



GDN NEXT HORIZONS ESSAY CONTEST 2014

The Contest

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GDN Next Horizons Essay Contest 2014

in partnership with the

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

on

The Future of Development Assistance

OVERVIEW

The world has changed radically since the emergence of official development assistance and since the aid agency was invented. How should aid change? Aid is by no means the only source of financing for development in today's world. Yet for the poorest countries, aid is a vital source of government finance. Aid helps fund critical social services and may catalyze other sources of development funding, such as private investment. In the lead up to 2015, when many significant financing commitments for development will be made, there is a need to be smart about where and how aid is deployed, based on an understanding of how aid can be most valuable in a given country.

In order to help bring attention to the need for scholarship and fresh ideas in this area, and to encourage broad participation, the **Global Development Network (GDN)** in partnership with the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** announces an international essay contest. The contest invites essays on the future of development assistance. The primary objective of the contest is to invite fresh thinking related to the future of aid that can inform the ongoing discourse on development assistance and to make this thinking available to policymakers and key stakeholders.

Up to 20 winning entries will be chosen, and receive \$20,000 each. An independent panel will make the final selections of the best and most potentially consequential submissions, based on criteria defined. Select winning ideas may be promoted by GDN and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

THEME AND TOPICS

The themes for paper submissions are listed below. The questions invite positive answers—for example, on how aid recipients can better manage donors—because we are searching for solutions. However, contrarian submissions are acceptable too. Although many of the questions are broad, a strong entry might respond narrowly, for example, by proposing a particular financial tool.

- **Instruments:** Which financial instruments should be used to provide aid, and what is the right balance among these different instruments? Should financial instruments as diverse as loans, guarantees, insurance, and equity be used and be mixed with varying degrees of subsidization? If so, how and when? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different financing instruments? How can we assess the contribution of debt, equity, and risk management instruments—as distinct from grants—towards meeting internationally agreed targets for human development—such as relating to health, education, and gender equality?
- **Bilateral and multilateral institutions:** How should the donor “aid system” be organized? Some donor countries administer bilateral aid from their foreign ministries, some from independent cooperation ministries and some through aid agencies. Are there other options? Is there a preferred way? What are the respective comparative advantages of bilateral and multilateral channels to deliver aid?
- **Middle-income countries:** If the main objective of ODA is poverty reduction, is there a case to restrict ODA to the poorest countries? What should an aid agency do for a country that has millions of poor people and a space program? If one answer is to work with subnational entities such as provinces and cities, how should donors adapt to do so? How would details of risk assessments, national qualification criteria, national borrowing limits, financial tools, and so on, need to be adjusted?
- **Aid and governance:** Aid is often criticized for reducing the accountability of government and funding corruption. Yet good governance seems central to economic development. What are the ways for aid to improve governance?
- **Recipient role:** Most discussions of foreign aid center on what donors should do, and are generally shaped by donors' perspectives. Recipient governments may have very different views. How should recipient countries allocate aid in the context of other sources of financing (i.e. where is aid most effective)? How can recipient governments manage foreign aid to minimize distortions and build their institutional capacity?
- **Data and information technology:** There is growing excitement about the power of open data as a tool both to inform policy and spending decisions

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and to hold governments to account for commitments they make. What will this data and technology driven transformation in the development project "marketplace" actually look like?? How might citizens use data to provide feedback on government services and development projects? What will it take to get there?

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Age: Entry is open to all adult individuals over 21 years of age.
- Staff: Current employees, contractors and agents of the Global Development Network and, as primary funder for this round, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, together with members of their immediate families (parent, child, sibling and spouse of each) and those living in their same household are ineligible to participate in the contest.
- Countries: Residents of Cuba, Iran, Syria, North Korea, Myanmar and Sudan are ineligible to apply. This program is void in these countries and where prohibited or restricted by law. The verification of the citizenship and residency of short listed and qualifying authors will be verified wherein authors will be requested to submit proof of residency and citizenship. The identification proof will be treated as strictly confidential by GDN and will be used for purposes of the contest only.
- Restricted individuals: Individuals included on the List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN List, available at <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/default.aspx>) maintained by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control are not eligible to participate in the contest.
- Reviewers and Translators: Reviewers, selection committee members and translators for this contest are not eligible to participate.

The Global Development Network reserves the right to limit, or restrict upon notice, participation in the nomination process to any person at any time for any reason.

ESSAY SUBMISSION FORMAT

The format of the essay should follow the guidelines given below:

- **Essay Cover Page:** The cover page should display the title of the essay and contain an abstract of at most 250 words. Information on the author(s) should not be presented on the cover page or in the abstract. Information on the authors can only be present in the list of referenced documents. *Essay documents containing author information in places other than the list of referenced documents will be liable for disqualification.*
- **Essay Word Limit:** The main text should contain at most 5,000 words, not counting notes and reference lists. Sources should be cited consistently. The abstract should not be more than 250 words and must be included in the essay document.
- **Essay Margins and Spacing Requirement:** The format should be in Times New Roman, minimum 12-point font, 1 inch/2.5 centimeter margins.
- **Essay Document and Page Formatting:** The submission should be Microsoft Word .doc or .docx format. Essays in PDF will not be accepted.
- **Essay Language:** Essays can be submitted in the English, French and Spanish languages only. The competition is open in three languages.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Submissions to the Essay Contest will be accepted on the dedicated online submissions platform only. For detailed information on how to apply, please refer to the Guidelines provided on this webpage.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 15 September, 2014 (1400HRS GMT). Entries received after the deadline will not be accepted.

APPLY HERE

GUIDELINES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

For any queries or assistance on the Essay Contest, please write to us at nexthorizons@gdn.int. GDN will not entertain any phone calls from potential applicants.

Please note: GDN reserves the right to modify, cancel or not award grants at any stage of the competition and grant-making. The decision of GDN will be final.