

## Global Development Awards Competition Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) 2026 Edition

### CALL FOR MIDP REVIEWERS (CONSULTANTS)

*The Global Development Network (GDN) is a public international organisation that supports high-quality, policy-oriented, social science research in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), to promote better lives. Founded in 1999, GDN is headquartered in New Delhi (India), with offices in Clermont-Ferrand (France) and Arlington (USA). Our work spans the Global South.*

#### Background

The **Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project** is a competitive grant programme under the umbrella of the [Global Development Awards Competition](#), administered by the Global Development Network (GDN), funded under the Policy and Human Resources Development Fund (PHRD) trust fund managed by the World Bank, and generously supported by the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan.

The award programme invites non-profit Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to submit project proposals supporting (in particular) improved service delivery, and innovative approaches that may be scaled-up through a grant. The Award targets projects currently at the stage of implementation, and which have a high potential for impact, targeting exceptionally marginalised and disadvantaged groups located in developing countries.

#### Scope of the Call

The aim of the call is to identify a team of reviewers (consultants) to conduct the review of applications received under the MIDP category of the 2026 edition of the Global Development Awards Competition, through desk-based work and site visits.

Applicants will have to demonstrate professional experience in developing countries (up to middle-income countries<sup>1</sup>) and a mix of international, regional and local exposure.

## Profile of Applicants

GDN is expecting reviewers to demonstrate the following:

- Have demonstrable experience in reviewing and assessing social development projects as part of a granting programme (for at least 5-6 years), including project design, staffing, budgets, financial and institutional capacity.
- Have previous experience assessing World Bank Environmental and Social (E&S) compliance and familiarity with the World Bank's current Environment and Social Frameworks (ESF) and associated Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs), and be willing to undergo E&S training, including an online self-paced training.
- Demonstrate appropriate regional representation within the team: no more than 40% of the team for each review stage should be from the same geographic region<sup>2</sup>.

## Application Structure

Each team, through their representative (Team Leader,) must submit the following information:

1. Detailed background of the applying team
  - a) Submission of comprehensive CVs specifying all relevant professional affiliations
  - b) Specify past experience in conducting reviews of development projects, including details of reports produced, etc.
2. A note (not more than 5 pages) detailing the proposed review methodology for the multi-stage assessment detailed in the Terms of Reference (ToR). The applicant may also use this note to:

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<sup>1</sup> Press [here](#) to visit the list of countries which are recognised as low- and middle-income countries by the World Bank

<sup>2</sup> Press [here](#) to visit the list of geographic regions as classified by the World Bank

- a) Propose improvements to the structure of the review (see details in the ToR attached).
  - b) Propose changes and/or additions to the standard list of review criteria proposed by GDN.
  - c) Describe which dimensions will be assessed through desk review, and which ones will require site visits.
  - d) Define the quality threshold, justifying site visits to projects; and
  - e) Detail the grading scales to be used and justify the choice of qualitative and quantitative grading.
3. A detailed budget for the assignment.
  4. A list of social development projects handled/completed during the last three years.
  5. Contacts of three references that can support the applicant's qualifications for undertaking the review process.
  6. Contact information of the two leading team members (full names, full postal address, telephone numbers, email addresses, professional website) who will act as contact points with GDN, if selected.

## Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed against the following weighted criteria:

### Quality of Application (60%)

- Quality of proposed process for undertaking multi-stage review (including criteria to be used for selecting projects).
- Feasibility of the work plan and proposed review process based on the overall task timeline.
- Appropriateness of proposed budget.

### Capacity of Applying Team (40%)

- Experience of Lead Team Member(s).
- Relevant expertise of the team in conducting a review of social development projects in different developing countries (no. of cumulative years).
- Appropriateness of the composition of the team to cover the different aspects of the review process.

## Application Procedure

- Follow GDN's dedicated online submission platform using the following link: [app.gdn.int/grantee\\_portal](http://app.gdn.int/grantee_portal)
- Register or log in to the platform to have access to your profile. You will receive an email confirming the successful registration of your profile. Only after verifying your profile will you be able to apply.
  - Take note that you will be able to resume your entry at any time up to the deadline. If there are duplicate entries, the most recent one will be considered as only one proposal per applicant is allowed.
- You must invite your team members by placing their name and email address.
- Upload all necessary documents and fill in all sections otherwise, your application will not be submitted.
- Once you have submitted your application, you will receive an email to confirm it.

*Check our website for additional information on how to interact with the platform, or reach out to us if you need any assistance.*

Enquiries must be addressed to [awards@gdn.int](mailto:awards@gdn.int).

## Deadline

The deadline for submission of applications is **Friday, May 22, 2026 (Indian Standard Time 6 PM)**.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Objective of the Assignment

GDN is seeking to recruit a team of reviewers (consultants) to assess proposals received under the MIDP category of the 2026 edition of the Global Development Awards Competition, in close coordination with GDN. Each team of reviewers will be expected to conduct both desk reviews (proposal and business review) and field visits (on-site review). The task is expected to involve travelling to developing countries to visit applying organisations. Based on their review, the team of reviewers will issue a reasoned recommendation regarding the top proposals (ranked) for consideration by GDN.

The selected MIDP Reviewer will conduct the assessment in 3 Phases:

- **Phase 1** - Review focused on: Innovative approaches, Clear development objectives, Sustainable social impact, Expansion, and Cost efficiency. 10 applications are shortlisted for Phase 2.
- **Phase 2** - Review considering all criteria with interviews and request for additional information. 6 applications are shortlisted for Phase 3.
- **Phase 3** – Review considering all criteria with in-depth interviews, written references, and site visits if needed and applicable. 3 applications are selected as finalists.
- A feedback paragraph will be provided to each applicant by the MIDP Reviewer.

### Review Criteria

Throughout the review process, the proposals will be judged on the following criteria, with the following considerations:

- Phase 1 - Special focus will be given to the criteria: Innovative approaches, Clear development objectives, Sustainable social impact, Expansion, and Cost efficiency.
- Phases 2 and 3 – All criteria will be considered.

The applicant(s) may also propose additional criteria.

### **Innovative Approaches**

- How is your project different from other existing approaches?
- Is it proposing to pilot alternative approaches or to reach the target groups not reached by other programmes?
- Does this approach come from bottom-up partnerships engaging NGOs/CSOs, community associations, or local governments as implementing agencies?
- Does it reflect a participatory design and consultation process with the targeted beneficiaries?

### **Clear Development Objective, Activities and Measurable Results**

- Does the project have a clear and measurable results framework?
- Does it utilise participatory monitoring and evaluation to help beneficiaries address their vulnerability and to ensure ownership and sustainability?
- Does the project have a realistic plan with steps/activities that build concretely towards achieving the project's objectives, and that can do so within a year of implementation after receiving the Award?
- Has the project designed a way to use monitoring and evaluation for learning and measuring outcomes and, ultimately, impact?

### **Sustainable Social Impact**

- Does the project contribute to poverty alleviation and social development in the short and long term?
- Is the development impact sustainable in the long run?
- Has the project generated local ownership?
- Is there a plan to transfer ownership?
- Has the targeted population demonstrated an increase in skill development or an increased willingness to learn new skills?
- Does the project help strengthen the capacity of the targeted population to continue with the work themselves in the long run?
- Does the project support community-driven development by empowering the poor at the local community level to participate in society and government and to affect their development and learning by doing?

### **Expansion**

- How easily can the project be replicated and adapted to other countries, regions, sectors and cultures?
- What are the prospects for the project's expansion using the resources obtained from the award?
- Does the project have the potential to have a large-scale development impact?

### Cost Efficiency

- Is the cost of the project justified in terms of measurable impacts/outcomes?
- What are the measurable impacts/outcomes (performance) of the project in comparison to the cost of the programme?

### Thorough Risk Assessment

- Are there any significant risks associated with the project?
- How well prepared is the project team in mitigating these risks?

### Efficient Management of Financial and Human Resources

- Are policies in place within the organisation to ensure effective utilisation of financial and human resources for the implementation of the project?

### Transparency and Accountability in Operations

- Does the project work in a way that allows gathering information on an ongoing basis and disclosing all appropriate information on the implementation, in particular to the project's direct stakeholders?

### WB Environmental and Social Framework's Environmental and Social Standards

- Does the project comply with the WB Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), including the Environmental and Social Standards (ESS)? Are there any E&S risks and impacts associated with the project, and how is the project team planning to mitigate these risks and impacts?
- Does the project comply with the exclusion list of ineligible activities?

Priority will be given to projects to be implemented in low-income countries, followed by low-middle-income countries as per the [classification](#) given by the World Bank.

## Structure of the review and timeframe

GDN proposes the following review process:

### **Phase 0: Longlist:** June 19, 2026

GDN will provide the team of reviewers with a longlist of up to 30 eligible submissions.

### **Phase 1: Desk-based shortlisting:** June 22 – July 17, 2026

Through the analysis of application packages against the agreed criteria, based on desk research, a shortlist of 10 applications will be produced by the team of reviewers.

Deliverable: Report justifying the shortlisting and supporting material (graded ranking, etc.).

### **Phase 2: Business review:** July 21 – August 8, 2026

A comprehensive business review of the projects shortlisted, through interviews and a request for additional documentation from the applicants. Based on this further assessment, 6 will be identified for site visits.

Deliverable: Report justifying the shortlisting and supporting material (graded ranking, etc.).

### **Phase 3: Site visits<sup>3</sup>:** August 10 – August 26, 2026

Site visits to each of the 6 projects identified in Phase 2. The site visits are meant to allow due diligence checks on the financial and organisational processes of the applying organisations.

Deliverable: Report summing up the review of each of the 6 projects, along with structured supporting material (graded ranking, etc.).

## Feedback to applicants

Each report must include notes to be provided to the applicant on how to improve their application or shortcomings for not advancing.

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<sup>3</sup> The site visits can take place on a virtual setting if justifiable within a methodological approach proposed by the selected MIDP Reviewer that does not jeopardise the assessment of applications.

Every step of the assessment will be done in close collaboration with GDN. GDN will have the possibility to request more information from the team of reviewers, if needed.

### **Finance and Budget**

A budget of **USD 18,000** is available for this assignment, inclusive of all expenses. The payment schedule will be agreed upon with the consultant.

### **Reporting**

All reporting will be done to João Costa, Senior Programme Manager, at [jcosta@gdn.int](mailto:jcosta@gdn.int).

## Theme | 2026 Global Development Awards Competition

### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION (STI) FOR PEACE AND HUMAN SECURITY

Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) are often viewed as the "hardware" of development - the tools, laboratories, and digital infrastructures that drive economic growth. However, the ultimate impact of STI on human lives is determined by the "software" of society: the institutions, capabilities, and diplomatic relations that govern how knowledge is created and shared.

**This edition seeks to explore the role of the social sciences in, on, and for STI.**

We are looking beyond the tools themselves to the human systems that surround them. Centered on the Japanese guiding principle of "Human Security" - freedom to live in dignity and from fear and want - this call invites proposals that demonstrate how STI ecosystems can be shaped to foster peace, build human capability, and protect the most vulnerable through cross-border cooperation and Science Diplomacy.

*GDN encourages the submission of projects that are either gender-specific or gender-transformative but requires that all projects be designed to respond to gender concerns.*

### Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP)

We invite NGOs that are using innovation not just to deliver services, but to build human capabilities among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. We are moving beyond the deployment of "tech tools" to focus on projects that empower communities to understand, adapt, and leverage STI for their own security and dignity.

We are looking for projects that:

- Target the most vulnerable: Projects must explicitly benefit marginalized communities (e.g., refugees, indigenous groups, extreme poor, women in fragile settings).

- Build capacity: Rather than just dropping technology into a community, how is the project building the literacy, agency, and capacity of beneficiaries to use innovation to solve their own problems?
- Enhance Human Security: Projects that use innovative methods to secure freedom from fear (conflict, violence) or freedom from want (poverty, health, environmental risks) or freedom to live in dignity (governance, social relationships).

To be eligible, projects must reflect the global development imperative of **protecting vulnerable individuals and empowering communities** to build resilient, sustainable livelihoods.

## Environment and Social Safeguards Activity Exclusions List

This exclusion list defines activities which will render a project proposal ineligible, vis-à-vis environmental and social standards.

The [World Bank Environmental and Social Framework \(ESF\)](#):

- Activities that cause involuntary resettlement or cause adverse negative impact on income-generating activities/livelihood resources.
- Activities which will involve any kind of forceful eviction of people.
- Activities/processes which will involve the use of highly toxic and/or banned chemicals, including pesticides
- Activities that involve child workers and/or forced labour, including activities that cause or lead to child abuse, child labour exploitation or human trafficking; No child under the age of 14 should work on the construction, rehabilitation or maintenance of a subproject. Children between the ages of 14-18 will not be employed or engaged in connection with the project in a manner that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child's education or be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
- Involve the development of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements in critical habitats, protected areas or areas proposed for certain

levels of national protection (e.g., reserved forests), including the cutting of trees for commercial activities.

- Entail the purchase or use of illegal/illicit drugs, military equipment or other potentially dangerous materials and equipment, including chainsaws, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, asbestos (including asbestos-containing materials); or other investments detrimental to livelihoods, including cultural resources.
- Processes/technologies that will discharge highly polluted processed water, emit toxic fumes and noxious odour exceeding the national emission standards or the World Bank Group Environment, Health and Safety Guidelines (EHSG).
- Activities that will produce wastewater that will not be possible or viable for on-site treatment.
- Activities which involve work related to religious and political infrastructure;
- Activities which involve the purchase of equipment for government agencies