

NAI Forum topics

The Forum opens with a few thematic issues to be presented in at least one lead article for each topic by invited authors. Lead authors should preferably be affiliated with NAI or any other institution in the Nordic countries or in Africa. The choice of lead authors should be balanced with respect to nationality, gender, academic background and institutional affiliation.

The four main criteria for the selection of topics are:

1. 'Hot' topics that are likely to engage many participants from the different stakeholder communities in a lively debate;
2. Policy relevance from an African perspective;
3. Policy relevance for several Nordic countries and/or at the Nordic level with respect to impact on African development;
4. Value added of raising ongoing policy debates within Nordic countries to the Nordic level by facilitating cross-border participation.

The following tentative, illustrative and non-exclusive list of topics may be useful to consider for the selection of topics:

- The MDGs under review, looking beyond 2015: Are they useful? How to improve them?
- Towards Nordic policy coherence for African development in the next decade? (Trade, agriculture, migration, investment, corruption, capital flight, fishing, climate impact etc.)
- The role of Nordic countries' own interests in development policies
- African perspectives on Nordic aid and development policies
- Does aid work? Is aid mainly part of the problem or of the solution? Should/can aid be reformed for enhanced results? How? Can institutional incentives be changed?
- Beyond aid – do we need a broader development policy approach?
- Aid to fragile states and other countries with severe governance problems – is it worthwhile? Is it/can it be consistent with DAC principles of alignment and ownership?
- How to support the building of nations and societies such as Afghanistan?
- Aid, democracy and government legitimacy
- Aid delivery and management – has DAC/Paris-Accra made a difference? Have the Nordic countries improved their performance in this regard? What should they do next?
- What can Nordic countries do about the increasingly chaotic aid landscape and the need for reforming the aid architecture?
- Nordic aid in the context of competition from emerging donors/development partners.
- 'Triangular' development cooperation
- Nordic social policies – a comparative advantage area for development cooperation with Africa?
- Is the focus shifting from poverty reduction as the overarching development goal to other issues, e.g. climate change, economic growth and conflict resolution? Should it?

- The Nordic role in international development cooperation; how to influence international policies and guidelines in areas of great poverty impact.
- Global economic governance: are the Nordic chairs in the IFI boards consistent with global equity and representativeness?
- The relevance of the East Asian experience for African development
- The role of the private sector in development cooperation
- Specific sector policy themes, e.g. in agriculture/rural development, local government, health etc.

A lively forum requires a mix of different types of topics. It might be useful to include topics that are narrower and more timely than some on the above list. This could be for instance: reviewing a new book (such as Olav Stokke's comprehensive overview 'The UN and Development. From Aid to Cooperation'), a recent high-level report (such as the World Development Report or the Human Development Report), a recent political initiative (like the Norwegian white paper on foreign policy in a changing global context, the new policy on economic growth in Swedish development cooperation 2010-2014, and the forthcoming Danish policy statement on development cooperation for the year 2020) or the results of a recent conference (like the 2008 Accra meeting on aid effectiveness and the 2009 European Development Days in Stockholm).

It would be useful to group topics into broader clusters linked to upcoming research and policy events such as the UNU-WIDER 'Triple Crisis Conference' in Helsinki and the ABCDE conference in Stockholm, both in May 2010; the Book and Library Fair in Gothenburg with NAI as co-arranger and the UN-MDG Summit, both in September 2010, the next COP meeting in Mexico in December 2010, the next High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Söul in 2011, and the 4th European Conference on African Studies to be held in Uppsala in June 2011.

These kinds of topics are introduced while the blog is underway, as events shape them. A blog or forum will be more interesting and attract more readers – and participants – if it is timely and flows with the current of public debate.