

# The Road Ahead

**STRATEGY 2017-2022**

Local Research for Better Lives

## A Public International Organization

The Global Development Network (GDN) is a public international organization that promotes better policies and better lives through high-quality policy-oriented social science research conducted in developing and transition countries. It provides researchers with financial resources, global networking, research management support, access to information, training, peer review and mentoring. Founded in 1999, GDN is currently headquartered in New Delhi.

### Addressing Development Challenges Globally



315

collaborative research studies on a range of pressing development challenges

## GDN 1999-2016

### Building Global and Local Partnerships



GDN works through global and regional partnerships. From its origin, it has cooperated with regional network partners covering all regions of the world. It connects researchers with their peers globally, across countries, regions and disciplines. It also reaches out to policymakers and civil society to make better use of development research. Its grantees have contributed to policy debates and influenced policies in their countries, have taken on leadership roles in academic and policy circles, have nurtured a younger cadre of researchers and have won international recognition for their work.

### Unearthing Excellence



310

researchers and development practitioners awarded prizes through global development awards competitions

### Networking at a Global Scale



7,600

participants at 17 annual global development conferences, 70% from developing countries

### Supporting Researchers



4,000

grantees across 139 developing and transition countries, thanks to 40 major funders



**THE ROAD  
AHEAD**  
(2017-2022)



### **Vision**

A world in which evidence and scholarly knowledge inform and inspire development and policy decisions.

### **Purpose**

Improve development outcomes and livelihoods through high-quality, policy-oriented research in the social sciences, produced in developing countries and connected globally.

### **Beliefs**

- Locally conducted social science research leads to a better understanding of development challenges and guides policy decisions and their implementation.
- Useful and actionable knowledge cannot be exclusively imported. Local social science research is needed to transform knowledge into solutions. It is also crucial for local ownership and for informed democratic debate.

### Knowledge for development

GDN was created in the aftermath of the landmark World Bank 1998-1999 World Development Report, *Knowledge for Development*. This report set the stage for active promotion of policy research

- More reliance on analytical work in development institutions
- Initiatives to build research capacity in developing countries
- Increased focus on education and on research in developing countries through universities and think tanks
- Contribution of active regional research networks, notably GDN's partners, to policy research and research capacity building

### Promoting better local social science research remains indispensable

- To shape and implement local solutions to collective and global challenges
- To inform priorities and approaches needed to locally pursue the Sustainable Development Goals through effective policies
- To facilitate local ownership of development programs, plurality of views and democratic debate
- To guide data collection and use in a "Big Data" world

### And yet, efforts have remained insufficient

- Quality social science research remains excessively concentrated in developed countries
- The overarching focus on research excellence raises barriers to research and to research capacity building in weak research environments
- Development research has focused on finding solutions to development challenges as if they could be easily imported and implemented by developing countries. Shaping effective and actionable solutions locally requires local and globally connected social sciences research.
- Connecting research with policy is a process in itself, that goes well beyond the effective communication of research results and researchers' recommendations
- We are still far away from a culture of locally-driven, knowledge-based development by which major debates and decisions routinely and critically mobilize the available evidence and stock of analytical work. This weakens both the democratic debate and development effectiveness.

## A three-pillar strategy to address the remaining challenges

### Strengthening research in low-capacity environments

Because available funding for research capacity building tends to target the highest quality research outputs, too little effort is made to raise research capacity in weaker environments. GDN proposes a specific approach to help local research institutions build their capacity.

### Delivering high quality, global collaborative research

Many developing country researchers lack opportunities and incentives to interact globally or engage in substantive, global collaborative work, because such opportunities and incentives require specific efforts that are currently under-rated and under-funded. GDN proposes to use its network and experience to promote research excellence through collaborative research across regions and disciplines.

### Putting development research to better use

A patent mismatch in developing countries between the potential demand for policy research and the actual supply of academic research results in poor research-policy interaction. GDN proposes to specifically work on the process of using research by developing various products and approaches to connect researchers and other stakeholders: governments, private sector, civil society.



### As a global research entrepreneur, GDN builds on a unique combination of

- 17 years of experience in building research capacity and serving social science research in developing and transition countries
- Global scale
- Extended reach to researchers, policymakers and other development stakeholders, across countries, regions and disciplines
- Capacity to offer a complete range of services to support research and its use along the whole supply and demand chain that connects knowledge with action
- Institutional independence, through the statutes of a public international organization

### Values

**Inclusiveness.** GDN reaches out to all categories of countries and researchers. It fights all forms of discrimination in access to its programs, whether originating in gender, or in differences in the institutional, geographic, political or economic environment.

**Transparency.** GDN programs, processes and criteria for selection and access are all transparent. So are GDN accounts, income and expenditure. The results of GDN's programs are public and publicly disseminated. GDN fully supports open data principles.

**Efficiency.** GDN manages its operations in a cost efficient manner, and focuses on outcomes and impact. It gratefully recognizes the support it receives and is keen on delivering value-for-money in the pursuit of its global mission.

**Research ethics and quality.** Through its programs and beneficiaries, GDN upholds professional research and ethical standards, such as scientific quality standards, respect for persons and their rights, equity and transparency, legal compliance and data confidentiality and protection.

INCLUSIVENESS

TRANSPARENCY

EFFICIENCY

ETHICS

## Assets

**Independence.** GDN has the legitimacy of an independent, public international organization. It has no institutional or political affiliation, and its only dedication is to serve its mandate.

### **First-class and diverse academic board of directors.**

GDN has a first-class, diverse academic Board of Directors, coopted under strict nomination guidelines. GDN's governance structure strengthens its independence and focus on quality. Directors are nominated by diverse global and regional constituencies and appointed by GDN's International Assembly.

**Operational experience.** GDN has accumulated strong and diverse operational experience in managing global research programs and working with individuals and institutions across the developing world.

**Partnerships and global network.** GDN builds on a strong global network. It has ten regional network partners across all developing regions, and has established working relationships with many individuals and institutions, thus combining local and global reach.

**Staff.** GDN has a small, competent and versatile staff. It is a nimble structure whose role is to initiate, coordinate and facilitate research-based work conducted by many other partners and organizations, and to learn from GDN's past operations and experience.



## A COMPLETE PACKAGE OF SERVICES

### Research Diagnostics

- GDN proposes to scale-up its just-completed pilot program called 'Doing Research', with the aim to describe social-science research environments in developing countries in a systematic and comparable way.
- Learning from its own experience, GDN contributes to scholarly knowledge on research capacity building.

Surveying the research environment (systems and practices) in developing countries

M&E: GDN research on research capacity-building instruments, methods, practices

Evaluations of research capacity-building operations

GDN's 'Doing Research' program documents the combination of factors that enable or impede social-science research in developing and transition countries. Following a successful two-year pilot phase, the scaled-up program introduces a systematic framework to analyze how social-science research systems, given the underlying environment, produce and disseminate research output and encourage its use. 'Doing Research' assessments aim to inspire research policies, map research strengths, support research capacity-building efforts and enhance the use of research in policy decisions.

### Research Management

GDN helps with various phases of the conception and implementation of complex research programs: initiation, possibly including incubation, of research programs, identification of promising researchers, networking, provision of quality control services, provision of various organizational and research facilitation services.

Combining services: incubating, initiating, funding and/or managing research programs, hosting services

Managing prizes and awards

Monitoring implementation

Monitoring quality at all stages

Coordinating the production of research papers and products





## Research Capacity Building

GDN mobilizes academic resources and services designed to enhance researchers' capacity, along two main axes:

- Building research capacity at the institutional level in low-capacity places
- Enlarging the horizon of confirmed researchers through global exposure and collaborative work (including multidisciplinary research)

These services include various forms of institutional support to partner with research capacity-building institutions, locally, through demand-led interventions, training sessions, summer schools, mentoring services and publication assistance.

Institutional partnerships

Training on design, skills, administration, communication and use

Assistance to publication

Mentoring and peer reviews

Quality control

Global exposure and collaborative work

## Research Use

GDN proposes a variety of research-based instruments and mechanisms to facilitate the interaction between researchers, governments, opinion leaders, private sector and civil society:

- Global Development Conference
- Tailored events to facilitate research-to-policy interaction
- Visible outlets for developing-country research
- Research 'translation' and dissemination services

New products will be developed, including high-quality policy briefs and research syntheses, as well as a high-profile development blog in partnership with other institutions.

Web platform, international conferences, workshops, dialogues, policy labs, convening all stakeholders

Research 'translation services', including blogs, briefs, summaries, videos, and advisory services

### Vision

A world in which **evidence** and **scholarly knowledge** inform and inspire **development** and **policy decisions**.

### Purpose

Improve development outcomes and livelihoods through **high-quality, policy-oriented research** in the social sciences produced in developing countries and connected globally.

### Values

Four main values: **inclusiveness**, **transparency**, **efficiency**, and **research ethics and quality**.

### Assets

Five crucial assets: **independence**, **first-class and diverse academic Board of Directors**, **operational experience**, **diverse partnerships and global network**, and versatile and competent **staff**.

### Three Strategic Directions

**Strengthening research in low-capacity environments**, **delivering high-quality, global collaborative research**, and **putting development research to better use**.

### Research-Based Services

A complete range of services combined to deliver results: **research systems**, **diagnostics**, **research management**, **research capacity building**, and facilitating **research use**.

A world in which evidence and scholarly knowledge inform and inspire development and policy decisions.

RESULTS FRAMEWORK



GDN

SERVICES



Strengthening research in low-capacity environments

Delivering high-quality, global collaborative research

Putting development research to better use

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ASSETS

INCLUSIVENESS

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## Strengthening research in low-capacity environments

In a pilot program in 2014-2016, research institutions in least developed countries were invited to seek GDN's support for their own research capacity-building programs. On this basis, GDN selected and partnered with three institutions in Bhutan, Cambodia and Ethiopia, to help them implement their projects through funding, as well as research and support services. GDN now purposes a scale-up of this approach.

### Support selected institutions' research capacity building strategies

#### What

##### **'Building capacity to build research capacity' in weak research environments**

- Helping institutions to train their researchers and staff and provide an environment conducive to their research
- Contribute to scholarly knowledge on how to build research capacity in weak environments

#### Why

Many regions and countries with weaker research environments are *de facto* excluded from capacity-building initiatives

Research training in social sciences in such places can have high returns in terms of the mobilization of elites, the improvement of governance and policies, the capacity to plan and produce inclusive development outcomes and the quality of the democratic debate

#### How

- Establishing two-to-three-year partnerships with institutions selected for the ambition, quality and feasibility of their research capacity building objectives
- Providing them with a package of services to implement their plans of action and monitor their results



## Delivering high-quality, global collaborative research

GDN promotes high-quality, multidisciplinary research, conducted by research teams across boundaries. Recent research themes notably include aid effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa, natural resource management, governance and public service delivery, public finance and expenditure management, industrial policy and approaches to raise productivity.

**Implement high-quality global collaborative research programs by mobilizing researchers through incentives and opportunities to work across countries, regions and disciplines**

**What**

**Produce high-quality, multi-country and multidisciplinary research** linking global and local insights to inform policy solutions to sustainable development challenges, including SDG implementation and global public goods.

**Why**

Global challenges need to be addressed through local dimensions. Collaborative work across countries and disciplines is under-developed by lack of incentives and opportunities for developing country researchers to be connected globally and overcome geographical, institutional and disciplinary isolation

**How**

- Support global collaborative research projects on major sustainable development challenges through organizational help
- North-South and South-South research connections
- Capacity building, quality control and monitoring



## Putting development research to better use

At its 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Development Conference in Lima, Peru, in March 2016, GDN tested a new model to connect policymakers and researchers. It organized a policy lab to allow them to jointly design research programs. More specifically, GDN pre-selected teams of researchers to work on quality of education and public finance in low-income countries in Latin America. The policy lab was an opportunity to discuss and validate their proposals with policymakers. They were then selected on the basis of their revised proposal after the policy lab. Such an approach is designed to add value in two ways: it makes research proposals more policy-relevant, and, by engaging policymakers in the design, it also makes it more likely that policymakers will be interested in the outputs.



**Instruments and approaches to connect research and policy**

**What**

- Raise awareness about evidence and research-based analytical work with various stakeholder groups
- Mainstream local academic research as a unique way to provide both evidence and robust methods of analysis
- Explore various options in a sound analytical and critical way and shape policy judgment
- Raise the voice of developing-country researchers in the global debate and help them shape actionable solutions to successfully address global challenges and SDGs

**Why**

- High-quality academic work does not spontaneously trickle-down to development stakeholders
- Academic research also competes on the market for policy ideas with advice derived from parochial interests, ideology or insufficient knowledge
- Using research is a political and social process that requires specific instruments and approaches

**How**

Develop instruments and approaches to mediate between the supply of, and demand for academic research

- Open the design of research to influences from all development stakeholders in order to improve the match between the supply of research and demand for it
- Develop high quality “research-translation” products and provide training on them, including a high-quality blog on development

## Strengthening Research In Low-Capacity Environments

## Delivering High-Quality, Global Collaborative Research

## Putting Development Research To Better Use

### Activity

- Establish 2-3 year partnerships with competitively selected institutions on the basis of their own monitorable research capacity program
- Provide targeted support to achieve expected results
- Evaluate experience and contribute scholarly research on how to build institutional research capacity building in low capacity places
- Manage global collaborative research projects promoting South-South and North-South scholarly cooperation on major development challenges and global public goods
- Develop a major collaborative program on analyzing the nature and performance of national social science research systems
- Organize global development conferences
- Provide a technologically advanced platform to organize researchers and research to policy interactions
- Organize research to policy interactions through research and policy labs, develop research-based and academically sound 'translation' products, such as policy briefs, to capture insights from academic research in a way that is interesting and accessible to policy makers and other stakeholders
- Create a high-quality, refereed research-based blog on development issues

### Outputs

- Number of institutional partnerships
- Number of researchers thus supported
- Number of training modules
- Number of scholarly papers documenting approaches to build research capacity and their effectiveness
- Number of global collaborative projects undertaken and completed
- Number of research papers
- Number of peer-reviewed publications
- Number of refereed development blog posts
- Number of researchers and non-researchers participating in GDN events
- Number of 'translation' products per year

## Outcomes

- Achievement of objectives by supported institutions (qualitative estimate, %)
- More capable and empowered research institutions in least developed countries (proof of new research-based activities, of concrete research-based collaboration with governments)
- Establishment of working South-South collaboration channels (evidence of pursuit of research collaboration beyond the project)
- Strong alumni base engaging in research and research to policy activities
- Scientific impact through citations
- Policy impact through uptake (in newspapers and other outlets)
- Evidence of better knowledge use by policy makers (qualitative, document instances of use)
- Density of research interaction on GDN's platform and social media (webmetrics)

## Impacts

- **Through better knowledge of major development challenges, visible progress in a number of sectors related to sustainable development and poverty reduction**
- **More effective research capacity building assistance**
- **Policy is better informed in least developed countries, which contributes to better development policies and better lives for citizens**



**RESULTS  
FRAMEWORK**



[www.gdn.int](http://www.gdn.int)

