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THE IMPACT INITIATIVE

For International Development Research

FOREWORD

The language and the art of 'impact' is highly complex and shaped by widely differing contexts. Subsequently, capturing and communicating can be allusive and often hard to visualise or articulate.

Efforts to simplify 'impact' to make it easier to plan for, can miss the point entirely. In the context of social science, and its ability to influence meaningful social change, it is essential to embrace the diverse 'ingredients' that contribute to shaping the bigger picture.

The Impact Initiative programme recognises the complexities of the policy development process, and the multifaceted nature of social science impact. Indeed, it may be several years before the relevance of some work is fully recognised, or for changes to take place in bureaucratic, social, and economic systems.

In an attempt to highlight the overall impact of projects funded within the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership, the Impact Initiative regularly publishes a series of impact stories. The series illustrates the breadth of the partnership, showcasing a rich source of development research evidence and impact.

The stories document a range of challenges that occurred during the research process, different approaches taken, and how barriers in achieving impact were overcome. Ultimately, they demonstrate how research is improving the lives of people around the world.

They provide 'easy access' to the impact of the project and insights to contributions to wider development issues. Despite their brevity, the relationship between the research activity and subsequent impact is not simplified nor exaggerated. The stories highlight context and key moments of change and understanding. They all provide links to further studies and background reading to add to their depth.

When it comes to writing an impact story, the following criteria should be met:

- The research has contributed to a deeper understanding of the issue in hand
- The research has contributed to a change in the knowledge, attitudes and/or practice of particular actors at local, national or international level
- The impact story can be supported with images, quotes and information from researcher.

Particular types of evidence include:

- Reference to the research in policy documents
- Reference to research by policymakers, e.g. Letters from Ministers or officials supporting the story being told
- Reference to research in practitioner guides
- National statistics that give indicative evidence to support the story
- Survey evidence from individuals who have benefited.

This 'recipe book' demonstrates a variety of unique and surprising ingredients for impact. We fully acknowledge that evidence comes in many forms, and impact can appear in so many ways. While this selection of stories only shows a snapshot of the impact of the research funded by the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership, they all highlight the different 'recipes' for impact.

Why don't you become an 'Impact Storyteller' today and note down the key ingredients in your own impact story at the back of this storybook?

The **ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership** is at the forefront of commissioning research with the specific aim of tying research with pathways to achieving impact. Through the Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation and Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programmes, the partnership aims to provide a robust conceptual and empirical basis for development, delivering economic and societal impact in developing countries.

ESRC define impact as "the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research makes to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations."

The Impact Initiative for international development research aims to increase the uptake and impact of research from these two research programmes.

Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

KEY INGREDIENTS

We think it is important to showcase how researchers and donors can create greater research awareness and impact. We have made impact storytelling easier by gathering observations and experiences and in doing so have identified some key ingredients.

Impact happens in many ways, and all the stories in the book demonstrate impact through at least one mode, as defined by the ESRC-DFID guiding principles on uptake, impact and communication of research:

CAPACITY BUILDING

Building capacity of researchers and intermediaries to strengthen research uptake approaches

CONCEPTUAL

Changing ways of thinking, raising awareness and contributions to knowledge

INSTRUMENTAL

Impacts on policy and practice – a change in direction attributable to research

NETWORKS AND CONNECTIVITY

Building and strengthening networks, connecting up the supply of evidence with the demand for it.

Photo: Tororo, Uganda: A boy giggles during a presentation on menstrual hygiene management at Agwait Primary School.

Credit: Nyani Quarmyne/Panos.

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BUILDING PEACE IN THE NEW OIL FRONTIERS OF NORTHERN KENYA

Since the discovery of oil five years ago in Northern Kenya, explorations have spread to more than 30 drilling and testing sites. This has brought foreign investment, and in turn, new work opportunities, corporate social investment in schools and health clinics, and options for personal enrichment through contracts and tenders. In an area long inhabited by pastoralists, this rapid development has created tensions, resistance, and conflict around both access to new opportunities and also the impacts on lives and livelihoods. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK and the Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies, Kenya, as well as a team of researchers from Turkana County in Kenya have worked closely with big businesses, advocacy organisations, and communities to understand and balance out the interests at play. They have enabled the different parties to navigate a peaceful and sensitive process and this will be key to informing future plans for oil development.

THE CHALLENGE

Oil exploration operations by London-based Tullow Oil and the Canadian firm Africa Oil have grown significantly in Turkana County, Northern Kenya since 2010, bringing significant foreign investment

with them – the greatest in Turkana County's history. These explorations are set to continue, with the full development of the region's oil fields estimated to require US\$2.9bn (Tullow Oil 2018).

Photo: At a new well pad just north of Lokichar, a rig is positioned to begin drilling. Credit: Sven Torfinn

In recent decades, many Turkana people have been pushed out of livestock-keeping, gravitating to Lokichar and other large towns in search of work and new beginnings. Still, pastoralism has remained the largest part of the area's economy. Inevitably, there were a number of concerns about the oil development, particularly around the environmental health impacts, the blocking of access to pastoralists' key resources, and the potential impacts on culture and heritage. The area itself has long been at the bottom of poverty indices in Kenya (Samoei *et al.* 2015). It has a history of marginalisation by governments, and concerns were raised as to how to ensure Turkana County's oil was developed in equitable and fair ways.

THE RESEARCH

Researchers from IDS, the Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies, and Turkana communities were funded by the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research in 2014–17. Together they wanted to identify different local opinions and views on oil development and empower those involved to work peacefully with each other. They worked with a range of actors including local businesses, traditional leaders, young people, civil society, and county government to understand the impact of oil development and identify what the future holds in the area.

The researchers carried out interviews, a household survey, and focus groups using a range of participatory exercises with communities. They ran a number of group exercises which helped to map stakeholders, and enabled different groups and individuals to visualise and discuss situations and identify different interests. This approach was particularly useful in this setting as it created a clear picture of the region, the connections between the different actors, and relative levels of influence within the local political economy.

The findings showed that engaging the large and diverse network of local stakeholders opened up and allowed a very important dialogue to take place – contributing to a more meaningful and peaceful process than one where decisions are imposed by external oil companies or by national or local leaders.

THE IMPACT

This research contributed to the understanding of both the different groups at play and their specific interests. Business leaders, advocacy groups, and local communities have used the findings to plan and work with each other for future oil development. Communities are now engaged with from the beginning of the process.

Sean McMurtry, Asset Protection Manager with Tullow Oil in Kenya, explained how the research helped the company consider and plan how to engage in a sensitive way with the community:

As with every complex environment, once you can achieve some clarity on the context, the real challenge comes with designing a robust and reactive strategy that can help navigate: the 'what' is achievable, it's the 'how' that tends to be the more difficult part. This research and associated maps/images can be particularly useful for leaders charged with designing and delivering an engagement strategy. And, with articulating that context and strategy to business leaders who may be more removed from the sharp end and have less insight.

Local and international advocacy groups in Kenya such as Saferworld and Friends of Lake Turkana have also used the findings to inform their advocacy and decision-making processes. In parallel, the research team brought the findings back to communities. This enabled them to clearly see how their voices could make a difference and demonstrated where the influence lies in the future of oil development.

FURTHER READING

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Samoei, P. et al. (2015) *Spatial Dimensions of Well-being in Kenya: Where are the Poor?: from Counties to Wards*, Nairobi: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

Tullow Oil (2018) *East Africa: Kenya*, www.tullowoil.com/operations/east-africa/kenya (accessed 16 April 2018)

Large development investment and local peacebuilding in rural Africa: building and sustaining peace at the margins

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's **Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research**, led by Jeremy Lind, Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN REBUILDING POST-TYPHOON YOLANDA IN THE PHILIPPINES

Communities are slowly being rebuilt after Super Typhoon Yolanda (also known as Typhoon Haiyan) struck the Visayas Islands in the Philippines in November 2013. The vulnerable, most affected communities face ongoing challenges to re-establish livelihoods, safe housing, access to water and electricity, and to rebuild roads and drainage. Aid agencies, active on the ground in the immediate aftermath, have since left the region, leaving national and local government, policymakers and affected communities to respond to the long-term legacy.

Researchers at the University of Nottingham, UK and Ningbo, China in partnership with the University of the Philippines, Diliman have worked closely with local communities to articulate the lessons from Typhoon Yolanda. Their recommendations for national and local policymakers and government officials, civil society groups, and foreign aid agencies involved in future disaster work show signs of adoption as agencies take on board the importance of engaging affected communities in recovery and rehabilitation plans.

THE CHALLENGE

Typhoon Yolanda brought death and devastation, leaving over four million people displaced and over a million homes destroyed. Progress to rebuild and resettle homeless inhabitants has been made since a new phase of recovery commenced from 2015. Large infrastructure projects have been undertaken, or are ongoing; and an extensive number of public and private relocation shelters have been erected. Many people who lost their homes have new ones. Local buildings – *barangay* halls (the *barangay* is the smallest political unit with elected officials), multipurpose buildings,

and schools – are complete; community areas, such as sports pitches, have been restored or re-established; and roads resurfaced.

However, for many vulnerable communities affected by the typhoon, recovery was so long in coming that people have rebuilt them in dangerous coastal areas. Some communities are resistant to being resettled away from danger zones as resettlement plans failed to engage them in the design or implementation, whilst newly constructed homes remain unoccupied because water and electricity are not yet in place. Some may be ready to promote tourism in Tacloban, presenting successful recovery and 'resilient' populations, but life remains difficult for many who have yet to be safely resettled, to establish sustainable livelihoods, or gain access to basic services and sanitation.

THE RESEARCH

This research, which was funded by the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Alleviation Research in 2015–18, set out to explore the challenges that different stakeholders faced during the recovery and rebuilding process in the wake of Typhoon Yolanda, and to create solutions for future strategies responding to disaster.

The researchers carried out 200 interviews with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government personnel; held 50 focus groups with local people to discuss their concerns about the rebuilding process; and conducted a documents review. The researchers also

Photo: Communities attempt to rebuild their lives amidst the debris left behind by Typhoon Yolanda. **Credit:** Dr Pauline Eadie, University of Nottingham 2018.

undertook three household surveys from 800 households in the province of Leyte: from Palo, Tanauan and Tacloban City. The surveys took place annually from 2015 to 2017. The resulting data provided information on aid received, recovery, community support, employment and livelihoods opportunities as well as insights into how different *barangays* are faring post-Yolanda.

A valuable picture has emerged of the challenges faced by different actors. Meanwhile connections have been identified between them, and further levels of influence within the recovery effort have been established. In November 2017, after presenting the research at international conferences, researchers shared the preliminary findings with a group of in-country stakeholders (including academics, civil society, aid agency representatives, and government officials). Recommendations were subsequently refined through feedback and comments.

The findings indicate that community rebuilding is more sustainable where communities are actively involved in schemes such as 'sweat equity', where beneficiaries donate their labour to the housing schemes that they will eventually occupy, and in the design and planning stages of their communities. However, the findings also revealed examples of lip service being paid to community involvement without it happening in a sustainable fashion. In order for sustainable rehabilitation to take place, more work needs to be done to engage the most vulnerable people within communities, such as women and own account (or self-employed) workers.

THE IMPACT

Political sensibilities at the local level are important and rehabilitation work post-Yolanda is influenced by the pursuit of political survival at the local level, including at *barangay* level. In recognition of this context in November 2018, the University of the Philippines research team will lead a forum in Tacloban to present the research findings. Data from the household surveys for each *barangay* will be provided to local people who can see for themselves how each *barangay* is faring post-Yolanda. The team are also working with the university's Center for Integrative and Development Studies to produce discussion papers and policy briefs (online and print) which draw on the project, to be disseminated in time for the fifth anniversary of Typhoon Yolanda.

This research has contributed to an awareness of NGOs – including foreign aid agencies, and some national and local policymakers and government officials – of the need to further engage local communities in the rebuilding and rehabilitation of

their communities. There is recognition that listening to, and involving, communities at the design, planning and implementation stages of post-disaster recovery is likely to result in better outcomes and longer-term sustainability. Furthermore, the programme has contributed to capacity-building impact with junior faculty and senior students of the University of the Philippines Visayas – Tacloban College, who helped in data gathering, being mentored in field work research, and writing research reports.

According to Robert Dazo, Project Manager, Typhoon Haiyan Response, World Vision, the recommendations are set to influence future project programming:

“The actionable steps were very helpful to us and the community where we provide our strategic interventions... the needs of the community are highlighted and can guide our project programming.”

FURTHER READING

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Tan-Mullins, M. et al. (2017) *Four Years On: Rebuilding Disaster Affected Communities for a Sustainable Future: Policy Take-Away for Poverty Alleviation in the Wake of Typhoon Yolanda*, www.projectyolanda.org/documents/policy-recommendations.pdf (accessed 7 June 2018)

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Poverty Alleviation in the Wake of Typhoon Yolanda

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's **Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research**, led by Principal Investigator

Dr Pauline Eadie, University of Nottingham.

HELPING TO MAKE SAFE ABORTION A REALITY IN ZAMBIA

Zambia has one of the most liberal abortion laws in sub-Saharan Africa. However, in spite of this, unsafe abortion continues to contribute to high rates of maternal mortality. Stigma, poverty, conscientious objectors, and lack of knowledge all contribute to why many adolescent girls and women do not and cannot access safe abortions in Zambia. Through ground-breaking research led by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), political, media, and charitable organisations are now making changes to raise awareness and shape their frameworks to ensure women can take up their right to access safe abortion services.

THE CHALLENGE

Under the Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1972, Zambian law asserts that women have the right to safe and legal abortion services. But very few people know about the law, or the services available, and there is still an enormous amount of stigma associated with abortion.

Worldwide, approximately 25 million unsafe abortions are carried out each year and death from unsafe abortion disproportionately affects women in Africa (WHO 2018). In Zambia, the government estimates that 30 per cent of maternal deaths are attributable to unsafe abortion.

THE RESEARCH

The researchers wanted to understand the roles that the health system, poverty, and stigma can play in seeking abortion-related care in Zambia; estimate and compare the implications of safe abortion and post-abortion care for women and their households; and ultimately better understand how and why safe abortion services are not used more fully.

Based at a Zambian Government Health Facility in Lusaka, the researchers interviewed over 100 girls and women coming either for an abortion or for post-abortion care after an unsafe abortion. The research team worked closely with midwives to gain informed and considered consent from all the participants.

Photo: Medical abortion consultation in Zambia. Credit: Dr Ernestina Coast

In addition to the dangerous and often life-threatening impact of unsafe abortion, the research identified a significant public health cost. The first national estimates showed that treating the consequences of unsafe abortion costs the Zambian health system up to US\$0.4 million more than if the pregnancies had been terminated safely and legally.

The study found that younger and poorer women are more likely to have an unsafe abortion, even though the costs of unsafe abortion for individual women are 27 per cent higher than the costs associated with a safe abortion. It also revealed that women often have to make 'unofficial payments' to doctors for services that should be free.

'Luck' or 'chance' plays a primary role in determining whether a woman can have a safe and legal abortion. Quite often, where a woman feels she can disclose to someone that she is pregnant or if she knows someone in the health sector she may get the services she needs. Otherwise, women may not know these services exist, and if they need to hide their pregnancy or abortion they take great risks in order to terminate an unsustainable pregnancy.

Raising awareness of these services – targeting not just the general population, but also health professionals – is vital if the Zambian Government is to reap the rewards of their investment in the provision of safe and legal abortion services.

THE IMPACT

The research team have been – and continue to be – proactive in engaging key people, organisations, and institutes to support progress to successfully implement and deliver safe and legal abortion services. Through working with government, media, and non-governmental organisation (NGO) actors, this research has gone beyond Zambia solely as a country study, and is shining a spotlight on the complex and challenging process of how to provide abortion care.

Media engagement has included the researchers being involved in training Zambian radio producers who work on programmes for young adults. In-country partners also gave interviews on BBC World News, and programmes on the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), commercial radio, and a radio station for young adults.

The Zambian lead for the project presented the findings to the Resident Doctors Association of Zambia (RDAZ) in 2015, during which he found that newly graduated doctors were unaware of the laws around abortion in Zambia. The guest of honour was the Deputy Minister of Health, who subsequently invited the partner to present at the Senior Management meeting of the Ministry of Health. The research has also been incorporated in the latest Standards and Guidelines for Comprehensive Abortion Care in Zambia.

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WHO (2018) *WHO Preventing Unsafe Abortion*, World Health Organization Fact Sheet, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/preventing-unsafe-abortion (accessed 28 June 2018)

Pregnancy Termination Trajectories in Zambia: The Socio-Economic Costs

The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research. The study 'Pregnancy Termination Trajectories in Zambia' was carried out by Dr Ernestina Coast, Dr Tiziana Leone, Dr Emily Freeman, and Dr Eleanor Hukin (London School of Economics); Dr Bellington Vwalika (University Teaching Hospital, Zambia); Dr Bornwell Sikateyo (University of Zambia); Dr Susan Murray (Kings College London); and Dr Divya Parmar (City, University of London).

IMPROVING RURAL LIVES THROUGH THE LIBERIAN MOTORBIKE BOOM

Parallel to the mobile phone revolution in Africa is the lesser talked about motorbike boom. Motorbike taxis have changed the face of transport and provided employment opportunities, particularly in rural parts, in many African countries. In regions previously affected by conflict, such as Liberia, the transport sector has been a lifeline, not only providing jobs for ex-combatants but also providing much needed access to health care, schools, and markets.¹

Researchers based at Swansea University recognised the benefits of this transport and looked for ways to support it. Following the Ebola crisis of 2014–15, they recognised that transforming footpaths to tracks provided a simple and affordable way to open up rural areas for motorbikes, and potentially change the lives of remote and rural communities in Liberia. Still in its early stages, this ESRC-DFID-funded project has influenced a World Bank Transport Systems consultant to push for the inclusion of this approach in Liberia's draft National Roadmap, and other donors are interested in funding similar initiatives.

THE CHALLENGE

A study in neighbouring Sierra Leone found that 65–95 per cent of passenger and freight transport takes place by motorbike taxis² and in Liberia motorbikes are likely to have a similar share in the public transport market. But because of this taxi revolution, existing research on rural transport has quickly become outdated.

Donors often invest in 'conventional' road construction. Depending on terrain and construction standards

the cost to improve 1km of a standard road can vary greatly, ranging from US\$50,000 to US\$200,000. Limited budgets mean standard roads are unlikely to reach marginalised rural communities, denying people motorised access to services they need.

THE RESEARCH

Dr Krijn Peters from Swansea University and Independent Consultant Jim Clarke were already aware of the taxi boom. They wanted to see whether improvements to the tracks significantly changed the lives of rural communities in three villages in Liberia. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa demonstrated the challenges of providing health-care services to rural communities during a crisis, and appeared to support the theory that upgrading footpaths for motorbikes could significantly improve development outcomes.

The researchers knew that upgrading the footpaths in this way was relatively cheap, but without hard data on impact, relevant state actors and international donors were reluctant to allocate funds. At the heart of their three-year research project they asked whether

Photo: Motorcycle Taxi. Credit: Erik (Hash) Hersman/Flickr [1] licensed under CC BY 2.0 [2]

1. Jenkins, J. and Peters, K. (2016) 'Rural Connectivity in Africa: Motorcycle Track Construction', *Transport* 169: TR6.
2. Mustapha, A.; Peters, K. and Tunis, N. (forthcoming, 2018) *Rural Transport Diagnostic Study in Sierra Leone*, Final Report SLE2108A, Research for Community Access Partnership (ReCAP).

track upgrades could be a low-cost intervention to compliment, or even be an alternative to, relatively expensive feeder road construction.

Led by Krijn, with AKA Research in Sierra Leone and Lofa Integrated Development Association (LIDA) in Liberia, the qualitative study took place in 2015, in three Liberian villages. Specifically, the researchers wanted to understand the impact that motorbike-navigable track building has on lifting farmers, and other members of the community, out of poverty. They also wanted to document the process and issues arising from community involvement in the decision-making and construction process.

THE IMPACT

The impact assessment is due in 2018, but the findings are already looking promising. The researchers have seen that upgrading footpaths has reduced the travelling time to markets and health facilities from a 1–3-hour walk to a short taxi ride. It also makes it easier to transport crops to markets, and secure vital income. The construction and maintenance of these tracks has used local labour and materials – providing much-needed employment to communities.

The potential to expand this idea across Africa demonstrates value for money to funders and major donors and governments, including the Department for International Development (DFID), German Development Agency (GIZ), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the Sierra Leonean government; many of which have indicated an interest in taking this idea forward in their own plans and processes.

According to World Bank Transport Systems consultant Paul Starkey, this research is set to influence the policies and actions of governments and donors alike:

There is great potential for the emulation of such policies and practices in numerous countries in sub-Saharan Africa so that many more villages can be served for the first time by motorised transport services, thus positively affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of people

Paul Starkey, World Bank Transport Systems

However, this issue isn't so straightforward. Many governments in West Africa are hostile to motorbike road users as drivers are perceived to be rule breakers, making it challenging to regulate and prevent road accidents. Motorbike use was banned across Ghana in 2012, and in the capital city of Liberia, Monrovia, in 2013. However, in 2016, Krijn was invited to be a Technical Advisor to a Research for Community Access Partnership (ReCAP)/DFID-funded rural transport diagnostic study in Ghana. The subsequent recommendations are to change the universal ban on motorbike taxis in Ghana and allow them in rural areas, and this is currently with the legislators. This demonstrates the potential for this project to grow to other communities and countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

FURTHER READING

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[Richards, P.; Archibald, S.; Bruce, B.; Modad, W.; Mulbah, E.; Varpilah, T. and Vincent, V. \(2005\) *Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment*, Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction No. 21, Washington DC: World Bank](#)

At the end of the feeder road: assessing the impact of track construction for motorbike taxis on agrarian development in Liberia

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, led by Dr Krijn Peters, Swansea University.

KEEPING AFRICAN GIRLS IN SCHOOL WITH BETTER SANITARY CARE

For young girls in developing countries, not knowing how to manage their periods can hinder access to education. Research from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London demonstrates that in rural Uganda, providing free sanitary products and lessons about puberty to girls may increase their attendance at school.

THE CHALLENGE

In many poor communities, menstruation is still often seen as an embarrassing, shameful, and dirty process. Such taboos around the topic mean many adolescent girls are often unprepared for their periods and how to manage them. Less than half of girls in lower- and middle-income countries have access to basics such as sanitary towels or tampons, soap and water, or facilities to change, clean, or dispose of hygiene products.

In Uganda, only 22 per cent of girls are enrolled in secondary schools compared with 91 per cent in primary schools, with those living in rural areas being the least likely group to go to school. Researchers believe that the cost of hygiene products and the difficulties in managing periods play a key role in keeping girls out of school.

THE RESEARCH

Over 24 months, a trial was conducted in partnership with Plan International Uganda across eight schools, involving 1,008 girls, in Uganda's Kamuli District, an area that had been observed as having low learning levels as well as gender disparity in health and education.

The research tested whether school attendance improved when girls were given (a) reusable sanitary pads, (b) adolescent reproductive health education, (c) neither, or (d) a combination of both. Girls were provided with AFRIpads, a washable, reusable cloth pad produced in Uganda, and locally trained community health nurses held sessions that covered changes which occur during puberty, menstruation, and early pregnancy, and on the prevention of HIV.

Researchers found that better sanitary care and reproductive health education for poor schoolgirls, delivered over two years, did appear to improve attendance. On average, girls increased their attendance by 17 per cent, which equates to 3.4 days out of every 20 days.

Many girls don't know about periods before they encounter their first one. They are totally unprepared because they receive no information or training on how to manage them. Simple interventions like these can have major long-term economic implications for women in low- and middle-income countries.

Catherine Dolan, SOAS, University of London

Photo: Uganda, Kiteengeesa. A worker trims and stacks sanitary pads before they are lined and sewn at the AFRIpads factory. Started by volunteers in 2009, AFRIpads manufactures reusable fibre sanitary pads. **Credit:** Nyani Quarmyne/Panos.

THE IMPACT

The research project has significantly strengthened awareness that sanitary pad provision and puberty education are both vital in improving attendance. Even in the absence of resources to provide sanitary pads, the research recommends that inclusion of adequate and gender-sensitive puberty education in the school curriculum can improve attendance.

Organisations such as UNICEF and the NGO CARE have used the evidence to identify solutions to barriers to girls' schooling associated with puberty.

These findings will make an important contribution to CARE's efforts to fight poverty by removing the barriers that keep girls out of school. All over civil society, in fact, bigger funding will now be available for large-scale rollouts because of the hard evidence provided by the study in Uganda.

Joan Garvey Lundgren, Executive Director, Strategic Partnerships, CARE USA

The project collaborated with Save the Children, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), WaterAid, and AFRIPads to lobby for menstrual hygiene management to be included as an indicator in post-2015 sustainability goals. Further collaborations building on the evidence have included working with Save the Children on how to link the distribution of sanitary care to their West African programmes, and with UNESCO on effective programming in puberty education and menstrual hygiene management.

Ghana's Deputy Minister of Education referenced the research when defending the decision to allocate part of the country's 2014 World Bank loan to providing sanitary pads for female students in need. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa stated that when adolescent girls are unable to take proper care of themselves during the menstruation period, it affects their confidence, which eventually keeps them out of school.

The research team continues to use the results as part of a push to promote female hygiene onto the global development agenda. The findings featured in preparatory documents for the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme indicators for menstrual hygiene management, and have been cited in the UNESCO *Puberty Education & Menstrual Hygiene Management* report, which aims to promote sexuality education as part of skills-based health education for young people.

The impact of the research has the potential for addressing psychosocial wellbeing, dignity, comfort, and ability to manage menstruation without shame, which are all essential for girls responding to the challenges presented by menstruation in low-income contexts.

Studies such as this are too few and far between. They are critical to give context to the impact of hygiene and sanitation during puberty, which in turn helps us work towards solutions to improve girls' life chances.

Brooke Yamakoshi, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Specialist (Sanitation and Hygiene), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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Menstruation and the Cycle of Poverty: Does the provision of sanitary pads improve the attendance and educational outcomes of girls in school?

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's **Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research**, led by Catherine Dolan, SOAS, University of London; Paul Montgomery, University of Birmingham; and Linda Scott, Chatham House. The research was carried out in partnership with Plan International Uganda, with the assistance of Julie Hennegan, Johns Hopkins University; Maryalice Wu, University of Illinois; and Laurel Steinfeld, Bentley University.

MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION IMPROVES LITERACY IN UGANDA

Children whose first language is not the language of instruction in school are more likely to drop out or fail in early grades. Research from the Universities of Illinois and their Ugandan partners Mango Tree Educational Enterprises and the Ichuli Institute, Kampala, demonstrates that the provision of teacher support and educational resources produced in local languages can lead to large learning gains in rural, under-resourced and overcrowded classrooms.

THE CHALLENGE

In Uganda, as in many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, access to primary school has expanded rapidly over recent decades. However, these gains have not been matched by improvements in learning, especially in literacy. In the Lango region of northern Uganda, 80 per cent of children aged 7–8 years are unable to read.

Previous research has shown that a child's first language is preferable for literacy and learning throughout primary school. Children who receive mother tongue-based multilingual education also perform better in their second language. However, in

the Lango region, reading is usually taught in English, and not in the local language, Leblango.

National efforts to promote mother tongue education policies have been largely unsuccessful due to underdeveloped rules for the writing and spelling of local words, a lack of education materials produced in local languages, and the absence of quality training to support teachers to deliver local-language curriculums.

THE RESEARCH

Funded through the ESRC-DFID Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Research Programme, the aim of the research was to evaluate and measure

Photo: Uganda Kampangi, Rakai. A pupil holds up their hand to ask a question at St. Henry's school where about 410 students between the ages of 6 and 16 are enrolled. **Credit:** Mikkel Ostergaard / Panos.

the effectiveness of the innovative Mango Tree Literacy Programme in Uganda which seeks to emphasise mother tongue literacy education.

The programme engages indigenous writers, artists, designers and technical experts, as well as teachers, to co-develop education materials in local languages. Teacher training has an explicit focus on improving written and spoken language skills, and parents are taught how to interpret their child's literacy report card and use the results to support learning at home.

A randomised control trial of the programme took place in 128 schools in the Lango region over four years (2013–17). The researchers found that Mango Tree's approach succeeded in substantially improving literacy levels in early primary school grades, raising literacy levels equivalent to a whole additional year of schooling – amongst the largest improvements ever achieved for randomised education interventions of this kind.

THE IMPACT

Results from the research have reinforced the benefits of Mango Tree's approach to literacy instruction. Thanks to Mango Tree's role in the research process, a project team member is part of a national literacy technical working group advising the government on successful approaches to improving literacy instruction and teacher training and support.

The research findings have also influenced a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) White Paper on approaches to improving literacy instruction in Uganda. Heidi Soule, USAID Uganda Education, Youth and Child Development Advisor reported that 'Without this research, the local language development component would not have been included in the White Paper.' The paper will be incorporated into a national reflection and dialogue about the future of literacy programming at an upcoming USAID-sponsored National Reading Symposium where participants, including prominent

Ministry of Education officials, parliamentarians, practitioners, and non-governmental organisation leaders will vote on priorities for future national education programming in Uganda.

Not only has the project stimulated a passion for local language literacy and a love for reading in local language in homes, communities, and schools, but the impact of the research has contributed to knowledge about successful approaches to teacher training and effective instructional materials in Uganda, which have the potential to transform learning in all low-income contexts.

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The Literacy Laboratory Project (LLP) under the Northern Uganda Literacy Program

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Research Programme, led by Rebecca Thornton, Department of Economics, University of Illinois. The research was carried out in partnership with the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin, the Copenhagen Business School, Mango Tree Educational Enterprises, and the Ichuli Institute.

REDUCING SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES IN MALAWI AND LESOTHO

'School in a bag', buddy systems and catch-up clubs have paved the way for improved learning and reduced dropout in schools in Malawi and Lesotho. These pioneering techniques have been used by researchers from University College London's Institute of Education and their Southern African partners to help ensure that disadvantaged children, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS, stay in school.

Between April 2007 and July 2010, the team developed and piloted these distance- and flexible-learning techniques in 20 primary schools in Malawi and 16 secondary schools in Lesotho, all of which were located in areas where HIV/AIDS was highly prevalent and where school dropout rates were high. In both countries, the schools saw reduced dropout rates (up to 45 per cent in Malawi), particularly for older children.

THE CHALLENGE

Many developing countries have made good progress in improving enrolment rates since universal primary education became a UN global target over 15 years ago. But for countries in Africa such as Lesotho and Malawi which are deeply affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis, these gains mask a troubling picture of low levels

of achievement and worrisome dropout rates. For orphaned or vulnerable children who struggle to attend class, for example because they care for chronically ill parents or work to support themselves and their families' income, the problem is made worse by school policies which actively discriminate against poor households.

THE RESEARCH

The research team wanted to study whether a flexible approach to learning could improve educational achievement and reduce the risk of dropout for vulnerable children. Key components of their ground-breaking SOFIE model included a 'school in a bag' that held pens, notebooks, textbooks and self-study

Photo: Malawi. Children studying in class. © Giacomo Pirozzi /Panos Pictures.

1. The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE); the Institute of Education, National University of Lesotho; and the Centre for Education Research and Training (CERT), University of Malawi.
2. Strengthening Open and Flexible Learning for Increased Educational Access in High HIV Prevalence Countries.

guides for English and Maths designed to encourage independent learning for children for whom school attendance was often erratic; a buddy system providing peer-support for learning; and catch-up clubs run by youth volunteers providing additional learning opportunities in friendly, informal environments, and which were arranged after school hours.

THE IMPACT

In both countries, school dropout rates reduced and Maths scores improved. In fact, the positive effects spilled over to a much wider group thanks to improved teacher engagement and changes in exclusionary practices. Children's confidence and self-esteem increased, and the buddy system helped reduce isolation and discrimination, build friendships, and increase motivation to continue with school.

Particular success was attributed to the innovative self-study guides and, critically, the collaborative nature of the project – community members, teachers and youth volunteers were all included in helping to improve the inclusiveness of schools by developing 'circles of support' around vulnerable children at risk of dropping out of school.

Against a context of underlying poverty and disadvantage, having someone who provides emotional support, takes an interest and pays attention to whether they are in school or not, be it a buddy, teacher, community leader, is of great value to pupils who regularly experience isolation.

Malawi lead researcher Catherine Jere

Findings from the project have played an important role in demonstrating how conventional schooling can be adapted for children struggling to attend and remain in education.

In Lesotho, the CEO for Curriculum Assessment has used the findings to raise the profile of open and flexible learning techniques within the Ministry of Education; and a formal qualification for teachers on guidance and counselling has been initiated.

In Malawi, pilot schools put in place plans to change discriminatory school policy, improve their inclusiveness, and support disadvantaged children.

The project also reinforced the Ministry of Education's ongoing re-assessment of the country's distance education strategies. Templates of the self-study guides were shared with district education offices and project outcomes informed the design of non-governmental 'bridging' programmes and clubs to provide learning support for senior primary girls during the transition to secondary education and to reduce the risk of dropout. Several of the youth volunteers involved in the project have since been accepted onto a national distance-learning teacher training programme.

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Strengthening ODFL systems to increase education access and attainment for young people in high HIV prevalence SADC countries

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's **Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research**, led by Principal Investigator Professor Pat Pridmore and Chris Yates, University College London's Institute of Education, team statistician Matthew Jukes, Harvard University, Ephraim Mhlana, South African Institute for Distance Education and in collaboration with the in-country researchers Catherine Jere, the University of Malawi and the National University of Lesotho.

REDUCING TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN SIERRA LEONE

Research directly involving teenagers and their families in Sierra Leone to reduce teenage pregnancy has helped pave the way for a new community-friendly Child and Family Welfare Policy. The research by the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity and UNICEF Sierra Leone mobilised local people through child- and youth-led education initiatives and through closer connections with district health workers. Thanks to the project, condom use increased, teenage girls reported feeling more confident to say 'no' and boys showed more willingness to act responsibly. The findings directly influenced the Sierra Leone government's development of a new policy on child protection.

THE CHALLENGE

Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's highest teenage pregnancy rates, with one in five girls aged 15 to 19 giving birth.¹ Many girls who become pregnant are forced to leave school. Complications during pregnancy are common and many girls undergo unsafe abortions. Babies born to adolescent mothers face a substantially higher risk of dying.² In 2013, with Sierra Leone recording a 68 per cent pregnancy rate among adolescent girls (with a mean age of 15),³ the president declared that the problem demanded urgent action and launched a national strategy to address it.⁴

A global review of community-based child protection mechanisms, such as Child Welfare Committees, found that these often failed to protect vulnerable children from dangers like teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Problems included a lack of local

ownership deterring families from getting involved, committees collapsing once funding had ceased and poor collaboration between community efforts and district-level health workers. This highlighted a need for a more community-led approach to child protection in places like Sierra Leone, to stem the high rates of teenage pregnancy and prevent the harm it causes to girls' health, their futures and to economic and social development.

THE RESEARCH

In 2012 the action research team began working in two districts in Sierra Leone: Moyamba District within the Mende-speaking southern area and Bombali District within the predominantly Temne-speaking northern area. After extended dialogue, community members chose to address teenage pregnancy through family planning, sexual and reproductive health

Photo: Girls in a school yard in Sierra Leone. Credit: GPE/Stephan Bacheneheimer [1] licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 [2]

1. UNICEF (2017) 'The highest rates of early childbearing are found in sub-Saharan African countries', downloaded 1 December 2017, <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/adolescent-health/>
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education and life skills. Communities encouraged families to collaborate with the district government, health services and schools. The team coordinated training by NGOs and the provision of contraceptives and education around puberty, sexuality, pregnancy and pregnancy prevention by the District Ministry of Health. Communities organised role plays among teenage girls and boys while parents and children had candid discussions about puberty, sex and preventing pregnancy. From the outset, the research team worked closely with UNICEF, which played a lead role in child protection. UNICEF engaged with Sierra Leone's national Child Protection Committee and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, which helped to select the areas for study.

THE IMPACT

A mid-point project evaluation in July 2014 showed that teenagers reported⁵ a greater intent to use condoms while teenage girls reported feeling empowered to refuse unwanted sex more frequently. Both girls and boys said that they had learned how to discuss and negotiate with their partners about sex, and how to plan their sexual activities in light of wider life goals. Boys openly acknowledged their responsibility to prevent teenage pregnancy – contrasting sharply with their previous behaviour.

The insights gave us the evidence we needed to work with the government on a radical shift in child protection policy.

David Lamin, UNICEF

Health workers, teenagers and their families indicated seeing a significant decrease in teenage pregnancies. Prior to the research, in an average school year there were five or six teenage pregnancies per village in both districts. In the 2013/14 school year, half the communities reported no new teenage pregnancies, and the other half reported only one new teenage pregnancy. Some villages had spontaneously begun to discuss the problem of early marriage.

Although the Ebola crisis disrupted the project in August 2014, the action research did significantly influence national policy on supporting vulnerable children in Sierra Leone – in particular the findings that local people relied on community-owned processes and

existing family and community mechanisms. This directly influenced Sierra Leone's government and UNICEF to collaborate on a new policy placing family- and child-led action at the centre of child protection. The new Child and Family Welfare Policy enacted in 2015 embodied insights from the research.

David Lamin⁶ of UNICEF Sierra Leone explained the value of the research: 'The insights into teenage pregnancy and the need for communities themselves to drive efforts to protect children provided us with the evidence we needed to work with the government on a radical shift in child protection policy.' He said the findings were being used to develop ways to implement the policy, adding: 'there are now plans to share this evidence and approach with the governments of Ivory Coast, Liberia and Guinea.

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Inter-Agency Research On Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection For Vulnerable Children In Sierra Leone

This research was funded by the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation. It was conceptualised by the Inter-Agency Learning Initiative on Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms, which is coordinated by Save the Children. The research team was led by Principal Investigator Michael Wessells, Columbia University, in collaboration with UNICEF, United States.

5. Stark, L. et al. (2014) *A community-driven approach to reducing teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone: Midline Evaluation*, London: Save the Children; Wessells, M.G. (2015) 'Bottom-up approaches to strengthening child protection systems: Placing children, families, and communities at the center', *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal* 43: 8-21.

6. Extracts from an audio recorded interview between M. Wessells and D. Lamin, June 2014.

TACKLING EXTREME POVERTY THROUGH PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT IN BANGLADESH

In the last 20 years, remarkable progress has been made in tackling extreme poverty. Yet, while the number of people living on less than US\$1.90 per day in 2015 was 736 million (10 per cent of the global population, down from 11 per cent in 2013), the rate of poverty reduction has started to decline. Reaching and keeping the most vulnerable and marginalised people out of poverty is harder than ever. A novel initiative in Bangladesh, led by the international non-governmental organisation BRAC, to provide material and psychological support to the poorest individuals and households has proved to be a sustainable and lasting way to prevent them from falling back into poverty.

THE CHALLENGE

Microfinance initiatives (MFIs) are widely used by governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help the poor to their way out of desperate poverty and to provide a reliable and safe source of income. Yet, in the early 1990s, the global NGO BRAC recognised that MFIs are not always an appropriate way to support the extreme poor as they fail to take into account the psychological, cultural, and physical barriers that prevent people from setting up and maintaining their own small businesses. Women in particular can often be excluded and isolated in a male-dominated society, and lack the networks and connections required for support and to effectively use the loan successfully.

THE RESEARCH

Through BRAC's Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the Ultra-Poor (CFPR-TUP) programme, over 650,000 ultra-poor families have graduated from poverty since 2002. This programme worked on the logic that those living in extreme poverty needed some kind of 'asset transfer'. Since most were illiterate they required training to take care of their 'business' assets – i.e. a cow, a flock of chickens, or a small grocery shop. That logic extended to the understanding that in order to benefit from having these assets the families have to be well looked after. Each family was provided with a case worker who gave not only practical guidance but also emotional support.

Photo: Measuring vegetables while selling in the market at Khagrachari, Bangladesh.
Credit: IFPRI/Farha Khan/Flickr licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

The ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research funded the Graduation as Resilience programme through two stages from 2013 to 2018 to understand what aspects of BRAC's already successful CFPR-TUP programme could be replicated. In the first stage, researchers adopted a model of psychological wellbeing and used it on a sample of women from the CFPR-TUP to find out how well they could manage specific tasks, such as looking after their assets, and the level and type of support they had received to enable them to do so.

The second phase of the programme tested the new 'psychosocial' model in three programmes in Bangladesh to see if it worked on a broader scale – it included one BRAC programme (CFPR-TUP) and two government-supported programmes carried out by Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF). The research asked 1,800 households across the programmes about what aspects helped people get out of poverty and showed overwhelmingly that the case-by-case support was pivotal in achieving that.

THE IMPACT

The assessment of the CFPR-TUP and roll-out of the model showed that the success of the CFPR-TUP was not an isolated example. Ninety-five per cent of participants in phase 2 of the research graduated from poverty in Bangladesh. The UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and others continue to fund this programme.

Based on the evidence, DFID encouraged other organisations to take up the approach and funded other major programmes in Bangladesh based on the same model. The model was copied globally with support from the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), the Ford Foundation, and other donors.

A major research study, published in Science Magazine, produced compelling evidence of the success of 'Graduation' pilot projects in Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Pakistan and Peru, and the approach is now being promoted globally by the World Bank and other major international development actors. As the evaluator of the CGAP and Ford Foundation-funded six-country programmes concluded, 'a multifaceted approach to increasing income and wellbeing for the ultra-poor [the BRAC programme] is sustainable and cost-effective'.

The Graduation as Resilience research has shown overwhelmingly the success of incorporating a more holistic approach to addressing extreme poverty. As the global community strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, it is those in extreme poverty who remain the hardest to reach and support. By evaluating the successful BRAC programme, and working closely with the Bangladeshi government, it is evident that there are components that can be replicated elsewhere, within the country and further afield.

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Graduation as resilience
Graduation as resilience stage two

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, led by Mushtaque Chowdhury, BRAC, Bangladesh, in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies, UK.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN PEACE-BUILDING IN RWANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA

In 1994, both Rwanda and South Africa emerged from a long and protracted history of colonisation, conflict, genocide, and apartheid which left lasting scars on their education systems. Both countries have undertaken educational reforms to try to strengthen social cohesion. Research led by the University of Sussex in collaboration with the University of Rwanda and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town examined how education policy interventions have helped teachers to become active agents of peace-building. It found that more professional development, policy direction, and support are needed.

THE CHALLENGE

Education plays a vital role in rebuilding crisis-affected communities and preparing residents for a peaceful future. However, despite progress being made in both South Africa and Rwanda, significant challenges remain in rebuilding education systems that promote and create conditions in which teachers – many of whom were former victims and perpetrators of violence – can play a key role in nation-building, identity construction, and peace and reconciliation.

THE RESEARCH

Data collected from one-to-one interviews with education and peace-building stakeholders, focus groups, lesson observations, and analyses of statistical data and policy documents helped researchers understand the challenges and opportunities faced by teachers in post-conflict environments.

In both countries, findings showed an uneven distribution of well-trained, quality teachers as well as a shortage of teachers able to teach effectively in the language of instruction. Trust between teachers and students was found to be low, making teachers less open to developing practices to promote peace and social cohesion. Furthermore, there was a general consensus among teachers that professional development provision failed to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to tackle historical legacies that continue to fracture society along race, class, gender, and ethnic lines.

The research also highlighted how the two countries' national education policy directives took different approaches to guide how teachers might contribute to their respective policy visions of peace. In Rwanda, for example, the state has incorporated teachers into

Photo: In a South African High School, a trainee teacher helps a pupil with her homework. Credit: Graeme Williams / Panos.

the mission of eradicating ethnic differences with the objective of emphasising a collective 'Rwandanness'. In South Africa, teachers are expected to support the idea of a 'rainbow nation' embracing diversity.

Based on their findings, the researchers made the following policy recommendations:

Improve teacher distribution: Equitable distribution of teachers in post-conflict contexts involves getting the right teachers into both rural and urban locations, serving the most disadvantaged and those most impacted by historic conflict.

Build trust in and accountability of teachers:

Student-teacher trust and accountability are crucial for social cohesion initiatives. Teacher Councils such as South African Council for Educators (SACE) in South Africa and Rwanda Education Board (REB) in Rwanda, which are designed to promote teacher trust and accountability, require more support.

Develop socially cohesive curricula and textbooks:

A socially cohesive curriculum can help to lay the foundations for a democratic, open, and united society. Textbooks should be free from bias and discrimination, and should actively disrupt assumptions about identity markers such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, region, and language.

Support teachers to develop inclusive pedagogies:

Teachers need to be provided with the psychosocial support and understanding to overcome their 'woundedness' as a result of the histories of conflict in both countries as well as engage with their own prejudices and biases when it comes to teaching, particularly in relation to genocide in Rwanda and apartheid in South Africa.

THE IMPACT

Several universities across South Africa are revamping their inclusive education programmes to better prepare teachers drawing on insights from the research. A teacher educator from the University of Cape Town said, 'We are looking at this research in terms of inserting key information and analysis into the various modules on teacher practice and teacher-pupil engagement around conflict situations and the generation of greater solidarity.'

In addition, in South Africa, the project's Principal Investigator, Yusuf Sayed, was appointed as a member of the Department for Basic Education's Ministerial Task Team for the review of textbooks. This review focuses on issues of discrimination, equity, and social cohesion.

Workshops were also held to share findings with policymakers. As a result, in Rwanda, ministry officials have agreed to embark on the implementation of

continuing professional development, focusing particularly on social cohesion and peace-building.

An ongoing dialogue between the research team and the South African Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Enver Surty, culminated in the Teachers and Social Cohesion Roundtable in 2016; and in 2017, on the 20-year anniversary of the South African Constitution, Mr Surty assured that the work would inform future social cohesion developments in education. This was echoed by the Executive Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Stanley Henkeman, who said: 'The research project has proved to be an invaluable contribution to the renewal and transformation of the South African education system. It deals with matters of inclusion and social cohesion in a holistic manner and provides useful insights for educators.'

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Engaging Teachers in Peace-building in Post-Conflict Contexts: Evaluating Education Interventions in Rwanda and South Africa

The research team was funded by the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, led by Yusuf Sayed, Professor of International Education and Development Policy, University of Sussex, UK. The research is a collaborative project involving the University of Bristol, UK; the Centre for International Teacher Education (CITE) at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa; and the College of Education, University of Rwanda.

DO YOU HAVE AN IMPACT STORY TO TELL?

Top tips for writing an impact story:

- The impact story should be no more than 800 words in total.
- Be concise, keep your language simple and direct.
- Adopt an engaging, accessible, refreshing and lively style. Use active language rather than the passive form.
- Remember the main audience will not be other academics. Readers are likely not to have in-depth expert or prior knowledge on the topic.
- Be careful about the use of jargon and be as clear as possible. Also avoid clichés, puns etc. For example, rather than describe 'stakeholders', say: families, teachers and pupils etc. If you can't avoid some aspects of jargon, provide for a short glossary box in the design.
- Avoid generalised or exaggerated statements about your impact. Be careful not to over simplify the links between the research activity and the subsequent impact – one way to get round this is to link to things subsequently done by the government/NGOs/beneficiaries.
- Bring the story to life with quotes, photos and infographics (ensure you have the permission to use, and cite where necessary).
- Where possible hyperlink to organisations and partners into the narrative.
- No more than six links should be included to project reports/information in foot notes.

CREATE YOUR OWN IMPACT RECIPE!

Here is a 'recipe' for you to draft your own impact story. Write it down and share with The Impact Initiative at info@theimpactinitiative.net.

TITLE

Keep it strong, short and catchy... and no more than 8 words

OVERVIEW

This opening paragraph should be an 'elevator pitch' of no more than 150 words, aim at key research users (such as a DFID Adviser, an MP or a journalist). It should briefly provide an overview of the project and why it matters.

THE CHALLENGE

Paragraph 1: Set the scene and identify the problem. What are the societal challenges and the opportunities for change?

THE RESEARCH

Paragraph 2: Who were the researchers / institutions / partners / funders? What was the research conducted and why?

Paragraph 3: What were the key findings, what does the study imply / suggest or recommend?

THE IMPACT

Paragraph 4: Thanks to the research, how has the problem been addressed? Include quantitative and qualitative evidence where you can, along with any useful quotes, testimonies, excerpts from policy documents referring to the research

Paragraph 5: Were there any specific barriers to impact that are worth mentioning? What are the specific lessons that can be learned?

Paragraph 6: Are there any other high level impact and/or policy effects. Has it encouraged governments / NGOs to take action in any way?

FURTHER READING

Link to published evidence that demonstrates the impact of research.

Photo: Turkana road marshals employed by the local company Amailo, subcontracted by Tullow. Work for local residents is thinly spread and precarious – road marshals, concrete mixers, and cleaners are the more common types of work available for Turkana. Few are employed in more specialist positions on oil rigs.

Credit: Sven Torfinn

THE IMPACT INITIATIVE

For International Development Research

THIS BOOKLET PROFILES A SELECTION OF RESEARCH FUNDED BY THE ESRC-DFID STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND THE IMPACT THEY HAVE ACHIEVED. WHILE THESE STORIES ONLY SHOW A SNAPSHOT OF THE RESEARCH, THEY ALL HIGHLIGHT THE MULTIPLE, UNIQUE AND SOMETIMES SURPRISING PATHS TO ACHIEVING IMPACT.

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