

Global Development Awards Competition  
Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD)  
2025 Edition

## CALL FOR ORD 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 Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) is a competitive research 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.

This awards programme identifies and funds outstanding research proposals in low-income or middle-income countries<sup>1</sup> with high potential for excellence in research and clear policy implications for addressing development issues.

### Scope of the Call

GDN is recruiting reviewers to conduct the assessment of research proposals under the ORD category of the Global Development Awards Competition. The review is scheduled to take place in two phases:

- Lot 1 - Reviewers will be selected to conduct a first assessment of proposals based on the ORD selection criteria and shortlist the best proposals.
- Lot 2 - Experienced researchers to review the shortlisted proposals and select the three finalists of the ORD category. The final decision will be validated by the Panel Organiser.

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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

### Panel Organiser

Out of the Lot 2 reviewers, a Panel Organiser is selected based on their professional experience, upon demonstrated availability for this additional task. This individual will have the additional task of approving the final ranking after taking into consideration all comments and (normalised) scores. Interested candidates can apply to one lot only, depending on their profiles.

### Profile of applicants

- Lot 1: Be a researcher with 2-10 years of research experience, with a track record of work and publication in the award theme for the current edition
- Lot 2: Be a researcher with 10+ years of research experience, with a track record of work and publication in the award theme for the current edition

### Application structure

Interested individuals must submit the following information:

1. Indicate to which Lot (1 or 2) they are applying for
2. Overview of how their expertise matches the theme and scope of the competition
3. Description of past experience on similar assignments
4. Full CV

### Selection Criteria

The criteria for the selection of Reviewers are as follows:

1. Research background on the theme of the call
2. Policy background
3. Leadership experience
4. Evaluation and experience on project implementation experience

### Application Procedure

- Head to GDN's dedicated online submission platform using the following link: [www.gdn.int/gdac/2025/apply](http://www.gdn.int/gdac/2025/apply)
- Register or log in to the platform to access your profile. You will receive an email confirming the successful registration of your profile and setting your password. Only after verifying your profile will you be able to submit an application.

- On your profile page, follow the displayed instructions and go to [Applications] “Funding Opportunities” to select the Call you wish to apply to or resume one from the [Applications] “In Progress” section.
  - 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.
- Upload all necessary documents and fill in all sections; otherwise, your application will not be submitted.
  - Indication of which Lot (1 or 2) the application refers to
  - Overview of how your expertise matches the theme and scope of the competition
  - Description of past experience on similar assignments
  - Full CV
- Once you have completed your application, click on “Submit”. You will receive an email notifying you of the successful submission of your application with a copy of the entire submission.

*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@gn.int](mailto:awards@gn.int).

### Deadline

The deadline for submission of applications is on Friday, May 23 2025 (Indian Standard Time 6 PM).



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Objective of the Assignment

GDN is recruiting reviewers to conduct the assessment of research proposals under the ORD category of the Global Development Awards Competition.

The review is scheduled to take place in two phases:

- Lot 1 - a first-level review by early-career scholars (less than 10 years of experience)
- Lot 2 - a second-level review of experienced researchers (above 10 years of experience)

Interested candidates can apply to one lot only, depending on their profiles.

### Panel Organiser

Out of the Lot 2 reviewers, a Panel Organiser is selected based on their professional experience, upon demonstrated availability for this additional task. This individual will have the additional task of approving the final ranking after taking into consideration all comments and (normalised) scores.

### Lot 1: First level review

Reviewers will be selected to conduct a first assessment of proposals based on the ORD selection criteria and shortlist the best proposals.

### Lot 2: Expert level review

Experienced researchers to review the shortlisted proposals and select the three finalists of the ORD category. The final decision will be validated by the Panel Organiser.

### Review Criteria

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

#### Academic quality

- Quality of the research question formulated
- Quality of methodology and methods chosen to answer the research question
- Quality of literature review
- Originality and innovativeness
- Ethics

#### Clarity of the links to policy

- Link to specific development outcomes
- Specific relevance to the policy process

#### Feasibility

- Timeline
- Budget
- Research team

### Structure of the review and timeframe

Each review consists of:

- 1) Scoring each proposal against the criteria
- 2) Comments to complement the quantitative evaluation for each of the 11 criteria
- 3) Indication of recommendation to advance to the following stage
  - a. Lot 1 Reviewers – Yes/No to “Should this proposal advance to the next stage?”
  - b. Lot 2 Reviewers – Yes/No to “Is this proposal among the top 3 you have reviewed?”

Applicants receive the anonymised comments and can revise their proposals between phases. It is expected that all comments submitted are respectful and contribute to the professional development of the applicants, regardless of the quality of their proposal.

Lot 2 reviewers (second level review) will not have access to the comments from the 1st level reviewers, but the applicants will provide a reaction to their comments.

Selected reviewers will comply with the timeline defined for their assignment, which is expected to be (subject to change):

#### □ Lot 1: First level review

Between **June 23 and July 16, 2025**, with up to 10 proposals per reviewer, a minimum of 3 reviews per proposal. This number might differ depending on how many applications are received and how many reviewers are selected.

□ Lot 2: Second level review

Between **July 28 and August 18, 2025**, with up to 10 proposals per reviewer, a minimum of 3 reviews per proposal (the workload on each reviewer may vary).

□ Panel Organiser

Between **August 20 and 21, 2025**, to approve the final ranking upon reception of all normalised scores and ranking provided by GDN.

## Finance and Budget

- Lot 1: The reviewer will be paid USD 40 for every proposal reviewed.
- Lot 2: The reviewer will be paid USD 80 for every proposal reviewed. GDN also pays USD 200 to the Panel Organiser as a management fee.

## Reporting

All reporting will be done to João Costa, Senior Programme Manager, through the email addresses [awards@gdnet.org](mailto:awards@gdnet.org) and [jcosta@gdnet.org](mailto:jcosta@gdnet.org) (all communications are to be addressed to both emails mandatorily).



## Theme | 2025 Global Development Awards Competition

### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

*"The importance of digitization in health care has been increasingly recognized since the outbreak of COVID-19. Implementation in society (including utilization of innovative technologies) needs to be accelerated in the world, including developing countries"*

[Japan's Global Health Strategy](#) (2022:2)

Digital health is a cultural transformation of traditional healthcare. Digital technologies offer powerful tools to improve access, affordability, and quality of health services. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are often at the forefront of innovation in this space, offering valuable lessons to the global public health community on how to do more with less, impacting health outcomes, behaviour and knowledge among the most marginalised communities. The right combination of research and research-led implementation can help scale innovations to benefit larger groups, or it can enable impactful innovations to travel and be adapted across different health systems.

In 2025, the Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) invites social science researchers based in LMICs to put forward proposals that focus on building the empirical evidence and the actionable knowledge capable of transforming the pursuit of universal health coverage through digital solutions. Research should illuminate how digital solutions impact the pursuit of universal health access across LMICs.

In parallel, the 2025 Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) will support existing (i.e. ongoing) NGO-led projects engaged in the development, implementation or evaluation of digital solutions in support of universal healthcare delivery in underserved areas.

Together, these awards bridge the gap between knowledge and real-world impact, advancing inclusive health systems.

*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.*

Under the ORD 2025, GDN will be accepting proposals from early-career researchers focusing on the topic above. Examples of research questions include (but are not limited to) the following:

- How do mobile health platforms impact healthcare access and health outcomes for marginalised populations in fragile and conflict-affected settings?
- What are the socioeconomic impacts of telemedicine on reducing healthcare barriers for women and informal workers in rural LMICs?
- Can AI-powered diagnostic tools be adapted for use on low-cost devices (e.g., older smartphones) to detect common diseases in remote settings?
- What are the key privacy, security, and equity challenges in national digital health data systems, and how can policy frameworks address these issues to enhance human security?
- How do mobile health applications influence mental health support and chronic disease management for displaced populations in humanitarian crises?

Adherence to one of the questions above does not increase chances of success - these are examples. Researchers are urged to focus on their own interests within the 2025 topic. Proposals must, however, demonstrate policy relevance, originality, and clear methodologies, along with a direct and well-articulated link to the call topic. Research must align with human security principles, emphasising the protection and empowerment of individuals to ensure freedom from health-related risks and vulnerabilities.

## FOCUS AREAS OF SUBMISSIONS

**Access and Equity:** Projects that focus on improving access to healthcare services and reducing health disparities, particularly for underserved populations. This could involve using digital tools to connect patients with healthcare providers, expanding healthcare infrastructure in remote areas, or reducing financial barriers to healthcare. It also includes developing targeted interventions for marginalised communities.

**Behaviour and Attitudes:** Projects that aim to modify individual or collective behaviours and attitudes that impact health outcomes. This could involve using digital tools to promote healthy habits, providing incentives for behaviour change. It also includes shifting attitudes and beliefs related to health by reducing stigma and discrimination and promoting positive attitudes towards health-seeking behaviours.

**Empowerment:** Projects that aim to empower individuals and communities to take control of their health and well-being. This could involve providing health education



and information, promoting self-care practices, and supporting community-led health initiatives.

**Knowledge and Awareness:** Projects that focus on increasing understanding and awareness of health issues. This could involve developing educational materials, providing training to healthcare workers, or using digital tools to disseminate health information. It also includes raising awareness of specific health issues or promoting health literacy through public health campaigns and working with community leaders.

**Systems and Capacity:** Projects that focus on strengthening health systems and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare delivery. This could involve implementing digital health information systems, improving supply chain management, or strengthening health workforce capacity. It also includes strengthening the capacity of individuals, communities, or health systems to address health challenges by providing training to healthcare workers, supporting community health initiatives, or developing digital tools to improve health systems management.

**Social Norms:** Projects that aim to transform social norms that influence health behaviours and outcomes. This could involve using digital media to challenge harmful traditional practices, promoting positive social norms around health, and empowering communities to advocate for change.

**Technology and Data:** Projects that focus on developing or implementing new technologies and improving the collection, analysis, and use of health data to improve health outcomes. This could involve creating mobile health apps, developing telehealth platforms, or using artificial intelligence to improve disease surveillance and diagnosis. It also includes developing digital health information systems, using data to inform public health interventions, or promoting data sharing and collaboration among healthcare providers.

