Sixth Annual Amartya Sen Essay Prize 2019

This year, Global Financial Integrity and Academics Stand Against Poverty will be awarding the sixth annual Amartya Sen Prizes to the two best original essays on assessing the human, social, political and institutional impacts of illicit financial flows out of Latin America as well as measures to curtail them in order to positively transform states and societies. Entered essays should be about 7,000 to 9,000 words long. There is a first prize of $5,000 and a second prize of $3,000.

Illicit financial flows are generally defined as cross-border movements of funds that are illegally earned, transferred, or used. Examples are funds earned through illegal trafficking in persons, drugs or weapons; funds illegally transferred through mispriced exchanges (e.g., among affiliates of a multinational corporation seeking to shift profits to reduce taxes); funds moved to evade taxes; and funds used for corruption of or by public or corporate officials. Because many Latin American countries have large natural resource sectors with relatively weak administrative controls on officials and powerful enablers operating locally (global banks; global tax, law, auditing and consulting firms; fiscal havens, etc.), illicit financial flows out of these countries tend to be substantial relative to their GDP or overall trade. And because structural poverty and inequality persist there, Latin American societies cannot afford such losses of capital and tax revenues that greatly hamper their ability to mobilize domestic resources to provide services and policies needed toward sustainable development.

Mindful of the Sustainable Development Goals (esp. SDG target 16.4 with indicator 16.4.1) and seeking to inspire effective political action toward reducing illicit financial flows out of Latin America, we are inviting essays that assess the human, political and institutional impact of such illicit outflows. Your entry may focus on one or more specific countries and on one or more specific kinds of illicit financial flows and strategies/policies to curtail, control or avoid them. It should then estimate the magnitude of these outflows as well as the damage they do to the institutions and to the affected populations – for example, through depressed investment and through reduced tax revenues leading to, inter alia, lower public spending on health, education, social security and development.

We welcome authors from diverse academic disciplines and from outside the academy. Please send your entry by email attachment on or before 31 August 2019 to Tom Cardamone at tcardamone@gfintegrity.org. While your email should identify you, your essay should be stripped of self-identifying references, formatted for blind review.