



# Global Challenges Foundation

**Introduction and overview**

**“The greatest threats we face today transcend national boundaries; they therefore need to be addressed jointly by all countries based on an increased realization of our mutual dependence. That is why I believe a new global framework for managing them must be found.”**

**Laszlo Szombatfalvy, Founder of Global Challenges Foundation**



# Global Challenges Foundation

**The Global Challenges Foundation (GCF)** was founded in 2012 by Swedish financial analyst and author Laszlo Szombatfalvy. GCF's aim is to contribute to reducing the main global problems and risks that threaten humanity. This is done through two parallel pathways:

Increasing knowledge and raising awareness of the greatest global risks and problems among policy makers, thought leaders, businesses, and the general public.

Stimulating debate and thought around new, better and more equitable models for how to manage the greatest global threats and challenges more effectively and equitably.

## BACKGROUND

**The world has changed dramatically** during the past century. In most countries, the average level of standard of living has improved, as has life expectancy. Moreover, technological breakthroughs have made society global, both economically and culturally.

But there is an obvious downside to this fundamentally positive trend. Some problems have grown larger, and new risks that threaten humanity have emerged. The most dramatic change may be that mankind is capable, for the first time in history, of seriously damaging the very ecosystem that we are all completely dependent on – and, in fact, is well on its way to do so.

GCF, together with leading researchers, has identified a number of risks that could threaten the existence of at least a tenth of Earth's population. Such risks are referred to as global catastrophic risks, the five most urgent of which are:

- Climate change
- Other large-scale environmental damage
- Politically motivated violence
- Extreme poverty
- Population growth

**These five main challenges** are interdependent and influence each other detrimentally. This means that immediate joint action by the world's states is an absolute necessity. As these risks include the greatest threats to humanity, they should be on top of the international political agenda in order to ensure safety for existing and future generations. However, this is not the case today. There are two main reasons for this: 1) The scope of risks and problems has been underestimated due to an inadequate understanding and lacking or nonexistent risk and problem analysis and 2) The international political system has not yet adapted to today's global community.

## THE NEW SHAPE PRIZE

**In May 2018** at the New Shape Forum, GCF awarded a total of USD 1.8 million to 3 finalists of the Global Challenges Prize 2017: A New Shape. This was a competition seeking improved models of international cooperation capable of tackling the most pressing threats to humanity. The Prize aimed to stimulate visionary thinking from the brightest minds in academia, politics, business and civil society to forge transformative approaches and secure a better future for all. The competition received 2702 entries from 122 countries, a reflection of the truly global engagement that GCF aspired to.





### THE NEW SHAPE FORUM

**The New Shape Forum**, held on 27-29 May 2018, convened over 200 leading thinkers and experts in Stockholm. Participants discussed fresh ideas for improving global governance to tackle the world's most pressing problems, building on the best submissions from the New Shape Prize. Keynote speakers who attended the event included Margot Wallström, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden, Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and Johan Rockström, internationally recognized scientist, outgoing executive director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, and incoming director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

### THE NEW SHAPE PROCESS

**GCF remains** very committed to supporting the further development of ideas that can improve global governance to mitigate the greatest risks that humanity face today. In June 2018, GCF selected 5 working groups that will receive funding as part of the drive to increase research, knowledge and elaboration of more holistic models of global governance. These groups will further have the opportunity to present at the Paris Peace Forum in November 2018, where world leaders, experts and thinkers will be in attendance.

### GCF'S WORK

**GCF has strived to achieve** its goals through a multifaceted, comprehensive approach. Examples of this include:

**Periodic reports.** GCF works with researchers and thinkers from all over the world to present facts and ideas concerning global risks and how they can be managed and reduced.

**Global Challenges at the Stockholm School of Economics.** GCF has made a grant of 40 million SEK (about US\$ 5 million) to create the Global Challenges Track at the Stockholm School of Economics.

**Surveys.** GCF commissions international surveys of how citizens in different countries rank different global risks, perceive current systems of governance for these risks, and what they consider as the best ways forward to manage them.

**Events.** GCF continuously engages in the roles of initiator, participant and sponsor of international meetings and conferences on global risks and global governance. Partners of previous events include Brookings Institution in Washington DC, Chatham House in London, TERI in New Delhi, Tsinghua University in Beijing, the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in Sao Paolo, and SAIIA in Johannesburg.

**The Educators' Challenge.** In parallel to the New Shape Prize, educators were urged to take on the significant task of creating knowledge about global institutions and engagement around institutional reform. The Educators' Challenge will award prizes of USD 5000 each at the Paris Peace Forum, to the most innovative strategies and creative efforts to address this goal.

## Global Challenges Foundation

Norrskan House – Postbox 14, Birger Jarlsgatan 57C, 113 56 Stockholm, Sweden  
+46 (0) 709 54 74 27 | [www.globalchallenges.org](http://www.globalchallenges.org)