

FASID Seminar

1. Date : August, 25th. 2008, 12:00-14:00
2. Venue : FASID Seminar Room #1 (5th Floor)
3. Presenter:
 - a. Dr. Gobind Nankani (President of the Global Development Network)
 - b. Dr. George Mavrotas (Chief Economist of the Global Development Network)
4. Theme: A decade of Global Development Network
5. Brief content of Presentation

Mission & statement

The Global Development Network is a world-wide network of research and policy institutes promoting the generation, sharing and application to policy of multidisciplinary knowledge for the purpose of development. GDN incorporates 8 regional partners in the southern or 'developing world' and 3 in the northern or 'developed' world. These partnerships connect locally produced research with policy, and the sharing of knowledge across the network. GDN supports the generation of multidisciplinary knowledge across all social sciences with an emphasis on economics.

To promote their work, GDN supports five core activities.

- Regional Research Competitions (RRCs) are conducted through their 8 regional partners in developing countries, to promote high quality research in developing and transition countries;
- Global Research Projects (GRPs), involve research teams worldwide, providing cross country research to help shape policy debate at country and global level. Current and past projects focus on explaining the development growth experience, understanding policy reform, creating stronger links between research & policy, poverty, migration, and working on innovative health projects to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for health;
- GDN's annual Global Development Awards & Medals Competition, is the

largest annual international competition for development research, aimed at promoting the work of researchers and development project practitioners from developing and transitional countries;

- The GDN's online research depository, GDNNet, provides researchers with access to journal articles in addition to up-to-date research datasets;
- GDN's annual Global Development Conferences provide a forum for researchers, leading academicians and policy-makers to debate and discuss the most pressing development issues of our time, whilst providing researchers from developing countries with a platform to showcase their research, share ideas and interact with leading experts.

Strategic Review

The June 2008 meeting of GDN's board endorsed the Networks efforts to build world class excellence in policy relevant research in developing countries. In doing so, new strategies were recommended to help maintain these efforts:

- Shaping policy debate by supporting Global and Regional Policy Forums
- Annual GDN Prizes for outstanding think tanks
- The strengthening of regional partnerships through new inter-regional research projects (IRRPs)
- A focus on global issues such as global public goods and global policy issues;
- Establishing better outreach & communications by dissemination in other major languages.

In addition to its GRPs the Global Development Network works on other areas of strategic research.

- Research projects include 'Moving out of Poverty' (MOP), a project designed to create a standardized module on institutional relations and local power to help understand social mobility;
- A UNDP-funded joint project with the AERC on strengthening institutional capacity building of public policy institutes in Africa;
- Governance & Transparency Fund: Helping the capacity of think tanks in the developing and transitional world working on public expenditure
- An International Growth Centre, which aims to be a central networking hub of

partner organizations, researchers and practitioners

- GDN will host 3ie (independent, international, impact evaluation initiative): An independent non-profit institution which aims to improve the measurement of the net effects of social and economic development programs in low- and middle-income countries through rigorous impact evaluations.

New activities

Two new Global Research Projects include work on 'Alternative Institutional Approaches to Ensuring Effective Governance for Growth, Poverty Reduction and the Delivery of Public Services' i.e. focus on how the delivery of public services is affected by different institutional forms of government; and on promoting inclusive development strategies to climate change, with a particular focus on climate change adaptation.

Proposals for future GRPs include Private Sector Development (PSD) in fast-growing economies and Urban Challenges in Developing Countries (large cities).

Evaluation of GDN (on Dec 2007)

GDN performs independent evaluations every three years. The most recent, in 2007, found that GDN provides a mostly unique, relevant and valuable service. The evaluation highlighted that GDN builds a base of policy-relevant literature and capacity for the future research leaders to inform policy at both national and sub-national levels. A survey of the recipients of grants from GDN found that, on average, the level of satisfaction with GDN was 'high'. Another important finding was that GDN's Awards and Medals Competition is valued extremely high among recipients and very important for their career development.

The evaluation concluded by recommending 4 key actions to take GDN's activities forward; a continued focus on building research capacity in the developing world; a widening of the emphasis on a multi-disciplinary base; the strengthening of relationships with regional partnerships and the enhancement of policy outreach activities.

6. Q&A Summary and Comments

What is the role of GDN in developed countries?

GDN is a network of research institutes in the developing and developed world. The network practices research, training and capacity building in developing countries. To promote these activities, northern partners have a fundamental role in assisting regional partners and researchers in developing countries, helping them to connect with northern institutions and researchers through capacity building activities, exchange programs, and by identifying experts for research projects and training courses.

How to change the global agenda on development

The agenda on development is very much driven by the UN, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the OECD/DAC. The UN always has a strong influence in developing countries while, the Bretton Woods institutions and OECD/DAC strengthen their influence on development by inviting developing countries to be part of their organisations.

The shift of economic weight in the global economy towards developing countries has been an important development in recent years, especially in emerging economies like BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China).

Generally, the voice of developing countries is still relatively low, but is changing rapidly. Emerging economies are currently increasing in their importance and GDN tries to bring their perspective on various development issues, including trade and agriculture.

The research-policy link: Some reflections

GDN is also interested in linking together research and policy. There are three ways to facilitate this:

- a. Research has to be packaged and presented in a way which is accessible to policy makers. Packaging should be different according to different

stakeholders.

- b. Research findings should be discussed and shared with all stakeholders (incl. NGOs, media, academia, and people in different fields who are interested in the subject) because policy makers can be influenced from various stakeholders.
- c. Researchers overall have little understanding and influence on political economy issues. But it is also true that sometimes good research have immediate impact on policy.

What GDN is trying to do on this front is to ‘translate’ research findings in an accessible form for policy makers and discuss them with other stakeholders thus trying to shape public policy debates.

In addition, policy issues vary substantially by country and region so working with regional partners and making the research-policy link country-specific and region-specific is equally important.

Moreover, GDN presents the research findings at various global fora (the annual GDN conference and also side events at other international conferences and meetings worldwide).

How the relationship between researchers and policy makers has changed

In Latin America, researchers have better access to policy makers because most of them have received similar training in North America Universities and they have a common ‘language’ when they talk to each other on the subject. In Latin America, over the last twenty years, many prominent researchers ended up as ministers and when they leave the government they go back to think- tanks, so there is a continuous contact between the research and policy community.

GDN as compared to other WB initiatives e.g. Global Development Gateway, Global Knowledge Partnership

Global Development Gateway focuses on easily accessible information on all development projects in the developing world, to promote harmonization among donors because too many donors initiate too many projects in the same sector, and in

the same country.

Global Knowledge Partnership emphasizes existing knowledge and brings attention to learning.

GDN focuses on building world class excellence in policy relevant research in developing countries.

How to promote policy relevant research

Linking together research and policy is not an easy task. One reason is lack of communication between researchers and policy makers (policy makers have their own needs and motivations and researchers have their own research interests). Furthermore, policy makers do not have the time to read available research. One solution is to facilitate communication between them by packaging research in a format which is accessible to policy makers (e.g. policy briefs). Finally, if researchers are keen to be policy relevant, they need to find out from policy makers what are the questions policy makers are most concerned with, and then try to address those questions in their research.

How Japan could contribute more to the international debate on development?

Japan has been very influential and instrumental in the development debate through the important East Asia Miracle study a few years back. There are many lessons emerging from the East Asian Miracle such as the importance of macro stability, openness, and the crucial role of the market among others, but they are just part of the whole story. In some cases, depending on the situation, a dynamic industrial policy and capital controls are also needed. We should be careful where and when to do that and it has to be country specific. Japanese thought on development policy already has a big influence in international development debate.