



Changing the Story Early Career Researcher Project Development workshop

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From 25th – 26th October at the British Council Offices in London, Changing the Story hosted an Early Career Researcher (ECR) Project Development workshop. The event saw ECRs from around the world come together with other academics and practitioners working in the art and international development. The ultimate aim of the workshop was for participants to co-create a funding call for the second phase of the Changing the Story project. Phase 2 of the project will commission 10 or more ECR-led projects across the globe, which will be led by ECRs from the UK and countries receiving overseas development aid, working with local organisations in conflict-affected countries. This novel and participatory approach to developing a funding call meant that those who are applying for the funding were heavily involved in setting out the specifications for the projects that will receive the grant.

However, this was not the sole focus of the workshop; which included multiple sessions and encouraged open discussion and debate on topics including the value of NGOs working collaboratively with academia, the role of the sustainable development goals and how to measure impact or evaluate arts-based programmes. Furthermore, throughout the workshop ECRs were able to discuss their own research and share knowledge and ideas on their areas of expertise.

The result of the multiple sessions was a call that encourages researchers to explore innovative and critical topics, as well as develop inclusive methodologies. Key elements that arose from discussions through-out the workshop and were incorporated into the call for funding include the need to involve young people in all elements of a project, from design to evaluation; the need to critically engage with issues of power and deconstruct commonly used terminology in projects; the need to better explore the relationship between the arts and develop and the need to include the most marginalised.

As well as developing practical skills and knowledge over the two days, it is clear from the workshop evaluations that one of the most beneficial aspects of the programme for those involved was the development of an international network of researchers and practitioners working in conflict-affected settings. Participants highlighted the significant benefits in being able to share knowledge and experience across this newly-developed network, and of seeing others in the field as collaborators rather than competitors. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme also allowed participants to see their own field of study in a new light:

““I came wondering how my discipline and research interests could fit into the realm of international development... Honestly , I can say that this workshop has helped realign

aspects of my thinking, and I'm not sure I will ever quite look at my discipline the same way again..." (Workshop participant)"

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