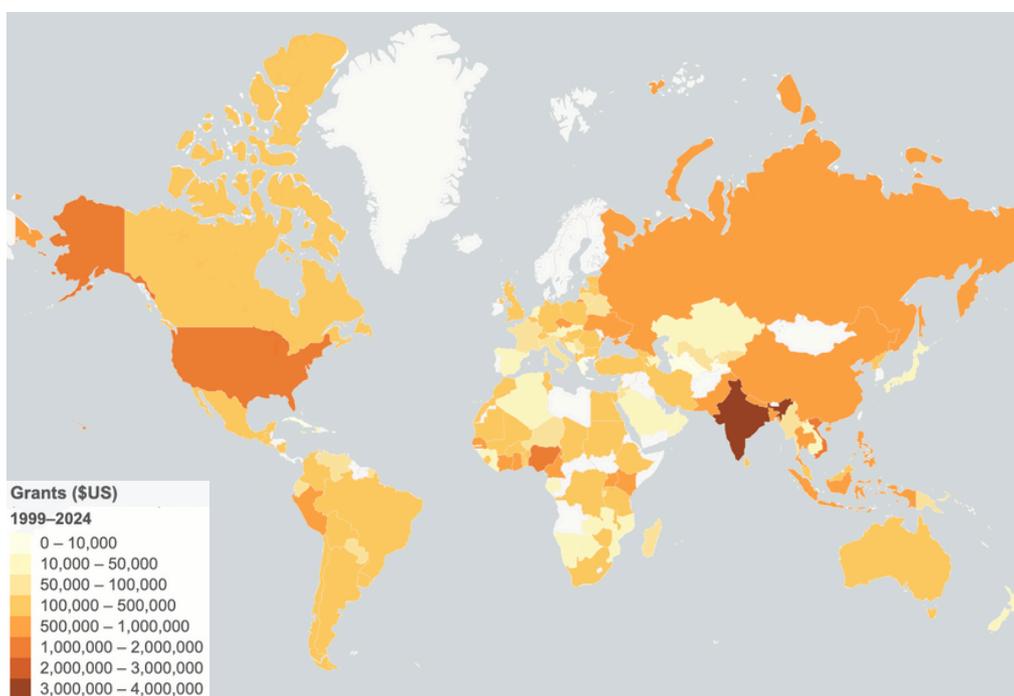


Strategic Framework

2025-2035

Global Development Network (GDN) is committed to strengthening research systems across developing countries, expanding leadership from the Global South, and ensuring that high-quality evidence informs development policies and decisions. For more than 25 years, GDN has invested in local research capacity, built international partnerships, and supported thousands of researchers and institutions, helping to ensure that development solutions reflect the realities, priorities, and knowledge of the countries they aim to serve.



Map of GDN grants from 1999 - 2024

As the world undergoes rapid technological, social, and economic change, GDN is preparing its next strategic cycle (2025–2035) with a forward-looking and purpose-driven vision. Building on its long-standing experience, GDN will deepen its role in enabling inclusive digital transformation, supporting cross-country research, and strengthening the production and use of locally grounded evidence. The growing influence of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and digital public infrastructure, presents both opportunities and risks. GDN aims to ensure these innovations reduce inequality by addressing barriers such as the digital divide, capacity gaps, and governance challenges.

To steer this next phase, GDN has developed an integrated strategic framework that brings together lessons from past initiatives and future ambitions. This framework positions GDN to respond to global shifts with agility while supporting countries in generating the evidence needed for equitable, resilient, and sustainable development pathways.

This framework comprises:

- **A renewed vision and mission** focused on empowering researchers and institutions in developing countries to lead knowledge creation.
- **Core values** rooted in integrity, inclusion, scientific rigour, and equity.
- **A strategic roadmap** detailing how partnerships, programmes, and knowledge-sharing platforms will be leveraged to broaden impact.
- **A “four gear” operational model**, designed to combine research funding, capacity building, policy influence, and global knowledge exchange into a single cohesive engine for change.

Together, these elements provide a foundation for how GDN will design programmes, build collaborations, mobilise resources, and measure impact between now and 2035. The goal is clear: to ensure that development decisions are driven by evidence generated in the contexts where it matters most, and by the people who understand those contexts best.



Vision

A world where strong research systems in the Global South generate knowledge that drives equitable and sustainable development worldwide.

Mission

GDN strengthens research systems and champions inclusive digital transformation to ensure that locally grounded evidence informs global development policy and practice.

Core Values



1. Inclusion

We champion fairness and equal opportunity in knowledge creation and access. GDN is committed to reducing structural barriers that limit research participation, especially for institutions and individuals in the Global South. We ensure that diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences shape global development debates and solutions.



2. Integrity

We uphold rigorous, transparent, and ethical research standards. Our work is grounded in data, scientific excellence, and accountability, ensuring that research findings are credible, policy-relevant, and capable of driving long-term change.



3. Collaboration

We believe that effective development solutions emerge from working together. GDN enables trust-based collaboration among researchers, policymakers, funders, and institutions, encouraging interdisciplinary and cross-regional exchange to tackle shared global challenges.



4. Innovation and Digital Transformation

We embrace innovation - technological, methodological, and institutional - as a tool to expand access to research and increase its impact. By leveraging digital technologies and Digital Public Infrastructure, we help democratise research opportunities and enable new forms of knowledge generation.



5. Local Ownership and Global Relevance

We recognise that sustainable solutions must be rooted in local realities. GDN supports research that is locally driven yet globally informed, enabling knowledge to flow in all directions, South–South, North–South, and South–North, to build a more equitable and interconnected world.

Strategic Roadmap

GDN's Strategic Roadmap for 2025–2035 sets out how the organisation will deliver value to researchers, institutions, and policy partners in the Global South. It focuses on strengthening research capacity, enabling collaboration, and ensuring that locally generated evidence informs decision-making at all levels. GDN delivers its impact through eight core service areas:

Showcasing Global South research and researchers

GDN provides platforms that amplify the visibility and influence of researchers from LMICs, ensuring their work contributes to global debates. *Examples: The annual Global Development Conference, which enables researchers to share their work with diverse stakeholders, and GlobalDev, a multilingual platform that translates academic research into accessible insights.*

Connecting researchers to address emerging global challenges

GDN mobilises interdisciplinary and cross-regional research communities to work collectively on frontier issues with global implications. *Examples: Research networks on the economics and inclusivity of digital public infrastructure, and on open transaction networks; the use of AI in medical diagnoses in India (ICMR); the use of nighttime luminosity as a decision-making tool (Government of Benin).*

Providing a neutral platform in the research ecosystem

GDN plays a neutral convening role, connecting funders, policymakers, and researchers to foster evidence-driven development policy. *Example: Evidence Fairs in the Sahel, strengthening think tank contributions to public debates.*

Providing technical “know-how” and “know-whom”

Beyond funding, GDN equips researchers with methodological support, mentoring, and access to influential networks.

Example: The EIB-GDN programme, which brought together early-career researchers and world-class academics to evaluate private sector development projects.

Designing and running pilot programmes

GDN tests innovative ideas through small-scale pilots that can be replicated or scaled by governments and development agencies.

Examples: AFD-GDN Biodiversity and Development Awards; pilot research on the societal impact of digital public infrastructure.

Diagnosing research ecosystems

GDN maps research systems at the country level to identify structural bottlenecks and guide investments in research capacity.

Example: Doing Research assessments conducted in 27 countries, providing the first global benchmarks on research environments in the social sciences.

Catalysing innovation for marginalised communities

GDN supports pioneering projects that test unconventional solutions to development challenges and study their impact. *Example: The Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP), funded by Japan, which recognises innovative NGO initiatives and pairs them with local researchers.*



Strengthening research capacity at scale

Through training, mentoring, and funding, GDN builds a pipeline of strong Southern researchers and institutions.

Examples: Regional competitive research funds in Francophone Africa, the Global Development Awards Competition (GDAC), and hosting Campbell South Asia to promote evidence synthesis.



To effectively implement its mission and achieve sustainable impact in its 2025–2035 strategic cycle, GDN will pursue the following organisational priorities:

1. Strengthen and expand the membership base to secure core funding

GDN will increase the number of member countries and formalise annual financial contributions from them. This is essential to establishing the stable core funding that has been missing since GDN became a treaty-based International Organisation headquartered in New Delhi. A stronger and more diverse membership base will enhance GDN's legitimacy, financial resilience, and strategic reach.

2. Expand strategically into new thematic areas, with a focus on inclusive digital transformation

GDN will engage deeply with emerging global priorities, particularly inclusive digital transformation, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), and Artificial Intelligence (AI). These areas are reshaping governance, markets, and service delivery worldwide, yet independent evidence on their impacts remains scarce, especially from the Global South. GDN will build partnerships with new stakeholders, including organisations such as Co-Develop, the Gates Foundation, ITU, and other global funders active in this space.

3. Incubate, scale and replicate successful programmes

GDN will systematically build on its proven initiatives by incubating and designing structured follow-on phases, extending them to new regions and countries, and attracting diversified funding streams. Rather than starting from scratch, GDN will scale what works - leveraging existing evidence, partnerships, and operational lessons to accelerate impact.

4. Re-engage strategically with India

As GDN's host country and a leader in digital innovation, India is central to the next phase of GDN's growth. GDN will re-establish strong partnerships with major think tanks (e.g., NCAER), academic institutions (e.g., Ashoka University), and key government counterparts (e.g., NITI Aayog). India's experience with digital public goods and large-scale social innovation makes it a natural anchor for GDN's work on inclusive digital transformation.

5. Consolidate and deepen the partnership with France

France's support has been essential to GDN's research capacity-building efforts in Francophone Africa. GDN will strengthen this relationship by securing French membership, deepening programmatic collaboration, and positioning GDN as a key actor in evidence ecosystems across Francophone countries. Continued engagement with AFD and other French institutions will be instrumental in expanding GDN's footprint in West and Central Africa.

In all of its activities, GDN adopts a **"four gear" approach** which combines a theoretical framework, data access, evidence synthesis and southern research networks: GDN's specificity lies in the "Southern Research Network" gear. Unlike traditional research programmes that rely predominantly on institutions in the Global North, GDN ensures that Southern researchers lead the agenda-setting, peer learning, and knowledge production processes.

