



LEGACY DOCUMENT 1999 - 2010

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# THE LEGACY OF THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

The seeds of the Global Development Network (GDN) were first sown in the World Bank in 1999. They took root and flourished thanks to a group of visionary leaders and donors who recognised GDN's unique potential to deliver some of the most sought-after outcomes in global public goods research. Then, as now, the need to empower the South to influence development policy debates was pressing. GDN's vision was for a world in which southern researchers and the institutions – both formal and informal – that incubate them, are placed centre-stage in delivering policy-relevant research.

Expectations of the new organisation were high: James D. Wolfensohn, then President of the World Bank, forecast that GDN would 'help to build the analytical capacity that will enable countries to design and implement their own development strategies and programs'. To deliver that mission, GDN has sought to build research capacity, foster research in developing and transition economies, disseminate development knowledge to the public and policymakers, and bridge the gap between ideas and policies.

Twelve years after its formation, GDN is a substantial network of researchers, donors, research institutes and think tanks worldwide. To uncover the impact of GDN, we have examined GDN's past interventions through a number of lenses: from the experiences of individual southern researchers, to the views of those participating in international research projects. The resulting publication gives us much to be proud of. It lets researchers from the Global South speak eloquently about the role the organisation has played in improving the standards of their research; in furthering their careers; and in connecting them with a cadre of researchers and policymakers worldwide in order to be more effective in their work. The publication has helped us to navigate the waters ahead, as GDN realigns its work with the fast-changing political, economic and social environments.

**Twelve years after GDN was formed,  
what is its legacy?**

## MAKING SOUTHERN RESEARCH VISIBLE



**16,500** research documents available online through the GDN Knowledgebase and up to **183,000** requests every month: GDN raises the visibility of southern research and the academics who generate it.

The GDN Knowledgebase provides a valuable and unique platform for showcasing southern researchers, their institutes and their original research. For many southern academics, this is the only place that they exist electronically, and it is an important ‘shop window’ for them to be found by others. Alice Nakiyemba from Uganda is typical: “Many people get in touch with me after viewing my CV on the GDN website.” 11,000 researchers have profiles and more than 100 join each month. One quarter of them visit GDN more than once a week, with a further 44% visiting every month.

**“GDN HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONAL IN DISSEMINATION, SHARING AND UPDATING PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS, KNOWLEDGE BUILD-UP AND INTERACTIVE LEARNING OF IDEAS, THEMES AND MANY MORE. THE SERVICES PROVIDED ARE INSTRUMENTAL.”**

Azhar Abbas, researcher

Demand for the 16,500 research documents held in the GDN Knowledgebase is high: the repository receives about 183,000 requests a month. Users share what they find with their peers – an important mark of quality: 37% of surveyed users share research from GDN at least once every three months. Users draw on the research for their own work, and for use as teaching materials: “I have actually been quite impressed with GDN’s scope and positive presence in my academic life. It has been a very useful tool for seeking academic texts for my students and present them with more lively research, along with classical lines, in class.” Flavio Augusto Lira Nascimento.

Many use it as a way to keep connected with ideas from other parts of the world, and in particular to access more than 1000 online journals through JSTOR, MUSE and BLDS schemes. “My students have found your online services most useful for their Masters thesis research, and even for my own doctoral studies research papers”, says a lecturer at the University of Asia and the Pacific.

For funders it is an important information asset. “GDN matters because it creates links between people in different corners of the world who may not have the chance to meet physically e.g. at the GDN Conference”, says Alan Winters from Chief Economist with the Department for International Development (DFID), and a GDN Board Member. “It does the very important job of helping developing country scholars to keep up-to-date with latest thinking which is a constant problem for most of them.”

## THE CHALLENGE OF CAPACITY BUILDING



**“Capacity building is a risky, messy business, with unpredictable and unquantifiable outcomes, uncertain methodologies, contested objectives, many unintended consequences, little credit to its champions and long time lags”** (Morgan, 1998)

Building research capacity, defined as ‘the ability of individuals, organisations and systems to undertake and disseminate high quality research effectively and efficiently’, requires dedication of purpose and commitment to the cause. It is a long-term ambition not only difficult to realise, but tricky to show in very practical ways how progress is being made.

**“OUR ASPIRATION IS TO CREATE A CRITICAL MASS OF RESEARCHERS WHO ARE GLOBALLY INTERCONNECTED, AND WHO PRODUCE GOOD APPLIED RESEARCH TO INFORM PUBLIC POLICY.”**

Gerardo della Paolera, President, Global Development Network

Alan Winters DFID, captures the problem: *“It is remarkably difficult to see the results of any capacity building initiatives in the short-term. You have to wait around three to four years to see early signs of progress, and nearer to ten years before you can say with any real confidence that there is any kind of permanent effect.”*

It is also difficult to show clearly the *contribution* versus the *attribution* of any intervention against the visible outcomes. Did, for example, the establishment of the ‘Asian Currency Units Studies Association’ by the recipient of a GDN Award, stem from increased confidence, credibility and authority of the researcher as a result of receiving the accolade? Sometimes we know the answer: for Quynh Ngoc Nguyen, winning the World Bank Best Thesis prize, being a finalist for a GDN Medal, and becoming a researcher on the ‘Development on the Move’ Global Research Project were all vital steps on her journey to set up the Center for Economics and Community Development in Vietnam.

What is clear is that capacity support needs to be delivered at the individual, organisational and institutional levels in order to fully realise the potential of southern research to inform global thinking and action. GDN, with a foothold in the southern academic community, but with arms that embrace other global communities and an intellectual head that understands the needs and demands of policymakers, is positioned to make progress at all three levels.

## INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS' CAPACITIES DEVELOPED



**The community charged with solving the world's greatest challenge – how to eliminate the poverty that diminishes the lives of 1.4bn people – should be amongst its smartest. If we don't engage the smartest minds, we will not overcome the growing crisis. GDN works with southern researchers and their institutions to ensure this is so.**

Through its Global Research Projects (GRPs), the organisation has provided opportunities for researchers to actively develop skills over periods of between two to four years, providing mentoring from global experts and technical training from GDN and its technical partners. By 2010, the organisation had supported more than 1403 researchers drawn from over 200 countries through the Global Research Projects. An independent evaluation in 2005 reasoned that the GRPs had been associated with 500 articles in refereed journals, over 500 volume chapters and over 900 working papers.

There is a great temptation to support those individuals and organisations that are most likely to deliver multiple peer-reviewed publications, and who are already sufficiently well-connected to generate high levels of exposure. But there are many organisations that already do this. GDN wants instead to identify, to lend support to, provide a platform and provide a 'step-up' to the less visible, less known, less guaranteed-to-succeed researchers who are more in need of 'a break'. It does this through a range of funding, training, and convening instruments.

An external assessment of the organisation's main capacity building activities in 2007 found increases in knowledge created and capacity built for individuals funded across most regions.

The Regional Research Competitions, which have dispersed \$24.5m through GDN's network partners over the years, allow researchers to build skills by undertaking research on topics important for their region. Each grant is worth between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Konny Nato, a grantee from the Oceania Development Network in 2008, said of his grant: *"The research award has both improved my research skills and knowledge through its capacity building workshop and also assisted me through career advancement in my specialist field. Furthermore, it also becomes a medium in which I am able to connect with other researchers in the region to discuss issues that are affecting our region and individual nations."*

## INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS' CAPACITIES DEVELOPED

Susana Tauaa, another grantee from the same region said: *“There have been a lot of positive gains from my grant, since I have completed it. The report has been incorporated as one of the recommended readings for the Environmental Management Courses that is taught here at the University. My research on water catchment management in Samoa is a current issue at the forefront of climate change project that is ongoing in this part of the world, so this research work provides primary information-data and awareness of local landowners and water users.”*

The Global Development Awards and Medals Competition, funded by the Government of Japan and other invaluable donors, has granted 184 awards and medals to young, talented researchers over the years. Around \$2 million has been distributed in research and travel grants to finalists and winners to present their findings to academic and policy audiences. The actual amount of money dispersed to winners is not always as important as the recognition and prestige it brings to young researchers, many of them at the start of their careers. This value is reflected in the enormous demand from researchers across the globe: between 400 and 800 researchers apply every year for the \$190,000 annually dispersed through the scheme.

For some, the awards have been a necessary springboard to illustrious careers in both academia and development. Laura da Costa Ferré, a researcher from Uruguay said, *“the award and the publication of the paper will give me the chance of improving my career; to join the National Research System in my country and support my application for a PhD programme abroad.”*

Dileni Gunewardena, from Sri Lanka said that her visibility had been increased among the international research community because the award was given by an internationally-recognised institution. *“It will go a long way to supporting any applications I make for promotion.”*

**“GDN HAS BEEN A GREAT INITIATIVE FOR PEOPLE LIKE US WHO CHOSE NOT TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY AND YET COULD COMPETE WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD ON RESEARCH QUALITY.”**

Developing country researcher

Medals play a similar ‘launchpad’ function. Mizanur Rahman from Bangladesh confirmed that he had been asked by the Research and Development Committee of the University of Dhaka to coordinate their research agenda as a result of receiving the medal. *“Also, the Ministry of Finance and the Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister have involved me in their various economic planning activities.”*

Amarendra Das, a young doctoral student and recipient of a GDN Award for research on the differences in productivity between public and private mining firms in India, described why the award adds value on his continent. *“Research in social science is remaining as one of the least preferred career options in our country. In this context, awards like GDN’s gives confidence and encouragement to researchers to focus on social science research which has serious policy implications.”*

## GENERATING NEW KNOWLEDGE



**2,623** researchers generating new knowledge through involvement with Global Research Projects and Regional Research grants since 2003.

GDN has committed around \$28.1m on generating global public goods research through 13 collaborative research projects since it was set up in 1999. The organisation estimates that its six completed Global Research Projects have enabled around 1403 researchers in approximately 200 countries to create new knowledge. An independent evaluation in 2005 reasoned that the GRPs had been associated with 500 articles in refereed journals, over 500 volume chapters and over 900 working papers.

**“GDN’S ROLE HAS BEEN DECISIVE IN STRENGTHENING THE DIALOGUE WITHIN LATIN AMERICA; AND BETWEEN LATIN AMERICA AND THE DEVELOPED WORLD”**

Mauricio Cardenas, Senior Fellow and Director,  
Latin America Initiative

Individual GRPs have contributed in specific research sectors. The Bridging Research and Policy GRP, launched in 1999, held three workshops in Germany, Japan and the UK and convened two electronic discussions on how research and policy interact. A decade later, such conferences discussing these topics are ten-a-penny, but at the time the support was groundbreaking.

GDN commissions research through the Regional Research Competitions (RRCs), which are administered by eight of their eleven Regional Network Partners (RNPs) located in developing and transition countries. The majority of the funds allocated to the RNPs (£2.264m in 2007) are spent on generating new knowledge that meets local research agendas. The number of research projects that GDN funds through the RRCs each year ranges from 100 to 130. The value of each RRC grant averages between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

For the more established research networks, the funds are used to support and enhance thematic research being commissioned already, e.g. AERC used GDN funds to directly fund 17 of the 31 projects approved in 2009–2010 and to underwrite the convening of the continent’s leading academics at the biennial conferences.

New Inter-Regional Research Projects were launched during 2009 to encourage the exchange of knowledge and expertise between RNPs, foster South-South collaboration more broadly and develop long-term partnerships between researchers across regions. The first, between Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS region looked at the topic ‘CITIES: An Analysis of the Post-Communist Experience’ and the second joined partners in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa around the topic ‘Latin America and Africa: Cross-regional Dialogue on the Effects of Commodity Dependence.’

## **GDN IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

**"WINNING THE GDN MEDAL WAS AN EXCELLENT START TO MY ACADEMIC CAREER IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT...THE GDN PLATFORM SERIOUSLY ENABLED ME TO ENGAGE DIRECTLY WITH POLICY MAKERS IN THE REGIONS MY RESEARCH FOCUSES ON."**

Jaideep Gupte, (2007 GDN Medal Winner, India)

**"THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION WAS A BOOST TO MY SELF CONFIDENCE - KNOWING THAT I WAS DOING RESEARCH THAT WAS THOUGHT GOOD AND USEFUL BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY."**

Aditi Mukherji, (2007 GDN Medal Winner, Sri Lanka)

**"BYRRAJU FOUNDATION ACKNOWLEDGES GDN SUPPORT IN ENABLING US TO PROVIDE ABOUT 81,000 RURAL PEOPLE ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER EVERY DAY FOR IMPROVING THEIR GENERAL HEALTH STATUS."**

Byrraju Foundation, (Andhra Pradesh, India)

**"MY WHOLE ATTITUDE, APPROACH AND THINKING AROUND KNOWLEDGE GENERATION, CODIFYING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE CHANGED AS A RESULT OF ATTENDING THE GDNET WORKSHOP. IT POSITIONED MY ORGANIZATION TO EMBARK ON NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH REGIONAL NETWORKS."**

Dr Ibrahim Ali Makawi, Community Development Fund Project(CDF)

**"THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK AWARD WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO STRENGTHEN THE WORK OF CIUDAD SALUDABLE IN THE PUCALLPA REGION OF PERU, WORKING TO INVOLVE, INTEGRATE, DIGNIFY AND IMPROVE HEALTH AND WORK CONDITIONS OF FAMILIES WHO MAKE A LIVING OFF WASTE SCAVENGING."**

Ciudad Saludable, (Peru)

**"GDNET GAVE ME ACCESS TO LITERATURE RELATING TO MIDDLE-EAST COUNTRIES AND I COULD GET BASIC KNOWLEDGE ON THE DIFFERENCES IN APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT STUDIES."**

Lakshmiopathy Vedantham, (India)



## PRODUCING BETTER RESEARCH



### **Training workshops, mentoring by experienced researchers, feedback on research proposals and draft papers all help to improve the quality of research being generated by southern researchers.**

GDN's ambition is 'to build methodologically-sophisticated, policy-relevant social science research capacity'. It deploys a range of mechanisms to assist individual researchers to be better researchers through their involvement with Global Research Projects and Regional Research Competition Grants. These include continual support and collaborative development of research proposals, methodological approaches, survey techniques, and preparation of Working Papers, as well as peer review and cross-fertilization between more experienced academics and junior researchers working together on the same project.

**"MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE EERC RESEARCH COMPETITION GAVE ME ENCOURAGEMENT TO CONTINUE WITH MY WORK, AS WELL AS A CLEAR IDEA ABOUT THE QUALITY THAT I SHOULD AIM FOR IN MY RESEARCH."**

Muzaffarjon Ahunov Mahunov, joint winner of GDN Award

The evidence is that such interventions over time do work: an independent World Bank evaluation showed a better publication record emerging from grantees and prize-winners over time. The amount of published research also increases: the same evaluation showed an increase in publishable outputs from GDN-funded research from 64% to 87% over the five years between 2002 and 2007.

The recently-completed Global Research Project 'Evaluating Innovative Health Programs' is showing early signs of policy interest as a result of robust research. The project evaluated the impact of 19 programmes from across developing and transition countries that focus on the health-related MDGs of reducing child and maternal mortality, and halting and reversing the trend of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and malaria. Building long-term evaluation capacity was a key component of this project. To promote capacity building, a panel of international experts in impact evaluation was identified to act as mentors. Each research team was paired with a mentor through the duration of the evaluation. The mentors provided active guidance in the design of the evaluation and the methods used. They also facilitated the transfer of knowledge and ensured that evaluations met rigorous methodological standards.

Lyn Squire, first President of GDN and Manager of this GRP describes the success factors: *"Our research groups were given higher local profile and status by being members of a global research project; they had something concrete to say on policy-relevant topics that had been reviewed by researchers of international repute, and this gave their topics more traction in policy circles."*

## MORE POLICY-RELEVANT RESEARCH



**1115** researchers from 86 countries trained in 15 GDN Net workshops to engage more effectively with policy audiences.

GDN is interested in generating policy-relevant research, and building the capacity of researchers to effectively engage with non-academic audiences. An independent evaluation published in 2007 found ‘evidence of building a cadre of professionals capable of policy-relevant work and helping build policy-relevant research.’

Since then, GDN Net’s training workshops, conducted in partnership with global experts such as ODI and the World Bank Institute, have strengthened policy engagement skills. Researchers attending these workshops go back to their institutions committed not only to communicating GDN research more smartly, but to revisit their previous research and ‘make it meet policymakers’ needs more directly’. Many turn this new knowledge into direct action: Sékou Falil Doumbouya returned from a GDN Net policy engagement workshop pledging to write Policy Briefs for his entire ‘back catalogue’ of research.

**“GDN CANNOT DIRECTLY INFLUENCE THE POLICYMAKER BY EDUCATING THEM DIRECTLY. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT GDN DOES IS TO BUILD CAPACITY BY TRAINING RESEARCHERS: THESE PEOPLE THEN INFORM THE WIDER SOCIETY.”**

Tom Coupe, Director Kiev School  
of Economics and Regional Network Head of CES

A two-year GDN Net-funded programme with CIPPEC called ‘Spaces for Engagement: using knowledge to improve pro-poor public policy’ has furthered understanding of how to better monitor and evaluate the impact of global public research. Involving 16 countries and the active engagement of around 400 professional research individuals working within a Community of Practice, the initiative has produced 16 publications capturing the new knowledge, held three regional workshops and two online courses on policy influence and M&E with 36 think tanks in the region. It has left a legacy of a core cadre of Latin American researchers trained in this critical issue and strengthened CIPPEC’s reputation within Latin America as a key player in research-policy influence.

As a result of research being conducted by the Center for Research and Communications in the University of Asia and the Pacific, Philippines as part of the DFID-funded project Strengthening Institutions to Improve Public Expenditure Accountability. Officials from the Department of Health have said they will include the findings of the research as inputs in future legislative deliberations on the budget for the Department of Health policy discussions on health sector reform. And in the Czech Republic, one of the ‘Development on the Move’ country studies has been used as a background reference in a new UN International Migration project.

*“I do not know of any organisation doing more to help southern researchers to communicate their research”, says Dr Olusanya Ajakaiye, Research Director at AERC.*

## PROMOTING A SOUTHERN RESEARCH AGENDA



**1250** grants awarded through the Regional Research Competitions that directly respond to the knowledge needs of the Global South.

The majority of funds that are made available to carry out development research come with strings attached. Donors want investigations into specific areas that are of policy relevance to them, or which resonate with what they perceive to be global current concerns. GDN provides funds to its southern research partners, with no such conditionality.

**“GDN GRANTS ALLOW US TO DO MORE RESEARCH THAT IS OF INTEREST TO SCHOLARS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. NO ONE DICTATES THE AGENDA.”**

Dr Olusanya Ajakaiye, Research Director at AERC

This brings great freedom. “GDN grants allow us to do more research that is of interest to scholars on the African continent”, says Olu Ajakaiye, Research Director at AERC. “No one dictates the agenda.” Each Regional Network Partner is free to tailor calls for research proposals according to the needs of the region. And to provide the kinds of capacity building support that their researchers need to become excellent scholars. So ERF have run courses on ‘Writing Winning Research Proposals and Papers’ while LACEA established the professional journal *Economia* to capture the region’s academic thinking on economic issues relevant for them; and EERC have launched an online library focusing on policy.

For southern scholars working in relative isolation in their own countries, GDN provides valuable intellectual company and support for the kinds of work they’re doing. A researcher from Jordan who is focused on doing work on his home country struggled to be recognised until his CV was found by others in the GDN Knowledgebase. “Thanks for GDN that has made me so international: I am so proud of being a GDN member.”

GDN Awards and Medals further validates local research agendas. The Universidad de Los Andes, in Colombia, was prompted to publish a Policy Note and to organise a forum to discuss the results of Marcela Eslava’s research on trade reform after she won a GDN award in 2009. “The forum stirred policy interest on the subject, even to a point where the implications of this research have called the attention of high-ranking policy-makers, and may result in policy decisions”, she said.

## GLOBALLY INTERCONNECTED RESEARCHERS



**5,500** participants from more than 100 countries networked through GDN Annual Conferences; support to five existing regional research organisations and three new networks which together form a global grid.

Global solutions, by definition, come from outside national borders. GDN believes that a cadre of researchers who are globally connected are better equipped to identify global solutions to national and regional problems. Why? Because a Tanzanian researcher working with a Malayan and Peruvian researcher share a context of poverty and recognise patterns of policy which both disable and enable their societies to flourish. The organisation's range of interventions brings people together both physically, e.g. country research teams working within a GRP and southern academics at the GDN Annual Conference; and it brings them together virtually through GDN's electronic platforms.

**"WORKING ON A GLOBAL PROJECT MADE ME REALISE THE ENORMOUS VALUE OF WORKING WITH OTHER SOUTHERN ACADEMICS. WE HAVE KEPT IN TOUCH BEYOND THE LIFE OF THE PROJECT AND ARE WORKING ON A JOINT PUBLICATION."**

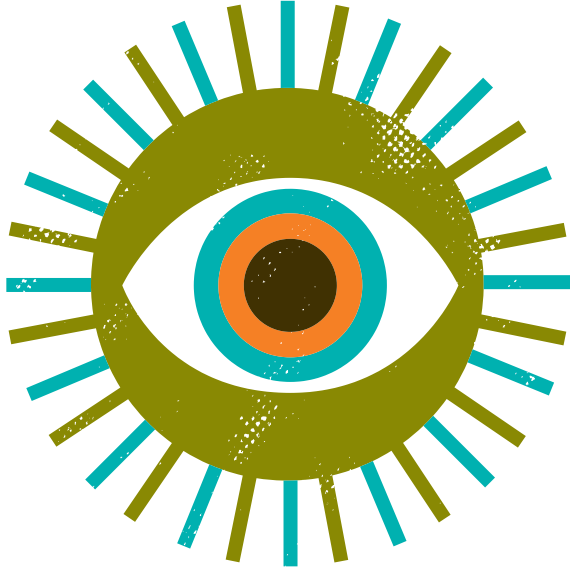
Quynh Ngoc Nguyen, Center for Economics and Community Development, Vietnam

There is evidence that once brought together in this way, people stay connected: more than 90% of conference participants report that they stay in touch with more than one person after the conference, and two thirds stay in touch with between two and three people. Researchers attending research summer schools as part of the Regional Research Competitions report that they are still 'in touch' and using their colleagues to peer review research five years later.

For Daniel Maceira, Senior Researcher at the Center for the Study of the State and Society (CEDES) and winner of two regional awards, the enormous value of GDN involvement was access to global experts. *"I was invited to the St. Petersburg Conference to present my research and was able to access experts from outside the Latin America region. The awards certainly boosted my career. Being recognised by a global organisation shows that international quality standards have been used to recognise your work. The awards give private satisfaction and public recognition for your research."*

*"Knowing who to reference and connect with on specific research agendas is enormously important", says Dr Olusanya Ajakaiye, Research Director at AERC. "GDN is becoming a reference point for global research. It helps to bring an end to the progressive isolation of African researchers through involvement in global research projects."*

## A PROUD HISTORY AND A CHALLENGING FUTURE



**The Global Development Network emerged in 1999 as a response to the need for a globally-interconnected approach to capacity building in research and public policy in emerging, transitional and poor countries.**

**Gerry della Paolera, President of GDN, outlines his vision for the future.**

Since its foundation, this need has intensified with the Global Society evolving more rapidly in the last decade than in the previous fifty years. Emerging countries continue to unbalance the political and economic playing field; new technologies are revolutionizing people's engagement with knowledge and governments, and the after-shocks of the financial crisis are still being felt around the world. More than ever, geographical distinctions are blurred and local and regional problems are global problems.

GDN is proud to have been a pioneer in accelerating research capacity in an interconnected way. For GDN to continue making an impact, we need to acknowledge our changing environment and reorient our strategy and interventions accordingly while not losing sight of the strengths that have brought us to where we are today.

Three principles drive GDN's new strategy: openness, relationships and enabling the exchange of ideas. GDN is designing a core interdisciplinary research agenda around which our research capacity building activities will be built.

A network is only as strong as the relationships with and between its members. For this reason, GDN will look to adapt its activities and interventions to reach those researchers with the greatest need, to build new partnerships with academic and policy institutes and, last but not least, to strengthen its Regional Network Partnerships to increase their capacity to compete for funding and to collaborate.

And through GDNNet, GDN will continue to facilitate the flow of development knowledge from and to southern researchers while piloting new ways of enabling and encouraging South-South learning.

Whatever the challenges of the coming decade, the GDN of the future is clear: a blend of committed stakeholders (signatory countries, researchers, donors, institutions and policymakers) in all regions gathered around one major obsession: inclusive socio-economic development.

*Gerry della Paolera*

## GDN THANKS THE FOLLOWING DONORS

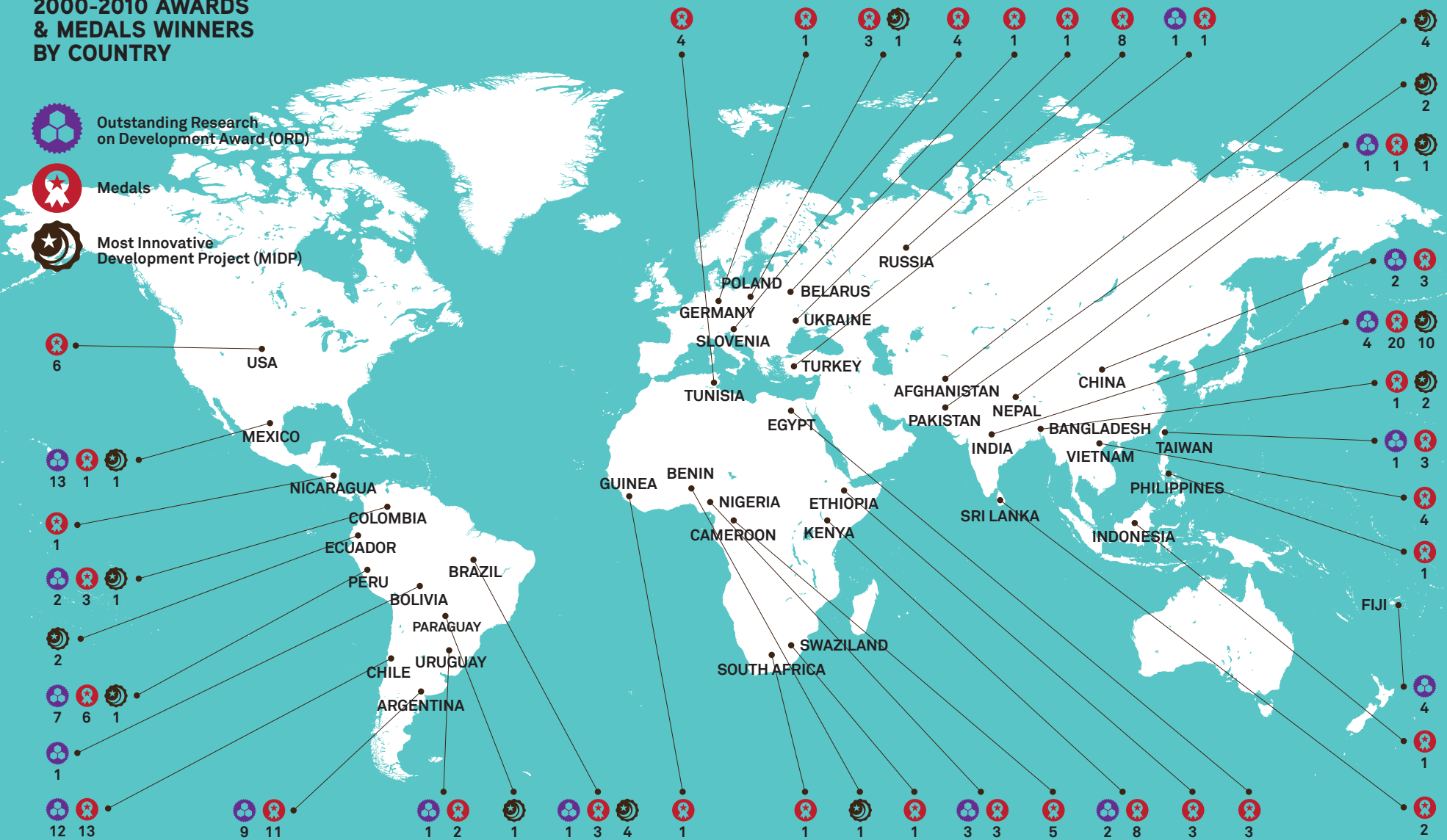
Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), *Kuwait*  
Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), *Australia*  
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2000-2010 AWARDS  
& MEDALS WINNERS  
BY COUNTRY

-  Outstanding Research on Development Award (ORD)
-  Medals
-  Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP)





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