

Centre for the Study of Global Development

Annual Report 2022 – 23



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Word of Welcome

As Director of the Centre for the Study of Global Development (CSGD), I would like to welcome you to our first Annual Report, which showcases and gives highlights of our research and activities between August 2022 and September 2023. In exploring *Human Wellbeing for a Better World*, we believe that, to research the opportunities and challenges of development, we should engage with communities and issues across the globe, be grounded in understandings of lived experiences, and take interdisciplinary approaches. We hope this report will give you a flavour of how we have been enacting these ideas.

You will be able to read about the launch of our CSGD External Seminar Series, our growing strategic partnerships across the globe, our portfolio of research projects, and features on activities and achievements from our Research Hubs and Early Career Researchers.



Pivotal to our work is our ambition to generate evidence that informs and inspires policy makers, practitioners and others to take action to improve human wellbeing, particularly for those most vulnerable or marginalised. Examples of how we are doing this is my co-chair of the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP), our partnership with the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network (CPAN) and our collaboration with the University of Cape Coast to ideate and hold the 2023 International Conference on Education Research for Development in Africa (ICERDA).

Thank you, everyone, for your insights and contributions to our work this past year. We look forward to continuing and extending our collaborations, conversations and debates over the coming year.

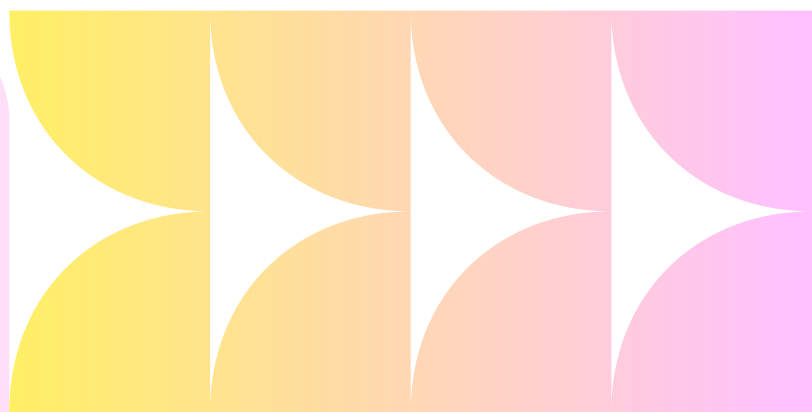
Professor Kwame Akyeampong
CSGD Director

Learn more about CSGD

Explore our website to find out more about our work



Visit
open.ac.uk/csgd



Meet the team



Director

Professor Kwame Akyeampong

Provides overall strategic leadership for CSGD and promotes the CSGD research agenda.

Deputy Directors

Each Deputy Director leads on key focus areas as follows:



Dr Alison Buckler

Growing the CSGD's doctoral and post-doctoral community; Technical expertise in qualitative research.

Image © Hannah Mobyia



Dr Keetie Roelen

Developing knowledge exchange and public engagement; Technical expertise in mixed methods research.

Image © Brian Tomlinson



Centre Manager

Claire Hedges

Provides focal point for research opportunities and collaborations; has oversight and management of Centre and Hub research portfolio.



Research Engagement Manager

Motunrayo Oladeji

Implements CSGD's research engagement and communications plan, including the Centre's digital presence.



Centre Co-ordinator

Claire Davies

Coordinates CSGD events, activities and project portfolio.



Strategic Advisor

Professor Freda Wolfenden

Advises on the CSGD strategy and has a leading role in relationship building with external partners and networks.

Mission and Values

The Centre for the Study of Global Development (CSGD) creates a unified space for multi and interdisciplinary research within the Faculty of Wellbeing Education and Language Studies at The Open University.

Human Wellbeing for a Better World: The core objective of research from the Centre is to advance aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals within and across all countries that relate to poverty, health, wellbeing, education, employment and transitions. To reach towards more sustainable responses, the Centre believes that development challenges should be grounded in an understanding of lived experiences and approached through interdisciplinary collaborations.

Values

The Centre is committed to conceptualising and carrying out research aligned with the broader Open University values of inclusivity, innovation, and responsiveness.



Inclusivity

We develop spaces for constructive debate, prioritising lived experiences, co-creative approaches and knowledge exchange through partnership and respect.



Innovation

We harness creativity and context-specific alternative approaches in our research.



Responsiveness

We seek to respond to global inequality and marginalisation by learning with our partners and collaborators through relevant and value-driven research.

CSGD in summary

The research priorities of the Centre are clustered around six broadly distinct but deeply interconnected domains that we call Research Hubs:



Health and Wellbeing

We explore diversity and inequality in health and wellbeing from the cradle to the grave.



Language and Society

We research how language and culture enable or hinder equality, justice and fairness worldwide in times of rapid social change.



Learners and Learning

We research the learning that takes place in schools, informal and community settings and its impact on children, young people and educators.



Poverty and Social Protection

We aim to enhance our understanding of the experiences, drivers and dynamics of poverty and how social protection or welfare policies can meaningfully engage with these to reduce poverty in a dignified and empowering manner.



Professional Learning and Technology

We explore how accessible technologies can be harnessed to improve professional learning and practice for front-line workers in health and education, often in challenging circumstances.



Youth and Transitions

We focus on how young people manage transitions toward adulthood in diverse and often challenging circumstances.

See pages 9-11 to read more about each Hub's highlights for 2022-23.

Moving out of the box

Reflections from CSGD'S Co-Deputy Directors

'Doing development differently' has become a buzz-phrase over the past decade. The movement has many features but at its heart is the idea that development is complex, and that many development interventions do not engage with this complexity. Doing development 'differently' involves working more locally, but also engaging more with bigger-picture politics; drawing on embedded expertise, but also being innovative and adaptive; understanding human perspectives and impacts, but also having high quality, large-scale, robust monitoring and evaluation processes.

Whether such shifts in intention and narrative have led to real change is much debated. But if the field is re-thinking how it works, the tools and approaches used to research and learn within the field must also adapt.

So, what does it mean to do development *research and learning* differently?

As European researchers working on issues of development, this is a question we ask ourselves regularly. As Co-Deputy Directors of the CSGD, we are excited about grappling with these issues through our work, in discussions with colleagues and partners, and as part of our leadership roles within this new and ambitious research centre. We want to share some thoughts on what this means in practice.

First, at CSGD, we operate from a position of curiosity, keen to work with and learn from others and are motivated by new ways of working. We strive to create an inclusive and safe space for developing new ideas and critically reflecting on ongoing practice. We are open to being challenged by others – and endeavour to respond constructively (rather than defensively) to cultivate expansive learning.

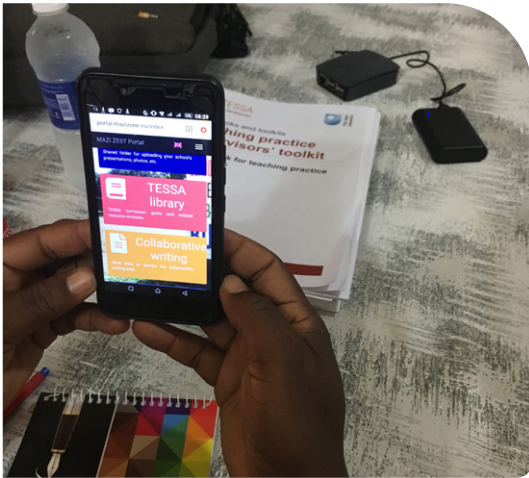
Second, and relatedly, we seek to cross boundaries and collaborate with people we might not usually work with. Instead of operating within the confines of thematic, conceptual, methodological or geographical silos, we actively promote interdisciplinary research and learning from a global perspective. We see development as a worldwide issue and aim to expand the CSGD's expertise in comparative development research: where issues are considered across higher and lower-income contexts through a shared analytical frame. We also see learning as social and collective and work proactively to notice, acknowledge and credit all contributions to research in ways that are meaningful to collaborators. We work to challenge conventions around knowledge production, including who 'owns' research data and encourage colleagues to think carefully about who is benefiting from the research they are doing.

Third, human wellbeing is front and centre to CSGD's work. Recognising that lives are shaped by and within larger systems, we zoom in on people's experiences in relation to health, education, livelihoods, and the wider society. Crucially, we recognise the interconnected nature of those experiences and the need to consider them in creating a more equal and sustainable future.

Dealing with complexity isn't easy. Thinking and working out of the box can be uncomfortable, but it also offers exciting and promising prospects on getting to grips with 'doing development differently' – and using research to map, understand, challenge, and shape the future of development. As CSGD Co-Deputy Directors, we are ready to lean in and explore, inviting all to join us on this journey!

Dr Alison Buckler and Dr Keetie Roelen
CSGD Co-Deputy Directors

Visualisations of our Research in 2022-23



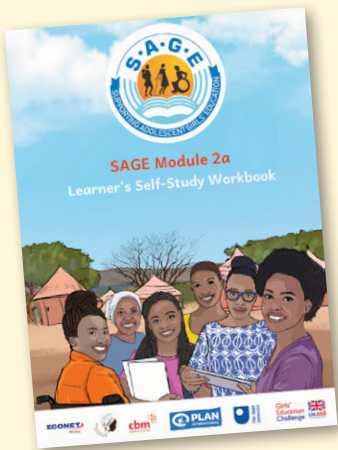
A teacher accessing Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) resources.



An analysis workshop from the Refugee Comprehensive Sexuality Education project.



Story cubes designed by teachers in an Ibali storytelling research workshop in the UK.



Contributing to global debates about community-based learning.



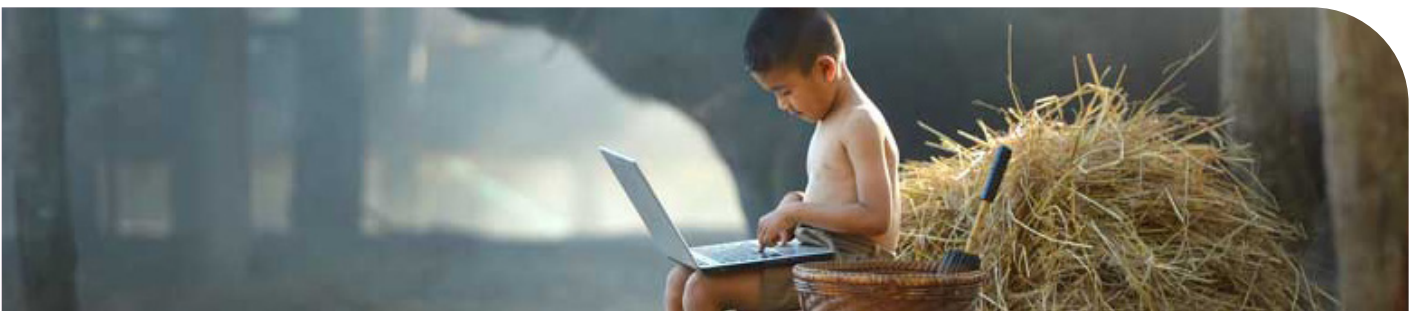
The Tree of Hope was designed by children to share their experiences at a residential home in Thailand.

Hub Highlights Looking back on 2022–23



Health and Wellbeing

- The Hub hosted the Centre's first cross-hub seminar event to mark World Mental Health Day 2022. We were delighted to welcome speakers from three research projects that demonstrate the importance of taking an inter-sector and multi-professional working approach to supporting mental wellbeing.
- Dr Ayomide Oluseye joined the School of Wellbeing, Health, and Social Care and the CSGD after securing an ESRC postdoctoral fellowship (January – December 2023). Her project explores health and learning inclusion among pregnant teenagers and young mothers in rural Nigeria.
- The Hub supported a project engaging young refugees as peer researchers for "Knowledge, resources and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights: The views and experiences of young refugees living in Kyangwali refugee settlement, Western Uganda".



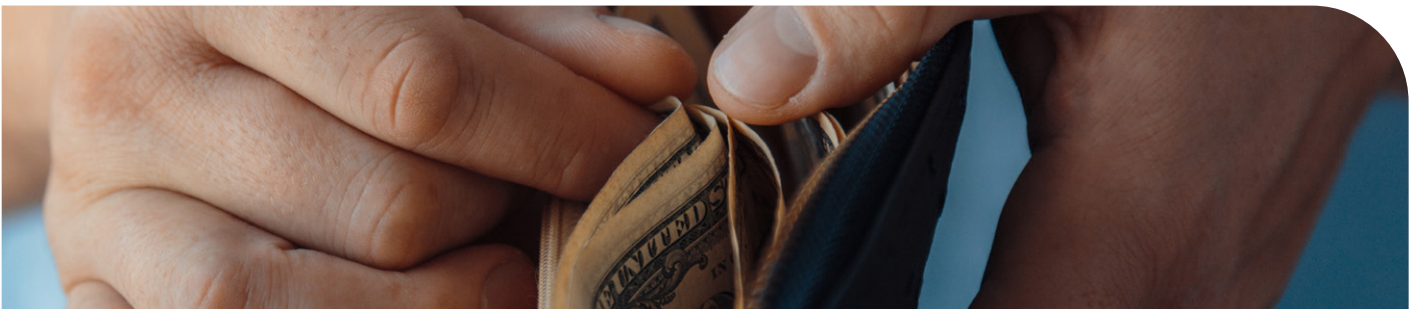
Language and Society

- The Hub implemented a British Council funded research project "English-medium education in low- and middle-income countries: Enabler or barrier to gender equality?" which included fieldwork and workshops in both Nepal and Nigeria.
- After a successful bid with The Open University's Open Societal Challenges (OSC), project "Social Inequalities and Sustainability Challenges of Ambulant Vendors in the Global South" researchers with the Language and Society Hub began their exploratory ethnographic work in Medellin, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires.
- The Hub was invited to join a panel at the International Virtual Exchange conference (IVEC) in São Paulo, drawing on the research project "Marginalisation and Underrepresentation in international learning opportunities for young learners: The ABC of Young Learners and Virtual Exchange (VE): access, benefits, and content."



Learners and Learning

- Research interests within the Hub are eclectic, and the past year has yielded an impressive range of projects such as Supporting Adolescent Girls' Education (SAGE), Ibali, OpenSTEM Africa, Learning through Play (LTP), Zambian Education School-based Training (ZEST).
- The Hub has been deepening the research and knowledge exchange partnership with the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana, including hosting a week-long workshop with UCC's Institute of Education in June 2023.
- The Hub co-led a set of research and knowledge exchange workshops and seminars with the Arab Open University's Faculty of Education and hosted and chaired the CSGD/BAICE International Women's Day Conversation 'Am I a girl?', which included speakers from Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe.



Poverty and Social Protection

- The Hub was launched in September 2023 and is co-led by Dr Keetie Roelen (Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies) and Dr Thaís de Carvalho (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences), aiming to develop research and scholarship in the areas of poverty, livelihoods, and social protection.
- The launch was marked by a two-day international hybrid workshop, 'Poverty Reduction – Rethinking Policy and Practice', on 27 – 28 September 2023 at the OU. The hub partnered with the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network (CPAN) at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the DSA/ EADI Multidimensional Poverty and Poverty Dynamics (MDDP) working group in organising this event, and more than 40 participants took part.
- Building on longstanding collaboration, the team is working with the NGO Fonkoze in Haiti to study the effect of their anti-poverty programme on women's lives, livelihoods and resilience.



Professional Learning and Technology

- The Professional Learning and Technology Hub hosted a consultation event and report for the 2023 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report on Technology and Education: Access, equity and inclusion for learners.
- Hub members continued the implementation of the research project - Mobile Learning for Empowerment of Marginalised Mathematics Educators (3Mpower) in Bangladesh.
- A key highlight was hosting 'Evidence cafes' for the hub's research in Bangladesh and Zambia, aiming to bridge the gap between research and practice. Find out more about the evidence cafes on page 16.



Youth and Transitions

- The Youth and Transitions Hub worked in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Hub, to secure funding from The Open University's Open Societal Challenges (OSC). Their research aims to explore young mothers' mental health and wellbeing in Ghana.
- The Hub supported the Welsh Assembly Government on Youth Justice and helped develop their national policies around transitions for young people in the criminal justice system.
- Hub members developed contributions to an edited book: "Exploring Urban Youth Culture Outside the Gang Paradigm and Against Youth Violence", published in September 2023.

Postcards Doctoral Students/Early Career Researchers



For my PhD, I partnered with Famia Planea to explore the co-creation of sexuality education materials with young people in Aruba. Earlier this year, we worked with a group of young creatives to explore topics surrounding sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) using arts-based activities. As a collective, we developed a series of diverse artwork, stories, games, and learning materials in an e-zine for fellow Aruban adolescents to enjoy.

Elizabeth Ascroft



In 2023, I spent five months in Santiago, Chile, conducting my PhD fieldwork on abortion, sexuality, and reproduction during adolescence. My research is grounded in feminist participatory action research, and I have been working with five brilliant young Chilean women. As co-researchers, they have helped shape the creative methods and facilitated interactive workshops. Doing co-production and working with co-researchers has already taught me much about feminist creativity and non-linear collaborative approaches.

Elise Denis-Ramirez



My work and interest in inclusive practice have expanded considerably in the past year. I am particularly excited about the progress with the AHRC-funded lbali project on the use of storytelling research methods to understand inclusion and exclusion in education.

I am also pleased about my recent open access book chapter on gender inequities and paper on ethnically-themed exclusions in education which both developed from my doctoral research; a new successful IDRC-funded bid connected to ZEST with a key component of engaging excluded community school teachers and; my involvement in M.A Ed Inclusive Practice module

Dr Jennifer Agbaire

Dr Eric Addae-Kyeremeh and I secured funding from the Education Futures Research Group at The Open University to research the learning experiences of apprentices in the automotive trade in the traditional apprenticeship system in Ghana. We submitted a book chapter titled: *The potential role of ICT in facilitating learning for livelihoods among informal apprentices in the automotive trade in Ghana* to the Handbook of Learning for Livelihoods: Skills and the Informal Sector.

Dr Joyceline Alla-Mensah



I conducted crucial research alongside my co-investigator, Dr Saraswati Dawadi, aimed at enhancing the well-being of survivors of human trafficking. This research has already made a significant impact by empowering marginalized communities in Nepal and Nigeria, equipping victims with the necessary support and skills to not only help themselves but also support others. In recognition of our work, our research received the OU People's Choice Award in 2022. Furthermore, we have leveraged the insights from our study to assist the Ugandan parliament in establishing a forum dedicated to addressing human trafficking issues. There is also growing interest in utilising the knowledge gained from this research to engage with the East African Legislative Assembly.

Dr Margaret Ebubedike

Example Projects

3Mpower: mobile learning for empowerment of marginalised mathematics educators – EdTech Hub

The 3Mpower project researches how primary teachers from rural schools in Bangladesh use mobile learning for their professional development.



[Click for more details about this project](#)

English-medium education in low and middle-income contexts: enabler or barrier to gender equality? – British Council

This British Council/Open University partnership explores the role of English as an enabler or a barrier to gender equality in low and middle-income countries.



[Click for more details about this project](#)

Evaluating Fonkoze’s anti-poverty ‘graduation’ programme in Haiti – Fonkoze

This research examines how anti-poverty interventions can strengthen livelihoods, empower women and benefit children and families.



[Click for more details about this project](#)

Ibali: storytelling educational inclusion/exclusion in Nigeria, South Africa and the UK – Arts and Humanities Research Council

This project uses storytelling to explore perspectives and experiences of educational inclusion and exclusion with young people and teachers in Nigeria, South Africa and the UK.



[Click for more details about this project](#)

Learning Teams project – Education Commission

This research explores how different actors can work with teachers in new ways to support children’s learning.



[Click for more details about this project](#)

Pathways to health and learning inclusion among young women in South-Western Nigeria – Economic and Social Research Council

This research explores pathways to health and learning inclusion among pregnant teenagers and young mothers in Nigeria.



[Click for more details about this project](#)

CSGD Inaugural External Seminar

March 2023

What does it mean to 'adapt an innovation' when scaling? Deepening the discourse around adaptation in global development projects

In global policy discourse, the scaling of innovations which have prior evidence of impact is increasingly being advocated as a solution to improving education policy and practice. This advocacy is often aimed at education systems in the Global South. Adaptation of the innovation is described as a key factor, driver, or ingredient in these scaling pronouncements. Its prominence reflects an increasing recognition that it is rarely effective to scale innovations into new contexts without respect for the local system (Faul, 2016). Yet despite this acknowledgement there is little systematic conceptualisation of adaptation or study of how it happens in different types of innovations and contexts.

In this seminar, I interrogated adaptation in innovation scaling, drawing on examples from recent applied research concerned with the development and implementation of innovative models for large-scale teacher education in different contexts across the globe. The process of adaptation is often depicted as a relatively straightforward activity in which international guidance supports 'local' education actors to undertake minor adjustments to global models or templates of success to better 'fit' the implementation context – for example, changing the type of technology, curriculum, or actor roles.

I argued that this characterisation of adaptation is limited: it frequently fails to pay deep attention to equity considerations and the relationship of the scaling innovation to existing systems and practices. Instead, adaptation needs to be viewed as a culturally embedded social practice (Rogoff, 2008). It is participatory, dynamic across time and place, and multilevel; local adaptation is essential to take account of diversity in teachers, students or other actors but is frequently discouraged or disallowed on the grounds that it would diminish the quality of the innovation. These arguments are still evolving and benefited from the thoughtful comments and challenging questions from seminar participants.

Professor Freda Wolfenden

Image: Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) project
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Empowering participation in evidence cafés

The Centre believes in the importance of equitable knowledge exchange in research. One of the ways we facilitate this is through evidence cafés, where we bridge the gap between research and practice. This enables participants to explore how research can inform their practice, while giving academics access to practice-based insights on their research from practitioners.

Our collaborative OU-University of Dhaka project, 3MPower (Mobile Learning for Empowerment of Marginalised Mathematics Educators), funded by the EdTech Hub, has utilised evidence cafés in its research. This has facilitated a two-way dialogue between practitioners and academics.

The 3MPower project is generating evidence on technology use for Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in Bangladesh, focusing on children’s foundation numeracy skills in schools serving marginalised, low-income, rural communities.

By studying the use of numeracy TPD courses on Muktopaath—a government-led e-learning platform used by over 400,000 teachers in Bangladesh—the project team aims to answer the question “How are primary numeracy teachers using mobile learning for teacher development in rural schools and in what ways does this change learning and teaching?”. Over 160,000 teachers have completed the most popular course on Anonde Gonit Shikhi (AGS) – Let’s Learn Maths with Fun – a set of courses to improve the teaching and learning of numeracy in primary education.

The 3MPower project has adopted a participatory approach to data collection, using the Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation Research (PEER) methodology. This approach enables those living and working in the community being studied to generate in-depth insights and contextualised data. In this project, the PEERs are teachers in rural and remote schools. PEERs—supported by early career researchers (ECRs) based at the Institute of Education and Research at the University of Dhaka—have been eliciting stories from other teachers working in the community, then discussing these stories and their meanings through regular debriefs with the ECRs. Adopting such an approach helps minimise power imbalances between participants and more experienced researchers and seeks to empower all those participating in the fieldwork.

In their first Evidence Café (in October 2022), the project team (including the ECRs and some of the PEERs) explored evidence from the PEERs about whether teachers were able to access the AGS programme and how teachers were—or, as it turned out, largely were not—implementing AGS activities in the classroom. During the second cycle of research, the PEERs gathered stories from a sub-set of teachers who were actively and regularly implementing AGS activities in their classrooms and who were also sharing their experiences of doing so with other teachers.

The second Evidence Café (in January 2023) enabled education officers who support teachers in local areas, representatives from a2i (a Government of Bangladesh digital transformation unit), and Bangladesh’s Directorate

of Primary Education and National Academy for Primary Education to understand and comment on the evidence and begin to work with us to develop recommendations for key stakeholders, including themselves. The PEERs played a vital role at the Evidence Café, presenting findings from a second cycle of research, sharing and exploring the evidence, and then, in small groups, discussing the stakeholders’ responses to the evidence and eliciting recommendations based upon the findings.



All the ECRs described their role in the Evidence Cafés as a high point, alongside developing a better understanding of—and respect for—teachers in remote and rural areas through fieldwork. Reflecting on their role at the Evidence Cafés, the ECRs noted:



It's a huge step to present in front of officials, you know. They're high officials in our government sector.

But I didn't mess up, and I got so much confidence then that I can do it.



It was the best opportunity when we had to, you know, share with teachers and high officials. We had to let them know 'No, no, this is our finding'. Of course, they had some disagreements, but we had to overcome that. So yes, this was the best opportunity.



I'm not an extrovert, someone who's very — I would say — confident. I'm not. Like I fear the public. I get nervous when I speak in front of the public. But now yes, I would say 'this was the best thing'.

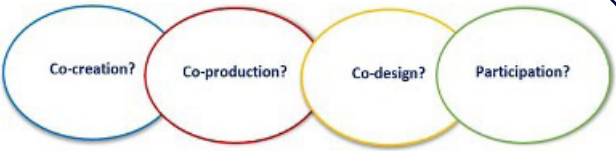


I found a new me yesterday—it was a completely new me... There were so many people in front of me, yet I was fearless... That completely amazed me. I was thinking 'Is that actually me?'



Events from the year

Here are examples of events and activities we have hosted, led and participated in over the last year.



Co Design
Call to action & Seminar



IDII
International Development and Inclusive Innovation

SRA-IDII
Festival of Research



UKFIET
THE EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM

NGO CSW67 Forum
"Actors, not voices: engaging rural women and girls as researchers"

Studentship with Luminos Fund




International Women's Day



Conversation Event
Am I a girl?

Seminar
Exploring ethics in the field

Seminar
Adapting an Innovation when scaling global development projects



unesco
Global Education Monitoring Report

Technology in Education Consultation



ICERDA
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

ICERDA 2023 Conference

Global collaborations

The CSGD is collaborating with researchers, practitioners, policymakers and other academic institutions from across the globe. The below map shows some of the organisations we work with and the locations we work in.



North America

- Brookings Institute
- Child Fund International, USA
- iSPARX, Canada
- School of International Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, University of Arizona, USA

Latin America & Caribbean

- CITRA/CONICET/UMET, Research Centre for the Study of Workers' Innovation, Argentina.
- Famia Planea Aruba
- Fonkoze, Haiti
- INeAC, Insituto de Estudos Comparados em Administraçao de Conflitos, Fluminense University, Brazil.
- International Planned Parenthood Federation Americas & Caribbean Regional Office, Colombia
- MUCA, Movimento Unido dos Camelôs, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- UGTI, Colombian Union of Workers of the Informal Economy, Colombia
- UTEP, Argentinian Union of Workers of the Popular Economy, Ms Sylvia Palmieri, National General Secretary (Buenos Aires), Argentina
- World Vision, Chile

Europe

- British Council, UK
- UNESCO-UNEVOC, Germany

Global

- Class2Class (Online, Worldwide)
- Education Commission, global
- International Planned Parenthood Federation, global
- Luminos Fund, global

Asia

- Adhyayan Foundation, India
- Aspire 2 Innovate, Bangladesh
- British Council, Nepal
- Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

Africa

- African Council for Distance Education
- Culture Beyond Borders in Accra, Ghana
- Iballi network, Nigeria and South Africa
- Plan International, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe
- Reproductive Health Uganda
- Right to Play, Ghana
- Spice FM Hoima, Uganda
- TESSA network
- University of Cape Coast, Ghana
- University of Ghana, Ghana
- World Vision, Ethiopia
- World Vision, Zambia

Middle East

- Arab Open University, Kuwait
- Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS), Lebanon

Australasia

- SPARX – Auckland University, New Zealand

CSGD collaborates with the University of Cape Coast on ICERDA conference

In September 2023, the University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana, collaborated with the Centre for the Study of Global Development (CSGD) to host the 3rd International Conference on Education Research for Development in Africa (ICERDA). This year's conference theme was "Repurposing the global development education agenda for Africa's future," which brought together over 150 people to discuss and share insights on how education initiatives in African settings can be made more effective.

There is currently minimal discussion on what is working in the African context based on insights from African researchers and their analysis and interpretation of the education challenge. It is crucial to have African researchers who can speak "truth to power" and collaborate with policymakers to develop policies that have the potential to improve teaching and learning.

The conference examined education challenges in Africa through a post-colonial lens to present a response that starts with interrogating how education research in Africa has been framed, what it misses, and how it should be redefined.

The conference featured keynote speeches by three distinguished speakers. George Kronnisanyon Werner, who served as the Minister of Education in Liberia from 2015 to 2018, spoke about the need to address the learning crisis in Africa and why Africa needs to reclaim its education narrative. Professor Joseph Ghartey Ampiah, a professor of science education at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, spoke about rethinking teacher education in Africa in the 21st century. Professor Wee Tiong Seah, a professor of Mathematics Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia, shared insights from the East Asian experience of achieving excellence in education.

Currently, many research conferences are hosted in the global north, and hosting ICERDA in Ghana made the conference more accessible to researchers on the continent.

The Centre will be collaborating with UCC on the 2024 ICERDA conference in Cape Coast, Ghana.



Publications

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