

UK Public Attitudes to Development Building New Responses: Toolkit

Background

Between January and March 2015 individuals from the international development sector joined together to participate in the course 'UK Public Attitudes to Development: Building New Responses'

The course was led by **Think Global** in collaboration with **Bond**, and included face to face training sessions, webinars and working groups. It was funded by the **DEEEP4 project**. DEEEP was initiated by the Development Awareness Raising and Education Forum (DARE Forum) of CONCORD and is co-funded by the European Union.

There were 27 participants from the following organisations:

Islamic Relief, Kwa Africa, WaterAid, Tzedek, Tearfund, Send a Cow, Suas Educational Development, Save the Children, Restless Development, Progressio, Oxfam, Commonwork, African Initiatives, African Education Trust, Leonard Cheshire Disability.

Throughout the course, participants had the opportunity to explore UK public attitudes to aid and development and discuss and debate some of the current research on this topic. They also engaged with development theories and used this as a tool to critique their own organisational activity.

The group successfully connected, shared and learned from each other and the practical outcomes of the course are summarised in this toolkit.

'It has been helpful networking with other people in the field, and discussing with a wider group of people the challenges that we all face'

Course participant

This Toolkit

This toolkit is informed by research, it is interactive, open-ended and creative. We hope that it provides international development professionals with a framework for

- a.) Learning/reflecting on their own and their organisation's practice; and
- b.) Sharing and informing others about important issues and ideas on this topic

The ideas in this toolkit are a starting point and stimulus for further discussion across the sector. The tools have been developed by the course participants over the duration of the course, and we hope that these ideas could be tested, adapted and developed further by others.

The toolkit is in 3 sections:

- 1.) A summary of the research that was critiqued during the course
- 2.) Tools for learning, reflecting and sharing (designed by course participants)
- 3.) Further research and ideas

Section 1: Research Summary

The following research and resources were critiqued by participants during the course, they inform and inspire the toolkit activities in section two.

'The results of this research have informed our organisational donor education strategy'

Course participant

a.) Change the Record: the need for new ways to talk about global poverty (2014)

Produced by Bond, it explores the reasons behind the fragility of UK public support for development and suggests how the development community can work together to build a more engaged public. [Change the Record](#) research shows that the public has a confused and negative approach towards the causes and solutions of poverty, with strong concern about corruption of governments in African countries. It suggests that a renewed effort and different approaches are needed to move the public forward.

b.) The Narrative Project: UK User Guide, Building Support for Global Development

The ambition of The Narrative Project (funded by the Gates Foundation) is to transform the way in which the sector talks about itself, and to reverse the decline of public support for global development. The primary objective of the project was to learn something new about how to change public attitudes. The research suggests 4 frames to talk about global development; Autonomy, Partnership, Progress and Morality. The [Narrative Project user guide](#) explains this in more detail, and could be a useful tool for the sector.

'The level of insight into donor motivations and effective messaging is hugely valuable'

Course participant

c.) Research by Dr David Hudson: University College of London (UCL)

[David Hudson](#) has written research, articles and think pieces on UK public attitudes to development. In particular, Hudson is interested in what are the individual drivers of support for official development assistance and development policy more generally. He also questions 'What does support mean? Giving money, voting, volunteering, writing to your MP, educating?' Most recently, he has looked at the corruption narrative, and questions 'Do we have to avoid talking about corruption with the UK public? Does even mentioning corruption trigger thoughts of waste and loss and depress support?' His website lists all of his publications.

d.) Finding Frames: New ways to engage the UK public in global development

[Finding Frames](#) by Andrew Darnton with Martin Kirk is a report about the ways in which the UK public engage with global poverty issues, and about how development NGOs and other stakeholders might deepen and extend that engagement. Having identified the problems, the report deliberately does not prescribe solutions; instead it sets out a collaborative programme of work which NGOs will need to undertake to achieve the transformational change in how the public engage with poverty.

e.) The Royal Geographical Society (RGS): Theories of development

These [six theories of development](#) summarised by the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) are a good theoretical basis to help analyse any form of communication (social media, adverts, blogs, newspaper articles etc.) referring to global development and poverty.

Section 2: Tools for learning, reflecting and sharing

All of these activities are written by the four working groups who participated in the course. We encourage you to engage critically with these activities, and continue to test, develop and adapt these for your own working environment.

'My critical understanding of NGO marketing has improved and I have become more adept at analysing marketing messages and why they have been used'

Course participant

1. Using films to reflect on your practice

There are four films that have been created by course participants to help you reflect upon the following:

- Polling - what are the public hearing and thinking?**
- Development Theories - what are we doing and what are we saying we're doing?**
- Narrative - what words work for the public, and for the long term?**
- Action - How can we frame our work better in light of this?**

For each film, there is also a suggested activity of 5, 15 or 30 minutes to reflect and learn. All of the films can be found here <https://vimeo.com/user39652889/videos>

a.) Polling - what are the public hearing and thinking?

Do you really know what the public thinks about aid and development? Test your assumptions against the evidence

For an introduction, watch this film <https://vimeo.com/126235521>

- 5 mins? Dip into Bond's [Change the Record](#) report
- 10 mins? Look at the latest polling on [aid and charities](#)
- A bit more time? What do your friends think? What do your supporters think? Are your communications addressing these concerns and do they need to?

b.) Development theories - what are we doing and what are we saying we're doing?

From degrees to doctorates, you can do a lot of study into different ways of impacting the world's poorest communities. But lots of us get into development through other routes - if that's you, here's a quick guide to development theories.

To get us underway, watch this film <https://vimeo.com/126235522>

- 5 minutes? Read the [Wikipedia Page](#)
- 10 mins? Watch the [Royal Geographical Society's presentation](#)
- A bit more time? - What theory of development makes most sense to you? If you give money to charities, what theory of development do you think they imply? What theory of development does the NGO you work in advocate? And which theory does it project on its supporter and public communications?

c.) Narrative - what words work for the public, and for the long term?

Now watch this film <https://vimeo.com/126235520>

- 10 minutes? Pull out one of your campaigns and critique it with a colleague - what is the narrative it portrays?
- 30 mins? Look at the Narrative Project user guide (see section 1) - it will tell you language that's going to work
- A bit more time? Use the Narrative Project and design a campaign for your organisation based on their principles. Send it around and track reactions. Feed this back into your organisation, at a staff meeting, or internal training day



d.) Action - How can we frame our work better in light of this?

Watch the film <https://vimeo.com/126139911>

The film in this section shares the work that Suas <https://www.suas.ie/> has been doing

- 5 minutes? Put yourself in a frame! For any of your campaigns/materials consider if you would be happy with how you are represented.
- 30 minutes? Read Finding Frames by Darnton and Kirk (see section 1)
- A bit more time? Conduct a self-audit of some of your organisational materials/website taking into account the Finding Frames research and decide on steps to take to achieve a deeper level of engagement with your audience

2. Sharing a checklist with your colleagues

One of the working groups identified five common themes from the course that would shape how NGOs communicate international development issues with the public, with the aim to raise more funds and better inform their audiences of the challenges faced in international development.

These points of advice focus on narrative, language, and imagery. They act as a check list that can be used to analyse a communications piece. These points are currently focused on a fundraising audience, but they could be expanded in the future.

'I'm much more aware of the problem that faces us and how difficult it is for so many organisations to change the narrative due to their reliance on fundraising'
Course participant

Aim 1: Promoting the independence of the beneficiary

- Is the subject of your communication portrayed as an active agent in their own journey?
- Positive imagery - portray need without taking away the subject's dignity
- Is the UK donor given the sense that their donation will be an investment for the future, rather than a hand-out?
- The beneficiaries should be the hero/focus of the story - where possible use the beneficiaries' voice to tell a story
- Promote independence as the end goal of development
- Use language that gives beneficiaries the ownership over their own development

Aim 2: Honesty of your story

- Do not exaggerate the effect a donation can have/what it can pay for
- Be clear where the money is going; e.g. a specific project or general funds
- Are all the facts in your stories true? e.g. names, project outcomes, quotes, organisation's involvement
- Don't shy away from negative issues, especially the topical subject of corruption.
- Try facing up to these issues head on to avoid speculation
- Avoid stereotypes - unique stories stand out more and teach the truth

Aim 3: Understanding causes/consequences of poverty

- Is your communication contextualised? Utilise case studies to help with this
- Focus on the causes of poverty not the symptoms; poverty is created and is not natural
- Avoid over simplifying the situation and ensure photos truly represent people's lives
- Provoke discussion on international development issues when appropriate



Aim 4: Celebrating positive success

- Show the finished results, focus on what can be achieved
- Evoke empathy not pity
- Humanise the success, don't use only facts and figures, but communicate emotion
- Open and end a communication with positive language and imagery
- Back up current appeals with references to past success

Aim 5: Being part of the bigger picture

- Are the beneficiaries portrayed as having futures beyond our interaction with them?
- Is our role outlined as being short term, with meaningful working timeframes?
- Let the donor feel that they are a partner in your work
- Offer multiple ways for supporters to engage with international development issues, e.g. campaigning, volunteering, sharing content etc., and communicate why this is important
- Encourage donors to share their support with others, inspiring them to engage with your work in some way
- On social media build an audience of engaged supporters

3. Positive stories to inform your practice

One of the working groups developed a social media presence to showcase positive examples of communications and initiate the debate amongst colleagues across the sector. We agreed that it is easy to recognise bad examples. However to make the argument for change, we need to share positive examples, and the impact that they have had.

This working group set up a Tumblr site <http://nomorepovertyporn.tumblr.com/>

You can also follow updates and the debate on @nopovertyporn. The site will be monitored by those that took part in the course, with support from Bond.

Suggested activity:

- 2 mins? Share the link around your office and ask them to join the conversation on twitter @nopovertyporn
- 15mins? Ask colleagues to find an example of positive communications, from your organisation or another, and write two sentences on why they feel it gives a positive message
- Once you've collected the examples - email them over to nomorepovertyporn@gmail.com and we will upload them for you!

4. Short activities to try in a meeting

The final working group developed two activities that could be tried at your organisation:

- a.) 10 minute activity debating newspaper headlines
- b.) 45 minute activity on development theories and organisational communication

'We are planning to share this through a lunch time talk'

Course participant

a.) Debating newspaper headlines

This is a 10 minute activity, to encourage group discussion about public attitudes to poverty and development. You might want to use this as a starting point to introduce the Change the Record research (see section 1) by Bond to other colleagues.

Look at the 3 newspaper headlines below, and discuss the following questions:

- 1.) What does this tell the public about the effectiveness of aid?
- 2.) Do you think this is representative of what the UK public think?



Repeated instances: The Daily Mail has reported on aid being wasted or used doubtfully

b.) Development theories and organisational communication

This is a 45 minute activity to introduce others to the different theories of development, and to support them to make connections between their own organisational work and this theory.

You might want to refer to the Royal Geographical Association theories of development document (see section 1)



Step 1: In groups of 3-4 match the different theories of development to the explanations (5 mins)



<h2>MODERNISATION</h2>	<p>Science and technology can be used to advance industry and stimulate economic growth. Development is achieved when a country has high industrial outputs and exports goods to the world economy.</p>
<h2>DEPENDENCY</h2>	<p>In a globalised world, all countries are interconnected. Some countries are winners of global trade, whilst others are losers. Countries become wealthy by exploiting and under-developing the poorest nations through unfair trade.</p>
<h2>NEOLIBERALISM</h2>	<p>Free global trade can stimulate economic growth and large businesses can profit more without government intervention. Universal development can therefore be achieved through the promotion of 'trade not aid'</p>
<h2>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</h2>	<p>Taking environmental factors into account, sustainable development 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,' according to the Brundtland report.</p>
<h2>HUMAN DEVELOPMENT</h2>	<p>Development cannot be achieved through economic improvement alone. Multiple dimensions (e.g. social, cultural, political) need to be taken into account. Development means individuals have freedom to make life choices.</p>
<h2>POST-DEVELOPMENT</h2>	<p>The rich cannot lift the poor out of poverty. Local communities need to address their own problems, using their own ideas. People have to develop themselves, rather than relying on ill-suited ideas from overseas.</p>

Content adapted from the Royal Geographical Association, activity designed by Think Global

Step 2: Now take a look at 3-6 current and past campaigns/communications/marketing pieces your organisation has released, and answer the following questions (25 mins)

- 1.) What theories of development does it refer to and why?
- 2.) What message does it give the UK public about poverty and development?

Step 3: Using the checklist in **section two**, pick one example of communication from above and discuss it in more detail (15 mins)

You also might want to discuss how this example aligns with your organisational mission/vision.

Section 3: Further research and ideas

UK Public Opinion Monitor

The Institute for Development Studies hosts the UK Public Opinion Monitor (UKPOM) - aimed at understanding how people view life in the UK. While the primary interest is in attitudes towards development issues, the panel aims to position these within broader issues. Find several key reports at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/project/uk-public-opinion-monitor>

Public Attitudes towards Poverty (2014)

This report and video by Joseph Rowntree Foundation explores public attitudes to poverty and how they have changed since 2008. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/public-attitudes-towards-poverty>

Understanding public attitudes to aid and development (2012)

Drawing on workshops around the UK this collaboration between the Institute for Public Policy Research and Overseas Development Institute explores attitudes towards aid. www.odi.org/publications/6651-aid-development-uk-public-opinion-attitudes

Global Generation (2010)

Research report by the International Broadcasting Trust and funded by DfID about how UK young people connect with the world. Find this and others at www.ibt.org.uk/ibt-reports/

Review of using aid funds in the UK to promote awareness of global poverty (2011)

The Central Office of Information aimed to identify whether DFID should continue to use aid funds in the UK to promote awareness of and public involvement in development issues. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/213991/rev-using-fnds-prom-aware-glob-pov.pdf

Perceptions are not reality: The top 10 we get wrong (2013)

Survey by Ipsos MORI on how the public perceive social policy issues. Summary plus reports at <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3188/Perceptions-are-not-reality-the-top-10-we-get-wrong.aspx>

'I am particularly struck by how pertinent it is that we engage the public in a more comprehensive way ie, not just for extraction of funds'

Course participant

Websites

Common Cause, the case for working with values and frames www.valuesandframes.org/

Commonwealth Broadcasting Trust www.cba.org.uk/resources/downloads/

International Broadcasting Trust www.ibt.org.uk/

Dochas <http://www.dochas.ie/standards-excellence-codes-and-guidelines>

The Rules www.therules.org/

'The outstanding question is how to negotiate the short term vs long term benefits of different messaging and the tension between messaging that raises cash and messaging that paints a picture of the effectiveness of development. As an organisation reliant on voluntary income, I think that will be a tough one!'

Course participant

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