

RESEARCH MONITOR

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Local Research for Better Lives



A Summary of Research Findings and Trends
from the Global Development Network



“The prolonged European debt crisis — accompanied by economic stagnation and diverse policy responses — has questioned the very existence of the Economic and Monetary Union and the single currency.”

Rajkovic, Stojkov and Velickovski (2016).

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Cover Image: Communications training for researchers in Lima, Peru by GDN/Barriopixel.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
Africa, Aid Effectiveness	3
Inclusion, Research Capacity, Least Developed Countries	5
Economic Development, Transformation & Productivity	7
Natural Resource Management, Climate Change and the Environment.....	9
Research Systems	12
Development Innovation & Excellence.....	14



INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to bring you a second edition of the Research Monitor for 2016, our biannual compilation of research findings and trends from various Global Development Network (GDN) programs and competitions, designed to inform current debate and policy.

This issue focusses on updates from our active research programs around the world. Topline information and stories to watch on a variety of development themes such as – aid effectiveness, economic productivity and natural resource management, and the quality of research and education – have been distilled into snippets of information, making the latest research and trends accessible to all.

Readers will find that much of the information featured here is from programs that are still in progress. In these cases, look out for interesting research questions, early findings, or emerging trends, as well as bits of context, with the potential to inform development discourse.

In this issue we cover the following topics, intrinsically linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Africa, Aid Effectiveness
- Inclusion, Research Capacity & Least Developed Countries
- Economic Development & Productivity
- Natural Resource Management, Climate Change and the Environment
- Research Systems
- Development Excellence



Image: Paolo Lucciola/Flickr

Aid influences the institutional environment as much as institutional factors influence aid.

AFRICA, AID EFFECTIVENESS

“While Africa is considered to have received comparatively high levels of aid ... the question still remains as to how such aid has contributed to economic development on the continent.”

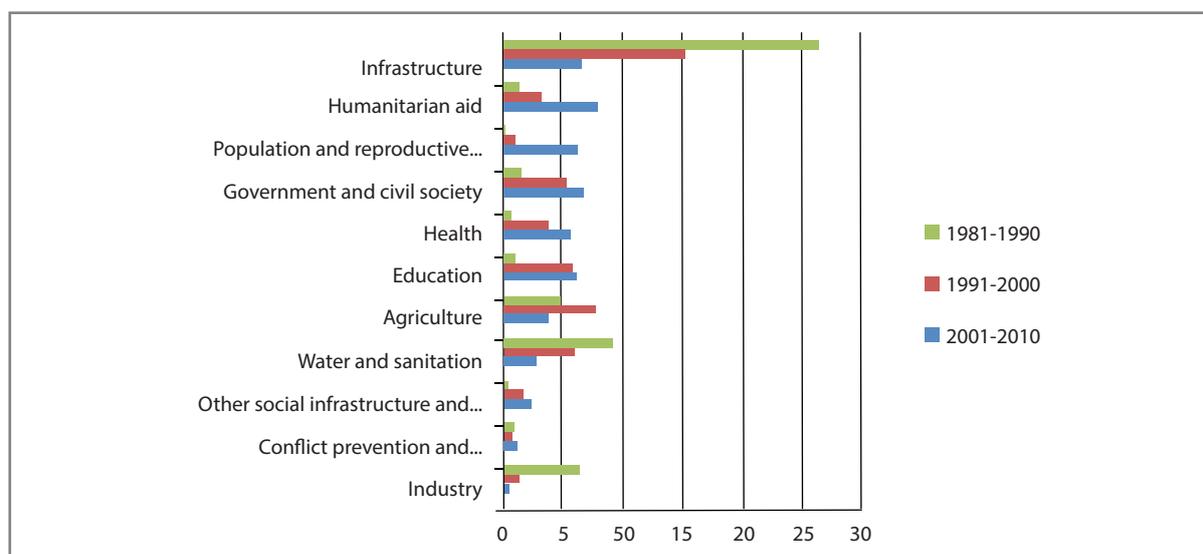
Ndikumana and Pickbourn (2016).

Aid influences the institutional environment as much as institutional factors influence aid. And, research on aid effectiveness needs to start focusing on specific sectors and not merely at the country level. These were key insights from one of a series of background papers that GDN commissioned on ‘The Future of Aid Effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa – A Research

Agenda.’ Researchers Ndikumana and Pickbourn (2016) made a critical assessment of the state of literature, presenting perspectives from African researchers. They highlight problematic features in aid design and delivery, which takes place on the micro level whereas its impact is measured at the macro level – particularly in terms of contribution to economic growth. They argue that the way forward is for aid effectiveness research to move its analysis to the sectoral level (health, agriculture, gender, conflict, etc.), where impact is more likely to be visible and measurable. They also recommend that aid effectiveness analysis should be based on historical conditions and external shocks that influence development, and the effectiveness of aid services.

In another overview of aid effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa, Fosu (2016) supports the findings of Ndikumana and Pickbourn. He suggests shifting attention from aid to domestic resource mobilization efforts, to support

Sectoral allocation of total aid 1981-2010 (%).



Source: Ndikumana and Pickbourn (2016), computation using data from OECD database.

growth with a combination of aid, foreign direct investment, portfolio flows, remittances and trade, thus putting African countries in control of their development. In a third paper in the series, Onguleye (2016) looks at broader discussion on aid in the continent, concluding that the discourse of 'aid effectiveness' itself is not fully owned by policy making elites or the local research community. These studies form a part of GDN's Development Aid Effectiveness program, jointly carried out in Africa by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), and supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

As part of the same program, GDN brought together donor agencies, African policymakers and senior African researchers in a series of three panels at the Brookings Institution on 6 October 2016 in DC, in partnership with Brookings's Africa

Growth Initiative and the African Economic Research Consortium, GDN's partner in the USAID funded program. The event titled 'African Voices on Research, Policy & International Development' concluded that it is essential to know not only what evidence needs to go into a policy and its implementation, but also where the evidence comes from and who carries out the analysis. Knowledge that comes from the region, and from other countries where policies or programs are being implemented, is the most influential. Local capacity and partnership, including with international actors, can contribute to this cross-country learning. Partners discussed the entry points for researchers and international development agencies into domestic policy processes in sub-Saharan Africa; financial inclusion and innovation at local, national, regional and continental levels; as well as boosting agricultural productivity through innovation in policy design.



Image: Still from video recording/Brookings Institution

Panelists discuss financial inclusion in sub-Saharan Africa at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC. (L to R) Lemma Senbet, Executive Director, AERC, Peter Quartey, Head, Department of Economics, University of Ghana, Oren E. Whyche-Shaw, Coordinator for Trade Africa, USAID, John Rwangombwa, Governor, Central Bank of Rwanda and Robin Lewis, Research Analyst and Associate Fellow, Center for Technology Innovation, Governance Studies, Brookings Institution.

INCLUSION, RESEARCH CAPACITY & LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

“We are developing the capacity of research leadership, developing research centers, developing the capacity of faculty to do research, and developing a research culture, and an enthusiasm for research among students.”

Jamba Tobden, coordinator of a team working on strengthening policy-relevant research at the Institute for Gross National Happiness Studies, Royal University of Bhutan.

Research as a process often outweighs the benefits of research as a product, especially in low-capacity research environments. Getting the best minds to engage in research for development results in the development of an analytical and critical culture, which values evidence and collaboration between research, policy and societal actors. It also develops a sense of ownership and agency for localized research results and their implications. GDN tested this idea in a pilot program in which research institutions in the least developed countries of Bhutan, Cambodia and Ethiopia were helped to implement research capacity building programs with funding, research and support services.

This pilot program is already showing that supporting local institutions to implement their own blueprint, to strengthen access and quality of research training locally, can have a significant and sustainable impact on the standards of research, and research training, in resource-poor settings.

In July 2016, Les Journées de Tam Dao (JTD) summer school in Cambodia (and Vietnam), for instance, was succeeding as a rare example of interdisciplinary research training in social science research methods, focusing on the regionally relevant theme of ‘Energy Transition in South-East Asia.’ With GDN funding, the school opened its doors to participants from other least developed countries in South-East Asia and Africa, and the number of these participants more than doubled compared to the beginning of the project, encouraged south-south cooperation and put out a host of research communication and visibility materials for wider dissemination.

Another partner in the program, the Royal University of Bhutan’s Institute for Gross National Happiness Studies is focused on building research leadership capacity in the eight colleges of the university, developing research centers of excellence, engaging academic staff and students to enhance their research skills. The support GDN provided in terms of funding, mentoring, project management and evaluation enabled the university to revive a number of international research MoUs with top institutions in Asia, set up a funding scheme that provides new incentives and academic support to young lecturers to keep up with research in their field and build a research agenda of their own, and among other things, introduce over 4,000 students to basic research concepts and practice, across all eight colleges of the university.

Not least, within less than two years of support from GDN, the Building Ethiopian Research Capacity in Economics and Agribusiness (BERCEA) team at Haramaya University in Ethiopia secured internal funding for the small grant fieldwork scheme they piloted with Masters and PhD students, institutionalizing a new approach to research in a national higher education context

where curricula are rigidly defined at the central government level.

Obino (2016) proposes that the key to building research capacities in the weakest settings might well be to identify and support strong local teams who have, on the one hand, a clear vision of academic development for their institution, and on the other, a deep, first-hand understanding of what degree of change is possible within them. Supporting local visions of research capacity building can enable these teams to

showcase new, effective and efficient ways to train researchers, thus contributing to building the next generation of development thinkers and doers.

GDN plans to scale up these efforts as part of its strategy to strengthen research institutions in some of the poorest countries in the world. So far, this activity has been supported by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) generation of development thinkers and doers.



Image: GDN

Jamba Tobden and his colleagues from the Royal University of Bhutan.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSFORMATION & PRODUCTIVITY

“Conditional transfers are only marginally more popular than similar unconditional transfers.”

Baykal, Luna & Zucco (2016).

People in upper middle income countries tend to resist redistributive policies, especially if they must foot the bill. In one of three studies supported by GDN through the Global Research Competition, Baykal, Luna & Zucco (2016) set out to understand if cash-transfers, a welfare policy instrument for the poorest citizens, were more popular if they were made conditional. Conditional cash transfers enjoyed only marginally greater support, than non-conditional ones in two heterogeneous countries, Brazil and Turkey. In addition, this preference was more pronounced amongst the better-off in each country. In fact, it increased considerably when respondents were primed to think of beneficiaries as being different from them. In addition, regionalism was a stronger driver of support for cash transfers than race or ethnicity.

The second study notes that deep economic recessions have an impact on the economy and on peoples' way of life. Workers' mobility and wages can often provide clues about resilience. Pajuste and Ruffo (2016) analyzed employment transitions, employment dynamics, wage dynamics and wage changes in Spain and Latvia, two countries which shared similar unemployment rates, even though Latvia's economy was hit by a harder economic shock. The researchers found that wage rigidity resulted in greater unemployment volatility in Spain, whereas the Latvian labor market was more flexible, with real wages in Latvia reducing by 20% in newly hired workers. Also, in Latvia, the rise in job separations and fall in job findings recovered much faster. Findings thus show that the economy in which wage rigidity is prevalent, the volatility of unemployment is much higher.

A third study's field of inquiry was why countries living at the edge of the Eurozone struggle to transition into the larger economy. To better understand economic convergence in Euro-transition countries, Rajkovic & Stojkov, Velickovski



Wage rigidity resulted in greater unemployment volatility in Spain.

Image: Andreas Hunziker/Flickr

(2016) studied quarterly data for 27 European countries from 1999-2001 to understand the key drivers for shock synchronization. They found that trade intensity flows and uncoordinated fiscal policies are the prevailing forces in shock divergence, particularly in peripheral and transition countries of the Eurozone, pointing to the need for appropriate monetary and fiscal



policies to provide greater stability and economic transformation in the Euro-area.

These studies were funded as part of GDN's global research competition, which focused on inclusive and sustainable growth, as well as political, economic and social transformations. The grant program, supported by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), provides early-career social science researchers from developing and transition countries with a platform to investigate international development challenges through collaborative, cross-country, inter-regional research.

STORY TO WATCH

Kaizen

In another new research effort, for which a call for proposals will shortly be launched, GDN will work with developing country researchers to document how the Japanese managerial approach Kaizen works. Kaizen means change (kai) for good (zen), and encourages continuous learning and improvement for industrial growth and development. The effort will especially focus on the link between management methods and productivity increase within firms. The two-year, multi country effort comes at a time when the global economy has been slow to recover. Results will feed policy discussions on managerial capacity and work systems, as well as the social structures needed to boost productivity and economic growth. The research is being supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency - Research Institute (JICA-RI).

STORY TO WATCH

Industrial Productivity

How do government and companies interact to improve – or conversely penalize – industrial productivity? How can the impact of this be measured in developing countries? Moving a step further from “what” growth strategies work, GDN has embarked on seminal work to look at the “how.” ‘Mobilizing Local Knowledge to Improve Competitiveness Strategies,’ is a program of the Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice Unit of the World Bank Group, funded by the multi-donor partnership, Competitive Industries and Innovation Program. Findings will focus on the impact of promoting industrialization in developing countries, as well as the determinants of the interaction between the private and public sectors, and their role therein. A call for proposals will be launched to solicit interest via www.gdn.int.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

“Our study revealed that the ecosystemic accounting of natural capital makes it possible to show the temporal and spatial dynamics of the various facets of the ecosystem. It takes into account not only the biotic system, but the whole environment.”

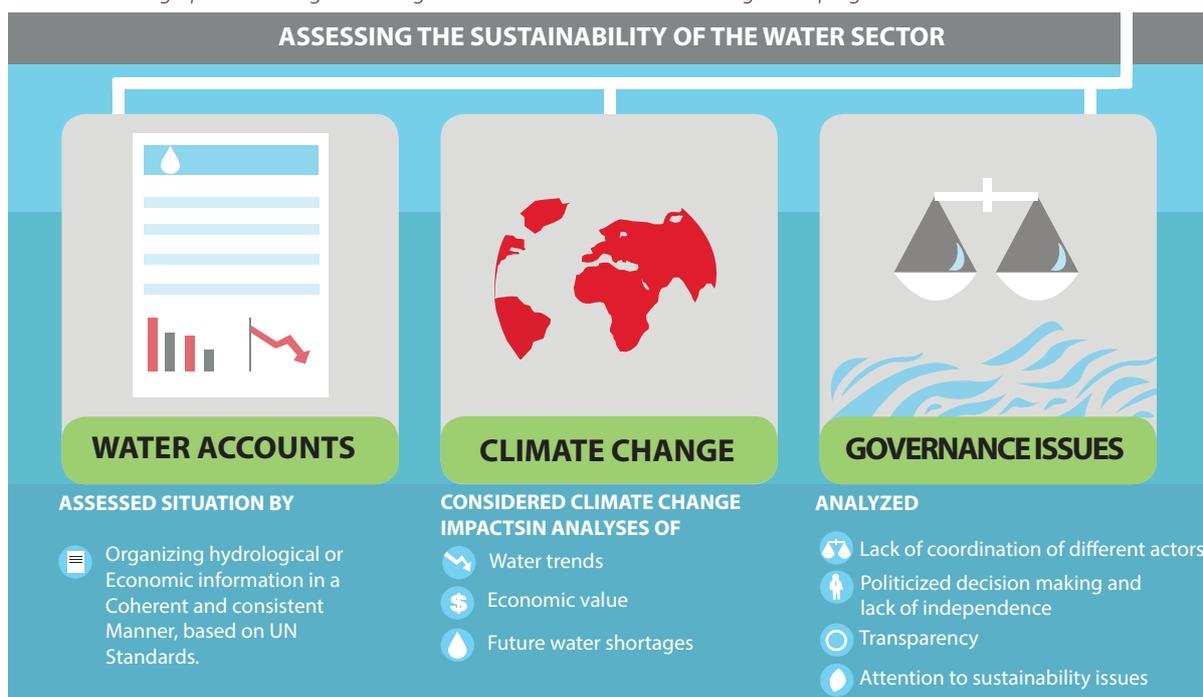
Researcher Solofo Rakotondraompiana, who tested natural capital accounting via historical satellite imagery in Madagascar.

often depleted as a result of economic activity. Three new studies completed in 2016 reflect on the economic cost of environmental change in three countries facing natural degradation – Madagascar, Mauritius and Morocco. They used insights from different disciplines to better understand the interaction between socio-economic systems and the environment, looking specifically at approaches that can be applied to land, water and coastal systems in a variety of developing and transition countries. Overall, the studies show that the cost of environmental degradation is both observable and quantifiable. Gathering this evidence becomes the critical first step to incentivize key stakeholders toward action in the three ecologically fragile countries.

Natural capital makes up a significant share of total wealth in developing countries, but it is

Key findings via land-cover mapping and *in-situ* observation in a study by Rakotondraompiana *et al.* (2016) in Madagascar showed that villages

One of three infographics showing the findings of GDN’s Natural Resources Management program.



Infographic: Tatum Street/GDN

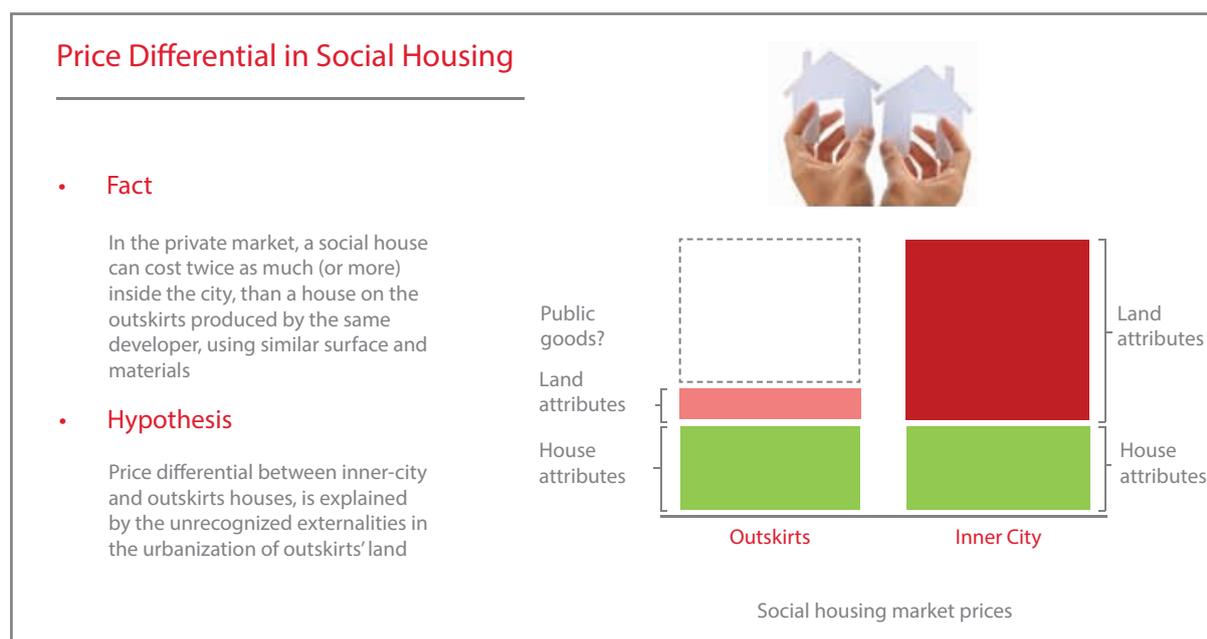
increased from 10 to 34 hectares, and 27% of palm trees were cleared to make space for meadows with habitation and rice fields, over ten years. Water accounts and other methods used in a study by Peroo and Sultan (2016) in Mauritius showed that the island country is vulnerable to a water crisis, with 50% of water being lost due to leaking pipes, faulty networks and theft. In Morocco, in a study by Flayou *et al.* (2016) that uses oceanography, coastal modeling and economic evaluations, three beaches were found to be disappearing within 40-60 years.

These three studies were carried out under GDN's Natural Resources Management – Natural Wealth Accounting program, funded by the French Development Agency and French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development to help build an understanding of development that simultaneously integrates economic, social and environmental priorities.

In three other research studies relating to the environment, findings were consistent with the idea that more action is needed to integrate climate concerns with development. In the first study, in Sri Lanka, Wickramasinghe (2016) investigated risk management strategies and the demand for climate insurance among dry zone farmers, with prize money from the Global Development Awards Competition. Data from 743 farmer household surveys showed that 47% of families pawn their jewelry as a coping strategy, to

overcome climate risks, and 17% families said they constructed agro-wells. Only 1% sees agricultural insurance as a possible risk management strategy. In the other prize-winning study from the Global Development Awards Competition, Sen (2015) conducted a pilot survey to understand farmers' risk perceptions and farm level risk management policies in India. Landless farmers borrowed from moneylenders at a high rate of 24-60% per annum, and no one ever availed of crop insurance. They were also unaware of other welfare policies such as fencing farm areas, national food security programs and housing schemes.

In the third study, Pulido, Diaz, Gomez, Sangines (2015) used the case of Mexico City to help governments look at economic instruments that discourage urban sprawl, known to cause extreme carbon emissions and heat events. The research contributed to the view that urban sprawl is socially inefficient, which justifies public policy interventions for regulating the land market. Overall, the study supported the idea that compact cities are key to fighting climate change because they reduce traffic emissions and are more energy efficient. Interestingly, the study used publicly available housing ads on the web, as well as Google maps, to calculate travel times. The study was made possible with the Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development, a part of GDN's Global Development Awards Competition, which awards excellence in research ideas around the globe.



Source: Pulido, Diaz, Gomez and Sangines (2015).



Image: Pietro Izzo/Flickr

A Baobab tree.

STORY TO WATCH

Food Nutrition & Security in Benin

In Benin, Chadare (2015) used novel techniques to map biodiversity and identify priority wild edible plants for food security and nutrition.

This will result in an advocacy plan for better integration of wild edible plants in food and nutrition security strategies at the national level. Preliminary fieldwork suggests that these food sources are indeed diverse and so are the potential food products derived from them. Chadare won second prize at GDN's Global Development Awards Competition in 2015.

RESEARCH SYSTEMS

“The lack of incentives and the small size of the research community contribute to the perception of research as not only a solitary, but also almost a heroic endeavor.”

Balarin et al. (2016).

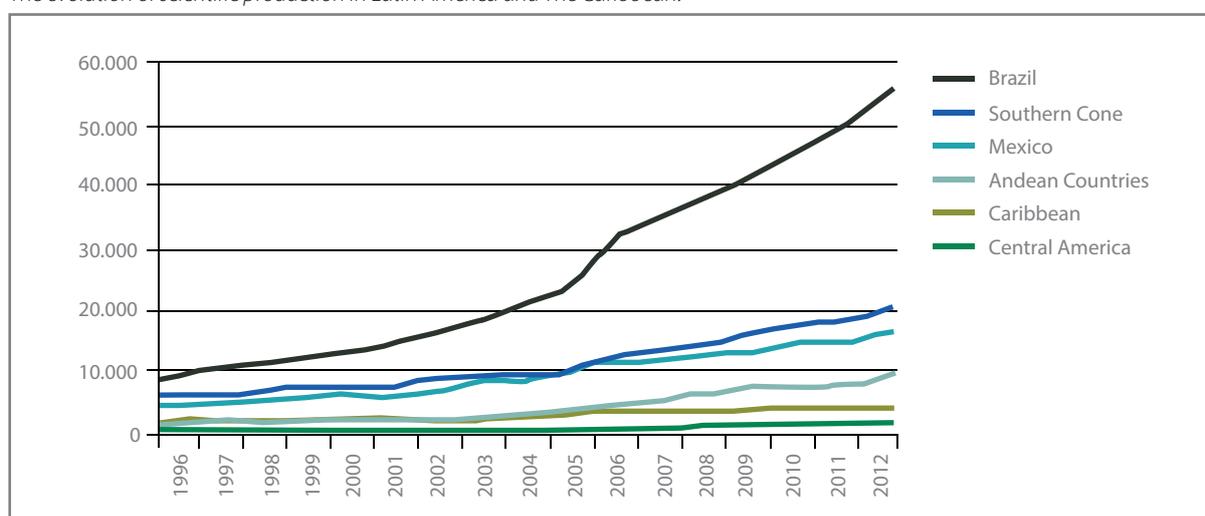
The study of social science research systems needs more attention, if we are to combat the vicious cycle of under-investment in research in developing countries. A ‘research systems’ perspective would help not only to diagnose, but also to create the appropriate conditions for effective development research. GDN’s Doing Research program assesses the environment for social science research in developing countries, for precisely these reasons.

A synthesis of Doing Research studies by Balarin *et al.* (2016) in low and middle income South

American countries, Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru, Pou *et al.* (2016) in Cambodia, Kamga *et al.* (2016) in Cameroon and Cote d’Ivoire, Chattopadhyay (2016) in India and Bangladesh, Rakhmani *et al.* (2016) in Indonesia, Idrissa (2016) in Niger, and Potgieter *et al.* (2016) in South Africa revealed that

- The lack of access to research infrastructure such as libraries, databases and IT infrastructure is an important barrier to research
- Funding is often short-term and donor-driven, and supply is led by think tanks and private firms
- Institutional frameworks can be set by governments, and practices can be improved at the organization level in order to counterbalance bureaucracy, careerism and the “publish or perish” way of doing research
- Professional management and leadership are key to overcoming structural barriers, lack of funding and limited networks
- Networking and collaboration should take place across stakeholders, countries and disciplines

The evolution of scientific production in Latin America and The Caribbean.



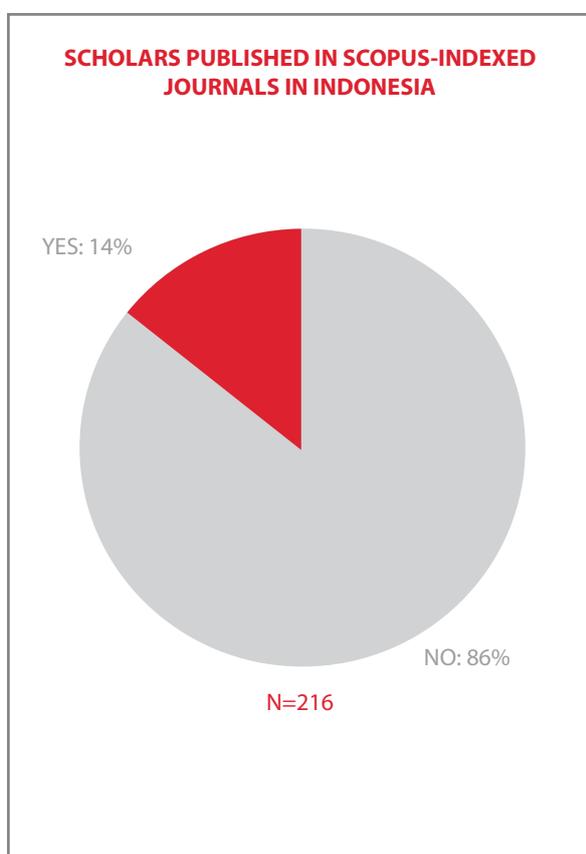
Source: Hernández Asencio (2014).

- Dissemination and visibility are major challenges in ensuring research uptake

These studies were part of GDN's Doing Research pilot program, which documented the factors that enable or impede social science research in 11 developing countries. A synthesis paper in 2016, by the Center for Research and Expertise on Education and Development (CREED), concludes that the Doing Research program has indeed described and measured the conditions under which the implementation of research in social sciences is optimal. The diversity of methodological approaches and conclusions have helped to identify a common research

system framework, as well as raised questions about the scope of the study, the normative aspect of quality and the balance between the production of research by public and private actors.

Not least, the interface between research and public actors needs to be strengthened. A synthesis report in December 2015, that looked at the 'Research capacity of relatively small countries in Latin America and the Caribbean: Mapping/ Diagnostic Studies,' found a long list of priorities in the region that need urgent research, including the analysis of public expenditure and impact, taxes and public finance, social protection and economic development, poverty and inequality and basic services such as health and education. For instance, in Ecuador, while the country has significantly increased public spending, last-mile coverage of key social services remains unknown among policymakers, highlighting both coordination and administrative information as areas of need for better policy decision making. This research was part of GDN's efforts to strengthen the Research Capacity of Small Countries in Latin America and Caribbean to Promote Better Informed Policymaking.



Source: Rakhmani, I., and Siregar, F. *Reforming Research in Indonesia: Policies and Practice*. Global Development Network Working Paper No. 92.2016.

STORY TO WATCH

Scaling up Doing Research Assessments

GDN's Doing Research program will scale-up its efforts to identify ways of optimizing research policies and capacity building efforts. In collaboration with local research partners, policymakers and global development actors, it aims to foster the development of quality research, training of researchers, dissemination of a research culture, and further use of research in related areas of development such as policymaking, higher education or innovation.

DEVELOPMENT INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE

“We don’t have best practices for all developing country problems. How do we organize corruption so that it is predictable? How do we use religion for protecting women’s rights? How do we work with local strong men so that they can provide a public good? We need to carve experimental pockets within aid agencies.”

Yuen Yuen Ang, Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan, author of winning essay on the future of foreign aid.

GDN ran the Next Horizons Essay Contest, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2015, which showcased winning ideas for development. In 2016, a small selection of these essays was showcased at prestigious fora with the power to influence the future of development: The OECD in Paris, the Center for Global Development and the Brookings Institution in Washington D. C.

Organizational and financial innovation feature prominently in the international discourse on development assistance policy: weaning off subsidies, integrating aid financing with mainstream financial markets, finding new ways of working, introducing new actors and institutions, etc. Macharia proposes that impact investing can be harnessed to provide transformational capital at the grassroots, resulting in improved livelihoods, bringing

environmental conservation to scale and a corresponding catalytic effect on social development. Kennedy, on the other hand, says that public-private partnerships, unlike donor institutions, offer a sustainable way to provide development solutions, because they can be perfected through learning and reform.

What should tomorrow’s aid agencies look like? Ang’s view on the future of foreign aid advances a dynamic theory of how poor and weak societies can escape the poverty trap. She recommends building a bank of “non-best” practices, diversifying expertise by creating separate career tracks and carving out experimental pockets where new development ideas can be tested. Honig, however, believes that organizational behavior and management theory bring much to foreign aid delivery. He says that the impact of aid can be improved greatly, by thinking more deeply about how organizational structure affects performance, and how, conversely, optimal structure is a function of recipient country context and the nature of the specific task being undertaken.

How can blended finance work to deliver the sustainable development goals (SDGs)? Bara - Slupski argues that many information and technology projects in the field of healthcare have failed to achieve scalability and sustainability, as well as the desired socio-economic impact. Referring specifically to health systems, he recommends blended finance for projects that prioritize user-friendliness, reliability and universality of digital solutions. For social enterprises, Horrocks & Horrocks argue that there is a need for increased ‘exit’ opportunities, while acknowledging donor anxiety about the modalities of exiting and the need to build technical competence before making investments.

Following a successful consultation on standard operating procedures in Nay Pyi Taw in June 2016, case workers and law enforcement officers in Myanmar and India will begin using an online repository of cases as a transnational referral mechanism to protect and repatriate victims, and as evidence with which to prosecute traffickers. The effort is supported by the Impulse NGO Network, recipient of the Japan Social

Development Fund Award (JSDF), funded by the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan and administered by GDN (2013-2016).

In addition to this project, GDN supports the replication of innovative development projects in the poorest countries around the world, through the JSDF Award. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Conservation through Public Health is using



Image: Madhuri Dass/GDN

Women police officers in Myanmar receive training on how to use the new online case repository to prevent human cross-border trafficking.

a unique, integrated approach to conservation by training village workers on hygiene and sanitation, as well as family planning services in Virunga National Park. In Kenya, the NGO Sustainable Development for All is scaling up a solar power project to empower youth and women in 15 villages by providing access to clean energy and fuel savings. In Cambodia, Science of Life Studies will set up 18 alternative education centers at province level, to promote equal opportunities for young men and women in the region.

“To address human trafficking, we must be able to gather and provide enough legal evidence to put offenders in jail. Very often, the fate of a case depends on how well – or badly – a case is documented.”

Hasina Kharbhih, Founder, Impulse NGO Network



Image: Still from a film made by GDN with support from the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan.

Women and children in Myanmar are at risk of being trafficked to neighboring countries, such as India, China and Thailand.

END NOTE

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, and 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.

In 2016, GDN's portfolio included the following programs

- Building Research Capacity in Least Developed Countries
- Development Aid Effectiveness in Africa
- Doing Research – Assessing the Environment for Social Science Research in Developing Countries

- Natural Resource Management-Natural Wealth Accounting
- Mobilizing Local Knowledge to Improve Competitiveness Strategies
- Productivity Improvement in the Private and Public Sectors: Roles and Lessons from Kaizen approaches
- Strengthening Research Capacity of Small Countries in Latin America and Caribbean to Promote Better Informed Policymaking
- Global Research Competition
- Regional Research Competitions

In addition, GDN ran the following networking and outreach activities

- GDN's 17th Annual Global Development Conference in Lima, Peru
- Global Development Awards Competition
- Japan Social Development Fund Award
- GDN Next Horizons Essay Contest 2014-15

Please visit our [website gdn.int](http://www.gdn.int) for detailed program updates.



Image: Mercy Corps (USAID)/Flickr

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Strengthening the Research Capacity of Relatively Small Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to Promote Better Informed Policymaking

Hoffman, Joseph, Andrea Ordóñez, and Jorge Benavides. "Research capacity of relatively small countries in latin america/caribbean: mapping/diagnostic studies. Synthesis Report." The Global Development Network, 2015.

“By looking at both success and failures, I intend[ed] to uncover the underlying parameters that may reveal a road map to a more cohesive [social science research] reform process in Niger, and other countries with similar issues.”

Rahmane Idrissa (2016).



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, and 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.



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