

Call for Expressions of Interest

for research institutions in sub-Saharan Africa
to carry out 12-month research projects on
aid effectiveness from the perspective of recipient countries

The Global Development Network (GDN) is launching a new Global Research Competition (GRC) on the topic of aid effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on the health and agriculture sectors. Teams of early-career researchers from universities, independent research institutions, think tanks, networks and consortia based in Africa are invited to submit an Expressions of Interest (EOI) with a focus on either one of the two sectors and two or more countries, to be completed within a 12 months period between the end of 2016 and the end of 2017.

Shortlisted teams will be invited to submit a Full Proposals in September 2016, and will have access to quality academic and project management support to finalize their research plan in autumn 2016. A research grant of up to USD 24,000 will be awarded to up to four institutions.

The deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest is September 11th 2016, midnight Nairobi time (GMT+3). The details of the call are given below:

Topic	The experience with aid effectiveness of recipient countries in sub-Saharan Africa
Sub-themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture sector (including productivity, technology aspects and innovation) • Health sector (including infrastructure development, system strengthening and service delivery)
Grant amount	USD 24,000
Number of grants	Four
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions based in Africa • Team members must be citizens of developing countries¹ • Team members must have completed a PhD in the social sciences in or after 2011
Publication of the Call for EOI	9 August 2016

¹ Defined as low and middle income countries as per the World Bank classification

Deadline for submitting EOIs	11 September 2016
Date for invitation of full proposals to shortlisted institutions	16 September 2016
Notification of award	11 November 2016
Beginning of the research period	Mid-December 2016

Focus: the experience with aid effectiveness of recipient countries in sub-Saharan Africa

The emergence of ‘non-DAC’ (‘non-traditional’, ‘emerging’ or ‘new’) development partners in the complex landscape of sub-Saharan Africa has become a theme in its own right in debates about the present and future of international aid. Although many of these actors have been active for decades, the emergence of growing global giants like China, India and Brazil; regional powers like South Africa and Saudi Arabia; rapidly industrializing countries like Thailand and Turkey; and that of former socialist states, such as Russia, Poland and the Czech Republic, has become part of what is a broad shifting paradigm in the aid sector – with China in particular playing an increasingly large role vis-à-vis DAC donors on the continent. With a changing actor landscape, the nature of financial flows is also increasingly diversified, and so are the modalities, channels and instruments in use to deliver aid.

In light of this, the question of whether (and – even more – under what conditions) aid can effectively impact the socio-economic development of SSA countries is as important and challenging as ever. Two long-standing features in particular emerge as critical in the on-going debate on aid effectiveness.

The first is that current measures of aid effectiveness remain contested, including from a methodological standpoint. Critics point out that the entrenched preference for macro-level analysis of aid impact is in stark contrast with the way aid itself is committed, disbursed and, particularly, implemented. Macro-level analysis, many argue, cannot account for sector specificities, the micro scale of aid implementation practices, and does not throw light on **what channels, instruments and modalities work and which don’t, or why, across a growing range of donors**. Macro-level analysis often lacks the historical and granular depth needed to fully account for aid implementation conditions.

Second, despite very high stakes, **aid recipients have little to no voice in the global debate on aid effectiveness**, which remains largely driven by actors based in donor countries. The conceptual and political appeal of the ‘aid effectiveness’ debate appears to be limited amongst recipient governments, but also amongst research centers, think tanks and independent scholars across the African continent. A direct implication of this is that on-going discussions on the concept do not reflect, or only very superficially, either the nature of aid implementation process or the experience and stances on aid administration of aid recipients.

GDN calls for teams of early-career scholars from developing countries and based in African institutions to define and put forward research projects on aid effectiveness that can clearly contribute to move beyond these two critical limitations.

The research should be of direct relevance to current debates on aid effectiveness – broadly understood as the measure to which aid disbursed from a donor contributes to advancing economic and human development in the recipient country. Importantly, the proposed research should not limit the scope of analysis to aid’s impact on aggregate measures of national economic growth, to OCED/DAC definition of ‘ODA’, and it should not be limited to an evaluation of aid effectiveness. Submissions can propose to explain, question or challenge existing data on aid effectiveness in light of micro-analysis of aid implementation processes, delve into ‘what works and what doesn’t in terms of instruments, processes and modalities of aid implementation used by traditional vs new donors; use national datasets to complement, sharpen or correct existing assumptions on the volume and effectiveness of aid in a specific sector, in an historical or political-economy perspective; analyze how recipient governments measure the value of the aid they receive; analyze how recipient countries administer aid coming from different donors in a single sector; and propose and test alternative approaches to gauge whether aid works or not, and why, with reference to a specific sector. Qualitative and interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged.

The current call requires teams to **focus on a single sector**, of the two identified:

- a. **agriculture** (including productivity, technology aspects and innovation);
- b. **health** (including infrastructure development, system strengthening and service delivery).

The proposal must **adopt a comparative, cross-country approach**, and focus on two or more countries **in sub-Saharan Africa**. Applicants should be able to justify the choice of countries in light of their specific historical, political and economic commonalities (and/or differences), including with regard to their experience as ‘aid recipient’ in the relevant sector. Finally, proposals should **analyze and discuss the work modalities of different donors** in the relevant sector, across both **DAC and non-DAC** donor groupings.

Research questions include but are not limited to:

- Can different donor approaches in a given sector explain significantly different results? Do donors adapt their approach to a single sector to the specificities of the recipient country? Are findings in this respect consistent across countries? Does the way donors implement aid make a difference, and how? Where can donors collaborate and build on each other’s strengths in a specific sector?
- How do recipient governments keep track of aid coming from different donors, for the same sector? What sector-specific data do national governments collect regarding the implementation of aid? Does this data offer a clear picture of aid effectiveness, in a given sector, across different donor approaches? How can data inform better administration of aid, across donor approaches, in a specific sector?
- What does the experience of countries A and B tell us about the political economy of aid delivery in a specific sector? To what extent can donors influence the political economy of aid delivery and implementation? Are findings in this respect consistent across countries and donors? How do recipient countries organize the administration of aid coming from different donors, for the same sector? What is the administrative burden of managing aid in a specific sector, across countries and donors?

The funding window. GDN's Global Research Competition is a competitive grant window that provides early-career social science researchers from developing and transition countries with funds and world-class support to investigate international development challenges through comparative and cross-country research. All research teams are transnational, and the grant is awarded to an institution committed to support and expand the research agenda proposed by the research team. GDN supports applicants to strengthen their research throughout the research process, starting from the application stage.

The program. With the financial support of USAID, GDN has been strengthening local research capacity and policy relevant research related to development policy making and implementation in SSA. This program pursues the overall goal to support the emergence of African voices in a global debate – that on aid effectiveness - that is largely driven by scholars and agencies from donor countries. It also supports opening the debate on aid in SSA to research and promote research-based coordination between DAC and non-DAC donors.

Since 2015, the program has focused on three specific priorities:

1. Building **spaces** and links for development experts and policy makers from aid recipient countries to voice their analysis and recommendations on how to improve development cooperation between Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and non-DAC donors in SSA.
2. Strengthen the **capacity** of African policy actors and research institutions to act as policy advisors to donors and governments across the continent, on development assistance issues;
3. Through a collaborative effort with the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), develop capacities to generate **authoritative research** that inform donors' strategic priorities in SSA, on select issues such as on extreme poverty, food security, economic analysis and reform, agriculture development, public/private partnerships, trade, domestic and foreign investment.

Eligibility

GDN welcomes Expressions of Interest from qualified research teams based in universities, independent research institutions, think tanks, networks and consortia in Africa with an interest in strengthening or developing a research agenda on aid effectiveness. The teams must be of early-career researchers from developing countries with first-hand research experience in the proposed countries of focus, and who have completed their doctoral studies in or after 2011. The teams must be transnational and can include team members from different institutions. Each team can only submit one EoI under a single sub-theme.

In the Expression of Interest, applications are expected to:

- identify a **research question** within one of the two sectors in light of the existing literature, define a **hypothesis** and a , justify with historical insight the **choice of countries**, and identify the **sources of data** needed, including questions of access;
- explain the choice of the **team**, its interest and previous experience in researching aid effectiveness research, and its overall strengths to carry out the proposed research;
- articulate the interest the **institution** has in supporting innovative research agendas specifically on aid effectiveness, and explain how the institution will be able to institutionally support the team in their research, if at all, beyond GDN support;

Contact us

For any query regarding this call and the application system, please contact Neha Jagatdeb at njagatdeb@gdn.int