN recruited a rich list of sponsors and partners to co-present this information-rich, visually replenishing site, which also features a blog. The site, however, is not kept updated, with the most recent posts dating back several months.

United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform

sustainabledevelopment.un.org/

The UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform provides information on a wide range of sustainable development topics and features virtual collaboration space for those participating in Rio+20 actions (including the establishment of the high-level political form and sustainable development goals). Access to more than 7,000 records on sustainable development makes the site a valuable resource. In terms of inter-governmental process, a sustainable development milestone orientation educates or reminds visitors of global institutional achievements. Helpful, too, is the site's dedication to guiding one through the Rio+20-associated UN implementation framework. Site visitors can browse the follow-up by paragraph, by timeframe, or by specific entity (i.e., NGO, bank, UN agency and so on). The site offers a synthesis of national reports stemming from Rio+20. It also provides sustainable development information for and about major groups. Included are editions of the online sustainable development newsletter and a visual mapping of country-by-country and

worldview perspectives of sustainability initiatives. Links point to diverse online sustainable development publications, and institutional and capacity-building activities.

The site's strength is increased by its interactive nature. In addition to Twitter feed, the site provides workspace for major group initiatives and encourages the making of and posting of

voluntary commitments or partnerships and green economy initiatives. Site visitors are encouraged to open accounts to more fully participate in site offerings; however, the site does not make clear the specific benefits of creating an account – only that civil society and business are one grouping, with UN organizations or IGOs the other.