What works for migrants: reflections on research practice in the interests of migrants

ICT4D Collective

AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT

This Working Paper summarises the outcomes of a workshop/roundtable held during the MIDEQ Symposium in Rio de Janeiro in September 2023 to explore ways through which research done within the MIDEQ Hub between 2019 and 2023 may have directly benefitted the lives of migrants. This also required us to consider how we know what migrants think about our work, and whether or not they valued our efforts to reduce the inequalities associated with migration. Our exploration focused on four main dimensions:

- How do we really know what migrants think about our work?
- What have we found to be effective ways of gathering empirical evidence about outcomes experienced by migrants?
- What have we found to be effective ways of disseminating our outputs so that migrants benefit from them?
- What are good forms of "output"/intervention to improve migrant lives?

Our discussions also explored seven other wider aspects of the interactions between migrants and researchers that cut across the four themes above: the need to change prejudices; the long-term impact of our work "Five years down the road"; the value of women's groups for social cohesion; the crucial importance of context; modalities of future co-operation among those working in MIDEQ; engaging business communities; and how we archive our experiences and resources. The conclusion draws on these discussions to propose a broad model for considering how researchers can more rigorously seek beneficially to impact the lives of marginalised communities.

1. Introduction

This paper shares experiences from 18 participants in the [MIDEQ Hub](#), a large research programme on migration between countries in Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean, which was designed to transform understandings globally about the relationships between migration, inequality and development, and to translate this

knowledge into policies and practices.[i] Our focus here is to explore ways through which migrants themselves were involved in and shaped our own work, and building on this to suggest good practices that other researchers might draw on in the future to ensure that rhetoric about participatory processes may better be turned into reality.[ii]

MIDEQ researchers gathered in Rio de Janeiro, September 2023

Many, perhaps most, academics[iii] undertake research and write papers not just to develop their own careers, but also because they want their research to influence others and have a wider social, political, economic or cultural impact. This was recognised a decade ago, for example, in the UK by the introduction of "impact" as a factor in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) expert review process which is regularly undertaken by the UK higher education funding bodies.[iv] Significantly, though, this aspect of the change from the previous Research Assessment Exercise process that had begun in 1986, was not universally welcomed by academics when it was first introduced. with many arguing that there remains an important place for "pure" research that is never intended to have such impact. In the latest 2021 review, "Impact" was "defined as the effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia".[v] As research practitioners, albeit from rather different backgrounds, the four authors of this paper are all committed to ensuring that some of the world's poorest and most marginalised people are the immediate, as well as the ultimate, intended, beneficiaries, of much of our research. This does not, though, mean that we

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[i] Full details of the MIDEQ project are at https://www.mideq.org/en/about-us/

[ii] There is already an extensive literature on participatory research in general and Participatory Action Research (PAR) in particular, and some of the material we have drawn upon in our own research includes Bailur, *et al.* (2018), Chambers (1994), Cornish *et al.* (2023), Duea *et al.* (2022), Pound *et al.* (2003), Tacchi *et al.* (2003) and Tacchi *et al.* (2009).

[iii] Throughout this paper, we make a clear difference between "academics" in general, and those of us specifically involved in MIDEQ.

[iv] https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/research-england/research-excellence/ref-impact/

[v] https://ref.ac.uk/guidance-on-results/guidance-on-ref-2021-results/

necessarily welcome all aspects of the REF process, or indeed the influence it has had on distorting research practice in the UK.

The four of us as authors of this paper have all been delighted to participate in the UKRI GCRF funded MIDEQ[vi] Hub (2019-24), which seeks to unpack "the complex and multi-dimensional relationships between migration and inequality in the context of the Global South",[vii] led by Heaven Crawley from Coventry University. The Hub works in six pairs of countries in Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean, and initially had 11 Work Packages, each conducting research on a different aspect of migration between these countries. More than 100 researchers have been involved from different academic and cultural backgrounds and with varying levels of experience.[viii] It is unsurprising, therefore, that there are many different understandings of research and approaches to it amongst not only our academic colleagues but also the many partners with whom we have engaged. Most of us, though, are strongly committed to having a beneficial practical impact on the lives of migrants, and these intentions were carefully incorporated within MIDEQ's overall theory of change model required by the funders[ix].

Each Work Package nevertheless developed its own ways of working within the overall context of MIDEQ's objectives and Theory of Change. Three of the authors of this paper were part of Work Package 9 (WP9) which focused on technology, inequality and migration, and we created our own theory of change in 2020 (see Figure 1) as a contribution to the emergence of the overall MIDEQ Theory of Change.[x] Some of us remain deeply sceptical about the value of such framings, not least because they are not really "theories" as we understand them. Nevertheless, on reviewing this diagram three years later, it is remarkable how well WP9 does seem to have adhered to the process that our framework describes. Seven main ideas and principles lay at the heart of WP9's research-practice:

- We needed to begin by understanding how migrants actually use technology;
- We were fundamentally committed to working with and in support of migrants, rather than on or for them;
- In origin WP9 was one of MIDEQ's three "intervention packages", and so we were specifically charged with "crafting" some kind of digital intervention(s) that could reduce inequalities associated with migration;[xi]
- We had no intention of simply designing a piece of technology based on the research of our colleagues, and then giving it to or imposing it on migrants. One of the earliest lessons we gained from working with migrants was that very few of them use apps (digital applications) that have been specifically designed for migrants;
- We wanted to work collaboratively with migrants and their organisations, in large part so that they would be the direct beneficiaries of our research-

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practice, but also because we believed that this was the only way that any intervention(s) we helped to create could become sustainable;

- We conceived of our main role as being to facilitate migrants and local tech developers in the countries where we were working in crafting something together that they believed would improve migrants' lives; and
- Monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of our research was also a key element so that we could continually try to improve what we were doing, and show any direct impacts that we helped to achieve.

Figure 1: MIDEQ Work Package 9's Theory of Change as at 2020.

The problem we are trying to solve	Key audiences	Entry point to reaching audience	Steps needed to bring about change	Measurable effects	Wider benefits	Long term change as goal
How can digital technologies address inequality in the South-South migration context?	**Migrants**	**Field research with migrants; literature**	Research on understanding needs of migrants and their interest in using digital intervention	Published research results		**Migrants/related stakeholders benefit from the use of digital interventions; digital intervention reduce inequalities in the migration context**
	Governments	Meetings with government officials and dissemination of findings in appropriate formats	**Co-creation of a digital intervention with migrants and local developers building on research findings**	A demonstration project is identified	Better quality and relevant digital interventions are developed	
	NGOs and Recruitment agencies working with migrants	Discussions with NGOs & Recruitment agencies	Carrying out demonstration projects	Demonstration projects are undertaken	Increased global recognition of how best to implement digital interventions in the migration context	
	Researchers	Workshops, publications, events	Revision of intervention in the light of demonstration	Digital intervention is revised	Information about digital intervention for migrants is gained by global community	
			Implementation of digital intervention	A specific digital intervention for migrants/related stakeholders is available		
			Dissemination to migrant communities	**Migrants/related stakeholders are using the digital intervention**		
Assumptions						
Digital technologies are indeed of benefit to and appreciated by migrants	We are persuasive enough so that audiences listen to recommendations	Audiences are willing to participate and interact with us; intervention planning (co-creation activities) is feasible via GCRF funding	Research findings enable the co-creation with migrants and local developers of an appropriate digital intervention	Outputs are seen by migrants/related stakeholders as being worthy of support	The team has sufficient resources for wider dissemination	Migrants/related stakeholder do indeed use the digital intervention; sufficient entities recognise the intervention.

Each of these principles underlay WP9's broad theory of change outlined in Figure 1. We are crafting another paper about our experiences of working within such a complex and large-scale research initiative, and this is not the place to drill down into any detail about the issues we faced, but for the purpose of this paper it is worth highlighting just two of these. First, the COVID outbreak from 2020-2022 seriously affected what we were able to do because of the limitations that it placed on travel, and second we did not have the financial resources ourselves to sustain any long periods of work in the field. The authors of this working paper are all UK-based, two from Italy and two from the UK (although one was born in India); three of us also consider ourselves to be migrants.

The MIDEQ Hub originally had five main commitments:[xii] (1) to produce robust, comparative, widely accessible and widely accessed evidence on what was termed "South-South Migration", inequality and development; (2) to engage directly with policy makers; (3) to build capacity, capability and institutional support in the "Global South"; (4) to communicate the evidence and its implication to a broad range of audiences; and (5) to establish a global network of researchers, policymakers and practitioners. It is interesting to note that this list does not explicitly mention migrants themselves, although many participants in MIDEQ and especially those focused on its intervention packages may have thought that they were working primarily in the interests of migrants. MIDEQ was nevertheless primarily a research initiative funded by the UK's Research and Innovation non-departmental public body.

The final main MIDEQ symposium involving most of its researchers was held in September 2023 in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and brought together around 80 members of the Hub to review its achievements as well as looking at the future of our work. It provided an important opportunity to review the impact that we had all had over the last four-and-a-half years, and began with a useful overview of the different types of activity, outputs and outcomes that members of the Hub had been engaged in during that time. In the order in which they were presented, these included:
- Academic publications and outputs
- Media outputs
- Policy briefs and reports
- Policy roundtables
- Impact interventions.

This ordering is of interest because it highlights both the rich diversity of our intended outputs, and also moves from the outputs that have been most distant to migrants (academic papers) to those that are most immediate (impact interventions). Few migrants will ever read any of our academic papers, but they are a pre-requisite for academic career progression that may in turn help us as academics to gain further research funding in the future.[xiii] We hope that our policy briefs and reports, might one day influence intergovernmental organisations, governments, civil society organisations and private sector companies working with migrants, and thereby have an indirect impact on them (see Jones, 2022). Policy roundtables, conferences and discussions can likewise help build better global understandings of the issues on which we have been

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[xii] Taken from the Hub Director's slide deck "We did it! Now what?" presented at the Hub's inception meeting in Accra in 2019.
[xiii] Although "migrants" is a very broad term and includes privileged migrants who have become academics such as ourselves.

doing research, but these also tend to remain somewhat removed from the lives of the world's most marginalised migrants, internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers.

The four of us were therefore particularly interested to explore during the symposium how the work of MIDEQ (not least through its impact interventions) has directly influenced the lives of migrants, and what the large team had achieved for them across all the work packages in the 12 countries where MIDEQ had a presence. Discussions over the previous year with many colleagues in MIDEQ had also revealed an increasing interest in examining what the direct research impacts of our work have been on the lives of migrants. We therefore convened a two-hour workshop/roundtable discussion at the Rio symposium which aimed to give participants across MIDEQ the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of delivering interventions,[xiv] and especially to try to identify and share good practices in monitoring and evaluation that can help us know what migrants have thought about their experiences of working with us.

2. Method and approach

We, as convenors of the session, wished to maximise the amount of information that could be shared together within the two-hour time period allocated, and at the same time produce a clear output that could subsequently be used as a framework in our future work. Consequently, we chose to use a facilitated ideas-sharing approach to generate a mind-map of our thoughts. Our work focused on four different but interrelated aspects of the overall issue:[xv]

- How do we really know what migrants think about our work? (led by Maria Rosa Lorini)
- What have we found to be effective ways of gathering empirical evidence about outcomes experienced by migrants? (led by Hari Harindranath)
- What have we found to be effective ways of disseminating our outputs so that migrants benefit from them? (led by Giulia Casentini)
- What are good forms of "output"/intervention to improve migrant lives? (led by Tim Unwin)

Initially, we had intended to have four parallel breakout sessions lasting about 40 minutes on each of these four broad themes, and then a general discussion that would bring together all the ideas that had been discussed. However, only between 18 and 20 participants (representing about a seventh of all researchers involved in MIDEQ) attended, and so instead we ran four brainstorming sessions consecutively for all the participants with each lasting between 15 and 20 minutes. If we had run the breakout sessions separately as originally planned, we felt that most of them would have been too small to promote sufficient discussion. While each of the convenors facilitated the discussion for one of the brainstorming sessions (as noted above), another wrote the


[xiv] Across MIDEQ as a whole some 33 different interventions are being delivered by country leads and the work packages with which they were involved.
[xv] We had explored various options for themes in the run-up to the workshop, but these were those that we considered together would be of most interest to our work during the remaining 6 months of MIDEQ's activities and in the future.

ideas onto a mind map, projected onto a wall so that it was visible to all. This enabled participants to see and reflect on what was being said at the time it was being discussed, which in turn prompted further conversations. Again, together with all participants in the workshop, we then sought to identify the five or six main issues that were most pertinent for each of the four questions, and also included a further set of other issues that participants felt were important but lay outside the four broad questions we had proposed at the beginning. After the workshop, we tidied up the ideas-sharing map (see Figure 2),[xvi] and it was distributed to all participants within 24 hours in case they wished to make any corrections or further suggestions while the ideas were fresh in their minds.

Figure 2: Ideas-sharing map generated at the roundtable workshop
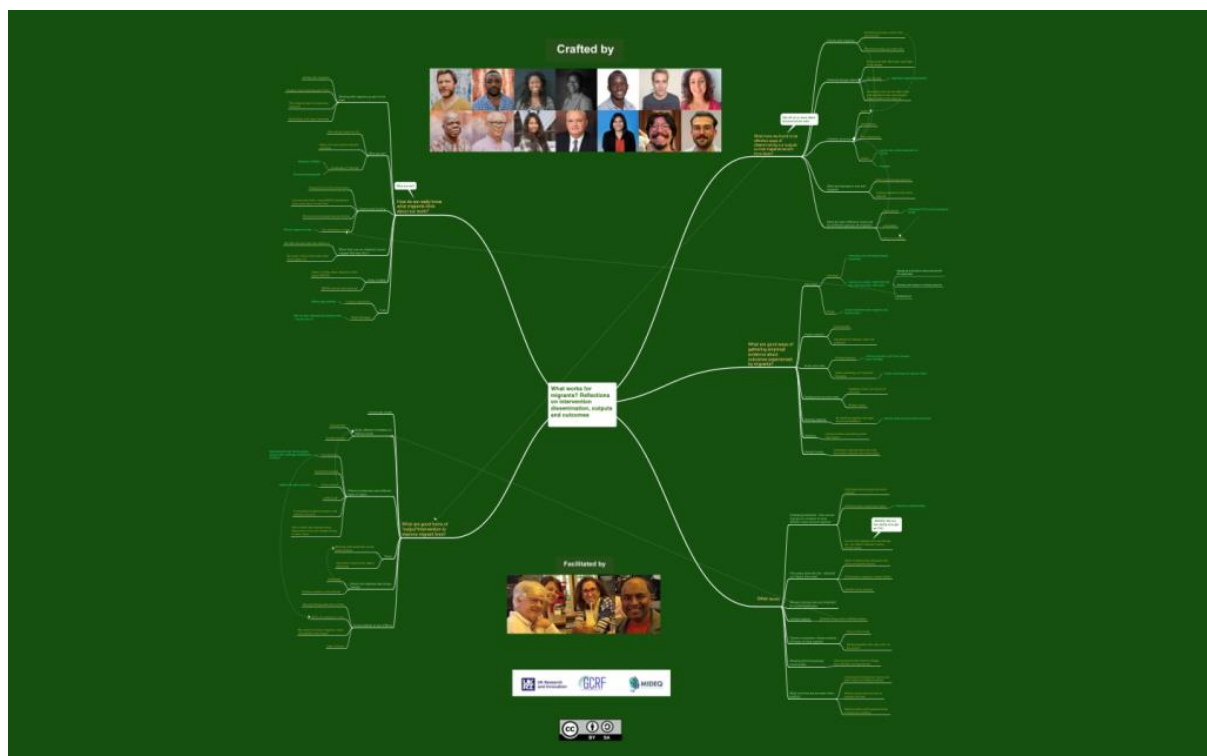
The remainder of this working paper uses this map as a framework for summarising the thoughts of the members of MIDEQ who participated on these issues. These are summarised in the order in which the four themes were discussed.

3. How do we really know what migrants think about our work? (led by Maria Rosa Lorini)

Our reflections in the workshop were in part guided by a common recognition that no single method can guarantee the veracity of any feedback that we receive from the people with whom we work. Indeed, many of us questioned what words such as

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[xvi] A larger, legible, version of this is available at
https://ict4d2004.files.wordpress.com/2023/09/migrants-mm-green-final.pdf.

"veracity", "authentic" of "accurate" feedback from migrants might mean. However, it was agreed that the more trust we build with those with whom we are working, the more likely it is that they will tell us what they really feel in a way that we can understand and appreciate. Some comments during our workshop suggested that researchers might never really know what participants think about the activities and the researchers involved. Others questioned whether this even mattered. Nevertheless, in an attempt to "know" or understand each other, researchers and practitioners can use a combination of techniques, from simpler and more common ones, such as feedback forms, to more complex and enriching ones that are usually built on the relationships created between all those involved as well their personal and professional judgments concerning what might be considered as authentic feedback. The discussion evolved around six inter-related themes.

3.1 Relationship building
The overarching common theme across this element of our discussion was that the better the relationships and trust are between researchers and participating migrants, then the more likely it will be that we will gain accurate and relevant information from them about what they think about our work. The corollary is also that they will have a better understanding of what it is that we are doing, and why we are doing it. Respondents are more likely to stay engaged if there is consistency in the interactions and if they feel that their input is genuinely valued. Creating an effective feedback loop where researchers visibly acknowledge and act upon what migrants say can reinforce sincerity and the sense that the relationship is reciprocal. Direct and open communication is fundamental to the success of any research endeavour. However, it must also be sensitive to the needs of migrants.

It is important to combine formal and informal methods to gain feedback within a mutually supportive relationship framework. One-to-one interviews, both formal and informal, allow for in-depth exploration of migrants' perspectives and experiences. Formal interviews provide a structured platform for gathering insights, while informal conversations offer the freedom for participants to share their thoughts more casually. This multifaceted approach to gathering feedback and information help to ensure that a comprehensive view of their experiences and feedback can be obtained.

It is also crucial for building relationships that migrants actually see and talk with us. During the workshop it was pointed out that many MIDEQ researchers had never visited the countries "on" which they were working, and had only ever interacted with migrants at a distance online. In part this was due to the travel restrictions imposed during the COVID pandemic in 2020-2022, which caused real difficulties in building the relationships necessary for successful feedback. However, the structure of MIDEQ's research with multiple work packages across six corridors made it difficult and expensive for UK-based researchers to visit for any length of time many of the 12 countries in which the research was being carried out (see also section 3.6 below).

Whilst relationship building is important for developing mutual understanding, it also carries with it challenges associated with the formation and ending of such relationships. Indeed, the closer the relationships are, the more difficult are the partings. Emotional energy is invested in building relationships, and it is important that the ways they are managed at the end of the five-year research project are consciously

and carefully planned. As was pointed out during our workshop, many of us have become not just researchers but friends of the migrants with whom we have been working. This is particularly so for the "intervention" work packages whose very essence has been built around working "with" rather than "on" or "about" migrants. These personal connections extend beyond just the research project itself and can lead to long-lasting friendships built on trust, empathy, and shared experiences. Such bonds not only enrich the research process but also underscore the inherent value of these relationships. Nevertheless, it is important that boundaries and expectations are managed carefully and with mutual respect.

3.2 Working with migrants as part of the team
A second related observation made during the workshop, was that it is often easiest to learn what migrants think about our work when they are treated as parts of our teams. The more that migrants get to know about our work by being involved in it, the more likely it is that they will provide genuine and relevant feedback. Open discussion meetings can also be of value in contexts where it is not feasible to ask individual participants for their opinions. Such meetings can provide a valuable platform for participants to share their insights and perspectives, fostering a sense of inclusivity and co-ownership of the research process. Additionally, specific evaluation workshops can further enhance the quality of research by equipping participants with the tools and knowledge critically to assess and contribute to the research's success.   Collaborative approaches not only enrich the research but also strengthen the relationships between everyone involved, ensuring that the research is a joint endeavour that benefits from the collective wisdom of both researchers and participants.

Effective research thrives on collaboration and the active engagement of both researchers and participants. Working together as a team, with open lines of communication and mutual respect, can allow for a richer and more productive research experience for all those involved. Researchers should actively engage in an ongoing dialogue with participants as integral members of their teams. This dialogue includes explaining transparently to migrants the research objectives, the purpose of their involvement, and how their feedback contributes to the study. Regular updates on the progress of the research also play a crucial role in keeping participants informed and engaged. Such proactive communication fosters a sense of partnership, where participants understand the significance of their role and are more inclined to provide sincere and valuable feedback. By nurturing this two-way relationship and maintaining a continuous exchange of information within the team, researchers can not only increase participants' level of involvement but also succeed in accessing other people's thoughts openly and honestly.

3.3 Who are we?
There was much discussion around the basic question of "who" those of us involved in MIDEQ actually think we are, and indeed who others think we might be. It was pointed out that many of us also consider ourselves to be both migrants and researchers. There are therefore significant conceptual challenges if we position ourselves as "others": researchers as opposed to participating migrants. "Othering" also usually involves the very power relationships that some of our research was seeking to challenge.

In the quest for sincere and meaningful feedback (whatever that might mean), and while building relationships with migrants, it might not be enough simply to introduce the research project as researchers or participants; getting to know each other on a personal level might bring about better results for the project as a whole and for the feedback that we seek. This connection becomes especially crucial when researchers share common experiences, such as being migrants themselves in a migration-related study such is MIDEQ. By taking the time to build rapport and trust, researchers acknowledge the shared identity and experiences they may have with the participants. This acknowledgment not only humanizes the research process but also highlights the researchers' empathy and understanding and diminishes the risk of ''othering". It creates a safe space where participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences openly. Knowing each other on a deeper level can go beyond the project itself, and can also help to ensure that the feedback received is sincere, genuine, and reflective of the authentic experiences of all involved.

3.4 When they use our material it would suggest that they like it and appreciate our work. Despite the observations made above, it is evident that we may never really know *directly* what migrants think about us and our research. It is, though, possible to glean some *indirect* ideas about their attitudes to what we are doing, simply by seeing whether or not they use the resources that we produce with (or without) them. Some work packages within MIDEQ, for example, have produced videos and other graphical/visual resources. Others have produced training materials and online content. If migrants do not appreciate and value these resources, they are unlikely to use them. In contrast, if migrants clearly use the skills that we have helped them to gain, and then they go on and use those skills to train other migrants then this would be a positive indication of their appreciation. Within WP9, for example, we have trained migrants about the safe, wise and secure use of digital tech in Nepal and South Africa, and it is particularly exciting to see how some of these mirgants are now going into schools and community settings to train others in these skills.

MIDEQ researchers have engaged with migrants in a very wide range of ways. Some have focused their attention explicitly on seeking to empower migrants through direct skills training. Typical of these have been some of the work by the arts, creative resistance and well-being Work Package which has facilitated musicians and artists in finding new ways of expressing their lives as migrants.[xvii] Others have made videos and documentaries about the lives of migrants,[xviii] and yet others have crafted animated stories to share information about migration and migrant lives.[xix] Our own work in WP9 has responded to migrant requests by training them to produce their own videos, and use their new skills to help others understand issues around migration and the importance of safe, wise and secure usage of digital tech by migrants. Our hunch is that where migrants are directly involved in the production of resources and interventions they are more likely to value them, but this remains an assumption since we have not yet conducted research specifically to evaluate this.

[xvii] See https://www.mideq.org/en/themes/arts-creative-resistance-and-well-being/, https://www.mideq.org/en/blog/creative-explorations-on-access-to-justice and https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/unesco/.
[xviii] https://www.mideq.org/fr/institutions/monash-university-malaysia/, and https://www.mideq.org/en/institutions/instituto-maria-e-jo%C3%A3o-aleixo/.
[xix] https://positivenegatives.org/story/mideq-2/.

3.5 Does it matter what migrants think of us and our work
Another clear area of debate during this section of the workshop was over whether or not it actually matters what migrants think about MIDEQ. This is a complex issue on which there were quite polarised views. At one extreme, MIDEQ could be seen as always ultimately a research process that extracted data from migrants so that researchers in all the countries involved could write academic papers from them, and thereby tangentially influence national and global policies. In such a scenario what migrants think about us may not necessarily matter very much. At the other extreme were those who believed passionately that MIDEQ was an opportunity to be highly innovative, conducting research-practice with migrants that would indeed help them directly improve their lives, and thereby reduce some of the inequalities associated with migration. What migrants thought about this work mattered greatly for those at this extreme.

One of MIDEQ's great strengths was that in practice it included researchers and practitioners with a very wide range of experiences and interests lying across the spectrum between these extremes. The many different strategies and approaches adopted across all the countries and work packages therefore provided MIDEQ members with the opportunities to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. Some developed material of relevance to international agencies, others focused on civil society organisations, yet others sought to work with national governments. Migrants themselves were in reality only one of the "audiences" for our work as a collective whole. Ultimately, the most important judges for most of us may well be the leaders and reviewers of the UKRI GCRF initiative itself. After all, they are the ones for whom we had to produce some of the most detailed and comprehensive reports.

3.6 Challenges with data
A final sensitive issue with which participants grappled in this part of the workshop concerned the quality and quantity of the actual data gathered across MIDEQ's research practices. Different teams collected data in very different ways for varying purposes, and this applies not only to the empirical material gathered "on" or about migrants and migration processes, but also to any data gathered with respect to migrants' thoughts about the value of our work. MIDEQ's devolved structure which was based on country research teams and cross-cutting work packages supported the possibility for researchers who were based in one specific country to connect to the network created and nurtured by other country teams. Researchers who could not go into the field[xx] had to rely on data collected by other colleagues and could not therefore gain direct feedback specifically generated by a relationship with migrants based on respect and empathy for the participants' experiences and opinions. Ultimately, we have all had to rely on large amounts of data gathered by other people from very different research traditions and with diverse experiences. This requires a considerable amount of trust, and with hindsight we might all have spent more time building such trust with each other over the duration of the project. Challenges with implementing the MIDEQ-wide quantitative survey indicate that it was by no means always easy to achieve the

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[xx] It would for example be very interesting to explore how many of MIDEQ's 12 countries each of MIDEQ's researchers had visited both before and during MIDEQ's research activities. We suspect that most will have visited rather few of the countries, and we are therefore relying largely on very diverse experiences to construct an overall tapestry of understanding.

anticipated uniformity of research practice for which we had originally hoped. This conclusion may well also apply across other aspects of our work.

4. What have we found to be effective ways of gathering empirical evidence about outcomes experienced by migrants? (led by G. Hari Harindranath)

It is important to begin this section by reiterating that the workshop discussion on this theme was primarily concerned with ways of measuring impact on migrants' lives and their experiences of interacting with us. This is rather different from more traditional academic models of measuring impact in terms of journal citations and impact factors (see Section 1 above). Our discussion evolved around seven different ways of gathering empirical evidence about the outcomes experienced by migrants.

4.1 Interviews and group discussions

Interviews provide an important means to capture important qualitative evidence to help us understand the impact of our work with migrants. In the context of MIDEQ, these often took the form of interviews with household heads but also family members, not least because in some cultures power, distance and patriarchy strongly affect responses. Interactive group interviews and focus groups can also allow migrants better to articulate their views and challenge the views of others. Interviewing community leaders involved in the project may also be a good way to capture impact. Building trust through two-way interviews with community leaders enabled them to ask questions of us as researchers, and helped them to understand our purposes in undertaking our research. One outcome expressed by such leaders was the hope that we would share our results with those in authority at all scales to help change their attitudes and thus behaviours. For the community leaders, our work was thus an opportunity for them to try to change existing power structures.

Gathering such qualitative feedback nevertheless requires researchers to be active listeners as impact can take many forms and not all of those may be explicitly recognised. For instance, in the work of WP9 in Nepal, a throwaway remark by a tech developer – "this project has connected me to people and organisations that I would never have connected with...and I will continue to support them" - captured a type of impact that many others had not explicitly recognised or articulated. Yet, when this statement was made by the tech developer, other organisations validated it and commented that this was indeed the case. The coming together of diverse organisations towards the collective goal of helping migrants was indeed an important impact in its own right.

4.2 Feedback forms and notes

Feedback forms are often the mainstay of gathering information about people's experiences, and this is no different for our MIDEQ impact interventions. An important suggestion to emerge from the workshop was that although using feedback forms at each stage of any intervention work is important, it may be even more so if we craft the forms together with those who are the intended beneficiaries of those interventions. This is perhaps the single most important way of ensuring that we are indeed capturing impacts that matter most to those with whom we are working. Notes written by both

migrants and researchers during meetings and feedback sessions may also be a route to capture passing remarks (see 4.1) or comments not written down elsewhere on official forms. These can then be validated through further discussions with participants.

4.3 Digital analytics
Quantitative analytics from apps such as Google Analytics and social media views, shares, likes, and the number of followers can provide valuable evidence for the reach (both volume and geographic) of our impact initiatives, especially in the context of digital interventions. Where we are facilitating the creation of such interventions (such as websites or short-form videos on social media, as in the case of WP9), digital means of collecting impact data can offer immediacy and help set up a virtuous cycle between impacts (for example, in terms of views and likes) and further dissemination based on the popularity of the digital interventions demonstrated by the analytics.

4.4 Audio and video
Audio and video feedback can be a great source of authentic and direct feedback from respondents in their own words, and offers a very different kind of evidence to the quantitative feedback on impact offered by digital analytics. In our work for WP9, for example, we have captured qualitative feedback through short-form videos by migrants in which they talk specifically about the impact of our collective work with them.[xxi] Recordings of our training sessions and focus groups can also be a rich source of feedback on impact.

4.5 Working together
Researchers often fail sufficiently to involve centrally those for whom intervention work is undertaken, or may only involve them at specific stages such as at the end of each stage of an intervention, or after a prototype has already been created in a lab. But this misses the point in relation to "working with" those affected by the interventions. Working together and collectively crafting interventions can offer valuable opportunities for continuous feedback. Although the lack of adequate time and resources may get in the way of this, it is a goal worth striving for, especially with the availability of digital means of communication even though this cannot entirely replace the richness of in-person, face to face interactions. The development of trusted, long-lasting relationships with and between the relevant, diverse stakeholders who can support migrants and family members might itself serve as a key impact that lasts well beyond the project timeline.

4.6 Visual format
Another interesting practice that was discussed during our session was the use of visual materials such as graphics and pictures to elicit responses from participants. This can focus the respondent's mind on specific issues on which researchers want feedback. Much research focuses on the use of words as in feedback forms or interviews, but such visual methods can be an excellent way to elicit valuable responses from those who think more visually or who may be illiterate.

[xxi] https://ict4d.org.uk/technology-inequality-and-migration/interventions/

4.7 Indirect modes

Finally in this section, it always pays to consider the wider networks in which an intervention is embedded for any mention of the impact of our work. Indeed, testimonials are often a central plank of the UK's REF exercise (Section 1 above). Comments or mentions of our work either by our partners or others who may have come across it, or benefited indirectly from it can often serve as a stepping stone to fully-fledged testimonials. This is particularly the case with organisational partners and international agencies with which we might work. It is also valuable when migrants themselves give testimonials, either in writing or through video recordings.

5. What have we found to be effective ways of disseminating our outputs so that migrants benefit from them? (led by Giulia Casentini)

Five main methods of effectively disseminating research outputs in the interests of migrants emerged from our discussions, involving both direct interventions in the field and more indirect actions. Our discussions revealed clearly that the work packages involved in MIDEQ have different ideas about dissemination: some focused on articles, blogs and conferences, others have implemented intervention activities in the field, whilst yet others have chosen to write academic papers. We believe that coherent and collective action focusing explicitly on dissemination is an important aspect of ensuring successful impact. Indeed, more structured attention towards sharing and discussing different practices of dissemination used by researchers in the field can enrich the potential of research to change the lives of migrants.

5.1 Using different methods for different groups of migrants

As highlighted several times in this working paper, differentiation of the methods and instruments used to disseminate our outputs is crucial, due to the highly diversified composition of the potential migrant beneficiaries. Accessibility (in its many forms) of our approaches has emerged as one of the most important characteristics, especially for the most marginalised groups within which many people are often illiterate. In such cases, the use of short videos, animations and podcasts have proven to be effective. Access to technology and electricity must, though, be considered when delivering such outputs. Attention to language is also essential: translation into local languages and the production of tools produced by migrants in their own languages are important for delivering messages and fostering discussion about the outputs presented.

5.2 Direct activities with migrants

Many researchers participating in the workshop expressed the need to carry out direct activities in migrant communities, especially in those communities that are directly collaborating with them in gathering data through methods such as interviews and focus groups. The involvement of communities from the beginning of field research is essential, and researchers must choose the optimal methods to return the value of their collaboration through activities that make migrants feel part of the process, facilitating the effective dissemination of outputs. In this sense, involving community leaders has proven to be a valuable strategy to promote the collective interest in the project, by providing constant feedback and restitution of the research results through presentations and the delivery of materials (such as books, podcasts, and short videos) that must be understandable by different groups (see point 5.1). Other researchers

underlined the importance of selecting a representative from each group (for example, by neighbourhood, ethnic belonging, work, or gender) and making them always aware of the activities of the project, and especially about the outcomes of the field research (such as publications, documentaries, and conferences). Direct activities with migrants can also be a good method to disseminate other information that might be useful for the community, such as legal advice concerning rights to work, to obtain regularisation, and the situation of their children with respect to access to citizenship rights. Some researchers highlighted the need to be attentive towards the needs of the interlocutors who had been chosen for dissemination, because in some cases the presence of "middlemen" has turned out to reduce the potential of community empowerment processes, whereby community members need to be able to represent and speak about themselves.

5.3 Indirect activities through other actors
The involvement of external actors and stakeholders in the dissemination of research outputs was perceived by the majority of researchers participating in the workshop as being their most important activity. Various actors at different levels have been involved during the years in which MIDEQ has operated. First, the inclusion of civil society organisations, especially migrants' organisations, has proven to be important for fostering dissemination both at a local level among migrants, and at the higher level, in the local and international political dimension. The engagement of government ministries in the restitution of results from the research, and also of international organisations such as UN agencies and international NGOs, seems to represent one possible way to make dissemination effective. These actors are crucial in shaping global and national policies on migration, and their involvement in the reception of the outcomes of the MIDEQ research findings could have a positive impact on future decisions intended to improve the condition of migrants. Disseminating the outcomes of our research through policy papers, working papers and other contributions directly addressing policies on migration that our research work has shown to be problematic for people on the move, could influence policy makers and invigorate the debate. These activities could have bigger impact on migrants' lives in the long run compared with other means of dissemination discussed in this section.

5.4 Creating resources
Many researchers at the workshop considered that the creation of resources that can be shared within migrant communities, circulated by them, and that remain in the hands of migrants as being very important. Many country research teams have produced books, documentaries, animations, videos, and art/photo exhibitions. Translating field and academic knowledge into artistic performances can likewise enhance dissemination possibilities, especially when migrants are involved in the production of these resources, or in the vision and discussion around them, especially when it involves visual art and thus becomes available and accessible to a wide audience (see 5.1). Recording and sharing these resources were described as powerful ways to pass the torch, making the process of dissemination much more effective and, possibly, sustainable in the long run.

5.5 Skills and Training
Dissemination of research outputs can become even more valuable when it comes to reinforcing skills and building training activities delivered by migrants themselves. The

delivery of training on access to health resources and wellbeing for migrants, for example, has a positive impact on the lives of many communities, as does the training migrants to train other migrants.

6. What are good forms of "output"/intervention to improve migrant lives? (led by Tim Unwin)

Six broad issues emerged from our workshop discussions about the forms of output that collectively we considered to have had most value in positively benefitting the lives of migrants involved in our interventions. Many of these seem self-evident, but nevertheless often remain insufficiently addressed in similar research-led development initiatives.

6.1 Different audiences require different kinds of outputs
This is a truism of any good communication strategy, but it is all too often ignored in much academic research-practice. The same piece of writing, for example, is unlikely to be equally suitable for influencing other academics, *and* policy makers *and* migrants themselves. To this day, far too many academics still think that senior policy makers have the time to read their academic papers, full of the latest nuances and intellectual complexity. Likewise, a video produced by migrants for other migrants may seem very mundane to academics, claiming the highest levels of wisdom gleaned from their years of studying what makes a good video. Members of MIDEQ prioritised six main types of audience and issues that need considering under this heading:

- *The funder*: UKRI GCRF (Global Challenge Research Fund). All researchers have to be able to provide good evidence for their funders, in a format required by them– a process that is largely irrelevant to migrants, but essential for future funding and lesson sharing.
- *Civil Society organisations*. There was widespread agreement that working with good and relevant civil society organisations on the ground is important for a range of reasons, but especially because these can hold governments to account and they often also challenge established political, social and economic interests. We need to be focused on the varying types of evidence that these organisations require, and learn from them about the styles that they find most helpful.
- *Community groups*. These usually work very closely with migrants and frequently welcome supportive suggestions, especially when they have also been involved in the design and delivery of an initiative. It is important, though, for materials to be shared with them in the styles and languages best suited to their needs.
- *Policy makers*. These have a key role to play in shaping national and global practice on the ground, and it may well be useful to provide them with clear and simple toolkits. In most cases, though, they are interested in the policy implications of research from trusted sources, rather than in the details of the research itself. Again, a mistake that many academics make is to write policy briefs that contain far too much detail about the intricacies of their own research, thus obscuring the necessary clarity of any policy implications. In general, scientists are usually quite skilled in writing about the positive (what is), but rarely have good skills in crafting the normative (what should be).

- *Turning academic research papers into relevant practice.* This issue underlies several of the above comments, and workshop participants recognised that some academics find it very difficult to turn their papers either into materials that policy makers and others can use to create good practices, or indeed to implement good practice themselves having written the papers. Part of the answer to this is quite simple: one should never try to turn an academic paper directly into policy and practice. Instead, policy papers and practical interventions should be designed or written from scratch in completely different ways, and using very different skills from those required to get a paper published in a top international journal.
- *The time-lag between writing policy briefs or conventional papers and any ultimate benefits for migrants on the ground.* A focus on policy briefs and academic papers alone is very unlikely to have direct impacts on the ground for migrants during the life-span of a research project. Moreover, once research funding ceases for a project, it is unlikely that any subsequent monitoring and evaluation will be done, and no knowledge about its ultimate impacts is ever likely to be recorded. The implication here is that either funding should be made available for evaluation studies to be undertaken for a period of years following the completion of a project, or academics and partners should be much more active on the ground working with the intended ultimate beneficiaries early on in a project's life-span.

6.2 Scale: different modalities at different levels.

This is closely allied to the above comments about audiences, but we felt that it was also important to emphasise that researcher-practitioners need to think about how to influence change at a range of different scales from the individual migrant or single community, through the local, regional and national scales, up to the international level. Different kinds of intervention are necessary at different scales. At a very basic level, documents for local level interventions need to be written in the relevant local languages and fully contextualised into local cultures, whereas those at an international level ideally need to be written in the six official languages of the UN.

6.3 Relying on others to take our work forward

The workshop participants recognised that in practice many academics concentrate mainly on writing papers for highly respected journals in the hope that through doing so others will then take the findings forward. We, as the four authors of this paper, have some concerns about the moral dilemmas this presents. We are unsure that we can simply rely on others to implement good practices based on our academic papers. Instead, during the duration of a project we must work very closely with partners and relevant other organisations to ensure that they are well equipped to deliver subsequent interventions that will indeed improve the lives of migrants. Too much research is still undertaken with data being extracted from poor communities and used to build the careers of elite and affluent academic researchers, rather than helping to improve the lives of any other intended beneficiaries.

6.4 Direct action

Three particular groups of people were identified in the workshop as being worthy of more engagement by researchers interested in effecting change: politically active youth groups, journalists and human rights advocates. These are undoubtedly important, but

building relationships and trust with them takes time. Rather few academics invest in, or necessarily have the skills or inclination to pursue such work, but this is an area where researchers increasingly need to focus if they do indeed wish to influence change in the interest of migrants.[xxii]

6.5 Achieving sustainability in our efforts.
Participants identified four specific ways to help make our interventions more sustainable:

- *Actively sharing our findings with other entities*, and continuing to do so through a range of media (including social media) long after the duration of the project itself.
- *Working more closely with NGOs and civil society*. As discussion above in Section 6.2, we need to work very closely with civil society organisations, NGOs and community groups who engage actively with migrants so that they are knowledgeable about our work and can translate it into relevant good practices on the ground. This does not, though, just happen. Much care and attention need to be extended in building and retaining such relationships with these organisations, and they need to be sustained beyond the end of project funding.
- *Open Science*. As academic researchers we need to share our findings as openly and widely as possible. This goes far beyond simply publishing our research in Open Journals, which are mostly rarely read by those we wish to influence. We need to use as many different media channels as possible to help disseminate our research findings, and we need to think carefully about how best to do this to influence the diverse audiences mentioned in Section 6.2.
- *Involving migrants in our work throughout its duration*. Many MIDEQ researchers have worked closely with migrants and migrant organisations, involving them in shaping and implementing their interventions. However, those of us in WP9 fully recognise that we have barely scratched the surface in doing this, and under different circumstance we would very much have liked to have done much more work on the ground with migrants themselves. This is about what one of us refers to as academics being the servants of the poor and marginalised.[xxiii] We appreciate, though, that this is not an approach that sits agreeably with the interests of many academics beyond MIDEQ in the richer countries of the world,[xxiv] and may well be much more akin to the perspectives of the well-intentioned civil society organisations with whom we have also been working.

6.6 The value of community media
A final brief area that we collectively agreed on as being worthy of much further consideration as an intervention through which we can help improve migrants' lives is community media, including TV, radio and local social media communities. Much good

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[xxii] This was even though those of us involved in WP9 have largely eschewed journal paper publications, preferring instead to invest our time, energy and funding in working on the ground directly with migrants and migrant organisations. For further details of the sorts of interventions we have been facilitating, see https://ict4d.org.uk/technology-inequality-and-migration/. Interestingly, there was rather little discussion in this part of the workshop specifically around how we work with migrants themselves, and what kind of interventions we should pursue in their interests. Possibly this was because these had already been discussed in the previous sections as reported above.
[xxiii] See Unwin (2019) Servants of the poor https://unwin.wordpress.com/2019/04/16/servants-of-the-poor-wsis-talkx/, and Unwin (2017).
[xxiv] Note that this refers to academics in general and not necessarily those within MIDEQ.

research and practice has been done in this space,[xxv] and it is a field that could be of real interest as a follow-on initiative building out of the work of MIDEQ.

As this summary of the fourth conversation theme indicates, most of the discussion in this part of the workshop was focused on indirect pathways through which members of MIDEQ have been seeking to improve the lives of migrants. Rather little of the conversation focused specifically on interacting directly with migrants themselves to help improve their lives. This presents very real challenges for evidence building. How do we know, for example, the number of migrants who have actually benefitted from one of our policy briefs that may have been read by a senior policy official in a UN agency? Ideally, specific monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be put in place at each stage of the influencing chain to be able to gauge even an approximate level of influence.

7. Other issues

Seven other issues that could not easily be grouped into the above four sections also arose during our reflections about how our research practice can be shaped more in the interests of migrants, and these are summarised below:

7.1 Changing prejudices

The need to change existing prejudices about migrants in the societies in which we live and work was recognised as being very important, but it is something that not many of those contributing to the workshop had yet focused on directly. It nevertheless seems logical based on our research that the development of positive online courses and other materials that could readily be shared and disseminated through varying media formats within the wider communities in which migrants are living could be a valuable way of addressing this. The difficult circumstances that many migrants encounter often intersect with other forms of prejudice, and this points to the need for researchers to address much wider social issues relating to poverty and marginalisation if they wish to have a beneficial impact on migrants' lives.

7.2 "Five years down the road"

There were contrasting views amongst those attending the workshop as to what the long-term impacts of our engagements with migrants might be and how we should try to measure them. On the one hand were those who suggested that any impact will be unlikely to appear for five years or more because that is the length of time that it would take for academic papers and policy reports to filter through the "policy system" to shape change on the ground. However, others had a more positive perspective and suggested that material we are already sharing through the Internet will have an immediate afterlife, especially if the migrants with whom we have been working can themselves carry forward the production of relevant videos and other materials on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram that are already being widely used.

[xxv] See, for example, the extensive work done by the Commonwealth of Learning in their archive at https://www.col.org/news-type/community-media/.

7.3 The value of women's groups for social cohesion

Women's networks and groups are crucially important for social cohesion well beyond the context of migration, and therefore may have a significant role in helping to translate our research findings into practices that are of direct beneficial impact for migrants. This is an important area for future enquiry and engagement.

7.4 Context matters

The observation that things happen differently in different places has been a recurring theme throughout this report, but it is worth emphasising as a specific issue in its own right. Contextualisation goes far beyond just translating "universal" documents or videos into local languages and using locally filmed imagery; it requires thinking locally from the very beginning. What is of most importance to members of a migrant's family "left behind" in Nepal is very different from what matters most to an Ethiopian migrant in South Africa. This means that most interventions need to be developed from the particular needs and aspirations of specific groups of migrants, sharing good practices drawn from wider experiences in similar contexts elsewhere in conceptualisation, design and crafting them. It also demands that all interventions should be designed from the beginning with migrants themselves.

7.5 Future co-operation

Successful teams and interventions depend heavily on the personalities involved and the structures that are created to ensure that robust and effective management processes are in place. It was recognised during the workshop that the MIDEQ project has been a learning experience for most of those involved, and that different research constellations are likely to emerge once the original funding has ceased. Some corridors and work packages will probably continue to work together and seek funding for future initiatives on the ground in different parts of the world. Others may continue to interact and share ideas and information through informal networks. It is our hope in writing this report that future such engagements will always place migrants themselves at the heart of our work. If we are to serve migrants, our academic work must always begin with them and serve their needs and aspirations.

7.6 Engaging business communities

It was widely recognised amongst the workshop participants that our research and practice in MIDEQ has not engaged sufficiently with the business communities that migrants often rely on for employment and thus economic well-being. Most of our external relationships have been with researchers in other universities and institutions, civil society organisations, and international agencies. However, and related to some of the issues touched on in Section 7.1 above, it is very important that we do engage with private sector companies should we wish to help reduce the inequalities associated with migration. Based on the experiences that some work packages have encountered in discussion with businesses, it is evident that it takes many discussions and a considerable amount of time and effort to build the necessary understanding and trust between employers, researchers and migrant organisation for such collaboration to be effective. It is, though, a task worth pursuing.[xxvi]

[xxvi] This approach is also recognised in the tripartite constitution and practice of the ILO, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---multi/documents/publication/wcms_094386.pdf.

7.7 Archiving our experiences and resources

Some of our work with migrants has had direct and immediate impact on their lives, but the lasting impact of the experiences that they have had with us may not be known for many years. Much of this will remain unknown and unrecorded, but this does not mean that it is unimportant. One of the reasons for writing this report was to capture our multiple reflections and current understandings of ways through which we can know what benefits migrants may have gained from our interventions, and share these among a wider audience of those concerned with reducing the inequalities associated with migration. However, it is also very important for us all to consider how what we have done in terms of interventions will be archived and made available to migrants and other researchers in the future, not least so that the latter can learn from our mistakes. Three specific issues were raised in the workshop around archiving. First, there is a need to ensure that the MIDEQ website can continue to be readily available to a wide range of users, and be updated where necessary. However, a vast amount of work, especially relating to interventions on the ground has not been recorded on this website, and it is not easy to conceptualise how migrants' experiences could best be represented in this way, although sharing videos of these experiences may go some way to achieving this. Second, it is therefore important for all of us to seek to archive what we have done individually and communally, preferably in a range of formats including websites, portals, videos, community media, blogs and other social media outlets, particularly ones that migrants can easily access. While academic papers are archived through the journals in which they are published, few such papers will have substantial impact on the lives of migrants. The lasting archive will be the living legacy of the continuing ways through which the migrants whose lives we have touched continue to share their ideas and experiences with each other. Finally, it is important that those of us who wish to continue working together should consider creating collaborative online spaces where we can indeed do so, albeit being scattered across the world.

8. Conclusions

> "Academic researchers and people from civil society organisations often come and ask us to answer surveys and questionnaires. But we never see them again when they go away, nothing happens and our lives remain the same. When is this going to change?"

The above refrain is one often heard by researchers working with some of the world's poorest and most marginalised communities. One of us first heard it in the early 1980s and has been haunted by it ever since. Others heard it repeated again during recent MIDEQ meetings with migrants and refugees in Malaysia in November 2023. The reality is that most academic research "on" others usually serves the interests of the researchers more than it does the "others". This is especially so when working with migrants in some of the economically poorest and most marginalised parts of the world. MIDEQ was in part conceived to try to change these power relationships, and develop new ways of engaging with migrants in *their* interests rather than our own. Our roundtable-workshop involved around 15% of MIDEQ's researchers and sought to reflect on these issues. We were a self-selecting group, and it is likely that we consisted

of those within MIDEQ who were most concerned about these issues.[xxvii] It is nevertheless remarkable how many thoughts and ideas emerged in just a two-hour session on the hot morning of 20th September in Rio de Janeiro, and the four rapporteur-authors hope that we have summarised those discussions as accurately as possible based on the mind-map that we all created together that day.

The above sections have summarised many important themes that were raised during the discussions, and we recognise that these are not exhaustive. It is also difficult to prioritise them into any order of significance or importance. In effect, an overarching conclusion to be drawn from this is that researchers need to take a broad and holistic approach to considering how best to work in the interests of migrants (and other marginalised communities) so as to reduce inequalities. Our mind map (Figure 2) can perhaps serve as a check-list for others embarking on a similar enterprise. However, we have also brought together these discussions into the overall model presented in Figure 3 below, which seeks to illustrate the various levels of emphasis and influence within MIDEQ's research practice (and we imagine in the practice of many other academic researchers involved in similar cross-sectoral research).

Figure 3: Tentative model of influence of MIDEQ research
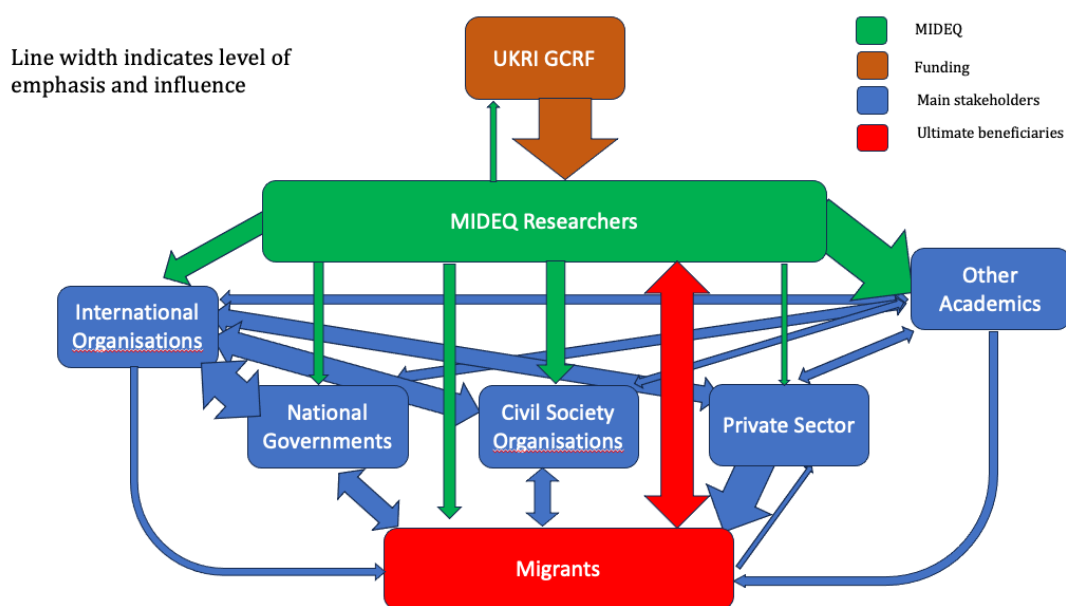
The width of the arrows in Figure 3 represents an approximation at outlining both how we see MIDEQ's approaches to influencing the lives of migrants by reducing the inequalities associated with migration over the last four-and-a-half years, and also where our main emphasis within MIDEQ has been.

The brown section shows that the UKRI GCRF played a significant role in shaping what we did in MIDEQ, with the green arrow suggesting that we may also in turn have had some influence on our funders. At this stage it is appropriate once again that we

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[xxvii] We also remember on the day feeling somewhat disappointed that not more people had attended the session, and that we had to run it in an attenuated format compared with that which we had originally envisaged. However, we also very much appreciated that there were other parallel sessions ongoing, and that it was difficult for colleagues to choose which sessions to attend.

should all thank Heaven Crawley and her team for leading the funding application and bringing us together within MIDEQ. Without their leadership we would never have had this opportunity to undertake the diversity of work that we have achieved, and also to reflect on our practices as represented in our Rio de Janeiro workshop and this working paper.

The green colours represent our approximation of the relative balance of emphasis of our work in MIDEQ and closely follows the listing noted above in Section 1 that was used during the introduction session of the final overall MIDEQ symposium in Rio de Janeiro.[xxviii] Most of our emphasis seems to have been on our relationships with other academic researchers (as reflected in our academic publications and networks), but we have also clearly tried to engage with international agencies and civil society organisations. Rather less emphasis would seem to have been placed on engaging mutually beneficially with national governments and with migrants themselves. Much of our "research-practice" has remained extractive; the research may have been in our interests more than it has been in the interests of migrants, at least in the short term.

The blue arrows seek to estimate the broad levels of influence and interaction between different sector stakeholders and migrants. We propose that the private sector (as employers and exploiters of migrant labour) probably has most influence here, followed by governments (providing the legislation and regulation) and civil society organisations (working directly with migrants and holding governments to account). International agencies (developing international law and sharing good practices) and academics have a much less immediate and direct influence on migrant lives on the ground. Our quite strong relationships in MIDEQ with civil society organisations who play a relatively influential role in supporting migrants would thus seem to have been a sensible and wise means of trying to reach our goal of reducing inequalities. Figure 3 would, though, suggest that our academic emphasis is unlikely to have a major short-term impact on migrants' lives, and we might also in hindsight have sought to engage more comprehensively with private sector companies employing migrants.[xxix] The indirect role of our interactions with international agencies, which in turn have quite influential direct links with governments, civil society organisations and the private sector also seem to have been well-directed, even if international agencies themselves may have rather a small and indirect role in directly affecting migrants' lives.

The red part of this model formed the focus for our discussions at the roundtable-workshop in Rio de Janeiro and is the main concern of this working paper. Our emphasis in the workshop was primarily on the migrants themselves and the ways that members of the MIDEQ team have interacted and supported them. Our belief that this should be the main focus for all research-practice that claims to be committed to serving the interests of poor and marginalised communities such as (many) migrants

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[xxviii] It also relates to MIDEQ's overall Theory of Change, although represents this in rather a different way to illustrate the primary interest of the workshop/roundtable on how our work may have directly impacted on the lives of migrants.

[xxix] Some work packages and country team did indeed seek to engage with companies, but these relationships were not easy to build and required considerable time and effort. The oppositional ideological stance between many social scientists and companies often makes building such relationships extremely difficult.

and refugees is represented by the size of the arrow. This is a normative and aspirational depiction, since the four authors of this report strongly believe that much greater emphasis should be given to these relationships than is usually the case in academic research. Participants in our workshop were a self-selecting group, and also generally shared such a view as reflected in the discussions reported above, but we recognise that it may be one with which some of our colleagues in MIDEQ are less convinced. MIDEQ has indeed achieved many examples of close and valuable interactions directly with migrants, but it remains to be seen quite how much lasting impact this will achieve. The directional emphasis on the red arrow in Figure 3 is also very important, because it highlights that those of us who have indeed spent time with migrants "in the field" have had our own lives significantly transformed through such interactions. We dare to suggest that the influence that they have had on our lives may well be more than the influence we have had on their lives.[xxx]

As rapporteurs and authors we hope that those who participated in the roundtable-workshop recognise the contents of this working paper as an accurate reflection of our discussions. We appreciate, though, that the experiences of specific country teams and work packages within MIDEQ all differed significantly, and that these conclusions will not apply to every instance or iteration of our work. However, we hope that it will provoke further discussion within the community of academic researchers and practitioners in the field of migration research, and will enable future researchers to learn from our experiences and thereby enhance the benefits that marginalised migrants can gain from such research.

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Acknowledgements

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[xxx] Should there be sufficient interest among our colleagues we would be interested in crafting a future working paper that draws on our reflections to illustrate how our collective knowledge within MDEQ has actually been shaped by the migrants with whom we have worked.

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2. Contribution to conceptual framing, workshop moderation, and first author of one section (listed here in alphabetical order): *Giulia Casentini*, MIDEQ WP1 and WP3, Section 5 (School of Oriental and Africa Studies, London, UK); *G. "Hari" Harindranath*, MIDEQ WP9, Section 4 (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK); *Maria Rosa Lorini*, MIDEQ WP9, Section 3 (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK).

3. The above authors have merely sought to elicit and then bring together the thoughts and experiences of the following workshop participants who all contributed to the ideas contained in this paper (listed in alphabetical order of surnames): *Dabiré Bonayi* (University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso), *Sheril Bustaman* (Monash University Malaysia), *Jason Gagnon* (OECD), *Fana Gebresenbet* (IPSS, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia), *Ayman Halasa* (IRC KHF, Jordan), *Baindu Kallon* (Coventry University, UK), *Adrian Kitimbo* (IOM), *Heloisa Melino* (IMJA, Brazil), *Caroline Nalule* (Coventry University, UK), *Jan Onoszko* (Brazil), *Dominic*

Persinger (AHRC, UK), *Danilo Sato* (IMJA, Brazil) *Priyasha Shrestha* (NISER, Nepal), and *Yeoh Seng Guan* (Monash University Malaysia).
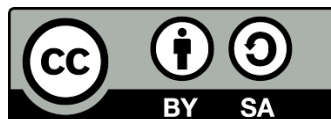

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