Eighth Annual Amartya Sen Essay Prize 2021

This year, Global Financial Integrity, Academics Stand Against Poverty and Yale’s Global Justice Program will be awarding the eighth annual Amartya Sen Prizes to the two best original essays examining one particular component of illicit financial flows, the resulting harms and possible avenues of reform. 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. Winning essays must be available for publication in Academics Stand Against Poverty Journal.

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); goods mis invoiced or funds moved in order to evade taxes; and funds used for corruption of or by public or corporate officials. Illicit financial flows are explicitly recognized as an obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and singled out as a separate target #4 of SDG 16.

Components of illicit financial flows can be delimited by sector and geographically. Delimitation by sector might focus your essay on some specific activity, business or industry — such as art, real estate, health care, technology, entertainment, shipping, agriculture, sports, gaming, education, politics, tourism, natural resource extraction, banking and financial services — or on an even narrower subsector such as the diamond trade, hunting, insurance or prostitution. Delimitation by geography might further narrow the essay’s focus to some particular country, province or region.

Your essay should describe the problematic activity and evaluate the adverse effects of it that make it problematic. Also, in quantitative terms insofar as this is possible, you should estimate the magnitude of the relevant outflows as well as the damage they do to the institutions and to the affected populations. This might include harm from abuse, exploitation and impoverishment of individuals, harm through subdued economic activity and reduced prosperity, and/or harm through diminished tax revenues that depress public spending.

Your essay should also explain the persistence of the harmful activity in terms of relevant incentives and enabling conditions and, based on your explanation, propose plausible ways to curtail the problem. Such reform efforts might be proposed at diverse levels, including supranational rules, national rules, corporate policies, professional ethics, individual initiatives, or any combination thereof. The task is to identify who has the responsibility, the capacity and (potentially) the knowledge and motivation to change behavior toward effective curtailment.

We welcome authors from diverse academic disciplines and from outside the academy. Please send your entry by email attachment on or before 31 August 2021 to Tom Cardamone at SenPrize@gfintegrity.org. While your email should identify you, your essay should be stripped of self-identifying references, formatted for blind review.