Global Development Awards Competition
Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) 2025 Edition

CALL FOR PROJECTS

Competition Theme

The Global Development Network (GDN) invites non-profit Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from low and middle-income countries to submit applications for the Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) within the theme "Digital Transformation for Universal Health Coverage".[1]

The Award

The Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project is a competitive grant programme under the umbrella of the Global Development Awards Competition, administered by GDN, funded under the Policy and Human Resources Development Fund (PHRD) trust fund managed by the World Bank, and generously supported by the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan. The award programme invites non-profit NGOs and CSOs to submit project proposals supporting (in particular) improved service delivery, and innovative approaches that may be scaled-up through a grant. The Award targets projects currently at the stage of implementation, and which have a high potential for impact targeting exceptionally marginalised and disadvantaged groups located in developing countries - per the World Bank's recognition as low- and middle-income countries.

The winning projects will receive grants worth US$ 125,000 in total. The two first prize winners will receive a grant of US$ 50,000 each. The second prize will be a grant of US$ 25,000. Additionally, awardees will be paired with a Technical Advisor throughout the entire implementation of the grant.

The awards will be given to organisations whose projects embody an innovative approach to an important development need and hold the greatest promise for:

  i. responding directly to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, underserved groups to improve their lives aiming at rapid results for improved livelihood.
  ii. supporting initiatives that lead to developing sustainable outcomes through the scaling-up of the project.

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[1] More information about the theme is available at the end of this document.

The deadline for submission of applications is June 18, 2025 (Indian Standard Time 6 PM)

Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) Award

The JSDF award focuses on piloting socially innovative development projects that have been identified as having the potential for development impact and replicability through the MIDP Award. The objective of the JSDF Award is to support community-driven development and poverty reduction programmes that serve to enhance productivity, increase access to social and community services and infrastructure, and improve the living conditions of poor and vulnerable groups in eligible countries.

The two first prize winners will compete for the JSDF award after a minimum of 12 months implementation of their MIDP grant. GDN will review the suitability of the proposals for a much larger grant of up to US$ 200,000 within the framework of the World Bank-administered Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF).

Connector Grant

The 2022 edition introduced the Connector Grant, which aims to stimulate international cooperation through the development of collaborative projects to support scale-up efforts with research-based evidence. The Connector grant will be awarded to ORD grantees based on a project developed in collaboration with the MIDP grantees who received the JSDF grant. This grant will support the award recipients' collaborative efforts towards measuring and analysing scale-up impact, as well as enhancing the robustness of their M&E activities.

Important Dates

- Deadline for submissions: June 18, 2025
- Eligibility screening results: June 20, 2025
- Phase 1 - Desk review results (1st shortlisted applications): July 14, 2025
- Phase 2 - Business review results (2nd shortlisted applications): August 4, 2025
- Phase 3 - Site visits[2] to 2nd shortlisted applications: August 4 until August 20, 2025
- Announcement of finalists: September 1, 2025
- Announcement of winners: November 2025

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[2] The site visits can take place on a virtual setting if justifiable within a methodological approach proposed by the selected MIDP Reviewer that does not jeopardise the assessment of applications.

Finalists are expected to be available for the Communications Training and the physical event for the presentation of their projects to the jury during the Global Development Conference, to take place in October 2025 at Clermont-Ferrand, France.

Competition Rules and Guidelines
Please review carefully. Any application that does not follow the guidelines below will NOT be considered.

General Rules
- Please note that the **submission of all documents is mandatory** for your application to be treated as complete and eligible.
- The application and the required documents **must be submitted as electronic files** at GDN's online submission platform. Please note that GDN accepts applications through the online submission platform EXCLUSIVELY.
- Proposals **must be submitted in English** only.
- An organisation can only submit one application.
- All applications must be accompanied by CVs of all the members of the project team (not from all staff).
- Please note that all personal information details provided in the application (along with the CV) should be correct, else the **application will be liable for disqualification at any stage of the competition**, including after the grant has been conferred.
- GDN will take into consideration the geography, gender, issue area, among other factor,s aiming to increase the diversity and representativeness of applicants and projects awarded.

Eligibility Criteria
Geographical scope
Eligible countries for the MIDP competition are those classified by the World Bank as low-income or middle-income countries[3].

World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF):
Comply with the [WB Environmental and Social Framework (ESF)](#) and the Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs). Please check the Annexe at the end of this call to see the exclusion list of ineligible activities.

NGO Registration:

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[3] Press [here](#) to visit the list of countries which are recognised as low- and middle-income countries by the World Bank. Preference will be given to projects in low-income countries.

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The project must be managed by a **registered** non-profit, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or Civil Society Organisation (CSO) with its headquarters in one of the eligible countries.

Project Implementation:

The project must have started its implementation on 1st June 2024 or before to be considered eligible. <u>The applicant will need to prove during the review stage that there is a track record of activities, since this Competition does not fund ideas or pilot initiatives.</u>

Submissions concerning a recently started project, or only a project idea, or a feasibility or baseline study will not be considered.

Submissions for funding conferences (either in part or in full) will not be considered.

Recurrent Submissions:

Applicants from previous years (except winners) may reapply, but they must update the application to include new aspects of the project.

Previous Winners:

Previous MIDP winners are not eligible to apply.

How to Apply

Prerequisites

- <u>Non-profit status</u> - Obtain an official document certifying the registration of your non-profit NGO/CSO. If the document is not available in English, please provide a translation (noncertified is acceptable).
- <u>Ability to receive funds from abroad</u> - Obtain an official document certifying your organisation is legally able to receive funds from abroad according to your national legal framework (For example, if in India, the organisation must be FCRA registered and compliant).
- <u>Budget from previous year</u> - Upload the budget/financial report of the project in 2024 so that we can validate it has a track record/implementation history.
- <u>Proof the project is ongoing</u> – You will be asked by the Reviewers for proof that the project is ongoing (beyond the budget from 2024).
- <u>Clarifications from GDN/Reviewers</u> - An application will be excluded at any stage if the requests from GDN/Reviewers are not promptly complied with. Check the "Important Dates" section for more information.

Submit your application

1. Head to GDN's dedicated online submission platform using the following link: www.gdn.int/gdac/2025/apply

2. Register or log in to the platform to have access to your profile. You will receive an email confirming the successful registration of your profile and define your password. Only after verifying your profile will you be able to apply.

3. On your profile page, follow the displayed instructions and go to [Applications] "Funding Opportunities" to select the Call you wish to apply to or resume one from the [Applications] "In Progress" section.

   o You must pass the automated *Eligibility Screening* before having access to the *Full Proposal*. If you fail it, you will not be able to apply, but reach out to GDN if you are facing issues.

   o A collaborator must accept and fillout their Collaborator Form, which is found at [Collaboration Forms and Applications] "Action Required" before being filled out. Afterwards, he/she will have access to the proposal they are associated with and can make edits and even submit it. This application will not be at [Collaboration Forms and Applications] "Applications".

   o Take note that you will be able to resume your entry at any time up to the deadline. If there are duplicate entries, the most recent one will be considered as only one proposal per applicant is allowed.

4. You will be asked to provide the details of the proposal, and you must invite your team members by placing their name and email address on the "Collaborators" tab. Don't forget to press "Invite" and check if people have accepted by checking their status on this tab.

5. Upload all necessary documents and fill in all sections otherwise, your application will not be submitted.

6. Once you have completed your application, click on "Submit". You will receive an email notifying you of the successful submission of your application with a copy of the entire submission.

Check our website for additional information on how to interact with the platform, or reach out to us if you need any assistance.

Review Criteria

Throughout the review process, the proposals will be judged on the following criteri,a with the following considerations:

- Phase 1 - Special focus will be given to the criteria: Innovative approaches, Clear development objectives, Sustainable social impact, Expansion, and Cost efficiency.
- Phases 2 and 3 – All criteria will be considered.

Innovative Approaches

- How is your project different from other existing approaches?
- Is it proposing to pilot alternative approaches or to reach the target groups not reached by other programmes?
- Does this approach come from bottom-up partnerships engaging NGOs/CSOs, community associations, or local governments as implementing agencies?
- Does it reflect a participatory design and consultation process with the targeted beneficiaries?

Clear Development Objective, Activities and Measurable Results

- Does the project have a clear and measurable results framework?
- Does it utilise participatory monitoring and evaluation to help beneficiaries address their vulnerability and to ensure ownership and sustainability?
- Does the project have a realistic plan with steps/activities that build concretely towards achieving the project's objectives, and that can do so within a year of implementation after receiving the Award?
- Has the project designed a way to use monitoring and evaluation for learning and measuring outcomes and, ultimately, impact?

Sustainable Social Impact

- Does the project contribute to poverty alleviation and social development in the short and long term?
- Is the development impact sustainable in the long run?
- Has the project generated local ownership?
- Is there a plan to transfer ownership?
- Has the targeted population demonstrated an increase in skill development or an increased willingness to learn new skills?
- Does the project help strengthen the capacity of the targeted population to continue with the work themselves in the long run?
- Does the project support community-driven development by empowering the Poor at the local community level to participate in society and government and to affect their development and learning by doing?

Expansion

- How easily can the project be replicated and adapted to other countries, regions, sectors, and cultures?
- What are the prospects for the project's expansion using the resources obtained from the award?
- Does the project have the potential to have a large-scale development impact?

Cost Efficiency
- Is the cost of the project justified in terms of measurable impacts/outcomes?
- What are the measurable impacts/outcomes (performance) of the project in comparison to the cost of the programme?

Thorough Risk Assessment
- Are there any significant risks associated with the project?
- How well prepared is the project team in mitigating these risks?

Efficient Management of Financial and Human Resources
- Are policies in place within the organisation to ensure effective utilisation of financial and human resources for the implementation of the project?

Transparency and Accountability in Operations
- Does the project work in a way that allows gathering information on an ongoing basis and disclosing all appropriate information on the implementation, in particular to the project's direct stakeholders?

WB Environmental and Social Framework's Environmental and Social Standards
- Does the project comply with the WB Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), including the Environmental and and Social Standards (ESS)? Are there any E&S risks and impacts associated with the project, and how is the project team planning to mitigate these risks and impacts?
- Does the project comply with the exclusion list of ineligible activities?

Priority will be given to projects to be implemented in low-income countries, followed by low-middle-income countries as per the [classification](#) given by the World Bank.

Selection Process
Once the submission of proposals is closed, a multi-stage review process will be used to select the winners.

- After a preliminary assessment by GDN, up to 30 applications will be reviewed by an independent external evaluator (MIDP Reviewer).
- The MIDP Reviewer will conduct the assessment in 3 Phases:
  - Phase 1 - Review focused on: Innovative approaches, Clear development objectives, Sustainable social impact, Expansion, and Cost efficiency. 10 applications are shortlisted for Phase 2.
  - Phase 2 - Review considering all criteria with interviews and request for additional information. 6 applications are shortlisted for Phase 3. Please note that shortlisted applicants must comply with the

guidelines on the process outlined in the "Review Stage – Shortlisted applicants" document.

- o Phase 3 – Review considering all criteria with in-depth interviews, written references, and site visits if needed and applicable. 3 applications are selected as finalists.
- o A feedback paragraph will be provided to each applicant by the MIDP Reviewer.
- The final selection of proposals will be undertaken by the MIDP High-Level jury after a public presentation of the projects by the finalists. The decision of the jury will be final.
- The jury for the Award will consider the substantive and operational merits of the submissions, but will also consider the potential for expansion into other settings and countries.
- The final selection of proposals will be undertaken by the MIDP High-Level jury, after a public presentation of the projects by the finalists. The decision of the Jury will be final.
- The jury for the Award will consider the substantive and operational merits of the submissions, but will also consider the potential for expansion into other settings and countries.

Terms and Conditions

- GDN reserves the right not to grant one or more than one award.
- GDN reserves the right to modify, cancel or not award grants at any stage of the competition and grant-making.
- Cancellation of the Award: The Award is liable to be cancelled in case of unsatisfactory progress of research work, and if any of the researchers in the award team are found ineligible later.
- GDN will award the funds to winners through a written grant agreement.
- Shortlisted candidates will undergo a site visit. All applicant organisations will agree to undergo a site visit and cooperate with the review process.

Jury

The composition of the Jury for this year's competition has not yet been determined. Previous Jury members, among others, included representatives from:

- Association of African Universities, Ghana
- AusAID, Australia
- Australian National University, Australia
- African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Kenya
- Center for Global Development, USA
- EADI, UK
- IDRC, Canada
- International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, India
- JICA Research Institute, Japan

- OECD Development Centre, France
- Peking University, China
- The Brookings Institution, USA
- The Egyptian Center for Economic Studies, Egypt
- The Partnership for African Social & Governance Research (PASGR), Kenya
- The School of Social and Economic Development at the
- University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji
- The World Bank, USA
- VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Zagazig University, Egypt.
- Association of African Universities, Ghana

Most Innovative Development Project Laureates

- Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), Pakistan
- BARKA Foundation for Mutual Help, Poland
- Biodiversity Conservation in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, Mexico
- Butterflies, India
- Byrraju Foundation, India
- Camara Rwanda, Rwanda
- Chinmaya Organisation for Rural Development, India
- Citizen's Proposal Group, Peru
- Colegio Virtual Iberoamericano, Ecuador
- Conservation through Public Health, Uganda
- Development Reality Institute, Zimbabwe
- Dnet, Bangladesh
- Dream A Dream, India
- Fundacion Paraguaya, Paraguay
- Impulse NGO Network, India
- IRRAD, India
- JAAGO Foundation, Bangladesh
- ONG Bethesda, Benin
- Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society
- The Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bio-Resources (ANSAB), Nepal
- Transparency International, India

List of Eligible Countries

Afghanistan; Albania; Algeria; American Samoa; Angola; Argentina; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Belarus; Belize; Benin; Bhutan; Bolivia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Botswana; Brazil; Bulgaria; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cabo Verde; Cambodia; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Chad; China; Comoros; Colombia; Costa Rica; Congo, Dem. Rep; Congo, Rep.; Côte d'Ivoire; Cuba; Djibouti; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Egypt; El Salvador; Eritrea; Eswatini; Equatorial Guinea; Ethiopia; Fiji; Gabon; Gambia; Georgia; Ghana; Grenada; Guatemala; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Guyana; Haiti; Honduras; India; Indonesia; Iran; Iraq; Kenya; Kiribati; Korea, Dem. People's Rep; Jamaica; Jordan; Kazakhstan;

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Kosovo; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao; Lebanon; Lesotho; Liberia; Libya; Madagascar; Malaysia; Malawi; Maldives; Mali; Marshall Islands; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mexico; Micronesia; Moldova; Mongolia; Montenegro; Morocco; Mozambique; Myanmar; Nepal; Namibia; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Romania; Russian Federation; Rwanda; Samoa; São Tomé and Principe; Senegal; Serbia; Sierra Leone; Solomon Islands; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Sri Lanka; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Sudan; Suriname; Syrian Arab Republic; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Timor-Leste; Thailand; Togo; Tonga; Tunisia; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Tuvalu; Uganda; Ukraine; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; Venezuela; Vietnam; West Bank and Gaza; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe

Theme | 2025 Global Development Awards Competition
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

"The importance of digitization in health care has been increasingly recognized since the outbreak of COVID-19. Implementation in society (including utilization of innovative technologies) needs to be accelerated in the world, including developing countries"

Japan's Global Health Strategy (2022:2)

Digital health is a cultural transformation of traditional healthcare. Digital technologies offer powerful tools to improve access, affordability, and quality of health services. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are often at the forefront of innovation in this space, offering valuable lessons to the global public health community on how to do more with less, impacting health outcomes, behaviour and knowledge among the most marginalised communities. The right combination of research and research-led implementation can help scale innovations to benefit larger groups, or it can enable impactful innovations to travel and be adapted across different health systems.

In 2025, the Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) invites social science researchers based in LMICs to put forward proposals that focus on building the empirical evidence and the actionable knowledge capable of transforming the pursuit of universal health coverage through digital solutions. Research should illuminate how digital solutions impact the pursuit of universal health access across LMICs.

In parallel, the 2025 Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) will support existing (i.e. ongoing) NGO-led projects engaged in the development, implementation or evaluation of digital solutions in support of universal healthcare delivery in underserved areas.

Together, these awards bridge the gap between knowledge and real-world impact, advancing inclusive health systems.

GDN encourages the submission of projects that are either gender-specific or gender-transformative, but requires that all projects be designed to respond to gender concerns.

The 2025 MIDP call is addressed to **NGOs in LMICs already implementing projects** relevant to the theme. Projects must demonstrate a commitment to addressing the needs ofthe most vulnerable communities, aim for tangible impact and potential

for scale, and align with principles of inclusivity and stakeholder participation. Projects must clearly identify and build the case for the change they seek to enable, whether changes in knowledge, changes in behaviour, changes in attitudes, changes in social norms, changes in access, changes in equity, changes in systems, changes in empowerment, etc.. Examples of possible projects include:

- A project based on a mobile app that provides information about maternal health, nutrition, and family planning in local languages.
- A project sustained on a framework built upon an SMS-based programme that sends reminders for vaccinations and medication adherence.
- A project based on the implementation of a mobile counselling platform offering psychological support to youth in fragile regions, promoting mental resilience and safety.
- A project using mobile apps and interactive voice response systems to educate rural communities on preventive healthcare practices and recognising disease symptoms.
- A project based on an online platform for women experiencing gender-based violence, offering information, support, and resources to enhance their safety and well-being

These are examples, and projects aligning with these are not more likely to be selected. NGOs should make the case for the alignment of their own project, in light outfits specificity and ambition, to the call topic.

To be eligible, projects must reflect the global development imperative of **protecting vulnerable individuals and empowering communities** to build resilient, sustainable livelihoods through universal health coverage.

FOCUS AREAS OF SUBMISSIONS

Note that digital health technologies must contribute to sustainable development in the targeted areas, ensuring continued use and impact beyond the research or project period. Additionally, continuous updates for new devices and applications are crucial for long-term sustainability, and, if possible and applicable, digital health innovations should be applied to support climate change adaptation and resilience efforts.

Access and Equity: The digital divide in healthcare, across both geography and demographics, prevents vulnerable populations from benefiting from digital health innovations. Projects should focus on improving access to healthcare services and reducing health disparities in underserved communities. This can include connecting patients and providers with digital tools, expanding healthcare infrastructure, reducing financial barriers, and developing targeted interventions for marginalised communities.

Behaviour and Attitudes: Projects that aim to modify individual or collective behaviours and attitudes that impact health outcomes. This could involve using digital tools to promote healthy habits, providing incentives for behaviour change. It also includes shifting attitudes and beliefs related to health by reducing stigma and discrimination and promoting positive attitudes towards health-seeking behaviours.

Empowerment: Projects that aim to empower individuals and communities to take control of their health and well-being. This could involve providing health education and information, promoting self-care practices, and supporting community-led health initiatives.

Knowledge and Awareness: Projects that focus on increasing understanding and awareness of health issues. This could involve developing educational materials, providing training to healthcare workers, or using digital tools to disseminate health information. It also includes raising awareness of specific health issues or promoting health literacy through public health campaigns and working with community leaders.

Systems and Capacity: Strong health systems are crucial for effective digital health implementation. Projects should focus on strengthening health systems and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare delivery. This can include implementing digital health information systems, improving supply chain management, and strengthening the capacity of individuals, communities, or health systems to address health challenges. Public-private partnerships are essential to promote the effective use of digital technology, and involving private companies with excellent technology in universal healthcare delivery is a key focus.

Social Norms: Projects that aim to transform social norms that influence health behaviours and outcomes. This could involve using digital media to challenge harmful traditional practices, promoting positive social norms around health, and empowering communities to advocate for change.

Technology and Data: Projects that focus on developing or implementing new technologies and improving the collection, analysis, and use of health data to improve health outcomes. This could involve creating mobile health apps, developing telehealth platforms, or using artificial intelligence to improve disease surveillance and diagnosis. It also includes developing digital health information systems, using data to inform public health interventions, or promoting data sharing and collaboration among healthcare providers.

Annexe – Environment and Social Safeguards Activity Exclusions List

This exclusion list defines activities which will render a project proposal ineligible, vis-à-vis environmental and social standards.

The [World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF)](#):

- Activities that cause involuntary resettlement or cause adverse negative impact on income-generating activities/livelihood resources.
- Activities which will involve any kind of forceful eviction of people.
- Activities/processes which will involve the use of highly toxic and/or banned chemicals, including pesticides
- Activities that involve child workers and/or forced labour, including activities that cause or lead to child abuse, child labour exploitation or human trafficking; No child under the age of 14 should work on the construction, rehabilitation or maintenance of a subproject. Children between the ages of 14-18 will not be employed or engaged in connection with the project in a manner that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child's education or be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
- Involve the development of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements in critical habitats, protected areas or areas proposed for certain levels of national protection (e.g., reserved forests), including the cutting of trees for commercial activities.
- Entail the purchase or use of illegal/illicit drugs, military equipment or other potentially dangerous materials and equipment, including chainsaws, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, asbestos (including asbestos-containing materials); or other investments detrimental to livelihoods, including cultural resources.
- Processes/technologies that will discharge highly polluted processed water, emit toxic fumes and noxious odour exceeding the national emission standards or the World Bank Group Environment, Health and Safety Guidelines (EHSG).
- Activities that will produce wastewater that will not be possible or viable for on-site treatment.
- Activities which involve work related to religious and political infrastructure;
- Activities which involve the purchase of equipment for government agencies