



#K4SD

2019 GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

## Knowledge for Sustainable Development: the Research-Policy Nexus

Bonn, Germany | 23-25 October 2019

Supported by Conference Partners



bonnalliance<sup>ICB</sup>



d.i.e.

Deutsches Institut für  
Entwicklungspolitik



German Development  
Institute



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY  
UNU-EHS  
Institute for Environment  
and Human Security

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### 2019 GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

#### Knowledge for Sustainable Development: The Research-Policy Nexus

The Global Development Network (GDN), the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), the United Nations University-Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), and the Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research/ Innovation Campus Bonn (ICB) are jointly organizing GDN's 2019 Global Development Conference in Bonn on the general theme of **Knowledge for Sustainable Development: The Research-Policy Nexus**. The Conference will be held on October 23-25, 2019 with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The conference will bring together academics, policy-makers, development practitioners, civil society, government officials and private sector representatives from around the world.

The 2019 Global Development Conference Organizing Committee is issuing a call for innovative papers that explore the research-policy interface in pursuit of Sustainable Development. Papers should address one of the four interrelated themes of the conference:

## **1. From research to sustainable development action: interdisciplinary research, knowledge sharing, evidence brokering**

How can and does social science research (economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, etc.) contribute to sustainable development action (theoretical, conceptual discussion, or careful case studies of specific examples)?

How – and how much - has our understanding of “development” improved over the last two decades?

How much has development research contributed to better development policies? What drives the supply of, and demand for, development research and evidence, more broadly? How does that differ between developing and developed countries?

## **2. Global and shared challenges of sustainable development**

What are the substantial and operational knowledge gaps that may hamper the pursuit of the SDGs?

How can research and other forms of knowledge address the shared development challenges of developing and developed countries (i.e. climate change and adaptation; migration; inequality; conflicts; health etc.)?

## **3. Next frontier challenge: Big Data, AI, digital transformation**

How do technological change and innovations (AI, Big Data, digital transformation, bioscience, institutional innovations, etc.) impact social science research and its usefulness for policy making and how shall social science provide guidance to harnessing technological change and innovations?

## **4. Greater local ownership and sustainability: implications for research policies and funding**

How can one improve research policy and funding's response to developing countries' sustainable development related challenges and support greater local ownership?

Detailed description of these sub-themes, and the research questions under each theme can be found at the end of this call. More information about the conference is available at [www.gdn.int/conference2019](http://www.gdn.int/conference2019).

## Guidelines and Selection

Selection of the papers will be made in two stages, first on the basis of an extended abstract and then the full paper.

Those interested should submit the abstract of their paper (between 300-800 words) **by April 30, 2019, 11:59 pm IST** through the link on the GDN conference page ([www.gdn.int/conference2019](http://www.gdn.int/conference2019)). All co-authors must also submit a short biographical note (max 150 words).

The abstract should specify:

- what motivates the proposed paper,
- what the paper contributes that is new,
- proposed methodology, data, etc.), and
- how the paper's conclusions/contributions (1) relate to one or several of the Conference themes and (2) will matter for policy and sustainable development action.

Those selected on the basis of the abstract review, will be informed by **May 30, 2019** and invited to submit their paper (approx. 5000- 8000 words, including references) by **July 15, 2019**.

Please follow the guidelines for submission. Even if there are multiple co-authors, each paper should only be submitted once. All papers should be proofread.

The Organizing and the Scientific Committees of the conference will evaluate all papers in terms of **originality, analytical rigor, policy relevance and clarity**. Authors of accepted papers will be informed by **August 30, 2019**. A final draft will be required by **September 30, 2019**. The selected papers will be presented in the parallel sessions of the conference.

For authors of selected papers, travel and accommodation expenses for the conference can be covered. Additional information on the overall conference program will be posted on the GDN website over the coming months. The conference secretariat can be contacted via email at [conference@gdn.int](mailto:conference@gdn.int).

## Scientific Committee<sup>1</sup>

**Joachim von Braun** – Director, Center for Development Research (ZEF), and Professor of Economic and Technological Change, University of Bonn

---

<sup>1</sup> As of March 29, 2019.

**Benjamin Buclet** – Director, Center for Research and Expertise on Education and Development (CREED), France

**Sir Peter Gluckman** – Former Chief Science Adviser to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Chair of the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA), and President-elect of the newly formed International Science Council

**Heba Handoussa** – Managing Director, Egypt Network for Integrated Development (ENID)

**Ravi Kanbur** – T. H. Lee Professor of World Affairs, International Professor of Applied Economics and Management, and Professor of Economics, Cornell University

**Habibul Haque Khondker** – Professor at Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, UAE

**Anjali Mahendra** – Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, World Resources Institute (WRI) Ross Centre for Sustainable Cities

**Katharina Michaelowa** – Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Zurich

**Celia M. Reyes** – President, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS)

**Shlomo Weber** – President of New Economic School, Moscow, Leading Scientist, Center for Study of Diversity and Social Interactions, Moscow, and Professor Emeritus, Southern Methodist University, Dallas

## Organizing Committee

**Jörg Faust** – Director, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval)

**Pierre Jacquet** – President, Global Development Network (GDN)

**Dirk Messner** – Head, United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), Bonn

**Ramona Angelescu Naqvi** – Director of Strategic Partnerships, Global Development Network (GDN)

**Jakob Rhyner** – Scientific Director of the Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research/Innovation Campus Bonn (ICB), Professor of Global Change and Systemic Risks, University of Bonn

**Imme Scholz** – Acting Director, German Development Institute (DIE)

## Conference Sub-Themes

### 1. From research to sustainable development action: interdisciplinary research, knowledge sharing, evidence brokering

It is necessary to take stock of what has been achieved so far and identify shortfalls, particularly given the global nature of the SDGs and the call for their implementation at national levels. Science and research are virtually absent from the texts of SDGs and agenda 2030, while this is a rather complex, multifaceted agenda with many trade-offs and competitions among goals. Yet, what should be the roles of science and research to foster sustainable development?

There are two inter-related sets of questions:

*a) How – and how much - has our understanding of “development” improved over the last two decades? What are the persistent challenges?*

Development challenges are multidisciplinary and involve ethical, behavioral and collective dimensions that call on sociology, anthropology, psychology and political science as well as on economics. *How can the insights of various disciplines be brought together through a research process that still meets high quality standards? What has been learnt from development economics, evaluations and other disciplines and approaches on development processes and dynamics?*

Development challenges also involve transformative knowledge from natural and “hard” sciences, and conversely, knowledge from “hard sciences” may not by itself lead to action, as the experience with climate change mitigation and even adaptation shows. *How can social sciences be better mobilized together with hard sciences to promote effective policies?*

Finally, there are many sources of evidence beyond pure academic research on development: statistics, big data, voting patterns, cultural beliefs, knowledge from experience, all forms of tacit, non-formalized knowledge which nowadays provide a broader basis for science and research of relevance for development. *What role may these other forms of knowledge and data play to enhance development insights and actions?*

*Are there cases or examples of indigenous knowledge being utilized by local communities for sustainable development? And of cross-cultural transfers and application of such knowledge?*

*b) How much has development research contributed to better development policies? What drives the supply of, and demand for, development research? How does that differ between developing and developed countries?*

*Are we closer to a better use of evidence in policy-making? Can such impact be conceptualized, studied, monitored and measured?*

*How can evaluations be better designed and used as instruments of applied science to inform development policies, budgeting and programming?*

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a mis-match between the demand and supply of policy-oriented research feeding into policy decisions. *What are the instruments, practices, processes that could specifically address the gap between the supply of research and the demand for development policy knowledge? Who have been the most successful and innovative actors to facilitate that intermediation and how can they be supported? How is that changing in the current digital era?*

In many cases, political, or administrative factors may impede utilization of scientific knowledge. It is important to understand those factors so that they can be neutralized or overcome. In some cases, cultural factors may impede implementation of policies grounded in scientific research. *What are the factors – political, bureaucratic, cultural – that impede the utilization of scientific knowledge for sustainable development?*

## **2. Shared and global challenges of sustainable development**

*What are the substantial and operational knowledge gaps that may hamper the pursuit of the SDGs? Which are the shared sustainable development challenges of developing and developed countries (i.e. climate change and adaptation; migration; inequality; health etc.)?*

The pursuit of the SDGs and the prevalence of new global challenges will require a lot of new data and analytical and contextual research, cutting across disciplinary boundaries and countries. The discussion might focus on three types of potential knowledge gaps. The first is thematic: climate change, environmental protection, resilience, the implications of the digital economy, or the various dimensions of migration, among other themes, need to be better documented and understood. But the older issues of poverty, inequality, governance, education, the organization of health systems, the role of institutions, still deserve further investigation, especially in their local contexts. *How should the priority themes for development research be established and by whom?*

Second, most of the efforts at knowledge generation or transfer seem to focus on the “what should be done?”. Yet the pursuit of the SDGs heavily relies on the quality of implementation and the learning therein, which relates to the “how it should be done” question. *How can development research promote a better understanding of the determinants of action and the economics and political economy of implementation?*

Finally, SDG-related challenges, including poverty, inequality, governance, democracy and citizen participation, climate change, security, sustainable growth, digital transformations etc., are salient issues in “developed” as well as “developing” countries. Some issues around global governance, international cooperation etc. which are now reflected in the SDGs benefit from less research available to guide and inform the international development community. *How can development research become truly “universal” in its generation and relevance, addressing challenges that are often shared by all countries and structuring a mutual learning process through more comparative work? What is the role for global networks?*

### **3. Next frontier challenge: Big Data, AI, digital transformation**

The advances in IT, digitalization, Big Data, and AI have impacted labor markets, access to the poor, service delivery, and democratic processes, thereby changing the development paradigm. They have also started to have a considerable impact on development research and policy implementation. The possibility to cheaply collect and process huge amounts of individual data opens new areas of investigation. Beyond the technical facility of collecting and interpreting data, these technological developments may increase the ability to conduct experiments. Observation and experimentation, two important legs of social sciences, can be expected to flourish. New technologies also have the potential to lower barriers to entry by facilitating access to (digital) higher education, networking, international research collaboration, knowledge co-creation, and a much more effective treatment of complexity. They may also facilitate a real-time feedback loop from innovation to evaluative research to policy adjustment likely to provide more timely policy responses.

However, those with poor access to digital equipment and digital knowledge risk being excluded. Furthermore, the advent of a seamless information society is not likely to eliminate power plays, ethical concerns and inequalities. *How best to reap the benefits of this new revolution for development, and make both the production and utilization of scientific knowledge more easily accessible to all, while maintaining confidentiality and respect for human subjects?*

Technological facilities do not solve basic issues that remain at the core of research rigor and therefore quality: among others, the nature and quality of data collected, interpreting them with

rigor, using them to address structured questions rather than to identify the questions to be addressed, and trying to identify robust ways to address existing problems, rather than define the problems for one's own pet solutions. *How to address the risk that the collection and use of data would lead to a data-supply-driven focus on selected issues that may not address the most urgent development challenges? How to mobilize social science research as a coherent way to guide the demand for data and ensure rigorous treatment and use?*

#### **4. Greater local ownership and sustainability: implications for research policies and funding**

As for all areas of development finance, an objective of aid to local research should be to avoid making domestic institutions dependent on foreign support and to enhance the sustainability of the local research systems, which ultimately depends on domestic funding. *How to promote this transition through development assistance?*

The 2006 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness emphasized ownership as one of the principles. Putting the developing countries in the driver's seat through capacity building was the logical operational implication. Research capacity building in developing countries can also foster stronger local democracies, enhancing local civic debates and appreciation for science and research to counter the spread of 'fake news'.

However, the focus on research output quality has mostly taken precedence. Research funding tends to go to the best scholars so that it can be shown to have a high quality scientific impact. *Should research capacity building be considered as a specific objective, distinct from the generation of scientific output and funded for its own merits? What could then be the appropriate metric for monitoring results and quality?* The goal of research capacity building also goes beyond promoting the local supply of good research: low capacity in emerging economies is perpetuated by the lack of demand for knowledge produced from endogenous sources. *How can development assistance contribute to promoting such demand and strengthening local knowledge systems and infrastructure? Finally, what is the role of the private sector in supporting research and knowledge sharing that enables faster progress towards the SDGs, both in terms of know-how and financing?*