

The **Northumbria University's Centre for Global Development (CGD)** brings together academics, practitioners and students to promote research, consultancy, teaching, training and public engagement on issues of global poverty and inequality, the communities and individuals who experience this, and the policies, practices and approaches that seek to address it. **Check out our LinkedIn page: @NUGlobalDev**

**Welcome to the CGD newsletter!** We hope to give a flavour of some of the activities we've been involved in over the past few months. If you would like any more information about any of our activities or programmes, please do get in touch.



## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

### DignArte Cimarrona: Participatory Mapping and Upcoming Community Workshops in Esmeraldas

**DignArte Cimarrona** is a feminist, decolonial, and anti-racist research project that develops art-based approaches to understanding the spatial and racialised nature of gender-based violence (GBV) in the context of protracted crises in Esmeraldas, Ecuador. The project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of their programme, 'Developing innovative approaches to gender-based violence', and is led by Prof Katy Jenkins from Centre for Global Development, in partnership with the Mujeres de Asfalto Collective, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and FLACSO, Ecuador.

In September 2025, the DignArte Cimarrona project team met in Mindo, Ecuador, to carry out the first participatory training workshop on participatory mapping with 21 peer researchers from different cantons of Esmeraldas.

The project uses participatory mapping to critically and creatively explore the knowledge, experiences, and everyday lives of Black/Afro-descendant, racialised women and LGBTQ+ communities in Esmeraldas. From feminist, decolonial, and anti-racist perspectives, this method is conceived as a collective space to share knowledge, recognise local territorial experiences, and question the 'official' maps that often omit the narratives of Black, Afro-descendant, and racialised women, and other marginalised groups.

Over three days of work, the peer researchers engaged in a collaborative process of learning and reflection on how to create maps that not only represent territory, but also express memories, emotions, bodies, and lived experiences connected to the idea of thinking of safe spaces.

In the coming weeks, the peer researchers will take these activities back to their own communities, where they will facilitate participatory mapping workshops together with women and LGBTQ+ participants. This marks the beginning of a new stage of the project, in which the knowledge collectively built in Mindo will expand into the communities of Esmeraldas.



Photos by Sophia Valle-Cornibert & Inés García.

## WELCOME!

A big hello and welcome to all those joining us over the last few months.

Welcome to Laura Hirst, new post-doctoral researcher. Laura is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Global Development (CGD), where she contributes to research and projects as part of the Northumbria Peak of Research Excellence on Volunteering, Humanitarian Crises and Development. Drawing on an academic background in anthropology and geography, her PhD research explored fire risk and disaster justice in Nairobi, as part of an ESRC CASE studentship with Operation Florian, a UK fire and rescue humanitarian organisation.

We also welcomed Zohreh Fakhari and Aishath Green as new PhD researchers in CGD and hope to hear more about their work in the upcoming newsletters!

And a huge welcome to all our new MSc Global Development and Disaster Management & Sustainable Development students.

WELCOME ALL !



## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

### RECLAMA Project toolkit

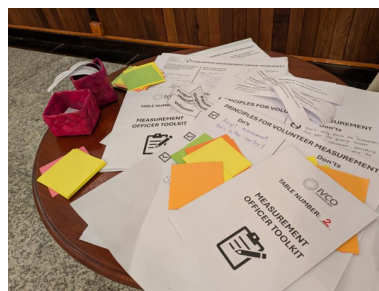
The **RECLAMA Project** is really pleased to have released an educational toolkit: *Telling Our Stories with Dignity* (Spanish only) featuring a range of activities to use in schools. Inspired by the ethno-education of the Afro-descendant people who inhabit Esmeraldas, the toolkit integrates stories, dynamics, recipes, music, and community methodologies to offer students a learning space that honours their roots, values their present and inspires them to project themselves towards an Afrofuturistic future. Feel free to share! Download the toolkit [here!](#)

A collection of six fairy tales from the toolkit are available in both English and Spanish. These stories promote dignity, respect for roots, and learning through stories with an ethical and decolonial approach. Download the English fairy tales [here!](#)

### CGD at the IVCO Conference 2025

The Centre for Global Development was proud to be part of IVCO2025 on 'Strengthening Civil Society in Challenging Times' hosted by International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum), Cooperation Committee for Cambodia and partners. During the conference, the topic of volunteer measurement was highlighted as a key priority for all interest groups.

Matt Baillie Smith and Bianca Fadel co-facilitated a plenary workshop for all participants exploring measurement priorities and approaches for different stakeholder. Key takeaways included the importance of listening to multiple voices, looking beyond 'numbers' and 'hours' and recognising that measurement is not solely the responsibility of researchers – everyone can and should be involved. These discussions are directly related to the focus of the upcoming State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR), which is being led by United Nations Volunteers in collaboration with Northumbria University, University of Pretoria & the International Labour Organization.



Photos from IVCO 2025

### KEYNOTE SPEECH!

CGD PhD researcher Maxine Mpofu delivered a keynote speech at the UCD Volunteers Overseas Annual Forum. Maxine shared her insights into the vital role that volunteers play in addressing the challenges facing society and our planet. Drawing on the philosophy of Ubuntu, she emphasised that solidarity, empathy and care are essential for meeting today's needs without compromising the needs of future generations. She challenged volunteers and organisations to recognise the contributions of those who are often overlooked, emphasising the importance of ethical volunteering and urging that stories be shared respectfully on accessible platforms that uphold dignity and inclusivity. Maxine also cautioned: "While volunteering is a force for good, without reflexivity, it risks perpetuating power imbalances and historical harms". Finally, she encouraged young people to recognise the pivotal role of youth in shaping sustainable futures through volunteering.





## STUDENT VOICES

### Representing Youth Voices in Global Development: My Journey as a UNYA-NG Youth Ambassador

*By Kareem Desmond Akadri, MSc International Development student*

As a Youth Ambassador with the United Nations Youth Association of Nigeria (UNYA-NG), my work focuses on amplifying young people's voices in global development conversations. The role allows me to engage with local and international partners to promote peace, sustainable development, and youth participation in decision, making. Earlier this year, I had the honour of speaking at the United Nations International Peace Day Summit 2025 in Abuja, Nigeria, where I shared reflections on the power of youth, led dialogue in fostering community resilience and social cohesion. Alongside this, I am currently pursuing my second Master's degree, an MSc in International Development at Northumbria University, which has further deepened my understanding of the complex relationships between policy, practice, and community impact. Through my involvement with UNYA-NG and my studies, I am learning how collaboration between institutions and young leaders can bridge the gap between global development goals and lived experiences, ensuring that future initiatives truly reflect the priorities of the next generation.

### Reflections on what our study trip to Kerala taught me about development

*By Emily Maddison, MSc International Development student*

Two remarkable weeks in May became a turning point in both my academic journey and personal growth. I had the incredible opportunity to explore Kerala, one of India's southernmost states, as part of my MSc in International Development. The aim of our trip was to understand Kerala's 'development miracle', and what I discovered was a vibrant tapestry woven from layered histories, diverse cultural traditions, and innovative approaches to development. Our trip began in Fort Kochi, a stunning old town in northern Kerala. Zipping through its streets on the back of rickshaws, we immersed ourselves in stories of migration, cultural fusion, and remarkable public art and architecture. Yet beyond the beautiful façades, I glimpsed at the shadows of colonial legacies and caste-based inequalities but also witnessed the remarkable resilience of local communities who navigate these challenges. Next, we travelled to Lake Vembanad in Alappuzha, where sailing through its intricate network of canals revealed a stark reality. I learned that entire communities here live below sea level, facing threats of flooding which are intensifying through climate change. Seeing this vulnerability firsthand made the climate crisis feel immediate and personal in ways that statistics never have. Our final destination was the vibrant city of Trivandrum, where we had the privilege of engaging directly with government officials, local community leaders, and leading development experts, providing incredible insights into active development practices.

Throughout our journey, I was struck by Kerala's reliance on grassroots women-led initiatives that bridge state policy with community action. Watching women organise to lift their communities out of poverty was truly inspiring. However, I was also grappled with whether these initiatives could be reinforcing existing inequalities rather than dismantling them? Does placing responsibility onto communities risk shifting burdens that the state should shoulder? So, to answer the question on whether Kerala is a development miracle or not is not so simple. Kerala's impressive social gains, proud historical traditions and community resilience coexists with persistent caste inequalities, remittance dependency, and climate vulnerability. It is not perfection, but it is inclusive development. Beyond that, this trip fundamentally reshaped how I think about development. It pushed me past textbook definitions and theoretical frameworks, challenging me to engage with the messy, complex realities of development. More than that, it prompted deep reflection on my own life, privileges, and worldview. My critical thinking has expanded in ways I didn't anticipate, and I find these insights influencing how I navigate my daily life and future work. Kerala didn't just teach me about development, it taught me about listening, and seeing the world through more nuanced eyes.





## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Public workshop:

Creating stories from the Archives:  
Using collage to explore Work, Migration & Activism in the  
Archives

Saturday 29th November 2025 | 13.00-15.30

@Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Cottenham Street, Newcastle  
upon Tyne, NE4 5QU

The Indian Workers' Association (Great Britain), a long-standing migrant worker activist collective, is working with Northumbria University to co-create a community-based archive of some of their work from the 1960s to the present day.

We will creatively explore this archive through the creation of collages using copies of some of the archival material to try and understand more about the struggles, resistance and activism of migrantised workers in the past and how this might resonate with the present day. We will explore the material to consider the different ways in which migrantised workers have been part of the wider working-class movement in Britain, the ways in which they have fought for workers' rights and how this links to other campaigns such as anti-racism, immigration struggles, civil liberties and anti-imperialism.

We will also use the workshop to explore how creative approaches, such as collage, can be help us to engage with and make sense of material from the past.

The workshop is free, but spaces are limited so please book by 28th November.

Find out more details and how to book [here](#).

Please contact [sarah.peck@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.peck@northumbria.ac.uk) with any queries.

## PUBLICATIONS



Here are some things we  
have been reading and  
writing about over the last  
few months:

By Matt Baillie Smith & Sarah  
Mills (2025). *Immigration  
and the contested politics of  
volunteering as 'good  
behaviour*.