



Evidencing the wide-reaching benefits of international development research:
A selection of REF 2021 case studies

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For further information on UKCDR, please visit ukcdr.org.uk.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council	Intrac	International NGO Training and Research Centre
AKN	Antislavery Knowledge Network	JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
APRIES	African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery	LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
APRIL	Asia Pacific Resources International Limited	MMU	Manchester Metropolitan University
BBSRC	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council	NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
CEH	UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CenHTRO	The Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach	ODA	Official Development Assistance
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CPP	<i>Cartonera</i> Publishing Project	PAHs	Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (part of OECD)	PEC	Policy and Evidence Centre
Defra	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs	RCSLT	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
DfE	Department of Education	REF	Research Excellence Framework
DFID	Department for International Development (now merged into FCDO and referenced henceforth as FCDO)	RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
DSIT	Department for Science, Innovation and Technology	SENAI	Brazilian Innovation Institute for Biomass
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation	SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
Elhra	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance	UKCDR	UK Collaborative on Development Research
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council	UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
EU	European Union	UN	United Nations
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
GCRF	Global Challenges Research Fund	UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
HMP	His Majesty's Prison	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
		VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

Introduction

This case study booklet expands on UKCDR's recent [report](#) on how UK-funded international development research submitted to the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF2021*) achieves real-life impact. From analysing over 800 research case studies submitted to REF2021, UKCDR found that, in addition to benefiting the Low-and-Middle Income Countries (LMICs) they were intended for (**primary benefits**), many research projects also had significant positive effects in the UK and even globally (**secondary benefits**). This booklet presents seven (7) case studies highlighting the wide-reaching impact of international development research.

Each case study shows clear primary intent that contributes to political, economic, social, health or environmental change to the benefit of people in LMICs. These benefits include introducing alternative educational models, expanding commercial activities, supporting the social transformation of vulnerable communities, tackling modern slavery, supporting people with communication disabilities, improving language translation practices, and developing better models for climate change mitigation.

Having achieved the primary intent of these projects, UK-based researchers and their partners later applied project insights to UK and other international contexts. These secondary benefits include improving children's education, expanding markets, improving social and healthcare services for disadvantaged communities, and changing policies to reduce carbon emissions. This clearly shows how research activities that primarily generate developmental impact in LMICs can also contribute towards wider benefits to the UK and globally, in alignment with the United Nations' (UN) [2030 Agenda](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

The UK's recent [White Paper on International Development](#) states that, to end extreme poverty and tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, all countries need to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. **This requires a collective global mobilisation of scientific expertise, technology, and innovation.**

The White Paper further emphasises the importance of an open and stable international order in which all countries, including the UK, can secure their interests, and in which everyone can prosper. Research fosters long-term partnerships between scientists in the UK and abroad, academic institutions, businesses, and government. These partnerships

promote mutual learning between UK and partner institutions in other countries, enhancing the capacity of research to yield effective and impactful development outcomes across different geographical contexts.

The seven case studies presented in this booklet evidence the positive global impact that stems from the UK's commitment to international development research. UKCDR hopes this compilation of research case studies will encourage and inspire researchers and research partners to maximise the benefits of their work, not only in their primary research sites but also in other parts of the world.

How was this booklet compiled?

*This study forms part of UKCDR's analysis of the case studies submitted to REF2021, a national assessment of the quality and impact of UK research. From the 891 international development research case studies analysed for UKCDR's study, we identified a subset that had real-life impact beyond LMICs. From this subset, seven case studies were selected to ensure diversity across different topics and geographical regions, alongside a mix of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA funded research. While the REF2021 impact assessment period spans from 2013 to 2020, some of the data in this booklet comes from after this period to reflect the latest information on the case studies' impact.

Each case study in this booklet synthesises the following information:

- **Summary:** Case study overview including the leading university, thematic focus, funders, partners, and location of impact.
- **Primary benefits in LMICs:** Summary of the key impacts achieved in the LMIC contexts.
- **Secondary benefits:** Summary of additional impacts that emerged in the UK, other countries or globally.
- **How secondary benefits unfolded:** Description of how key findings, partnerships or lessons learned during the research process evolved leading to additional positive impact.
- **Funding timeline and key milestones:** Visual representation that shows ODA and non-ODA funds supporting the case study, along with key milestones relating to primary and secondary benefits.

What do we mean by primary and secondary benefits?

Primary benefits

The overall aim of international development research is to address global challenges, in alignment with the UN's SDGs. Funding for international development research can be from both ODA and non-ODA sources. Both sources of funds are seen to focus on the poorest and most fragile countries to ensure a more even global development process towards the 2030 Agenda.

In this context, the primary focus of ODA-funded research is the promotion of economic development and welfare of communities on the [list of ODA-eligible recipient countries](#). This list is defined and revised annually by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (OECD), according to each country's income status. The benefits of ODA-funded research can include positive political, economic, societal or environmental effects.

Secondary benefits

It is recognised that achieving the primary focus of international development research can lead to wider benefits in the form of ripple effects that reach the UK and other parts of the world. This booklet looks at the effects that positively benefit the UK, and in some instances, other parts of the world, referring to these as secondary benefits.

There is currently no standard definition of secondary benefits within the context of international development research. Instead, various terms such as 'direct and indirect impact', 'mutual prosperity' (Prosperity Fund) and 'transnational benefits' (OECD), have been used to indicate secondary benefits.

Despite multiple concepts and viewpoints, there is a general understanding among international development practitioners that 'secondary benefits' involve positive impact across multiple locations and audiences beyond the main recipient country or countries.

Secondary benefits can occur at multiple stages of the research process. In some cases, they happen during research implementation, materialising as ripple effects following unexpected findings. Some others occur during the final stages of research (during dissemination or the post-grant stage) when the research team works towards adapting and applying the findings or methods beyond the original contexts.

Drawing on an [evaluation of secondary benefits from the Newton Fund](#), for the purpose of this booklet, secondary benefits can be further organised according to four sub-categories.

Types of secondary benefits



Research capacity and knowledge generation: enhancing institutional and/or individual capacities (e.g., development of leadership skills and expertise, stronger research capabilities).



Policies and practices: informing decisions or shifts in sector practices (e.g., changes in national or local policies, new sector guidelines).



Economic and commercial: contributing to financial gains, economic growth or further commercial activities (e.g., new product lines or services, new start-ups or spin-outs, securing jobs).



Relationships and reputation: enhancing partnerships or strengthening a global position due to successful partnership building (e.g., consolidation of networks, further joint initiatives, enhanced leadership).



Unlocking talent through tablet technology:

How educational app *oncourse* boosted literacy and numeracy and guided decision-making in Africa and the UK

Leading university	University of Nottingham.
Location of impact	Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, South Africa, and UK.
Thematic focus	Psychology.
Funders	In the UK: Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Scottish Government, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) International. In Norway: Royal Norwegian Embassy.
Partners	In Malawi: Imagine Malawi, VSO. In the UK: Burton Joyce Primary School, onebillion. In the USA: Imagine Worldwide.

Case study summary

Between 2014 and 2021, 225,000 disadvantaged children in Malawi received writing, reading, and maths support from [oncourse](#), a tablet app. Oncourse was developed by the Unlocking Talent alliance which involved researchers from the University of Nottingham and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) International Service Overseas and onebillion. From its pilot stage, oncourse has become a nationwide program supported by the Malawian Ministry of Education and local NGO, Imagine Worldwide. The app has since been rolled out worldwide, where it has helped over 502,000 children make gains in literacy and numeracy, mainly across Africa. The accessible and adaptable software has also been rolled out across 126 schools in the UK, where it has improved educational attainment for 1,100+ students, strengthened teachers' skills, and informed policy decisions during COVID-19. Beyond the classroom, oncourse has influenced international funders and reinforced the capacity of the British non-profit VSO international.

Primary benefits in Malawi and other LMICs

- **Boosting learning outcomes:** Oncourse helped Malawian students [improve their skills](#) in literacy (spelling, reading, comprehension) by 50% and math (identification of numbers and patterns) by 40% within 8 months. This attracted new education investments from the UK's FCDO, the Norwegian Embassy, German development bank KfW, Comic Relief, and UNICEF. By 2017, the NGO Imagine Worldwide set up a regional office in Malawi to implement development programmes, including oncourse.
- **Enhancing teachers' skills:** Implementation of oncourse improved the abilities of 8,844 Malawian teachers, primary education advisors and training college lecturers in using digital tools for teaching. It also helped them handle challenging classrooms with many students per teacher.
- **Multilingual expansion in Africa and beyond:** The app's translation into English, French, Portuguese and Swahili facilitated its expansion to [schools across Africa](#), to the benefit of over 270,000 children, mainly in Kenya and South Africa. The translation included cultural adaptations to ensure children accessed words and images relevant to them. Onebillion's local partners in Brazil, Cambodia, India, and Jamaica have also implemented the app with small groups of students.

Secondary benefits for the UK and globally



Developing students' and teachers' skills: Within 3 years, oncourse was [implemented in 126 UK schools](#), where it has improved numeracy and literacy skills for 1100+ disadvantaged early years and Year 1 students. It has also strengthened capacities of teachers and teaching assistants via bespoke online training materials on educational technology.



Programme expansion in Kent: In 2019, following independent research that established the efficacy of onecourse compared to standard educational practice, the programme expanded to all publicly funded schools in the county of Kent.



Research-based policy decisions: Clear evidence on the [success of the app](#) in improving learning in and beyond school environments influenced the Department of Education (DfE) to give laptops to disadvantaged students affected by school closures during COVID-19.



Job creation: British non-profit VSO created 30 new positions and recruited 50 education specialist volunteers to facilitate programme scale-up.

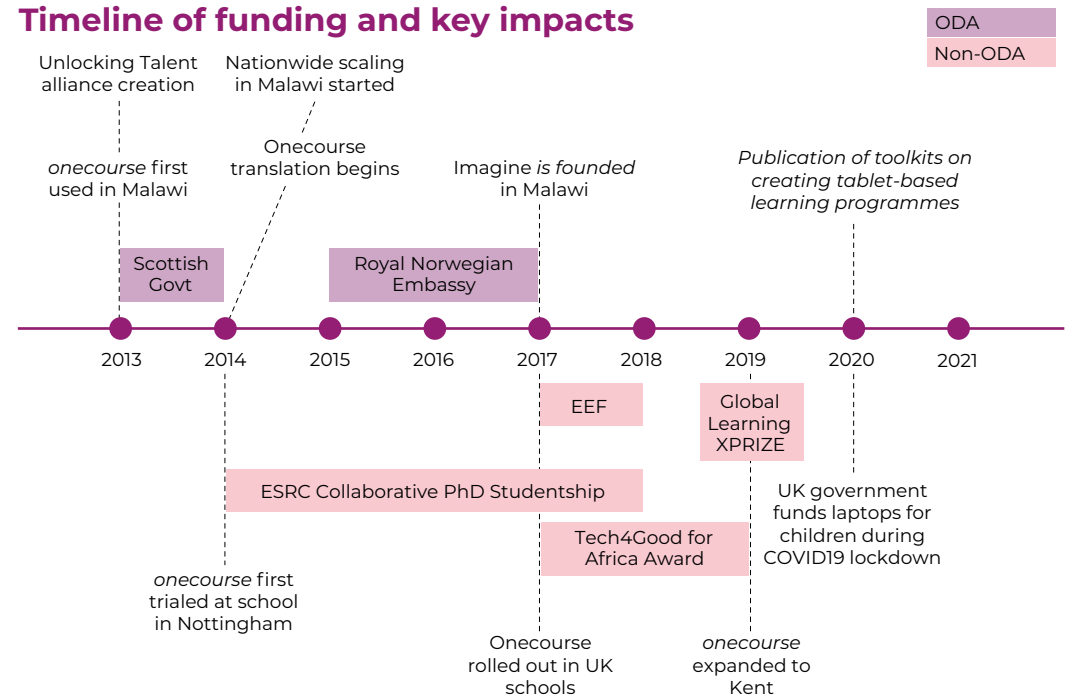


Open access findings and tools to support EdTech initiatives: The research provided evidence that helped VSO, Imagine Worldwide and the University of Nottingham to co-create free and [open access toolkits](#) which guide international policymakers and NGO practitioners in the process of designing, implementing, and monitoring tablet-based learning programmes.

How secondary benefits unfolded

- The first trial of the tablet technology in a UK school in Nottingham emerged from a conversation between the lead researcher working in Malawi and a (then) undergraduate who had volunteered in a local UK primary school.
- Evaluation analyses co-developed by the University of Nottingham and Imagine Worldwide, along with an independent review on the results of onecourse, supported evidence-based decisions to scale up the UK rollout. They also helped build an appropriate online learning environment for young children during COVID-19.
- The rapid scaling of the project to 126 UK schools in 2017 was made possible by pre-existing networks and longstanding relationships, including a network of Apple regional training centre schools and a multi-academy school trust.

Timeline of funding and key impacts





Improving *mate* production for a more sustainable world:

How a heat pipe-based tea drying system delivered environmental, health, and financial benefits in Brazil and the UK

Leading university	Brunel University London.
Location of impact	Brazil, UK.
Thematic focus	Engineering.
Funders	In Brazil: Ervateira São Mateus, SENAI. In the UK: Innovate UK, Solex Thermal.
Partners	In Brazil: Ervateira São Mateus, SENAI. In the UK: Solex Thermal, Spirax Sarco.

Case study summary

Mate tea producers in Latin America have benefited from an innovative heat pipe-based drying system. *Mate* tea is a traditional herbal drink made from the leaves and stems of a plant native to South America. It is a popular drink in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, where some communities consume it more than coffee or other types of tea. Traditional drying methods for manufacturing *mate* tea can release high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), known carcinogens also found in tobacco, affecting production line workers and consumers.

The innovative new system was developed by Brunel University's [Heat Pipe and Thermal Management Research Group](#) and UK manufacturer Solex Thermal in partnership with the Brazilian Innovation Institute for Biomass (SENAI). Implemented in Brazil through a partnership with the local company Ervateira São Mateus, the project provided significant health, environmental, and financial advantages for *mate* manufacturers and consumers. These benefits, along with an economic analysis led by SENAI, helped *mate* tea reach new markets. The research also fostered technical innovation in Brazil.

In the UK, the system's success boosted Solex Thermal's expansion into the energy sector, leading to £12 million worth of heat pipe-based units across Latin America. The modular design and academic-industry collaborations further bolstered business partnerships, reputation and sustainability.

Primary benefits in Brazil and other Latin American countries

- **Healthier *mate* tea drying:** The new method for drying *mate* tea minimised health risks for Brazilian employees at Ervateira who were exposed to inhalation of PAHs in smoke. The changes in the production process also benefited an estimated 1,400,000 consumers by reducing the level of carcinogens, ensuring that *mate* met international standards.
- **Eco-friendly drying technology:** The new technology made *mate* tea production more environmentally friendly. It reduced Ervateira's carbon footprint associated with *mate* production by 20% and decreased waste production by 15%, helping to tackle climate change issues.
- **Growing business and commercial expansion:** In two years, Ervateira's *mate* tea production expanded by 25% (equivalent to £128,090 per year). New quality and environmental standards regarding safe PAHs levels and improved residual waste disposal allowed the company to open new markets across the European Union, United States, Russia, China, South Korea, and Turkey.
- **Efficient technology assembly:** The new system is easy to assemble on-site and made from good-quality materials. This reduced shipping and operational costs for other companies in Latin America who acquired a similar system.
- **Local research capacity building in thermal technology:** Working on the heat pipe technology improved technical skills and infrastructure for Brazilian researchers at SENAI and also helped kickstart new Brazilian-led research focused on heat-based waste decomposition.

Secondary benefits for the UK and Europe



Skill development in heat pipe technologies: Solex Thermal improved individual and organisational skills to create better, more eco-friendly heat pipe technologies. This helped the company secure a strong position in the competitive energy industry.



Heat pipe market growth: In less than 5 years, Solex Thermal sold 12 heat-pipe units across four Latin American countries, worth £12,000,000. Their parent company Spirax Sarco recorded £1,850,000 in new business. The success of the new heat-pipe system helped create 18 new jobs across the two collaborating UK companies.



Expanding the use of new technology: The easy assembly and modular design of the new heat-pipe-based system facilitated scalability and expansion to meet the operational needs and specific application of other industries. This opened opportunities for UK manufacturers in the wider leaf-drying industry.



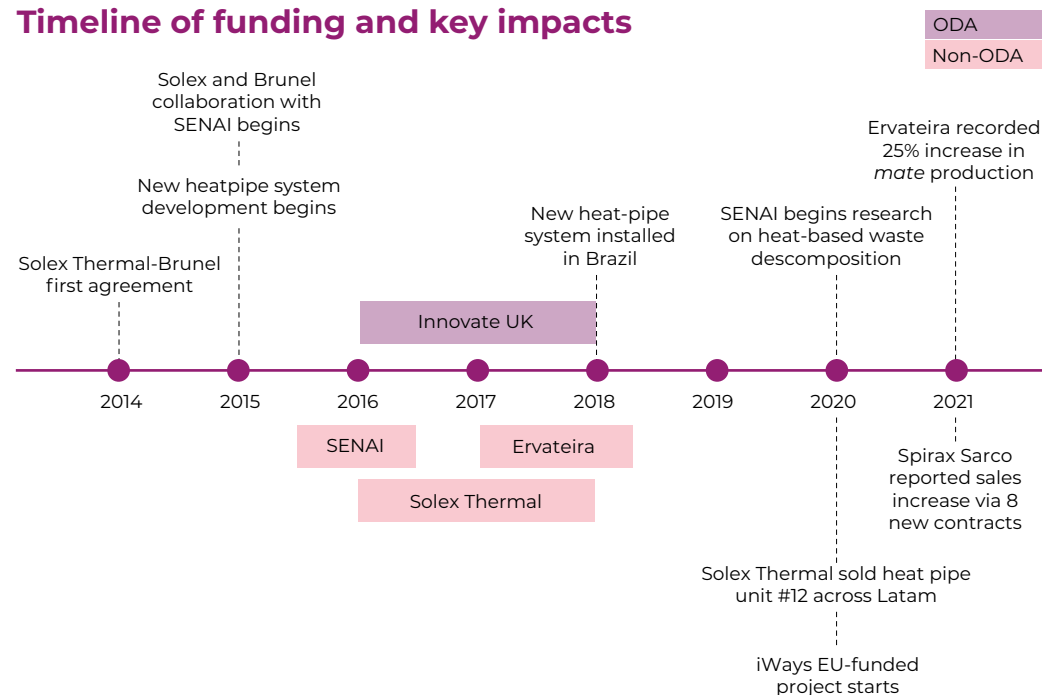
Strengthened academic-industry collaborations: Successful collaboration in the tea drying industry encouraged further Brunel-Solex Thermal joint initiatives on industrial-environmental challenges. Academics and professionals are working on *iWays*, a project co-funded by the European Union that aims to recover water and heat from various industries including waste management.



How secondary benefits unfolded

- Brunel University and Solex Thermal have a well-established and long-term academic-industry collaboration focused on identifying an industry challenge outside the UK and combining academic and private-sector expertise to tackle it. Both partners harnessed skills and lessons gained when developing the heat pipe drying system to contribute in the *iWays* project.
- The project highlighted potential applications of Solex Thermal's technology in the leaf-drying industry. The new system's demonstrable success led to reputational gains.
- The success of the new heat-pipe system boosted the expansion of Solex Thermal and Spirax Sarco products and services into the Latin American market.

Timeline of funding and key impacts





Uncovering hidden stories through alternative publishing practices:

How the *Cartonera* Publishing Project empowered vulnerable communities in Latin America and the UK

Leading university	University of Surrey.
Location of impact	Brazil, Mexico, UK.
Thematic focus	Language, literature, art, and anthropology.
Funders	In Mexico: Jalisco Department of Culture. In the UK: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), BBC Arts.
Partners	In Brazil: Catapoesia, Dulcinéia Catadora (<i>Cartonera</i> organisations). In Mexico: La Rueda Cartonera, Ministry of Culture Jalisco (government), Viento Cartonero (<i>Cartonera</i> organisation). In the UK: British Library, Cambridge University Library, Koestler Arts (prison-based arts charity), Senate House Library.

Case study summary

Publishing practices in Latin America have been revolutionised by the [Cartonera Publishing Project](#) (CPP). This project is sustained by a community of academics and practitioners aiming to enable social transformation by making visible the stories of vulnerable communities. This project was inspired by the first *Cartonera* organisation which began in Argentina when waste-pickers (*cartoneros*) started saving cardboard and self-organising to turn these discarded materials into books. Drawing from this method, CPP was born as a collaboration between University of Surrey researchers, UK library archivists, and Latin American writers and artists. Between 2016 and 2020, *Cartonera* workshops inspired over 1,000 participants, including rural, indigenous, homeless and incarcerated groups to collectively write and publish their life stories. Reflecting on issues of poverty, social exclusion,

and inequality, these arts-based workshops have nourished participants' creativity and fostered social cohesion. By adapting and implementing the *Cartonera* method in Brazil and Mexico, the CPP has influenced social, cultural and publishing practices in different communities. In the UK, the *Cartonera* movement has shifted library practices, supported the empowerment of local groups, and inspired social and education changes.

Primary benefits in Mexico and Brazil

- **Empowering incarcerated women through storytelling:** In 2017, women in a Jalisco Prison (Mexico) joined *Cartonera* workshops and subsequently co-authored and published [Espejo y Viento](#), a *Cartonera* book about their experiences in jail and the events that led to their incarceration. Sharing their stories helped challenge myths and stigma, enhancing their leadership and resilience.
- **Enhancing local community bonds:** In Zacatecas (Mexico) and Gouveia (Brazil), CPP-inspired book-making workshops fostered dialogues on local knowledge (e.g., on uses of plants) and social issues. The workshops also helped these communities earn more money from selling the *Cartonera* books.
- **Highlighting social inequality:** In São Paulo (Brazil), the Dulcinéia Catadora *Cartonera* team co-designed a new intervention with 18 homeless people and housing activists. Through the collective book-making process of a book entitled *Mutirão* (Task Force), the initiative exposed issues of urban homelessness, decent housing, and inequality.
- **Showcasing innovative publishing practices:** CPP highlighted alternative knowledge production and innovative publishing practices by hosting, from October 2018 to February 2019, the largest international *Cartonera* exhibition in São Paulo, Brazil.

Secondary benefits for the UK



Expanding *Cartonera* collections through partnerships:

The CPP partnerships between researchers and *Cartonera* leaders enabled the expansion of the *Cartonera* book collection at Cambridge University Library. In turn, this inspired the library to update its cataloguing practices to include all contributors (e.g., book cover artists) and add Spanish and Portuguese index keywords in bibliographic records. Prompted by its CPP experience, the library opened its doors to new audiences, including children, through 'Summer at the Museums' workshops.



Capacity building through arts-based interventions:

Inspired by CPP's experience in Mexican prisons, arts-based social interventions were successfully implemented in UK prisons HMP Nottingham and HMP Downview. The Prisoner Publishing project, piloted in 2019 in HMP Nottingham, helped participants improve their literacy and communication skills. Their experience was featured in a [BBC Arts episode](#) in 2020.



Prompting young people's engagement with sustainability and migration issues:

Interactive *Cartonera* workshops for London-based Latin American teenaged migrants prompted participants to reflect on their experience as migrants and their role in addressing the SDGs.



Fostering participative research and decolonising literature:

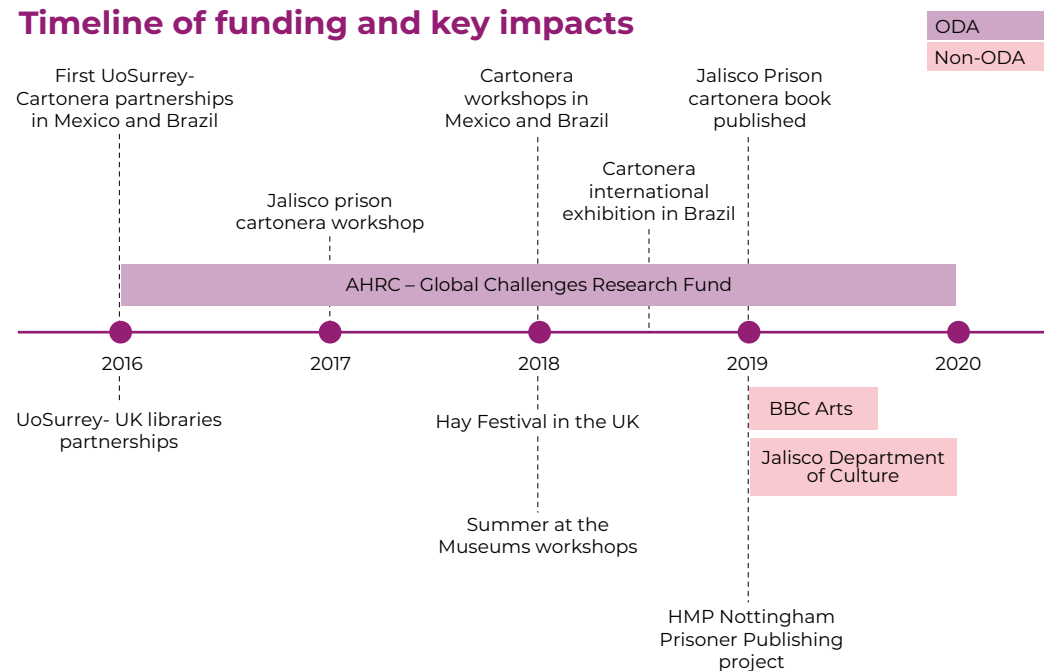
CPP's success encouraged the Universities of Surrey and Durham to create new modules and teaching tools on participative research methodologies and decolonising literature practices.



How secondary benefits unfolded

- Partnerships with the British Library, Senate House Library, and Cambridge University Library helped grow the UK's *Cartonera* collection. In addition to giving UK readers access to Latin American books, the collection has helped encourage people to rethink waste generation, knowledge production, and traditional practices in the publishing industry.
- CPP inspired spin-off events and interactive workshops led by the research team and partners at the Hay Festival 2018, the [London Cartonera Festival](#) (2019), the [Migration Museum](#), and several initiatives in various [UK prisons](#) and schools.
- Teenagers and community groups in London were galvanised to organise their own *Cartonera* workshops thanks to easy-to-access online CPP resources, affordable materials, and their hands-on learning experiences in previous interactive workshops.

Timeline of funding and key impacts





Transforming the lives of people with communication and intellectual disabilities:

How Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) improved policy and training in Africa, Asia and the UK

Leading university	Manchester Metropolitan University.
Location of impact	Ghana, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and UK.
Thematic focus	Clinical Sciences, Specialist Studies in Education, Cognitive Sciences.
Funders	In Australia: Speech Pathology Australia. In the UK: Comic Relief, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (Elhra), Nuffield Africa Foundation, RCSLT.
Partners	In Ghana: University of Ghana. In India: Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy. In Kenya: Chance for Childhood (NGO), Yellow House Kenya. In Rwanda: UNHCR and implementing partners. In Uganda: Association of Speech and Language Therapists in East Africa, Makerere University. In Sri Lanka: SLT Professional Association, University of Kelaniya. Global: Communication Therapy International.

Case study summary

Addressing the needs of individuals with communication and profound intellectual disabilities has led to far-reaching positive outcomes thanks to research led by the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in collaboration with multiple local institutions in Africa and Asia. Part of this research was also supported by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT). MMU's research focused on improving the provision and sustainability of low-cost interventions in speech and language therapy, including new therapeutic approaches, training programmes, and other mentoring initiatives. This has resulted in better care and quality of life for individuals with communication

and profound intellectual disabilities in Africa, South Asia and Europe. In the UK, the research findings also played an important role in developing training for healthcare workers and shaping policies that improved access to support services for refugees with communication disabilities. The research influenced policy and funding on the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities in humanitarian contexts.

Primary benefits in Asia and Africa

- **Improved access to support services:** In the informal housing settlements of West Bengal, India, research enhanced community-based services through individualised home-based interventions for 311 people with disabilities and 293 low-income families. These were implemented by 11 partner organisations between 2014 and 2019. The research also led to refined training programmes for community members and field workers, boosting their skills so they could better support people with disabilities and their families and bolster their social inclusion.
- **Establishing the SLT profession:** Since 2011, the Uganda-based [Makerere project](#) provided mentoring for graduates of the first SLT university degree in East Africa. Lessons from the Makerere project influenced the University of Ghana's new SLT master's degree. The number of SLT specialists also grew in Sri Lanka (from 1 SLT specialist in 1988 to 300 in 2019), where the research team supported the creation of the Association of Speech and Language Pathologists.
- **Screening for refugees with communication disabilities:** In collaboration with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Rwandan refugee community, researchers developed training to improve the capacity of UNHCR Rwanda staff to identify and assist refugees with disabilities. This effort resulted in a new screening tool created by an MMU PhD student which was implemented in two camps and two urban areas. The tool enhanced operational procedures for identifying communication disability and improving service access.

Secondary benefits for the UK



Professional training and mentoring: From 2014 to 2019, research experiences in Africa shaped the training of over 500 UK-based SLT practitioners and other healthcare professionals via Communication Therapy International, an RCSLT Clinical Excellence Network. In 2019, MMU delivered training for 115 health professionals focused on using lessons from LMICs to create culturally relevant services in the UK. Similarly, since 2013 MMU has also trained 1500+ practitioners and family members on techniques and low-cost SLT interventions for underserved context in several European countries.



Influence on legislation and policy: Research findings on the causes of communication disabilities were used in 2020 by the RCSLT to provide [evidence](#) for the UK's Domestic Abuse Bill, particularly in issues surrounding the impact of domestic abuse on children's speech, language and communication. Similarly, MMU's findings on communication disabilities were used by the FCDO-funded [What Works global programme](#) in 2017 to expand the evidence base on preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities in LMICs and provide recommendations for future research, evaluations and development programmes.



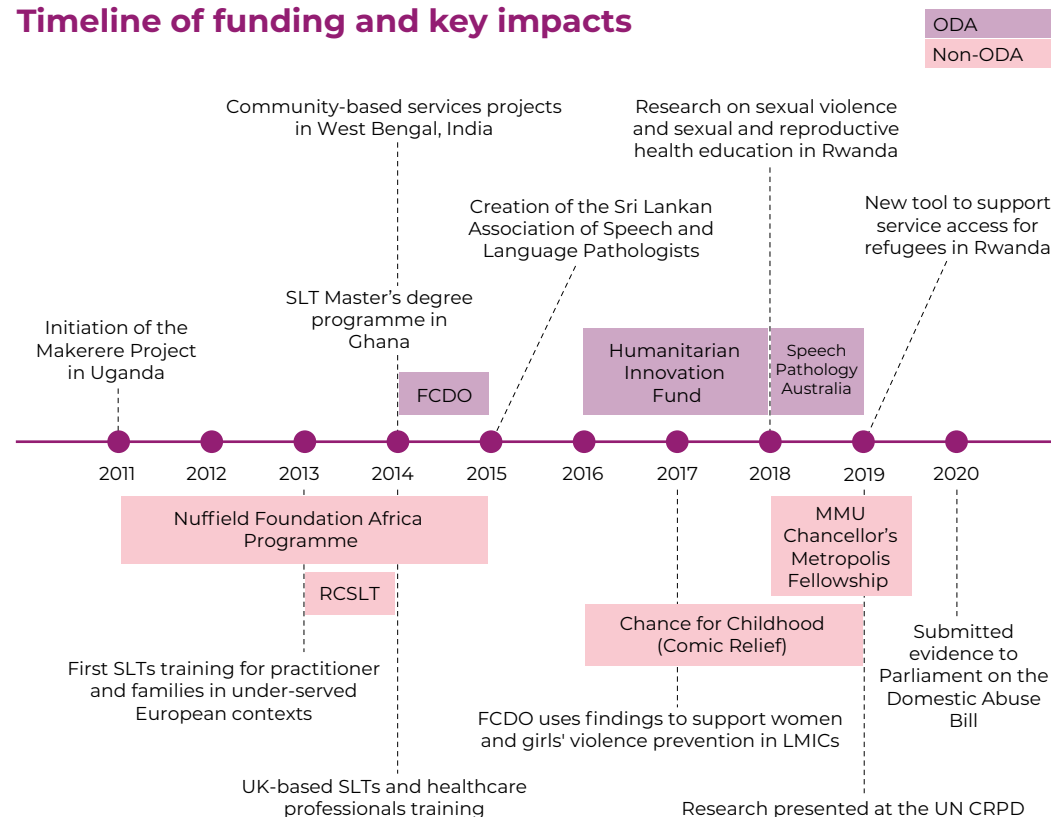
Global visibility of UK's research excellence and real-life applicability: MMU's [findings were reported](#) by RCSLT at the [12th Session](#) of the UN Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to promote knowledge exchange and capacity building on a global scale.



How secondary benefits unfolded

- Feedback and challenges faced in Africa and Asia during the research process led to capacity strengthening in LMICs and in the UK. Lessons from LMIC-based initiatives informed training that was considerate of culture and context-specific elements for both formal degree programmes in LMICs and UK-based practitioner training.
- The RCSLT provided input on the Domestic Abuse Bill, drawing on their established expertise in communication disabilities and incorporating research findings from MMU. RCSLT's presentation at the UN CRPD increased recognition for UK-led initiatives on the issue.
- Although challenges related to SLT are not widely recognised and there is limited investment in tackling them, having diverse funding sources allowed the research team to broaden the scope of their study and share the results more widely.

Timeline of funding and key impacts





Changing language translation practices in NGOs:

How embracing inclusive communication approaches improved development initiatives in Malawi, Peru, and the UK

Leading university	University of Portsmouth.
Location of impact	Malawi, Peru, UK.
Thematic focus	Area studies.
Funders	In the UK: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).
Partners	In the UK: Christian Aid, Intrac, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, Tearfund, University of Reading.

Case study summary

Although development projects often take place in contexts with diverse cultures and languages, a lack of adequate language translation too often stops researchers connecting with local communities. Since 2015, the [Listening Zones](#) project sought to tackle this by exploring the role of language and cultural understanding in the policies and practices of NGOs working in international development.

This research emerged from a collaboration between the Universities of Portsmouth and Reading and the International NGO Training and Research Centre (Intrac). It led to the production of the [Respecting Communities](#) report which provides practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners on language translation, including for: grant applications, project planning, and budgets. In Malawi, NGOs that collaborated on the report put its recommendations into action. This increased community participation and helped find better solutions for addressing local problems. In the UK, the report influenced a fundamental call from national academies to embrace more inclusive language strategies. It also transformed the translation policy of British NGO Tearfund which inspired other NGOs to follow their lead.

Primary benefits in Malawi and Peru

- Increased funding for translation practices:** Donors of the NGO Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, working in Malawi, were inspired by the results of the Listening Zones research and the *Respecting Communities* report. They subsequently allocated funding for the translation of the NGO's project materials on health education to local languages, leading to better community engagement. The Peruvian NGO Kusi Warma also adopted recommendations of the report.
- Improved standard practice of NGOs:** Following the report, the Malawian-based NGO Trocaire translated its organisational training materials. Volunteers at Trocaire positively responded to this new approach as it facilitated grasping development-related concepts and enabled culturally sensitive discussions (e.g., gender equality). The NGO expanded material translation to other LMIC locations among the 17 they operate in.
- Building relationships between the local community and NGOs:** Researchers, NGO staff and the local people of Lilongwe and Zomba (Malawi) collaborated using AHRC follow-on funding to develop the [Chichewa-English Glossary for Development Work](#). It explains development and NGO terms (e.g., social exclusion, empowerment) that can create confusion. Building and implementing this practical tool helped build stronger NGO-community relations.
- Impact on data sharing and understanding:** The glossary was used by the Malawi Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Alliance to develop all guides, questionnaires, and group discussions in Chichewa. This improved data quality and the understanding of the Alliance's key messages. Materials will also be translated into minority languages, such as Sena and Yao.

Secondary benefits for the UK



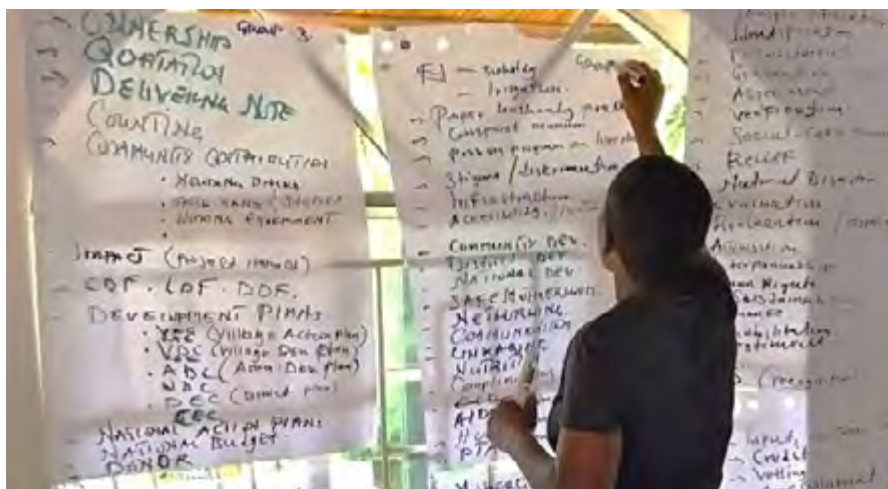
Professional training and development: The 'Listening Zones' research raised awareness about the power of language in development work. It encouraged UK researchers, NGOs, and funders to move away from English-centric communication (e.g., allow project proposals in other languages) to improve the quality of development initiatives and ensure they are inclusive and effective for the communities they serve.



Pushing policy toward equity: Tearfund revised translation policy and integrated it to the organisation's diversity and inclusion agenda, potentially affecting staff practice across the 50 countries in which they operate. Among other initiatives, this included developing a culture of multilingualism and extending translation beyond 'core' languages (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish). As a result, Tearfund staff can access best practice resources to inform their community work in local languages. Other UK-based NGOs have also started to acknowledge the crucial role of translation in development practices.



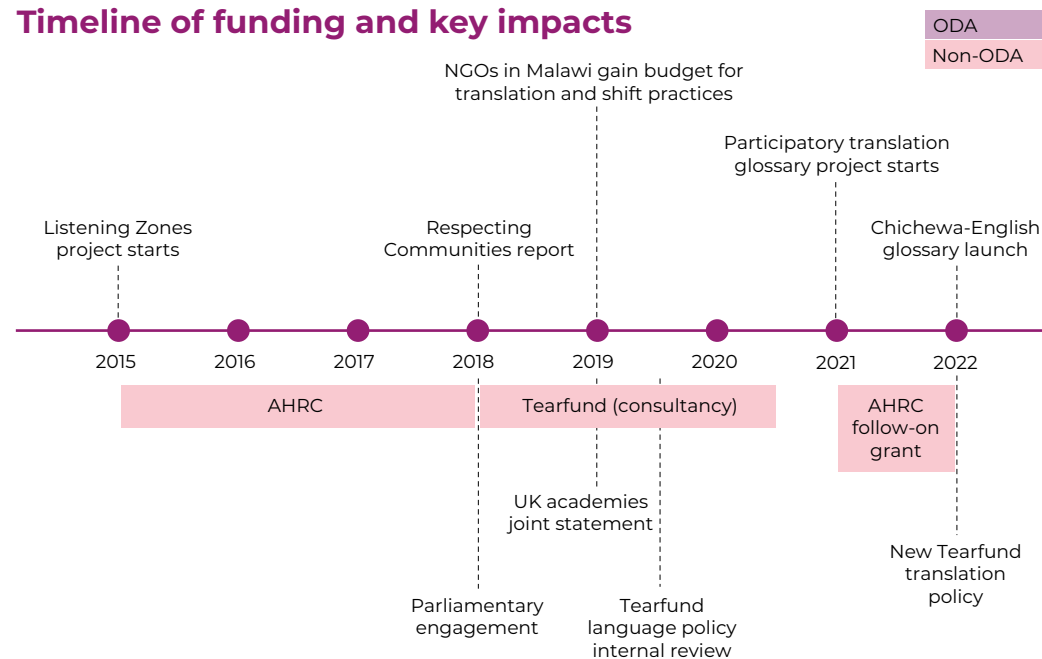
Influence on legislation and policy. Recommendations from the *Respecting Communities* report were shared in a [high-profile parliamentary group](#) in 2018 and included a [joint national academies statement](#) in 2019 calling for the UK government to adopt a language strategy for better international development professional practices.



How secondary benefits unfolded

- The Listening Zones research team focused strongly on achieving real-life impact and creating equitable partnerships. Direct input from NGOs working in Malawi and Peru, along with an active advisory board, helped the research findings move from theory to practice and influenced both LMIC-based and UK-based NGOs.
- Tearfund's involvement in the advisory board for the Listening Zones project prompted them to conduct an internal review of their organisational language policy. This, in turn, resulted in an [improved translation policy](#).
- Insights from the *Respecting Communities* report – along with Tearfund's positive experience regarding its new translation policy – informed Amnesty International and Save the Children's revision of their language policies. As a result, the importance of translation to the inclusivity and localisation agenda is gaining greater recognition.

Timeline of funding and key impacts





Transforming approaches to tackling modern slavery and improving outcomes for survivors:

How creative community projects shaped policy and practice in Africa and the UK

Leading university	University of Liverpool.
Location of impact	Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and UK.
Thematic focus	Politics and International Studies.
Funders	In the UK: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), British Academy, and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). In the USA: Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. In Europe: European Commission.
Partners	In Africa: AKN (including 32+ partners between community enterprises, universities, faith-based organisations, and charities), APRIES (a research collaborative). In India: George Institute for Global Health. In the UK: Bright Future, Causeway (former City Hearts), the Co-operative Group (Co-op), Federation of Small Businesses, International Slavery Museum, Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC), the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR). In the USA: The Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO) at the University of Georgia.

Case study summary

Arts-based community projects have helped raise awareness of and provide support to survivors of modern slavery. Researchers from the University of Liverpool collaborated with individuals who have experienced modern slavery,

as well as with businesses, charities, and academics to explore different approaches for addressing causes and effects of modern slavery. This research enabled the creation of the [Antislavery Knowledge Network \(AKN\)](#) and the [African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery \(APRIES\)](#), two initiatives that have delivered sociocultural impact across multiple African countries and India. In the UK, the research helped build better support services for survivors (shelter, advice, healthcare). By facilitating survivors' socioeconomic re-integration through stable employment, it also boosted interest in the issue and informed government policies.

Primary benefits in African countries

- **Raising public awareness and empowering survivors:** From 2017, the UK-Africa AKN team conducted 14 inter- and transdisciplinary projects involving 2000+ participants in eight African countries. These projects raised awareness about modern slavery through [arts-based community initiatives](#) (artwork, [podcasts](#) and performances) which empowered local stakeholders. In Kenya, Uganda, and Niger, former child soldiers, marginalised slave descendants, and other survivors co-led support services aimed at tackling discrimination and fostering community cohesion. Their participation also contributed to context-sensitive strategies against modern slavery such as creative arts-based therapies and improved design of care facilities for survivor healing.
- **Guiding future local policy:** In Ghana, Causeway practitioners, University of Liverpool researchers, and local organisations collaborated through the AKN initiative to support vulnerable families (those at risk of forced labour, sex trafficking, among other risks) to understand and prevent modern slavery. Research findings subsequently informed guidelines for local policymakers in West Africa.

- **Providing insight to external programmes:** Insights from lived experience and locally-led solutions developed by AKN shaped APRIES, a US-funded programme created in 2018 to tackle child trafficking in West Africa. In collaboration with local research hubs, APRIES improved data on sex trafficking in Senegal and child trafficking and labour in Guinea and Sierra Leone, identifying policy gaps and providing intervention recommendations.

Secondary benefits for the UK and globally



Influence on legislation and policy: Research on regulation and enforcement tackling forced labour contributed to strengthening [UK policy](#) on the issue. It informed the priorities of the Independent Antislavery Commissioner and helped the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority gain an economy-wide remit to protect workers and prosecute exploiters. Submissions of evidence to Parliament prompted the incorporation of business requirements for addressing modern slavery in supply chains within the [Modern Slavery Act](#) of 2015.



Creating employment opportunities: Successes of AKN projects and the value of partnerships between businesses and charities led Co-op and Causeway to join forces to create the [Bright Future Programme](#) in 2017. Thanks to an evidence-based approach centred on survivors' real-life experiences, the programme has provided jobs and improved long-term support for modern slavery survivors. It later expanded across 21 businesses and 28 charities and contributed to 100+ referrals, 59 placements, and 34 permanent jobs.



Informing best practice guidance: Building on research from AKN and APRIES, and in collaboration with UKCDR, the research team developed [safeguarding guidelines](#) for international development research which informed UK funders' institutional practices (UKRI, DHSC, FCDO).

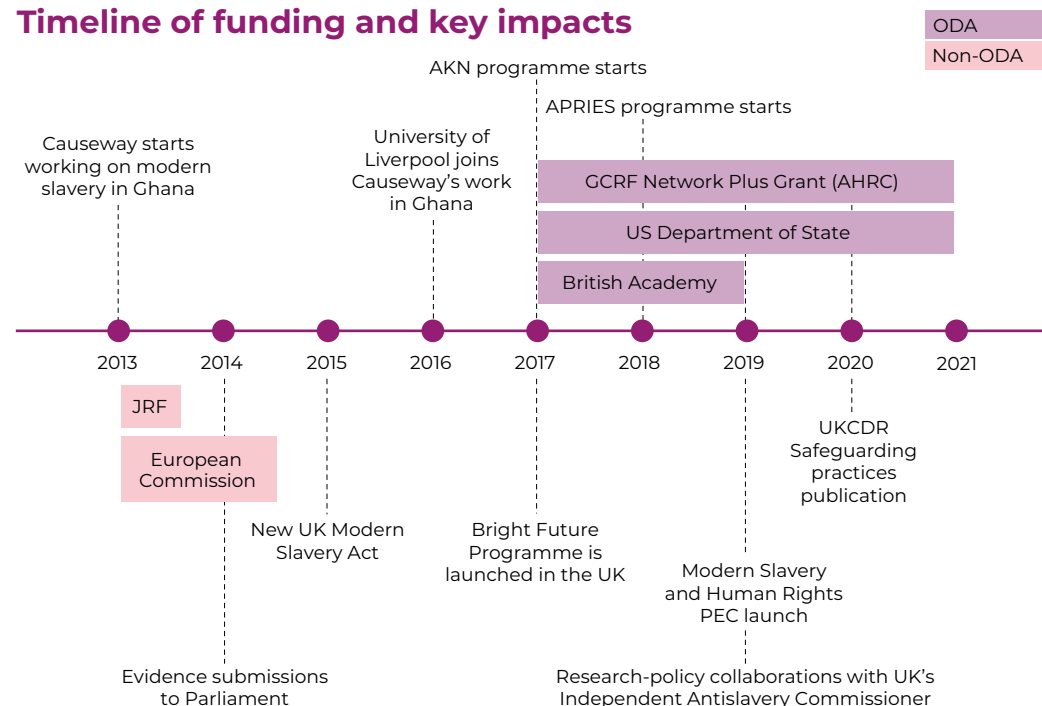


Global and local partnerships: The creation of new partnerships and projects involving researchers and practitioners, both within and outside the UK, helped develop a vibrant research community, including through the formation of UK's Modern Slavery Research Consortium linking 200+ diverse groups and individuals.

How secondary benefits unfolded

- University of Liverpool researchers prioritised building equitable transdisciplinary partnerships (i.e., working with practitioners, consultants, academics, and survivors with mutual respect and trust). This enhanced research impact in African countries. Lessons from this approach were pivotal for the development of the Bright Future programme, which successfully fostered effective partnerships with UK businesses and charities.
- Insights from the engagement with survivors and vulnerable communities in Africa enabled Causeway to promote ways of addressing modern slavery in the UK's business supply chain. For example, Causeway highlighted the value of lived experience and encouraged firms to employ survivors as consultants for risk mitigation in recruitment processes.
- Similarly, lessons from AKN's interdisciplinary research (spanning 18 disciplines including politics, history, communication, and drama) helped the UK improve engagement with survivors, identify legislative gaps, establish safeguarding guidelines, and shape research agendas led by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights PEC.

Timeline of funding and key impacts





Protecting peatlands to mitigate climate change:

How geological research influenced policies and practices in Southeast Asia, the UK, and globally

Leading university	University of Leicester.
Location of impact	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway, Peru, Republic of Congo (RoC), UK.
Thematic focus	Geology, physical geography, environmental geoscience.
Funders	In Europe: European Commission. In the UK: Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), UK Space Agency.
Partners	In Indonesia: University of Indonesia, University of Palangkaraya. In DRC: University of Kisangani. In RoC: Marien Ngouabi University. In the UK: UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH).

Case study summary

University of Leicester research on the environmental effects of tropical peatland drainage has influenced international peatland management and greenhouse gases (GHG) reporting. As peatlands are natural ecosystems that store carbon, draining them for agriculture releases carbon as GHG and also raises fire and flood risks. In Southeast Asia, research recommendations influenced policies to protect peatlands and reshape agricultural practices. In Europe, research insights on the damaging effects of peatland deforestation and draining to make way for palm oil plantations influenced regulations on sustainable palm oil imports. Meanwhile, the efforts of Congolese and UK-based researchers to document a newly uncovered tropical peatland - storing three years' worth of GHG emissions -

in the Congo Basin prompted various international agreements. Having worked in Southeast Asian tropical peatlands, researchers from Leicester and the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) collaborated to explore the lowland peatland systems in England and Wales. Their findings helped shape national soil health guidelines and contributed to UK government reporting on GHG emissions.

Primary benefits in LMICs and globally

- **Informing peatland drainage and GHG emissions policies:** Linking peatland drainage to subsidence, flooding, and GHG emissions prompted calls from NGOs to phase out peatland drainage in Indonesia. Methodologies developed to identify GHG emissions in degraded tropical peatlands were used by the Indonesian government to create mitigation schemes and support the [2015 GHG emission reporting](#).
- **Global peatland protection:** In 2017, researchers from the University of Leicester and other UK universities [documented the extent and amount of carbon storage](#) of an uncovered vast peatland located in a tropical swamp forest in the Congo Basin. This led to the [Brazzaville Declaration](#), an international [pledge to protect major peatlands worldwide](#) adopted in 2018 (Congo Basin, Indonesia, and Peru). It also drove the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) [Global Peatlands Initiative](#) established in 2016, fostering best practices and attracting capacity building funding from Germany and Japan for climate mitigation in Congolese peatlands.
- **Transforming paper production:** Researchers from the University of Leicester and CEH joined an advisory group for Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL), a major Indonesian pulpwood company. Their input supported [APRIL's new sustainable forest and peatland roadmap](#) and contributed to science-based assessments to advance on responsible peatland operations and the target of net zero emissions from land-use. Between 2019 and 2022 APRIL recorded a [14% reduction in carbon emissions intensity](#) from stationary sources such as fossil fuel and biomass combustion, waste management and others.

Secondary benefits for the UK and globally



Influencing policy discourse: University of Leicester and CEH researchers collaborated on a project to study lowland peatlands in England and Wales. Lessons learned from LMIC contexts helped researchers understand the links between the UK's agriculture and its peatland degradation. These findings informed Defra's strategies for reducing peatland emissions and were integrated into [evidence](#) that clarified [recommendations](#) in the UK [Parliament's Soil Health 2016 report](#), which advocated against intensive agricultural practices on lowland peatlands.



Enhancing emissions reporting: Research findings and methodology improved the accuracy of the UK's GHG emissions reports and mitigation assessments which are developed under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Kyoto Protocol and published by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. Beyond the UK, the methodology for GHG emissions reporting has also supported global emissions projection estimates, such as [UNEP's 2017 emissions reduction potentials report](#).



Innovating for better monitoring: To overcome data constraints in the monitoring of peatland drainage, CEH developed a cost-effective [camera monitoring kit](#). The kit contains simple camera-based sensors that capture high-resolution changes in peat surface elevation over extended periods. Supported by UK public funding, the kit was implemented in England's lowland peatlands, enhancing national data collection.

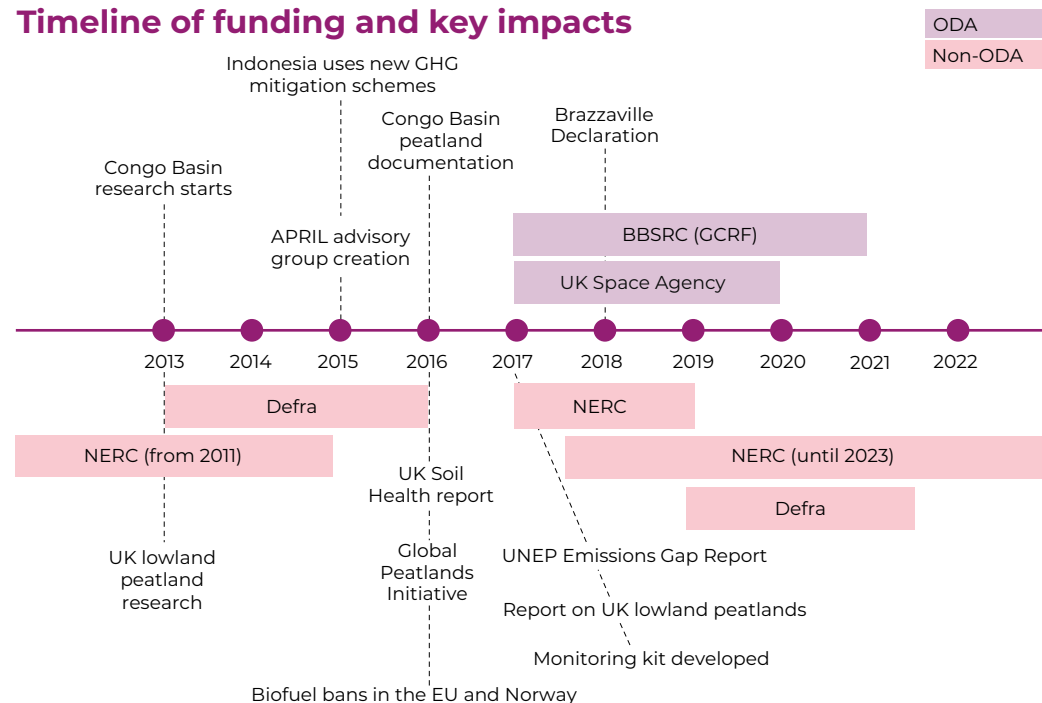


Sustainable biofuels and palm oil: Researchers provided input to the international NGO Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), influencing guidelines for [oil palm plantations](#) and [drainability assessments](#) to reduce GHG emissions from oil plantations on peatland and mitigate subsidence-related flooding risks. Research findings also contributed to the [European Parliament's biofuel ban](#) in 2018 and the phase-out of biodiesel from vegetable oils by 2030. Similarly, they contributed to Norway's enforcement of a total ban on palm oil-based biofuel procurement.

How secondary benefits unfolded

- University of Leicester and CEH researchers had prior experience conducting studies in Southeast Asia, both collaboratively and independently. Some of these studies ran concurrently with joint research in the UK, facilitating feedback loops between institutions and among the two geographical contexts. For instance, awareness on the relevance to livelihoods of palm oil and pulp plantations in tropical peatlands helped the researchers consider the wider implications of UK peatland drainage for farmers, including [societal impacts](#).
- The methodologies and insights derived from research in Indonesia provided valuable foundations for advancing GHG emissions calculations in the UK, mainly used by Defra and DSIT. Although the environmental conditions and land use practices differ, the fundamental methods were successfully leveraged and adapted.
- The camera kit was initially created to address under-monitoring in Indonesia's challenging environmental conditions. However, the kit's low-cost and practical set up has facilitated scalability in the UK and widespread interest has led to potential commercialisation.

Timeline of funding and key impacts



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