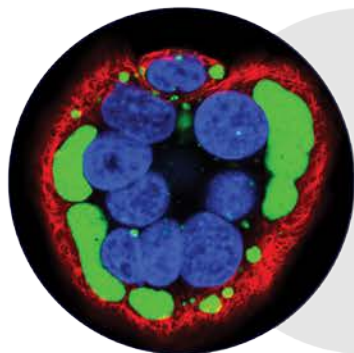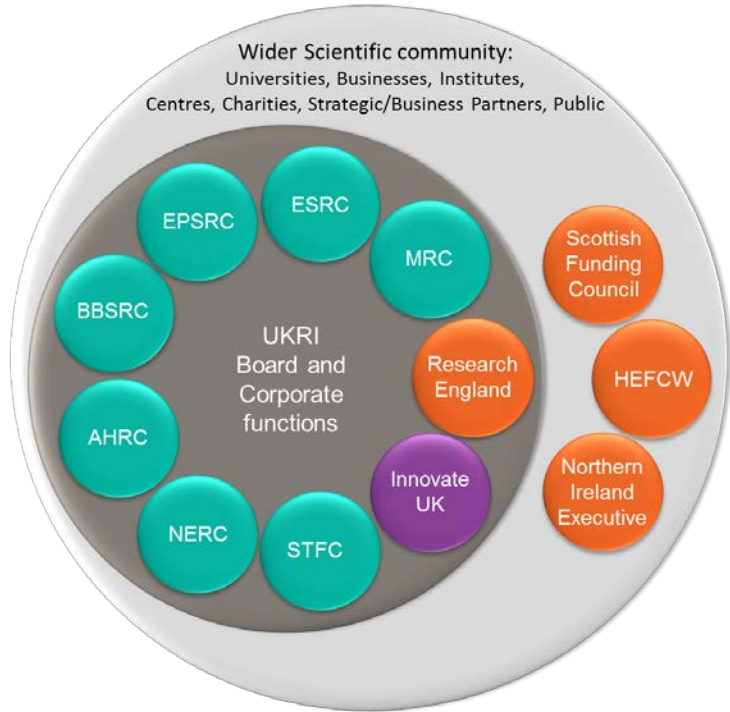# The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)

Dr Tahrat Naushaba Shahid – Challenge Leader, Food Systems

October 2019

UKRI and relationship to GCRF

Wider Scientific community:
Universities, Businesses, Institutes,
Centres, Charities, Strategic/Business Partners, Public

EPSRC · ESRC · MRC · BBSRC · Research England · AHRC · Innovate UK · NERC · STFC · Scottish Funding Council · HEFCW · Northern Ireland Executive

UKRI Board and Corporate functions

- GCRF is primarily (but not exclusively) administered and delivered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

- Launched in April 2018, UKRI is the new funding organisation for research and innovation in the UK

- Brings together 7 pre-existing UK research councils, Innovate UK, and Research England, working closely with partner organisations in devolved administrations (like the Scottish Funding Council, for example)
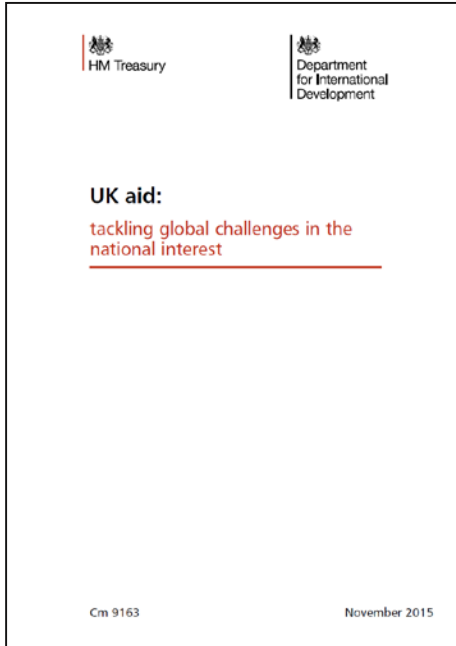
UKRI's agenda

- Promote the UK as a world-class destination to generate and access research and innovation

- Develop existing and create new collaborative research and innovation programmes that target countries with high performing research and innovation sectors to engage in joint-funded bilateral and multilateral agreements

- In context of Overseas Development Assistance or ODA, using the GCRF and Newton Fund (will describe this one later) to develop relationships with international partners

The UK's ODA Strategy

UK aid:
tackling global challenges in the national interest

HM Treasury

Department for International Development

Cm 9163   November 2015

- Strengthening global peace, security and governance

- Strengthening resilience and response to crises

- Promoting global prosperity

- Tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable

GCRF reflects ODA strategy

- £1.5 billion ODA funding stream 2016-2021 to support cutting edge research that addresses challenges faced by developing countries; unilateral funding programme

Aims

- Address global challenges through disciplinary and interdisciplinary research

- Strengthening capability for research and innovation, within developing countries and the UK

- Agile response to emergencies and opportunities

GCRF Agenda for Change: Breadth of Ambition

Equitable access to sustainable development

to create new knowledge and drive innovation that helps to ensure that everyone across the globe can prosper through access to health, food, water, education, energy etc.

Sustainable economies and societies

to identify new responses to the challenges arising from changes in population, technology, consumption and pressure on the environment

Human rights, good governance and social justice

to understand how to strengthen the institutions that underpin peaceful societies, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

GCRF reflects role of research in achieving SDGs

- Need to accelerate progress

- Develop innovative solutions and support evidence based policy making

- Challenges are linked and interdependent

- Business as usual activities unlikely to be sufficient - transformative approaches

- Interdisciplinary

- Transboundary

- Addressing challenges in an integrated holistic way

Number of GCRF projects addressing SDGs

- UKRI GCRF funding so far: 800 projects, £775 million
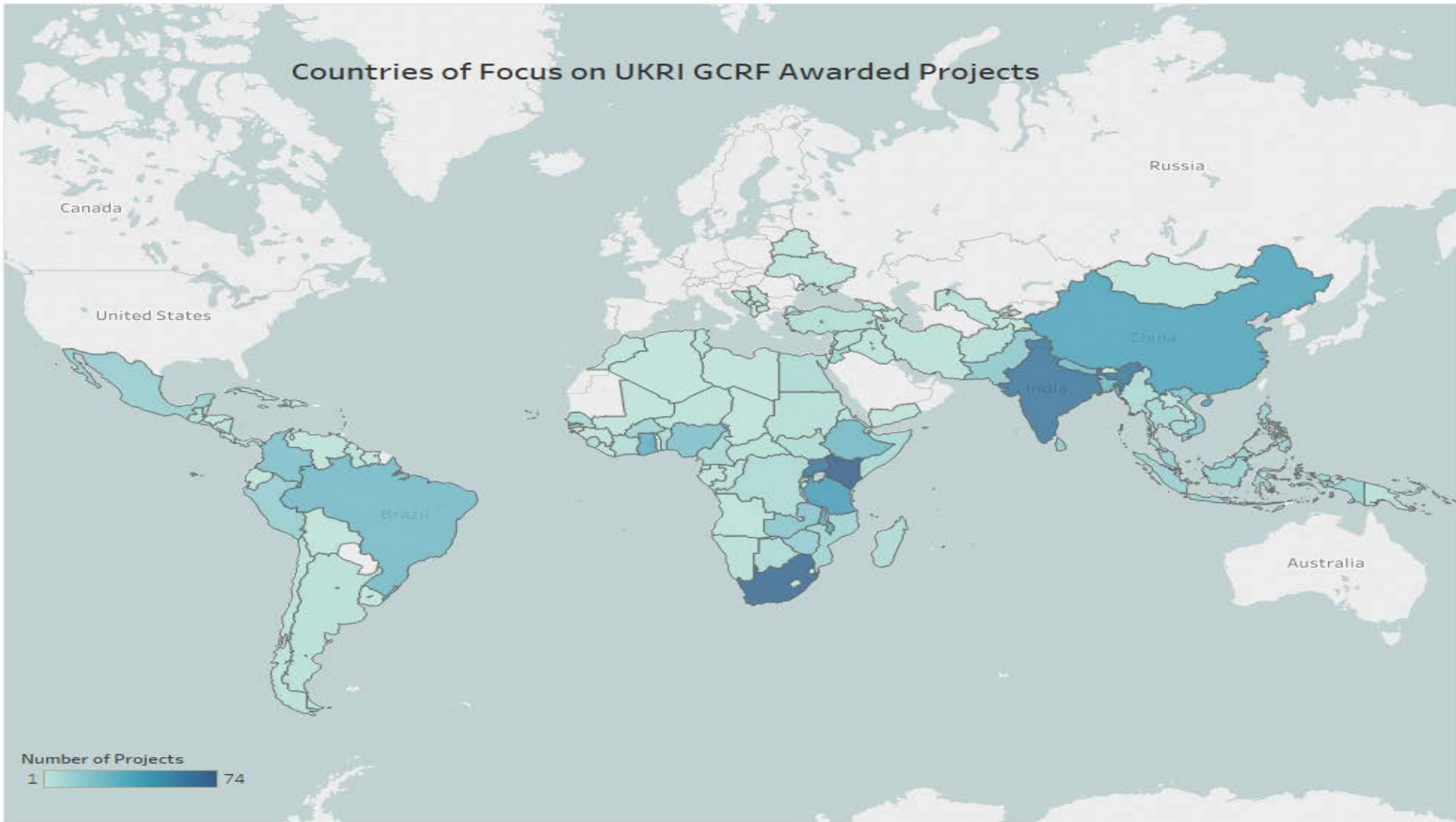
- Most projects address more than one SDG

GCRF Delivery Partners

Countries of Focus on UKRI GCRF Awarded Projects

Number of Projects
1 — 74

Some examples of funded projects

- From food systems, second-largest portfolio, encompassing agriculture, nutrition, and food security

  - **Learning from the past: Nubian traditional knowledge and agricultural resilience, crop choices and endangered cultural heritage** on how comparisons of present-day and ancient crop choices in Sudan can inform risk management
  - **Longitudinal study of Anti Microbial Resistance (AMR) risk behaviour among livestock-keeping communities**, exploring the social, behavioural, and environmental factors driving AMR in India and Kenya

- Gender viewed as cross-cutting and deeply relevant across all portfolios, so not separate portfolio

  - **GCRF GlobalGRACE**, an over £3 million grant on Global Gender and Cultures of Equality that focuses on communicating cultures of marginalised people on a global leve
  - **Dynamics of gender inequality in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia**, analysing the importance and broad ramifications of work on female employment and dynamics of inequality, highlighting links with SDGs, with implications for both policy and advocacy

GCRF Interdisciplinary Research Hubs

- In 2017, launched a call for GCRF Interdisciplinary Research Hubs to address Intractable Development Challenges

- Delivering challenge-led, interdisciplinary, transboundary research at a significant scale (approx. £20 million each)

- Multi-dimensional and complex challenges which
  - Cut across SDGs
  - Are resistant to change
  - Are prone to fragmented responses
  - Cannot be solved by a single organisation, sector or discipline

Hubs exemplify challenge and impact-focused interdisciplinary research

- Approaches that cut across SDGs, drawing on insights from across disciplines and sectors

- Co-produced with partners from Global South, awareness of underlying contexts and factors

- Translate research into measurable, scalable impacts, working with NGOs, CSOs, multilateral organisations, and so on

- Generate excellent and novel research, through sustainable programmes with a legacy beyond the initial investment

List of Research Hubs

- UKRI GCRF Achievement for Africa's Adolescents Hub
- UKRI GCRF Accountability for Informal Urban Equity Hub
- UKRI GCRF Action Against Stunting
- UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub
- UKRI GCRF Living Deltas Hub
- UKRI GCRF One Health Poultry Hub
- UKRI GCRF One Ocean Hub
- UKRI GCRF South Asian Nitrogen Hub
- UKRI GCRF South-South Migration, Inequality and Development Hub
- UKRI GCRF Trade, Development and the Environment Hub
- UKRI GCRF Urban Disaster Risk Hub
- UKRI GCRF Water Security and Sustainable Development Hub

Global reach of the Hubs

KEY FACTS

12 global interdisciplinary research Hubs

85 countries

550 researchers

400 unique partner organisations

£200M investment*

North America **23**
Europe **125**
Central Asia **23**
Caribbean / Atlantic **2**
Middle East and North Africa **12**
Southern Asia **106**
South / Latin America **18**
Sub-Saharan Africa **86**
Oceania **5**

This map shows number of unique organisations that are our partners on the 12 Hubs, and regions that they are based in

Accelerating Achievement for Africa's Adolescents Hub

■ By 2050, Africa will be home to half a billion teenagers. Despite their incredible creativity and potential, many of these young people will be trapped in a cycle of poverty, violence, low education and poor health. This Hub will work with policy makers, NGOs and adolescents themselves to discover which combinations of services can most efficiently and cost-effectively help adolescents achieve their potential. By testing different combinations such as malaria prevention, business skills and violence prevention, this Hub will identify 'accelerator' packages to boost nutrition, health, schooling, employment, gender equality and safety for teenagers across Africa.

"
My name is Noxolo and I am a member of the Hub's Teen Advisory Group in South Africa. As a young person growing up in South Africa, I have faced a lot of challenges. I believe that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will be a great help, not only for me but other young people like me. We want the best chance to be safe, educated, healthy and successful. Thank you."

Miss Noxolo Myeketsi, Adolescent Advisory Group South Africa

KEY FACTS

£18.5M

15 partner countries

56 partner organisations

Lead organisation: University of Oxford

Principal Investigator: Professor Lucie Cluver

1 NO POVERTY

2 ZERO HUNGER

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Geographical focus: Africa

Contact details: Maria Michalopoulou
maria.michalopoulou@admin.ox.ac.uk

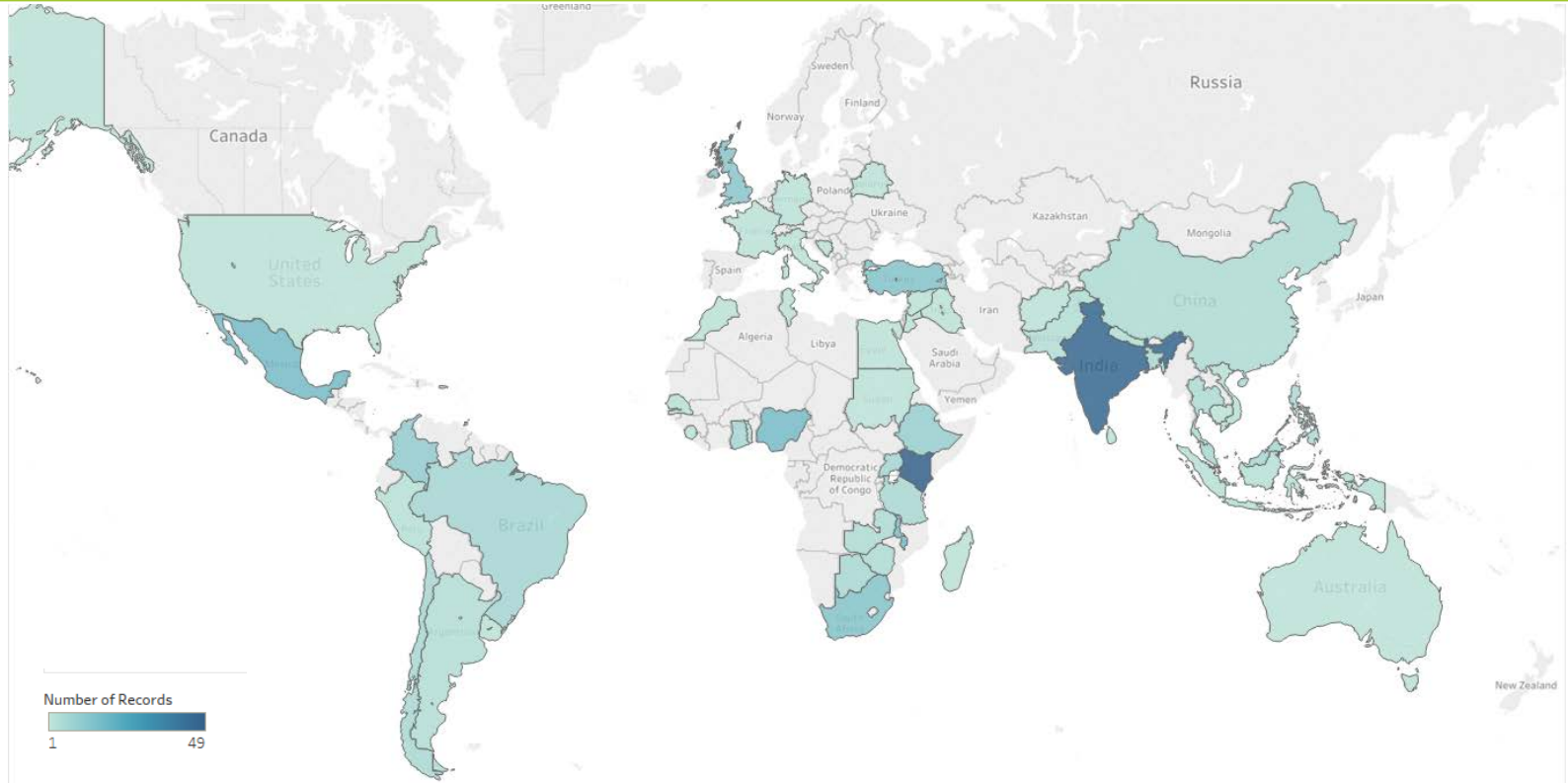# UKRI's Int. Development Peer Review College: Aims

- Ensure that developing country perspectives are key part of the peer review of GCRF and other ODA-relevant UKRI calls

- Build on GCRF aim of fair and equitable partnerships, ensuring that developing country researchers and non-academics are able to contribute to decision-making process

- Facilitate closer engagement with peer reviewers from Global South, and provide training and capacity-building in (interdisciplinary) peer review (as well as knowledge exchange)

Peer Review college membership

- 300+ members from 61 countries (50 countries on OECD-DAC list of ODA recipients, make up over 90% of members)

- Includes academics and non-academics from organisations based in or working with ODA recipient countries such as policy-makers, NGOs, and CSOs

- Represents 250 different universities and organisations worldwide

Peer review college membership across countries

As an aside: the Newton Fund

- Bilateral programme but unlike Swiss bilateral programmes (and like GCRF funding) part of the UK's ODA

- Uses science and innovation partnerships to promote economic development and social welfare of partner countries through collaboration with partner countries and 15 UK delivery partners

- Launched in 2014, total UK investment of £735 million through to 2021, with partner countries providing matched resources

Promoting engagement between research and policy

- UKRI appointed 9 Challenge Leaders, directing GCRF portfolios in:
  - Global Health
  - Food Systems
  - Security (Protracted Conflict, Refugee Crises and Forced Displacement)
  - Resilience to Environmental Shocks and Change Education
  - Cities and Sustainable Infrastructure
  - Education (in Conflict)

- Portfolios align with/respond to SDGs with intent to:
  - Disseminate, combine, scale up excellent research and impact
  - Have real impact on SDGs
  - Set benchmarks for best practice in research for development
  - Make sure that GCRF is coherent, more than 'sum of its parts'

Role of Challenge Leaders

- Build strong intellectual and strategic leadership for each portfolio

- Build and promote individual portfolios in terms of coherence, excellence, and real-world impact i.e. connect with policy-makers

- Draw on the knowledge and experience of GCRF Strategic Advisory Group and strengthen coordination across multiple delivery partners, building relationships with colleagues in Research Councils and Academies through formal and informal means

- Champion collective research, innovation, and growth agenda

- Champion equality, diversity and inclusion policies and practices and other policies which support mission

Nine Challenge Leaders

Challenge Leader	Portfolio	Title
	Resilience Challenge Leader	Professor Mark Pelling (King's College London)
	Resilience Challenge Leader	Dr John Rees (British Geological Survey)
	Conflicts Challenge Leader	Dr Neelam Raina (Middlesex University)
	Conflicts Challenge Leader	Dr Laura Hammond (SOAS University of London)
	Cities Challenge Leader	Dr Jaideep Gupte (Institute of Development Studies)

Challenge Leader	Portfolio	Title
	Food Systems Challenge Leader	Professor Nicola Lowe (University of Central Lancashire)
	Food Systems Challenge Leader	Dr Tahrat Shahid (University of Oxford)
	Education Challenge Leader	Dr Kelsey Shanks (Ulster University UNESCO Centre)
	Global Health Challenge Leader	Dr Helen Fletcher (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine)

UKRI GCRF policy engagement

- GCRF Challenge Leaders have been building links throughout the UN system for example
  - UNDP and World Bank: Pathways for Peace Report and Mapping out a New Research Agenda
  - UN Development Programme, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG): UNSG Climate Action Summit, UNDRR Global Risk Assessment Framework, UNDRR Global Platform

- UKRI have recently funded a UK team to co-design and author a report with the UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programming on "Science and Innovation Pathways to the SDGs"

- UKRI colleague is currently on secondment to UNDP

UKRI GCRF policy engagement with Switzerland

- Regularly engage with colleagues from the Swiss National Science Foundation and other funders working in this space, through forums such as the Global Research Council and High Level Research for Development Funders' Forum to discuss areas of common interest such as the role of research in accelerating progress towards achieving the UN SDG

- Working with the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries to learn from their approach to equitable partnerships

- Held a joint workshop in Tanzania which brought together Co-Investigators from East Africa to understand experiences of being involved in GCRF and the Swiss Research for Development programme (report issued afterwards with recommendations, discussed next)

Ongoing challenges

- Equitable partnerships

- Showing impact/value for money

- Budgetary cycles

- Structural challenges and changes within UKRI

On equitable partnerships: Investigators

- Restriction of UK institution-based Principal Investigators means relationship inherently skewed; potential solutions:

  - Discuss differing expectations, priorities, capacities, legal and ethical frameworks advance of project; agree on mutual purpose of work and decision-making processes and budgets; revisit these as part of regular review throughout project

  - Use a participatory process to involve stakeholders from the Global South in codesigning research programme agenda, developing a greater understanding of national/regional priorities and aligning with them

On equitable partnerships: funders

- Funders need to make application process more accessible to applicants from the Global South, by:

    - Putting mechanisms in place to ensure that applicants from the Global South are involved in all aspects of the assessment process and work to strengthen their capacity in the peer review process

    - Providing mechanisms to enable researchers from the Global South to engage directly with them and their systems and strengthen capacity

    - After project is completed funders could provide support for impact and evaluation activities and links to follow on funding. resources. Important to emphasise uptake of research outputs in policy and practice in proposal and assessment

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