

Dr Matt Thomson he/him

PhD Researcher, University of Bristol | Independent Adviser, Managing Transitions

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PROFILE

International development specialist and doctoral researcher working on the politics of localisation and assistive technology networks across East and West Africa. Operational track record co-managing multi-year EU co-financed programmes and leading multi-country transitions that move regional grassroots networks off grant dependency. Work sits between academic evidence and field delivery: qualitative research design, outcomes and evaluation architecture, and institutional partnership building across donors, ministries, universities, and disabled people's organisations.

EXPERIENCE

Community Partnerships & Research Manager

STAND (formerly Legs4Africa) · Bristol, UK and Sub-Saharan Africa · Mar 2022 to present

- Promoted from Fundraising Manager in October 2023 to lead research and partnership strategy.
- **Programme delivery:** co-manage a multi-year, EU co-financed programme in The Gambia, covering budget management, partner compliance, and impact reporting.
- **Multi-country transitions:** lead portfolios across Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, moving regional grassroots networks from aid dependency toward locally owned operating models.
- **Academic partnerships:** built and manage an advisory network of UK and international academics feeding public health research directly into operational clinics.
- **Funding:** secured high-value institutional grants from international development agencies, expanding annual income and operational scale.
- **Field evaluation:** lead systems audits, focus groups, and key informant interviews on regular field visits, predominantly Uganda and The Gambia.
- **Supervision:** train and supervise international university placement students in field research methods, ethical frameworks, and qualitative health systems analysis.

Postgraduate Researcher and Seminar Tutor (Politics)

University of Bristol, School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies · Jan 2024 to present

- **Doctoral research:** the politics of localisation in Sub-Saharan Africa, tracing how structural power, expertise, and capital move through assistive technology and prosthetics and orthotics networks, from global donors down to frontline clinics.
- **Teaching:** weekly undergraduate seminars across Political Science, International Relations, and Global Public Policy, including assessment and academic mentorship.
- **Guest lecturing:** specialist postgraduate lectures, including the University of Southampton MSc in Amputation and Prosthetic Rehabilitation.

Strategic Adviser

South West International Development Network (SWIDN) · ongoing

- Independent advisory on organisational structure, board governance, and practitioner-researcher partnership design, working with secretariat staff, boards, and member organisations.

Researcher and Contributor

Exceed Research Network (ERN) · global academic consortium · 2024 to present

- Partner with universities, health ministries, and NGOs to build the evidence base for prosthetics and orthotics services in low-resource settings, supporting cross-institutional data analysis.

External Relations and Fundraising Coordinator

International Institute of Debate (iiDebate) · Tunis, Tunisia · Sep 2021 to Mar 2022

- Built international fundraising pipelines to secure institutional donors and scale delivery into new markets; led an internal monitoring and evaluation unit; Editor-in-Chief of *Youth Polyphony*.

Research Officer

The Next Century Foundation · Penzance, UK and Middle East · May 2021 to Sep 2021

- Delivered an official Oral Intervention to the United Nations Human Rights Council; co-authored non-papers on the Middle East Peace Process and facilitated conferences with state officials and civil society leaders.

EDUCATION

PhD in Politics, University of Bristol

Jan 2024 to present. The politics of localisation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

MSc Development and Security, University of Bristol Distinction

2019 to 2020. Thesis on how small-scale NGOs maximise structural impact through cross-sector partnership design in Uganda.

BA International Relations and History, Oxford Brookes University 2:1

2016 to 2019.

SELECTED SPEAKING

Television interview on disability rights and advocacy, The Fatu Network, The Gambia, June 2026.

Guest lecture, MSc Amputation and Prosthetic Rehabilitation, University of Southampton, March 2026.

Sustainable service provision: device sourcing and local production, Exceed Research Network 10th anniversary, January 2026.

Panellist on academic and practice partnerships in international development, SWIDN and University of Bristol, July 2024.

Assistive technology in low- and middle-income countries, OTWorld side session, Leipzig, May 2024.

Occasional talks in UK schools on international development and disability.

SKILLS

Research and evaluation: qualitative and quantitative fieldwork, monitoring and evaluation, systems auditing, ethics approvals, theory of change validation, NVivo.

Operations: institutional contract management, budgeting, compliance, logistics, partnership management across Uganda, The Gambia, Kenya, and Tanzania.

Advisory and communication: teaching, workshop facilitation, statutory bid writing, stakeholder management, public speaking, safeguarding.

Languages: English (native), Spanish (B1, in progress).