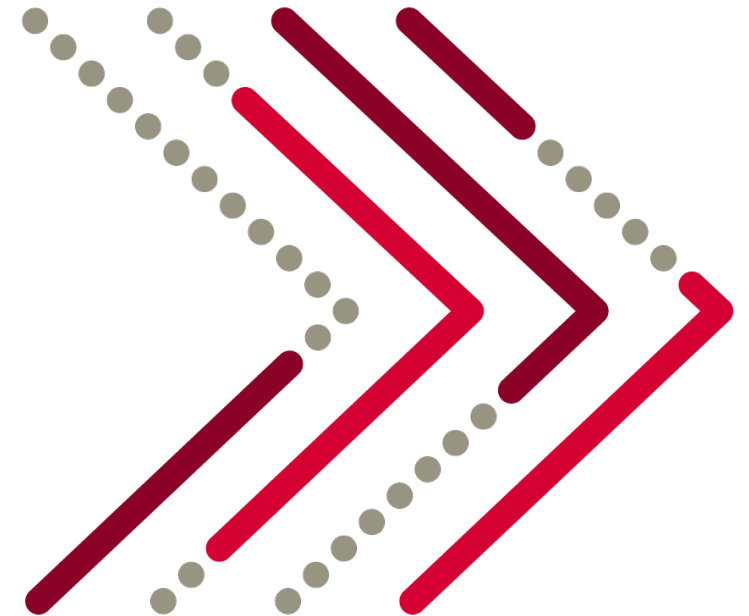




Workshop 1: Words matter

Lena Bheeroo (she/her)



A word on language

Racism

Racism is... race prejudice and social and institutional power

Racism is... a system of advantage based on race

Racism is... a system of oppression based on race

Racism is... a white supremacy system

Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination.

Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society in question, and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Source: "What Is Racism?" – Dismantling Racism Works (dRworks)

Decolonisation

The action or process of a state withdrawing from a former colony, leaving it independent. Processes of decolonisation understand that colonisation is more than just a physical project – it has cultural and psychological components which determine whose knowledge is privileged. Decolonisation involves seeking restorative justice through cultural, psychological and economic freedom. Decolonisation is the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies regarding the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches.

Why?

- Language is used **inconsistently** across Bond and within the sector
- Language is often used in ways which **validate those in power** and validates top-down power structures
- If power changes hands and we change our language with it, it makes us seem **inconsistent in terms of our values** and what we stand for.
- Using language inconsistently **dilutes our brand and dilutes our values**, and can undermine our case or puts us at risk of being called out for being duplicitous
- Using language that reinforces existing power structures can mean that the very people we want to help are **robbed of their agency and their context**
- **Language and meaning change rapidly** and take time to review given the political and external context
- Other sectors are much better at using **accessible language which has helped strengthen public support and understanding for their work**. We need to do the same.

Principles

The sector needs a way to describe what it is and the work that it does, in language that “does no harm”.

- Language should not be influenced by or validate existing power structures
- Language should be consistent with our values
- Language should be consistent across all areas of our work
- Language should avoid forms of words which reflect specific political or ideological thinking or are owned by a political party
- Language should describe our work, our staff and our relationships with those we work for in a way that does not undermine their own agency or capability
- Language should remain constant even in times of political change
- Language should not reflect colonial or paternalistic views of the world
- Language should support equity, diversity and inclusion
- Language should be accessible, clear and free of jargon, particularly the use of theoretical or academic concepts
- Language that is problematic should be challenged and not left for others to resolve

Language we won't use publicly or privately because they do not reflect our values

No	Alternatives
Global Britain, language that harks back to colonialism e.g. or "Global leader" "global superpower" "force for global good"	"UK playing its part" instead of "UK leadership" UK working in solidarity with UK playing a positive role in the world UK working in partnership
British values	Fairness, democracy, freedom and human rights are values that should underpin how and where we invest UK aid Shared/human values,
(British) expertise	British experience and validating language around lived experience
Levelling up	Making societies fairer
Beneficiary, world's poorest, most vulnerable people, people left behind,	the communities we work with, marginalised people / excluded, under-represented groups/communities, "people that live on less than £2 a day", people in need
Developing countries, Third World, Global south,	LIC, MIC, FCAS, "the countries we/NGOs work in, regions, countries,
Mutual prosperity, aid in the national interest / public interest	Independent aid that works for marginalised people/people based on need
Combative language e.g. "fighting global poverty"	Tackling global poverty
Capacity building	Sharing learning and knowledge, community organizing and movement building, Community led development
Localisation, shift the power	Locally led, shifting power and resources to communities,
Empowerment	'transformation' or 'claiming rights'

Language and phrases that in some contexts are ok

- **Put an end to global poverty** - better alternative to "fighting global poverty"
- **Leave no one behind** – In an SDG context ok to use
- **National security** – but we would prefer "shared security"
- **Experts** – only if we are talking about specified area of expertise e.g. not 'expert on East Africa' but 'expert on nutrition programmes in East Africa' or 'expert on global education policy'
- **Elites** – not to describe ourselves but ok when talking about "elites" as a descriptor of a group of people in society
- **Leadership** – only if we can validate this with evidence
- **Soft power** / diplomacy better
- **Value for money** – If holding the govt to account for VfM meaning quality programmes that do not waste money, or when talking about the importance of having a specific select committee for ODA = YES, if referring to ensuring VfM for the British taxpayer = NO because this risks endorsing poor quality programmes or cutting corners to save money
- **Parroting back phrases to hold government to account is ok** – but needs to be in quotation marks and used sparingly

Language work

- We consulted our members and made changes to the guide
- It will be evolving – contexts change – language changes
- Be aware of any co-option of words

Discussion question 1

- What are some challenging terms that you and your organisation are struggling with?

- Why are they challenging?

Discussion question 2

- What are alternative terms you could use?

- Why would it make sense to use them?

Discussion question 3

- How can you communicate the need for different language approaches

- What considerations will you need to be aware of?

Thank you

