

Call for Expressions of Interest: Assessing Social Science Research Systems

Doing Research program

The Global Development Network (GDN) is calling for expressions of interest from multidisciplinary research teams based in research institutions in developing countries, to act as national focal point of the Doing Research program, and as national implementation partners of Doing Research Assessments in their country of operation. The ideal teams can mobilize advanced qualitative and quantitative research skills, and have relevant experience leading institutional analysis of the national education, research or innovation sector in their country of operation.

The Global Development Network (GDN) is a public international organization that supports high quality, policy-oriented, social science research in developing and transition countries to promote better lives. It supports researchers with financial resources, global networking, as well as access to information, training, peer review and mentoring. GDN acts on the premise that better research leads to more informed policies and better, more inclusive development. Through its global platform, GDN connects social science researchers with policymakers and development stakeholders across the world. Founded in 1999, GDN is currently headquartered in New Delhi

'Doing Research' is a GDN flagship program that aims to understand, map and assess social science research systems, with the goal to identify and analyze structural barriers to doing research in developing countries. GDN is running a global roll-out over the period 2018-2023 and is calling for expressions of interest (EOI) from multidisciplinary teams based in research institutions in developing countries interested in becoming national focal points and implementation partners of the Doing Research program at the national level. Through their association with the Doing Research program, national focal points are expected to become reference institutions at the national level for research, policy advocacy and public debates on the national research system, its regulation, and its contribution to development.

1. Background

GDN's work on research systems builds on the work of Lundvall (2007), EC (2009), IDRC (2013), Williams et al (2013), and on GDN's own Doing Research pilot (2017a). The Doing Research program proposes a systemic analysis of the research environment, functions and system at the national level. By feeding new data and research on these aspects through a new comparative framework, the program aims to support national policymakers, national and international donors and academics to strategize their efforts to boost local production of quality academic research and its contribution to public debate and sustainable development policies.

A pilot phase (2014-16) supported seven research teams from eleven developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to investigate their research environment using a range of different scientific approaches, from historical analysis to political economy analysis and econometric approaches. The synthesis exercise of the pilot studies highlighted a set of 'determinants' considered relevant for understanding research systems and their performance (GDN 2017a). This collaborative exercise culminated in a Synthesis & Scale-Up workshop in May 2016 that established the foundations for the Doing Research Assessment (DRA) in conversation with a wide range of experts and agencies.

After the pilot phase, GDN produced several knowledge products and resources on research systems. The program is now being rolled out to a targeted number of 40 countries, starting with five that are currently being selected by GDN.

2. Background documents

A number of key documents developed by GDN are available online:

- [Doing Research Assessments. GDN Program Document](#)
- [Doing Research Pilot Phase Synthesis. GDN Program Document](#)

Additional resources:

- Series of four infographics on Doing Research: [Why](#) | [Africa](#) | [Barriers](#) | [Local Research](#)
- [Summary of Scale-Up workshop](#). Brighton, 2016
- [Summary of Stakeholder Roundtable](#). Nairobi, 2017
- [Doing Research Pilot Phase Evaluation Report](#)
- [Blog series at Research To Action](#)

3. Doing Research: a global comparative research program

The present Call for Expressions of Interest aims to start building partnerships at the national level to implement the program's global roll-out.

The Doing Research global roll-out (2018-2023) includes three inter-related work streams, each leading to dedicated outputs:

- (1) Implementation of 40 Doing Research Assessments in partnership with national research institutions in developing countries.
- (2) Curation of a global dataset of indicators to benchmark and compare research systems across countries and over time, to document global and regional trends in research production, diffusion and policy uptake.
- (3) Production of widely accessible dissemination resources to boost awareness about the importance of social science research systems to national development, structural barriers to the performance of research systems, and contextualized pathways to reforming research systems with improved policies and funding efforts.

The implementation of the global roll-out will start with a first cohort of five countries. During this initial phase, GDN will continue to refine the assessment method with external expertise and the direct feedback from national focal points. The expected result of the global roll-out is a series of publications on research systems and the question of their performance, an open-access dataset, and a series of physical and online events (GDN 2017b).

4. Doing Research Assessments

The central tool of the Doing Research program is the Doing Research Assessment (DRA).

What exactly is a DRA? It is a mixed method research module that allows a contextualized comparative enquiry into a national research system, looking at key factors that determine the production, diffusion and uptake of social science research in a country. The method follows three analytical steps: a context analysis,

a stakeholder mapping, and a standardized assessment framework. The framework provides a structured approach to analyzing a research system's functions and processes. It is populated by quantitative indicators and implemented through primary and secondary data collection. The DRAs are implemented by a local research institution, with technical backstopping support and guidance of the global Doing Research team at GDN.

The DRAs can be used in several ways, and it would typically bring together data about a national research system that is currently not available in a single place. An assessment can directly serve as a magnifying glass to identify particular aspects that need the attention of the regulator, or can provide a benchmark or baseline for strategizing investments in capacity building on aspects such as research production, its diffusion or its use. The data that emerges from the assessment will also be made available to the research community, to foster further research on the performance of research systems.

5. Engagement of key stakeholders

National focal points are expected to interact and mobilize a number of stakeholders, both during the research phase and the dissemination of the results of the DRA. These stakeholders include at least:

- Direct beneficiaries: national policymakers and regulators, national and international research donors and research administrators.
- Indirect beneficiaries include academics, citizens and the media.

During the research phase (DRA implementation), key stakeholders will be research actors, grouped in four categories: higher education institutions; donors and government; industry; civil society. The mapping phase of the DRA will be instrumental to identify relevant sub-categories: HEIs can be public or private universities; industry includes for-profit think tanks and consultancies; civil society includes NGOs, non-profit think tanks and the media. Government and funding agencies is the most hybrid category: they include national ministries and research councils, as well as public and private foreign donors. The national research team is expected to liaise closely with these actors to ensure comprehensive inputs on the research system.

6. Activities to be performed by the national research teams

GDN is calling for expressions of interest from multidisciplinary national research teams based in developing country research institutions, to act as national focal point of the Doing Research program, and as national implementation partners of Doing Research Assessments. National research teams will be responsible to implement the DRAs in their base country. In doing so, they will liaise with key stakeholders as described in point 5 above, organize the national level dissemination of findings. The key outputs of the DRA will be the production of a national report on the national social science research system.

The engagement of the national focal points in the Doing Research program can be broken down in three phases:

Inception:

- Desk review of the Doing Research program documents.
- Desk review of research and policy literature on national social science research system, with a focus on literature that discusses context and actors.

- Inception meeting with GDN

Research:

- Step 1: Contextualization of the DRA method: qualitative review of economic, political, historical and international contextual elements; identification of key stakeholders and data sources
- Step 2: Data collection with stakeholder mapping; primary data collection through surveys and interviews; secondary data collection, including national and international data sources.
- Step 3: Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the determinants of research system performance, and production of a country specific Doing Research report.

Dissemination:

- Proactive approach through interventions in physical and online events.
- Production of dissemination materials such as videos, infographics, policy briefs.
- Organization of a high-profile national dissemination event with key stakeholders.

National focal points will be expected to be part of the Doing Research program over a mid- to long-term period, and may include further research and the production of regional or sub-regional reports, participation in global meetings or demand-led collaboration with national focal points from other countries.

The first cohort of studies is currently under implementation in four different countries. Implementation in further countries will be considered on a rolling basis.

7. Application process

Research teams interested to apply must send their expression of interest at their earliest convenience, by sending the documents listed below to doingresearch@gdn.int.

- EOI document following the attached template. The EOI should be maximum 5 pages.
- Annexes. Including:
 - o CVs of the team members.
 - o Letter of support from the head of the applying institution (template attached)

EOIs should be submitted at the team's earliest convenience. The call is open continuously and is assessed every month. GDN is inviting the teams to submit their EOIs as soon as possible. Applications will be reviewed shortly after reception by the Doing Research program team. When submitting the form, please specify in your email body whether you already have funding available to carry out the study. The "full footprint" for ongoing studies is of USD 70-80k per assessment.

The program currently focuses on a specific set of priority countries: Cote d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Lebanon, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, and South Africa. However, invitations are welcomed from all developing and transition countries.

8. Profile of the research teams

Research teams must apply through a research institution. The ideal research team is multidisciplinary and includes proven advanced capacities in both qualitative and quantitative research, and previous

experience in institutional analysis in the education, research or innovation sector. It may also be complemented by skills in communication and data visualization.

Research teams must be able to demonstrate the following capacities:

- Experience in analyzing organizational and institutional processes in the sector of research, higher education, knowledge or innovation.
- Experience in conducting multi-stakeholder primary data collection.
- Existing network with policy, academic and civil society communities at national level.
- Experience in communicating research to various audiences.

These criteria apply to the team as a whole and not to individual members. The experience must be demonstrated by submitting samples of projects, work positions or research publications.

9. Questions

For any questions, please contact the Doing Research program team at doingresearch@gdn.int.

10. References.

EC (2009). Europe's regional research systems: current trends and structures. 6th Framework Programme for Research.

GDN (2017a). Doing Research Pilot Phase Synthesis. Prepared by the Centre for Research and Expertise on Education and Development (CREED).

GDN (2017b). Doing Research Assessments. GDN program document.

IDRC (2013). Excellence in the context of use-inspired research: Perspectives of the Global South.

Lundvall B.-Å. (2007). National Innovation Systems – Analytical Concept and Development Tool. *Industry and Innovation*, 14:1, 95-119.

Williams R., de Rassenfosse G. (2013). The determinants of quality national higher education systems. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*.