March 2022

Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on GCRF and Newton Projects

A Research Report by PRAXIS: Arts and Humanities for Global Development

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Recommended citation:

Pirgova-Morgan, L. (2022). Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on GCRF and Newton Projects. A Research Report by PRAXIS: Arts and Humanities for Global Development. Leeds: University of Leeds.

"Clearly these are unprecedented times and we need to be flexible and adaptable to the inevitable changes before us".

— Principal Investigator of GCRF project, responding to PRAXIS survey regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their research experiences.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AHRC: Arts and Humanities Research Council

DAC: Development Assistance Committee

GCRF: Global Challenges Research Fund

LMIC: Low or Middle Income Country

ODA: Official Development Assistance

PI: Principal Investigator

UK: United Kingdom

UKRI: United Kingdom Research and Innovation

Executive Summary

Over five years, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) have made close to 300 awards under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton portfolio. These awards have drawn on AHRC's research base to address development challenges that are ultimately global challenges, including poverty reduction, global health, climate change, resilience, conflict, displacement, inclusive education, and rapid urbanization.

PRAXIS, based at the University of Leeds, aims to champion the distinctive contribution that Arts and Humanities (A&H) research can make to tackling a range of urgent development challenges. Its two major 'Nexus' events were held in Lebanon in February 2020 and via a virtual platform in November 2020 and focused respectively on Heritage and Conflict and Displacement. In light of the global pandemic that continues to affect global research, PRAXIS re-routed resources to include two new areas of focus in 2021. First, to explore how GCRF and Newton A&H projects have adapted to COVID-19, including a focus on long-term opportunities for understanding how these adaptations may inform action towards climate change. Second, to explore the critically important issue of young people's political and social engagement and agency, given the seismic shifts that are affecting global populations.

This report focuses on the PRAXIS Project COVID-19 Strand
and explores the following two research questions:

> Question 1: How are projects across the AHRC GCRF and Newton portfolios responding to COVID-19?

> Question 2: What challenges and solutions can be identified in GCRF and Newton projects' experiences of COVID-19 that can contribute towards a climate-resilient, zero-carbon economy?

The report illustrates various themes within the data, including but not limited to: the impacts of COVID-19 on the entirety of the research process for the projects, from fieldwork to analysis; the impacts on researchers and their research partnerships; the impacts on the content and quality of the projects as well as emerging themes on mental health and well-being, gender and politics, ethics and etiquette, researcher role and moral responsibility, climate change and climate justice. These themes range from those related to the practical implications of COVID-19 impacts on research, to those more abstract (aesthetics and the concept of time) and theoretical (considering changes to the academic field as a whole).

The analysis shows that COVID-19 helped highlight existing tensions and inequalities in academic research, in particular in the area of Arts and Humanities for addressing global challenges. The pandemic increased pressure on already strained research systems highlighting some key challenges and issues. This report reflects on these, using insights and reflections from researchers who took the time to provide feedback through survey responses and in-depth interviews. Finally the responses provided consideration of opportunities for adapting or changing research based on lessons learnt from the pandemic, both in terms the post-COVID era, if it ever arrives, and as we face the reality of adapting to increasing climate-related disasters.

Copyright 'Fishing and farming in the desert'? A platform for understanding El Niño food system opportunities in the context climate change in Sechura, Peru' project

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has locally and globally impacted on both research practices and individual researchers. While some impacts, such as travel restrictions, can be relatively easily comprehended and adapted to, others are unique to Arts and Humanities research and have created significant challenges for the research community. This introduction serves to situate the COVID-19 report within the PRAXIS project framework; describe the research design and methodology undertaken; and present the structure of the report.

The PRAXIS project and the COVID-19 Research Strand

Over the last five years, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has made almost 300 awards under the Global Challenges Research Fund Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton portfolio. Of those nearly 300 projects, more than two thirds have been affected by COVID-19. These projects faced significant challenges due to the pandemic, but new opportunities have also arisen. For example, COVID-related travel restrictions hindered traditional fieldwork research practices but have also given rise to other methods of communication and interconnectivity as well as contributing greatly to lowering projects' carbon footprints.

PRAXIS, based at the University of Leeds, aims to champion the distinctive contribution that Arts and Humanities (A&H) research can make to tackling a range of urgent development challenges. PRAXIS has identified a number of strands across the AHRC GCRF and Newton portfolios. Its two major 'Nexus' events were held in Lebanon in February 2020 and via a virtual platform in November 2020 and focused respectively on Heritage & Culture and Conflict & Displacement. In light of the global pandemic that continues to affect research, PRAXIS re-routed resources to include a new area of focus in 2021, namely how projects across the AHRC GCRF and Newton portfolios are responding to the challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the research in this report aims to uncover how projects across the AHRC GCRF and Newton portfolios responded to COVID-19 as well as what challenges and solutions can be identified in these projects' experiences of COVID-19 that can contribute towards a climate-resilient, zero-carbon economy.

Report Research Design and Methodology

The research design for this project followed a relatively standard data collection and analysis process. Data was collected via a survey, in-depth interviews, and case studies; then analysed through content and thematic analysis. These stages are discussed further below.

The first stage of data collection required identifying projects from AHRC GCRF and Newton portfolios in order to approach their Principal Investigators (PIs). We identified projects by generating a list via UKRI's Gateway to Research. Ultimately the survey was distributed to all 248 projects that could have possibly been affected by COVID-19. Projects included in the final sample selections had to meet one of two conditions. First, they had to be projects that were still ongoing and as such could be currently affected by COVID-19. Second, they had to be projects that had a completion date within 6 months of first official COVID-19 lockdowns in the UK in March 2020, which would imply that they could also be affected in their dissemination stages. As a result projects prior to September 2019 were excluded from the sample.

The survey helped gather general data about the current state of the projects as well as explore how projects were affected by the pandemic and how they were coping with the challenges faced. It was sent out by mid-February and was accessible to PIs for one month. An email invitation was sent out to encourage participation, followed by several email reminders seeking completion before the deadline.

The survey incorporated both prompted responses with multiple choice answers as well as open-ended questions. The survey went out to 211 projects in GCRF and 37 projects in Newton portfolios. There were 80 individual responses but given that many PIs lead on multiple projects it is worth noting that 38.5% of GCRF PIs and 40.6% of Newton PIs completed the survey. The final question of the survey invited the respondents to volunteer for participation at a later date in in-depth interviews. 32.8% of GCRF responders and 23.1% of Newton respondents wished to be interviewed further and were subsequently offered the opportunity. These self-selected interviews constitute the second phase of data collection for this report.

In contrast to the general questions of the survey, the in-depth interviews were tailored to the projects. Questions were prepared for each participant and his or her project, as well as clarification questions so PIs could have the opportunity to elaborate on their responses in the survey. The interview time ranged from 45 min to 2 hours as PIs were encouraged to answer the questions to any extent they would be satisfied with. The semi-structured nature of these interviews permitted for the in-depth interviews to be participant-led. 21 interviews were completed between April and July 2021. Each interview was recorded and transcribed in preparation for further analysis. Participants provided consent to be contacted via the survey and then verbal consent was later confirmed and recorded during interviews.

The final, third phase of data collection for the report included the collection and analysis of nine case studies. These case studies were carefully selected from both research portfolios to provide a symbolically representative sample of the range of circumstances and experiences projects encountered during COVID-19. Once the case studies were completed, they were sent back to the PIs for additional clarification and comments. These co-produced cases are presented throughout the report from Chapter 2 to Chapter 5.

The analysis of the empirical materials from the survey, interview, and case study data included both content and thematic analysis. The data was thematically coded in preparation for analysis with a secondary sub-thematic coding within the stratified themes. A number of interesting themes emerged from the data, which will be presented in this report.

Additional Reflections on Data Processing and Presentation

As this is a research project that studies the impacts of COVID-19 on research projects, there must be a brief reflection on the impact of the pandemic on this report as well. Gathering empirical materials during the pandemic was remotely completed using either Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Data gathering of this type has its own limitations and challenges due to technological difficulties or connection problems. On the other hand, this brought opportunities. For example, some of the interviews would not have been completed if virtual interviews were not an option due to PIs' geographical location or illness. There was also multiple re-scheduling of interviews done at short notice, which in an offline situation

would have most likely ended up as 'cancelled' rather than 're-scheduled' interviews. In this sense, COVID-19 was not only the content fuelling this research, but also a medium to enable its successful completion.

Finally, a comment on the photos and quotes incorporated in this report. All visual materials have been provided by PIs from AHRC GCRF and Newton portfolios, which allows readers to gain further insight into the visual representations of the projects. Additionally, all quotes used in the report are from PIs from across these portfolios. The quotes within the chapters have been edited for clarity, while preserving the original language and meaning. All quotes have been anonymised except for those included in case studies where they have been attributed to PIs with their permission.

Structure of the Report

This report is structured into six Chapters:

> Chapter 1 presents the survey data thematically, presented in two parts: part 1 focuses on research design, methodology and dissemination and part 2 focuses on research focus, scope, aims and values.

> Chapter 2 focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and well-being among researchers, research partners and/or participants.

> Chapter 3 explores the impact of COVID-19 on partnerships and networking during the pandemic.

> Chapter 4 then re-evaluates the impact of the pandemic on ethical frameworks and etiquette guidelines of research projects.

> Chapter 5 highlights the concepts of climate change and climate justice to explore how the pandemic has impacted on perceptions of these in relation to PIs' research plans and approaches.

> Chapter 6 considers how research practices might be impacted in the long-term, in particular in terms of future expectations about research practices, quality and standards.

Disposable COVID-19 face coverings and hand sanitiser. Photograph by Anshu A. from Unsplash.

Highlight from a COVID-researching GCRF project – Researchers in Masks; Copyright Emma Wild-Wood 'Belief in the time of COVID-19: Understanding the making of meaning and trust to maximise public health responsiveness of faith communities in DRC' project

Chapter 1: Impact of COVID-19 on the Research Process and Outputs

Any research project incorporates many stages, from project conception and design to the various methods of data collection, analysis and dissemination. The projects from GCRF and Newton portfolios follow standard research processes, but they also have another layer incorporated in their project designs, namely that of 'impact'. All projects from the portfolio consider the short and long lasting 'impacts' of the project as a priority for project design. This focus on impact meant that when COVID-19 appeared and shifted research priorities, projects had to adapt and modify their research processes, while considering both the impact of the pandemic on the project as well as what impacts there would be for the researchers, for their partners, for the communities involved as well as more widely in academia.

Chapter 1 of this report is focused on exploring the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research design and research process of the projects. This chapter will discuss the statistical data from the PRAXIS Project: COVID-19 Strand survey that was conducted with 80 GCRF and Newton projects. These data provide an overview of the main themes, which are then explored in more depth in subsequent chapters, using additional data from 21 in-depth interviews with PIs. The first part of the chapter will explore the positive and negative consequences of the pandemic on the projects' research design, methodology, and dissemination strategies. The second part of the chapter will focus on the changes of focus, scope, aims, and values associated with the different projects as a result of the pandemic.

Part 1: Research Design, Methodology, and Dissemination

COVID-19 is the first global pandemic of its kind that has occurred during the information age, so as expected from both the interview and survey data, COVID-19 was reported to have had a significant impact on research projects from across both GCRF and Newton portfolios. Specifically, 94% of GCRF and 100% of Newton project respondents stated that the pandemic had a significant impact on their project in the survey. Further, 91% of GCRF and 92.3% of Newton respondents who completed the survey wrote that their

project was still ongoing at the time of the survey. The following sections will present survey data illustrating the main impacts of COVID-19 on research projects, highlighting positive and negative consequences as well as exploring changes to research practices and research design expected to continue long-term.

Impact on Research Projects

There were many areas of the research process that were impacted by COVID-19 with the main ones identified by more than half of the respondents being research design, methodology, data collection, project travel, dissemination, and networking. Further, more than 40% identified impact on both finances and partnerships. There were also several other impacts that were identified such as grant management processes, data storage, gender roles, ability to engage with local organisations and local communities directly, exhaustion and motivation of colleagues involved, training, and timing. These additional ones were further explored with the interviews conducted for this report and most were found to have actually impacted almost all of the projects interviewed.

Inability to travel was one of the main reasons why projects were impacted by COVID-19. 100% of Newton respondents and 91% of GCRF respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that COVID-19 travel restrictions altered their project designs. These alterations primarily occurred during the fieldwork and dissemination stages of the research projects. COVID-19 led to constraints on fieldwork in 84.9% of GCRF projects and 92.3% of Newton projects, while the majority of all respondents highlighted that they had needed to abandon or change dissemination plans as outlined initially in their project design.

Positive Consequences

COVID-19 brought many new opportunities to the research projects in both portfolios as well. 53.7% of the GCRF and 61.5% of the Newton portfolio projects stated that COVID-19 caused positive changes to the projects and 92.3% and 87.5% of those who identified COVID-19 as a positive impact on their projects stated that they will preserve some of those positive changes in the project in a post COVID-19 world. Additionally, 9 out of 10 projects showed a willingness to incorporate positive changes experienced because of the pandemic as part of the research design of future projects.

Some examples of the positive changes projects reported amidst the pandemic were: increased amount of collective reflection for the projects via better and more innovative use of the available resources, making greater use of local assistance and support from their research partner as well as opening up to new multidisciplinary collaborations. For example as one respondent wrote in the survey:

'More autonomy was given to ODA partners. As we cannot visit partners, we've had to learn to let go of control in very practical ways (instead of just talking about this), and realised things still happen, although sometimes in a different way and with different results from what was planned.'

Another respondent wrote in that 'delays to lab work have allowed us to add a newly developed technique which will enhance the dataset available for impact activity.' Additionally, on some projects, more staff were employed from leftover travel money that could not be used due to COVID imposed travel restrictions.

Other examples of positive impacts on research projects from both portfolios were linked to improved technological abilities such as using Zoom, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, or other online mediums for communication. This allowed researchers to increase the frequency, and in some cases, quality of contact and engagement:

'Our workshops which would have been held in-country are now running online and therefore we are able to engage a much wider audience, including in other DAC listed countries. Our collaborative work as a project team has been strengthened in some ways, in the face of the challenges.'

Finally, there were also positive impacts that reflected accelerated action towards decolonisation of the fieldwork by creating autonomy and ownership, but also in view of environmental concerns and a shift towards net-zero research study design. COVID was often linked to a decrease in carbon footprint due to a reduction in travel, which is an intense carbon activity as well as other practices of environmental sustainability such as finding alternative food initiatives or promoting local economies of scale during the pandemic as a way to sustain communities and reduce carbon intense activities.

That being said, there was also an element of reflection reported: 58.3% of GCRF and 88.8% of Newton respondents said they would have addressed those changes differently, or improved them, if they had the ability to go back and re-do the project knowing what they know now.

Negative Consequences

There were also negative consequences of COVID-19 for many of the research projects. 93.9% of the GCRF and 100% of the Newton respondents identified aspects of the research project that were changed, placed on hold or abandoned because of COVID-19. These included aspects of the research projects from staff recruitment, networking, and fieldwork to accessibility, dissemination, and engagement events.

How would you rate the consequences of Covid-19 to your GCRF research project?
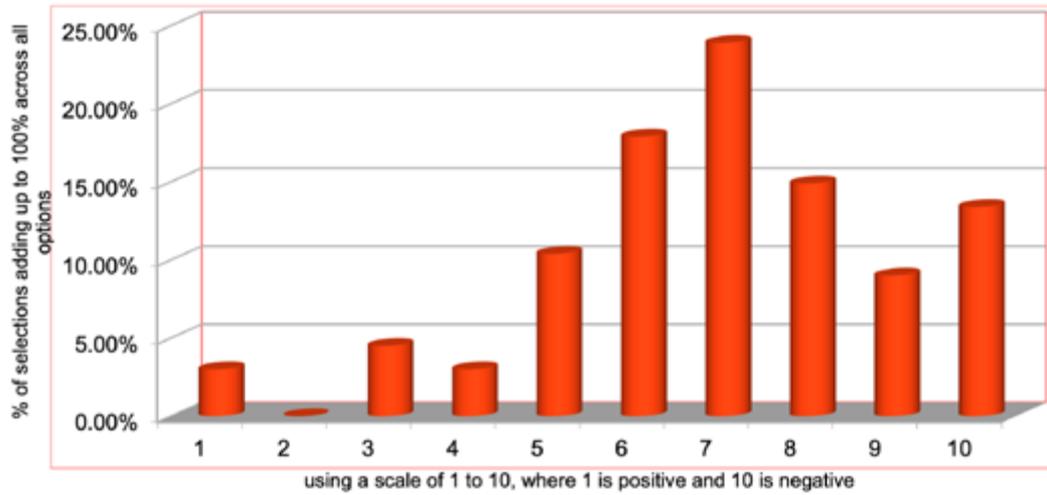
How would you rate the consequences of Covid-19 to your Newton research project?
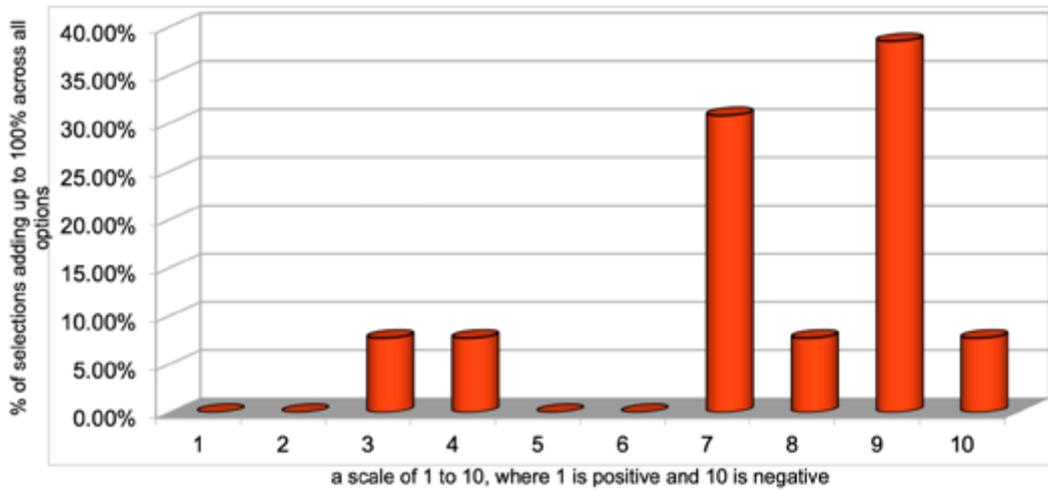
Researcher recruitment was significantly delayed by local and overseas national lockdowns and by closures of partner organisations following the COVID-19 outbreak, as reported repeatedly in the survey. This delayed the early phases of many projects and several elements related to fieldwork and dissemination were either postponed or placed on hold.

Networking and partnership involvement were also impacted negatively by COVID for many projects with some partners being unable to participate in capacity enhancement activities due to lack of access to internet, and often not having any viable alternative due to COVID-19 restrictions. Further, as one respondent summarised regarding their partnership interactions, 'face to face networking and team building that were at the core of the project have had to be reimagined and are delayed', while another respondent commented that 'we continue to maintain a very gentle pace to work and acknowledge that work will happen at different times in different countries, in part because of varying COVID situations and in part because of additional caring responsibilities across the team (of course exacerbated by COVID).' This acknowledged the additional strain partners feel from not only the pandemic as a disease, but also impact on family life disrupting the work/life balance of researchers and their research partners. As a result, in many projects research and partnership development activities were changed and/or delayed, and in a few, such as being unable to work with Indigenous partners for their own safety, activities were abandoned altogether.

One of the main negative consequences of the pandemic for projects was the adverse impact on conducting planned fieldwork. This was described as 'severely disrupted fieldwork as nearly all data collection has had to be virtual and the activities we are studying have also been very restricted'. For some types of data this was seen as productive, but for those dependent on in-person activities such as observation and participation it proved to be a great challenge for most projects. Research designs that incorporated qualitative research methods such as networking surveys, some literature reviews that required access to archives, peer review workshops, participatory research methods and performance based research methods were often transformed into other methodologies, and where this was not possible, projects stalled: 'Interviews that were held over the phone rather than face to face, were harder and slower to do - leading to a missed project milestone.'. Supervision of field workers, seminars, and other research activities were similarly delayed and disrupted by '1. The knock-on effects of COVID-19

on a related project (required for participant recruitment) and 2. Ongoing travel restrictions and limits placed on field research (digital data collections methods were considered but are not a realistic alternative)'. Finally, one of the most prominent barriers to fieldwork was the issue of COVID-19 related travel restrictions, which in some cases prevented data gathering as no online alternatives were deemed viable.

Another negative consequence of COVID-19 was linked to project deliverables, dissemination, and engagement activities. Conference presentations, trialling of educational materials, and inability to engage in impact activities city authorities that were in crisis-management mode, meant that deliverables were often delayed.

Finally, the impact on research staff was also highlighted by many in the survey data as a major negative impact from COVID on their research projects. Many teams successfully delivered their projects, but the cost for meeting deadlines under COVID-induced strained circumstances involved 'a high degree of burnout'. Unwieldy grant management processes also led to overwhelmed staff while working from home. An example provided by a respondent involved a particularly challenging experience:

'[We were] able to secure the exhibition space for the last part of the project but are now affected by the death (from COVID-19) of a close family member. The project is now on hold for that reason. We can't obtain an extension due to the way the extension money was awarded, so we are stuck at the moment and unable to complete the project.'

Despite these challenges and setbacks, many of the responses highlighted that projects were not permanently affected by the negative consequences, but rather 'delayed' in their completion. There was a general sense of hopeful expectation for improvement of the pandemic situation that permeated many of the responses on the negative consequences researchers listed.

Funding

There were further impacts that projects experienced because of COVID-19 such as access and ability to spend allocated funding. Funding was one area that had positive and negative consequences for the projects from both portfolios. The government-initiated ODA budget cuts, discussed in a later chapter, were seen by most respondents as a negative consequence connected to the pandemic, while others reported finding unexpected funding opportunities. 25.8% GCRF and 23.1% Newton respondents said they found new opportunities for funding that the pandemic opened up. Further, 59.7% of GCRF and 76.9% of Newton respondents were able to reallocate a portion of the funding received from AHRC to another aspect of their project because of COVID-19 thereby opening up new avenues for the project such as development of new partnerships, more ambitious dissemination methods, expansion of project outcomes, etc.

There were many different areas where finances were reallocated as identified in the survey. According to some of the respondents, some of the money destined for overseas workshops and travel were being reallocated towards developing collaborations with various partners and to hiring local research assistance. Others used the funds for technological innovations and digital support of partners. Technological innovation included tools such as podcast, video, or other online resource material development for the project that would increase project sustainability and impact. Digital support included funding partners' access to hardware such as technology equipment, e.g., WiFi devices as well as access to data bundles, IT support, or other online training. These practices were supported in most projects from both portfolios in an attempt to facilitate remote working, digital engagement, and enhance COVID-safe working practices.

Consequences Summary

These two charts show that in both the GCRF and Newton portfolios, respondents perceived COVID-19 to have primarily negative consequences on the projects. The Newton projects in particular were illustrative of this perception. In the GCRF projects, fewer than 20% of respondents noted primarily positive consequences (1-5 on the scale). The majority of the projects identified with negative consequences as depicted by choosing 6 to 10 on the scale.

Changes in Research Practices

COVID-19 was seen by the majority of the respondents to have brought about a change to research practices in general. Specifically, 94% of GCRF and 92.3% of Newton respondents perceived changes to one or more aspects of the research process. These included a perceived challenge to the maintenance of research practice standards as agreed by 85.1% of GCRF and 76.9% of Newton respondents. While data analysis was not impacted by COVID-19 according to the survey data for the majority of the project, data collection and dissemination were. For example, 72.7% of GCRF and 76.9% of Newton respondents highlighted difficulties when attempting to communicate their research findings.

The majority of respondents (85.1% GCRF and 76.9% Newton) reported that they favoured taking the lessons learnt during the pandemic forward and using them to help research practices in general. Similarly, the majority of the respondents (86.4% GCRF and 84.6% Newton) also believed that the lessons learnt from conducting research during COVID-19 could be retained beyond the pandemic.

Changes to Research Design

One of the main lessons learnt by the majority of the projects from both portfolios was the ability to use different mediums for communication and various platforms for expression. The primary preferred form of communication with the community/ies post-COVID was described by the respondents as 'both in-person and virtual' (70.1% GCRF and 61.5% Newton). Even though online communication has grown amidst the pandemic, telephone and radio were seen as important mediums for communication, particularly in the Global South and in rural areas where internet can be untrustworthy or 'patchy'.

This preference for 'both in-person and virtual' forms of communication is only one example of the possibility of 'hybridisation' of research practices in the future as a consequence of COVID-19. The majority, 83.3% of GCRF and 76.9% of Newton respondents, were in favour of 'hybridisation' of research practices with examples including increasing the use of 'blended events', or a series of webinars leading up to an in-person event or an event that can be accessed both in-person and virtually. As one of the perceived benefits of blended events, one respondent stated, the 'use of online tools to enable seamless transcription and interpretation to enable opportunities for more extensive knowledge exchange with languages beyond English, and to extend the impact of events through sharing of digital videos or audio recordings which can be shared online'. Many respondents echoed these sentiments as pertaining to various aspects of fieldwork or data gathering methodologies such as encouraging the use of digital ethnography or moving interview-based research virtually. As for data collection, respondents also referenced a hybridisation of methods, suggesting making more use of local practitioners to do the research and to lead dissemination and engagement events. As to the analysis and dissemination phases of a research project, developing the appropriate tools to reflect this shift was also discussed such as using digital archives to replace the need to access archives physically. Finally, as to the lasting impacts and sustainability of the projects the use of digital technologies and methodologies for communication and research were often seen to be enhanced by COVID-19 and likely to affect future projects; or in the words of one respondent:

'I could see funds being utilised to improve internet and tech capacities in communities which would allow better online communication and thus minimise transmission risk for COVID and future pandemic diseases but also benefit the climate action needed in the coming years.'

Part 2: Research Focus, Scope, Aims, and Values

The pandemic did not only influence project design and research processes, but as survey respondents repeatedly highlighted, COVID-19 also brought a noticeable transformation in several key topic areas such as research focus, project scope, aims, and values. The pandemic created new opportunities for exploration of existing topics such as issues of inequalities, diversity, and inclusion, the role of gender in research projects, the widening gap between the Global North and the Global South, capacity development in DAC listed countries as well as the changing face of marginalised communities and the digital divide researchers faced during COVID-19. For many, the scope of the projects also changed because of travel, resource, and timing constraints imposed by the pandemic. Research aims and values were also reflected upon by respondents, especially in relation to themes of resilience, climate change, and climate justice as well as mental health and the general well-being of researchers, partners, and participants. The following sections of this chapter will focus on survey data highlighting the impact of COVID-19 as described by the respondents related to communication, communities, partnerships, policymakers and policy impact, and climate change/climate justice before concluding with some final reflections.

Augmentations and Limitations to Communications

80.6% of GCRF and 76.9% of Newton respondents stated that COVID-19 changed their engagement with their research and 73.2% of GCRF and 84.7% of Newton respondents stated that COVID-19 changed how they communicated with their participants. Similar percentages were cited for communication with colleagues and partners (86.5% GCRF/69.2% Newton).

For the majority of the projects, COVID-19 introduced new forms of communication with people and/or groups affiliated with the project. 67.1% of GCRF and 69.3% of Newton respondents embraced new technologies as a means to maintain communication necessary for the project. Four or five out of ten projects also increased their communication with people affiliated with the project because of the pandemic.

On the other hand, despite the widespread acceptance of new forms of communication due to COVID-19, only half of GCRF respondents perceived the emergent technological innovations as providing opportunities for communication with people and/or groups who they may otherwise not have had access to. Two in ten found it a barrier while the remaining were undecided. In the Newton portfolio case respondents were evenly split on this question. This was therefore followed up in interviews and will be addressed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

Transformations Brought by COVID-19 to Communities

Many of the research projects in both portfolios work with communities outside of the United Kingdom and as can be expected COVID-19 had an impact on these community/ies as well. 86.4% of the GCRF and 100% of the Newton respondents responded in the survey that the communities they were working with were affected by COVID-19, with the remaining 13.6% from the GCRF portfolio claiming that the communities they work with were either unaffected or this question is not applicable to their research project as they only work with non-human resources such as archives.

The main community areas that were identified by respondents as having been impacted by COVID-19 were community projects and community events closely followed by community programmes and community support. Other community areas that were impacted included institutional policies and interdisciplinary and/or out of community partnerships as well as several identified by the respondents such as impacts to the art sector, pressure on natural resources, economic effects of restrictions on the communities, loss of mobility and travel opportunities, loss of access to education, and dealing with COVID-related illness and death.

Further, COVID-19 was identified as having impacted existing concerns facing communities such as gender violence, police violence, or mental health for 77.8% of the GCRF and 53.8% of the Newton respondents. First, increased sense of isolation and loneliness from lockdown restrictions were seen to impact mental health, while fear of contracting COVID had led to considerable anxiety surrounding health and interpersonal interactions. Mental health concerns were often reported in the context of deteriorating mental health for academics and practitioners involved in the projects, and likely project participants as

well. Second, there were reportedly 'exacerbated differential power balances - who has access to resources and who does not' as well as increased police and military violence and statements of colleagues and partners on some projects about what they perceived as over-arching political controls becoming stronger due to autocratic governments using COVID-19 as an excuse to expand their powers. Finally, serious concerns related to gender were raised as respondents reported increased cases of gender-based violence, including sexual abuse and rape of young girls at some project sites. There was also an increase in human trafficking risks, especially for vulnerable women. Additional concerns over gender inequality were connected to lack of access to employment as women needing to work were forced to adopt greater childcare duties at home while 'in some countries there has been an increase in suicide by (male) providers, out of work because of COVID'.

Other concerns highlighted in the survey included food and resource security as well as other negative economic, political, social and cultural impacts. COVID was often seen to compound existing structures of marginalisation and vulnerability in the communities of the projects, or in the words of one respondent: 'many of the communities we work with are struggling with access to work and sustenance. There are also mental health concerns and growing gender imbalances.' More than half of GCRF respondents (57%) observed increased concerns about mental health in the communities during the pandemic.

While most respondents from the Newton portfolio remained neutral or did not respond in this category, from the few that did respond, the main concerns perceived to have impacted the communities were: lockdowns and their subsequent impact on mental health; COVID restrictions that affected participation in and enjoyment of heritage practices; and impact on violence against women, as the following respondent noted:

'part of the research is on women experiencing domestic violence in a specific location in a city: due to COVID the usual support agencies that help these women have not been operating, and therefore gender violence is not being registered or dealt with.'

Specifically in relation to the wider issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, 68.6% of GCRF and 61.6% of Newton respondents suggested that the pandemic has highlighted existing inequalities within the communities they research in their projects. COVID-19 was also identified to have contributed to the widening gap between the Global North and Global South by 63.6% in GCRF and 61.6% in Newton portfolio responses. Therefore it was unsurprising that the pandemic was also seen as a potential barrier to the process of decolonising knowledge production. 58.2% of the GCRF and 69.2% of the Newton respondents perceived COVID-19 as a barrier to decolonising knowledge production and as potentially propagating further knowledge inequalities.

These impacts on the communities had consequences for project research design. For the GCRF project respondents, 56.5% of respondents preserved their research design despite changes in their community/ies while the remaining 43.6% transformed the research design in an attempt to address some of the impacts of COVID-19 they faced. In the Newton projects, more than two thirds of the projects, or 69.2%, transformed their research design in order to account for impacts experienced within the community.

Some of the changes to the research design that the respondents provided could also be stratified in several themes such as moving towards a 'remote interaction design' via visual engagement with the communities or other forms of digital/technological innovation. Another was a change to the research design and public engagement activities to provide additional employment in struggling communities to combat food, medicine, and other shortages experienced in some communities because of the pandemic, while yet another was to focus on how to 'empower' more or different types/groups of people through transformations of the research design as related to projects during COVID-19.

Modification of Partnerships

The question of whether COVID-19 has helped identify other research areas to include in projects was a rather polarising one with half of the respondents agreeing that this is the case and the other half disagreeing. And while COVID-19 was not perceived by respondents to have created additional opportunities for unanticipated disciplines to be connected to the projects, there were some new or different partnerships that formed in order to adapt research designs to the pandemic context. These new partnerships were particularly prominent with regard to the data collection phase of research projects when, with COVID-imposed travel restrictions, PIs had to depend on local participants and community members to gather empirical materials and in some cases, re-shaped the entire research design because of it. For example, in the survey, 31.9% of GCRF and 38.5% of Newton respondents stated that they strongly agreed or agreed that COVID-19 helped them develop unanticipated capacities in DAC listed countries. In the interviews, these capacities were often described as connected to new partnerships developed during data collection phases of the project and in some cases, during the dissemination phase with examples given of museum exhibitions or other community engagement initiatives.

COVID-19 was also identified as a barrier to sustaining existing partnerships and forging new ones. The Newton portfolio respondents experienced greater impacts in this area due to their greater reliance on networking. While 45.5% of GCRF projects perceived the pandemic as a barrier to partnerships and 65.7% strongly agreed or agreed that COVID-19 has impacted their ability to forge new partnerships, the Newton project responses were 61.5% and 69.3% respectively. The most negative impact was in relation to the ability to establish new sustainable international partnerships, where 80.3% of the GCRF and 92.3% of the Newton respondents described the pandemic as a barrier to such endeavours.

Respondents highlighted both opportunities and challenges in relation to partnerships and networking in their additional comments. On the positive side, respondents reported a noticeable 'increase of frequency and participation in online events, workshops, lectures'. This increase was seen both in relation to existing audiences as well as new and different audiences who, because of COVID-19 and the use of digital technology for dissemination events, could now participate. This online method of engagement was also credited by

some respondents to have influenced a change in perspectives amongst people enabling better partnerships, and empowerment of partners and communities, including Indigenous peoples, as well as a move toward drawing on and consolidating networks with global south partners. COVID-19 was seen to be at the centre of the 'acceptance of this digital alternative' within research practices, as without the pandemic, even with the existence of the technology, its use in research was perceived by respondents to have been previously much more limited. Finally, online networking with partners was described as easier to organise as well as 'more environmentally sustainable'.

On the negative side, one of the main challenges of COVID-19 in relation to partnerships and networking was also linked to the use of online communication and platforms for engagement. 'Virtual meetings, using translators, is a nightmare, and many project participants cannot participate as they do not have suitable internet access,' wrote one respondent. Negative consequences of online communication were also depicted in relation to creating a barrier to 'team-building' and the ability to build relationships with partners or communities that are a part of the projects:

'COVID-19 dramatically limited the engagement between team members and key stakeholders in the partner country as well as the networking between project members and local professionals, academics, and public.'

Additionally, the partnerships that were established, were seen to progress in a limited way because 'relaxed dialogue' and 'informal communication' diminish with online networking. Inability to travel to field sites and moving communication online also meant for some projects that new interdisciplinary researchers were not able to immerse themselves in the local context and virtual communication meant that interdisciplinary partnerships were weaker and less inclusive in comparison to respondents' prior experiences.

There were additional negative consequences listed by the respondents of the survey such as 'delays', 'loss of momentum', 'stress', and 'added time' concerns. One respondent wrote in the survey that 'continuous delays and uncertainly are jeopardising relationships with overseas partners', while another stressed that 'remote engagement with partners and project management takes significantly longer…up to 3x longer, and this is not reflected in end dates.' For many in the survey, the impact of COVID-19 on their academic workload has been immense. This included 'time and access issues', 'competing demands on time in different time-zones', and increased workload due to 'non-stop emails'. Respondents also described the impact of the lockdowns on productivity and mental health, with many more work hours required to attain a similar level of pre-COVID quality.

Finally, the remaining negative consequences listed in the survey are connected to the type of partners that projects are involved with and their difficulties with COVID-19. Difficulties that range from partners dealing with the pandemic, the loss of life, the loss of stability to crisis of leadership in institutions as funding is threatened, as people migrated to other opportunities, as COVID devastated entire communities. Many projects also work with partners who are in-country health organisations that understandably had to shift their priorities to deal with the immediate crisis rather than focus on maintaining academic relationships. The partnerships that were sustained amidst the pandemic were the ones described as 'strong pre-existing relationships'. Sustaining these partnerships also involved a degree of newfound flexibility towards partners as researchers identified challenges their partners were facing, recognising: 'how stretched those with caring / home schooling responsibilities are, not just in the UK, but also around the world'.

Policymakers and Policy Impact

Another area crucial to projects in both portfolios is related to policy impact and access to policymakers. With the pandemic affecting different countries in different ways, COVID-19 emerged as a significant obstacle to maintaining existing links with policymakers or forging new partnerships with policymakers. 93.9% of GCRF and 92.3% of Newton respondents stated that the pandemic hindered their access to policymakers.

In terms of policy impact, GCRF and Newton projects were affected slightly differently during the pandemic. For GCRF projects, 58.5% of respondents argued that COVID-19 hindered their ability to trace the policy impact of the project, while for the Newton projects, 53.8% of the respondents suggested that the pandemic actually helped. This help was connected primarily to the necessity to adapt and change their research design amidst the COVID-19 context, a change that incorporated alternative methods of assessing and implementing policy impact within the emerging pandemic context.

Climate Change and Climate Justice

The final theme that emerged through the survey is connected to the secondary focus of this report, namely the impact of the pandemic on climate change and on climate justice. Notably in the survey, COVID-19 was seen to have changed perceptions of climate change for only a quarter to a third of all respondents. For the remaining respondents there were no changes in perceptions. When this was followed up in the interviews later, it was described by the interviewees that the changes they referred to in the survey were about affirmation of existing ideas, beliefs and values associated with climate change reduction practices rather than new opinions formed as a result of the pandemic. Yet with further questioning more nuanced views were uncovered, which will be examined in depth in Chapter 5.

In the survey data, only 1 or 2 out of ten projects perceived the pandemic as a driver to address the issue of climate change in their research. For most who did engage with the topic, there was an existing interest that pre-dated the spread of COVID-19. 'COVID has solidified pre-pandemic plans for the next phase of our work to take a more holistic approach to environmental and cultural heritage' as one respondent clarified in the survey. Similarly, only 2 out of 10 projects perceived the pandemic as a driver to address climate justice in their research.

While there were no significant changes in content for projects in relation to climate change and climate justice because of the pandemic, there were practical implications such as a reduction in projects' carbon footprint for 80.6% of the GCRF and 76.9% of the Newton respondents in the survey. Travel was stated as the most common carbon expenditure of most projects, so the main impact related to global emissions discussed in the survey was

the pandemic impact on travel. For all projects in the survey, the amount of overseas travel was vastly reduced or eliminated altogether, for some helping them reach close to zero carbon research designs:

'The ability of virtual meetings to achieve certain objectives has been highlighted, making us re-evaluate how invested we all are in carbon-heavy travel,' or as another respondent summarised, 'COVID has definitely helped us reflect on what 'necessary travel' means.'

Respondents also reported that climate change, climate justice, and climate resilience are topics that have come more to the foreground because of COVID-19. Higher Education Institutions have begun addressing how certain aspects of research behaviour, such as travel, need to change; while in some partner countries other researchers from the GCRF portfolio noted that the climate change agenda had been pushed forward by the COVID crisis. Nevertheless, other respondents warned that online communication and work also leaves a carbon footprint, which needs to be counted against the reduction in travel.

The pandemic did, however, highlight the fragility of the global trade system. In relation to resilience, and particularly climate resilience, 43.3% of GCRF respondents strongly agreed or agreed, as opposed to 20.9% of them who disagreed or strongly disagreed, that there is a need for climate resilience. In the Newton portfolio, that percentage increases to 61.5% who strongly agreed or agreed about the need to work towards climate resilience. Respondents highlighted that COVID-19 has also highlighted that climate-related environmental issues increase the risk of future pandemics so we need to take climate resilience seriously. One respondent argued that 'COVID-19 has shown that Indigenous food systems are more resilient'; while another focused on showing how the pandemic has brought climate interconnectedness and threats to the fore within their project.

Individual researcher and project energy and carbon consumption has changed for some of the projects from GCRF and Newton portfolios. With no international travel and moving

meetings primarily online, there have been fewer travel related project emissions. That is to say, with no international flights, most of the project work has been conducted from researcher homes, on their laptops, rather than in an office, on desktops, taking trains, cars, public transport, flights etc. On the other hand, there has been an increase in carbon consumption both domestically and abroad. As one respondent commented 'as we're all working from home, individual domestic energy consumption has risen'; while another stated that 'I fear that this question [comparing carbon use pre and post COVID] is in danger of setting up a false dichotomy without looking at the fuller picture'.

While in the UK reduced mobility led to fewer travel associated greenhouse emissions, that is not the case in some partner countries. Some projects observed that, rather than an overall carbon reduction, emissions simply shifted from the Global North to the Global South where many countries did not adopt lockdowns or restrict travel in any way. In other words, who and how carbon is consumed changed during the pandemic. That is why, one respondent even argued that 'we've had to move funds towards generators and mobile data to enable partners to participate in virtual meetings and events'. This move increased partners' carbon emissions, while UK colleagues working at home were also consuming more household energy.

Finally, on the topic of economic consequences of the pandemic and its relationship to the aims of a zero-carbon economy, most projects did not find much of an impact. 86.2% of the GCRF and 76.9% of Newton respondents did not find anything in their projects that highlighted any economic consequences of COVID-19, which might or might not hinder global aims towards a zero-carbon economy.

On the other hand, some projects did identify some economic consequences. These consequences related to inequalities, environmental concerns, and digital capacity. In terms of inequalities, one respondent argued that 'it would be useful to consider the gendered implications when assessing COVID's link to economy, including zero-carbon economy'. Others focused on the Global North-South divide where they noted both positive and negative consequences. One positive consequence was the increased opportunity for job creation among research projects as a result of reallocation of travel funding. In stark contrast, a

negative consequence noted was the disproportionate impact on poorer, marginalised communities in the Global South. These inequalities were viewed as a possible hindrance towards a zero-carbon global economy. In terms of environmental concerns, COVID-19 was seen to 'highlight the general environmental harm from the dominant agri-industrial system' as well as 'the vaccine inequality'. A positive impact linked to these economic consequences was the reduction of flights, printing, and road travel, at least in terms of reducing carbon emissions. Finally, in terms of digital capacity, the 'digital divide' was highlighted as related to economic factors during the pandemic, while technical ability and support were cited as having improved and helped move toward a zero-carbon economy. As one respondent commented, prior to COVID, 'we organised an online/virtual symposium which we tried to do in any case but experienced much resistance and little technical expertise within the university, while COVID changed both attitudes and skills at our institution within a few months'. This was commonly discussed in the survey, that despite all the challenges projects experienced because of the pandemic, there were also many newfound opportunities, skills acquired, and research transformations that could impact research practices far beyond the pandemic.

Has the energy or carbon consumption for your project changed in any way because of COVID-19?

Yes 79.74%
No 20.26%
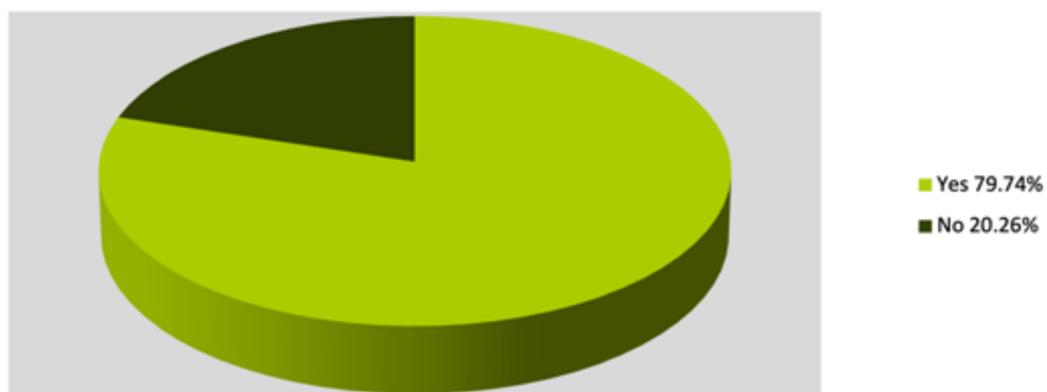
Further Reflections

Respondents from both the GCRF and Newton portfolios also had some further reflections, views, or suggestions that they shared spontaneously in survey comments. This final section will present these additional written responses thematically. The themes are as follows: funding, time, death and illness, inequality, and research collaboration.

Funding challenges

> Funding to cover the time of our partners: "One of our major problems was that the funding from the extension money did not cover the time of our partners and is therefore almost useless, unless they work for free".

> Funding for language transitions as part of the working process: "I work between Spanish and English - through our GCRF forum we are trying to ensure that projects speak across differences and are promoting as much south-south and cross team dialogue as we can but language is a real barrier and currently as none of this was in budget. We are scrabbling to facilitate in order to enable those without English to be heard more"

> Operating with funding during the pandemic: "Transfer of research funds is a HUGE challenge. i.e. not having a partner institution to receive funds, operating in countries with exchange controls, in cash-based economy and delivering community-based research where there are multiple items of expense, rather than one or two companies who can be registered as authorised suppliers. Our current response to this has been that the academic spend their own money and then get reimbursed. Clearly, this is not in accordance with the University's financial procedures and leads to costly delays. The main challenge in our project is the directly incurred costs under fourteen headings, used to purchase goods and services to deliver the mini projects. As PI, I take responsibility for the spending and ensuring that it is secure, but the task in hand is to come up with process that is streamlined and does not involve me advancing my own personals funds. It also needs to be resilient to take account of the phasing of funding which may be concentrated at certain points in the lifetime of the project. I will only know when and if 'cash flow' is an issue when the School team is briefed and the project finally gets underway. Please note that it looks as if researchers will be delivering this 100% remotely for the time being. I am asking the University's finance department if it can quickly develop a model that does not use 'spend and reimburse'. Having the funds

Highlight from a COVID-researching GCRF project – Clergy in Masks; Copyright Emma Wild-Wood 'Belief in the time of COVID-19: Understanding the making of meaning and trust to maximise public health responsiveness of faith communities in DRC' project

in a UK online bank account with Finance (or research administration staff) and the PI (me) as authorised co-signatories would be another example of a workable solution".

Reflections on Time

> Loss of research time: "One major impact, not mentioned here, is loss of research TIME, especially for the UK team".

> Permitting additional time and changes to the budget: "The need to repeatedly re-schedule project workshops, and to re-design them as virtual workshops, required additional time for the PI and less funds for travel - but AHRC will not allow the required changes to the budget - this is a real problem for the project".

> Time spent on research: "The biggest impact by far has been the amount of time I can spend on research. I have tried hard to continue working on my project and to redirect energies. But - as an academic - my workload and stress have increased enormously. I am now forever in online meetings - with my own children home, too. The project buy-out has actually been 'sucked up' by my work. Writing and conducting research have come to a virtual standstill".

Death and Illness brought by COVID-19

> The human cost of the pandemic: "I think it is very important to remember that researchers and partners internationally and in the UK have become seriously ill with COVID, and some have lost their lives. Likewise, research projects are with and in communities where there has been serious illness and loss of life. We are also about to grapple with the realities of global inequities in vaccine distribution within our research projects and this is likely to lead to complex ethical and practical decisions and situations".

Recognising Inequalities

> Online communication as a barrier for some: "I feel it is very important to highlight the inequalities that are exposed by a move online - women, children, the marginalised in general, impoverished communities, LMICs, and rural areas have less access to the means to simply participate online. Electricity, cash to buy data, access to WiFi, access to hardware are all barriers to participation".

> Empowerment, new knowledge, and helping the environment: "The advantages of the effects of COVID-19 included the following: i) the partner team were more in charge of the workshops and had a lot of autonomy over the process, including increased autonomy for women, and ii) we learnt to use zoom and our carbon imprint was reduced".

Research Collaboration

> The opportunities and challenges brought by the pandemic: "I suspect my experience is like that of most others. The pandemic has greatly complicated a research collaboration – but has also opened up ways to make it more effective and creative, and possibly even more balanced. I suspect we all still have a lot to learn about how to make the best of these new opportunities and challenges".

> Advantages and drawbacks of virtual communication: "I have been surprised at how much has been possible through entirely virtual means. But when short relaxations of restrictions allowed some face-to-face work, my post-doc researchers uniformly reported a step change in their engagement with their collaborators and research participants".

Recordar: volver a pasar por el corazón exhibition; Copyright: Julia Paulson 'Education,
Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)' project

Chapter 2: Impact of COVID-19 on Research Practitioners

Even though COVID-19 is a physical illness, the pandemic itself has had significant impacts on individual and group mental health and well-being. Many international organisations have published policy briefs advising on strategies for coping with the mental health fallout resulting from the pandemic. These include the United [Nations Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health](#) (United Nations, 2020) published on the 13th of May 2020 or [Tackling the mental health impact of the COVID-19 crisis: An integrated, whole-of-society response](#) (OECD, 2021) published on the 12th May 2021. There are also numerous academic publications highlighting the impact of the pandemic as related to stressors and coping mechanisms on different groups such as international university students (Yuen-Kwan Lai et al., 2020), health care workers (Shaukat & Razzak, 2020; Khanal et al., 2020), people with or without quarantine managements (Shen et al., 2020) or communities in general (Cullen et al., 2020) as well as social impacts such as the ramifications of social isolation on mental health (Usher et al., 2020), increased vulnerability and family violence (Usher et al., 2020). This chapter seeks to explore the impact COVID-19 had on research practitioners from GCRF and Newton portfolios, including the mental health and well-being impacts on researchers and their families, on research partners both individuals and organisations, on students and other connected researchers, as well as on the communities many of these projects were conducting primary data collection in.

COVID-19 Intensifying Current Mental Health Issues

One of the main impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on research projects and researchers across the GCRF and Newton portfolios is that it intensified existing experiences, highlighted current system flaws, and brought into focus ongoing concerns for the researchers, their partners and communities being studied. This impact was heavily reflected upon in both the survey and interview data.

'The way in which pandemic kind of exacerbated and kind of intensified things that perhaps already were there but come into sharp focus because of lockdown.'

In many communities that were part of the projects, lockdowns and disasters are more common for various reasons including political instability, economic hardships, resource management, environmental and climate issues. In those communities, individuals and researchers have been facing mental health risks and well-being concerns for generations. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the sense of isolation and loneliness increased. The trauma of the pandemic and its effects led to reports of frustration, disempowerment, lack of agency, sadness, depression, and even symptoms associated with PTSD. Feelings of loss and hopelessness were particularly prevalent in the narratives of researchers in areas with mass death due to COVID-19 as well as in child behaviour surveys that were a part of quite a few of the projects from the GCRF portfolio.

'We need to make it clear that we're talking about something that is systematic in these marginal prolific peripheral communities that has been made more extreme because it was already a major problem; a systemic problem of mental health, as it's related to poverty, and to the increased levels of violence, which have been expanded on by COVID'

Mental health system flaws were exposed by the pandemic, which also brought into focus related health system issues. For example, there is a widespread stigma surrounding mental health issues, which can impact on individuals' ability to access mental health services as needed. However, the pandemic helped highlight areas where the system can be improved. For example many UK-based researchers commented on improvements their universities made to mental health services in the pandemic setting as well as increasing access to more inclusive, better organised, and more readily available health support systems. On the other hand, for many of the researchers, partners, and communities based outside of the UK,

while the pandemic highlighted the existing system flaws, these could not be addressed or improved. This meant that research partnerships were placed under increased pressure given that individuals had to establish alternative coping mechanisms, potentially leading to project delays or quality issues. As one of the project investigators explains in the following focus, change is needed urgently.

Highlight 1: We need a response to urgently address mental health in marginalised communities
'I think we have kept to those systemic things because of COVID. Sticking to the same things that you know such as you need to take care of yourself and you need to take care of other people. However, also realising that you also need to, we need to, break the stigma of mental health. Whether it's a mental health problem caused by COVID or whether it's caused by systemic problems, it's still surrounded by stigma and prejudice. There's a belief that it's something that harms other people and there is still this belief that if it does happen then pharmaceutical interventions are the most appropriate. Sometimes they are, and that's important, but sometimes there are other ways we can all take care of our mental health and well-being. And in terms of dissemination and impact on policymakers. The research in this area and changes needed so it does not impact our existing research are even more valid. We need an approach that is not one size fits all. There's a very specific problem around these [marginalised] communities that we need to address. If for instance, there's very high levels of physical violence and lethal deaths due to COVID, the focus needs to be on that this is a major health epidemic of people dying through homicide. This focus then informs our understanding ability to deal with the corresponding major mental health crisis in these communities. We need a response, a social response that is adequate to this scale of this problem while also accounting the context in which it occurs.'

Many researchers mentioned that mental health was a topic that, pre-COVID, was often hidden or avoided. The stigma mentioned is only one of the reasons, others include inadequate training or support, inability to recognise the problem or simply believing that 'it will go away on its own with time'. Researchers from GCRF and Newton portfolios

commented on how both researchers and communities 'would rather not talk about mental health'. Therefore, the priority of 'raising awareness' was highlighted, followed by the 'establishment of support networks' and actively developing various programs to help partner researchers and communities.

Highlight 2: A possible response leading to a better mental health awareness and building of support systems

'We focused on their artwork and how they represent themselves. Over the year, we worked with them to see what impact the involvement with the arts had on the long standing condition of mental health issues. Definitely, there is certainly a number of challenges facing people, extreme challenges from living in a conflict affected area, and yet the senses from these conversations with partners is that mental health is not something that's generally commonly spoken about. So our focus then was about raising awareness and building exchanges between schools in India. We are hoping we can facilitate some more regional inter interchanges. These exchanges are aimed to allow participants to talk about their arts journeys and their experiences in Kashmir, with other children in Delhi. It'd be pretty important actually because the Kashmir is seen as a kind of like a danger zone and outlying area and not very Indian and you know they're Muslim mostly and so it would be an important exchange and it would give the ability for the students and the teachers to get out of Kashmir and to take their work elsewhere. So building that exchange would be, I think, incredibly powerful for them and give them a sense of: we've come, we've accomplished something really great, and telling people about it. And even if we're not allowed to do that face to face, then we will construct some kind of online platform because using art, we can enable them to share their experiences, to raise awareness of mental health concerns and build support networks in the region.'

Responses, such as the focus one presented here, where creative and artistic expression is used as a coping mechanism to help people face extreme challenges in conflict affected areas are vital for raising awareness and encouraging individuals and communities to speak about and address mental health concerns. In light of the pandemic and increased mental

health issues, discussing problems and building the support networks to address them makes projects like this one from the GCRF portfolio vital for researchers and communities alike.

The Human Cost and Response: Dealing with COVID Deaths

COVID-19 is the pandemic on the largest scale we have experienced in contemporary times. Even more importantly, this is the largest health crisis since we became so globally interconnected by technology. This means that we were able to follow the human cost, the number of infections and deaths in real time as the pandemic spread globally. This had both a positive and negative impact on researchers and their state of mind. On the one hand, the readily available information provided some certainty about the situation, providing some stability. On the other hand, this information transformed daily routines, increasing potential for anxiety and stress through constant updates about illness and death.

In view of the human costs of the pandemic, some researchers began to question themselves and their roles: 'So much death, is our research really important?'. This quote illustrates the existential crisis that many researchers reported feeling as a result of the pandemic. There are numerous examples in the data of researchers questioning their own abilities and reasons for being a researcher, especially with the imposed research design transformations many had to adapt to. There were also concerns aired relating to the quality of work and its importance when pitted again the numbers of deaths increasing day by day. While these concerns may seem detached from the research projects themselves, they are informative of the mental state of researchers feeling the 'unrelenting pressure of the pandemic'.

'Over 2000 people dying every day. How can you talk about anything else?'

In addition to the global COVID-19 context, there were additional mental health impacts felt by the researchers as they, their friends, family members, and partners were getting sick and some even dying from COVID. Principal Investigators (PIs) reported feeling the 'immense pressure' and 'responsibility' for having to protect researchers on the project as

well as partners and research communities. Further, where project members did become unwell, PIs experienced feelings of guilt. Finally, PIs understandably and repeatedly described feelings of 'sadness' and/or 'despair' in survey and interview data vis-à-vis COVID-related deaths.

'The researchers, all sort of getting ill, and I think that's big impact. It's been an impact on me because of the sense of responsibility. And when you have those talks at the end of the day, of feelings of guilt as well as that we have so much and such support with colleagues have been so excited that I got the vaccine. You know, I actually feel absolutely dreadful about that: the levels of guilt about Caribbean colleagues and dealing at the community level who don't have access to vaccines and in some cases even to basic necessities because of the pandemic'.

'Guilt' was one of the most commonly cited emotions researchers described in relation to COVID-19 and their projects. Guilt from someone being ill, from someone dying, but also guilt over missing deadlines or having a decline in the quality and/or quantity of work due to having to change the scope or adapt the project design in view of the pandemic circumstances. One of the coping strategies proposed by the PIs as a way to manage the 'guilt' was to encourage the introduction of more thorough risk assessments for the projects, including COVID-related assessments and procedures. It was suggested that these improved risk assessments could better outline the responsibilities of researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Highlight 3: Dealing with death of research partners and supporting research partners dealing with death

'From a human perspective, we've always made a point of as soon as any of our partners have died, we put them on the impact website. You do as much as possible to get that story out there, even on our school news. Even if someone is just ill, all of my colleagues will send greetings. I think that this is really important'.

—

Additionally in someone else's words: You're acutely aware that people's family members

are dying and obviously they are. I lost family members through COVID, so it's the same in this country, but I think it's much more acute then in the past. Especially in the last few months, you're more aware that there are people sick within your team and within their families. You just need to be aware of what comes first: the well-being comes before the research and so if it does take longer because they can't answer or give focus to your questions, then that is how it is. It is still stressful because you still know your clock's ticking and you still know your budget is floating around and needs to be used by certain point. So it seems you need to adapt your timeline but there is almost no space to. How the time is set, I think that's the main thing'.

Adapting timelines, managing workloads, shifting priorities as necessary as well as showing empathy and understanding were cited as the most prevalent coping strategies in supporting researchers and partners who got ill or lost someone to COVID. While these coping mechanisms provided guidance for supporting project team members through the pandemic, they also brought other unintended consequences. For example, while understanding that a researcher might take a month off for bereavement, the project must still continue. That means that researchers had to adapt to these circumstances and either take on the extra workload or hire additional people to replace those missing. Short term hires are often difficult in the middle of an existing project compounded with the inability to predict when such hires would be necessary or how to add on time to the project while searching for a replacement candidate.

Researcher Mental Health and Well-being Impacts

The personal stress and anxiety researchers experienced was another major impact of COVID-19 on researchers' health and well-being. From short projects to longer ones, they all encountered various challenges during the pandemic, which in turn increased PIs' anxiety. Short term projects have quick turnaround times and no built in space for delays. There is always a lot of work to do in in a relatively little time. Any COVID impacts had the potential to completely derail such projects leading to elevated stress for researchers. Long term projects, often incorporate elaborate partnerships and networks as well as extensive fieldwork. For many of these projects as discussed in the previous chapter, a complete overhaul in research

design was required, bringing significant uncertainty. These COVID impacts on both short and long term projects also gave rise to various forms of introspection or reflection for PIs. These manifested mainly as a reflection on the self, as reflection on one's abilities, or as a reflection on the progression, scope and development of the project.

Highlight 4: A first-time PI reflecting on their experiences of COVID impact

'COVID brought me extra kind of stress and anxiety personally because of course it is actually my first project as a PI. I was so eager this project is going to get down and get done on time and it will be very good and it will lead to further projects as this is a project with a networking grant. Not really as confident, so it is the disappointment and I feel like it does reflect on me personally. I can always say to myself later 'but you could have tried harder, you could have made a better deal of that project' and so it's been disappointing... there's also a lot of hidden costs to adapting to COVID. So for example you say you could make a film but then you'd also have to pay professional editors and the people who actually put the film together, those are costs that I guess you would not have budgeted for. But because of the changes to the project, it makes the sort of psychological effect that has made me to think quite on rational things like 'oh I could have made a much better deal out of this project', even if maybe, I couldn't have and I was just projecting. The way that things haven't gone to plan means one can be quite hard on oneself, and then it also makes me want to doubt whether one could have done better. In the optimum circumstances could I have managed this a bit better. So, it's stressful because as the PI, it's my responsibility to make the project come through despite all that we're experiencing with cuts and COVID and whatnot.'

The reflections of the researchers did not only extend to the self, but also often related to the disparity between self and others. The differences in situation between the PIs in the UK and their partners and other researchers globally were very noticeable in researcher interactions. In the data, there were two main differences between the self and others that were most frequently highlighted. One was on the differing experiences of the pandemic, while the other was more focused on the financial strain as related to COVID-19.

Highlight 5: The differing experiences of the pandemic

'We're coming into our summer and we're vaccinating and things are getting better here and it's getting worse in Argentina because of the vaccination issues, but also because they're coming into winter. There's always that sometimes it's quite psychologically hard when you're dealing with people, and the flip side for me when it was January, February here and it was just awful and they're on the beach. So that makes it quite difficult. Even though you're having daily interactions with people but your lives are so different; and you've all living through the pandemic but your day to day experience of that can be so radically different. These are the different points that make the interactions difficult. It just adds another layer of complexity on to everything.'

The stark comparison between researchers' experiences brought on additional stress. For example, the financial strain experienced because of COVID and as related to the existing health infrastructure in the UK is very different to the one experienced in other parts of the world. Multiple sources reported having to provide financial advances to partners who needed them to get oxygen for family members or to pay for vaccines. These situations highlighted PIs' awareness of the stark division between how those in the UK were experiencing the pandemic versus those in other settings. However, while certain aspects, such as finances impacted non UK based researchers primarily at the beginning of the pandemic, finances became an urgent issue for GCRF and Newton PIs and researchers following the announcement of the ODA cuts.

Impact of ODA Cuts on Researchers' Mental Health

This report would be remiss if it did not cover the stress and anxiety the ODA cuts brought to many of the researchers on the GCRF and Newton portfolios. In an open letter published on their website on 11th of March 2021, the UKRI announced that the budget for GCRF and Newton portfolios would reduce by half. This announcement, reportedly, brought much uncertainty to the PIs as to how and when their projects would be affected.

Researchers reported experiencing a lack of transparency and delays in communicating decisions related to the cuts. Many of those interviewed argued that these delays cost them opportunities, the ability to adapt quickly and effectively as well as generally 'made

the situation even more difficult than COVID'. It was especially unclear for PIs of smaller projects to ascertain whether they were being overlooked after not receiving updates regarding their financial status or whether they were able to proceed with their current financial commitments. The uncertainty, in turn, brought much anxiety to the researchers and their research partners.

Highlight 6: Budget cuts uncertainty and their consequences

'There's been some awful days when you just don't know whether it's worth continuing because it's just so extremely uncertain, especially since the funding cuts. So while you're in a position where you've been given this money to do a specific job, and you have to make sure everybody else is doing their jobs to contribute to that, but then at the back of your mind you're thinking, do I even have the money is even make it happen. And that's an extremely stressful position to be in, to be pressurizing other people when you're not actually certain about the future of your work, and especially the current situation, working in a low or middle income country.'

The budget cuts also impacted various relationships and networks that were core to many of the projects. The specific timing of the cuts affected some projects, while others reported having difficulties maintaining partnerships. Feelings of being seen as 'unreliable' and 'unprofessional' were echoed in both the survey and interviews. Individual strain, stress and anxiety paired with lost partners and broken networks impacted heavily on many teams across various projects in both portfolios.

Some PIs reported that their universities implemented financial, organisational, or time management support systems to help them deal with the impact of the cuts. Where this happened, it was much easier to maintain relationships with overseas partners and to achieve the aims of the project, albeit in adapted ways.

The Ultimate Balancing Act: Work vs. Home

Another impact COVID-19 had on the mental health and well-being of researchers as well as the completion rate and success of the projects related to the changing balance (or imbalance) between work and home life brought on by the pandemic. COVID-19 brought with it repeated lockdowns in many countries across the globe and was a main reason behind the temporary closure of businesses, offices, universities and schools. In the attempt to stop the spread of the illness, individuals and families were forced to stay at home while most academic researchers were expected to continue to work on a 'from-home' basis. Project outcomes were expected to be maintained leading to reported feelings of 'isolation', 'loneliness', and 'depression' as a result of the lockdowns. Lack of work-based support networks was also particularly difficult, confirmed also by the survey data. Although some found ways to combat this:

'I guess going back to mental health, we've had a lot of very open mental health conversations in our team which has been great and I think, very beneficial and very helpful for balancing work and life'

There were various coping mechanisms that were put into place by researchers to help them balance their work/life priorities better. Most researchers in both the survey and interview stated that 'flexibility' and 'adaptability' of working schedules and expectations were crucial for maintaining work on the projects. Many researchers also shared that they coped by asking to have a reduction in the expected working hours for the week while others made physical changes to their environment. These physical changes in the environment spanned from allocating specific 'work only' areas in the home to moving house to an area where they may receive additional support from extended family members or friends. For parents in particular, with offices and school closed, finding support networks and reducing work hours was crucial in order to be able to work and home school children at the same time.

'I found that it was very difficult with the impact of home-schooling and the reduced hours, and the impact it had on the project'

Many researchers from the GCRF and Newton portfolios have children, so managing having the children at home while chasing deadlines was highlighted as one of the most stressful effects of a lockdown. In terms of project impact, having childcare responsibilities often meant that the project suffered from the lack of time and focus, while maintaining work deadlines often resulted in less interaction with children. It comes as no surprise then that 'television' and 'streaming services' were highlighted as crucial stop gaps in successfully balancing child entertainment and project completion.

Highlight 7: Managing a project while home-schooling

'The biggest impacts of course immediately was, well for me as a parent of a young child, was having my young daughter at home. So I tried to protect time for the project, but what that meant was that I wasn't protecting time for my kids. I felt a particular responsibility to keep progress moving on the project because it is an agency funded project, and there was a time statement involved. If I was just doing my own research and it wasn't funded, I probably would have left it to one side, but for this project, I didn't feel that was an option so I tried to kind of keep it going. But that was quite hard on me. So how do you deal with that? What did you do in order to try to balance? For me, I would stick her in front of a screen, all afternoon. In all seriousness, I think it's quite significant impact on the kind of family relationships, the whole working from home and home-schooling, which is better now that she's back at school, obviously.'

How to balance home and work life during the pandemic are concerns that were managed at both an individual level for the researchers, but also as part of wider team interactions. The team-based problem solving approaches helped individual researchers create a more stable support system during COVID-19 that enabled them to focus and maintain project priorities. Accommodating home working was a priority for many projects and was made

possible for many by the agreed flexible approaches and organisational strategies employed by research teams. In both the survey and interview data, more acute awareness of mental health and well-being of teammates was an unexpected improvement. However this was experienced by some as 'interference' or 'policing of well-being'. There were frequent references to considering how to remain healthy; from protecting oneself from the virus, to avoiding too much screen time and remembering to have walking breaks and space for oneself within the working day. Some teams even spent project funds in order to preserve the well-being of some researchers, partners and participants in the projects.

'One of the things that we did that was we've funded childcare, which went down really, really well'

One of the most difficult aspects of working from home was indeed addressing the need for selfcare. That is why many teams took an organisational approach to maintain team well-being. This organisational approach included practices such as managing and scheduling meetings with appropriated breaks, keeping to strict time expectations for both scheduling and meeting duration, offering availability for meetings rather than prescriptive time arrangements, placing flexibility and adaptability at the heart of any communication and expectations with partners and participants, and regularly discussing amendments to working expectations with team members. These monitoring practices, in some cases accompanied by established protocols such as risk assessments that included a stress indicator, were all aimed at preventing work overloads and to preserve the quality and stability of the research project in the long run.

Research Partner Support and Mental Health Impacts

The well-being of research partners was also a significant concern for GCRF and Newton research teams. Just as the pandemic was traumatic for PIs, the same anxieties over COVID-19 were shared by many of their partners. While some partners were able to receive support from pre-existing support networks such as colleagues, friends and family, others turned to project PIs for support. Some PIs reported to have found it challenging to provide

such support to partners, which in some cases impacted their working relationships and even project outcomes.

> **Highlight 8: Challenges in partner support and dealing with COVID deaths**
>
> 'One of my colleagues, who has only recently started working, came off a Skype call, a team's call to a colleague in India, and he was just completely freaked by it. The colleague on the line, who he knew only a little, her family were dying, her colleagues were dying, and she was just completely freaked out. He just didn't know what to do and yet in that context, people have wanted to hold on to work. It is difficult to support someone when you have no background or training on how to do so.
>
> —
>
> Not that you couldn't reach them, but in terms of mental health and well-being as something big they were going through, especially when family members die. The main filmmaker who is a close partner with my team and has been collaborating for a very long time with us, well he lost his mother in a very difficult, very horrible situation at the beginning of the second wave. But he was very adamant that he wants to keep working from home because he was like 'this is actually my way of keeping my sanity you know'. I think people also reacted in quite different ways to the situation. People were very active in those communities and even though they lost family members, they are all activist filmmakers that were very active in trying to find resources. They set up this kind of oxygen distribution centre and crowd-funding campaigns.'

Lack of appropriate background, inadequate training, or inability to understand the context all emerged in the data as key reasons for being unable to provide further mental health and well-being support to partners. There were also the physical constraints imposed to the project by the lockdowns and new travel regulations. For example, as COVID-19 waves occurred with sometimes little to no warning, there were reports of researchers being stranded away from home. Such experiences were described as 'traumatic', 'distressing' and as having 'immense mental health impact' for the individual and the stability of the research project. In some cases, it was the inability to react with sufficient support or

respond quickly enough, that brought miscommunication and stagnation in certain projects within the two portfolios.

On the other hand, some partners found or suggested solutions to dealing with difficult situations encountered by the pandemic, and in some cases even loss. These included taking extended time away to grieve or recover individual well-being, re-arranging work schedules and interchanging tasks to enable diversity of work as well as in some cases encouraging the researcher to focus even harder on the project as a coping mechanism with the promise of extended vacation time as needed. These coping strategies were underpinned by the necessity of flexibility and adaptation to the ever-changing circumstances brought on by COVID-19. For partner relationships in particular, providing negotiated extensions and making sure there was no pressure on project sites were also listed as appropriate actions of support.

Mobile exhibition in Post conflict Northern Uganda; Copyright: Julia Paulson 'Education, Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)' project

Case Study 1

Name of Project	Education, Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)
PI	Julia Paulson
Co-I	Maria Teresa Pinto Ocampo; Duong Keo; Nelson Adebo Abiti; Kate Emily Moles; Tania Saeed; Catriona Pennell; Lizzi Okpevba Milligan; Peter Manning
Research Organization	University of Bristol, United Kingdom (Lead Research Organisation)
Partners/ Collaborations	Engage Pakistan; Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center; Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan; Fundacion Compartir; Bophana Audiovisual Resource Centre; Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliat; Share Foundation; INEE; Truth Commission, Colombia; Educapaz; National Memory, Peace and Documentation
Location	Cambodia, Colombia, Pakistan and Uganda
Dates	April 2020 - March 2024
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£1,856,428)
Research Subjects	Development studies; Law and legal studies; Political science and international studies; conflict and war studies; socio legal studies
Objectives	Consolidate best practices of teaching and learning about the violent past; build a network for knowledge transfer and sharing of those practices, develop alternate curriculum with a focus on better understanding of conflicts and acquiring of skills for peace building practices, transform existing policies on teaching conflict studies in schools
Original Methodology	Interviews, Classroom Observations, Survey, Workshops/Training

Peru. History education is recognised as a key site for constructing identity, transmitting collective memory and shaping communities; Copyright: Julia Paulson 'Education, Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)' project

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

The 'Education, Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)' project promotes lifelong learning opportunities by encouraging skills, knowledge and attitudes that are inclusive and allow for equitable quality education. A focus of the project is on ideas and values that connect to a culture of peace and non-violence. This project is a part of conflict resolution studies with the aim to raise awareness of alternate methods and tools that can be used to comprehend the historical, economic, cultural and political origins of conflicts thus gaining the necessary skills to transform these conflicts. This project aims to go beyond the standard use of textbook based learning and engage with more creative and innovative practices. Using work pioneered by a variety of academics and practitioners in four core countries, namely Cambodia, Colombia, Pakistan and Uganda, EdJAM is establishing an evidence base of best practices. These practices are connected to a variety of disciplines including history and politics, economics and education, justice and law, to list a few. What all of these cross

disciplinary practices have in common is the goal to gather the knowledge and develop the skills in order to build a culture of peace.

This project has created an opportunity to share knowledge, a responsibility to change existing curricula to become more inclusive as well as to shape future educational and research agendas. With this view in mind, the project is developing an interactive web page in several different languages including English, Spanish and the languages of the four core research countries as needed. Further, the project incorporates a series of events that aim to bridge researchers with educators, policy makers and civil society organizations. These events contribute to sharing of best practice approaches, teacher training, educational and policy development.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

Some of the main impacts of this project, therefore, include direct influence over curricular activities in the four core countries. The project impacts both the content of the curriculum as well as the methods of teaching and learning about conflict and violence. Another impact is linked to partnership building and collaboration. These partnerships seek to create an environment for knowledge transfer and exchange, influence policy practices, and transform the learning environment making it more inclusive and accessible for all. Both of these impacts will benefit approximately 100,000 students and 4,000 teachers related to the project, researchers, policy makers as well as other partners and collaborators. This project case study was selected for this report because it showcases the changes COVID-19 has brought to research practitioners.

Project Adaptation Strategies

With the pandemic impacting all aspects of the research design, is it inevitable that the researchers themselves also transform in the process. In terms of data collection, the researchers had to carefully consider when and how to gather empirical materials. The COVID waves and the ambiguity as to when a wave begins and when it is safe to resume data collection are all practical implications of the pandemic researchers have to grapple with.

"So we're having to try to think about how we develop ethnographic methods to capture online learning [in addition to] developing the qualitative protocols right now for how to try to do some something like classroom observation"

On one hand, in some of the core countries of the project, classroom observations may still be possible despite the pandemic, such is the case in Nepal. On the other hand, other countries have relied solely on online learning since the pandemic started, such being the case in Peru. The project then has been augmented to include both online observations as well as physical ones, but that does not come without its challenges. From patchy online access for some, to the physical risk and harm researchers can face due to COVID if they conduct ethnographic research in a classroom, the project has had to consider all those issues. That also means developing, what is in essence two research methodologies side by side.

Hashiya: Revisiting Violent Histories; Copyright: Julia Paulson 'Education, Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)' project

"Nepal colleagues are thinking that it may be possible to visit schools physically in a break between waves so there's also all the ethical issues of, you know, guidelines and regulations enabling things, allowing things that whether it's actually safe and ethical to go and visit schools when public health experts are saying that another wave is likely to happen and that you know schools possibly are open but should they remain open for health and safety reasons, so there's just enormous, enormous ethical considerations".

These ethical considerations have led to transformations in how to approach qualitative data collection for a project. These considerations are arguably also useful for other researchers to help them reflect on the very basis of what is qualitative research and how it has been transformed by the pandemic as well as what those changes mean for the researchers themselves.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

The transformation to data collection and the ethical implications that has, have had a direct impact on the researchers, from having to debate new theories of ethics to the mental health strain due to the practical implications of these changes. Questions around both the physical and mental health of researchers have been raised by the pandemic. In terms of the physical, the ethical debates often highlight the risk of infection or other harm that can be caused by the physical presence of the researcher near the participants, but there are other physical aspects such as the demands on researchers through their other social roles such as parenting.

"We have really not wanted to, you know, in the context, like I said before if people with huge additional carrying responsibilities and no end in sight for when they might you know it seems unethical to continue to expect the same commitments from them that they made when they didn't have to be educating their children full time as well as working their jobs full time".

Thus, there are physical aspects in terms of health and mental well-being as directly related to the infection or indirectly by having to navigate a pandemic world that had different expectations of researcher time and availability. Balancing research and family life while also developing new methodologies to suit this changing world is a great challenge indeed, but this project is one where this balance was successfully navigated.

Summary

In summary, this case study can be described as *compassionate and reflective.* It demonstrates the ethical implications that research practitioners had to face as well as many practical hurdles and how they successfully overcame them. Instead of shying away from the challenges the pandemic put before the researchers in terms of data collection and time management, the project developed a flexible approach with an innovative dual methodology to fit the situation, considered the ethical implications for researchers because of the physical harm of the pandemic, and showed an understanding and compassion for other demands researchers face such as caring and parenting responsibilities.

App-learning on the Khmer Rouge History; Copyright: Julia Paulson 'Education, Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)' project

Community Mental Health Impacts

Respondents reported taking mental health impacts into consideration as part of the research process. While some would have done this pre-pandemic, others developed this as a new approach. Research projects reported engaging communities about mental health in one of two ways: first, attempting to change existing negative perceptions of mental health issues within the community and second, aiming to transform communication about mental health and well-being within those same communities.

For many communities where GCRF projects are involved, COVID-19 has contributed to already unstable environmental, political, economic, social or cultural structures. These are communities that experience compounded disasters where natural and human generated disasters can mean that basic survival is the priority for the community and mental health discussions are overlooked.

Highlight 9: Survival mode in pandemic affected communities

'They live kind of from hand to mouth. They don't have savings so if they work somewhere, they might be paid on the same day, and then only if they show up they get paid. So when the job stops, income stops. So it was very traumatic for them in that way. And then they would just starve. I think their structure is slightly resilient so they kind of survived, but it was very difficult time. I don't know if mental health has even been on the top of the priorities because it has been kind of survival mode, I think for a lot of people. I think in the beginning, some of the women said "our life is so hard any way, COVID is just another wave of difficulties, so will get through that", but I don't know how they feel about it now. I think they're extremely resilient communities in what they have to endure normally but this been quite exceptional, really in terms of just having enough food to eat.'

In such communities perceptions of mental health and well-being are that it is 'something unspoken' and as such there is little discussion encouraged on a community level. GCRF projects highlighted attempts to change those pre-existing perceptions of mental health issues by helping the community to understand their prevalence within the community,

accept their existence at an individual and community level, and to help develop coping strategies rooted in, and reflective of communities. Such strategies included developing short films, theatre pieces or other art installations as a way to show, challenge, and redefine communities' perspectives of mental health and well-being. This also required a different kind of data collection and a different kind of engagement with the communities that often impacted research designs of projects.

This leads to the second aspect of community engagement on mental health, namely the attempt to transform how the community communicates about mental health and well-being. The pandemic was often seen as a catalyst that enabled researchers to explore and adopt new mediums of communication based in technology. For example, where prior to the pandemic a project may have used theatre in order to engage the community, as a result of COVID-19 and safety regulations, now the project may have changed to an online medium and used digital theatre instead. COVID-19 brought to the foreground the use of technology in improving communication and projects responded by adopting approaches such as digital theatre, but also developing apps, websites, and other online accessible training tools. By using different mediums to talk about mental health, in some communities, more or different members of the community engaged with the topic of mental health as well as various stakeholders such as professionals and other academics.

'We're trying to tell the stories of migration and how they constructed mental health and well-being and resilience. Our engagement process was to try and engage with the community, by means of music.'

Some communities experienced the strain caused by return and reverse migration. Return migration refers to migrant workers returning to the community after working in another region or another country. Communities were reported to be unwelcoming to such return migrants due to fear of those workers being COVID-19 carriers. Such workers were often met by either hostility or community exclusion. Reverse migration, on the other hand, refers to the urban to rural shift

that occurred in some communities. The reason for this migrant shift was described in the data as either an attempt by community members to keep away from the illness by moving to a less populated area or that jobs became scarce due to lockdowns and so community members needed to search for affordable living places and spaces.

People with disabilities and other marginalised groups were often viewed through a similar prism by members of the wider communities. Such marginal groups became even more marginalised because of COVID-19, but with some key differences. Migrant groups, ethnic and racial minorities, and other minorities such as LGBTQI+ were excluded forcefully by the community for the 'community protection and well-being'. People with disabilities, older people and those with physically debilitating conditions were often excluded 'for their own protection'. While the first shows exclusion based on force, the latter shows exclusion defined by 'care'. This 'care' while arguably for the group's physical protection from COVID-19, often led to greater mental health and well-being harm stemming from the loneliness and isolation these individuals experienced.

'Disabled people being even more marginalised because of COVID under the guise of this being for their own protection to be kept away from other people, to be shut away, to be kept at home, and cutting social relationships that they had and cutting them off thus bringing about a mental health crisis with no one to respond to it as well.'

Community exclusion for protection of either the community or the excluded group were often seen by researchers as causing marginalised groups to lose more of the little agency they had as NGOs and charity organisations shifted to 'protective' mode amidst the pandemic. This is only one of the inequalities that was made evident by the pandemic, and the next section will focus particularly on the stark disparities highlighted by COVID-19 between the Global North and Global South.

Global North and South Divide: Mental Health and COVID-19

Consideration of global inequalities between 'North' and 'South' is a common theme spanning across GCRF and Newton project portfolios and as such researchers were particularly sensitive to changes in North/South relationships and interactions. COVID-19 helped highlight this divide further and particularly in relation to the existing health and well-being divide.

When COVID-19 emerged as global threat, one of first outcomes was the difference in ability to respond to the pandemic. These responses are connected to the difference in resources, health system infrastructure as well as other social, economic, political and cultural factors. For instance, researchers worried about getting COVID-19 as well as seeing their friends and family ill, and those worries were amplified by the health system context in which they existed. In the data, the fear of health systems collapse due to high COVID infection rates and regular illnesses was frequently highlighted. These concerns were particularly prevalent when making an urban/rural distinction as well as within the existing Global North and Global South disparity. In addition to health system failures amidst COVID, fears also spread over existing lack of health-based resources.

Highlight 10: Health infrastructure in context

'I think it was Namibia where they our partner said well, there are two psychiatrists in the whole country. So, you know, there's not a clinic that they can go to down the road and even if they had the financial means to do that, it's just the availability of access to treatment, but also the recognition of the mental health challenges in the first place. Yeah, because different countries do have different perceptions toward mental health. Even in neighbouring countries like Nigeria producing some world-renowned psychiatrists and yet neighbouring countries that have very little health infrastructure.'

Unequal access to healthcare was described in both the survey and interview data as illustrative of the Global North/South disparity, and especially when considering the urban/rural divide. A prime example would be the disparity in vaccination availability and quality with consideration to multiple factors.

Highlight 11: COVID-19 vaccinations

'The vaccines are not getting there, they're not getting to the global south. The inequality is totally exacerbated throughout this as in the summer, we will be off travelling over throughout Europe, and having a great time while they cannot. Everything becomes very political. The health system is collapsing and a few weeks ago went into lockdown; and apparently it is because the vaccine that they were able to buy was the second Chinese vaccine that's less efficient than what we have. It's only got 50% rate of efficacy after the first dosage, but they couldn't get the better vaccine. You can't get the supplies, and we've had supply chain difficulties here, but global south countries are last on the list and have less money. Some countries like Guatemala, for example, have no vaccines. They have been told that they'll have to wait until private vaccines become available so that people can buy them privately but there'll be no vaccines bought by the government for people.'

COVID-19 vaccines have become a politicised topic across the globe. In countries from the Global South, however, lack of vaccines or quality vaccines, means that this politicisation is less about choice and more about ability. Further, the economics of vaccinations differ from the Global North to the Global South. Supply chains and cost often dictate availability of vaccines. Production and distribution lines are often located in the Global North, thus preserving the Global North's control over vaccine distribution. Social and cultural factors are also related to vaccination rates. In the Global North where vaccines for other diseases are more readily available, there has been a relatively stable uptake in COVID-19 vaccinations, notwithstanding pockets of vaccination hesitancy in some populations. While in the Global South, where hesitancy is also an issue in some populations, vaccinations have simply not been made available due to resource constraints.

In terms of how this North/South divide and approach to vaccinations impacted GCRF and Newton portfolio research projects, there were widespread reported difficulties as partners from the Global South could not obtain vaccinations thus impacting the successful running of the project. Without vaccinations, in terms of risk assessment, it was inadvisable to have in-person meetings, to conduct in-person fieldwork, or to partake in any in-personal dissemination events. Additionally, regarding mental health, project stagnation due to lack of vaccinations was met with feeling of 'anxiety' and 'stress' that also impacted project productivity.

Case Study 2

Name of Project	Digital Innovation in Water Scarcity in Coimbatore, India
PI	Deborah Ruth Sutton
Co-I	–
Research Organization	Lancaster University, United Kingdom
Partners/ Collaborations	Coimbatore Ponds Security System; OSAI Environmental Organisation; Diminished Pond Security Merger
Location	India
Dates	February 20 - October 21
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£109,234)
Research Subjects	Development studies, History, Human Geography, Information & Communication Technology, Cartography and GIS, Post-Colonial Studies
Objectives	Intervention to existing water crisis in Coimbatore, India; Develop new practices from spatial and digital humanities in addressing water crisis; Develop visualizations to enable new perspectives of water conservation, management and access; Raise information awareness and bring about policy change in water conservation methods
Original Methodology	Digital humanities, interviews, seminars

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

'Digital Innovation in Water Scarcity in Coimbatore, India' is a quick response intervention project for the existing water crisis in Coimbatore, India. The project is designed with a digital methodology in place building on existing digital humanities scholarship. The aim of the project is to re-frame and change the current system of water over-exploitation leading to water depletion amidst water scarcity due to human mismanagement and global climate challenges. The project will design a series of visualisations and meaningful images that challenge the disjunctures that exist between water and land, local and regional/national aggregate data, abundance of information and misinformation as well as the colonial impacts on cartography, governance, and water exploitation that still guide local decision-making processes.

This project has created an opportunity to develop new practices in addressing water conservation using concepts and methods of spatial and digital humanities. Using georeferencing, entity recognition, and corpus linguistic methods, this project is building a bridge between water, land, and the people. By presenting new perspectives on the water crisis in Coimbatore, the project will aim to develop innovative and integrated strategies of water conservation, management, and access that could leave lasting impacts for the local communities.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

Some of the main impacts of this project include immediate impacts to the local community in Coimbatore within a year as well as significant and measurable long-term impacts locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. The visualisations of the project are disseminated and promoted via Tamil Nadu and English-language social media sites and applications. Additionally, the images are disseminated via direct communication with policy makers, schools, community groups, environmental activists and other partner organizations. Further engagement events are also planned throughout the year of the project. The aim of the impacts is to address the existing water crisis situation, raise information awareness, and transform existing water policies about local water conservation and access, and water custody and management. This project case study was selected for this report because of the way in which it exemplifies the concept of resilience, in terms of content and scope of the project as well as for the research practitioners themselves.

Project Adaptation Strategies

The way the researchers engaged with the concept of resilience in a holistic manner is something to be highlighted as it may be of use to other researchers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath:

"Easily for a decade or more in terms of environmental management, earthquakes, floods, water scarcity, it became a sort of quite lazy buzzword resilience; and then more recently, it's been used in Britain a lot more about resilience at the workplace [...] but also mental resilience, or how would you think about supporting people in a time of crisis in transition".

The project explored all aspects of resilience, from environmental and climate resilience, to the infrastructural resilience needed because of COVID-19. In terms of infrastructural resilience that includes technical aspects such as moving or working on-line to questions of how well that shows our capacity to be agile and adaptable to changes, as for example with the different formats of teaching or community engagement needed to complete a research project amidst the pandemic.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is particularly illustrative of individual and local resilience during the pandemic, from the strength of the researchers needed to the individuals within the communities studied, while maintaining a critical overview. In terms of resilience:

"at the local level, there is a scale at which it's a good way of thinking about the diversity of strategies for dealing with water scarcity; so on the one hand you have a kind of state science you're highly bureaucracy claims made by the state, but actually the state was only ever watching the big rivers, the dams and have no interest at all and the smaller aquifers, the ponds, and surface water based systems or irrigation"

As a result, the local communities have the necessary knowledge of the water systems as needed to develop more accurate water conservation and access strategies, but often not the access to the state resources. Water management becomes a local or individual responsibility often without the resources, equipment, power or ability, but instead relying on local community initiatives. The communities are asked to bridge the resource gap by being 'resilient' and 'understanding' of the overall situation, while urbanization and big hydrological projects for dams take priority.

"So I think resilience probably needs to be something that we trade, all the way up and across all the different ways in which water is imagined, and water scarcity is imagined - in terms of kind of different ways of understanding infrastructures and strategies and water extraction management, conservation [...] I think there was aspects of that spirits that were commendable, and I think there is danger in that term".

There is an inherent critique of resilience as linked to the negation of responsibility that can occur when resilience becomes an overly individualistic term. When the responsibility falls on the individual alone to pick themselves up, and brace for the upcoming periods of challenge and difficulty, this indicates a failure of institutional and government responsibility. Therefore, there is a danger to use the term without considering holistically all the different levels of authority, historical context, political, economic, and cultural aspects as well.

Summary

In summary, this case study can be described as representing holistic resilience. This project showed a view of resilience in the content, the particular approach to the water crisis in India as well as resilience as a holistic term that encompasses structures, individuals and ideas.

Example of Participant Work; Copyright Michael Buser 'The Art of Healing in Kashmir: how creative activities can support child wellbeing in areas of conflict' project

Chapter 3: Impact of COVID-19 on Research Collaboration

COVID-19 has had a lasting impact on research collaborations. While for some, the pandemic opened up new avenues of networking with individuals or groups that were unreachable prior to the pandemic, for others, COVID-19 was an impassable obstacle. There has been a particular focus of research on the impact of the pandemic and lessons learnt on a variety of types of partnerships such as Public—Private—People partnerships (Seddighi et al., 2020); Academic-Community-Government Partnerships (Joseph at al., 2021); Academic-Humanitarian partnerships (Aluisio et al., 2020); and Community partnerships (Michener et al., 2020). This chapter of the PRAXIS Project: COVID-19 Strand report will explore key themes arising from the interviews in relation to the pandemic impact on partnerships, research collaboration, and networking for the projects from the GCRF and Newton portfolios.

Partnership Maintenance

The most widespread impact of COVID-19 on research collaboration within the research projects from the GCRF and Newton portfolios relates to the ability to maintain existing partnerships despite the disruption caused by the pandemic globally. There were both challenges as well as newfound opportunities that PIs and researchers reflected upon, which could either help or hinder the maintenance of sustainable partnerships for the projects.

By far the most widespread challenge was the ability to sustain remote relationships. Prior to COVID-19, projects often relied on in-person communication, but in the interviews conducted for this report, most participants commented on the changing nature of communication, accessibility, and connections to partners. While online communication allowed for many to maintain the exchange of messages and information, there were other types of commitments and support to partners that were more difficult to complete remotely. An often-cited example was the 'building of trust' that many PIs argued could not be developed remotely given that it required time, effort, and understanding of local cultural and social contexts.

Highlight 12: Relationship management in three areas where 'things go wrong'

'There's been risks of people moving, leaving organizations, or just dropping out when they [had] just not heard anything for such a long time or with other frustrations. Some of these things are just to do with prosperity as well. One person we were involved with has moved organizations... They then got a job in another country in Europe, not the UK and created a massive, massive problem so that's more to do for clarity and rules. Another person was very, very ill and one of the contributors has been very ill, not COVID but needed to shield. So keeping those communications going because they left [country x], they went somewhere else that was suggested they thought was safer. It's also so circumstantial and it's hard to say is it directly related or is this just the nature of network building. COVID just aggravated things that probably would have been difficult anyway, but I also think we need to flag up the challenges of COVID for precarious staff. Everyone has to have a permanent contract but then they leave, and maybe sometimes we need to educate them on that, to talk with them without probing too much. So be careful how we approach these challenges because this is what happens when people are real.'

Another method used to maintain relationships with partners was to understand the circumstances those partners face because of COVID-19 in their own country. Instances included understanding of their changing availability and the necessity for flexible working arrangements for partners amidst the pandemic, rebuilding of relationships with partner successors as well as showing support and pride in partner initiatives such as applications for rewards, honours, side-project creations or public engagement initiatives.

Partnership maintenance was particularly important amidst the changing conditions many institutions faced because of the pandemic. There were changes to leadership and power dynamics within partner institutions as budget constraints emerged or due to organisational restructuring during the pandemic. There were staff changes at partner institutions as individuals moved around due to COVID-related safety, convenience, or for other personal reasons. There were other considerations researchers had to reflect upon such as 'who are we actually partnering with; a specific institution via an individual representing it or the person themselves?'. If the former, then partnership sustainability was about opening

up new opportunities to link to other individuals within the partner organisation; if the latter, then as people shifted to other institutions, and in some cases countries, project design had to shift to accommodate these new changes and 'follow the individual'. These considerations of 'who' and 'how' to partner were considered by researchers prior to the pandemic as well, but with COVID-19 these issues became more urgent and fraught with ethical and practical challenges.

A method used to sustain research collaborations, both in terms of maintenance and growth, was to depend on established partnerships pre-pandemic that would form a 'core team' to connect with other partners. This method ensured that the core had already 'built trust' and a steady working relationship, and thus could mitigate potential challenges arising from less established partnerships. In addition there were other methods for new partnership formations and new opportunities for network expansions inspired by the pandemic context that will be discussed in the next section.

New Opportunities for Partnerships

With COVID-19 travel restrictions acting as a barrier to partnership building researchers had to find alternative ways to form new partnerships or expand their existing networks. Some of the approaches highlighted included using the potential of existing partnerships to reach other partners, applying a hybridisation model of communication to partnership engagement, and addressing current power dynamics as a way to maintain equitable partnerships during the pandemic.

The first, and most commonly highlighted approach in the data, was to build on existing partnerships. In other words using established connections to find other opportunities for partnerships. In some cases that meant using existing partnerships, either personal or institutional, to reach other partners and establish new connections for the research projects. In other cases, this meant allowing partners to bring in others that they had worked with in the past or had connections to.

Highlight 13: Partners linked to new partners and new roles defined

'Arts organizations measure their own weight and inventory of how they would make a fair impact through arts and culture. And that's happening here despite COVID. We are able to do it again, but it's a bit weird because I've only ever met one of the organisations, which I know really well the people involved and that but they know the other five. I'm really happy that I don't have to be the person who selects the partners. It's great that this one arts organisation, which is a major Art Gallery in the area is selecting the others.'

The second most cited approach was to reinvigorate existing partnerships by applying a hybrid model of communication to partnership engagement. This approach highlights the importance of using digital technology for the sustainability of partner communication during COVID-19, and also the newfound opportunities technology can afford for partnership building such as the ability to reach more or different kinds of individuals, groups, or communities. Conference and workshop participation were frequently discussed by project coordinators as well as the ability to 'see' more through the use of video communication.

Highlight 14: Rebooting partnerships by using a hybrid approach

'I suppose I think that just as research methods are somewhat hybrid now, there will be a mix of in person and virtual research. I suspect that the partnerships will be the same. And there might be opportunities, of course, in the fact that we can so easily video conference and we've seen that that isn't hard to do. That might make it easier to actually maintain relationships and maintain the regularity of communication between researchers in the UK and researchers and partners in East Africa. So there is perhaps an opportunity there but I think it's getting the balance right between using the technology to initiate and also to maintain communication, but also that I don't think anything could really replace the in-person more sustained engagement with partners within the region. Video conferencing can facilitate perhaps a more sustained communication and a more sustained engagement, but it has to be in combination with them, in person, presence.'

The final approach to focus on here, was finding new partnership opportunities by addressing existing power dynamics by shifting project ownership and giving more autonomy to partners to lead at project sites. Giving more autonomy sounds simple, but it actually requires the building of new forms of trust with partners, providing them with access to technology, data, and the inner workings of the project as well as knowledge and skills transfer. Additionally, it requires project coordinators to shift their research design and acknowledge new perspectives that may emerge through the collaborations. Sometimes the new perspectives that emerged could shift the entire dynamic of a research project.

'One of the reasons why the local partners and why the Ministry of Culture local offices are really keen is a way also to put it on the map: because we found out on the web that's owned by an order of nuns, but nothing so far is registered in the Ministry of Culture lists and that actually makes access difficult, and that started a really interesting conversation that maybe without COVID and the museum having to be shut, the nuns wouldn't have been thinking about.'

Finding new partners during the pandemic was not easy for projects within both research portfolios, especially with the differences in vaccination access and virus spread depending on region, nation or continent. The risks COVID-19 brought amidst loss of mobility and low vaccination rates, in some cases dissolved partnerships, while in others, allowed certain marginalised voices to finally be heard through the use of alternative online forms of communication. Often, the success or failure of partnerships depended on the ability of the project principal investigators to engage with the partners and adapt to new circumstances that were presented.

Partner Engagement

COVID-19 restrictions meant that many projects were unable to complete their original plans for community and partner engagement. As a result, it was highlighted in the data that other methods were used within the research projects in order to connect with partners

and participants. These methods focused on 'ability', 'opportunity', and 'availability' for engagement. In terms of ability, technology access was described as both a support and a hindrance to the engagement process. There were opportunities for communication with people or groups that researchers might not have had access to otherwise, but also a barrier that some could not overcome due to lack of internet, availability, or technology/ infrastructure. As an opportunity, the pandemic highlighted alternative partners that could participate in the project as well as alternative means of conducting research such as recruiting former research participants to conduct research after receiving specialised training. These opportunities were dependent on the preparation of educational and training materials for recruitment and strict monitoring and/or feedback systems. The additional preparations allowed for better engagement and for sharing of new perspectives, different experiences, and local knowledge. Finally, the availability of partners to contribute to research amidst increased pressure from the pandemic was often addressed by increased flexibility and adaptability of research designs and communication practices for engagement. In certain cases, even placing some partnerships on hold in order to accommodate their circumstances.

'So some of the people you're working with are particularly vulnerable. And some of them, people with certain disabilities, have been accused of being responsible for COVID. There are all sorts of narratives that have emerged around it, that would be really problematic. So that meant we then couldn't be asking them to come to a workshop and share what their experiences are of advocacy for example when actually they needed spend 24 hours a day using and redirecting their funds and their energies to help people in very dire situations.'

Further, trust towards partners has also changed how certain projects engage with them. Frequency and type of communication were often described as having improved to reflect partner needs. Some researchers additionally commented on the rise of 'alternative thinking' on 'how to best engage partners and how to organize meetings amidst the pandemic'. Some

research projects benefited from COVID-19 restrictions as they had to reorganise where meetings should take place as well as to consider more carefully about who received invitations for events, what shape events should take in order to best engage the intended audience and when to schedule events in order to encourage maximum participation considering different time-zones. While others lamented about the difficulties that lack of face-to-face interaction caused for successful partnership engagement, dissemination of results, and the ability to have longer lasting impacts.

Highlight 15: 'Boots on the ground' and in-person engagement necessary for dissemination and meaningful relationships

'Sharing a meal with somebody is often the start of an actual partnership. I think that applies more generally about dissemination and impact, and dissemination impacts networking. Without that physical face to face interaction, I think it's much harder to achieve those soft goals. Yeah we can still disseminate the findings, much as you can have a research seminar online and you can hear the research and you can ask questions about it and you can have a very productive discussion, all those things can work well. But what doesn't work is the socialisation side of it, that I think is key. It's a big part of it, especially when working with people from different communities and different areas around the world.'

Lastly, engagement with partners was not only discussed in terms of the research process of existing projects, but also in terms of organisation and financial prospects for future research and opportunities. The ability to establish a lasting network is key to the goal of many research projects to have a lifespan beyond the project period. Researchers often referred to the term 'stepping stone' to describe their hope that existing research projects would develop lasting collaborations that might be sustained beyond the life of the project.

Case Study 3

Name of Project	The Art of Healing in Kashmir: how creative activities can support child well-being in areas of conflict
PI	Michael Buser
Co-I	Julie Mytton, Emma Brännlund, Nicola Jane Holt, Loraine Leeson, Sara Penrhyn Jones
Research Organization	University of the West of England
Partners/ Collaborations	WISCOMP (Women in Security Conflict Mgt), Katkatha Arts Trust, BOAT (Building on Art Therapy), Dolphin International School (Pulwama), Yakjah Peace and Reconciliation Network
Location	India
Dates	July 2020 - October 2021
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£126,783)
Research Subjects	Medical & Health interface; Political science & international studies; Psychology; Visual arts; Peace Studies
Objectives	Using arts activities and arts-based therapies to support the mental health and well-being of children affected by conflict; the creation of a replicated training module or workbook guide
Original Methodology	Workshops, Interviews, Film Development, Website and Blog Systematization of Resources

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

'The Art of Healing in Kashmir: how creative activities can support child well-being in areas of conflict' is a project that examines the opportunities for art-based therapies to improve the well-being of children in a conflict context. With the unstable political context in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, India, children's well-being and health is influenced by the pandemic and political lockdowns currently occurring. The COVID-19 restrictions, the blackout of all

internet services and telephone networks, in addition to widespread curfews and removing access to public transportation and other services, means that many children are unable to get the help they need, while being in a much more stressful environment then prior.

This project has focused on children within the militarized zones, who as a particularly vulnerable population will greatly benefit from alternative methods to address the trauma they are experiencing. As the project describes, many children in the region are reportedly having feelings of numbness and isolation while showing emotional and behavioural symptoms akin to PTSD. The project partners with a school that has an art profile and extensive knowledge of Arts-Based Therapies. The main aim of the project is to use various forms of art such as drama, visual arts, digital arts, and puppetry in order to provide children with an alternative therapeutic method that could help them address their trauma.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

Some of the main impacts of this project include the development of the art therapy for the improvement of children's mental health and well-being, a methodology for its application in a school setting, an evaluation once it is applied, and a feedback stage for improvement of the model. A series of workshops and interviews are planned as well as the creation of a digital record of the researcher-participant interactions. The main outcome of this project would be the creation of a replicated training module or workbook guide that can be disseminated to arts practitioners within India and possibly beyond to any area of conflict with vulnerable population. This project case study was selected for this report because of the adaptability of the research design and partnership maintenance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Adaptation Strategies

Despite the travel restrictions due to COVID-19, the project still successfully delivered its objectives with no changes to content or questions. Instead, the project researchers adapted the design to online technology in order to better manage the delivery. For example, during phase two of the project, student workshops were meant to be delivered in person in Kashmir, however, with COVID waves surging, the original design of 30 people workshops became a safety concern.

"The main switch was to do that online to different structure of delivering and what that really meant mostly was for the partners we were working with in India, […] they needed to completely restructure the intent that this would be kind of a classroom setting engagement in a way that they would only work with groups of five, rather than one group of 30"

This restructure meant much more work was done by the partners in order to still accommodate these 30 children, but now by engaging them in 6 workshops rather than in one. This resulted in much more time and effort needed by both the UK and India based researchers in order to successfully deliver the project.

Additional adjustments were also made to accommodate the complications of online delivery of an arts-based project for that particular political and pandemic context. In view of the low quality internet in parts of India, which in many locations is only 2G, and other restrictions put in place by the government, the types of files exchanged had to be carefully considered.

"You couldn't really send big files so very small little bits of work needed to be sent, and they needed to be communicated very simply, so with this internet everything was low tech in terms of sharing resources and so on".

Of particular note is that in addition to accommodations of the research design to online delivery, the researchers also added a physical component of the research design that would comply with COVID-19 regulations.

Example of Participant Work; Copyright Michael Buser 'The Art of Healing in Kashmir: how creative activities can support child wellbeing in areas of conflict' project

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"Another major change we made was because the students wouldn't be coming into school because they were in lockdown, we created these art boxes, and these art boxes included pens and papers and little bits of cardboard and paints and all these other materials".

These boxes served as both a welcome pack and an introduction to the project as well as a tool to engage the children with physically. The boxes enabled the project researchers to work with the children both physically and virtually even while using a distance delivery methodology.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is particularly illustrative of the consideration of distance delivery of the project for both researchers and participants. The methodology used to deliver the research to the participants is one aspect of this consideration, while another is the selection and engagement with the partners in India. For instance, when travel finances were not used because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, the researchers shifted the resources to website development, a local web resource design with local partners. The project already had website development as part of the initial design to create a website to record and preserve various aspects of the project; so the additional finances were used to develop a secondary website/tool for the school.

"This website isn't quite public yet, because what we've created is basically an online journal kind of page that allows the students and teachers of the of the school to upload their own arts materials and resources to their own website […] a kind of private shared space"

The project researchers engaged professional design services to respond to how the students and teachers want to use this web resource, to establish a user-friendly design interface, and to preserve the progress of the students by enabling a sophisticated storage platform for years to come. The students and teachers currently use the website to upload and share their artwork within the school such as poetry, video and other images. The website is now operated by the school in junction with the Student Leadership.

These examples demonstrate the consideration the researchers have of their partners and how on both sides of this project, researchers went above and beyond to support their colleagues. On one hand, the project partners in India spent more time and effort to successfully deliver the workshops with the students while accommodating a new format and alternative engagement techniques; while on the other hand, the project team from the UK made the arrangements for the development of the additional web resource to benefit both students and teachers at the partnership school.

Summary

In summary, this case can be defined as representing *strong partnership collaboration.* This case study represents a project that developed a number of outputs in addition to the original aims and goals that were set, outputs meant for the benefit of the project partners. The project successfully delivered as planned a series of workshops, established an art therapy methodology, and helped contribute to the improvement of health and well-being of children in India. Moreover, the project also left a lasting legacy for students and teachers at the school with the creation of the supplemental web resource tool. The tool for the moment is private due to the ethical consideration surrounding the public sharing of the children's art, however, once a system of anonymisation can be established, this tool might be replicated to benefit many more schools and vulnerable children within conflict zones.

Example of Participant Work; Copyright Michael Buser 'The Art of Healing in Kashmir: how creative activities can support child wellbeing in areas of conflict' project

Partnerships though the lens of Finances and Administration

Finances and administrative organisation were also key themes in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on research projects from the GCRF and Newton portfolios and their partners. Financial constraints caused by COVID-19 added to the impact of the ODA budget cuts. These cuts were seen by many researchers to have led to a loss of trust on the part of overseas partners and to have added to worries about COVID-19, a loss of income and employment opportunities, caring responsibilities, illness, and an increased sense of disconnection from family, friends, research partners and communities.

Limited access to technology, and specifically hardware as well as lack of stable access to a WiFi connection were also seen as barriers to equitable participation and collaboration.

Focus: financial impact on trust and loss of soft power

[In relation to the cuts and other COVID-19 financial losses for the projects]

'I think it's an absolute disgrace. In terms of building partnerships and relationships of trust within a region. The damage that will do. To realize relationships that UK researchers have taken quite a lot of care to build up and we'll have invested quite a lot in to happen and that certain outcomes will be achieved. And those things will not happen. I think it's really a short sighted move to cancel projects or to reduce the budgets of projects that are already in progress. The perception of our partners is going to be quite detrimental to the spiritual relationship. One way to see this is when using projects like this to maintain this impression of the global role, a kind of soft power the UK has; but this is really damaging it. It will damage the perception of the UK in regions that we've been building these partnerships with, and universities in those regions will be I think more sceptical about engaging with the UK researchers. As a result of this, I think there would be problems in the UK and abroad.'

Most of the researchers interviewed for this report felt that the financial cuts directly undermined the global nature of their research, particularly in terms of the focus of their research on issues of inequality, poverty, or gender. They felt that the UK government had lost interest in prioritising these areas.

Communication with Partners

Communication with partners was seen as both essential for the maintenance of research connections as well as for their growth. There were four main areas related to communication practices that were widely discussed. First, the established importance of face-to-face communication for many projects. Second, the role of online communication in the pandemic setting. Third, the necessity for language sharing and understanding. Fourth, the effort needed to communicate support for partner initiatives and understanding the changing role of research partners in GCRF and Newton project portfolios.

Highlight 16: Impact objectives impossible to meet without partnerships in place and face-to-face communication

'[GCRF] impact objectives are built into the project. I do think that without a personal presence in the region, building relationships with individuals and institutions in the region, and face to face communication in person, I think it's going to be harder to achieve those impact objectives. I just don't think that you'd be treated as seriously. I feel as though it's harder to embed those relationships without that in person content. For instance, the relationship that I was trying to use and build on in Kenya, was one that was established face-to-face, and not through a remote interview or that was established through a conference or a workshop. There was all kinds of stuff about actually being there and establishing those processes. People say sharing a meal can actually be a start, but there it is having a beer with the meal.'

Face-to-face communication was described as 'crucial' for many of the projects within both portfolios. Concepts such as 'trust building' and 'shared experiences' with partners were seen as much more effective if done in person. Additionally, without in-person communication, management, finance, and administration of projects were also difficult to organise. The organisational aspects of a project impacted particularly on partner relationships and the smooth running of a project. For instance, the inability to have face-to-face communication because of pandemic restrictions was highlighted as the

main reason for difficulties with carrying out pre-planned fieldwork and data collection. The inability to collect empirical materials in person was the most cited reason for halting a project or even completely re-thinking project design and methodology. Some reported that having to delay or stop a project due to the loss of face-to-face communication caused research collaborations to suffer due to COVID-19. Others, however, adapted their projects from face-to-face communication to online communication as a way to preserve and even expand their partnership networks.

Highlight 17: Online medium, type, and frequency of communication

'So we have been working online quite a lot already so it wasn't like, oh, all of a sudden we switch. Some colleagues I know had never used Skype or Zoom or anything before, while we have been working like that already. I think that with the new project, it's great that the people who are co-partners and co-investigators can communicate online, but quite often it excludes other people we would have brought in had we been able to meet in person. There's a real concern now around how we're going to change the GCRF projects and how we're going to set up the new projects in a way that it doesn't exclude the communities we wanted to work with. We work with already marginalised communities, both physically and also digitally, and there's a real concern around digital literacy. Even if they have internet access that doesn't mean it's easy for them to join a Zoom meeting. All these questions around what it actually means and what is the worst thing. The worst effect it has that you can't meet people, is that you can't really build that trust. It's difficult. It's nice talking to you now but I think it would be even better if we had the chance to actually drink a coffee and meet and hang out. I think it's even more so when you work on these really sensitive topics with GCRF with vulnerable communities that need protection.'

Online communication for projects within the GCRF and Newton portfolios had both positive and negative impacts on partnerships. Online communication helped maintain partnerships when the pandemic interfered with face-to-face communication. Many researchers were also mindful that online communication opened up opportunities for reaching individuals and groups that may have been excluded before, while also being aware that they should not

further exclude marginalised communities. The 'digital divide' for those who can and cannot access online communication was particularly prevalent in the discussion, a prevalence that also showed how carefully researchers were considering the issue and attempting to mitigate its negative effects.

While online communication provided many opportunities, there were also negative impacts on relationships with established partners as well as presenting a potential barrier to new partnerships. Online communication was often seen to have a reductive effect, or even to eliminate opportunities altogether of certain types of communication. A frequently cited example was that of conference informal spaces provided by break times between sessions where many researchers had previously established research connections. With conferences becoming virtual during the pandemic, those informal spaces diminished and so did opportunities for new partnerships to form in this way.

Challenges to virtual communication made partnership-based projects difficult to complete. On the other hand, online communication, web resource development and sharing, helped support partners during the projects, or as stated by one of the researchers, using and understanding the local context for communication could often determine the success or failure of the connection with or without the online medium. The remaining aspects of partnership communication, namely language, context, and the changing role of partners, will be discussed further in the following sections of the report.

Language and Local Context of Partners

Shared language is the key to successful communication practices and also for successful partnership maintenance and growth. The type of language, the medium used for communication as well as the implicit rules and regulations on how to communicate are all important aspects of research collaboration in the pandemic setting. For example, the ability to speak local languages and understanding local heritage, culture, values and expectations were often described by the researchers as prerequisites for conducting research in a particular setting. With COVID-19, the adaptation to new value systems and methods of communication that were also site-specific was crucial for the preservation and development of research collaboration.

Highlight 18: Adapting to partners' mode of communication and language use

'I think the key thing beyond all of this, which I think is relevant and it's something that linguists often forget to say, because for us it's a given, is you've got to speak the language of the people you're trying to deal with. And you've got speak it well. By language I mean the local language, but also the customs and traditions as well. So, you need both: you need the intercultural skills and you need linguistic capability in order to get your point across. Only then can you be confident to be able to actually build relationships in the first place and then to learn how to do business with different people in different situations. Those are interconnected. So for example, my partners do business on WhatsApp exclusively. By business, I mean academic business, commercial business, all types of business. WhatsApp is extremely dominant and there are certain ways of composing messages on WhatsApp that they prefer. There are certain ways of using voice notes that we don't really use here, and certain unwritten codes about length, you know appropriate length of voice notes, frequency, timings of contacting people, all of those kinds of things which are very specific to that country. I have to say it's a skill I have learnt to know how to communicate with those partners remotely now and I had learnt that skill before the pandemic happened.'

Speaking the language, updating language content, and comprehending jargon were further needed for partnership maintenance. Frequent contact with partners enabled many researchers to adapt to changing language parameters or descriptions of particular phenomena. An example was the changing attitudes partners had toward COVID-19 vaccinations as the information, death toll, and other aspects of their daily lives changed. How they communicated about vaccinations including the views, values and belief systems presented by partners, changed over time as did the language they used to describe them.

'When it becomes a longer partnership, that's not necessarily sustainable, so you have to enter into a period of negotiation as to how you make it work for both parties, and the main thing is the language.'

Finally, the language of digital technologies also changes with innovation. Digital technologies are seen as a 'tool' for communication, but in some research projects, the technology has become more then a tool. It is a language on its own that provides new opportunities for understanding partners. For instance, some researchers described instances where partners used the technology differently thus creating a 'new' language that helped to communicate points of view beyond what some researchers originally incorporated in their research plans or that they had considered as part of the project.

Case Study 4

Name of Project	Mental health literacy in urban and rural communities in Kerala India: An interdisciplinary approach using applied theatre methodology
PI	Raghu Raghavan
Co-I	Amanda Wilson; Brian Brown; Meena Kolar Sridara Murthy; Asha Soletti; Michael Wilson; Indrani Lahiri; Karan Jutlla; Monica Lakhanpaul; Nadzeya Svirydzenka; Erminia Colucci; Santosh Chaturvedi; Dinesh KM Bhugra; Sivakami Muthusamy
Research Organization	De Montfort University
Partners/ Collaborations	University College London; Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy; Institute of Health Management, Pachod; Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), India; National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences
Location	India
Dates	September 2018 – October 2021
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£578,150)
Research Subjects	Drama & Theatre studies; Medical & Health interface; Mental Health; Psychology; Social Psychology; Social Policy

	Develop and promote context sensitive mental health literacy; Develop and enhance a participatory applied theatre model for promoting mental health literacy; Co-produce a piece of applied theatre on mental health literacy that reflects the lived experiences of urban and rural communities; Follow through with public engagement of users, families and communities on talking about mental health literacy and pathways of services
	Theatre for development' (TFD) model that incorporates Films/ Videos & Animations as well as Live Performances; Narrative Interviews; Adapting Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire; and Develop Phone App; Other Public Engagement Activities such as Webinars, Workshops, Visits, Social Media Engagements, etc.

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

'Mental health literacy in urban and rural communities in Kerala India: An interdisciplinary approach using applied theatre methodology' is a project that uses participatory theatre and media in order to communicate about mental health to both urban and rural communities. It is a collaborative research project with a focus on community engagement that is linked to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

The project uses a *theatre for development* model, or TFD. This is a model that adopts a participatory approach to community engagement and empowerment via the co-creation and co-production of culturally sensitive knowledge and promotion of mental health literacy. In this project, biographical interview methodology is used as the prompt for the creation of theatre performances and other community engagement events.

Specifically, this project has created an opportunity to engage with policy makers and members of the public, academics and practitioners as well as health, social care and education providers. The methodology included completing 192 narrative interviews with mental health users from urban and rural communities in four districts in Kerala, India. From these interviews, eight applied theatre performances were created and used for engagement with mental health users and their families residing in those four districts. Subsequently, the project also began to adapt

the Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire (MHLQ) in order to more accurately study the mental health literacy of urban and rural communities in Kerala.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

Some of the main impacts of this project include encouraging access to mental health services in the area through the creation of positive perceptions of mental health support through the interviews as well as the community engagement events such as the theatre performances and knowledge sharing sessions. This project case study was selected for this report because of the strong community engagement aspect, something that was severely threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Adaptation Strategies

The original methodology included interviews that would inform the creation of theatre performance used for community engagement. The pandemic meant that some of the methodology also had to adapt in view of the new health risks. The theatre was changed from a live performance to a digital piece of theatre and short films based on the narratives were also developed and communicated via social media and other contexts.

The short films incorporated the participants own perspectives of mental health and mental illness thus giving the viewer a much more intimate connection to the narrative then the re-imagined from narratives performance could. However, the digital medium was also found to have additional challenges. First, only those with access to the technology and social media could view the films, this reaching fewer members of the community. Second, there seemed to be a gendered aspect to participation, with more men engaging than women.

As a way to balance these challenges of community engagement and the COVID situation, the project also conducted three webinars with a focus of engaging mental health users with storytelling. Thus, this project is an example of a case where the researchers changed the methods and engagement used in order to introduce new ways of engaging with communities and the local people such as the use of films, webinars, and digital stories with both affordances and drawbacks.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is particularly illustrative of finding new ways to engage with the community and searching for additional opportunities to maximise the impact of the research. In terms of new opportunities for community engagement during COVID-19, with the increase of social media usage, when the project started, they only had about 10 people following on Facebook, but now they have more than 6000. In terms of new impact for the project in India, the project developed and engaged with the community with the use of the mental health literacy questionnaire, which is also one of the legacies of this project with the most traceable impact even amidst the pandemic. As the researchers could not engage with the community in face-to-face interactions because of COVID-19, data for the development of the questionnaire was collected via phone interviews. Subsequently, both universities and charities have acknowledged using the mental health literacy questionnaire developed in the project as part of training process for mental health specialists and support. Thus the materials developed in the project have transformed into educational materials used to train a number of community professionals.

"The original idea was we want to push to have a toolkit that people can actually use at the end of the day, so we thought we could transform that idea into an app".

Seeing how useful the questionnaire was as a training tool, the project information and questionnaire were developed into a more easily accessible application, or 'app'. The app has a longer shelf life then a one off training session and can be used for training and other purposes during challenging times such as during COVID-19. With training of professionals and mental health support having moved from face-to-face to digital learning methodologies during the pandemic, the app has made it much easier to engage with the end users than the prior research design. Additionally, the app allows the project leaders to keep a track of who is accessing it, for what purpose, which aspects of the app are more useful, and which would require an upgrade thus facilitating reshaping and updating the toolkit as required.

Summary

In summary, this case can be defined as demonstrating *advantages of digital technologies for community engagement.* This project presents a method for reshaping community engagement amidst the pandemic and making the most of the digital technologies available. As the methodology is hybrid, the project still conducted the narrative interviews, but as the pandemic came, the theatre engagement aspect was changed to digital theatre and short films. Transforming the mental health literacy questionnaire into a readily available app made sure that this project has wider and longer lasting impact in the community, while still maintaining community links via incorporating part of the original methodology.

Perceptions of Global North-South Divides

For the projects of the GCRF and Newton portfolios, understanding of local social, political, cultural and economic context are just as important as shared language and clear, transparent channels of communication in order to sustain partnerships. North-South disparities in terms of access to technology and online communication, sometimes referred to as the 'digital divide', as well as general differences in ways of life and access to resources, also had a great impact on equitable partnership maintenance for projects in both portfolios.

Highlight 19: The North-South 'divide' and perceptions of knowledge extraction

The other thing I'd say in general about partnerships and networking and been quite consistent in insisting that we still try to do fieldwork because I think that this kind of interview can be very effective in terms of information gathering and also in terms of relationship building, to some extent in East Africa specifically, and maybe other parts of the world as well. There is already a pre-existing preconception that researchers from the West are basically extractive: we come in, we get the data, we go away, we publish it, we make careers out of it. I think that doing things on Zoom probably intensifies that perception, because you're not even coming to the region. A big part of African Studies has always been the idea that researchers would spend extended periods of time, in the continent, or in the region, or in the country that they're working at. That there would be some attempt to engage with the local culture in the broadest sense of that word and build partnerships in that context. I think streaming doesn't really allow for that. I think it's a really big issue about the perception of the North extracting data and knowledge from the South. That perception can be contrary to sustained relationship building. If we just do things on Zoom, then I think we lay ourselves even more open to the accusation that we are just taking and not actually being there in any meaningful way. But equally, I think there was a risk in models that we've had in the past of spending a sustained period of time in the field, maybe up to a year's time to the graduate study, and then returning and not actually sustaining the relationships that were made during that time. I think what's actually more possible now is, once you've established those relationships in person, once they've been created, when you come out of the region back to your home institution, it might now be easier to keep those relationships going because this

kind of communications become so much more normalised. So actually, there might be an up-side where actually partnerships might become more sustained and sustainable because of the ease of virtual communication, but virtual communication will also never be a replacement for physical presence and face to face relationship building.

The different access to technology between the researcher and their partners was seen by most researchers as the main factor deepening existing inequality between the Global North and the Global South. For this reason many researchers used their travel funds to address this gap by paying for internet access, data, and in some cases, even technological devices and electricity generators. With these actions, researchers were aiming to equalise digital access for their partners while also implicitly or explicitly supporting the decolonisation of knowledge production in the process.

Highlight 20: How to address the 'digital divide' between the North and the South
I'm having to use WhatsApp as the main means of communication because that's what people have access to readily since they haven't got laptops, easy access to a network, or have got broadband. It's that digital divide. We have had to adapt the communications to what works for the people. Also, going back to the finances, this is a positive thing of COVID because we're not travelling so I'm trying to think about how we can shift the money that was the UK travel money to something else that's going to help enhance that access to digital equipment, particularly for the early career researchers that we want to have the training for. So it's helped us. We've had to think a bit more about the technology and the hardware that's going to support any collaborative working. It's easy to slip into that we have broadband at home, but our partners very rarely have that. So it's those 'have's and 'have nots' in terms of the process there, and then there's the digital divide in terms of hardware and software that we aim to address.

The final comment in this report relating to the North-South divide and partnerships as related to COVID-19 is connected to the new types of decisions that researchers had to incorporate as part of their research projects. Some of these decisions were related to administrative aspects

of research projects that changed during the pandemic, while others were caused by the effects of COVID-19 on the partners.

On the administrative side, with the shift towards online and remote working, new forms of documentation emerged. The due diligence required as a result of the pandemic such as concerns over safety and security was very different from pre-pandemic projects and required more paperwork and coordination with partners. Some of these changes were seen by partners not only as a reflection of the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also an additional imposition by PIs (almost all based in the Global North) to partners based in the Global South thus reportedly adding an additional strain on some research partnerships.

The different effects of COVID-19 on the Global North from the Global South also had direct impacts on partnerships. As some highlighted, amidst COVID-19, many researchers had to make decisions that were not connected to the academic aspects of the project, but rather the humanitarian side. These decisions were particularly prevalent in communication with partners from the Global South where additional funding and humanitarian initiatives were conducted by researchers in order to help their research partners. There were also decisions related to the death, safety, and autonomy of partners and the impact these had on the partner's role within the research project.

Changing Roles of Partners

One of the ways research projects from GCRF and Newton portfolios accounted for divides between the Global North and Global South during the COVID-19 pandemic was to reflect on and implement changes to the roles of partners within research project design. The main themes that emerged surrounding these changes were those of 'preservation', 'understanding', 'adaptation', 'transformation', and 'resource management'.

In terms of 'preservation' the focus for many projects was to find methods of maintaining the stability of partnerships. There was also recognition among some PIs that while roles of partners might change in relation to the project during the pandemic, certain hierarchies would inevitably remain. These instances of 'hierarchy' in relationships were evident both within institutional organisations as well as partnership relations between institutions and/ or affiliated individuals.

'I wouldn't say that there's been a changing of the hierarchy because while colleagues have slightly more autonomy, I think the hierarchy has remained the same probably due to who has the money dictating that hierarchy remains the same, and also the particular structure of this project designed around the fact that there was a hierarchy and the hierarchy is actually part of the logic of it thus having the hierarchy being very much maintained.'

Another key to enabling role changes for partners within the research projects was the gaining of more or new forms of understanding related to partners' situations and perspectives amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding partners' desires and goals and how those changed during the pandemic, being able to contextualise their perspectives within their individual, community, regional and national value systems as well as reflecting on the shifting priorities for some of the partners all served to inform and anticipate partner role changes within individual research projects.

Highlight 21: Changing roles of partners from protectors to educators and sharers
'They used to see themselves effectively as a policing body that protected antiquities from people, and now they see themselves very much as an education role trying to explain what the past is all about and so on. So they teach in the community in a not very informal way. They have taken different paths. One of the guys we have on the course already set up a very good program, where he was doing all sorts of things such as having open days where he was inviting people in from his local town, and not just for children, but for the whole population to come and try things like making pottery. So stuff that in other ways contemporary but showing them how they were all handmade, how they used to work in this house. The other group of trainees, who are university graduates, most of them are at least trying to carry on in an academic career and will hopefully carry on working in in that environment. They are teaching the more formal teaching of students, many of whom in turn obviously don't go on into academic or archaeological careers. But one of the main major paths for a lot of the graduates is into tourism. So, there are even

Example of Performance; Copyright Raghu Raghavan 'Mental health literacy in urban and rural communities in Kerala India: An interdisciplinary approach using applied theatre methodology' project

departments, which make Tourism Management and Archaeology, all in one department and in one course. So that the idea that we were inspiring to not only teach the next generation students but also to go out and be a part of the general tourism marketing.'

'Adaptation' is a term that was evoked in relation to all aspects of the research process, and that also includes the need to adapt the project to the changing roles of research partners. Understanding why their roles changed was suggested in the data collected for this report as the basic step necessary for a smooth transition, a smooth transformation of partnership relationships, and eventual adaptation of new applications used in relation to research connections. For example, as a reflection of the COVID-19 situation faced by partners, practical aspects of the project were adapted to reflect the need to further respect partners' privacy, and a careful consideration of when and how to record meetings/sessions; a consideration that often had to be justified institutionally given that, pre-pandemic, they may have constituted breaches of institutional policy.

The main role changes for partners that were most commonly discussed among GCRF and Newton projects was the greater autonomy handed to partners over the project data collection stages, and in some cases analysis and dissemination stages. With COVID-19 preventing UK-based researchers from travelling onsite to gather empirical materials, more autonomy was given to partners to conduct the necessary data collection for projects, often after some specialised training and tools were provided. As mentioned, in some cases, the project design was altered to allow for some analysis and dissemination to also be taken on by partners in order for the individual project to meet its impact objectives, particularly if the analysis and/or dissemination would require a researcher to be physically onsite. Not all projects were adaptable to virtual dissemination approaches, particularly arts-based projects dependent on their physicality as a method of impact. That is why some projects empowered their onsite partners to access, lead, and/or deliver activities. The relationship management with those partners then required a certain degree of flexibility and support to facilitate the increased responsibility, which some defined as 'creating intimacy without proximity, giving ownership without losing connection'.

Highlight 22: Empowerment of local volunteers as a bottom up vs top down innovation

We're also looking at bottom-up versus top-down innovation. So our approach has all been completely bottom-up, to empower local volunteers. One of the learning outcomes we found from that is that those volunteers worked in the same spaces as clinical professionals and because they were equipped with a new tool, it was recognized as being valuable by those clinicians. There's lots of esteemed factors that have happened in terms of those volunteers and how they fit and work with those professionals. They own the tool, and therefore, I think bottom-up innovation in this context is far better than a top-down approach.

Finally, the changing role of partners also meant that projects had to consider changes in available resources and engage in better resource management. Specifically, re-evaluation of the available assets, re-thinking the use and competence of partner resources, and considering how to best make use of them in the changing pandemic context. Those listed by participants as 'successful partnerships' were the ones most likely to adapt, and adapt quickly, to the changing circumstances and resources partners had to offer amidst COVID-19.

Example of Performance; Copyright Raghu Raghavan 'Mental health literacy in urban and rural communities in Kerala India: An interdisciplinary approach using applied theatre methodology' project

Case Study 5

Name of Project	Creating Safer Space: Strengthening Civilian Protection Amidst Violent Conflict
PI	Berit Bliesemann de Guevara
Co-I	Rachel Julian, Roger MacGinty, Beatriz Arias, Rosemary Okello-Orlale, Nerve Macaspac, Chantana Wungeao
Research Organization	Aberystwyth University
Partners/ Collaborations	Durham University, Leeds Beckett University, Chulalongkorn University, Strathmore University, City University of New York (CUNY), University of Antioquia, Peace Tree Network, Harlequin and the Jugglers, Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Centre for Development and Ethnic Studies (CDES), Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, Asociación Campesina de Antioquia, African Women and Child Feature Service
Location	Colombia, South Sudan, Kenya, Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand
Dates	April 2020 - March 2024
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£1,872,226)
Research Subjects	Political Science and International Studies, Conflict and War Studies, Peace Studies
Objectives	Understanding vulnerability to physical harm in violent conflict; Building local protection infrastructures; Developing civilian protection capabilities
Original Methodology	Network+ Project, Case Studies

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

'Creating Safer Space: Strengthening Civilian Protection Amidst Violent Conflict' is a four-year international research network project. The focus of the project is to support local processes aiming to develop sustainable structures of nonviolent physical protection, to raise resilience awareness, and to prevent future displacement in communities impacted by violent conflict. The innovation of this project stems from an approach to recognise unarmed actors already present locally who have the expertise and relationship networks in place to de-escalate conflicts, monitor agreements and establish safer spaces for civilian life. The aims of the project will be achieved through the sharing of good practice examples of civilian protection, developing existing local protection infrastructures in view of the context in which they exist and vulnerabilities already present in the current systems, as well as broaden community use of civilian protection strategies. The hope is that in the long run the communities themselves can gain ownership and transform their involvement in conflicts and contribute to long-term sustainable conditions for peace building.

This project has created an opportunity to establish networks, build capacity, and develop a series of research and impact activities in the hope of creating a long-term sustainable future for many within the conflict zones. In relation to networking and capacity enhancement, the project aims to build bridges among organisations such as NGOs, local self-protection initiatives as well as national and international support groups. The following collaboration and innovation can support an agenda of de-escalation of conflict and sustainable peace building initiatives. The knowledge sharing and advocacy aspect of the project enables the practical application of good practices of civilian protection within communities affected by conflict.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

The main impacts of this project are aimed at the most vulnerable victims of conflict, namely the communities, groups and individuals closest geographically to the violence zones. These communities experience first-hand the conflict, the loss, and the inevitable displacement that follows. This project is then focusing on creating a network to enable better protection for these very communities. Additionally, the project will impact the global unarmed civilian protection community of practice by expanding awareness of it and

its capabilities to develop it further. Finally, the project will also impact policymakers by directly proposing policy briefs, educational materials, and action plans. The dissemination of the project will occur via many outputs including reports, academic papers, briefings, workshops, and a variety of arts and media outputs including, for example, film screenings, exhibitions, or performances. This project case study was selected for this report because it shows the careful balance of research design development and transformation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Adaptation Strategies

The global rules that accompany the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the transformation of existing conflict zones, and in some cases amplified existing problems while hindering much needed solutions and practices. This project has also had to adapt its research design to both the practical application of the methodology as well as the content development of the project. The health and safety of the researchers and the communities researched are paramount in the research design in addition to other constraints impacting the project, most importantly among them the UK government's ODA funding cuts which occurred during the pandemic.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is particularly illustrative of changes in the research design in relation to fieldwork and dissemination. Originally this was a Network Plus project, but because of the ODA cuts, the project temporarily lost much of its budget and time, resulting in changes to structure, design and content. As a Network Plus project, the original design incorporated an open call to fund external projects from researchers in the UK and LMIC countries to use project money for their own research within the network pre-set structure. However, with a 2/3 budget cut, this structure was no longer viable, so instead the project was re-developed as a work package structure set yearly. This new structure brought less certainty, less security and smaller scope to the project with long-term planning being replaced by the yearly plans.

A particular hurdle in redesigning the research activities within the network was that the original partners had not necessarily been invited in relation to research strength or expertise but because they were excellently placed regarding networking and dissemination and impact activities. Hence the reconfiguring of the research activities required a close collaboration

on the formulation of the new work packages, which was done in a productive but also very time-consuming co-designing process involving online workshops and multi-step peer-reviews of draft work package applications. While this could be seen as having strengthened the project in its capacity enhancement strand, it certainly also required the academic leadership team to put in much more time in reality than on paper.

On the other hand, this new structure, as created amidst the global pandemic, opened up the project to new opportunities. These new opportunities include changes to researcher responsibility and agency, and longer lasting legacy and impact.

"As for how we are reconfiguring our research, there was a bit more of thinking around actually cross country collaboration and cross regional collaboration and the original GCRF thinking; and one of the things we have to change [as researchers], and not just because of the cuts but because of COVID is to think more in terms of country teams, so you don't have to cross borders necessarily when you travel because that makes things even more complicated, but to think about how to do research where the team actually is".

In line with this perspective, the project enabled the teams in the core countries to develop their projects with consideration to the specific COVID restrictions within the country. Rather than use a comparative study approach that often would entail cross border travel, a site-specific approach was taken. Site-specific approaches are linked to individual contexts, and for a project where the aim is to improve protection for civilians in violence zones, being able to more accurately respond to the particular needs within a community in a specific conflict situation is paramount. Additionally, this approach could lead to a more lasting legacy and impact of the project within the community. Despite the difficulties the project faced, the redesign has been successful in that is has enabled the researchers to develop some meaningful and impactful research.

Currently this project is amidst the planning of the next stages pending changing pandemic restrictions due to a new variant. On a more positive note, the funding cuts for the final two project years seem to have been reversed (final confirmation pending), and the project has now launched an open funding competition as originally planned, albeit at a reduced scope and under much more time pressure as would have been the case without the ODA cut disruption.

Summary

In summary, this case study can be defined as *embracing opportunities amidst adversity and great challenges*. This is a project that presents a research design that has been augmented to include new aspects not present in the original design structure, many of which were also adapted to address the COVID-19 pandemic research situation. The most detrimental impact of the threatened ODA cuts has been on individuals employed by the project, whose positions were temporarily at stake. Time management and a flexible working structure have also been among the major changes in addition to changes to researcher roles and research impact. The resilience of the projects' LMIC partners amidst detrimental circumstances has been fundamental to navigating the project through difficult times.

Example of Participant Work; Copyright Michael Buser 'The Art of Healing in Kashmir: how creative activities can support child wellbeing in areas of conflict' project

Partnerships and Gender

It is important to consider gendered aspects of partnership relations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many studies have already highlighted how the pandemic has impacted on gender relations, particularly noting how women have been disadvantaged during the pandemic (for example see: Dlamini, 2021) Similar observations were made by researchers within GCRF and Newton project portfolios. With increased childcare and home-schooling responsibilities often falling on women during the pandemic, many participants commented on how they, their family members, or others on the project had been forced to reduce work hours or risk reduction in the quality of their work while they attempted to balance their home and work life. This was particularly noticeable for some projects working with partners in contexts where severe gender divides existed even prior to COVID-19 and where childcare is primarily viewed as women's responsibility.

Highlight 23: COVID-19 as a barrier to keeping to gender objectives
Our partnership with her was quite important from promoting a gender equality perspective because she contributed to the extensive design of the project grant and she would continue to be involved in the projects. In terms of what our impact is going to be, she was going to be an essential lynchpin of that. My point is that COVID disrupted our capacity to build and maintain those relationships in region and it's also hindered the sort of achievement of those gender objectives.

Another aspect raised in relation to gender was the 'inflexibility towards gender diversity' on an institutional level that made 'universities incredibly ill-prepared for these kinds of projects that involve overseas partners. One of the goals of AHRC projects is to promote gender equality, but with COVID-19 making this particularly difficult as women in many partner countries had to take on increased childcare responsibilities, researchers faced an uphill battle to find funds to pay for childcare for women partners to try to enable them to remain with the project; or had to temporarily hire alternatives that no longer met the gender equality criteria. COVID-19 was seen by many as a step backwards for gender equality within projects due to these challenges.

Influence of Time on Partnerships

Finally, the concept of 'time' was very relevant to research partnerships for the projects within GCRF and Newton projects. In the beginning of a project, coordinators have to take the 'time' to build trust and be flexible. Many researchers reflected on how their perception of this initial 'time' has changed because of the pandemic either because they realised how much 'time' building trust took as time management became one of the main priorities during COVID, or because they needed 'more time' to build trust during the pandemic with lack of face-to-face interactions and dependence on other mediums of communication. It is also when timelines and requirements are settled. Being sensitive to the ever changing COVID-19 context of partners meant building in flexibility and extra time within the set timelines of the project from the outset. As one respondent mentioned: 'Make a lot of effort at the beginning of the working time.'

Many researchers reported that the pandemic led to partners being able to allocate less time to the project. One of the ways projects adapted was to hire more people to work on the projects at lower percentages of time that would add up to the work necessary for completion of the project. This approach ensured the projects were successful, but it also cost project coordinators additional time needed to set up and maintain these additional staff, maintain timelines, and make sure everyone met their set deadlines. Flexibility and adaptability were seen to include additional time costs.

Highlight 24: Needing more time due to change of pace and scope

'You can't get time back and when things take longer, even if you have had your project paused, as soon as it restarts that clock is ticking again. It doesn't account for the fact that things are much slower and I think that's what has worried me the most, especially as things have become more positive. I realise we can modify the project, we can restart again, but it's not running at that the pace that it needs to. I think we've been very pragmatic, and very honest about what we can achieve. We have a list, we have a core Gantt chart that I feel pretty confident we will achieve within the timeframe, but we do have almost like a wish list of activities that bring different stakeholders together. I would hope that if our online methods work as well as we hope they do that we may

be able to consider speaking to the funder about having another extension so we can incorporate more of those activities. Although our core plans get the project done as best as possible, if we could have a bit more time for a bit more engagement between different stakeholders, it would really enrich the impact of the project and actually help us become more sustainable in the long term.'

Researchers requested 'no-cost' extensions to make up for time lost due to the pandemic. These extensions were often seen as necessary to support equitable partnerships on the project. Researchers described the importance of no-cost extensions to maintaining equity with their global south partners given that a lot of responsibilities had shifted onto them. The extra time was often added in order to support partners, rather than UK-based researchers of the project.

Struggling to maintain partnerships under time constraints was also another concern for projects. For instance, stopping and starting projects in parallel with local pandemic restrictions, made it more difficult for researchers to maintain timelines. There were significant time costs related to contacting partners, setting up collaboration agreements, and needing to 'chase signatures' with different countries going in and out of lockdowns at different times. It was challenging to maintain relationships with partners who had been out of action or were having communication challenges. Many of the projects affected were relatively small scale with few permanent staff and had to deal with these issues with limited human resources due to lack of additional administrative support. Ongoing administrative paperwork, such as the signing of contracts, was described as a major challenge in the interviews especially in multi-partner projects. Remote working and flexible working arrangements also added an extra layer of difficulty in aligning time schedules to match partner needs and keep to project outcome deadlines.

Season 1: Episode 1 | What is Corona?; Copyright Alice Tilche 'Using the arts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities' project

Chapter 4: COVID-19 Transforming Research Ethics and Etiquette

The pandemic changed not only our everyday lives but impacted on the entirety of our lived realities. Questions of ethics and etiquette amidst COVID began to emerge in academia as well as in practical research applications. Researchers started to explore ethical issues when conducting research during the pandemic (Townsend et al., 2020) as well as ethical concepts and their application to COVID-19 research in particular (Dawson et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2020). In social sciences and humanities, projects also examined ethics and community engagement during the pandemic (Crooks et al., 2021) and the ethics of using technology (Dubov & Shoptawb 2020) for both analysis and communication. This chapter will also consider the ethical implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research practices, people, and engagement processes the projects from both the GCRF and Newton portfolios were involved with.

Ethical Frameworks amidst the Pandemic

With innovation in all aspects of research projects related particularly to new modes of communication, many researchers in the interviews called for an expansion of existing ethical frameworks or even the development of new ones. Research projects were impacted during their data collection and analytical stages as well as in the maintenance of relationships with various partnership networks and internal project organisation. These impacts arguably require re-inventing ethical frameworks and ethics forms to incorporate the changing realities of conducting research amidst COVID-19.

This expansion or development of new ethical frameworks does not change the existing understandings of ethical research, but rather it is to take into consideration the pandemic context and the severe changes to communication practices that have incurred as a result. For example, with many of the research projects moving online, data collection, analysis and dissemination will require ethics frameworks that can encompass different applications or online tools of communication, sharing, and transfer.

'We are in the process of doing all the ethical approval and fortunately it hasn't been the case that we haven't been able to do anything, it just means we've had to think about how we do things to achieve similar aims.'

A more flexible ethics framework would enable researchers to take into consideration online communication as well as the shifting nature of research in response to lockdowns and other COVID-19 restrictions. On the one hand, ethics frameworks should place more emphasis on the protection and outcomes for research participants themselves, rather than implicitly focusing on protecting the reputation of research institutions.

'The need of having more flexible ethics assessments and how some of these frameworks really don't benefit the people on the ground. I know this is not the official view of the agency, but I think it's very clear how some of these ethics frameworks are really there to protect the university rather than the people working within; and this becomes a problem in this kind of circumstances when you're trying to get voices heard.'

On the other hand, ethics frameworks should be equipped to address the transitional nature of COVID-19 rules and regulations and enforcing these rules in different contexts, as well as considering the changing dynamics the pandemic brings and the shifting definitions of researcher and researched. This is particularly important for GCRF and Newton portfolio projects that conduct international research and have to balance the COVID-19 restrictions of the UK as well as those of another country. These situations reportedly caused ethical dilemmas for establishing COVID-19-aware ethical research practices while considering the varying COVID rules and guidelines that differed nation to nation.

Highlight 25: Ethical approval for new mediums

'Well it's an interesting one as the research team in India worked with the artists in India, and were working with students through video monitoring, sorry the zoom rooms and zoom protocol. We had trouble getting that authorized because my university wasn't using zoom, they were using MS teams and MS teams wasn't working. MS teams doesn't work in Kashmir as it just takes up too much data. So that was one challenge that we had to debate and discuss and get allowed to use WhatsApp and Zoom as alternatives to MS teams. The artists and students weren't sending data through WhatsApp as far as I'm aware, but they were simply meeting, and organizing meetings using the app. The actual conversations and the sessions that they ran were through Zoom yet this brought an interesting ethical challenge for us.'

Context was highlighted as integral to these flexible ethics frameworks. Different contexts mean different approaches to what is considered 'ethical' and 'moral'. For example, some behaviours may have been considered unethical prior to the pandemic, but perfectly acceptable in the current COVID context. As one researcher described, uncertainty brought on by the pandemic as to job security meant that some of their partners accepted additional workloads and involvement in other projects that would bring them beyond 100% work time. Practically, this meant they risked not fulfilling their obligations to the projects they participated in, but in the context of the pandemic, the reality was different. Since many international collaborations were stopping or being placed on hold, partners were forced to accept additional work, hoping that in the end enough work would eventually materialise to enable them to survive financially. This is particularly true in view of the UKRI funding cuts that impacted many projects and reversed funding decisions in some cases. Another important perspective on this approach was that it opened up new opportunities to engage other researchers given that the project workload was distributed differently. Individuals and groups that previously may not have taken a central role in the research process, had more opportunity to do so due to shifting contracts thus gaining new skills and also allowing projects to gather more diverse data. Some researchers argue that this approach enables a more ethical research practice because it allows for otherwise marginalised groups to take more control over the research projects in which they are participants.

Ethics in the Field

An important focus of research ethics is the ethics of conducting fieldwork. COVID-19 has impacted fieldwork in multiple ways including with regard to the safety and protection of people in the field, the ethical implications for both researchers and the participants on when and how to gather data as well as considerations of the ethics of travelling in order to collect data amidst a pandemic.

The safety and well-being of researchers and participants is particularly important from an ethical standpoint, and even more so during a pandemic. Differing perspectives of when and how it is safe to collect data contributed to researchers' ethical dilemmas in this area. These dilemmas were focused around two main areas: ethical concerns about protecting those not in a position to protect themselves; and ethical concerns about protecting those who might choose to take greater risks than deemed ethical by researchers.

Highlight 26: Safety considerations for conducting research amidst a pandemic
'Colleagues are just developing the qualitative protocols right now for how to try to do something like classroom observation, which in some contexts might be possible to visit schools physically in a break between waves. There is also all the ethical issues of guidelines and regulations enabling things, allowing things and whether it's actually safe and ethical to go and visit schools when public health experts are saying that another wave is likely to happen, and that schools possibly are open but should they remain open for health and safety reasons. So there's just enormous, enormous ethical considerations. Is it ethical as researchers know that there's opinion against the reopening of schools and safety concerns in terms of COVID infections around schools being open? Should we gather data even though public health restrictions don't forbid us from collecting data? At the moment, is it ethical to do so considering it may put our researchers at risk or it may increase the risk of infections in classrooms, etc.?'

Participatory-driven data collection processes raised particular ethical dilemmas and challenges. The differing COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines from health experts in the UK and abroad, meant that in some cases partners from countries where COVID health regulations were more relaxed, would reportedly take risks collecting data that UK researchers perceived as inappropriate from an ethical standpoint. Further, despite the perceived insufficient consideration for participants' own safety or the safety of others, researchers often felt helpless to do anything due to the distance from the field site and without the existence of formal ethical guidelines in this area.

'The filmmakers themselves insisted that "no things are safe now so we want to go", and there are already some of the ethical issues that came up because I felt that I couldn't stop them. It's also that it's their project so they ended up going with the safety measures that they felt were appropriate and that the government mandated in their country'

Many researchers also considered the ethics of travelling amidst a pandemic with the aim of gathering data. Taking unnecessary risks during travel for data collection purposes was considered unethical and so many research designs adapted to exclude PIs travelling to the fieldwork sites and instead involved more local resources in research projects. In some cases regional meetings in the global south were prioritised to enable face-to-face communication in areas that were experiencing similar pandemic effects. Further, who 'gets to travel' and for how long was also given ethical consideration. PIs mentioned that they would now try to prioritise travel for early career colleagues who might be more likely to benefit from being physically present at a fieldwork site. Trips overseas were also extended since quarantine procedures made travelling over a weekend or just for a meeting, no longer viable. Finally, ethical implications with regard to travel impacts on climate change were also considered and will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Data Protection

The ethical implications most often associated with data collection, sharing, and storage are issues of security, privacy, and protection. In most research projects from the GCRF and Newton portfolios data sourcing, protection, and issues of consent had to be moved online. There were particular ethical concerns related to using various online mediums such as social media sites, phone apps, and streaming services. Recent data mining activities by social media platforms, insecure internet access, and insufficient data protection guidelines for new online mediums such as apps have brought these ethical issues to the foreground.

Highlight 27: Grappling with ethics in data collection, protection, and issues of consent
'One thing we started doing is we had this WhatsApp group where people started circulating images of the pandemic because they said, "this is going to be the way for us to capture what's going on the ground right now and we'll be able to maybe use some of these images later in our films". And this, I thought was a brilliant idea because there's so much that circulates on social media and they really want to capture the moment, even if some of the images were disturbing. So we did create a WhatsApp group with the 16 participants that we have where people started exchanging images, news and information and that became this sort of lifeline of the project for the last month.

I did think of some of the ethical issues around WhatsApp because I was trying to understand from the university point of view how we have to comply with GDPR regulations. Currently, I think, there are regulations put in place to protect more the university than the people that we were actually working with who felt that sharing these images was a way for the stories that are happening at the margins to be recorded and to enter in the kind of reality of memory. Although this might mean that some of the images don't necessarily have consent because you don't know where the images are coming from, I was trying to get adequate approval for this new methodology from the university.

We have entered this kind of endless debate, which has not been resolved yet so I don't know if I'd be able to actually use the material that we're generating. Specifically, because it's on WhatsApp and because some of the images that are shared on WhatsApp you

don't always know who the images are coming from. Some of the images that were sent are images that exists in the public domain, the news items and other images might be videos that people are taking on the street when they see somebody or something. People are sharing among the groups of indigenous marginal communities, whose stories have not been covered in the mainstream media. So from my point of view, these are actually pieces of news that are quite important, to capture that, but I do think the ethical issues are around having the consent of everybody who is on the images, and that sort of thing.'

New data collection and data sharing methods have new ethical implications. The ethical challenges of WhatsApp were often discussed in the interviews because of the prevalence of this app in the Global South. UK institutions reportedly perceive corporate backed online mediums such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom as safer options for data protection rather than phone applications. Additionally, as much of the data shared on online platforms and phone apps is visual, the ethics of visual data as connected to data sourcing, protection, privacy, and issues of consent were also widely discussed. While the importance of protecting the privacy of participants, especially children and other vulnerable groups, was already an ethical consideration pre-pandemic, new challenges were faced in terms of protecting data in these new online mediums. Some practical approaches to address these included blurring faces or voice distortion, but for many, these were not considered enough. Thus some of the data collected using these new technologies remains in storage until the ethical implications have been addressed.

Ethics of Analysis

Amidst health and safety concerns associated with COVID-19, many projects subcontracted elements of their research by using local human resources. This practice presented challenges and opportunities for the research projects. In terms of challenges, subcontracting research led to concerns over data quality and analytical consistency in the projects. In terms of opportunities, subcontracting research provided more autonomy for local partners, enabled researchers in the field, and opened up the analysis to include new analytical lenses as project ownership was transferred to those whom it concerns most.

Highlight 28: Subcontracting research challenges and opportunities

'There's other stuff I've been doing over the last year where I have been basically subcontracting research that I would otherwise have been doing myself and that does that does kind of raise questions about the recording and the quality of the data. You're not there in the room, and you're not able to verify for yourself otherwise. So yeah, new challenges, on the other hand also kind of exciting new opportunities and having to think about how you work with colleagues who were engaged in the same project as you in a way that's more verifiable as well as more equitable is actually quite a good challenge. So, yes, there are problems, there are ethics problems, there are data quality problems. How do you make sure the protocols that you've developed, are actually being followed in the field? Those are challenges but again there are also opportunities for more people to do more research, and especially for colleagues in Africa to be doing things I might otherwise have been doing for myself and making me think about how to work with people in a way that enables them to be productive researchers on their own account. Actually, I think that is quite an opportunity for the project. So in a way, what I'm trying to say is the dynamic was maintained as it would have been.'

The pandemic context also provided many researchers with the space and time to write up existing research data and to work on commentaries and think pieces about the ethics of research during COVID-19. There are many blogs that explore this topic and many of the researchers interviewed for this report reported wanting to write and reflect about the changes in ethical practices they had encountered during their projects. For some, this reflection on the ethical issues they encountered was described as a method for coping with the changing nature of research practices during the pandemic, while for others it was formalised as an output of the research project.

Partnerships and Relations

Equitable partnerships are at the heart of the GCRF and Newton project strategy. Relationships with partners changed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and some of these changes brought new ethical implications.

On the positive side, pandemic restrictions and online communication caused partnerships and team work to become more interconnected and engaged. Many teams bonded well and completed projects while never having met face-to-face. Team meetings took place on platforms such as Zoom, while data was collected either virtually or by partners already in place at the project sites. Virtual communications, as a result, provided researchers with an unprecedented view of their colleagues and partners' private lives either through online engagement or due to the data collection and analysis being led by those in the field. However, this raises certain ethical concerns about privacy in one's working life. Where should the line be drawn between the private and the public sphere when working from home? Greater access means knowing more about partners and colleagues, but some asked if there is such a thing as knowing too much that may detract from the professional relationship. To take this a step further, the pandemic has raised ethical questions about what is ethically and morally acceptable in a research team or partnership or even our very definition of what it is to be a professional researcher.

Being a professional in academia often implies employing a sense of impartiality and objectivity as part of a researcher's role, but some interviewees argued that they could not remain neutral when faced with COVID-19's rates of mass infection, illness and death. Supporting partners through bereavement and death was difficult without prior training or guidance. In addition to emotional support, many researchers provided resource support which also raised ethical concerns. Especially when researchers diverted funding money allocated elsewhere on the project to supporting research partners. Paying for medicines, oxygen, heath workers and data bundles with diverted funds might be a humanitarian act for some, while for others it might be considered a misuse of funds.

Highlight 29: Emotional and practical support for partners on projects
'I was talking to people who had dead relatives in the house and they didn't know how to get rid of them because they didn't know where to put them. It was just so horrifying! As for the oxygen: I worked with [organization name], they're also theatre group, an activist group that deals with issues in their community. They've always linked their artistic practices to two practices of, let's say development or intervention into livelihoods. So,

even during the first wave, they managed to get money together to distribute ration kits to other people in the slum area where they work, like rations of rice and lentils rations. That's what they did this time too because the oxygen was the main demand, and it was the oxygen because people couldn't get hospital places in time, and oxygen levels were dropping so fast. They were trying to get people on oxygen for a couple of days, so that in the meanwhile, they could find them, a hospital bed. Oxygen cylinders had become very, very expensive because of demand and so with this crowdfunding, we did buy 20 cylinders that could be refilled regularly and that they used in the communities they work with. Our Indigenous communities are quite separated from the main communities. I felt that the project during that month didn't stop because there was a sense from people that they wanted to keep in touch and try to do as much as possible, but some of what we did was actually outside of the project like the crowdfunding campaign, it was to provide relief, really.'

An additional aspect to consider are the ethical implications of asking partners to remain on the project following a shift in priority for those partners. For example, many projects collaborated with various health organisations. During the pandemic, those organisations had resources that could have been more useful in other areas of the community to better address COVID-19. Some questioned the ethical implications of involving these organisations in research projects when their resources might have been better spent elsewhere.

Finally, there is a question of ethics surrounding vaccine discussions within research teams, in terms of how to address vaccine hesitancy among partners where it arose. Researchers argued that the focus of vaccination discussions among teams should be on information awareness, affordability and availability of the vaccines to those who wanted them. An encouragement approach rather than sanctions was considered critical to help preserve equitable partnerships and avoid unethical coercion that could be viewed as an extension of unequal power relations.

Case Study 6

Name of Project	Using the arts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities
PI	Alice Tilche
Co-I	—
Research Organization	University of Leicester, United Kingdom
Partners/ Collaborations	Budhan Theatre; Bhasha Research and Publication Centre
Location	India (South Asia)
Dates	January 2021 - January 2022
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£110,415)
Research Subjects	Museum & Gallery Studies; Drama & Theatre Studies; Heritage Management; Social Anthropology
Objectives	Document, Create awareness, Ease the short and long-term impact of COVID-19 among India's most precarious indigenous nomadic communities
Original Methodology	Transferable methodologies, Using mobile digital technologies to complete a variety of arts activities including an arts podcast and theatre performance

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

'Using the arts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities' is a project aimed at using mobile digital technologies in order to explore the short and long term impact of COVID-19 upon the *Adivasis,* or otherwise defined as early inhabitants of India. The focus of the project is on Indigenous, nomadic communities within India whose lives remain hidden both globally and locally, but which are often most affected by disasters and instability.

This project has created an opportunity to increase the participation of these communities by aiming to develop transferable methodologies and using mobile digital technology to encourage socially engaged arts practices in the context of the pandemic. In partnership with the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, Budhan Theatre and the Adivasi Museum of Voice, the project has developed an arts podcast, used to document and raise awareness about the pandemic in the Indigenous languages used within the communities studied. These podcasts address a range of topics from health and well-being to socio-cultural and politico-economic dimensions of the pandemic. Additionally, a project website was also created in order to record the progress of the project, the completed research and the community-level responses to the pandemic, as well as to serve as an archive of the podcasts in the long term.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

Some of the main impacts of this project include the translation of various forms of theatre through socially distant and virtual platforms as well as engaging with the changing role of community museums and their agency in assisting communities during disasters. Policy intervention and a report in collaboration with development consultant Dr Khanna are also part of the planned impact for this project. The policy intervention will highlight concepts related to citizenship, mobility, welfare, and human rights. The report will focus on recommendations of how to strengthen Indigenous rights and social accountability mechanisms within India in addition to advising public health interventions to the pandemic as based on communities' needs.

"As COVID-19 exposes and deepens existing inequalities, this project will contribute to alleviating the effects of the pandemic on highly vulnerable populations by employing the arts and culture as mechanisms for community building and resilience".

This project case study was selected for this report both because it is one of the projects that explored COVID-19 impacts on a specific community, but also because it was impacted by the pandemic for the entirety of the research process.

Project Adaptation Strategies

As a project that was conceived after the pandemic had already begun, the constraints imposed by COVID-19 on fieldwork were already built within the parameters of the research process. Careful reflection and planning at the start of the project led to incorporation of digital technologies as the primary medium for data collection and dissemination, with no planned local or international travelling. The fieldwork was also developed with ethical considerations of risk and the safety of researchers amidst the pandemic. New communication mediums were utilised to minimise direct social contact as for example using messaging tools such as WhatsApp for both communication and for data sharing.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is illustrative of the changing ethics and etiquette that researchers have been facing during the pandemic. Particularly, how this project has engaged with physical risk and safety considerations undertaken because of COVID-19; mental health and well-being aspects that were considered; and the ethical responsibilities of the researchers involved.

COVID-19 poses a significant physical risk to both the researchers and those they study, especially in this project where the marginalised communities researched do not have ready access to vaccinations and are overwhelmingly against being vaccinated. Moreover, fieldwork was conducted between the first and second pandemic waves in India, where local safety regulations were much more relaxed than UK-recommended safety measures at the time. This prompted the PI to have to draw up revised risk assessments and safety recommendations for the project partners in India who were conducting the research, often asking them to engage in additional safety measures. As the second wave of the pandemic swept through India, the PI had to develop additional mental health and well-being support for the project partners in India. With many project partners experiencing widespread casualties of the pandemic including having to cope with personal loses when relatives passed away, the PI had to adapt to each case. One adaptation was to move towards more one-to-one

communication better suited to provide support and flexibility for project partners. To further minimise social interactions within the project, planned training was moved to an online medium. Moving training online is not only about shifting the medium used, but also requires addressing additional challenges in terms of capacity and ethics. Capacity, particularly in relation to the quality of research, was a challenge to overcome as support that was originally planned for the training sessions had to be adapted to new mediums of data collection and communication. For example, the WhatsApp medium is part of emerging methodologies amidst the pandemic that provided new ways for researchers to collect and share data, but that also come with new ethical considerations that are still evolving as the limits of this medium are explored and tested.

Finally, the additional ethical considerations for both the physical and mental health aspects experienced by the researchers and communities because of COVID-19, also serve to show the transformative nature of the individual ethical and moral responsibilities of the researchers amidst the pandemic. PIs have developed more detailed risk assessments and safety recommendations in an attempt to protect both researchers and participants. They have adapted their communication and methodologies in order to provide better mental health and well-being support, and some have even gone beyond this by taking personal moral responsibility for the communities they engage with. This project participated in crowdfunding to raise money for oxygen tanks and other aid. This humanitarian approach exemplified within the GCRF and Newton portfolios is worth being highlighted as it illustrates the commitment of these researchers. Rather than being solely focused on 'extracting' knowledge from these communities for research purposes, these morally engaged researchers used research connections with partners and local communities to build further bonds, and to help stabilise and support one another amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

Summary

In summary, this case study represents adaptability. This is a project that demonstrates how adaptable researchers from across GCRF and Newton Portfolios had to become in order to complete their research during a global pandemic, while also maintaining moral and ethical responsibilities towards the communities they were researching.

Season 1: Episode 7 | Quarantine; Copyright Alice Tilche 'Using the arts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities' project

Ethics in Communication

COVID-19 made face-to-face communication in many parts of the world challenging, which in turn had a 'huge knock on effect' on projects across the GCRF and Newton portfolios. New communication ethics and etiquette have been adopted as a result of this shift from in-person to virtual communication. These ethics are related to the type of interactions, language used, and the communication context.

'Well there seems to be a whole new language and etiquette that's now evolving around Zoom calls because we've had to learn a new way to communicate sadly.'

Researchers noted that with increased virtual communication deciding which emails to write, how often to send them and who needed to be copied into them became essential skills.. This is true for all online platforms such as social media sites, apps and communication programmes such as Zoom, Skype and Microsoft Teams. The importance of knowing how

to engage with these tools meant some researchers engaging in or organising classes on etiquette management for colleagues and partners in order to ensure the smooth running of their project and teaching responsibilities within their university setting.

'How many meetings we put in, and also how many emails we send. I've always been quite short and sweet person for emails, only email when you need to. But I've really tried to condense now so if we have an email to a stakeholder it is extremely clear with what I, what we want to discuss, what the points are. And if I think I'm going to be sending three emails that week, I will wait, and send one email with all those points so that they're not having to laugh about it because I think it's, it's little things like that that can really add to stress and pressure and crumbling mental well-being when you just sat in front of a laptop all the time.'

Another important aspect of interaction relates to out-of-office e-mail etiquette that emerged amidst the pandemic. Many respondents noted that with COVID, many more researchers started using out-of-office messages. Further, in addition to the increased use of out-of-office messages, the content of these messages also changed. Researchers commented on noticing that messages had become more nuanced and better written to address information that may not have been shared prior to the pandemic but which was quite useful for others to know. Examples include sharing working schedules and hours as part of out-of-office messages, clearly stating holidays and time away as well as sharing information about home status, such as having increased childcare responsibilities that might impact on response times. Some researchers hoped that this novel etiquette would remain even beyond the pandemic due to its usefulness in promoting smoother interactions within the team and with partners.

'It seems like there's almost an out-of-office etiquette, that has now been added, that we didn't have before. Definitely, I do feel when I have an out-of-office reply on now, I get fewer emails. On our outlook you can see when there's an office reply on before you send the mail and I definitely notice so I don't bother sending them. I just note down the day when they come back to work and then I send that email, and I think that's happened to me. I've received less emails when my out-of-offices is on and that occurs. It's starting to perpetuate.'

Researchers also argued that the content of messages and the language used during meetings is dependent on the medium used for communication. While some mediums have preserved a formal style of communication such as e-mail and Zoom, many other online mediums encourage concise and informal style of communication such as Twitter and WhatsApp. As a result, it can be noted that different online platforms develop different and yet shared etiquette.

Highlight 30: Approaching phone interviews in West Africa

'So with the telephone interviews in the West African project, it's harder to get people's attention when you want to call them on the phone. The normal procedure in many West African countries is to turn up in person at someone's office and either if you're in a country like Ghana is quite low protocol, you may even be able to just interview them right there and then, or in a country like Burkina Faso, you'll have to apply and it might take a few weeks but you've got to do all this in person. You can't just call up like you do over the phone. Trust also was an issue. So our partners, especially in Senegal, mentioned that when you're calling somebody up on the telephone and asking them for an interview. They want to know where you are from, why should I do this, where did you get my number from etc. and it's just not polite, in that context and culture, to explain that over the phone and to not show up. It's not seen as very genuine, so it was harder for them to gain those interviews when working remotely. I was quite surprised because I thought maybe everybody will understand that because of COVID I'm calling on the phone because I don't want to catch COVID; but apparently those norms were so strong that it just was harder for the partners to actually get the interviews.

We have a WhatsApp group as well, which is communication on a slightly more informal style than it is in emails, or actually in the Zoom meetings, but I think that's to do with WhatsApp. There's a particular medium, so it's not online versus face to face, it's more that I think different platforms developed slightly different community events over time. Basically, WhatsApp is a bit more informal. I think that's mostly people's experience, where it's from for our emails, and for zoom, we maintained a slightly more familiar kept communication.'

The communication contexts were also taken into consideration in relation to ethics. Local language use and communication context can shape access, conversations, and impact at a given research site. Being flexible and understanding the need for others to take a more flexible approach were also considered crucial for the success or failure of the research project.

Emergent Technologies

A subcomponent to considerations of ethics and communication during the pandemic is the development and use of emergent technologies in research practices during COVID-19. With many research practices in virtual, research projects have had to adapt to learning new technologies for communication, data gathering, analysis, and dissemination.

> **Highlight 31: Adapting to new technologies and new communication methods**
>
> 'One of the things that's quite surprised me about all of this is that we have found it fairly easy to develop a kind of practice of communication through the meetings that we've had online. I know one or two of the people in the team but actually most of them I've never met physically with on set. The whole thing is up online, the whole putting together the application, and so it all been very largely done online. Couple of phone calls and one or two people join your event, but despite the fact that we didn't have any practice of this we didn't have any established etiquette. The meetings have gone surprisingly well we haven't found difficulties with meeting management of the kind that you might expect to emerge from a new form of communication. I don't know why that is. It may just be lucky to have inherently a very polite group of colleagues I'm working with but we've come fairly easily to an understanding about communication within the group that seems to work quite well. I feel, and you'd have to ask other members of the team, but I feel actually we have a fairly equitable and good communication.'

Some of these technologies are not new, but the pandemic simply made them more widespread in use, especially in the research context. For these new technologies, existing ethical frameworks could be adapted, but in some cases, new ones were required. Developing

new practices requires a careful consideration of the new methods of communication and emerging types of language that may have additional ethical dimensions and implications. For example in Zoom, one could easily record a video call and even set an automatic transcription method so seeking consent could perhaps be built in, if not directly a part of the platform as a button on a check box, at least in prescribed research practices and methods of communication.

Meeting management practices also need to be ethically improved to reflect these emergent technologies. Consent forms should incorporate permissions that are related to the capabilities of the online medium used. As some researchers pointed out, with many platforms being able to provide different communication opportunities, perhaps consent forms need to also reflect this flexibility and adaptability of the technology medium in practice. Managing consent and use of these emergent technologies then is a matter of ongoing debate as ethical practices continuously evolve in an attempt to match technological innovation and use.

Ethics and Finance/Funding Applications

There are three aspects of finance and ethics to be highlighted here. First, ethics as part of the bureaucratic process associated with the submission of a funding application. Second, finances as related to the ODA budget cuts and the ethical implications for equitable partnerships. Third, the ethical considerations stemming from the financial disparities between the Global North and the Global South.

As part of the bureaucratic processes that accompany the submission of a funding application, researchers commented that COVID made finance and spending guidelines difficult to follow. Finances allocated for certain aspects of a project, such as travel, were no longer necessary for the project, while new budget lines emerged, often related to technological aspects of the project. Examples here include the need to hire video editors or server hosting for websites as well as the purchase of data bundles, mobile devices and, on one project, electricity generators.

Season 1: Episode 8 | Livelihood Part 1; Copyright Alice Tilche 'Using the arts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities' project

'You've got to do an awful lot of work and budgets and ethics and all this kind of stuff is much bigger than the [regular] application pages'

An often repeated suggestion by the interviewees was to have COVID-19 appropriate guidelines for financial spending that could take into consideration the changing nature of projects during a pandemic as well as ethical responsibilities of researchers and projects. For example as mentioned in a previous section, some projects redirected funds to humanitarian aid which could have been considered a misuse of funds but was an ethical imperative for the researchers involved. Another example was the need to pay for data bundles which could be considered both ethical and pragmatic, given that without the extra support communication would have stopped, stalling the project.

Highlight 32: Buying data bundles in order to maintain connectivity during the research project

'There've been technical problems yesterday with most colleagues' bandwidth. It is not as good as you have in the UK and there has been a shared load of work in terms of sending people money to buy data. Basically, the data is very expensive in East Africa, so there's a whole lot of technical logistical stuff, but the etiquette of this is actually how to fund it. I actually mentioned in the survey that I used money to buy data bundles and WiFi devices. Of course, we would never have done in other circumstances, and for you and me, who have either institution or home internet which is pretty good, and is not usually limited by data, this isn't an issue. But if you're in Uganda and if your institution doesn't usually have a reliable WiFi, even if you can get into your institution, and your home certainly doesn't. You have to buy data and data is actually very expensive by international standards. So I, first of all, am sending people data they can put onto their phone, so we can talk on the phone and then of course everyone mobile WiFi devices. On the other hand, we of course, saved; I mean we wildly underspent on our budget because of the lockdowns and no travelling.'

The suggestion repeated most frequently was to develop more formal ways of allocating finances to other sections of the project to keep up with changes brought about by the pandemic.

Navigating Ethical Complexities

COVID-19 added new and complex dimensions to existing ethical considerations within GCRF and Newton research projects.

'Within the research projects are also the complex ethical and practical decisions and situations linked to that'

Some ethical challenges were pre-existing, new aspects arose of these in the pandemic context. For example, there already existed ethical considerations in relation to gender, but in light of the pandemic, many PIs felt an ethical responsibility to address increased

childcare responsibilities of female researchers and partners with some projects even funding separate childcare in order to help people involved in the project.

Highlight 33: The ethics of commitments and negotiation of expectations

'We have really not wanted to, in the context of people with huge additional carrying responsibilities and no end in sight for when they might not be, it seems unethical to continue to expect the same commitments from them that they made when they didn't have to be educating their children full time as well as working their jobs full time. So, how do we continue to collaborate towards the same expectations when circumstances have changed so dramatically? For many of our colleagues there's been overlapping.'

An important focus was the issue of consent. A number of respondents noted that while permissions and consent were always sought when gathering more traditional types of data such as interviews, surveys or when conducting ethnography, these checks were not always integrated into newer methodologies being used in the pandemic such as sharing of images and videos. Researchers had to be careful when participants would send imagery to return and seek specific permission about what they were permitted and not permitted to do or use these images for. They had to ensure all the permissions were there in place before analysing, sharing, or engaging with images shared and/or created in the research process.

Changes in project organisational strategies during the pandemic also challenged established research roles and hierarchies. Some researchers argued that the new dynamics explored during COVID as well as the innovative practices being used in research projects, allowed them to break certain stereotypes regarding who can and should conduct research, who owns the research as well as whose voice should be heard and how. But they also struggled to get helpful advice from institutional ethics committees that were often inexperienced in international research and focused on narrow institutional parameters.

'I mean, it is really, really tricky, I think, because the system of ethics, the setup of ethics isn't really set up for such complicated situations and culturally different cultural situations as well. It's difficult for international projects so we have ethics committees that's not that familiar with international research and working in places like Kashmir, and they don't really know what to look out for necessarily, and then they start focusing possibly on the wrong thing. Sometimes, giving us trouble for Zoom rather than MS Teams was absolutely, just an institutional decision that they had decided to go through MS Teams and other universities use Zoom and so you're on Zoom.'

COVID-19 helped some researchers explore the complexities and nuances of research collaborations, particularly in relation to debates around international research ethics as compared to site specific or national academic ethics. Institutional decisions also highlighted shared international communication problems, especially around the ability and access to technology and information.

Ethics and Time

The final section of this chapter will explore a concept that emerged from the data, namely the relationship between ethics and time. Time as a concept kept appearing in both the interviews and the survey, but ethics and time was a key subtheme identified. Conducting a research project amidst a pandemic brought forth considerations of 'differences in time' and 'time scales'.

'There is an objective to be done, but there has been lapses in relation to the time. I don't think in terms of the actions but in terms of the timeline that we do because of some of these difficulties of actually getting things back up and running.'

The timing of different stages of research, when to contact partners, and when disseminate results were all seen in a new light new due to the pandemic context. Questions of the ethics of collecting data in a time when priorities are focused on the huge impact of the pandemic

on people's lived realities played on PIs' minds. In addition questions of 'dissociation of time', 'loss of time' and 'time changed' impacted on a research project's success, scope, and quality.

Highlight from the 'Protecting Brazil's indigenous communities during the COVID-19 pandemic' GCRF Project, a collaboration between Paul Heritage, People's Palace Projects (PPP), Queen Mary University of London and Takumã Kuikuro, Kuikuro Indigenous Association of the Upper Xingu (AIKAX); image shows filmmaker and researcher Takumã Kuikuro: Copyright Flavio Andre. https://www.newton-gcrf.org/impact/stories-of-change/protecting-brazils-indigenous-communities-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic/

'That was the main the main effect on that bit of the timing, when we missed the first milestone for getting all of the interviews done. Also because it was early on, people panicked and were scared. I suppose all of those other issues like probably how people were strict. I was struggling with childcare and this idea of doing work just went out of the window. Struggling to get food and water in those cultures as you may need to leave your house for those things. I also just let that milestone go because it wasn't like I could call them up and pressurise them, and knowing the current situation.'


Season 2: Episode 1 | Bahurupi; Copyright Alice Tilche 'Using the arts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities' project

Further, in terms of project organisation and continuation, flexible 'time scales' of when and how to conduct the project as well as how to accommodate partners and participants were readjusted as part of projects' research design. Many projects were put on hold during COVID peaks, so when projects were restarted, team members and partners might have increased workloads as a result of now concurring projects. Time management and organisation are crucial for the successful completion of any project, but these took on new meanings and raised new ethical challenges due to the COVID pandemic.

'Just say when someone needs to chat "Oh yes I'm available". As an academic I think it's really easy to say "I'm too busy sorry", but actually, for them, they need it, so I needed to clear my diary when they needed to talk. So it was about their timescales, not my timescales. Hopefully, they feel I was there for them but I think it's really hard to come across now we're on zoom, to pick up things about someone who may be really tired and to ask, "is it not a convenient time?". Do they think I'm saying the wrong thing? It is quite hard over Zoom. You can try, but it is quite hard.'

Time is therefore about being considerate, both of those the researchers connect with as well as an introspection of their own temporal availability. With this is also the ethical implications as linked to expectations of 'time given', 'time shared', and 'time needed'.
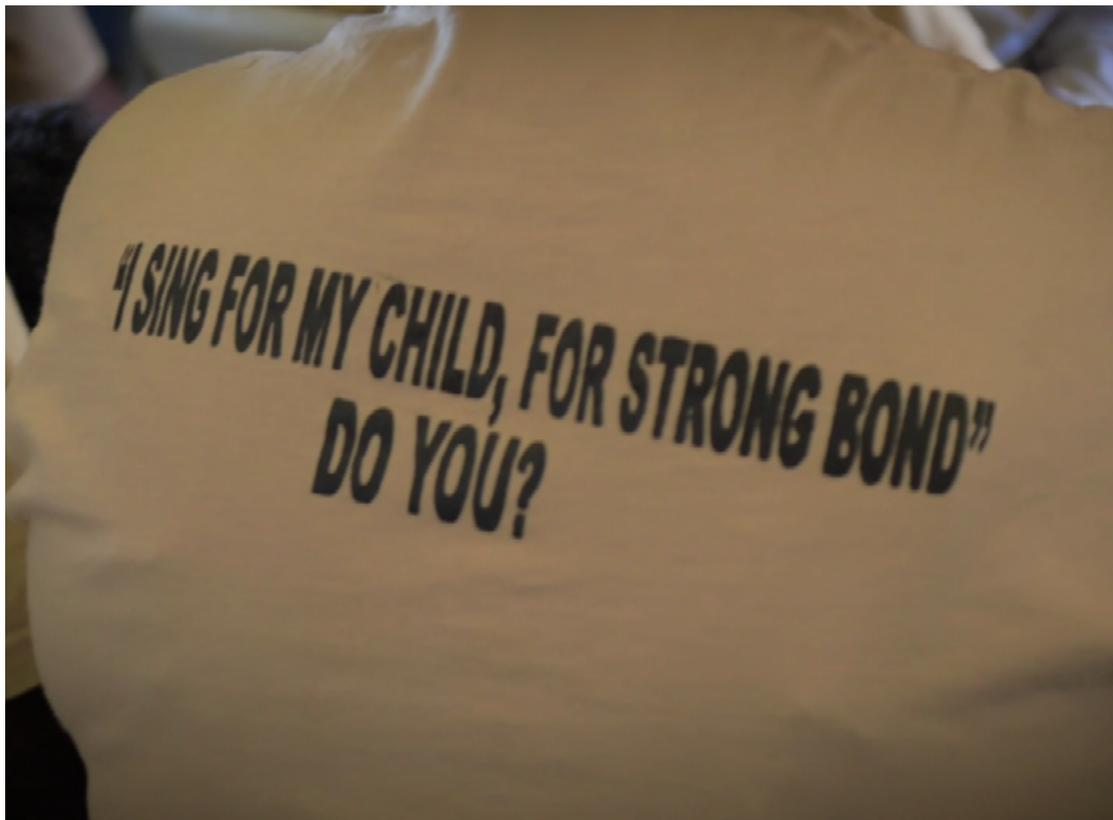
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Chapter 5: Bringing Climate Change and Climate Justice to the Foreground

There are many similarities and differences between the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate change crisis (Manzanedo & Manning, 2020; Zang et al., 2021) as well as many lessons to be learnt about advancing climate change mitigation strategies and agendas (Klenert et al., 2020). There are shared lessons linked to costs, policy design, exacerbated inequalities, transparency and the necessity of international cooperation to overcome challenges. Further, while both COVID and climate change can be viewed through the lens of compounding risks and the negative consequences of such circumstances (Phillips et al., 2020; Monasterolo et al., 2021), there are also conditions created amidst the pandemic for bringing about a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient global recovery (Stern et al., 2021) as well as using pandemic recovery programs for the advancement of climate change agendas (Rosenbloom & Markard, 2020). This chapter seeks to address the second question of the PRAXIS: COVID-19 Strand Project 'what are the challenges and solutions as can be identified in GCRF projects' experiences of COVID-19 that can contribute towards a climate-resilient, zero-carbon economy. The specific focus of this chapter was on themes related to *climate change* and *climate justice* as reflected through a COVID-19 pandemic lens*.*

Climate Change and Re-Organisation of Project Design

Concern about the environment has made many principal investigators include a climate change perspective as part of their research design. Consideration of environmental impacts through fieldwork, outputs, and day-to-day practicalities, was already coming to the foreground even before the pandemic. COVID-19 simply served as an amplifier of existing concerns as well as providing a platform for adapting to climate-aware approaches out of necessity. As a result, many research projects introduced changes to their research designs and aimed to create more balance between research practices and climate considerations.

The most prominent change to research designs was in relation to fieldwork and student/ early career engagement. One of the most common solutions to minimise impact on the

climate was to reduce travel by sending researchers and students into the field for extended periods of time in order to justify the carbon emissions associated with the travel. Another was to remove travel by encouraging 'virtual' field trip options instead.

Highlight 34: Re-thinking fieldwork and student participation

'I genuinely believe that around field work, and students, and climate change we need to rethink. In the context of COVID, really rethinking what fieldwork is and basically pushing a lot of virtual field trips. My point was that in terms of the students learning about climate change, if they can do that over time through engagement with places where we are actively researching, so whether that's Amazonia, or the coast where there is use of climate change on fisheries, then you know if they're engaging with that both through my teaching but then through these sorts of volunteer experiences of talking to students, or researchers. I would hope that they could be a generation who should be able to go and still travel and do a dissertation, but it would be a longer term engagement than the sort of, you know, two weeks field trip somewhere. Our students are very, very passionate about and well versed on climate change issues, but they still do want to go places, and I think that through the course of a four year degree, they can think more carefully about how they go and why they go as responsible research is important and the inter-cultural exchange within that I think is really important.'

For some researchers, COVID-19 helped contextualise research questions within a climate change framework, highlighting existing concerns, and shaping future directions of research. For others, the pandemic served as a catalyst for self-reflection and subsequent adaptation of climate aware project research designs, which juxtaposed questions of what is better for the environment versus what is better for the project. For others still, the uncertain situation due to the pandemic highlighted the need to improve research designs to address the climate crisis and avoid environmental harm. With this perspective, there is also an inherent sense of hope that was communicated, a hope for improvement of research practices that may allow researchers to also play a role, or at least be a part of the solution, that addresses present pressing climate change concerns.

Project Content Incorporating Climate Change as Topic for Consideration

As the climate change crisis has come into focus over recent years, many research projects have incorporated climate issues into the content of their research projects, with projects on resilience, agriculture and water issues becoming more common.

These adaptations were further reshaped through the COVID-19 context. The pandemic provided a space for exploration of the link between digital technologies and climate change. One project included in this report is expanding the project scope to include 'digital cooperation' and 'tree scapes'.

Highlight 35: Digitisation and cooperation

'One of the things I was thinking about coming up to this project is what would I do next, and two things immediately emerged: one is everything was about the digital, but it was also about cooperation. The digital was really about how to create spaces for women who are small organizations to do more cooperative types of things, which was about refugees and asylum seeker young people and sense of belonging in tree scapes. I realised that the women that we work with were themselves refugee asylum seeker women. One of the things was creating this kind of infrastructure of belonging, so they felt they could belong in this new space through this activity they have seen making. Asylum seekers, and finding a way, a mechanism for belonging, but again through nature. The ideas about how do we create these mechanisms for belonging and creativity.'

Another important theme that emerged from the data on climate change in GCRF and Newton projects was connected to the increased use of arts-based methods to raise awareness, communicate information, and provide social critiques related to climate change and how these were affected by the pandemic.

Highlight 36: Creating climate change art from afar

'This was an invitation to create an installation about climate change and climate

devastation. Normally it will be an early delivery or activities, so it's a massively affected us, as we didn't travel for obvious reasons. We had planned a big intervention, big actions around climate change, to be associated with this installation so we've had to shift, we managed to stage the installation, almost as we would by contracting local people. But it's not easy. I can tell you to put up an installation over Zoom and distance and work out what the colour of the paint is and the requirement to do an exhibition, while the partner in the US couldn't go there.'

A central component of these projects was that arts-based approaches and methods can be a part of the solution to some climate change concerns, particularly in that 'arts' may be used to help citizens and policymakers to communicate about climate change and other environmental issues. Projects such as these often engage multiple stakeholders including community members, academics, art practitioners, and policy makers. In the pandemic context these projects had to rely heavily upon digital technologies, which was challenging in terms of producing art from a distance, but also enabled a shift in communication strategy to focus on the advantages of the digital medium, and in practice, shifted research projects closer to a zero carbon model.

COVID-19 Raising Awareness about Climate Change

One of the major challenges to the climate change crisis is how to raise awareness of the topic without either frightening people due to the urgency of the crisis or making the climate issue so distant that it fails to engage. Some research projects from the GCRF and Newton portfolios addressed that challenge by raising climate change awareness through establishing a connection between the pandemic and the disease on one hand and environmental degradation on the other. After all, environmental harm is considered a factor in the spread of diseases like COVID-19.

Highlight 37: Climate science and the spread of diseases shaping research questions

'I think there's also just a greater awareness of the link between what's happening in animal populations and how that links to human consumption and the spread of disease; and that directly linked into our research theme because it's diseases spreading and the likelihood that resistant diseases are spreading. It's almost contextualised our research theme and research questions and got us to think a bit more broadly about what themes of research we might want to look at in the future. I do have really strong interest in climate science so definitely been making the most of other people's interest to steer research questions. I think generally there's a greater awareness of climate crisis and ecosystem collapse because of the pandemic.'

One of the challenges research projects faced regarding climate change communication is how to maintain the climate issue debate without making the individuals and communities part of the discussion become desensitised with repeat discussions and no new insights. As some researchers highlighted, participation in environmental protests during COVID-19 was unfeasible and would have been counter-productive.

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Case Study 7

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Name of Project	Life-Saving Lullabies: Reducing adolescent maternal and neonatal deaths in Zambia
PI	David Swann
Co-I	James Reid, Barry Doyle
Research Organization	Sheffield Hallam University
Partners/ Collaborations	St John Zambia
Location	Zambia
Dates	Feb 20 - Mar 21
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£129,795)
Research Subjects	Design HTP
Objectives	applying art, design and humanities research methodologies to discover, define, develop, deliver and empower adolescent parents and caregivers with responsive skills for meeting their needs as both women and mothers; confronting inequalities associated with the accessibility of antenatal care services (ANC); improving upon the current ANC practices used to up-skill service users with maternal health information; and empowering local communities to conceive new lullabies to address immediate local and national challenges
Original Methodology	human-centred design approach; sustainable arts-based innovation strategy
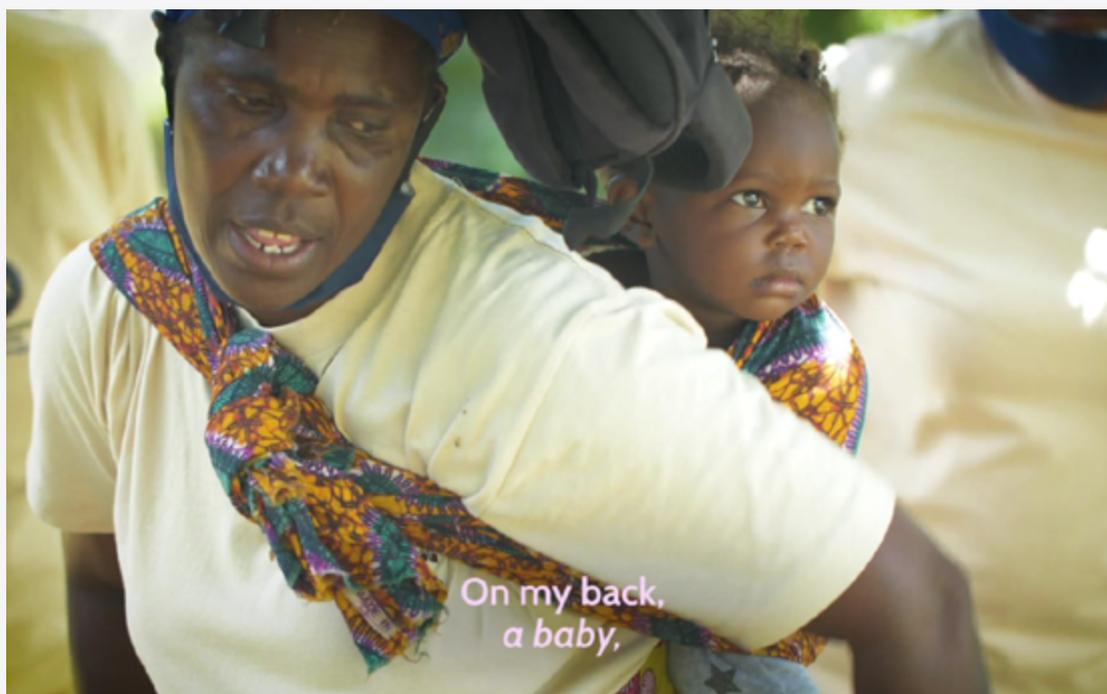
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COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

'Life-Saving Lullabies: Reducing adolescent maternal and neonatal deaths in Zambia' is a project that is illustrating the use of lullabies as both an expression of love and affection as well as a methodological tool used to educate and encourage better parenting practices. This project introduces a novel 'sustainable arts-based innovation strategy' that provides an alternate method for raising health and well-being awareness in relation to antenatal, birthing, and postnatal care. In particular, the project takes a bottom-up approach by considering the experiences of young mothers in Zambia as the primary source for knowledge to be distributed via the lullabies. This project has created an opportunity to allow mothers to better prepare for delivery, to raise awareness of critical danger signs post birth, to understand the importance of both medication and nutrition for both mother and baby ante and postnatally, as well as to highlight some additional emotional and physical aspects of pregnancy for the whole family.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

Some of the main impacts of this project include a context specific approach that has been much better received in the communities in Zambia. These impacts are evident in data showing improved life-chances for new-borns and increased awareness and knowledge for the new mothers. The lullabies have also helped reduce stress and anxiety for the pending mothers, build confidence, and educate them with new skills needed for care and parenting. In sum, this project has empowered women in Zambia to better improve their own well-being as well as the health of their children. The project has also had an impact on local organizations and government. For example, the enhanced partnerships with St John Zambia allowing the organisation to disseminate the lullabies provides a long term contribution to the country via the improved maternal and baby health and welfare. The project contributes to SDG goals 3, 5 and 17 and Articles 2, 6, 12 and 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This project case study was selected for this report because it presents a unique case of a climate change conscious research design and practice.

Project Adaptation Strategies

In climate terms, this project is dedicated to having zero impact in terms of carbon and cost. The main aim of the project is to disseminate knowledge about ante, birth and postnatal care to mothers and their families, and so the project originally considered different ways of providing the community with this knowledge. One of team's foundational principles is the concept of 'frugal innovation', where dissemination of knowledge occurs via the creation, often locally, of small and discreet products that can convey messages at little cost. This approach focuses on developing minimal viable solutions that would deliver the maximum impact. In line with this view, the original research design considered using the traditional 'chitenge', a waxed cotton fabric that is approximately a meter by four meters, and has a variety of uses in African communities such as a skirt, tablecloth, headdress, baby wrap etc. The original idea was to print the relevant educational information on the chitenge and use it as the medium to disseminate within the communities. As this material is prevalent in the communities, it seemed that this would be an excellent cultural fit and well within the social context thus creating maximum impact.

"While conducting foreground research, we tested our chitenge concept with local volunteers at two clinics in Zambia. They recognized its educational value but the problem we encountered was that even at $5, it was too costly and so it forced us to think of a solution or intervention that was zero cost".

As a result the research design was altered to be cost free which minimised its environmental impact while maximising its legacy post-project. It was in search of this net zero research study design that the idea of educational lullabies was created. This methodology is also in line with UKRI aims to have research studies as net zero if possible in the future.

"99.9% of researchers who've received funding wouldn't be able to tell you the carbon footprint of their studies. So there's a kind of cognitive dissonance in terms of our practice and we don't interrogate our own practice; and so professionally, I feel it's incumbent on me as a practicing researcher to reduce my impact so I said to myself, that all future projects will work towards becoming net zero".

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is particularly illustrative of a project that carefully evaluated its research carbon footprint and found a way to reduce its ecological impact while still achieving its aims. This was also aided by COVID flight restrictions at the time, which made international flight, a carbon heavy activity, impossible during the pandemic outbreak. During the COVID pandemic era, this project can serve to others as an example of completing net-zero project while maintaining the original focus. Additionally, because the project leaders could not be present in Zambia due to COVID-19, much more agency was given to the volunteers from the partner organization St Johns Zambia. As a result, the 31 lullabies finally created and disseminated as part of the research process were co-created with the academic background

and knowledge of the UK partners and the experience and site-specific understanding and knowledge of volunteers from St John's Safer Motherhood Action Groups.

Summary

In summary, this case study presents a project that can be described as climate conscious research design development. It serves as a great example of an ingenious design that was adapted to the changing context of the pandemic as well as in relation to tackling climate change concerns. This project successfully communicates the message that such net-zero research designs are possible even amidst the most challenging times.

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"So, you know, it comes down to personal responsibility, adapting our research designs to the constraints of the COVID era and towards making them net-zero".

Travel Amidst the Pandemic

Travel was the most prominent factor connecting climate change discussions and COVID-19 among GCRF and Newton projects. Travelling for fieldwork, to meet partners, to organise outputs, or to participate in events were those activities most affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns. In this respect, the pandemic highlighted for researchers the true impact of travelling for their research projects. Many realised that it was still possible to conduct research in spite of travel restrictions. Travel should therefore be considered much more carefully to understand when and how it is 'strictly necessary' in research terms.

Highlight 38: Travel considerations

'I guess it depends a bit on the project. It really should be meaningful. It was great to have the ground team and without that, the project wouldn't have worked even without the pandemic if you want to do some sort of ethnography. You have to have people who can go back every month for a week and be with the participants and of course if you live there, you can do that. If you live elsewhere, you can, but you should be much more involved as a researcher, so it would be important for me to go and to be able to speak about things, and to do some of the research. I wouldn't for this project, I wouldn't have reduced travel. I don't think it would have been feasible or necessary to reduce it, but for example I am thinking about not going five times for a week but rather twice for a month or something. I think this kind of consideration is what people should be thinking about. So how can you actually collaborate with people in the country and how can you reduce the times you fly and so on. In a way, utilise your time a bit better rather than just jumping on the next plane because you can and you have the funding.'

Managing travelling and frequency of travelling is also connected to proper resource management. As related to climate change, taking responsibility for travel should also be about taking responsibility for carbon emissions. On the one hand, research projects continue to value travel that enables access to conduct field work, to maintain partnerships, and to create impact within local to the project communities. On the other hand, research projects are increasingly including goals and objectives that address climate change concerns and move projects closer to a zero carbon model. Carbon reduction was cited as a practical necessity to reduce use of resources as well in relation to concerns over climate change. COVID-19 further brought about a perception change in the sense that researchers now believe they can do more to reduce the carbon emissions of their projects given the unprecedented reduction in travel they experienced due to COVID-19.

Travel and Partnerships

For most of the projects from GCRF and Newton portfolios, travelling is an essential component of network building and maintenance. Partnerships that are part of these projects are often dependent on face-to-face communication in order to be established, preserved, and expanded. Reduced or temporarily halted travel plans due to the pandemic severely impacted several research projects and in some cases ended partnerships altogether. Therefore PIs were determined to maintain travel where possible, in spite of climate concerns.

Highlight 39: Travel as a necessity for understanding context

'I'm not going to stop flying. We mustn't let this break down, being together. I can see loads of things we've done, they've been an advantage, but we wouldn't have been able to do any of that work without having the sort of rooted relationships. I think… a lot of the work I do is not running the same risk of course but there's no way I would contemplate being able to work in surveillance if I hadn't been in there and seen the challenges they face and worked with people and being next to people who can show me the complexities of that society. I don't see that happening without travel in terms of climate change.'

How reduction in travel due to COVID-19 impacts relationships with partners is only part of the discussion, but there are also impacts for the partners in the field; particularly, how travel bans have affected project partners from unstable nations. Existing political, economic and social instabilities are often camouflaged by COVID-19 restrictions and can lead to delays with the research projects, concerns over the safety and well-being of partners as well as in some cases, inability to complete the research. For many researchers, travel needed to remain as an integral part of their partnership building, but they considered alternative ways to engage in travel which were informed by their experiences of travel reduction during COVID-19.

Highlight 40: Staying in the field longer to maximize impact and minimise travel

'So I'll be very reluctant to give up travelling entirely, but I can see that there's a lot of flying somewhere to give a lecture, for example, and I wouldn't do that now, because it just be silly. Hopefully, everyone knows that it will be silly. But there's a lot of briefing work and that kind of thing that that I've done historically in person, that I've been doing online over the last year and I would expect to continue doing online. So in terms of the sort of design of the project I think that going forward now, there'll be far more of a case for me to say, for example "I'm not going to do fieldwork for three weeks" because that was usually the maximum amount of time I could get because of teaching and stuff. If we make as a university, a commitment to less travel, then we should be prioritising areas where we have research and teaching links and make them long term relationships with the places. So I could now go, I would go, for two months and I would do some of my teaching from there and include my partners in the teaching, including my classes on climate change.'

Until successful completion of research projects and partnership maintenance can be disentangled from travel for GCRF and Newton portfolio projects, it is unlikely that travel can be eliminated altogether.

Travel and Change: Communication, Time, and Funding

Using technology to address communication needs was the main solution for reduction in travel. Project meetings, conferences, and various types of events were moved online. Teaching and learning have also become digitised because of the pandemic.

With COVID-19 restrictions lifting, online events have not simply returned to pre-pandemic face-to-face interactions. In many research projects the positive aspects of having online meetings were taken into consideration, for example the ability to engage with audiences that may not participate in person and the ability to attend events at the click of a mouse thus bypassing resource disparity and travel time constraints. As a result, hybrid communications were seen as a vital post-COVID methodology for engagement. Hybrid communications were also seen as beneficial for the environment due to the reduction in travel.

Highlight 41: Conferences and events

'I feel hybrid communications will stay because I think there's a wider benefit. For example, I went to a conference in Denmark last week sat here and it worked so well. I think there's benefits for people, who are on maternity leave, or who have caring responsibilities, or who are less able to travel to really make use of those situations. With this conference, you were doing your presentation, obviously through zoom, but you can even engage with the quizzes, and the round table discussions, and social meet ups at lunchtime. You could book slots with people you didn't know, but who you want to network with. The online platform created such a great environment and you can see that's not just a COVID response, but that could be beneficial for so many others. It was international so there were people from the Philippines attending and Australia, so obviously they've got up in the night to come to the conference. With planning, you could plan your childcare or your other arrangements around that. I think because there's so much more benefit to the online communication and then of course there's drawbacks and there's risks and some people are excluded and that needs to be challenged but I do see that sticking around.'

Of particular interest was the notion of 'time' when listing reasons not to travel as in 'saved time' flying, 'protecting time', and 'better using one's time'. Reduced travel was also attributed to changes in researchers' perceptions of time as 'available time' and 'shared time'. For example, as one interviewee noted, being 'bored on aeroplanes' was seen as 'time wasted' when 'time could be better occupied'.

'I spent too much time flying places, and I probably am more aware that I can do less of that. So, I don't think my attitudes have changed but myself and the possibilities to actual address my own concerns have changed a bit.'

Finally, the last concept highlighted in relation to travel was the travel budget and funding realities balanced against the newfound effectiveness of online communication and remote communication. With hybrid communications and less time allocated travelling, researchers often made a case for a reduction in travel funds while reallocating those funds to support digital innovation or extra time on a project.

'I think there's a realisation, for future projects, that we could manage without so much travel, but I don't think we can completely replace it. It is challenging trying to negotiate time zones and it will become very challenging once more activity happens, but I do think we figured out how to have effective or much more effective online communication and much more effective remote communication and so I think future travel budgets could be reduced, and so then emissions could be reduced.'

This reallocation of funds would address environmental concerns by establishing a framework for supporting and prioritising reduced carbon emissions and net zero project designs as well as reshaping research practices for the future.

Extreme Weather Events and Water Security

Extreme weather events are often discussed when considering the climate crisis and researchers highlighted how these might impact already vulnerable communities struggling to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. In those communities, climate change is ever present as researchers frame the projects to include areas such as studying of water supplies and resources, which amidst the pandemic and lockdowns have become even more inaccessible to already struggling communities.

'I think there was also a sense that we've been thinking of climate change as being fairly distinct and the pandemic suddenly meant that we were reintegrating questions of landscape and water usage with questions of health infrastructure and social infrastructure. The fact that suddenly people couldn't move, people couldn't leave their homes to access water, the fact that this sort of everyday patterns of resource and use of extraction suddenly changed meant that we have to rethink what climate change was, I think.'

Further, extreme weather and the climate crisis can impact already vulnerable communities that are already struggling to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. In those communities,

climate change is ever present as researchers frame the projects to include areas such as studying of water supplies and resources.

'After the cyclone, climate change was a big issue that came up again. All these things are really, really muddled up, and the point is the condemnation of these communities, increasing the vulnerability of groups that were already absolutely vulnerable. This involves access to water that does relate also to climate change in indirect ways. When you think of a huge cyclone hitting areas and devastating villages, when you're in the middle of a pandemic; it just makes it worse, which just makes everything worse. What we're looking at in the project itself is how these kinds of specific vulnerabilities of these communities that were linked to certain occupation or certain notions of criminality, how these kinds of vulnerabilities have changed or become worse.'

This is further linked to the notion of water security. Climate change affecting water supplies is a well-recognised topic with climate change research, but projects from the GCRF and Newton portfolios suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic brought the issue into clearer focus and linked it to other aspects of lived realities. For instance, in addition to practical aspects of climate influences on the communities within a pandemic context, there are also impacts on local intangible culture that were highlighted. What happens with climate change, risks to territories, and changes to lived environments, is that communities lose not only churches, monuments and physical access to sites, but also lose all sorts of activities of culture, the social fabric that is related to arts and cultural production and engagement. These questions featured in the case study discussed next.

Name of Project	After the Earth's Violent Sway: The Tangible and Intangible Legacies of a Natural Disaster
PI	Michael Hutt
Co-I	Stefanie Lotter and Mark Liechty
Research Organization	School of Oriental and African Studies, SOAS South Asia Institute
Partners/ Collaborations	Social Science Baha (Nepal) and Martin Chautari (Nepal)
Location	Nepal (South Asia)
Dates	February 2017 − September 2020
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£576,418)
Research Subjects	Asian and Middle Eastern studies; Cultural and Museum Studies; Heritage Management; History; Political Sciences and International Studies; Social Anthropology
Objectives	Build resilience for future disasters; Raise public awareness and understanding of the social, political and cultural impacts of Nepal's 2015 earthquakes
Original Methodology	Archival document analysis; Researcher Interviews; Short term dissemination via website and research blog; Long term dissemination via the creation and publication of the open-access SWAY Digital Library

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

After the Earth's Violent Sway: The Tangible and Intangible Legacies of a Natural Disaster is a project aimed at exploring the transformational nature a disaster may bring upon the rules and conventions that govern cultural, social, and political spheres in a given context. The project specifically focused on three main aspects, namely the post-earthquake cultural

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and political discourse in Nepal following the 2015 earthquake; the discourses surrounding the rebuilding efforts of physical heritage sites in the aftermath of the earthquake; and the historical comparisons of the 2015 earthquake to two prior earthquakes from 1833 and 1934 that shared similar sociocultural and political impacts as well as similar transitory politico-cultural context following internal unrest. The project achieved its aims by exploring previously unpublished and un-analysed archives in London, Delhi, and Kathmandu.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is illustrative of a long term project that was impacted by COVID-19 at its final stages. The most severe impact was to the dissemination of results. As this project was affected by the pandemic with only two months to its original conclusion, its research design remained largely unchanged. However, the project coordinators had applied for a 6 month 'no cost' extension, which was granted. The aim of this extension was to return to the case sites in Nepal and follow up with interviews in the communities that were identified in the main project as having additional trends and themes to be explored in further depth. Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to facilitate this new stage of data collection. With inability to complete the new fieldwork required, the project coordinators used the extension to explore how best to disseminate the results of the original project in the changing research environment as caused by COVID-19 as well as how to better showcase the impact of the project.

This project has widespread impact that can be traced both short term and long term. For the short term impact of the project, a project website and a research blog were developed to track the progress of the project. For the long term impact of the project, the website serves as a standing archive for the work achieved. Additionally, the creation and publication of the open-access SWAY Digital Library has become a useful tool for researchers across the globe.

The project has already contributed substantially to comprehending the long-term social, cultural, and political impacts of natural disasters, particularly in aid-dependent low-income countries where the political power of the state is weak. The research has also encouraged policy-makers to better understand the local political and historical context in order to better respond to future disasters thereby increasing the efficacy of both interventions

and rebuilding efforts. The project also contributed to gaining a more critical viewpoint of the existing discourses and decision-making processes in the aftermath of the earthquake in Nepal as related to the Nepali public, Nepali political actors as well as international involvement in Nepal. The knowledge gained from this project is particularly useful during the ongoing pandemic. For example as stated by Michael Hutt, the PI of the project:

"We were looking not so much at the technocratic and technical challenges, but more at the human, cultural and social impact; so, what kind of heritage did people want to see rebuilt and how did they want it to be rebuilt, how were decisions made about people's futures in cultural and human terms, not just in terms of what kinds of grants were being given for what kind of physical rebuilding, but what was the social cultural human context of all of that".

COVID-19 as a disaster bears many similarities to the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, so the knowledge gained has ongoing practical applications and impact. The global pandemic, just like the earthquake disaster, will have an impact on communities for years to come. By learning to understand the context, how to rebuild physical spaces in order to accommodate the pandemic, and what kinds of social, cultural and, in general, 'human' relationships we need to now create in order to live in a post-pandemic world, we can borrow some of the knowledge from this project to adapt to our current predicament.

Summary

In summary, this case study presents a project that was only affected in its later stages by COVID-19. Even though further research during the planned extension could not take place with fieldwork, international travel, and planning for dissemination events all cancelled, this project adapted to focus on maximising the impact of the research already completed.

Climate Change and Food Security

Climate change has already impacted food security globally, from animal extinction and loss of diversification to droughts and floods making agricultural practices more difficult. As such, food security is often linked to climate anomalies such as heat waves and temperature changes impacting food supplies in communities across the globe.

Highlight 42: Farming and climate change, loss of seed diversification and stress for farmers
'Well, when we've talked about it with the farmer organizations, climate change is sort of in the background as part of one of a number of stresses that is affecting them and their organisations, and some of the ways that they're adapting their organisations, and it's more about not being as dependent on the global north, or the multinationals. So they're seen as a key example, and one of the topics that the early career researchers look at is access to seeds and other inputs into agriculture that are more locally appropriate. That's partly linked to ecology and dealing with weather changes. It's also linked to more political economy pressures and processes so it's not as dependent on multinationals. The US sourcing the seeds and there has been a decline in diversification for the seeds, because I know different strands of corn and things have started disappearing around the world. There's fewer options for people and that's why they are very interested in saving seeds and having non GMOs. and disconnecting from the global international seed trade.'

The pandemic brought with it another layer of complexity as it threatened the supply chains of already unstable food resources consequence of climate and environmental degradation. These threats were seen as a significant cause of migration in both South America and Sub-Saharan Africa. This migration stems from the relationship between COVID-19, climate change and lack of security, both in terms of food security and in terms of secure livelihoods.

Highlight 43: Food security leading to migration from cities to rural areas
'And people basically leaving the city and going home to rural settlements. Some of whom, for example, with this is one fabulous case study of this guy who was able to go

illegally south to work on fishing boats during COVID in order to get the money to pay for the journey for all of his family to come back and return to the rural area, and he'd learnt to fish and so it's just sort of like part of his general story and life skills. So, COVID and food security for him, that was a way for him to earn money to get back to the rural areas, while the rural areas were very worried about how they were going to cope with all these incoming, and particularly in terms of would there be enough food when there was a contagion. There was also the sort of the sustainability of food security and livelihoods going forward. In the context of the fishing communities and how the communities managed, who they let in, and how they manage those people, how they fit them in those times collectively while they were insisting on quarantine.'

During COVID-19 there was migration from urban to rural areas in some nations as a way to avoid the pandemic, but also in search of alternative food sources. Without jobs, researchers noted that some of their research participants became dependent on a return to fishing, hunting and gathering. This sometimes affected participation in projects. However, it was also reported that there was return migration to urban communities in search of employment once vaccines became more widespread.

Climate Change and Pollution

Carbon emissions are often connected to the topic of pollution. Contextualising pollution within COVID-19 highlighted for many researchers just how different urban areas could be with fewer carbon emissions. For example, pandemic lockdowns led to widespread reports of cities with clear skies, free from pollution.

'The other benefit, because it's a very polluted city and I don't think it's suddenly become cleaner, but a lot of the staff have been cycling a lot more and said that they can cycle without having to stop to clean their nose and face. So in a way, the pandemic has had some mental health impacts in terms of them being able to get out and do some outdoor exercise with reduced pollution.'

The pandemic was reported to have had both positive and negative consequences on pollution. On the one hand, cleaner air in urban areas and reduction of CO2 emissions were seen as positive effects of the lockdown. Some celebrated 'this dramatic inhibition of human activity and industry that enabled the environment to breathe'. On the other hand, as the pandemic death toll grew, so numbers of cremations rose in certain countries. In many cities increased cremation gave rise to new forms of pollution, including increased ash and the smell of burning corpses. In addition to the funeral pyres smoking, in some affected areas, permissions were given for trees to be cut down to burn corpses. In that sense, the pandemic was noted by some as damaging to the environment as communities were forced to increase deforestation practices in order to be able to safely deal with COVID-related deaths.

Climate Change and Energy Use

COVID-19 also was viewed to have had both positive and negative impacts on energy use. On one hand, the pandemic led to an increase in use of household energy. Researchers observed that they consumed more household energy due to increased time spent there and that this was not necessarily off set completely by reductions in power elsewhere:

'I think the universities are still on. Of course they've turned off heating, but the universities are still generating quite a lot of power I imagine in their empty infrastructures and then all of us who would be using the power in those buildings are at home using them.'

On the other hand, working from home meant less travel, less use of office space, and reduced travel for shopping. Although online shopping expanded during the pandemic, online shopping delivery systems meant that there were often fewer emissions generated per individual purchase. Some researchers highlighted potential benefits of these changes both in climate and in personal terms.

Highlight 44: Re-examining places of work that could lead to fewer emissions

'I think that the home working could become better utilised and I suppose that does lead to climate change in terms of utilising less office space and heating and lighting, and from the institution's perspective, as obviously still doing that at home. I do think that could become more main state because I think there are huge benefits if you can balance your work and home life and if you have a good system of taking breaks and monitoring your work hours, it can actually be more productive and more beneficial for you.'

Energy usage as connected to the research projects from the GCRF and Newton portfolios was often linked to enabling connectivity with research partners in other nations. Many projects paid for data bundles and WiFi devices in order to improve communications and maintain partnership networks, but some also dedicated funds towards obtaining electricity generators for partners. Data and electricity in Southern contexts are often much more expensive then when compared to Global North household income and standard of living. Purchasing generators for partners both helped with these high energy costs and enabled them to obtain generators that were more energy efficient and therefore more environmentally friendly.

Climate Resilience

The concept of resilience is contested but remains an important area of focus in GCRF projects, especially in terms of climate resilience. While increased resilience of some communities during COVID-19 was often seen among the positive impacts of the pandemic upon research projects, climate resilience was seen as nuanced and multifaceted.

Highlight 45: Resilience and responsibility

'Often, [resilience] involves a slight negation of responsibility as you push things down onto the individual and say you should be more resilient. What do you need to be more resilient or asking individuals to armour themselves for periods of challenge and difficulty. I think similarly in terms of climate resilience. With demographic increase their water was regarded as both unavailable because of urbanisation, but also inadequate and hence you have to search for either a big hydrological project for dams, and also going down into the ground pumping water up to the surface for resilience. I think very often, how it fits with local community initiatives, and actually how it's placed on to communities that are least well equipped, or empowered, or entitled, in terms of their relationship with these resources to be resilient. So I think, there's an established critique of the term resilience, and the way in which it's used to push responsibility away from the state. I think it's a concept can be useful as long as we trace it all the way up and across the different levels of authority. It has to be inflected as to how is state science protecting the resilience of marginal communities and where it has to be responsibility. That's how we're thinking about resilience, and it's something that we're quite keen to trace backwards and to think about more carefully.'

On the one hand, the pandemic helped researchers identify areas of possible adaptation towards climate resilience as well as areas where adaptation was already being implemented on an individual and on community level. In some research projects, climate resilience was in fact included within the project research design including both methodologically and in terms of topic area. On the other hand, while COVID-19 highlighted areas of opportunity for encouraging climate resilience, it also highlighted the difficulty of shifting existing political, economic, social and cultural agendas that may have used the pandemic as 'cover' for scaling back on climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

'So it's [the need for climate adaptation] just been downplayed, as the exigencies of everyday life have taken back over so people are now concerned about getting food and getting shelter and the cost of water bills and the absence of electricity and such like, just as they were in 2019 and 2018.'

With COVID-19, other priorities such as health and well-being, food security, and safety were seen as more central and important to communities, rather than dealing with long-term sustainability and climate resilience.

Climate Impact on the Community

For many from the GCRF and Newton projects COVID-19 helped shift climate change perspectives in the communities they worked in. The impact of climate change on communities became much clearer and easier to trace.

'I think it shifted the canvas for us and we didn't really have climate change appear until the 80s 90s so it felt fairly peripheral. Also, a sort of the way in which climate change was evident, we didn't think it would be so easily mapped onto local community issues, except as an issue, not as a physical effect that we could trace quite carefully.'

Some projects engaged with reconfiguring research practices to shift away from cross country collaboration and towards cross regional collaboration. Such projects encouraged local partner initiatives and often, gave ownership of the project back to the communities that were being researched.

Highlight 46: Cross country collaboration

'So one of the things maybe for one of the previous questions to ask is, so how are we reconfiguring our research. There was a bit more of thinking around cross country collaboration and cross regional collaboration and the original GCRF thinking. One of the things we have to change, and not just because of the cuts, but because of COVID, is to think more in terms of country teams [as a way to combat climate change impacts from travel]. So you don't have to cross borders necessarily when you travel because that makes things even more complicated, but to think about how to do research, where the team actually is.'

The climate change debate also included the development of innovative approaches to connect to the research communities. One such approach was to approach Indigenous territories not as solely environmental spaces, but also as living museums.

Highlight 47: Indigenous living museums

'We've got a new project we're looking at the moment about how Indigenous territories can be a living museum, without people visiting it. So how can digital tools you use to create connections with environments rather than extracting elements like clothes and objects and putting them in museums. How can the actual territory be in it, in terms of thinking about territory and environments and mind and risk and local culture that's intangible. Zoom isn't very good for intangible culture. So, it seems this is a very nuanced experience because on one hand, you need the access physically in order to connect, but on the other hand, Zoom has allowed you to see certain things you would never have seen before.'

Case Study 9

Name of Project	Fishing and farming in the desert'? A platform for understanding El Niño food system opportunities in the context climate change in Sechura, Peru
PI	Nina Laurie
Co-I	Andrew Charles Henderson
Research Organization	University of St Andrews, United Kingdom
Partners/ Collaborations	Foundation for Agrarian Development FDA, Benefits Association PRISMA, CIPCA, United Oceans S.A.C.
Location	Peru
Dates	December 2019 - May 2022
Budget	AHRC-GCRF (£174,052)
Research Subjects	Climate & Climate Change, Development studies, Marine environments, Geography and Development, Land - Ocean Interactions, Palaeoenvironments, Regional & Extreme Weather
Objectives	To identify existing perceptions of climate change that local marginal desert-living communities currently have and analyse these in relation to regional and national discourses; To unearth oral histories, colonial and republican records relating these perceptions; To document and analyse current food system practices in the region; To identify the challenges and opportunities for change to both the perceptions and food system practices the local communities have in the context of climate change as related to El Niño events
Original Methodology	Document analysis such as colonial and republican records as well as newspaper archive analysis, ethnography, interviews, surveys and palaeoecological and climate archives.

COVID-19 Impact on Project and Lessons to take Forward

'Fishing and farming in the desert'? A platform for understanding El Niño food system opportunities in the context climate change in Sechura, Peru' is the first project to systematically explore desert-El Niño-food systems in the Sechura Desert, northern Peru. The main aims of the project are to influence both academic perceptions as well as existing policy related to climate change in arid settings. This project could potentially impact the local marginal desert-living communities of fishers and farmers who depend on the changes to both the water and land as brought by El Niño. Changes that can include the increase of available freshwater and relocation of fertile sediment that fills the river and lake floodplains during El Niño.

The project also aims to explore intangible cultural heritage within those marginal desert-living communities. In particular, the project examines agricultural and fishing heritage within the community as a window onto local perceptions of climate change, climate resilience, and climate interdependence.

This project has created an opportunity to deconstruct the existing perceptions of climate change and climate history by incorporating monitoring and recording of lake sediment deposits over time. The project has a focus on the community, and particularly, on perceptions of climate change as evident in the oral histories and records of colonial and state archives for previous El Niño events. Further, the project explores existing food system practices through a study of climate variability on fish ecology and the mapping contemporary fish-related practices from raising and catching to selling and usage. This mapping will then allow for the analysis of the current challenges and opportunities faced by the local marginal desert-living communities of fishers and farmers as well as contextualise this knowledge for future planning and development of fishing practices in the Sechura desert.

Project Impacts and Case Selection Criteria

Some of the main impacts of this project include direct benefits for the local marginal Sechura desert-living communities of fishers and farmers. Additionally, these benefits are illuminating for the local and regional government in Peru, affiliated NGOs and private

stakeholders engaged with the consequences of El Niño events in social, cultural, political, and economic settings. They are especially relevant to commerce, production, infrastructure, governance, and social development. The aim is to prepare better for a future where climate change will bring even more transformations to the region and the way of life for the people living there. This project case study was selected for this report because of the impact of climate change on the research practices designed, and further developed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Adaptation Strategies

This project incorporates a strong ecological consciousness with reflection on research practices in relation to climate change. COVID-19 has allowed the researchers to make a case for changing existing academic practices to incorporate consideration of carbon and energy usage on behalf of teachers and students as well as researchers and participants. For example, this project has put into practice such a change in relation to student engagement. First and second year St Andrews based university students volunteered to meet Peruvian early career researchers online for weekly English language practice. In turn, these early career researchers are now co-producing blogs about doing their research in that context, including around climate change.

"I think the carbon neutral discussion is only part of it because what it has done is [that] it has enabled us to think more relationally and more deeply about relationships to place and commitments to people and what a long-term relationship is".

In other words, this project has made efforts to connect the research to the context, the place, and its people. By opening up channels of online communication between the students and the researchers, the project has allowed the Peruvian early career researchers to benefit from improved English language skills, while the students have benefited from gaining understanding of the place through building up of relationships with the people of that place and through that, a better understanding of the impacts of climate change in that research context.

"I hope with how we see relationship, that it has to be a long-term commitment. It's not just a 'do not travel', it's not all 'look we're doing this because we're carbon neutral and we're good'. It's actually about giving space for different types of relationships of equity, to really be that, rather than just something you put on the proposal".

Student engagement was incorporated as part of the project after the COVID-19 pandemic grounded travel to Peru. As a practice it was used to create and maintain the connection between the students and researchers despite the circumstances. Also, by addressing the existing deficit of English language practice for early career researchers this project has opened up a pathway towards conducting more holistic research. Given its benefits as a practice, it might be something that other research projects and teaching institutions might want to consider, even after the pandemic has subsided.

Lessons Learnt or Challenges Faced

This case study is particularly illustrative of incorporating changes to student engagement practices while remaining critical and vigilant of what those changes mean to both the research project and to the people involved. These changes were prompted by COVID-19 restrictions such as the inability to travel and have face-to-face communication, which also necessitated more online correspondence and the use of online research methods. Field sites were restricted as Peruvian schools continued to remain closed. As a result, researchers could not conduct in person interviews with school children living in the desert communities to better understand El Niño food systems. Online oral history methods were therefore developed and delivered through new digital curricula.

"It would be very easy to say that because the oral histories went online with the digital curricula that it was a positive impact of COVID-19 restrictions […] the fact that in the future the university might let me do some classes from Peru and travel less but for longer is also a good thing; however, as I've suggested the quality of that first lot of data generated from the digital curricula wasn't as good as it would have been in person, and so it was a trade off at that point. We have taken important lessons away from this experience".

While virtual communication has improved and additional networks are being built using it, the quality of the data collected has been impacted. Therefore, the opportunities afforded by COVID-19 forcing a change to digital communication needs to be balanced by the technical, social, political, and economic challenges which may impact the content of communication as well as the quality. That being said, these opportunities have opened up new possibilities for research and changes to the overall research dynamic. Innovation in student engagement as evident in this project can be seen as a pilot model for a transformation to some fundamental ways in which we approach student engagement in a research context.

Summary

In summary, this case study can be described as demonstrating *commitment*. In this project, commitment applies to every aspect of the project, from its contents and research design to the impact and dissemination. The passion for climate change as a topic has made the researchers committed to conducting ethically responsible research. There is also commitment to the specific place, and to the people involved, in the research context.

Note from PI: A special thank you to our partner Oliver Calle from the NGO PRISMA for the amazing support on this project.

Copyright 'Fishing and farming in the desert'? A platform for understanding El Niño food system opportunities in the context climate change in Sechura, Peru' project

Sustainability Considerations

Another term often associated with climate change studies is that of sustainability. In GCRF and Newton projects, there were three main themes related to sustainability that emerged most often in the data, namely development, travel, and personal responsibility.

First, sustainability was discussed through the perspective of sustainable development, particularly within vulnerable and marginal communities. Respondents recognised the need for sustainable development to take into consideration climate change, in order for communities to be able to adapt to its effects. There was also recognition of the fact that the communities, in particular Indigenous communities, that are likely to experience the strongest impacts of climate change are those least likely to have contributed to its causes, yet the burden and responsibility for solutions is often placed upon these communities.

Second, COVID-19 often forced researchers to evaluate travel plans and consider the project's carbon emissions impact on the environment, while others had already included such considerations within their research design.

Highlight 48: Project design with sustainability in mind

'We have sustainability as one of the core values, and we thought a lot about travel and equity. We had a whole plan for who would travel, and why, and how we would support inclusive travel for our summer schools and things like that. So we sort of did quite a bit of work around thinking ethically specifically about travel. And then haven't used any of it, because there isn't any travel. That's another thing, if there were time, we might be thinking more about understanding the climate impact of increased online collaboration and things like that but that's just like at the bottom of a list. Originally, our plan was to use principles around regional meetings to prioritize travel of the global south and early career colleagues prior to COVID. So that is still in place, that's a plan that we've had in place since we did the project development.'

Finally, the last theme that emerged from the data in relation to sustainability is in terms of personal responsibility and recognition of opportunities highlighted by the pandemic. Researchers became more aware about their responsibilities to address sustainability within their research design as well as on a personal level.

Commercial Impacts of COVID-19 and Their Implications

The pandemic had considerable commercial impacts which in turn had implications for how researchers considered their role in climate change. Those which impacted GCRF and Newton projects relate to travel, movement of goods and value chains, and the changing role of economic markets.

While the huge reduction in travel had long-term implications for many projects, many researchers expected to return to a time where they could travel again to field-sites. This potential return to commercial travel, while understandable for many reasons, including the need for researchers to spend time at field sites and with local partners, will inevitably have climate impacts.

COVID-19 impacted on local and global movement of goods as well as influencing changes to the value chains and these had knock-on effects for research projects. Projects that incorporated sending materials to participants found it more difficult to do so, while projects that included certain research topics, found their content changing amidst the pandemic. Moreover, the role of traditional markets and global markets also changed amidst COVID-19, and in some projects, that meant a change in the communities they study or partner with. Changing priorities, economic situations, and cultural values would also change the content of the research projects. Pre-COVID, these changes could have taken years, but according to some researchers, the pandemic's impact on local markets brought about very rapid changes in some cases that in turn greatly influenced their projects. For example, for projects focused on agriculture and domestic goods such as clothing and furniture manufacture. In turn these changes have implications for climate adaptation and climate change which research projects will need to grapple with.

Climate Justice, an Environmental Perspective

Similar to climate change, climate justice has been explored through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. TO date this includes exploring the priorities for equitable recovery from the pandemic (Mattar et al., 2020), a gender perspective (Sultana, 2021), a racial perspective (Mitchell, 2020), a focus on the economic and racial inequality during COVID-19 recovery with regard to climate policy (Corfee-Morlot et al., 2021) as well as linking climate justice to other climate disasters and the pandemic (Walters, 2021). There are also new approaches to climate justice that were published during the pandemic such as the 'ecological grief' perceived during COVID and tourism (Crossley, 2020), the new type of mass climate change activism that erupted just before and during the pandemic (Storch et al., 2021), and using the theory of the 'semiosphere' to illustrate how global phenomena such as the pandemic necessitate a new type of cultural science (Hartley et al., 2021). The final sections of this chapter will focus on the concept of climate justice during the pandemic. These sections seek to address how the researchers perceived the concept of climate justice and how those perceptions have changed throughout the pandemic.

There are many definitions of climate justice depending on the focus of who or what justice is referring to. One of the most widespread definitions is not related to people but rather the notion of 'environmental justice'. Often researchers spoke of the justice nature deserves in view of environmental degradation through climate change, but also through direct interventions, such as the exploitation of resources. There was a particular emphasis on the risk of violence around the concept of climate justice and the need for community self-preservation and protection. For example threats towards environmental activists have been made and sometimes carried out. Some projects have lost project partners because of this.

Climate justice as also often defined in terms of individual behaviours with their respective impact upon the environment. Many researchers expressed a desire to raise awareness by bringing climate justice to the foreground, by encouraging more conversations about it, and particularly by discussing how individual researchers can contribute to solutions.

'Contribute to climate justice by modifying our behaviours, [is] really practically connected to what we're doing and how it impacts the natural environment, but I just think now it's people's immediate needs [that] are always put over long term solutions.'

Indeed, in relation to this, some respondents highlighted the personal toll that the pandemic had taken, recognising that they and their colleagues were 'desperate for a holiday, desperate for the field, desperate to go to conferences'. As mentioned earlier, while researchers are all the more aware of the need to reduce travel, they also want to return to their earlier 'normality'. This remains a challenging paradox for researchers working in international development.

Climate Justice to address Inequalities

Researchers were very conscious of tensions around the desire and ability to travel, whether for a holiday or as part of fieldwork, despite awareness of how damaging this is in environmental terms and in light of the unequal access to these 'goods' between well-resourced 'Westerners' and those in much less privileged positions. They expressed frustration with those who continue to view travel as their 'right' and sought alternative approaches that would be more reflective of genuine climate justice.

Highlight 49: Climate justice and inequality

'We're acknowledging the need to reduce negative environmental impacts of the project, and also recognise inequalities and who has had privileged access to travel opportunities and the ways that those travel opportunities feed into a career and offer other opportunities. So acknowledging that at least when we developed the project, travel was a part of it. Being privilege-aware, we were then trying to use an equitable approach to travel opportunities whereby we work to prioritise travel for our colleagues in the global south and travel for early career colleagues to conferences and to attend events on the basis that those of us here in the UK and within more senior levels of our career have had much more access to those kinds of opportunities. Trying to limit travel, to keep travel to regional encounters where possible, and

we were also thinking a lot about ways that we could facilitate access for people with carrying responsibilities or disabilities or health issues or other reasons that might have prevented people from travelling, when such a thing was possible. So we have good plans around climate justice and other justice elements around meetings and being together, that we're trying to shift into the ways that we manage digital and online encounters. Although, many of us have been teaching online since COVID, we're learning from that perspective and so we are trying to think about equity and accessible participation and inclusion in our online events as well.'

Climate justice also needs to be considered in the context of managing partnerships amidst climate concerns and COVID-19. Researchers expressed that when having to make environmentally conscious project decisions, they also needed to take into consideration the experiences of their partners.

'Spending energy into building equitable partnerships and focusing on issues of climate or managing the environment and hearing the voices of the people who are experiencing this differently: that for me is part of climate justice.'

Climate Justice and Gender

Respondents noted the significance of using a gendered lens to explore climate justice as important for understanding power dynamics within communities as well as wider global inequalities between North and South.

'Climate justice impacts most women, but [most] women don't have much say.'

As mentioned earlier COVID-19 revealed gendered inequalities that already existed but were further exacerbated by the pandemic, for example in the area of women's increased reproductive labour and childcare responsibilities. Respondents highlighted the need to amplify women's voices in general, but especially as an important factor in addressing climate justice.

Highlight 50: Climate justice and women's voices

'It's just about creating infrastructures for women to have their voices heard as climate justice impacts most on women but women often don't get a say. There's a kind of a very male dominated structures of power. A really strong impact of this project is all about women, to amplify women's voices and practices. If you're giving support for your voice as a woman, I think that leads to climate justice because women are the most negatively impacted often anyway.'

Working virtually. Photograph by Sigmund from Unsplash.

Chapter 6: Looking Forward

This concluding chapter looks forward focusing on what is next. It explores new developments, ways of thinking, and/or research topics that are a direct consequence of COVID-19. The chapter takes into consideration COVID-19 impacts throughout the whole research process, from funding applications to beyond project conclusion.

Funding Applications

The first likely long-term impact of COVID-19 on research practices is linked to writing future funding applications. The inability to complete the projects as designed during the pandemic in both AHRC portfolios has highlighted the need to build in additional contingencies in research project designs. There is now a widespread acceptance that external factors can cause plans to change, research processes to change, expectations and outcomes to change. A consideration of contingency plans for a project, respondents argued, were needed in research applications both as physically written alternatives as part of project designs and in terms of encouraging researchers to have open mindsets that could be adaptable to unforeseen circumstances.

Another impact of the pandemic on research applications was the need to have greater clarity on the roles of partners in a research project. These roles must be described and acknowledged in the funding applications themselves rather than having projects adapt research designs at the later stages of the research process. These changes refer specifically to giving research partners a greater role in the project or finding alternative means of integrating those partners in the research design from the onset. There was a general call for allowing acknowledgment of partners' capabilities and expertise not via their academic achievements but based on their lived experiences. Because of their experiences during COVID-19, many researchers argued that funding applications should change to allow for partners, especially those in a co-investigator role, to be able to draw on a separate set of qualifications and to include lived experience as equivalent to having a formal qualification from a recognised university.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of funded and 'no-cost' extensions as well as funding for innovation in light of the lessons learnt from the pandemic. In the words of one researcher:

'It's extremely important that sufficient and no-cost extensions are granted for projects affected by COVID also to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to understand new research methods and opportunities that have been tested during the pandemic, and also to inform the top grants. When the lockdown started I remember a colleague of mine circulated a document about how to conduct empirical fieldwork remotely. It was a shared document where people put on ideas, and maybe not completely new methods, but these kind of hybrid methods. It's not only interviews, but also how you could use prompts in the actual research interview observations. These are not completely new methods but a diversity of the possibilities of the data. So for example, we use them, participants videos to present their answers in the interviews, or you might do compilation theme that perhaps you can use in the event with the policymakers. I have seen in my field people are very eager to innovate as a result of those now shared ideas.'

The researcher continued to explain that with sufficient funding and/or time, methods developed as a response to the pandemic could end up benefiting research practices as a whole in the future.

Research Conditions

The next set of impacts of the pandemic on research practices in general, relate to the research conditions for both the researchers and the research project. The main impact is related to the ability and/or necessity to travel for research. The pandemic grounded most researchers and made it impossible for them to visit field sites and collect data first-hand. However, this unprecedented situation brought new opportunities. Many researchers learnt

that they don't have to travel in order to achieve the goals of the project and discovered that there are alternative ways of gathering data that do not necessarily rely on travelling but rather on building reliable partner networks. In light of this, many researchers concluded that travelling should be more carefully considered, especially in terms of considering duration of visits and prioritising those that are essential. In a post-COVID setting, travelling for a single afternoon meeting might now be viewed by researchers as irresponsible and unnecessary, while extending time spent at a field site for data collection might be seen as a better use of time and resources. Overall, however, respondents favoured a mixed approach to travelling in a post-pandemic world: reducing travel as a climate-aware response, while continuing to travel where necessary. As one respondent summarised: 'It is important to have the right balance'.

Indeed, travel restrictions led many researchers to be more reflective about the impact of travel on carbon emissions. Some researchers incorporated these reflections in their research designs or sought further funding opportunities where they could explore these topics.

Finally, there were changes, some more significant than others, which impacted on researchers' experiences of working during the pandemic. These were related to the impact of the move to virtual working from home and the challenges of balancing home and work lives. Among some of the challenges that respondents noted about working virtually included the loss of the 'coffee break', viewed as an integral aspect of social interaction with colleagues and research partners that was missed as a productive method of interacting. The move to virtual working also brought smaller changes in communication etiquette, for example, in more informative email signatures and 'out of office' messages, which respondents thought would likely continue beyond the pandemic.

Technology for Research

The rise of online communication was a significant impact considered likely to remain as a permanent feature of post-pandemic research practice. There was a widespread acceptance of the positive aspects of moving communication online. These include enabling researchers to avoid excessive travel and allowing them to conduct (at least in part and in certain conditions) research online; managing certain types of meetings and

extending opportunities for including research partners from different global contexts; and using technology to open up new ways of collecting, analysing, and presenting research data. Respondents reported that they would consider using continuing to use these new technologies in future projects. They also highlighted the importance of using approaches that are fit for purpose, even where these represented new challenges, for example using WhatsApp as a tool for communication with partners or supporting shared drives for information exchange.

For most researchers, technology allowed for new ways of working such as working from home while also often reaching a wider audience thanks to online communication. Many argued that moving events virtually enabled them to reach more and different communities, but on the other hand, that online working required additional trust building and involving of intermediaries in order to ensure smooth communication with research partners. However respondents also acknowledged the need to address challenges faced by populations in the Global South whose online access is inconsistent or non-existent.

Research Practices: Data Collection and Analysis

Respondents also considered how research practices, such as conducting fieldwork, might change in the long-term following the impact of COVID-19. These changes would need to involve consideration of 'who' is required to conduct fieldwork, given the increased role of local research partners in data collection, while also recognising that there may be times that PIs need to travel to field sites; attention should also be paid to 'whose voices' are heard: given growing inequalities between North and South, it is imperative that international development research and interventions reflect the voices and experiences of those marginalised from the mainstream; and finally, sensitivity to 'how' fieldwork is carried out remains critical and requires first-hand knowledge and experience that in some cases may only be attained through in-person approaches. Each of these elements requires recognition that the best research practices are built on respect and reciprocity and should seek to create lasting impacts for the communities that researchers interact with.

Further, the pandemic highlighted the need to have the flexibility to adapt to situations such as allocating additional time for data collection, or re-directing funds as needed, as well as creating more transparent and equitable models of research partnerships that work in local contexts. Addressing the latter issue was particularly important during the pandemic where research partners were often able to offer solutions for financing issues, data collection, or dissemination practices that worked better within the local context. Data quality was also impacted by the pandemic context. On the one hand, respondents described research practices as becoming more inclusive of alternative methodologies and perspectives. On the other hand, there were concerns over data quality and, importantly, whose data was being collected and considered, as one respondent highlighted:

'The other thing that's more tricky is about data collection. I'm working in a context where we do rely largely on primary data collection. Maybe lots of my colleagues don't so much, but the ability to go to the field and collect data that's meaningful and important for the less privileged who don't have necessary access to digital tools, that's problematic because we're aware that we are likely missing out the perspectives of those without electricity, those without phones, those without the internet, or those for whom these digital technologies are not relevant. So I hope that we reserve the limited flights that we should do for making sure that we still capture relevant data and we don't assume that the whole world's gone digital because of our private use, it's just not the case, and that will be doing a disservice to the people we're trying to actually do the research for, I suppose.'

In other words, as other researchers also pointed out, if the future of research practice is only digital, data quality will suffer and may no longer be representative of the very people that should be the focus of our research.

Many of the researchers on these projects became acutely aware of the risk of certain voices being excluded, with others, for example, those with better access to technology, starting to dominate. Reflecting on issues of inequality also brought about a conscious understanding that in many of these research projects 'there are too many white people in the room'.

Indeed, respondents highlighted that the pandemic allowed new ways of thinking about research and analytical methods to emerge. Specifically, more equitable ways of conducting research where researchers 'face up to the existing problems'. Many highlighted that the pandemic shone a light on existing inequalities, realising that 'there are different ways of doing at least some of the things we do that we should continue to use, so it's also just more equitable'. For example moving international conferences online has made them much more accessible to diverse academic audiences. Indeed, virtual meetings were often hailed by researchers as more inclusive and open to diverse kinds of intellectual exchange. Online training and capacity building opportunities have significantly increased accessibility. Respondents hoped and expected that these positive impacts would remain even beyond the pandemic, to address inequalities in research as well as to improve existing data collection, communication and analysis approaches.

Research Collaboration

The ability to face existing problems around inequality as well as alternative methodologies for fieldwork and data analysis, led researchers to also comment on the impact on collaboration practices that has emerged as a result of COVID-19. While the pandemic has encouraged more flexible approaches to research partnerships, in terms of communication modes and frequency, among others, there are certain social protocols that have remained and certain hierarchies that have been preserved. The following quote illustrates the challenges of building and sustaining a team during the pandemic:

'Collaboration has been so interesting. One thing that's been so interesting is we all knew each other really well as a team prior to COVID. We've had a lot of time physically together, so we knew one another, we had those strong relationships, and yet it's not been easy. The relationships are strong and we still have a cohesive idea of what we're trying to accomplish as a team. We still chat online and joke and support each other and so I feel like that team is

working well. We've had online team meetings and that is going fine, but it's not the same. It's complicated and difficult often and it doesn't put the fun of the project or the development where it should be. We haven't been able to push each other's thinking the same way because we don't have fun together and collegiate joking. We do have relationships of trust, but we don't have a closeness. We just don't know one another. We don't know what each other does outside of work and that is what I am interested in after COVID. Well if there is after COVID; how will some of it remain. Especially from an environmental perspective it's much better to do things digitally right now, but there is that need for time together socially, which is hard online. We tried to do it with socials and quizzes and stuff but everyone has enough online meetings, so it's not really working. That's a real challenge of how to build a team during COVID.'

This quote illustrates why respondents felt it was important to advocate for a return to in-person communication to build those social relationships again, while also considering when and where would be appropriate to do so. Some felt that it would be possible, once teams were in place, for research practices to move online, but they highlighted that initial meetings, introductions, social exchanges in informal settings, would benefit from being in-person. They felt these were integral parts of the research process that had been lost during the pandemic.

Research Outputs

The pandemic also had impacts on research outputs, some of which respondents believed would remain in a post-pandemic world. For example, the pandemic encouraged the rise of huge online international conferences, and so one of the most cited impacts for the future of research was around the concept of the virtual conference. Virtual conferences were credited with wider and more varied participation and most researchers argued that even after the pandemic subsides, and travelling stabilises, conferences should remain virtual at least in part.

Another impact mentioned by respondents in this area was the acceptance of new forms of outputs such as databases and digital creations. The pandemic introduced new ways of disseminating research project outputs, many of which contain a digital component and

often have a 'longer and more visible shelf life', thus extending project legacies. An example is the widespread digitisation of libraries. Since the pandemic began, many archives, trusts, and organisations have uploaded their collections as digital files, making them widely accessible. The library digitisation projects have also been linked to attempts to decolonise knowledge access and knowledge production, which underpinned the view held by many respondents that digitisation of learning materials and tools would likely continue and even expand beyond the pandemic.

Final Reflections

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges as well as opportunities for research projects from AHRC GCRF and Newton portfolios, but what this report has highlighted is the immense resilience of these researchers who learnt from and adapted to the circumstances they were faced with. These lessons deserve the attention of the wider research community. While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected us globally in unprecedented ways, it has also demonstrated our resilience and adaptability, from the values and resourcefulness of researchers to the emerging support and adaptability of research partners and communities. The innovative research practices and emerging methodologies outlined in this report are of benefit not only to the projects themselves, but also to the research wider community now and in the future.

Copyright: 'Fishing and farming in the desert'? A platform for understanding El Niño food system opportunities in the context climate change in Sechura, Peru' project

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Annex 1

Links to Case Study Resources

Case Study 1:
Education, Justice and Memory Network (EdJAM)

Principal Investigator:
Julia Paulson

Publication:
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09620214.2020.2020.1743198

Project web pages:
https://edjam.network/projects/
https://edjam.network/
http://iepri.unal.edu.co/mempaz/
https://www.bath.ac.uk/projects/justed/
https://cire-bristol.com/2020/10/13/going-away-or-not-international-collaborative-research-and-coronavirus/

Case Study 3:
The Art of Healing in Kashmir: how creative activities can support child wellbeing in areas of conflict

Principal Investigator:
Michael Buser

Project website:
http://artofhealing.org.uk/

Case Study 4:
Mental health literacy in urban and rural communities in Kerala India: An interdisciplinary approach using applied theatre methodology

Principal Investigator:
Raghu Raghavan

Project website:
http://mehelp-india.org/

Short films:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmwHTKBK4MI
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YslgMqHTqA&t=1s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TBcrR0AZFQ&t=33s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HZL54zKYRQ&t=145s
https://youtu.be/7Bmzi9u9daU
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwZ3BISGzm8&t=1s

Case Study 5:
Creating Safer Space: Strengthening Civilian Protection Amidst Violent Conflict

Principal Investigator:
Berit Bliesemann de Guevara

Project website:
https://creating-safer-space.com

Illustrated book:
https://des-tejiendomiradas.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Destejiendo-Miradas-Para-DIGITAL-2.pdf

Case Study 6:
Using the arts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities

Principal Investigator:
Alice Tilche

Project podcast:
https://www.budhanpodcast.com/

Case Study 7:
Life-Saving Lullabies: Reducing adolescent maternal and neonatal deaths in Zambia

Principal Investigator:
David Swann

Project outputs (lullabies):
https://www.admresearcharchive.co.uk/ref-21-archive-1/life-saving-lullabies

Case Study 8:
After the Earth's Violent Sway: The Tangible and Intangible Legacies of a Natural Disaster

Principal Investigator:
Michael Hutt

Project website/blog:
https://michaelhutt.co.uk/

Sway Library:
https://sway.soscbaha.org/digitallibrary/

Nepali Conversation on YouTube :
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWY3KFGYqb4

Case Study 9:
Fishing and farming in the desert'? A platform for understanding El Niño food system opportunities in the context climate change in Sechura, Peru

Principal Investigator: Nina Laurie

Project web pages:
https://calacs.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/files/2020/10/report-peru.pdf
https://elninophenomenon.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk

PRAXIS

PRAXIS focuses on Arts and Humanities research across the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and Newton Fund portfolio. Specifically, its aims are to consolidate learning across research projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), to amplify their impact and policy relevance, and to champion the distinctive contribution that Arts and Humanities research can make to tackling urgent development challenges.