

Institution: University of Chichester		
Unit of Assessment: Education		
Title of case study: Early Education in Crisis Settings: Empowering Community Volunteer Educators through Translational Research		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2016-present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Linda Cooper	Head of Education Studies	L Cooper: 9 years
Mrs Debra Laxton	Senior Lecturer/Early Childhood Lead	D Laxton: 8 years
Dr Chris Shelton	Head of Education	C Shelton: 17 years
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018-present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Translational research at the University of Chichester (UoC) explores how insights from educational research can be communicated with practitioners effectively and lead to the empowerment of volunteer educators. UoC researchers worked collaboratively through the international MESH (Mapping Educational Specialist KnowHow) initiative to develop a novel system for communicating research insights. This system was used to create the Early Childhood Education in Emergencies Guide, booklets and resources, which have been used effectively by the charity VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) to inform their provision of play-based learning with young Rohingya refugees in the Jamolti camp, within the world's largest refugee settlement, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Through a process of communication, training and dissemination, our research promoted high quality early years practice to international, national and community volunteers, raising the quality of early education provision for 1,500 refugee children.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Since 2016, Cooper, Laxton and Shelton at UoC have worked collaboratively as part of the MESH (Mapping Educational Specialist KnowHow) initiative to address the challenge of translating findings from educational research into practice – taking a leading role in developing its work in early years education. The MESH initiative involves researchers from universities across the world working in collaboration with charities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and practitioners, to ensure that insights from educational research are effectively communicated and understood.</p> <p>As a member of the MESH Executive Board, Shelton worked with an international group of researchers to identify 5 models of translational research that could create a novel, sustainable methodology for educational knowledge mobilisation [1]. Within this work, researchers from the UoC made significant contributions to the models of translational research that involved partnerships with doctoral schools and with NGOs. Shelton worked with colleagues at the University of Pretoria to develop a model for translating insights from doctoral research, and Laxton and Cooper worked with VSO to develop a model of translational research through partnership. As well as producing these models, this research</p>		

identified 3 core features of translational research as applied to education: engagement with stakeholders, democratic participation, and quality assurance processes:

Engagement with stakeholders

The research developed models based on the engagement of end-users with researchers. By developing and refining a series of stages of training, application and feedback, the models ensured that the needs of stakeholders were central to the translational research process.

Democratic participation

Each of the translational research models resulted in the creation of 'MESH Guides' – freely-accessible, web-based summaries of educational research. These are not seen as 'final' documents, but rather as requiring continued updating and revision. The process through which this is achieved acknowledges the role of all participants in creating and organising knowledge. This requires a dynamic approach to collecting and communicating insights from evidence.

Quality assurance

For MESH Guides to be accepted as warranted and useful for educators, it is vital that they are of high quality. The models in our research provide a range of quality assurance approaches to ensure this.

In addition to the novel findings above, UoC researchers have also taken the lead in the creation of the "Early Childhood Care and Education in Emergencies" MESH Guide [2]. This guide is itself a product of translational research and is the result of existing knowledge about early childhood education being developed experimentally to produce new translational research teaching tools and resources.

Further research by Laxton and Cooper into the development and implementation of this MESH Guide in practice has extended the research findings above with further insights about how to maximise stakeholder engagement and democratic participation. This research has shown the importance of **common values** in ensuring effective collaboration and productive relationships between partners; the necessity of **socio-culturally relevant resources**; and the **potential for empowering marginalised individuals** [3].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] Younie, S., Audain, J., Eloff, I., Leask, M., Procter, R., & Shelton, C. (2018). Mobilising knowledge through global partnerships to support research-informed teaching: five models for translational research. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 44(5), 574-589.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2018.1516348>

[2] Laxton, D., & Leask, M. (2017). *MESH Guide: Early Childhood Education in Emergencies*. Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <http://meshguides.org/guides/node/1343>
This MESH Guide meets the definition of research through "the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials".

[3] Laxton, D., Cooper, L., Shrestha, P. & Younie, S. (2020) Translational Research to Support Early Childhood Education for Children in Crisis Settings: A Case Study of Collaborative Working with Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar. *Education 3-13*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2020.1813186>

All outputs available on request.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

UoC research into effective methods of translational research focused on both understanding the process of translation and the production of new translational research products (MESH Guides). Our research findings into effective collaboration through stakeholder engagement and democratic participation helped shape the MESH partnership with VSO. The collaboration between MESH researchers and VSO volunteers in Cox's Bazar empowered marginalised members of the community and provided regular, safe play-based learning sessions for 1,500 refugee children.

In 2018, VSO asked MESH to support their work in early childhood education in the Rohingya refugee camps. The refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar are the world's largest and are recognised by the UN as being under huge strain. UNHCR (2019) data suggest that 55% of refugees in Cox's Bazar are children who, often traumatised by their experiences and the daily stresses of life in a refugee camp, lack suitable safe environments in to relax, play and learn.

The approach from the VSO led to the establishment of a MESH Guides advisory board on early years education, led by Laxton (UoC), and a rapid review of research evidence with global reach, involving 40 educators across 6 countries. This led to the development of the MESH Guide "Early Childhood Care and Education in Emergencies" [2]. Over a recent 12-month period this guide was accessed by 1,658 unique users, who viewed a total of 2,248 webpages in the Guide (MESH Guide Analytics, November 2020 [4]).

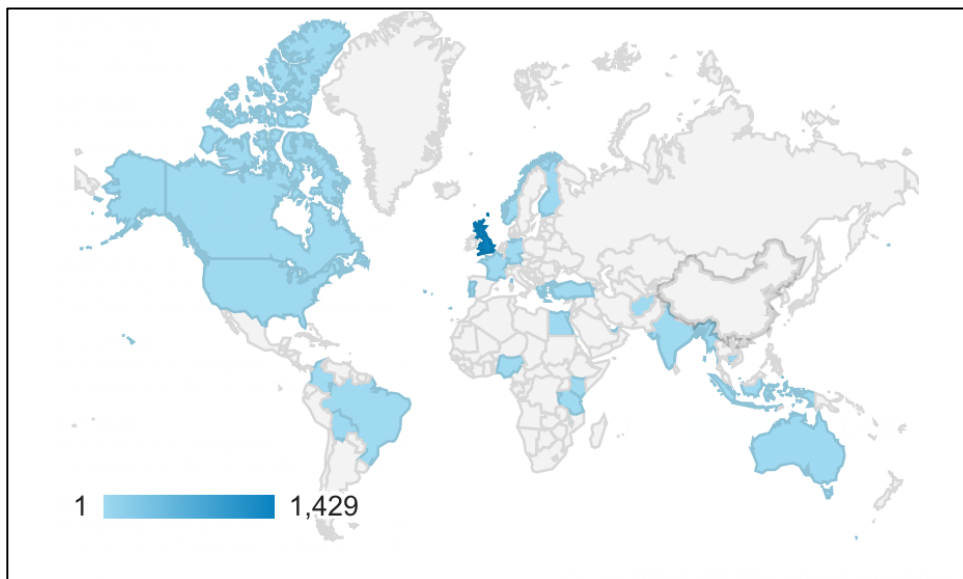


Figure 2: Global Reach of Early Childhood Care and Education in Emergencies MESH Guide

Family Booklet and Play Leader's Booklet

In order to ensure that the Guide was accessible for parents and local community leaders (with limited access to online resources), the researchers engaged and participated with VSO in line with the models of translational research described above (see Section 2). This collaboration with VSO led to the creation of a Family Booklet [5] and Play Leader's Booklet [6]. Following the principle of ensuring that such resources are socio-culturally relevant to end-users, these booklets were translated into 2 local languages (Bengali and Burmese) by VSO volunteers. VSO International Volunteer Specialists (IVEs) then used them to provide tailored support and training to meet the needs of the community.

The booklets were used to support the training of national and community volunteers [7]. Testimonials and evaluations demonstrate that the booklets were used effectively by

volunteers ('Mothers'/'Big Sisters') in the camp's home learning environments to develop playful learning opportunities and to support changes in attitudes to play [7] [8].

VSO School Mobile Application

The MESH Guide and booklets were used to create a 'VSO School Mobile Application' [9]. This app, accessible without the need for internet access once downloaded, enabled the continuation of training and ideas for practice without face-to-face contact.

50 community volunteers accessed activities on this mobile app during training in 2019. VSO Pilot study evaluations showed that 100% of community volunteers held positive attitudes towards using the technology. Furthermore, 60% of volunteers who were given the tablet found it useful in understanding how to provide various materials to help children learn [10].

Community dissemination

VSO IVEs trained 5 national volunteers who, in turn, trained 50 community volunteers to implement the MESH Guide through the Family Booklet and the Mobile School App [7].

Volunteers developed knowledge and understanding of effective early years practice, successfully translating research insights into actions. The volunteers reported that "I have changed the way I teach young children", and "It has made me more aware of the importance of families in supporting education in the early years" [11]. These benefits were reported in Bangladeshi newspapers [12, 13].

Community impact

The 50 trained community volunteers used their homes as early childhood education centres and worked with 1,500 refugee children to promote playful learning [7].

Community volunteers were empowered to take ownership of the project. As one IVE stated, "Some [community volunteers] developed their own teaching resources using locally sourced materials, like writing numbers on food cartons using lipstick". The volunteers provided homes that they took pride in, decorating them, working hard to maintain safety standards, and providing safe spaces in which children could play and learn [8].

Another IVE summed up the emotional impact on refugee children in the camp: "Initially, the children were fearful or anxious when we interacted with them [...] Our home visits were characterised by screams [...] Now, these children have the chance to sing joyfully, recite poems, and take part in other activities [...] Above all, these children feel a sense of belonging." [8].

The project also had an impact on participants' understanding of education. One grandmother reported, for instance, that "I've learnt so much about aspects of education I haven't thought of before and about how to help the learning of my grandchildren." [11].

The implementation of educational initiatives within global societies is often contentious, with many being critical of organisations developing projects without the participation and agency of key community stakeholders. Avoiding these pitfalls, the success of the project/s described above came from fully involving stakeholders through democratic relationships based on research-informed principles.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[4] Testimonial: Richard Proctor, MESH Webmaster – MESH Guide Analytics

[5] VSO and Laxton, D. with MESH Early Years Early Childhood Education Editorial Board (2018a). *Family booklet for early childhood education in emergencies (ECEE)*. VSO/MESH.

[6] VSO and Laxton, D. with MESH Early Years Early Childhood Education Editorial Board (2018b). *Volunteers/play leader's booklet for early childhood education in emergencies (ECEE)*. VSO/MESH.

[7] Testimonial: Purna Shresthra, VSO, Education Lead

[8] Ahsan, T. (2019). *A research report on Education in Emergency for the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (Rohingya)*. Bangladesh: VSO

[9] VSO Press Release (21 August 2019): <https://www.vsointernational.org/news/press-releases/vso-releases-an-application-to-strengthen-learning-for-rohingya-children-in-bangladesh>

[10] Al Kabir, A. (2019). *uSTAD Mobile Apps Feedback Survey Results Report*. Bangladesh: VSO

[11] MESH. (2019b). What about the children of Rohingya?: from <http://www.meshguides.org/rohingya/>

[12] Dhaka Tribune (4 December 2018). *Planting the seeds of education*: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/magazine/weekend-tribune/2018/12/04/planting-the-seeds-of-education>

[13] Khairuzzaman, Z., Daily Sun (30 August 2019). *Education Rekindling Hope Among Rohingya Children*: <https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/419255/Education-Rekindling-Hope-Among-Rohingya-Children>