



Building a Network for Laureates of the Global Development Awards Competition

*GDN*ext

Debrief paper (Consultation with Awards Competition winners, 21 March 2018, New Delhi)

The Global Development Network (GDN) and 15 former laureates of the Global Development Awards Competition have gathered on 21st March 2018, on the sidelines of GDN's 18th Global Development Conference, to discuss the opportunity to create a network of past winners. The discussion collected ideas about the general purpose of the network (what is important, why is it important?), and about its functions (how to operationalize the network?). This document reports on the discussion and build on participants' inputs to identify priorities and ways forward.

Background. Over almost 20 years of existence, GDN has accumulated a range of valuable individual contacts through its programs. In this regard, having been implemented continuously since 2000, the Global Development Awards Competition is paradigmatic. The competition, however, is also unique, as it engages both researchers and development practitioners, a circumstance so far not exploited by GDN. The creation of a network would seize the opportunity to leverage GDN's contacts with researchers and practitioners from the Global South that have had an interaction with GDN as part of its programs and foster meaningful interactions between the two categories.

GDN's new organizational strategy¹ was adopted for the period 2017-2022, with the purpose of improving development outcomes and livelihoods through high quality, policy-oriented research in the social sciences, produced in developing countries and connected globally. The strategy is structured in three pillars, with a three-pronged focus on building capacity, supporting high-quality research and supporting research-practice interactions. The discussion on the proposed network is in this context also an opportunity to discuss the engagement of GDN's 'alumni' in rolling out its strategy.

The consultation featured a pre-event survey and two focus group discussions on the purpose and functions of the network, that used the method of the 'most significant change' technique. The agenda is available as Annexe 1. The rest of the document summarizes the key discussions that took place during the consultations, in an attempt to understand the demand from its potential users for a strengthened network facilitation and engineering effort by GDN.

¹ http://www.gdn.int/sites/default/files/The_Road_Ahead_GDN_Strategy_2017.pdf

1. Why establish the Network in the first place? Purpose and objectives.

The main reason identified, is to support interactions between researchers and development actors. The consultation made clear that a network would need to prove immediately useful to its members in their professional life – as academic or as development practitioners, and would need to keep its members and the (changing) demand for being part of a network at its center. There was a clear sense that its general objective should be **to enable GDN and its members to join forces to capture the voices of local people in addressing local and regional development problems to eliminate poverty – through research, implementation and joint efforts.**

Four specific objectives emerged in the consultation, when the group was asked to reflect about their potential experience as the network members:

1. To network with actors from two different worlds, and build the interaction between analyzing (researchers) and solving (practitioners) development challenges
2. To support visibility and promotion of local research by featuring it on a global platform, and accessing a diverse readership
3. To leverage the membership of the network to increase the credibility of research findings amongst local policy actors and communities
4. To access skills and competences from individuals at similar or different stages of their careers, with the goal to give and provide mentoring, access peer-review, work and – for researchers – publish together.

Concrete ideas that emerged from the discussion for engagement with GDN
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using the GDN Working Paper series to recognize high quality local research. The series could be extended to accept all relevant work of the network members.• Creating a Mentoring Facility to provide stage-specific feedback, adapted to the local context. Mentorship should be open to academics, policy actors and practitioners.• Creating a Co-authorship Facility to facilitate the identification of peers with the potential to become co-authors among the network members.• Fostering member ownership in the network activities and in its governance. Members voices are part of the network's strategic orientations.

2. What matters most? Suggestions by past Awards winners.

The workshop participants have outlined a number of fundamental features the network should have. They are described in the following lines.

A thematic network focused on development challenges

There must be a thematic strategy for the network to focus on. This should be defined in terms of themes, but also in terms of disciplines targeted by the members and related activities, and should enable interdisciplinary work.

Participative governance, steered by the network members and centralized at GDN

Participants mentioned the possibility that members take up on a rotating basis (through elections) the leadership of the network hosted by GDN. There must be a vision to clearly define the role and responsibilities of the members. Network members should help raising funds and scaling the network. The Awards winners would form a core group of members, but it could also be open to others, for example with an observer status.

Partnerships at all levels: GDN, Network members, Network observers

The network should aim to connect people and organizations, and this can take place at different levels. Internally, between the network members and to foster collaboration between academics and NGO workers. Externally, to foster peer review at all stages that also involves public policy actors. The network could also connect people at the regional level, through dedicated crosscutting groups.

Activities targeting sustainable impact and learning

All activities should follow a form of partnership or collaboration aimed to enable the researcher-NGO connection. In so doing, the network could offer access to peer review opportunities for projects (research or implementation) that can take place at several stages: *ex-ante*, *in itinere*, and *ex-post*. The activities should also include knowledge sharing aspects, with the aim to involve development communities and foster their ownership of the research, by leveraging the network and its visibility. Activities should be developed to match the distinct objectives, biases, techniques and desired outcomes of the researcher-development worker collaboration.

High visibility and promotion for the network and its members

The network should be recognized regionally and globally and build its reputation. One way to build that is to set up high quality standards in all the work involving the network.

3. How to operationalize the network functions? Initial discussion.

The meeting prompted past Awards winners to also discuss options to operationalize specific functions of the network. These will support the network's life.

3.1. Organization and governance

First of all, the question of the general organization of the network should be asked and the consultation provided some ideas towards it in its early discussions. The figure below proposes a draft and schematic way of organizing the network and is based on these discussions.

The proposed architecture aims to give its own structure to the network, which would interact with three types of actors: GDN, members and observers. GDN and the members are managing the network, while observers can also access and contribute to part of the activities.

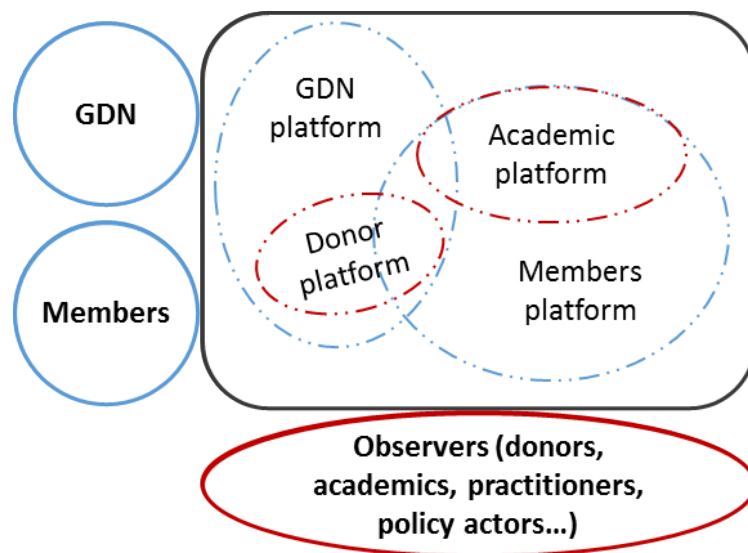


Figure 1: Possible way to organize the network

This structure does not carry any assumptions on the precise governance of the network and the various platforms.

3.2. Operational aspects

The following sections are the result of the second focus group discussion and summarize the proposed options on financing, stakeholders, capacity building, and network identity.

3.2.1. Actors

Three categories of actors would participate in the network:

- **GDN**, to provide a working capital that includes:
 - Conceptualization
 - Administration
 - Research management
 - Resource mapping
- **Network members (Awards Alumni)** contributes:
 - Ownership of the platform
 - Time to invest in activities
 - Membership fees
 - Fundraising support
- **Observers**, who are various types of organizations: (the observer status would need further definition)
 - Donors
 - Academics
 - NGOs
 - Policy actors

3.2.2. Financing

- The business model suggested by the participants places the network as an active actor with its own financing.

- It also assumes that GDN activities (including the Awards Competition) would be able to gather a reasonable amount of funding to ensure its basic operations of the platform.
- The network would also host an open platform for interactions with donors interested in collaborating with the members.
- A fundraising roadmap would be prepared every year by the network leadership. This roadmap would highlight the strategic priorities for interaction with potential donors.
- Network members should help raising funds and scaling the network through their participation in network activities coordinated by GDN.
- For example, any funded project that used the platform to come to life, could include a small amount of funding earmarked to support the platform costs.

3.2.3. Capacity building and member engagement

The translation of capacity building on the platform focused on three elements: mentorship, data and dissemination.

- **Mentorship should be available not only from academics, but also from policy actors and practitioners.** The general aim of mentorship is to provide stage-specific feedback, adapted to the local context.
- Technical and analytical mentorship is also important. Ideally there could be two mentors: a professional researcher and a policy actor or development practitioner.
- **Mentoring should take place at all stages:** with a pool of referees during the design stage, that could become mentors during the implementation stage.
- Access to data should be facilitated by the online platform, for example through a participative repository of datasets populated by members and by GDN, through its programs.
- The **GDN Working Paper series** should also be used as a way to recognize high quality research. Specifically, the series could also be extended to accept all relevant work of the network members.
- The platform should also facilitate the **identification of co-authors** from the network members.
- The platform should also help to disseminate research, through videos, social media (including Facebook groups and other learning platforms), policy briefs. The platform should be staffed to provide these services, and dissemination should involve all actors (GDN, researcher, practitioner and mentor)

3.2.4. Identity

- The network's identity should point at the ultimate objective of eliminating poverty. It should also relate to the network's general objective, elaborated in this document's introduction.

- The visibility of the network should go beyond its link to GDN. The network should participate on its own in important events (Davos-type forums, UN meetings, conferences).
- It should also be on social media, webinars and other online platforms.
- It should be recognized as an interactive space for combining research and practice. It should become a reference in the development sector for this kind of exchanges.
- Members should also engage for the network as its ambassadors, and should particularly build on its well-known members and have specific activities to engage members in network visibility.

4. Conclusion and next steps

The proposed network has the potential to become an actionable arm to support the Global Development Awards Competition in future years, which also fits well with GDN's organizational strategy for 2017-2022. By proposing a space where laureates of the Awards Competition, as well as a number of selected observers, interact, it will enable GDN and its partners to stir the network in the direction of its strategic objectives, based on a demand that arises from the program beneficiaries.

In the next steps, GDN wishes to consult with the full group of Awards Alumni about the present document, to receive more feedback and create ownership amongst the group. Once the main rationale for this project will be sufficiently developed, GDN proposes to create a working group with both GDN staff and Awards alumni, and a program proposal to further describe 'how' to implement it, and to put forward a joint fundraising effort.

Remaining questions to be addressed: (not limited to the questions listed below)

- What do we understand by development challenges? What should be the exact scope of collaborations enabled by the network?
- Which research disciplines should be targeted in particular?
- How will the rotating structure be organized for the elected Steering Committee? What is its role? Can it be more than a Steering Committee? (i.e. also leading the secretariat)
- Should there be a different status for institutions and for individuals? How?
- Who is eligible to become an observer or a member?
- The observer status needs a clearer definition. Who are they and how to they get involved? Will they ever become members? What do they get out of their observer status? Who can identify observers, and how should they be included to the network?
- Should we go beyond the project cycle? The above paragraphs mainly focus on identifying/implementing/evaluating/disseminating interventions.
- Should the members also promote the network visibility through their other activities outside the network?
- Should there be a quality assessment before an intensive visibility effort? How?

Annex 1: Agenda of the discussion

The agenda of the morning discussion on March 21st 2018, is given below:

9:30 – 9:40	Welcome and introduction Francesco Obino, Head of Programs, GDN
9:40 – 10:10	Speed networking Participants will meet each other for short face-to-face interactions in order to get to know each other.
10:10 – 10:30	Presentation of survey results Clément Gévaudan, Fellow, GDN The presentation will summarize the preparatory survey available mentioned above.
10:30 – 11:00	Group work: What are the most useful aspects of a network? Participants will break into groups of 4-5 persons to discuss what, based on their personal experience, are the most useful and important aspects to consider for the Network of Excellence.
11:00 – 11:20	<i>Followed by group reporting</i>
11:20 – 11:40	Tea/Coffee Break
11:40 – 12:10	Group work: Defining the main characteristics of the network Participants will break into groups of 3-4 persons to flesh out the ideas exchanged in the previous sessions. The groups will be focused on some of the following aspects: Financing model and membership; Research and policy connections; Capacity building; Member engagement strategy; Visibility and identity.
12:10 – 12:30	<i>Followed by group reporting</i>
12:30 – 13:00	Conclusion and the way forward Francesco / Clément

Each session builds on previous discussions to progress towards the desired outcome of the consultation, to define the network project, why it should exist and how to make it successful, possibly through a charter establishing it in principle.

Please ensure that you fill in the short preparatory survey before 17th March. It is accessible through the link below:

<https://goo.gl/forms/LIWEA6GLdfoMyV2g2>

Annex 2: List of participants

Name	Country	Affiliation	Award
Dr. Flora Chadare	Benin	University of Agriculture of Ketou	ORD
Dr. Yang Juhua	China	Renmin University of China	ORD
Mr. Clément Gévaudan	France	Global Development Network (GDN)	
Dr. Suresh Kumar Devaraluju	India	Tamil Nadu Agricultural University	ORD
Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka	Uganda	Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH)	JSDF
Mr. Chyngyz Kalykov	Kazakhstan	Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP)	MIDP
Ms Hasina Kharbhih	India	Impulse NGO Network	JSDF
Mr. Francesco Obino	Italy	Global Development Network (GDN)	
Dr. Jeremaiah Opiniano	Philippines	Institute for Migration and Development Issues	ORD
Dr. Marjan Petreski	Macedonia	University American College	ORD
Ms. Nadia Qonita	Indonesia	Indonesia Medika	MIDP
Mr. Luis Fernando Sanabria	Paraguay	Fundacion Paraguaya	JSDF
Dr. Petar Stankov	Bulgaria	University of National and World Economy (UNWE)	ORD
Dr. Bhishma Subedi	Nepal	Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB)	MIDP
Dr. L. Venkatachalam	India	Madras Institute of Development Studies	ORD
Dr. Kanchana Wickramasinghe	Sri Lanka	Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS)	ORD
Dr. Sara Wong	Ecuador	Escuela Superior Politecnica del Litoral (ESPOL)	ORD