Research Community Guide to the GCRF

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This document was co-created by all those attending the two-day AHRC workshop in March. The delegates provided text in advance of, and after, the meeting. Their presentations and discussions were filmed and transcriptions have been incorporated into this document. All have provided feedback and additional content to shape the output and are happy to be named as authors.

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Preface

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) was established by the UK Government in 2016 to support collaborative research that addresses global development challenges and improves the economic prosperity, welfare and quality of life of people in living in Development Assistance Committee (DAC)-listed countries. The fund recognises that the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require holistic interdisciplinary approaches that engage fully with the relevant cultural and historic contexts, knowledge bases, creativity, languages and diverse voices and beliefs in LMICs. For this reason, the AHRC has been allocated £26 million for the period 2016-2020 to support GCRF-related work and is seeking to empower and mobilise Arts and Humanities researchers to lead interdisciplinary collaborations using their unique skills sets.

The GCRF represents an opportunity for the Arts and Humanities community to conduct high-quality research that alleviates problems in, and supports the development of, DAC list countries. There is exceptional potential for the Arts and Humanities to lead this kind of world-changing research and, by so doing, demonstrate the core value and significance of the disciplines involved. Indeed, this potential is already being made clear through the AHRC projects funded via the first tranche of GCRF monies. At the same time, these pioneer projects are highlighting that there is greater scope for buy-in from the community, for understanding and flexibility from the institutions involved with facilitating ODA-compliant research projects, and for awareness from international agencies and NGOs about how the Arts and Humanities can help address global challenges. In sum, for the Arts and Humanities to drive the GCRF agenda there is a need to build expertise, confidence and relationships at a variety of nested levels, both within and without the academy, locally and internationally.

To kick-start dialogue and capture knowledge from which a baseline of best practice could be distilled, the AHRC funded a GCRF strategy initiative that engaged researchers and stakeholders who had experience of running, or involvement with, GCRF projects. The aim was to reflect on the added value that the Arts and Humanities can bring to development issues but also to identify the hindrances to research and impact, and consider how these might best be negotiated and overcome. From this reflective discussion, a series of outputs were generated:

i. Case-study volume. Highlighting the significance of Arts and Humanities disciplines for addressing SDGs, and showcasing the reach and impact of AHRC/GCRF-funded research.

ii. Community guide. Aimed at empowering the Arts and Humanities research community by outlining the potential, challenges and pathways for AHRC-funded GCRF research.

iii. Introduction to Development. Outlining the history and approaches of development studies.

iv. Institutional Guide. Setting out recommendations for enhancing the ambition and effectiveness of Arts and Humanities GCRF research, for institutional-level consumption and AHRC policy and reporting purposes.

1. Introduction

Few research projects are straightforward or reflect precisely the plans set out in funding applications. Research is dynamic: things change, situations shift and opportunities arise or disappear. Developing and managing research projects has the potential to be deeply challenging, both professionally and personally. But they can equally bring great personal joy and social value from the creation of new partnerships and knowledge, and from the positive transformations that research can engender.

If these statements are true of standard UK-based research, their accuracy is magnified (by several orders of magnitude) for GCRF projects. They are by nature international, interdisciplinary and complex, as their *raison d'être* is to tackle some of the toughest problems facing humanity. As if this were not daunting enough, the GCRF agenda has arisen and been rolled out quickly, giving funders, institutions and, above all, researchers little time to adapt to, or understand, this new funding landscape (ACAI 2017). Unsurprisingly, excitement, curiosity, suspicion and anxiety abound. A Google search for 'GCRF' returns a plethora of funding calls and institutional bravado statements about how "GCRF-ready" they are, and yet there is little advice or support available for researchers – particularly those from the Arts and Humanities – who are contemplating the development of a GCRF project. In part, this is because the scale of available funding is so large that working knowledge of the GCRF is being viewed by many institutions as an economic resource, desperately sought and closely guarded to maximise opportunities for financial return as the scheme becomes established. Acquiring research funds may drive some of these institutional initiatives, but as the process has unfurled, it has also become apparent that the scale of cross-institutional, multi-national and inter-agency cooperation and policies that these projects demand have had to be created *ad hoc*, rather than carefully developed and tested before projects go live. What is clear from all of this is more guidance is needed.

This document sets out to fill the GCRF advice vacuum and level the field in terms of access to best practice knowledge. It has been created by AHRC/GCRF-funded researchers from a variety of different UK and international institutions, specifically for consumption by the Arts and Humanities research community. The content derives from a six-month period of consultation during which questionnaires were sent to the leads of AHRC/GCRF-funded projects and a series of follow-up meetings were held, attended by academics and non-academics from a range of disciplines and backgrounds. A two-day workshop provided a space for setting out some initial shared goals for the AHRC community in the broad context of development, as well as yielding insights into specific issues that included identity politics, heritage, gender and climate change. Discussions were frank, as individuals shared their opinions about, and experiences of involvement with, GCRF research. Collectively, commonalities and differences were identified, be they in terms of disciplinary approaches or with regard to variabilities of institutional infrastructure and support. The need for creating equal partnerships in project development, management and legacy was also discussed and the suggestions that emerged have been brought together here.

Those involved in the creation of this document are enthusiastic champions of the Arts and Humanities and believe that their disciplines should be working with others to ensure that we are not only part of the GCRF agenda, but leading it. To achieve this, the strong view was that the Arts

and Humanities community needed to be more confident in its abilities and perspectives but, perhaps more importantly, to unite and make clear what Arts and Humanities researchers should stand for within the GCRF agenda. It is our hope that this document serves as a call to arms as well as providing guidance, and direction to existing literature, about how projects might be planned, implemented and delivered in circumstances that are often difficult, domestically and abroad.

2. The Potential for Arts and Humanities to Shape and Lead the GCRF agenda

Traditionally, the Arts and Humanities have been overlooked in terms of development, which has often been economically focussed and framed to meet immediate practical needs (e.g. food, water, health and shelter) or strategic needs (e.g. education, employment and skills building). Within this paradigm, priority has been given to scientific analysis of issues such as global warming, food security and waste management; however, it is becoming increasingly apparent that many global challenges are societal, political and cultural as well as scientific and that the barriers to change are historical, linguistic, social, ideological and gender-based. It is important to recognise that these barriers do not exist solely within DAC list countries but also within those "developed" countries who are responsible for generating and distributing aid programmes. There is a pressing need to recalibrate approaches to Global Challenges and to create bespoke solutions that are both informed by, and developed in, the social, political and cultural contexts in which they will operate. This is key to successful and sustainable delivery.

The Arts and Humanities community has a vital contribution to make in this regard. Crucially, this is not just about Arts and Humanities researchers helping with cultural and linguistic barriers, science communication, and community engagement (although these are all very important practical contributions not to be ignored). Given the skills, expertise, critical reflections and scholarly foci, the Arts and Humanities can shape and lead GCRF research.

> "We know the science around global warming/food security/waste management. The barriers to change are often historical/cultural/ linguistic. That's where we come in." Paul Cooke, University of Leeds

The Arts and Humanities have the potential to set the intellectual agenda, bring real world problems into richer context and sharper focus, and lead research activity that helps address these global, international development challenges. The Arts and Humanities can also provide space for critical reflection on the more intangible, creative aspects of human experience and cultural identity - expressed through cultural practices such as oral histories, drama, art, story-telling and cultural heritage - that are fundamental aspects of well-being. The creativity and agency borne of trying to make sense of the world and of human relationships is – in many respects – at the heart of the human ability to make change. A better understanding of these aspects can inform the aspiration towards more relevant, meaningful, people-focused development.

Given that Arts and Humanities researchers have both the potential and opportunity to make a difference, it is surprising that there is a palpable sense of reticence amongst certain quarters of our disciplines. We have been investigating why this might be the case.

3. What is Stopping Arts and Humanities Researchers?

Talking to the Arts and Humanities research community, there are many reasons why individuals have been reluctant to engage with the GCRF agenda. Some researchers are sceptical of the politics behind the GCRF—sensing that the budget has been created through a re-direction of ODA (Official Development Assistance) funds. The title of the government's (2015) *UK Aid: Tackling Global Challenges in the National Interest* is explicit about using the money to serve "the national interest", which some believe make clear the UK government's rationale for engaging in and distributing international aid.

Others are troubled by, or resentful of, the feeling that they are being required to bend their research unnaturally in order to fit funding streams. Alternatively, those who might be interested in undertaking GCRF projects sometimes find it difficult to see how their research focus, which may be narrow, can be resituated at the scale necessary to address Global Challenges.
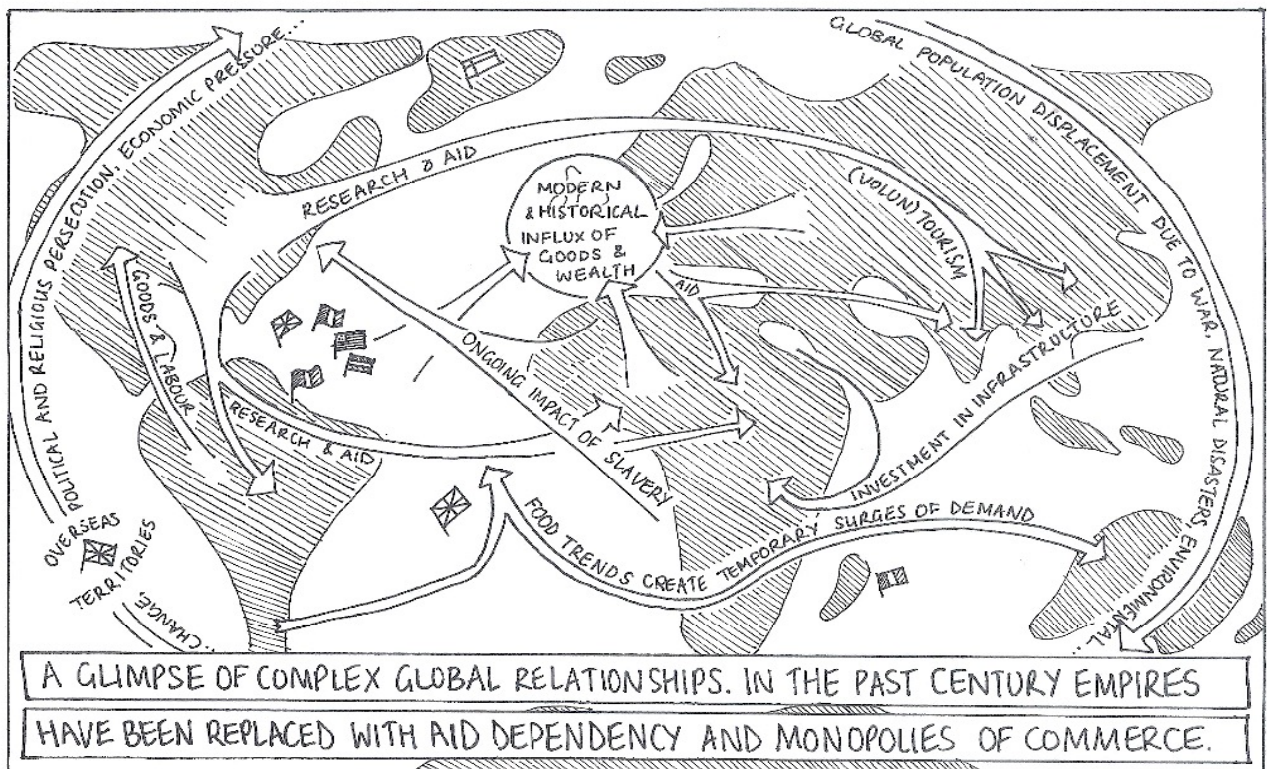
Few within the Arts and Humanities have expertise or a background in development work and there is an understandable anxiety amongst individuals from our disciplines that we are unqualified to lead GCRF projects. At the same time, researchers have expressed an unwillingness to be part of projects led by other disciplines, fearing that they represent a token gesture, "a nice arts project", at the end of the "real" science-led development work.

This mix of scepticism, anxiety and insecurity is, at a generalised level, a character trait of Arts and Humanities researchers, the majority of whom are critical thinkers who have been raised within a lone scholar tradition. However, there is a burgeoning population of Arts and Humanities researchers who can see the positive potential of the GCRF and are comfortable working collaboratively within interdisciplinary and international teams to address complex social and cultural issues (see Case Study volume). Their confidence comes from a genuine belief about the value of their field and the ability to see its significance in a real-world context. Alongside this, they are empowered by the recognition that they are not required to have expertise beyond their disciplinary bounds but rather to work in partnership with other equally skilled researchers from different fields, countries and contexts. One of the advantages of working across "distant"

disciplines and with new partners is that it allows us to learn from our differences whilst sharing our commonalties, and that is empowering too.
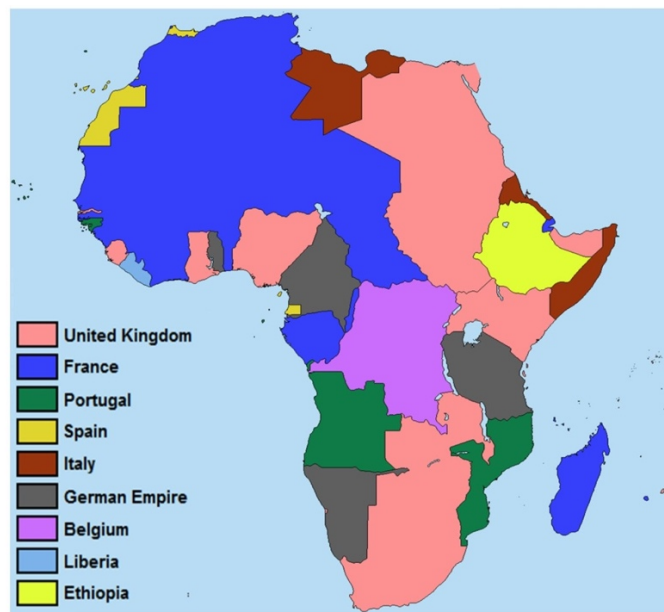
Already the AHRC has funded over 100 interdisciplinary GCRF projects. These projects are demonstrating that Arts and Humanities researchers are more than capable of using their creativity to co-produce methodologies and programmes of research that are enhancing the development sector. They have also highlighted areas that ought to be considered by any researcher setting out within a GCRF context. Perhaps the most significant of these considerations is that of colonialism.

4. The Legacy of Colonialism, Imperialism and Interventions

A GLIMPSE OF COMPLEX GLOBAL RELATIONSHIPS. IN THE PAST CENTURY EMPIRES HAVE BEEN REPLACED WITH AID DEPENDENCY AND MONOPOLIES OF COMMERCE.

More than any other disciplines, the Arts and Humanities have acute awareness of the colonial past. Many recognise their own history as disciplines of Empire, since their founding knowledge, associated collections, museums and galleries, have their origins in, and have benefitted from, colonialism. Other disciplines have long histories of critiques of and/or reflections on conquest, invasions, rhetorics of "modernity" and primitivism, considerations of dispossession, post-colonialism, the logics of racial capitalism and humanitarian intervention, to name but a few global themes and processes. It is, therefore, unsurprising that Arts and Humanities researchers have been the quickest and most vocal to highlight that some of the rhetoric (e.g. *UK Aid: Tackling Global Challenges in the National Interest*) and practices surrounding GCRF are worryingly close to neo-colonialism (Noxolo 2017) and are framed without a clear ethical consideration of how interactions between unequal political bodies should take place.

One needs only to look at the DAC list to see the startling coincidence between those countries in need of assistance and those that felt, or may continue to feel, the impact of Empire, occupation and exploitation (see Fig 1). This is something that we need to recognise and be honest about, otherwise attempts at development will fail before they start. Indeed, some existing in-country partners on current AHRC/GCRF projects have raised concerns that the GCRF is explicitly neo-colonial. Knowledge about the history of Development Studies explains why this might be the case as, by the 1990s, development had become synonymous with imperialism (see Development Guide).

Legend:
- United Kingdom
- France
- Portugal
- Spain
- Italy
- German Empire
- Belgium
- Liberia
- Ethiopia

Least Developed	LIC	LMIC	UMIC
Angola	Kenya	Cabo Verde	Alegria
Benin	Zimbabwe	Cameroon	Botswana
Burkina Faso		Republic of Congo	Gabon
Burundi		Cote d'Ivoire	Libya
Central African Republic		Egypt	Mauritius
Chad		Ghana	Namibia
Comoros		Morocco	Seychelles
Democratic Republic of the Congo		Nigeria	South Africa
Djibouti		Swaziland	Tunisia
Equatorial Guinea			
Eritrea			
Ethiopia			
Gambia			
Guinea			
Guinea-Bissau			
Lesotho			
Liberia			
Madagascar			
Malawi			
Mali			
Mauritania			
Mozambique			
Niger			
Rwanda			
Sao Tome and Principe			
Senegal			
Sierra Leone			
Somalia			
South Sudan			
Sudan			
Tanzania			
Togo			
Uganda			
Zambia			

Figure 1: Coincidence of DAC-list countries and the 1913 map of colonialism on the African continent.

There is a risk that, despite best intentions, the GCRF might replicate this situation and reproduce inequalities rather than solve them, whilst at the same time dehumanising communities and promoting an academic "white saviour" culture in which money, leadership and "answers" flows from one nation outwards to other nations in need of being saved, fixed, helped or developed. This is, of course, complicated by inequalities and disparities observed within the UK that may be related to certain SDG goals. Coming from academic institutions, as a whole, in which the academic research population is overwhelmingly white, there is the potential for GCRF to seemingly replicate the nineteenth-century notion of the "white man's burden" with regard to missionary and imperial work within colonial spaces. Related to these questions about problematic inequality and power is the tangible impact within various countries of the GCRF push to assemble international partners and teams. Already it is possible to observe something of a new "Scramble for Africa" (and other DAC list countries) as UK institutions seek to find in-country partners in order to capture something of the GCRF pot. This has resulted in a new calculus about who would make "good" in-country partners, how fit each might be to receive UK funds and how networked these groups might be in-country to enable capacity building to occur. The fear is that rather than tapping into a wealth of in-country knowledge and expertise, GCRF might actually displace various groups and merely concentrate power (and funds) within certain partners as universities and independent research organisations circle around "trusted" collaborators. To avoid the seeming adoption of the logics and patterns above, Arts and Humanities researchers should not only embrace our anxieties about development, but engage in research that directly highlights and critiques the neo-colonial hazards within development research.

> "In many parts of the world, 'Development' has been seen as a stand-in for colonialism. I fear not enough researchers funded under the GCRF scheme will have a firm grounding in postcolonial issues."   Bret Matulis, Dept of Geography, University of Leicester

It is important to stress nevertheless that there is a similarly strong critique of these potential elements of GCRF from within the Development Studies community, and these have led to culturally-focused and contextualised research approaches often led by anthropologists and those in cognate fields. Arts and Humanities scholars are, as a result, supplementing, supporting and enriching what has already been emerging within the field of development. Awareness of the neo-colonial risks of the GCRF research needs not be debilitating, therefore, and it is equally important that we avoid problematizing the situation to the point of inaction. Instead, Arts and Humanities researchers need to view our criticality as one of our greatest strengths. Our other assets include our sustained and sophisticated engagement with historical and geographical context, with cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as with the various modes of communication that the negotiation of these contexts and forms of diversity requires. We promote understanding of the complex human dimensions of the regions, cultures and communities on which GCRF projects focus and in the process, explore connections between past and present, while seeking to illuminate the unresolved

inequalities and asymmetries that persist within specific regions. Rather than merely becoming an uncritical agent within GCRF, we see Arts and Humanities scholars as vocal agents that can reframe language(s) around development, critically examine the research processes within GCRF projects, unmask the ethical encounters that may distort collaborations and partnerships, reveal the political contexts that may have shaped many of the challenges being felt within DAC list countries and the impact of any purported "solutions" to Global Challenges. Why? Because this is the type of work undertaken by many within the Arts and Humanities.

If nothing else, our comparative and *longue durée* perspectives allow us to highlight that cultures change, are changing, and will continue to do so – for the better if researchers within the Arts and Humanities have the confidence to recognise their responsibility to the cultures that they study and deploy their skills and insights to help address Global Challenges and work in collaboration to deliver solutions that continue to engage with our critical scholarship and knowledges and the knowledges already within the communities that GCRF aims to serve.

> "As a museum curator, I am in charge of a great collection of artefacts that has been collected and administered by colonial powers, but largely omits the perspectives of the colonised peoples." Ilona Regulski, British Museum.

Again, this approach builds on the contributions of a number of Social Scientists who have sought to apply perspectives similar to these. The challenge again is to identify the value added to this area by Arts and Humanities researchers: taking seriously the importance of stories and narrative; adopting a more historically-informed approach, one that explores past influences and also challenges the a-historical strands of much previous development work; analysing cultural and social change; and showing how the ways in which people have explained or influenced those changes can both indicate underlying social values and norms, and also reveal what alternative routes to positive change might work in future.

5. What Should the Arts and Humanities Represent in a GCRF Context?

The complex combined realities of the colonial and postcolonial histories of most DAC list countries, together with an understanding of the current political motivations behind GCRF funding and experience of the institutional scramble to capture GCRF money, might justifiably leave any researcher with a feeling of queasiness. Many of these countries have moved far beyond the direct impact of the colonial past, demonstrating strong cultural, historical and economic identities, but the question that we must ask ourselves remains: how should we respond to this discomfort – disengage from the GCRF agenda entirely, or embrace it and try to influence its course? The latter is, arguably, a more positive response but to achieve it requires a unified effort and, more fundamentally, a consensus about what Arts and Humanities research should stand for in the face of a complex, political and emotive source of funding. Essentially an Arts and Humanities GCRF

mission statement is needed, and this was something discussed at length during our workshop. All attendees were tasked with writing 100 words about what they felt the Arts and Humanities should represent in a GCRF context, and the text that follows has been distilled from these statements.

For the Arts and Humanities, development must be human-centred, valuing, promoting and prioritising diversity. It must focus on ensuring that every person has access to opportunities, can make free choices and is free from discrimination and violence and lives a life defined by wellbeing, respect and dignity. To this extent, the Arts and Humanities should stand for cultural reflexivity and critical introspection. We need to challenge perceptions of passive cultures that are "waiting for development", or our own assumptions about what kind or how much development a country or community needs. Our disciplines can move us beyond narrow representations of need, aid, and assistance that might reproduce colonial practices of disempowerment.
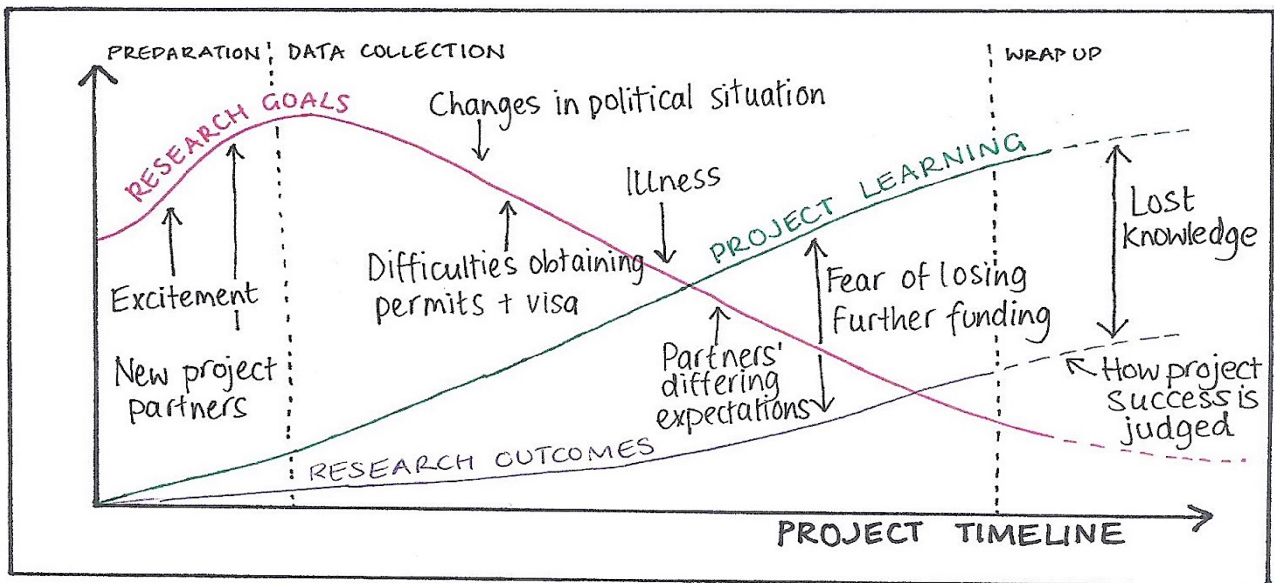
If the GCRF is challenge-led, focussed around so-called wicked problems, then one of the most important contributions of the Arts and Humanities is that of praxis; the on-going cycle of thought, action, critical reflection, and further action that constitutes many of our discipline—a process that naturally, and necessarily, includes a widening of the international development dialogue to value contributions from as wide a spectrum of arts and humanities subject disciplines and approaches as possible.

Collaborative working practices that promote creativity and the ability to co-design and co-produce solutions iteratively should be at the heart of AHRC-led GCRF research. Creativity is integral to the process of development as to be human is to be creative, and that is what enables change. This is especially the case where creative participatory and what are sometimes called "action" approaches – artworks, literature, films – can amplify voices working toward a particular issue, problem or theme, a key element of the route towards greater social justice, better forms of empathy across space and time, and more responsible modes of living on a shared planet.

In view of both the centrality of education to the SDGs and the structural and institutional disparities that persist when working with partners (especially HE institutions) located in the Majority World, the Arts and Humanities are also well-placed to address the intersections between research and pedagogy in productive and imaginative ways.

As a group, Arts and Humanities researchers need to be both bold and proactive in our dialogue with the Sciences and Social Sciences, making sure that a recognizable Arts and Humanities dimension is built into cross-disciplinary projects from the start. How can research have an impact on social cohesion without thinking about history and heritage? How can we achieve effective communication in areas such as health or the environment without taking into account the power of narrativity and the many, culturally inflected forms which story-telling takes? And how can we work across cultures without acknowledging the multiplicity of languages and the role of translation? In considering these questions, we come closer to establishing best practice.

6. "Best Practice"

Within a GCRF context, the concept of "best practice" is largely a fallacy. The real world of development work is full of complexity, interdependency and nonlinearity. The idea that a single, centrally-controlled approach can be successfully replicated in any context is a fantasy, albeit one that is often seductive to researchers, funders and governments who want to reduce risk and calculate impact and reach. Rather than minimising problems, the imposition of rigid systems increases the risk of programmes failing through cultural mismatch or rejection, and may actively reinforce inequalities in power structures, rather than combat them—significantly impacting future sustainability of any possible change-making, innovation, understanding or creative solution.
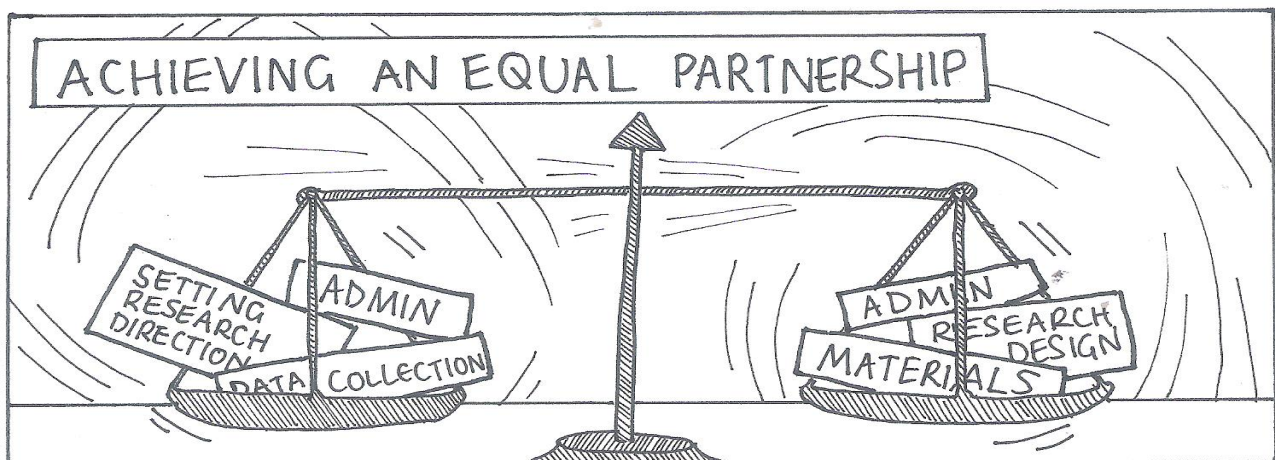
This, of course, chimes with messages from the front line, such as Maramis *et al.* (2011), in their review of Mental Health in South East Asia, citing maternal mental health as a barrier to achieving UN SDGs, but criticising the parachuting in of "off the shelf" solutions from established, but dislocated, research programmes. Whilst there are no "off the shelf" solutions to Global Challenges, there are some overarching principles and values that can be observed. Perhaps the most important is to value specificity in everything we do, whilst finding an appropriate balance between such an emphasis on the specific and the aspiration to "scalabilty" that characterises large-scale development programmes. The difference between the ideal and the reality is a line that development researchers and practitioners have to walk all the time: in this case, advocating too much specificity does not yield results that can be adapted or scaled up, and overemphasising this aspect could thus be limitation of the outcome of the research

We should make sure that we are exploring the particular sensitivities, challenges and opportunities that this particular engagement is generating within our working environments. These aspects are not necessarily impediments to addressing challenges, but are central to the ethical underpinnings of such work and resonate with how we formulate questions of partnerships and the co-design of our projects.

There is also a need for reflexivity. We should consider our own motivations for embarking on GCRF research, for without genuine commitment to addressing SDGs through research, there is a higher risk that projects will fail when problems arise or become difficult to manage. Projects and partnerships must be entered into with humility and with a recognition that the global north does not possess all, or necessarily any, of the solutions but, rather, may have played a past or current role in perpetuating the problem. We must navigate the terrain of representation, positionality, voice and intentionality with care and a high level of self-reflection.

It is important to be aware of our own positionality as a researcher representing UK-based institutions, and the ways in which these affect your own subjectivity. To what extent do your own assumptions, cultural norms, history, ethnic identity and gender affect your understanding of the people, practices, places and issues you are engaging with? It may be hard to mitigate against these, often unconscious, biases but it is important to acknowledge them when you are beginning a project, gathering information, analysing your data and writing up your research. The best way to be sensitive is to listen – an art in its own right – to those that you are working with and recognise them as equal partners in the research. It is also critical to reflect on the position of your university, your organisation and the "national interests" of the UK. Again, this is a complex terrain, but no one should enter into this space without clearly thinking through how best to work, craft, think and practice the type of transformative research that drives many of us to want to work with and learn from communities around the world.

6.1 Establishing and Sustaining Equal Partnership

Sustainable Development Goal 17 emphasises that all the other SDGs rely on **partnership** for their achievement. For this reason, a recent publication by UKCDS *Building Partnerships of Equals: the role of funders in equitable and effective international development collaborations* (Dodson 2017) provides extensive guidance about partnership models and advice about working practices. Their findings will not be rehearsed here, especially since the document is freely downloadable; however, it was written for a science-based audience (the word "culture" is mentioned just once – Ministry of Education, **Culture** & Science) and there is, therefore, scope to consider the subject from an Arts and Humanities perspective.

The GCRF actively encourages a partnership approach to the design and implementation of research projects, noting that the likelihood of scale and impact is increased if stakeholders that are close to the problem are actively involved in the research. But in the rush to establish partnerships we are often neglecting to ask some very basic questions about what we hope to achieve through these partnerships and how they should work.

There is often an assumption that all those involved in a partnership have a prior, shared understanding of goals and practice, but this is often not the case. Different stakeholders can have very different perceptions of the purpose of the relationship, which can have a knock-on effect for its transformational potential. Even when researchers are keen to foster partnerships grounded in equality and democratic principles, unspoken hierarchies of power – between Global North and Global South institutions, between holders and receivers of budget, between languages, between cultural groups, between "expert" knowledge and local knowledge, between funding priorities and local realities – regularly derail these ideals.

Often such power dynamics are invisible to those within them but some can be extremely overt, perhaps the most obvious of these being language. Communication challenges and misunderstandings are frequent enough in projects where all partners share a common dialect, but in the GCRF context, where language is an added barrier to communication this must also be considered in terms of power balance. The transmission and translation of research and information must be considered in order not to replicate linguistic power dynamics, such as colonial language practices that may have suppressed local language forms. Projects that privilege English or other colonial languages, disadvantage those cultures who do not speak them, reducing access to and success in GCRF research.

> "There is the hazard of the myth that the English language will lift people out of poverty. People need to ask themselves the question: what are you doing about language? If we do that, everything shifts in the landscape" Loredana Polezzi, Cardiff University.

Attention to linguistic diversity must be a priority when working in GCRF contexts where multilingualism is often the norm but the power differential between languages is extremely marked. Researchers need to be alert to the implications of their own linguistic practices for social cohesion, the accessibility of findings, and the overall democratizing (or otherwise) effects of research projects. Translation is a crucial tool to alleviate such problems, but it must not be understood as a transparent and neutral practice, nor as an easy solution to communication issues. Ultimately, all GCRF projects must set out to avoid "language indifference" and to incorporate an understanding of translation and multilingualism as much as cultural and political as linguistic practices.

Many Arts and Humanities disciplines, even those that purport to study international and transnational phenomena, reveal an indifference to linguistic variability. These tendencies reflect the use of English as a lingua franca in much international research, a trend reflected in the Anglocentrism of much scholarly publishing. Programmes such as the AHRC's "Translating Cultures"

theme have recently challenged all researchers to be more sensitive to language in the design and conduct of their work, and this approach is particularly important for GCRF projects. Equitable partnership should factor in the multilingual realities of many ODA recipients, and the co-design of research should pay close attention to the languages in which research will be carried out and disseminated. This might mean including researchers with specific language skills or factoring in the need for language training. It is also likely to entail the inclusion of resource for translation and interpreting. Finally, careful attention should be paid – and informed local advice taken – about the languages in which the findings of research should be best shared.

Another major problem in developing equal partnerships is that development as we know it today tends to be driven by supply rather than demand. When seeking development partnerships, researchers often gravitate towards NGOs as their more formal structures mean they are easy to establish relationships with when there is pressure to achieve results in a short space of time. NGOs often make excellent research partners, especially when they are working at the community level and have built relationships of trust with local people. However, their bureaucratic structures and pre-determined priorities mean they may be less agile and responsive to emerging issues than less formal civil society groups and social movements. These smaller groups often coalesce around urgent shared concerns and engage affected people directly in their campaigns. Working with groups such as these may be more challenging but there are also greater rewards in terms of understanding the struggles of ordinary men and women, and their active participation in addressing them.

The notion of co-producing knowledge is central to many partnerships, with the aim of representing local perspectives and concerns. Yet there is often a dissonance between providing space for marginalised southern voices to share their knowledge and identify their needs; and the perception of what constitutes rigorous, credible evidence. So how can we achieve a better balance between the demands of producing "hard data" and metrics to demonstrate results of research, and representing the more experiential but no less valid knowledge of research participants?[1]

One way in which to begin discussing them is by considering similar circumstances and problems that are removed, either by time or space. The Arts and Humanities are particularly well placed to achieve this and such an approach – highlighting and linking commonalities across cultural, geographical or temporal contexts – can not only help address difficult issues in a more palatable and engaging way, it can also be a creative mechanism of bringing about change and empowerment.

Empowerment and capacity building are key aspects of the GCRF but we need to be aware of the unexpected consequences of shifting power within communities, especially in places where infrastructure and politics are murky. Engagements need to grapple with how we manage partnerships. For example, researchers must think carefully about their established and emerging partnerships within the larger context of GCRF, given the length and scale of this investment and the increasing push for UK-based institutions to work with LDCs. We must also continue to think

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[1] These comments are drawn from an online conference "Decolonising Development: Whose Voice, Whose Agenda", hosted by University of Leeds and INTRAC, May 2017.
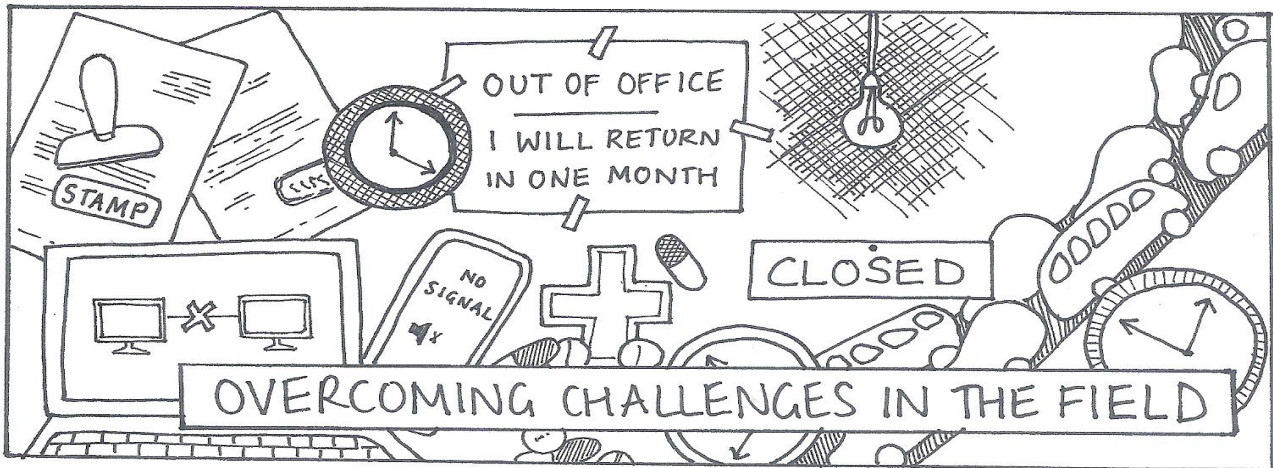
about and acknowledge the wider political context within which our projects emerge. ODA eligibility is not a simple process and involves calculations that can bring new nations into this terrain and push out others.

There is also need for "two-way capacity building" which gives space for innovative learning and re-education of northern/global actors, as well as allowing researchers, staff working in development organisations and local communities actively to define and lead their own research and development agendas. A Participatory Action Learning approach (see Development Guide) allows researchers to position themselves as facilitators, providing an environment for groups to reflect critically on what they might already be doing well in terms of thinking about, for instance, gender issues and equity concerns in their planning and implementation. It provides space to think about how to improve and systematise these good practices, as well as identifying gaps in knowledge and capacity. This kind of process can help build confidence among staff, who are able to recognise their own expertise. Just as significantly it can dramatically increase understanding of effective strategies for working with partner groups.

In sum, there are a few take-home messages about establishing partnerships.

- Take time to choose **appropriate research partners** and to develop a relationship of trust that will enable effective co-production. Working with local groups in addition to local research institutions and larger NGOs could enable deeper insights into issues of poverty and inequality that your work could/should be engaging with.

- **Do not presume common ground or mutual understanding**. Cross-cultural research must often grapple with questions of opacity, misunderstanding and even the failure to make sense.

- **Establish a theory of change and plan accordingly:** identify from the outset what change you would like your research to contribute to. If possible consult in participatory ways with communities and individuals in the context where your work will take place to understand what changes they would like to see and how you could work together to enable those changes.

- Consider from the start how you will take into account any **gender dimensions as well as integrating issues of race and other forms of difference** (taking an intersectional approach) across your work.

6.2 Management

Talk to any GCRF Principal Investigator and they will tell you that the one certainty of running a project is that little will go according to plan: people get sick, their visas are denied, travel can be disrupted by technological failure, climatic events or civil unrest. You need to be aware that things will go wrong. To be able to manage this, it is important that, wherever possible, flexibility is factored into your project design. This may be in terms of research questions (which will likely change as your research develops with your in-country partners on the ground), activities (which can change in response to shifting situations) or outputs (especially where questions and activities have changed). Some researchers feel uneasy about expressing uncertainty in their applications, fearing that it looks weak and will reduce their chances of getting funding. However, our experience suggest that panels look more favourably on bids that are open about their flexible approach, so long as the rationale is made clearly, confidently and by a team with a track record of delivery, or at least there is evidence to suggest that they will become such a team. We believe that one of the great strengths of GCRF research (particularly in comparison to standard development work) is that there is capacity to build into projects flexibility and even the potential for failure, the latter being important given that there are many aspects of GCRF research that lend themselves to failure.

6.2i Communication

Questions of language and translation have already been raised with regards to the development of equitable partnership (Section 6.1); however, within a GCRF context there are problems of communication beyond language. Perhaps most significant is how projects and team members stay in touch when they are located in different countries. Within the Global North there is a tendency to rely on technology for communication – mobile phones, email, Skype – but these may not available or reliable within the Global South. In most DAC list countries, it is usually possible to employ certain communication technologies but thought should be given to the possibility that such technologies will fail. What happens if you cannot contact your team? What plans are in place to ensure the research progresses? There is no substitute for face-to-face meetings and our recommendation is that significant time and budget is costed into projects to enable the maximum amount of collaborative work to be undertaken together, in person.

Lack of communication within any research project can often lead to friction and misunderstanding. Given that the tempo of GCRF is often highly variable (sometimes very slow, other times changing

moment to moment) all team members need to recognise their responsibility to be transparent, providing frequent updates about their activities and findings. Without free communication, there is a risk that relationships between colleagues may become tense and, more importantly, that opportunities for cross-fertilisation of knowledge are lost. Breakdown in communication can occur for any number of reasons but one of these is time.

6.2ii Time

This single word – time – encompasses a variety of the biggest issues in GCRF research. At the most basic level, teams are often working in different physical time zones, which can hamper even the best attempts at communication. However, even more fundamentally, there are frequently differences in time *perception*. This is unsurprising given that time is social construct that is shaped by cultural and linguistic forces (e.g. Ancona 2001; Fuhrman *et al.* 2011). It has to be expected, therefore, that projects working across cultures – be it in different global regions, academic versus administrative cultures, or those relating to HE versus non-HE status – will encounter different notions of time.

Variance in time perception is a well-known problem of collaborative research between HE/non-HE organisations but it is magnified in GCRF projects because the logistics of project management involve many more individuals, organisations and administrative units than are generally required for standard research projects. Conditions are made worse by the additional time-pressure inherent of GCRF funding schemes, which have, to date, required rapid response, turn around and delivery in order to meet imposed deadlines and targets.

Often these time-related issues can coalesce to generate new problems. For instance, without sufficient lead-in time, the production of official documentation to gain visas or other kinds of permissions can be difficult. This is particularly the case where institutional procedures are ridged or cumbersome, which in turn either increases the time-lag for performing tasks or places additional pressure on already overburdened administrators. Solutions to such scenarios are not straightforward as they are, themselves, the product of management cultures. It is our belief that, in much the same way that GCRF projects require co-production, collaboration and flexibility, the same is true for their administration. Together, researchers and their institutions need to create environments that facilitate flexibility. Whilst this is the ideal situation, there are hurdles to achieving such collaborative states.

6.2iii Incompatible Systems and Realities

As part of our consultation process, we talked not only with academics involved with GCRF projects but also with the administrators who shoulder much of the logistical burden. The clear message, from nearly all concerned, is that existing processes are unfit to support the complexities and time demands of GCRF research. This is understandable, since universities and other research organisations are not development agencies and, like most Arts and Humanities researchers, academic institutions have little knowledge of ODA compliance or experience working in DAC list countries. In the main, institutional procedures have been established to accommodate research and travel within the Global North. As these processed have been fit for purpose to date, there has been little incentive for institutions to change them and they are often deeply entrenched; however, GCRF research represents a different landscape and requires new approaches.

Ethics are an increasing concern within all institutions but many ethics boards and procedures have been established with the sciences in mind, for medical research or animal testing. Whilst Arts and Humanities ethics boards have some experience with regards to oral histories, most are ill equipped to deal with the circumstances of humanitarian aid. Yet ethics is a central element of planning for GCRF projects. Indeed, funding bodies have expectations that projects coming into this volatile development space will consider ethics at a range of nested levels. That said, there is currently no RCUK process in place to encourage ethics planning in a broader sense. Our recommendation is that ethics is treated as one of the key areas to discuss early, and in detail, at project planning stage, making sure it is really thought through. It is not sufficient to give a generic statement such as "my institution has policy in place concerning the protection of subjects, issues of consent and the use/re-use of data" only to discover later that there are huge problems. Projects need to take seriously the processes and impact of their work, consider how best to enter into a landscape of significant imbalances—and not amplify the tensions. Questions that need to be asked include:

1) How are you working to deal with gender, power imbalances, and with displaced communities?

2) What is the child protection framework in the country you are working in? How will you plan to comply with your organisation's child protection policy if (for example) DBS checks for rural workers in an overseas country are very slow or impossible to obtain?

3) How do management structures, research aims, scope and processes need to change in order to keep ethics central to projects?

4) How will keeping equality and equity at the forefront impact the WAY of working?

It is also important to consider the possibility that projects might potentially do harm to the very groups that they seek to help. For instance, projects that aim to empower women may risk a rise in female-directed violence or, as Thompson (2011) has stated "some projects that claim to be therapeutic are damaging … the right to silence is forgotten too often in the pressure placed on many communities to speak out". Such unintended consequences need to be thought through, and in some ways, they should comprise part of the risk assessment.

Risk. A clear understanding of risk is fundamental to GCRF projects and detailed consideration must be given to ensuring the well-being – both physical and mental – of all concerned in the research. It is important to gather and disseminate the contact details of the team members and emergency numbers (UK and in-country) along with medical information, contacts for local hospitals and embassies. It is advisable to follow the FCO website, to make sure that team members are trained in first-aid, and that everybody has appropriate insurance. Generally, this information is collated as part of standard risk assessment procedures. However, a recurring problem is that many institutions adopt overly complicated (but not always valuable) risk assessment procedures. For example, risk assessments are often judged by people (e.g., academics who have moved into long-term administrative roles) who have no knowledge or experience of working in DAC list countries and are, therefore, less qualified to make judgements than the researcher submitting the assessment. In some cases, this renders the process little more than an exercise in bureaucracy. This is even more the case where universities and other research organisations require the paperwork to be completed well in advance of any travel, as whilst it is possible to plan activities

and anticipate potential associated risks, a single document is unlikely to capture the reality of in-country research.

Our recommendation is that risk assessments need to move beyond specific actions "the predicted risk is X and we will do Y to mitigate/reduce/manage it" to a much more realistic acknowledgement that risks can change fast and unpredictably. When working in an unstable area such as a shantytown or in a conflict prone area, the local community's situation is very specific and FCO travel advice will not be granular enough to advise you on risks: you will need local partners who know the territory well. "The project team will assess risk in dialogue with partners at daily meetings and respond accordingly" is a more honest and useful risk management practice than trying to describe in advance a blanket risk level and practices for working in a particular community. This is not to suggest that risk assessments should not be undertaken, quite the opposite. We believe the risk assessment process should become a central discussion tool with your team to engage them with thinking about the health & safety, ethical, financial and governance risks they may encounter during the project. Do not identify one person to complete it and let it sit in a drawer, or feel that the team must follow the actions the document specifies without reflecting on the situation they see arising.

Finances are a significant consideration for GCRF projects as, alongside normal day-to-day budgetary management, there is an additional requirement that all spend is ODA-compliant. None of the workshop participants, or others that we consulted, had found finances to be an insurmountable problem; however, there were some common issues, and solutions, that were identified. The most frequently encountered problem is the incompatibility between university financial systems, which are receipt-based, and the reality of in-country purchases, which may be from street markets or households where traders might be illiterate and there is no concept of receipts. The easiest solution is to carry personal receipt books and log all purchases that are made. This is advisable not only because it helps the administrators of university finances but also because it is useful evidence to demonstrate ODA compliance.

Some researchers have noted problems of reconciliation between the spend on cash advances and the receipts obtained. For instance, there may be "problems of translation", either literally (because not everything will be in English) or figuratively. By example, a very popular drink in Namibia is a "rock shandy": water, lemonade, ice, and three drops of angostura. It is extremely good for dehydration, but financial offices have been known to query all the receipts thinking that it was an alcoholic drink.

Such issues are easily overcome but significant problems can emerge where institutions follow financial models that require transactions can only be made to "approved suppliers", the paperwork for which can take weeks to establish and approve. The requirements for approved suppliers is often unworkable in a DAC list country, especially within the, often tight, time-frames of GCRF research. This returns us to the all-important issue of "time", which can have significant impacts on finances.

Due to the size and structure of many UK universities, bureaucratic procedures often involve approval and sign-off from different units within the institution, generally with little communication taking place between these units. In some cases, one stage of a project (e.g. risk assessments) must be approved before other stages can be actioned (e.g. travel bookings). If each unit requires a lead-

in time of, on average, two weeks, this not only hampers project progress but can also lead to increased costs. For instance, the price of airplane tickets tends to increase closer to the date of travel: they may be a £150 different between buying tickets 1 month or 2 weeks in advance, a sum that could be better used in-country. Most importantly, it needs to be recognised that time-lags caused by UK institutions can delay payments to in-country partners, which in turn runs the risk of reducing vital good will.

There are, of course, many examples of good practice. Smaller institutions in particular are much more agile and their researchers have reported excellent support and swift turn-around on paperwork and approval. The strong message is that "Small is Beautiful" and our recommendation is that institutions should be providing bespoke, agile administrative support specialising in the delivery of ODA compliant projects. Where this is not possible, researchers can begin to create such an environment by costing a dedicated project administrator into their team, so that there is a member of staff knowledgeable about, and able to negotiate, institutional procedures. Where there is insufficient room in the budget for a project administrator, PIs and other researchers should take the time to provide university administrators with information about the project, its partners and aims. By so doing, abstract paperwork is transformed into a more relatable human story and administrators can feel more engaged in the process, becoming part of the team.

6.2iv The Team
Different teams will have different make-ups, depending on the project design. RCUK requires that projects are led by an eligible UK-based PI but, beyond this, there is considerable flexibility and PIs have the capacity to create teams with large scale in-country representation.

In-country partners. As set out in section 6.1, all projects should strive towards equal partnership. This means that in-country partners should take a lead on project design and help co-create research questions and aims. The authenticity of partnership is something that research councils will increasingly, and quite correctly, be looking to check. It is not acceptable that partners are used simply to facilitate in-country logistics (e.g. to book accommodation and transport). Wherever possible, projects should be co-directed by in-country partners and any steering committees should have equal in-country representation, with thought given to the ethics surrounding appointments to such committees.

Post-doctoral researchers. Research councils are keen to see GCRF projects run by early career researchers, with PDRAs being given encouragement to take leadership positions. Certainly, there is a need to train the next generation to work in a GCRF context; however, given the logistical issues and potential problems inherent in GCRF research, we feel that it is unwise to give too much responsibility to UK-based PDRAs before they have gained sufficient in-country experience. Similarly, in-country recruited PDRAs will require experience of navigating the structures and expectations of UK Higher Education.

PhD students. It is not possible to cost PhD studentships into most RCUK research projects; however, if the desire for GCRF projects is, in part, to capacity build, we feel that the provision of PhD studentships is a good method for achieving this. Our recommendation is that, wherever possible, UK-based project PIs/Co-Is should approach their institutions at the project planning stage, requesting support in the form of international PhD studentships. If successful, these PhD

students should be recruited in-country, in collaboration with partner organisations. Adequate costs should be included to enable the student to travel between institutions and countries, gaining the maximum amount of training that will, ultimately, benefit the DAC list country.

6.4 Outputs and Impact

Within mainstream development work, there is an increasing emphasis on demonstrating results and impact, whilst at the same time diminishing acceptance of projects that fail to achieve the goals anticipated in their initial planning. Concerns over jeopardising future funding means that vital lessons about what did not work and why are too often not being shared, leading to the duplication of the same mistakes. Part of the advantage of GCRF research projects is that there is more scope for reflecting on "failures" as well as sharing success stories from your research. Indeed, much of the guidance presented in this document derives from lesson learnt, discussed and shared: this document represents an output from GCRF research that we hope will have an impact of future projects.

Nevertheless, GCRF applications are designed to bring about change and funders do wish to quantify this. At present, most quantification methods are far from ideal. The impact framework is too often set by commonly agreed (econometric) indicators used by funders and government, with impact assessed relative to the goals set out in project plans. Such approaches to quantification do not account properly for socially (as opposed to economically) valuable effects, take little account of the perspectives of the community where the work is happening, and give less weight to unintended positives that are the natural result of work that is sensitively undertaken in dialogue with partners in response to changing contexts.

There is scope for Arts and Humanities projects not only to highlight the problems inherent in existing systems of impact assessment, but also to help devise alternative forms of metric. This is particularly important because, in some cases, pressure to demonstrate impact as a condition of funding is placing additional burden on partners (e.g. they may be required to spend time capturing data for reporting purposes) and undermines the project's ability to effect change. More generally, the whole of concept of "impact" establishes a scenario whereby the recipients of aid are cast as passive communities that are impacted upon. If nothing else, the Arts and Humanities can demonstrate, clearly and in detail, the inaccuracy and naivety of such assumptions. Communities and cultures are many things - complex, messy, difficult and sometimes dangerous to navigate and translate – but they are never passive.

7 Conclusion

This Community Guide is the result of a series of conversations drawing on the range of experiences of those listed as its co-authors. The document is a "live" one, and the intention is that it will continue to be developed and expanded as projects evolve and as more Arts and Humanities researchers engage with the GCRF. We welcome stories of success (and failure), and will seek to incorporate these in future editions. Knowledge and experience are particularly important outputs of research funded under the GCRF, and we encourage you to capture these in detail, through journals and regular dialogue within research teams.

The key idea that emerges from our discussions is that "small is beautiful", meaning that whatever longer-term ambitions you may have regarding scale and impact, initial success depends on close attention to the contexts in which you plan to work, and on the identification of suitable local partners rather than (or in addition to) those who may be seen as the "usual suspects" (i.e., universities and international NGOs). These contexts are multiple, and Arts and Humanities researchers have the skills to negotiate them in their cultural, historical and multilingual complexity. At the same time, those in the Arts and Humanities must learn from and complement experience from across other disciplinary fields, and in particular from the development sector. Such an approach will allow is to bring, in addition to this cultural sensitivity, a distinct criticality, tempered we hope with humility, that will enhance the work that GCRF seeks to achieve. Above all, we seek to encourage a genuine confidence, not only to lead projects and address pressing challenges in DAC list countries, but also to bring lessons back to own countries and institutions.

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