

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

BEYOND THE NOW

2025-2026

SOAS
University of London

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RESEARCH AND
KNOWLEDGE
EXCHANGE

BEYOND
THE NOW

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WELCOME TO THIS EDITION OF SOAS RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE: BEYOND THE NOW



It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this year's Research and Knowledge Exchange (KE) showcase at SOAS University of London. As a world-leading institution specialising in the study of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, SOAS plays a distinctive and vital role in shaping scholarly and public understanding of some of the most pressing global challenges of our time.

Our research is rooted in deep disciplinary expertise and informed by close partnerships with communities, institutions, and researchers around the world. Whether through work on climate justice, migration, language preservation, or the politics of decolonisation, SOAS researchers are committed to making a tangible impact—locally, nationally, and globally. Our Knowledge Exchange activities are central to this mission, enabling us to co-create knowledge with non-academic partners, influence policy and practice, and foster mutual learning with a wide range of collaborators.

Over the past year, we have continued to support a vibrant research culture across the School. Our academic community has secured significant funding, published ground-breaking work, and led ambitious collaborations that reflect the diversity and excellence of SOAS scholarship. We have also expanded support for early career researchers, developed new interdisciplinary networks, and deepened our engagement with research users and beneficiaries beyond the academy.

This publication provides a snapshot of that work. It celebrates the dedication, creativity, and impact of our researchers and partners. I hope it inspires you, as it has inspired me, and invites you to learn more about the ways SOAS research is shaping a more just, inclusive, and informed future.

Warm regards,



Professor Laura Hammond
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Knowledge Exchange,
SOAS University of London

WELCOME FROM THE RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE DIRECTORATE



I'm pleased to welcome you to this year's edition of our Research and Knowledge Exchange highlights. This collection reflects the excellence, diversity, and global relevance of SOAS's research. The work featured here demonstrates our commitment to co-production and equitable partnership across disciplines, organisations, and borders. At SOAS, we foster innovative and pioneering approaches grounded in rigorous and engaged knowledge production—bringing fresh perspectives to many of the critical challenges of our time.

The Directorate of Research and Knowledge Exchange is dedicated to enabling research and amplifying its wider benefits through co-creation, partnership development, policy engagement, and knowledge exchange. Our team provides specialist professional support that has contributed to substantial growth in research income, enhanced visibility of our researchers' work, and expanded its reach and impact through strong partnerships with communities, policymakers, and practitioners both in the UK and globally. We have worked to ensure that our research environment is inclusive and sustainable—enabling all researchers, especially early-career scholars and those from underrepresented backgrounds, to thrive.

This publication is a celebration of what we can achieve together. I hope you enjoy exploring the stories, insights, and achievements shared across these pages, and that they inspire further collaboration and impact.

Dr Rachel Lawlor

Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange
SOAS University of London



OUR GLOBAL IMPACT

Digital Innovation and Linguistic Diversity: SOAS research ensures Tibetan thrives

Tibetan, a language of profound cultural and spiritual significance, has long faced barriers to digital integration due to its unique script and structure. Despite being spoken daily by over six million people and serving as a vital conduit for Buddhist literature, Tibetan lacked the digital infrastructure—such as predictive keyboards, language learning tools, and searchable archives—available to more dominant languages. This posed a serious threat to its preservation and accessibility, as well as limiting the opportunities for native speakers to engage with the modern world.

Researchers at SOAS University of London led a groundbreaking initiative to change that. Led by Dr Nathan Hill, the team developed foundational tools for Tibetan Natural Language Processing (NLP), including a word breaker, part-of-speech tagger, and a 300,000-word tagged corpus. These innovations enabled the creation of essential technologies such as speech recognition, machine translation, and screen readers—tools that are now powering Tibetan’s digital future.

SOAS’s approach attracted major tech partners. Microsoft integrated the research into its SwiftKey keyboard, boosting typing speed by 27% and transforming user experience. Google applied the research insights to enhance Tibetan support across Translate, YouTube, and other platforms. Cultural

institutions also benefited: the Buddhist Digital Resource Center improved its search capabilities, and the University of Toronto’s Nettle platform expanded global access to Classical Tibetan.

For cultural institutions and tech innovators, SOAS offers a proven model for bridging linguistic heritage and digital innovation, and an ideal collaborator for those seeking to preserve, revitalise, and expand access to minority and endangered languages.

NGOs like Esukhia used SOAS’s tools to create modern, accessible learning resources, reaching thousands of students across 63 countries. A Tibetan-English dictionary app tripled its user base after incorporating the research, with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Together, these tools based on SOAS research are now used by scholars, translators, monastics, and language learners alike, ensuring that this vital language thrives in the 21st century.



Prof Nathan Hill
Professor of Tibetan & Historical Linguistics



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Protecting People and Planet: How SOAS Research Is Changing Global Finance

Climate change is not just an environmental crisis—it's an economic injustice. Developing countries, often the most vulnerable to climate impacts, face disproportionately high borrowing costs, limiting their ability to invest in resilience. Until recently, the link between climate vulnerability and the cost of capital had not been systematically explored.



**CAPITAL INVESTMENT
+ BORROWING COSTS**

**UNLOCKING
AFFORDABLE FINANCE**

SOAS University of London led the first comprehensive research to quantify this relationship. Between 2017 and 2019, Professors Gerhard Kling, Victor Murinde, Ulrich Volz, and collaborators revealed that climate-vulnerable countries paid an additional US\$62 billion in interest over two decades. Their findings showed that investing in social and physical resilience—such as education and infrastructure—can reduce these costs, offering a clear path forward.

This research didn't just sit on the shelf. It directly shaped global policy. The Vulnerable Twenty (V20) Group of Finance Ministers used SOAS's findings to launch new financial instruments, including the Accelerated Financing Mechanism for Maximal Resilience and a Sustainable Insurance Facility. These tools are helping 48 countries unlock affordable finance for climate adaptation and renewable energy.

SOAS's research has had a transformative impact on global climate finance. It informed the World Bank's Sovereign ESG Data Portal and shaped the Inter-American Development Bank's sovereign risk assessments. It led to the V20-IMF Joint Action Agenda on Transition Risks and Climate-related Financial and Fiscal Stability, contributed to the Global Commission on Adaptation's policy focus, and underpinned ASEAN-endorsed research on macrofinancial risk in ten Southeast Asian nations. In the UK, it guided COP26 preparations, with SOAS advising the FCDO's expert panel. Widely recognised, the research was cited in nearly 60 international media outlets, including *The Economist*, *Financial Times*, and *Reuters*.

With deep expertise, global partnerships, and a commitment to equity, SOAS is a proven, visionary partner for those tackling the climate crisis through innovative, justice-driven solutions.



Prof Ulrich Volz
Director of the Centre for
Sustainable Finance



Turning the Tide on Corruption: How SOAS ACE Is Driving Practical Change

ACE
SOAS Consortium

Anti-Corruption Evidence
Making Anti-Corruption Real

Across many countries, corruption continues to divert vital resources away from the communities they are intended to serve. Often rooted in weak regulatory systems and widespread informality, these practices undermine public policy, erode trust between citizens and the state, and slow progress on development goals. Addressing such deeply embedded challenges requires more than conventional solutions.

The SOAS Anti-Corruption Evidence (ACE) research consortium is taking a different approach.

Rather than relying on traditional top-down enforcement or attempts to change individual behaviour in isolation, SOAS ACE focuses on identifying how corruption operates within specific sectors—and designing targeted, practical strategies that improve outcomes in real-world contexts. By aligning anti-corruption efforts with the incentives of powerful actors, the programme creates pathways for change that are both effective and sustainable.

Led by Professor Mushtaq Khan and Professor Pallavi Roy, SOAS ACE brings together a global network of universities, think tanks, and partner organisations across the Global South and the UK. Working collaboratively, the consortium has supported over 40 projects with more than 30 partner organisations, spanning sectors such as infrastructure, energy, healthcare, education, climate finance, digital governance, and political systems. While much of the work has focused

on Bangladesh and Nigeria, its insights have informed approaches across Africa and Asia.

A defining feature of SOAS ACE's work is its emphasis on context-specific solutions. In Bangladesh, for example, researchers examined persistent corruption in climate adaptation projects—an area where conventional anti-corruption mechanisms had delivered limited success. Their findings revealed that in some localities, better outcomes were achieved not through formal enforcement, but through informal, "horizontal" accountability mechanisms.

In these cases, influential local actors – such as small landholders and traders – actively monitored how resources were used and ensured construction quality. Their motivation was clear: they directly benefited from the infrastructure being built. Cyclone shelters, for instance, also functioned as community spaces, creating shared value that encouraged local oversight.

Building on this insight, SOAS ACE designed a practical intervention. By embedding stronger dual-use features into climate adaptation projects and offering multiple location options, the approach incentivised local stakeholders to take an active role in monitoring, without triggering resistance from higher-level political interests. The result is a scalable "win-win" model that strengthens accountability by working with existing incentives, rather than against them.

Through initiatives like this, SOAS ACE demonstrates how rigorous research can translate into tangible impact. Its work not only advances understanding of how corruption functions in practice, but also provides policymakers and practitioners with actionable tools to address it.

As global challenges – from climate change to infrastructure development – demand more effective governance, the need for innovative, evidence-based anti-corruption strategies has never been greater. The SOAS ACE framework is well positioned to meet this need, generating insights that inform policy, support implementation, and drive meaningful, lasting change.



Prof Pallavi Roy
Professor in Political Economy at the
Centre for International Studies and
Diplomacy



Prof Mushtaq Khan
Professor of Economics

Protecting People Beyond Borders: Policy Solutions for Human Rights at Sea

Across the vast expanse of our oceans, human rights violations often occur out of sight and out of mind. From modern slavery aboard fishing vessels to unsafe conditions for migrants and seafarers, the sea remains a legal and moral blind spot. International law, traditionally focused on state sovereignty and freedom of navigation, has struggled to keep pace with the complex realities faced by those living and working at sea. Prof. Irini Papanicolopulu, a leading expert in international law and a British Academy Global Professor at SOAS, is working to change that. Her research tackles some of the most urgent challenges facing ocean governance today: Who is responsible for protecting the

rights of people at sea? What legal protections exist for those who fall outside clear state jurisdiction? And how can international law be mobilised to prevent abuses in these hidden spaces?

Prof. Papanicolopulu's research is grounded in close collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders including NGOs involved in migrant rescue operations, legal practitioners, seafarers' unions, human rights advocates, and international policymakers. Through the European-funded BlueRights network, she brings together those working on the frontlines of maritime human rights issues to share knowledge, identify legal gaps, and co-develop solutions.

Her work has informed legal guidance used in cases brought before Italian and European courts on rights violations during irregular sea crossings and has supported advocacy efforts to hold states accountable for maritime neglect. Engagement with EU officials has also contributed to the drafting of legislation aimed at addressing forced labour in the fishing industry. In addition, her conceptual work on a holistic approach to human rights at sea underpins the Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea, now used as a reference point by civil society and legal professionals in advancing protections for vulnerable maritime populations. This ambitious work is supported by the SOAS Centre for

Human Rights Law, a hub of critical scholarship and public engagement. The Centre provides an interdisciplinary platform for advancing rights-based approaches to global challenges and plays a key role in amplifying research that connects theory with practice.

As climate change, conflict, and inequality drive more people onto dangerous maritime routes, and as commercial exploitation of the oceans intensifies, this work becomes ever more urgent. By ensuring human rights are embedded into international maritime law, SOAS is anchoring legal accountability where it has long been missing: at sea.



Professor Irini Papanicolopulu
British Academy Global Professor
of International Law



From Research to Real-World Change: How the SOAS IAA Is Driving Impact on Migration and Marginalisation

The SOAS ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) is a five-year initiative (2023–2028) funded by the ESRC to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world impact. Focusing on themes of migration, displacement, marginalisation, and minority identities, its goal is to foster equitable knowledge exchange, empower communities, and inform policy through co-produced and collaborative work.

Since launching its funding schemes in March 2024, the IAA has supported a wide range of impactful initiatives through flexible grants, rapid-response funding, and strategic partnerships. A key milestone was the IAA Grant Celebration Event in February 2025, which showcased how research has been translated into practice while building long-term cross-sector partnerships.

A flagship project, delivered in partnership with the Sydney Policy Lab, produced a report on housing precarity and structural injustice. Presented at a major roundtable in Sydney, the report represents a strong example of research contributing directly to global policy discourse.

Another highlight was a creative storytelling and theatre-based workshop with university students, using audio-visual installations to explore memory and migration. This emotionally rich and innovative project connected academic research to public engagement.

The IAA also extends its community engagement objectives through the annual ESRC Festival of Social Science, where SOAS hosts events for secondary school students aged 13–17. Over the last two years, 245 students from seven London schools participated in workshops on digital agency, food insecurity, and belonging. These sessions helped communicate research in an engaging, hands-on format and aligned with wider SOAS strategies to broaden research dissemination and skill-building.

In July 2024, the IAA convened a roundtable for leaders in the migration, asylum, and refugee sectors in the UK, aimed at exploring the erosion of rights of those seeking asylum and how research can inform solutions and improve sector outcomes. At the same time, the 'Stories of Migration' exhibition at the SOAS Gallery offered a creative space for dialogue, hosting workshops for schoolchildren to reflect on migration through art,

while training SOAS researchers in impactful, creative research communication.

Through these diverse initiatives, the SOAS IAA is turning world-leading social science into policy insights, educational experiences, and meaningful community partnerships—creating lasting pathways between research and social change.



Bethel Worku Dix
Impact Acceleration Account Manager





INNOVATION AND CHANGE

Gaming the Past: How Immersive Storytelling is Transforming the Way We Understand History

From Mali to Japan, two research projects led by SOAS are tackling a pressing global challenge: how to engage new generations with the legacies of slavery, forced labour, and systemic social exclusion. At a time when historical memory is fading and social injustice persists, these projects are pioneering the use of immersive technology and gamification to confront difficult pasts and bring them vividly to life.

In Mali, despite the legal abolition of slavery, people are still stigmatized for being of “slave descent”. This form of stigma —passed down through generations—is not widely understood, particularly among younger Malians, and reinforces silence, isolation, and discrimination, making education and awareness all the more critical. To address this, Dr Marie Rodet turned to an innovative medium: digital storytelling.

that reflect historical realities, confronting themes of injustice, resilience, and identity. The result is a tool that both educates and empowers. It facilitates intergenerational dialogue, challenges enduring stigma, and makes complex historical issues more accessible for younger audiences. Through gameplay, *Usawa* invites users to engage emotionally and ethically with the past and present, building empathy and strengthening community.

Hashima Island off the coast of Japan is the subject of another SOAS project led by Dr Christopher Gerteis that uses technology to preserve and interrogate difficult heritage. Known colloquially as “Battleship Island,” Hashima was once a densely populated coal-mining site where migrant workers, including many from Korea, toiled under harsh and often exploitative conditions during the 20th century. Today, as the island deteriorates and living memories dwindle, Gerteis’s project *Hashima XR*, in collaboration with Tokyo’s Polygon Pictures, digitally reconstructs the island’s past using extended reality.

Drawing from architectural plans, oral testimonies, archival photography, and cutting-edge game engine technology, *Hashima XR* recreates the lived environment of the island in the 1960s. This virtual space enables users to “walk through” reconstructed buildings and streets, listen to personal stories, and engage with a layered, multifaceted view of history. It also grapples with the political

sensitivities surrounding contested memory, offering a space for critical reflection on labour, migration, and industrial heritage.

Together, these projects exemplify how SOAS blends academic rigour with creative practice to respond to urgent social issues. By co-producing immersive experiences grounded in lived histories, they expand the boundaries of public engagement, foster cross-sector collaboration, and transform the study of the past into something tangible and emotionally resonant. As these pioneering efforts show, immersive storytelling is not just a method—it’s a movement toward reimagining how we connect with history and each other.



Collaborating with Jiwe Studios, Donkosira, V4T, Kasart Media, and Kerdoff Productions, she led the development of *Usawa*, an award-winning app-based game that fuses history, culture, and creative technology.

Usawa—meaning “equality” in Swahili—is grounded in over 150 oral histories collected from Mali and the wider Sahel region. It transforms these lived experiences into an interactive mobile game that blends Afro-futurist aesthetics with real-life narratives. In the game, players navigate choices



Dr Marie Rodet
Reader in the History of Africa



Dr Christopher Gerteis
Senior Lecturer in the History of Contemporary Japan

Preserving the Intangible: SOAS brings ancient ritual to life using VR



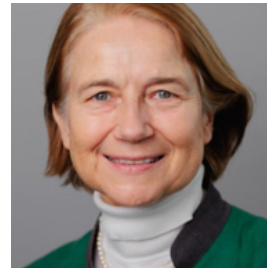
In an era where ancient traditions risk fading into obscurity, SOAS University of London is leading a digital renaissance—one that fuses cutting-edge technology with the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. At the forefront of this innovation is Living Zoroastrianism, a groundbreaking Virtual Reality (VR) experience that transports users into the heart of a 3,500-year-old sacred ritual, the Yasna.

Zoroastrianism, originating in pre-Islamic Iran, is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, and has influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam, yet remains largely unfamiliar to the public. The Yasna, its core ritual, is a three-hour liturgy performed in Avestan, an ancient language which has been unspoken outside of ritual contexts for over two millennia. A full-length performance was filmed in Mumbai using a six-lens VR camera, with the resulting footage stitched into a seamless 360-degree experience allowing viewers to witness the ceremony from multiple angles and in unprecedented detail.

Through a VR headset, audiences are guided by the voice of a Zoroastrian priest as the ritual unfolds—from drawing water at dawn to returning it at dusk, symbolizing the soul's journey through the universe. This immersive format not only preserves the ritual's visual and spiritual richness but also democratizes access to a tradition once hidden behind temple walls.

Developed by Professor Almut Hintze and Chouette Films, the VR experience is a cornerstone of the Multimedia Yasna (MUYA) project, funded by the European Research Council. It exemplifies SOAS's unique ability to blend rigorous scholarship with creative innovation. By capturing the Yasna in virtual space, we have created a living archive—one that ensures this sacred ritual will not fade into obscurity as the Zoroastrian

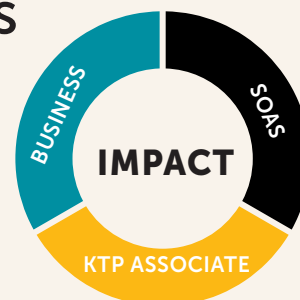
community faces decline, but continue to inspire, educate, and engage global audiences.



Professor Almut Hintze
Co-chair Zartoshty Brothers
Professor of Zoroastrianism



Knowledge Transfer Partnerships at SOAS – A Global Perspective for National Impact



KTPs are one of the most effective and well-supported routes for bridging the gap between academia and industry – translating academic knowledge into strategic growth for UK organisations. Funded by Innovate UK, they allow businesses and 3rd sector organisations to tap into the deep expertise held within UK universities, including the highly distinctive capabilities here at SOAS.

SOAS is uniquely positioned in the KTP space. Our research and teaching focuses on Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – regions of growing global importance – and we bring that international understanding to bear on pressing strategic and operational issues in collaboration with UK-based partners working in both domestic and international contexts. A KTP at SOAS is rarely just about commercial gain. It's about sustainable, inclusive growth, cultural awareness, and driving systems-level change.

But there's more to SOAS than people often realise. Alongside our globally recognised social science and area studies expertise, we bring robust capabilities in AI and machine learning, behavioural economics, gamification, immersive technologies (VR/AR), digital platforms and data analytics, and advanced risk modelling. These strengths allow us to support innovation in everything from dynamic pricing and product personalisation to user engagement and impact measurement.

A KTP is essentially a three-way collaboration between a business

(or non-profit), an academic institution, and a highly skilled graduate – the KTP Associate – who acts as the conduit for knowledge and change. The business identifies a challenge or innovation opportunity that it cannot solve in-house. SOAS matches this need with the right academic expertise, and together we co-design a project that will address the challenge over a 12-36 month period.

Once the KTP is approved for funding, an Associate is appointed to deliver the project. While they are technically employed by SOAS, they are embedded within the organisation (physically, remotely or a hybrid of both). Associates are expected to implement – not just advise on – change. They are supported by academic supervisors at SOAS and by my team, ensuring the partnership remains aligned and effective.

What sets SOAS apart is our ability to integrate technical expertise with deep cultural and contextual understanding. Our academics work across global markets, development economics, digital innovation, policy, and social impact – applying rigorous, multidisciplinary insight to real-world commercial challenges. Whether it's building inclusive fintech tools, transforming supply chain ethics, or enhancing the social impact of cultural institutions, we ensure that the solutions we co-create are contextually intelligent and globally relevant.

For the partner organisation, KTPs lead to measurable growth, product or service innovation, improved operations, and new global opportunities. For our academics, KTPs offer pathways to high-impact research, real-world validation, and new networks. And for our KTP Associates, these projects are career-defining. Around two-thirds of Associates are offered permanent roles at the end of their project – testament to their value and the strength of the partnerships.

From a knowledge exchange perspective, KTPs are one of the most powerful tools we have to ensure that the university's expertise is used where it matters most. Our academics don't just observe the world – they help shape it. When they step into a KTP project, they bring a multidisciplinary approach that challenges assumptions, fuels innovation, and drives tangible results.



Ashley Ritchie
Head of Knowledge Exchange,
Enterprise and Impact

SOAS and Eversure KTP: Disrupting Insurance Through Data-Driven Innovation

Through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Eversure Ltd., SOAS, University of London is demonstrating how academic knowledge can fuel real-world business transformation. Eversure is an online insurance provider operating in specialized markets such as breakdown, bicycle, camera, caravan, and car hire excess. SOAS is applying its research expertise to redefine the way this insurance is priced and marketed.

At the heart of this collaboration is a bold ambition: to disrupt traditional insurance markets by replacing costly, brand-driven strategies with intelligent, data-led decision-making. Eversure's vision is to offer high-quality insurance at lower costs, using advanced analytics to better understand customer risk and customer value.



Supervised by SOAS academic lead Dr Jaideep Oberoi, in partnership with Dr Yiting Deng of UCL, SOAS KTP Associate Meriem Benalkma is developing a fully personalised, automated pricing algorithm. This innovative tool uses machine learning to assess individual risk and price sensitivity, leveraging a mass of data behind the scenes.



For instance, a potential customer currently just needs to introduce their car registration number to receive a bespoke breakdown quote in real time. The ability to instantly offer the right price to the right customer provides customers with better value, better tailored propositions, and maximises efficiency in the market. These tools also serve to maximise the conversions from costly advertising.

This is more than a technical upgrade. It's a strategic shift in Eversure's operations that embeds academic insight into its core functions. The project exemplifies SOAS's commitment to applying multidisciplinary research—spanning risk management, data analytics, and marketing—to solve complex commercial challenges.

By combining academic rigour with entrepreneurial ambition,

SOAS is helping Eversure build a smarter, leaner, and more competitive business. The result is a powerful model for how universities can drive innovation, deliver measurable business impact, and shape the future of entire industries.



Dr Jaideep Oberoi
Reader in Accounting & Finance



If you're a UK-based organisation with a bold idea or a strategic challenge, we'd love to explore how a KTP with SOAS can help you grow: enterprise@soas.ac.uk



SOAS' New Centre for Anthropology and Mental Health Research in Action

Based at SOAS University of London, CAMHRA (Centre for Anthropology and Mental Health Research on Action) is a pioneering research centre supported by a five year Research England *Expanding Excellence in England* (E3) grant.

As societies grapple to respond to the scale and complexity of mental health needs, CAMHRA contributes distinctly anthropological perspectives to a growing global understanding of how societies can understand mental distress and build effective systems of care.

The core academic team, led by Co-Directors Professor David Mosse and Dr Nikita Simpson, leads cutting-edge research across global contexts, while its professional staff draw on expertise from sectors including education, service delivery, policy-making and activism to shape and sustain their work. By embedding themselves and ethnographic expertise within mental healthcare services and institutions, CAMHRA demonstrates how anthropologists unlock deep insights into the challenges facing both service users and providers. This understanding offers new ways for collaboration and co-design of services to make them more inclusive and effective.

CAMHRA's research agenda is set in collaboration with community, policy and academic partners locally and globally. CAMHRA's expert advisory board, and global professorial

associates from the UK, US, Japan and France, are ensuring CAMHRA is at the cutting edge of mental health and anthropology research. There is a particular focus on widening and deepening the inclusion of people who have been historically excluded from research institutions, including those with lived experience of mental health conditions, service use and care-giving. Areas of research interest include peer-supported open dialogue, housing distress, cultures of care, social isolation and community connectedness, environmental and climate distress, the mental health of children and caregivers, suicide prevention, conflict and displacement, digital mental health, global mental health and the role of religion and spirituality in mental health.

The centre offers a dynamic range of postgraduate training opportunities (MA, M Res, PhD), professional development programmes, and Continuing Professional Development offerings. CAMHRA actively builds inclusive research pathways through initiatives such as the community fellowship programme, the talent pathway for people with lived experience, and structured research opportunities for NHS mental health staff. Sector permeability is central to CAMHRA's model, with fellowships, scholarships and secondments enabling reciprocal learning between academia, healthcare, and communities.

Based in London, CAMHRA has a particular mandate to understand and help better meet the complex mental health needs of London's diverse populations. To do this, the Centre has a core partnership with Thrive LDN, a public mental health partnership of London's NHS Trusts, councils, other statutory bodies, and community groups.

Alongside its research and training programmes, CAMHRA is investing in institutional sustainability and policy impact. It is pioneering ethical research models and leveraging platforms such as the Influencing Corridors of Power (ICOP) to bring anthropological insights into national and international mental health policy debates.

CAMHRA builds on the already outstanding reputation of SOAS's Department of Anthropology and Sociology, which in REF2021 ranked 2nd among anthropology departments in the UK by bringing together a group of exceptional researchers with an interest in anthropology and mental health.

CAMHRA also offers SOAS an opportunity to expand the opportunities for research, policy and practice. It creates new, non-traditional pathways into research for non-anthropologists, the mental health workforce, and service users. SOAS can, with CAMHRA, create a widened and more porous interface between research and communities. To discover more about CAMHRA's work visit: <https://camhra.soas.ac.uk/>



Prof David Mosse
Professor of Social Anthropology and Director of CAMHRA



Dr Nikita Simpson
Reader in Anthropology and Co-Director of CAMHRA



Dr Michelle Callander
Centre Manager of CAMHRA





GROWING TALENT

From Lecture Hall to Launchpad: How SOAS Student Enterprise Transforms Ideas into Impact

At SOAS University of London, entrepreneurship extends beyond commercial success—it is also a means for students to develop impactful ideas grounded in their academic knowledge. The Student Enterprise programme provides comprehensive support through mentoring, workshops, funding, and a focused pre-accelerator course, equipping students with the skills and resources needed to advance projects with social and creative significance.

One notable example is Ashleigh Garnett, a humanities student who created *ReStart*, a digital platform designed to assist homeless individuals in accessing essential services. Despite having no prior experience in technology, Ashleigh benefitted from the programme's training and mentorship, which enabled her to translate academic insights into a practical and socially meaningful enterprise. Her experience highlights how the programme fosters innovation that addresses pressing community challenges.

Another inspiring story is that of Noha Mohamed, who successfully re-launched SOAS Radio and founded *Falafel Frequencies*, a media outlet that represents the SWANA diaspora. With guidance and strategic mentoring from the Student Enterprise programme, Noha was able to refine her vision, develop operational strategies, and bring these projects to life within a few months. Her



journey demonstrates how entrepreneurial support can transform creative passions into sustainable ventures with cultural impact.

The Student Enterprise programme at SOAS aligns with the university's values of inclusivity, creativity, and global awareness. By integrating academic inquiry with practical entrepreneurship support, it empowers students like Ashleigh and Noha to lead ventures that are both purposeful and innovative.

In an ever-evolving world, SOAS Student Enterprise continues to cultivate socially conscious and culturally grounded founders who are prepared to make meaningful contributions across a variety of sectors. Discover more here:



Irfan Zaman
CEO SOAS Students Union

Students at SOAS have access to multiple mentoring programs, workshops and funding opportunities to hone their entrepreneurial skills.

Reclaiming Digital Space: Rethinking Openness in the Age of Tech Monopolies

The digital world we live in today is dominated by a handful of powerful corporations—Google, Amazon, Apple, Meta, and Microsoft. These companies shape every aspect of our interaction with technology—from how we use computers and access the internet to how we engage with politics, media, and even our friends and families. The power they wield can feel overwhelming. But reclaiming our digital rights is still possible—if we’re willing to leave their proverbial walled gardens.

At SOAS, my research into the impacts of digitisation, artificial intelligence, and platform (or “gig”) economies—especially in Nigeria—makes it clear that these monopolies are not natural or inevitable. They are carefully constructed through closed ecosystems, restrictive licensing, aggressive lobbying, and slick marketing. The most effective way to challenge this system is to step outside of it entirely.

One path forward lies in the Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS) movement—a global community of developers and users building software by the people and for the people. From tools like Mozilla Firefox to full operating systems like Linux, FOSS provides adaptable, secure (if not more secure than its commercial counterparts), alternatives to commercial software. In fact, much of the internet itself runs on Linux-based servers.

Tired of Microsoft using your data to train Copilot? Switch to LibreOffice—it’s open-source, respects your privacy, and can read and write Office files. Worried about Adobe training AI on your Creative Suite projects? Consider alternatives like Krita, GIMP, or Kdenlive. At SOAS, we teach with tools like R and Python not just because they’re powerful, but because they reflect a broader philosophy of access, transparency, and shared knowledge.

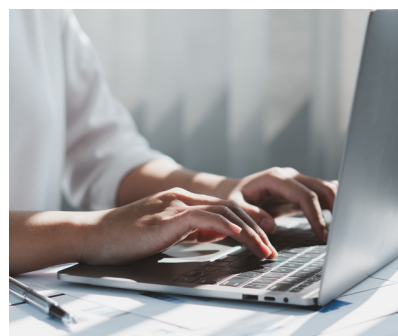
This isn’t just about software preferences—it’s about reimagining how digital spaces are structured, who controls them, and who benefits. Open-source thinking becomes a framework for challenging inherited assumptions about technology, convenience, and control. It pushes us to ask:

WHO BUILDS THE TOOLS WE RELY ON?

WHAT VALUES ARE EMBEDDED IN THEM?

HOW CAN WE BUILD DIFFERENT FUTURES?

Questions of data sovereignty, long-term sustainability, and digital literacy are no longer niche concerns—they are central to any serious discussion of justice and equity in the digital age. At SOAS, we don’t explore these



issues in isolation. We approach them in dialogue—with students, with communities, and with partners who are also thinking critically about the future of technology. Rather than accepting the current digital order as fixed, we treat it as provisional—shaped by choices, assumptions, and systems that can be changed. Reclaiming our digital space means daring to imagine something better—and then building it, together.



Taylor D.H. Rockhill
PhD Student in Development Studies



Empowering Future Leaders and Changemakers: The Community Leadership Programme

The Community Leadership Programme, coordinated by Dr. Sham Qayyum at SOAS in partnership with Step Up Hub and Brent Council, is an inspiring initiative designed to empower individuals with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to become active community leaders.

Developed to address the unique challenges and opportunities facing local communities—particularly in Brent and across London—the programme provides a supportive space for participants to explore the dynamics of leadership, civic engagement, and social justice. It is especially focused on nurturing leadership among underrepresented and marginalised groups, equipping them to drive positive change within their communities.

Participants benefit from a structured course that covers key areas such as advocacy, policy, local governance, and community organising. Through workshops, interactive sessions, and mentoring from experienced facilitators, the programme encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and practical action. It also fosters an environment where diverse voices and lived experiences are valued as essential components of leadership.

One of the core strengths of the programme is its emphasis on empowering participants to lead on issues they care about. Whether it's tackling youth violence,



improving mental health services, or advocating for housing justice, the programme helps individuals develop and implement projects with real community impact.

Participants and alumni come from a wide range of disciplines and experiences—from social entrepreneurs and youth workers to educators, local volunteers, and even directors of companies and staff of statutory agencies. This rich mix contributes to a dynamic and inclusive learning environment where peer learning and collaboration thrive.

Sham, who leads the programme, brings deep expertise in legal education and community empowerment. His commitment to inclusion and grassroots change is reflected in the programme's design, ensuring that it remains accessible and relevant to people from all walks of life.

Graduates of the programme often go on to take up influential roles in local voluntary organisations,

advisory boards, and civic campaigns—demonstrating the lasting value of this initiative. More than just a training course, the Community Leadership Programme is a catalyst for building stronger, more connected, and more resilient communities. For those passionate about making a difference, this programme offers a transformative journey into leadership rooted in purpose, equity, and collective action. For more information, contact enterprise@soas.ac.uk



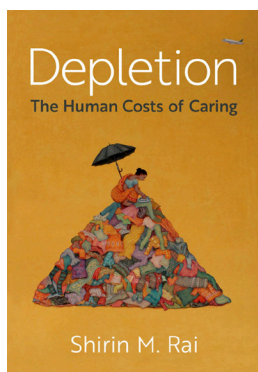
Dr Sham Qayyum
Programme Lead



GLOBAL THINKING

“Invisible Labour, Visible Impact: The Economics of Care”

As global attention turns to the profound challenges reshaping societies—climate breakdown, ageing populations, shrinking welfare states, and deepening inequality—questions of who cares, how care is delivered, and at what cost have become central. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed just how dependent societies are on care work, much of which remains invisible, undervalued, and unsustainably resourced. At the same time, policy debates around economic productivity, sustainability, and wellbeing often overlook the human labour underpinning these systems. In this context, rethinking care as a political, economic, and ethical priority is both urgent and transformative.



Professor Shirin M. Rai FBA, Distinguished Research Professor of Politics and International Relations addresses these pressing issues in her latest book, *Depletion: The Human Costs of Caring* (Oxford University Press, 2024). Rai brings decades of expertise in gender, governance, and political economy to this work.

She introduces the concept of “depletion” to describe the long-term toll placed on individuals—overwhelmingly women—who carry the burden of care without adequate support or recognition. Whether in formal employment or unpaid roles, this labour often goes unnoticed—until systems start to fail.

In this ground-breaking work, the concept of “depletion” captures the cumulative exhaustion experienced by those undertaking care work, whether in homes, hospitals, or precarious public services. Through case studies spanning race, class, and geography, she shows how systems of care are strained to breaking point, with carers themselves absorbing the cost of this imbalance. Rai also explores how global extractive industries and austerity-driven public policies compound these pressures, hollowing out the very foundation on which societies depend.

The book makes clear that across sectors, from healthcare and education to technology and finance, one issue is becoming impossible to ignore: the sustainability of care and that depletion is not only a personal crisis but a systemic one. As businesses grapple with talent retention, burnout, and the shifting demands of the modern workforce, care—once dismissed as a private or peripheral concern—is revealing itself as an essential pillar of economic productivity and social resilience.

But Depletion is not only diagnostic—it is a call to action. Rai calls for “replenishment”: a commitment to valuing and investing in care as infrastructure. This includes supporting care workers, creating flexible and inclusive employment policies, and embedding care into the design of public and private systems alike.

For funders, policy leaders, and employers alike, the question is increasingly not whether to support care systems, but how to do so in ways that are equitable, efficient, and forward-thinking. As such, for those looking to support impactful, systems-level change, Rai’s work offers both urgency and direction. It offers a powerful and timely framework for rethinking care as central to economic strategy, and speaks to the kind of holistic thinking needed to future-proof economies and our society. As organisations seek to align growth with wellbeing, *Depletion* is an essential guide to understanding why care matters—and why ignoring it is no longer an option.



Prof. Shirin Rai
Professor of Politics and
International Relations

BEYOND THE PAGES: PARTNER WITH SOAS

If you have a challenge to address, an opportunity to explore, or a partnership in mind, we'd love to hear from you.
enterprise@soas.ac.uk



The articles in this publication show how SOAS expertise moves beyond the academy to shape policy, practice, innovation and social change. They demonstrate what's possible when deep expertise meets real-world challenges.

SOAS, University of London offers flexible routes for organisations, policymakers, practitioners and communities to engage with our research and expertise. We collaborate across sectors to co-create knowledge, solve complex problems and generate impact at local, national and global levels. Our academics combine deep regional expertise with globally relevant strengths, including in finance and management, human rights and governance, mental health and care, migration and sustainability, cutting-edge digital innovation, and art, culture, and history.

WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH SOAS

We can work with your organisation in a range of flexible and practical ways, depending on your goals, timescales and challenges.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) are a proven, Innovate UK-funded route for UK businesses to embed academic expertise directly into their organisation. SOAS KTPs uniquely combine technical capability with cultural intelligence and global insight, supporting inclusive growth, service transformation, product innovation and new market development.

Consultancy and Advisory Support provides access to targeted, research-led expertise. SOAS academics work with organisations on focused challenges, strategic advice and evidence-based insight — from short-term problem-solving to longer-term advisory relationships across policy, practice and innovation.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Executive Education programmes are designed for organisations, leaders and professionals navigating complex global, social and cultural environments. We offer open-enrolment and bespoke training, grounded in cutting-edge research and real-world experience, supporting skills development, organisational learning and leadership capacity.

Wider Engagement and Co-Creation includes co-produced research, secondments and fellowships, policy roundtables, community partnerships and creative public engagement. These collaborations are shaped to be ethical, collaborative and impactful, building long-term relationships as well as immediate value.

Facilities, Spaces and Cultural Resources

SOAS also offers access to distinctive physical and cultural assets that support creatives, professionals and other organisations and groups. Our central London campus provides unique filming locations, adaptable event and meeting spaces available for hire, and access to specialist facilities. This includes the vibrant SOAS Gallery, an important exhibition space for all art mediums, and the SOAS Library, renowned for its world-leading collections on Africa, Asia and the Middle East. These resources support research, creative production, meetings and events, and knowledge exchange, extending the reach and impact of SOAS.

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