

COLLABORATION SUCCESS WITH MICROSOFT 365

THE GENDER, JUSTICE AND SECURITY HUB



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The **UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub** is a five year, multi-partner research project housed in LSE's Centre for Women, Peace and Security working to advance the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality; SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions; and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda by developing an evidence-base around gender justice and inclusive security in conflict-affected societies.

The Hub started using MS Teams in 2019 to effectively coordinate the work of its 123 team members spread over various organisations and countries. Teams offered new ways of collaborative working in line with the Hub's partnerships and communications strategy that promotes and fosters open and transparent working practices.

What does collaboration look like for your team?

Our daily activities involve sharing and co-authoring documents that underpin the Hub's work. Our MICA (Management, Impact, Communications and Administration) team members work across five countries, so Teams helps us to work together in real time as well as on joint pieces of work. Various updates are shared throughout the working day on the Hub (a shared workspace on MS Teams).

We share links to related research, publications, and events and tabs for key documents. File sharing channels were created to embed structure into the remote way of working.

What challenges led to your adoption of MS Teams?

At the inception of the Hub, we were tasked with finding a means for effectively managing communication and coordinating the work of our international research team. We needed platform for managing communication and document sharing with project management functionalities.

There were colleagues within the Centre who had used MS Teams previously and made the recommendation. Teams was chosen due to its accessibility and support for remote working. This was particularly important where team members reside in regions where internet connectivity was a challenge or where agility was required due to field research. In addition, teams offered us a new way of working that moved away from traditional workplace communication structures and into a way of communicating with each other in a much more current, fluid and genuine way, something that was, and continues to be incredibly important to our work with so many international partners and organisations.



How do you currently use Teams?

Through Teams file sharing we are able to provide guidance for Hub members and facilitate collaboration on documents. We use the video calling functionality to conduct and share interviews and we use the chat function, and teams channels for all day-to-day communication.

In the past we have used Teams to manage communication for an international convention. Having a dedicated virtual workspace meant that we didn't need to

circulate convention materials via email - something that was particularly important to us when working in conflict affected societies where we wanted to manage how we shared materials.

Collaboration during the convention and after was easy with Teams. The use of Teams was instrumental in the success of the convention and bringing over 70 international researchers together .

What are the benefits of using Teams?

Teams has been instrumental in team building. The chat functionality has enabled more informal conversations and relationship building. The ease of file sharing has enhanced working processes and helped with productivity.

What were your early implementation problems?

We had early problems with file syncing because we had created a SharePoint site before creating the team workspace. We were able to resolve these issues quickly with the help of colleagues within DTS who worked closely with us in setting up our team. We have had some challenges given that so many of our Hub members are not LSE staff. The functionality for guest users is not as good as for those with LSE accounts, so this has limited some of the ways in which our members can use functions such as the calendar and sharing files through chat. We have come up with some workarounds but this has been challenging. Peer support from members of the Digital Communications team really helped with optimising Teams' file sharing functionality.

Any advice for those interested in adopting Teams:

- Plan your team structure. This will help reduce problems with access rights and information overwhelm.
- Induction is key. Invest time in preparing guidance and training for team members. This will make the on boarding process easier and improve user experience.
- Give it time. We had mixed take up from team members at initiation but we have observed less resistance to adoption over time.

Interview conducted with Nicky Armstrong (Communications Manager) and Michelle Callander (International Strategy and Partnerships Manager).