



Call for Applications

Creating Safer Space Research Grants

The research network Creating Safer Space aims to understand and support unarmed civilian protection and self-protection in the midst of violent conflict. Our research focuses on conflicts in Colombia, South Sudan, Myanmar, and the Philippines, but research on other Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) will also be supported.

We welcome applications for research grants. We will fund about 15 - 20 research projects that meet the aims of the Creating Safer Space network. Grants range from £20,000 - £100,000 GBP for periods of 6 to 16 months. Projects have to be led by organisations in the UK or in LMICs. The application deadline is **15 April 2022**.

This document will answer the following questions:

What is the Creating Safer Space research network?	1
What is the Research Focus?	2
What are the Research Themes?.....	3
What are the differences between the two types of grants?	5
Who can apply for funding?.....	6
What kind of projects will be funded?	7
What can the funds be used for?.....	8
How do I apply for funding?.....	9
What happens after I have submitted my application?	9
What are the ODA cuts, and will it affect my funding proposal?	10
Who do I contact with questions?	10

What is the Creating Safer Space research network?

Creating Safer Space is a four-year international research collaboration, which aims to understand, support and expand unarmed civilian protection and self-protection in the midst of violent conflict. Creating Safer Space supports research that explores how violence against civilians can be interrupted, reduced and/or prevented by civilians by using a range of active nonviolent strategies. The aim of this network, and of the projects it supports, is to strengthen civilian capacities for protection and to support local efforts to transform conflict nonviolently as a basis for lasting, sustainable peace.



The network provides opportunities for researchers, practitioners and communities to network and share knowledge and ideas, to engage in training and research, and to undertake joint dissemination and advocacy activities. Please see our [website](#) for more information.

Creating Safer Space is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of UK Research and Innovation. The funding is part of the Global Challenges Research Fund, a £1.5 billion fund supporting cutting-edge research and innovation that addresses the global issues faced by developing countries. The GCRF forms part of the UK Government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment.

Creating Safer Space is led by Aberystwyth University (UK) in collaboration with the University of Antioquia (Colombia), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), City University of New York (USA), Durham University (UK), Leeds Beckett University (UK) and Strathmore University (Kenya).

What is the Research Focus?

According to the UN Refugee Agency, there are now a record high of 82.4 million people forcibly displaced by violent conflict, and the majority of deaths in conflicts are among civilians. This makes the protection of civilians from physical harm in contexts of war and other political violence a pressing issue of our time. While the international community has acknowledged the need for protection, the physical safety of civilians is still imaged predominantly as a task of armed actors (UN blue helmets, national police or militaries, armed local self-defence groups, etc.). Yet not only does the demand for protection from physical harm exceed the offer by far; armed actors are often also rather (part of) the problem than the solution.

The originality of the Creating Safer Space research network is its focus on active nonviolent protection provided by unarmed civilians and deployed at the local level of communities, be it by outside specialists or insider/local protection actors. Unarmed civilian protection (UCP)¹ is “the practice of civilians protecting other civilians in situations of imminent, ongoing, or recent violent conflict. It involves trained international civilians protecting local civilians, local civilians protecting each other, and even local civilians protecting international or non-local civilians.”² For more information on unarmed civilian protection and self-protection, please visit our [website](#) and our [UCP research database](#).

There are over 40 international NGOs and a growing number of national and local organisations currently undertaking protection work in at least 24 countries in conflict, in addition to local self-protection initiatives such as peace communities and weapons-free zones using a range of proactive strategies to create safer space for civilian life amidst violent conflict. They illustrate that the protection of civilians by civilians without the use or threat of force can work to create physical safety and may even do more: by providing a role model, and by not fuelling further violence, UCP can help break cycles of violence and thus contribute to longer-term peacebuilding. Initial research has suggested that UCP may often be more effective than armed protection and indeed, latest UN

¹ UCP is used here as a shorthand to a wider field of practice. Organisations and communities use different terminologies to denominate their work, and there is a lively debate over this within the community of practice. While unarmed civilian protection and protective accompaniment are the most commonly used terms, the Creating Safer Space research network is interested in all practices of protection from physical harm of civilians by civilians through nonviolent strategies, regardless of their specific denomination.

² Oldenhuis, H., Furnari, E., Carriere, R., Wagstrom, T., Frisch, A., & Duncan, M. (2021). Unarmed civilian protection: Strengthening civilian capacities to protect civilians against violence. An introductory course in 5 modules. Second edition. Geneva: Nonviolent Peaceforce.

Security Council and General Assembly resolutions mention the potential of UCP, indicating some change in thinking even at the level of governmental organisations.

The focus of Creating Safer Space is on nonviolent (self-)protection of civilians in conflicts in Colombia, South Sudan, Myanmar and the Philippines, but research on other Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) will also be supported (as specified below).

What are the Research Themes?

We seek to fund research projects that will further our understanding of unarmed civilian protection and self-protection from physical violence, as explained in the 'Research Focus' section above. Research projects must address one or more of the following themes, or the linkages between them:

1. ***Understanding vulnerability to physical harm in violent conflict***

Vulnerability to physical harm is complex, context-dependent and often situational, suggesting that common universal understandings not only obfuscate nuance in protection needs, but also neglect people's agency. There is therefore a need to better understand how different kinds of vulnerabilities interact in situations that require protection, how vulnerabilities may differ depending on the context and the identity and positionality of the people concerned, and which different protection strategies these complex vulnerabilities require.

Potential research questions include, but are not limited to:

- How is vulnerability to physical harm understood by the conflict-affected communities?
- How is it shaped by the historical, political, socio-economic, cultural and legal context and the dynamics of the violent conflict?
- How can common vulnerability markers such as gender, age, ethnicity or religion be unpacked to account for the intersectionality of experiences, which may lead to agency and empowerment as well as vulnerability?
- How do context and identity-related factors come together to create specific vulnerabilities, but also to enable agency and resilience?
- Which role does violence-affected communities' mental health play in vulnerability, resilience and protection? What strategies enhance mental health and resilience (e.g., cultural and artistic strategies)?
- How can UCP actors assess vulnerabilities in dynamic conflict contexts in order to best tailor their approaches, so as to protect without disempowering or undermining specific groups such as 'women' or 'youth'?

2. ***Building local protection infrastructures:***

Unarmed civilian protection has been shown to be most sustainable, where outside nonviolent protection initiatives have not only concentrated on addressing urgent protection needs, but also have built on existing practice or engaged in establishing more long-term local 'protection infrastructures', for example by enhancing and expanding local protection capacity through trainings and giving other types of material and knowledge support to local volunteers. A second research theme therefore focuses on exploring how outside protection strategies, national protection initiatives and self-protection mechanisms in communities can work together for best protection results and without undermining each other.

Potential research questions include, but are not limited to:

- How and to what effect have local protection mechanisms and capabilities been harnessed in UCP interventions to protect civilians in contexts of violent conflict and displacement?
- How have local communities and nonviolent protection actors adapted UCP strategies to their respective contexts?
- How have specific local protection initiatives (e.g., women protection groups or youth protection groups) helped to address specific vulnerabilities? What can be learned from them for other contexts?
- Which role do different types of relationships (with communities, armed and unarmed stakeholders etc.) play in enabling or complicating collaboration?
- How has UCP built on international law (e.g., IHL, human rights) in culturally diverse legal contexts (e.g., customary law)?
- What are the (potential) uses of digital technologies in imperilling or protecting communities?
- Which factors influence the success or failure of protection in the short (emergency response) and longer term (as basis for sustainability and resilience, and for creating conditions for positive peace) in different contexts?
- How do successful local UCP infrastructures impact on the short-term and long-term quality of peace arrangements?

3. ***Developing civilian protection capabilities:***

The field of practice of organisations using active nonviolent protection strategies has grown over the last decades and UCP has been successfully used in a wide range of countries, suggesting its versatility to adapt to very different contexts and types of political violence. Despite these positive experiences, however, the scope and reach of unarmed civilian protection has remained limited. A final thematic focus of this network is therefore on the question of how unarmed local protection can be scaled up or broadened out in size and/or scope, or include new actors and collaborations, with a view to protect more people from violence and displacement and develop stronger nonviolent protection capacity.

Potential research questions include, but are not limited to:

- What would enhance a wider acceptance and/or adoption of active nonviolent protection? What would be necessary to change dominant ways of thinking about protection, power, security, agency etc. at the national and/or international level?
- How can positive experiences with proactive nonviolent protection strategies be shared between communities and grassroots organisations within and across countries and regions?
- With what existing organisations—multilateral organisations such as the UN, the African Union, ECOWAS or ASEAN, or large INGOs working in the area of protection of civilians in conflict zones—, if any, can UCP actors collaborate, and how would this be done most effectively? Is there a risk that such collaboration may undermine the core principles of UCP?
- Given the central principle of many UCP actors of working and living with violence-affected communities, groups and individuals, (how) can UCP work on a larger scale?
- (How) Can UCP methods interact with other protection approaches, including armed ones, and what are limits or dangers of such interaction?
- (How) Can UCP work remotely between outside protectors and violence-affected communities in areas not accessible to outside support, e.g., due to extremist violence or national travel/access restrictions?

- How does UCP interact with wider efforts at peace-making (including conflict resolution, mediation) and peacebuilding, and how does it impact on the quality of the resulting peace?

What are the differences between the two types of grants?

There are two types of grants available – Large Grants and Small Grants – with different criteria.

Our funding forms part of the UK’s foreign aid budget. Our grants therefore have special requirements in regard to involvement of Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) on the [OECD Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) List of Official Development Assistance Recipients](#) (DAC list). References to ‘DAC list countries’ in the text below include any country on the DAC list, **except** China, India or any country due to graduate from the DAC list in the near future.

	LARGE GRANT	SMALL GRANT
Number	2 - 8 grants	5 - 20 grants
GBP	£30,000 - £100,000	£20,000 - £30,000
Research Focus	Any of the three research themes described on page 3. We particularly encourage systematizing work, comparison between different conflict situations, and/or South-South collaboration between research teams in two or more DAC list countries.	Any of the three research themes described on page 3.
Country Focus	At least 50 % of the research focus must be on conflicts in Colombia, South Sudan, Myanmar and/or the Philippines, but comparative research projects involving conflicts in other DAC list countries are very welcome.	Projects can focus on conflicts in any DAC list country, but projects on Colombia, South Sudan, Myanmar and the Philippines are especially encouraged.
Project Team	Experienced research teams who are employed by organisations with significant experience of supporting research projects. The Lead Organisation must be based in either the UK or a DAC list country.	While the nature of the project must be research-focused, applications from both research-oriented and practice-oriented organisations are permitted. The Lead Organisation must be based in either the UK or a DAC list country.
Start Date	1 Oct – 1 Dec 2022	1 Oct – 1 Dec 2022
End Date	31 Jan 2024	31 Jan 2024
Duration	12 – 16 months	6 – 16 months

Who can apply for funding?

All projects must include a Principal Investigator, and may include one or more Co-Investigators and/or Project Partners.

- The **Principal Investigator (PI)** has overall responsibility for the project and leads the research. The PI must be employed by an organisation with capacity to support the project. This will be the **Lead Organisation** on the project. Principal Investigators and Lead Organisations are eligible to receive full funding for the project.
- **Co-Investigators (Co-Is)** make a significant contribution to the research or to the project activities, and assist the PI in the management and leadership of the project. Co-Is can be based at the same organisation as the PI or at another organisation, and this can be either a research organisation or a non-academic organisation (such as a non-governmental organisations or a media or cultural organisations). Co-Investigators and their organisations are eligible to receive full funding for the project, if they meet the nationality criteria specified below.
- **Project Partners** are organisations that play an integral role in the proposed research or in furthering the research's dissemination and knowledge exchange, but are usually less involved in the project than Co-Investigators. Project Partners are normally non-academic organisations, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), media or cultural organisations, businesses, or government agencies. Project Partners can only receive limited funds from the grant for travel and consumables directly linked to the project. Project Partners are not eligible to apply for funding for salaries or overheads. For this reason, it is recommended that individuals who make a significant contribution to the project, and who work for small non-governmental non-profit organisations, are included as Co-Investigators rather than Project Partners. Businesses, other for-profit organisations and government agencies will always be Project Partners rather than Co-Investigators.

The **Lead Organisation** must be based in either the UK or in a Low and Middle Income Country (LMIC) on the [OECD Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) List of Official Development Assistance Recipients](#) (DAC list). There are some exceptions: organisations in China, India, or in countries due to graduate from the DAC list are **not** eligible to lead on a project. If the Lead Organisation is based in the UK, the project must involve Co-Investigators and/or Project Partners from DAC list countries.

UK Principal and Co-Investigators are normally expected to belong to a UK Higher Education Institution eligible for UKRI funding; please see the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) for further details.

Co-Investigators or Project Partners can be from either the UK or from a Low and Middle Income Country on the DAC list. Co-Investigators or Project Partners can also be from other countries, but please see the [FAQ](#) for special funding rules.

The Lead Organisation for a project is often an academic organisation, such as a university or a research institute. Other organisations, such as NGOs, are also encouraged to apply for grants, but special care must be taken to ensure projects are research-focused. Lead Organisations without significant previous research experience are only eligible to apply for the Small Grant, and must include research-focused Co-Investigators or Advisors in the project. All Lead Organisations will have to provide evidence of their capacity to lead and deliver research projects and to carry out projects in accordance with our funder's terms and conditions (e.g., in respect to finances and good governance) – please see our [FAQ](#) for more information.

Please be aware that any project without UK involvement will receive an Advisor from the Creating Safer Space Executive Committee.

We are especially keen to support projects with leadership or strong involvement from Investigators and Project Partners in Colombia, South Sudan, Myanmar, the Philippines, and/or other DAC list countries.

What kind of projects will be funded?

We provide funding for **research** projects. Projects must undertake a systematic investigation, of some kind, to further our knowledge or understanding of the Creating Safer Space research themes described on pages 3-5. It is **not** sufficient to engage in humanitarian activities to protect civilians in conflict.

We welcome the use of different research methods and approaches. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Participatory Action Research or other community-based research methods
- Arts-based and creative research methods
- Digital methods
- Fieldwork
- Focus groups
- Interview-based research
- Quantitative surveys
- Archival research

We particularly encourage applicants to consider participatory methodologies which mirror the community-based approach of UCP, arts-based and creative methods, or innovative digital methods to support more traditional approaches. We offer [online training](#) to enable applicants to learn about different research methods.

All projects must include **some** elements from the arts and humanities. This can consist, for example, in the involvement of researchers, approaches or methodologies from relevant academic disciplines (like history, social anthropology, law or media studies), the use of arts-based or other creative research methods for data generation and dissemination, or the involvement of project partners with arts and humanities expertise. Please see the [FAQ](#) for further guidance.

Projects are particularly encouraged to think about the links between research methods and project dissemination, for example by using, developing or enhancing methods that could eventually be included into UCP strategies (e.g., creative methods to explore conflict-affected communities' experiences which could help UCP organisations better tailor their programming, or digital methods of research which could then be adapted to and adopted by protection actors).

Grant applications must demonstrate that the research, if successful, will have the potential to positively impact the lives of people living in the midst of violent conflict or affected by other forms of political violence through more protection or better protection approaches. More specifically, since our funding forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, the research must have the potential to positively impact people living in countries that are eligible for foreign aid. This includes any country on the [OECD DAC List of ODA Recipients](#) (DAC list), except China, India, and any country due to graduate from the list. Please see page 5 for further information about the country focus of each grant.

Each project must produce outputs that are appropriate to the aims and target audiences of the project. Examples include academic publications (journal articles, book chapters, edited books, monographs or conference papers), websites or digital resources, policy briefings, public engagement, training materials, exhibitions, documentaries, performances or other creative outputs. Projects are especially encouraged to consider artistic or media outputs.

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Research Quality and Importance:** Including the extent to which the proposal meets the specific aims of the Creating Safer Space network; the significance and importance of the project and its potential contribution to knowledge; the appropriateness of the research methods; and Official Development Assistance (ODA) compliance.
- **People:** Including the quality and importance of the research team's work to date; the ability of the research team to bring the project to completion; and the suitability of the opportunities which the project will make available to support the development of research staff on the project.
- **Management:** Including the appropriateness of the project plan and timeframes; and the extent to which sufficient time and resources have been allocated to achieving each aspect of the project.
- **Value for Money:** Including the extent to which the likely outcome of the research will represent value for money; and the extent to which the resources requested are reasonable in the context of the project.
- **Outputs, dissemination and impact:** Including the appropriateness of the proposed plans for dissemination and impact; the likelihood that the outputs and outcomes of the project will be highly valued and widely exploited, both in the research community and in wider contexts where they can make a difference; and whether sufficient attention has been given to who the beneficiaries of the research might be and appropriate ways to engage with them throughout the project.

All projects must also evidence a commitment to gender equality, meet certain ethical principles, and safeguard researchers and research participants.

What can the funds be used for?

Projects are welcome to apply for the funding required to support the proposed research activities, within to the funding limits described for each grant on page 5. Examples of eligible costs include:

- Funding to cover the time that Principal and Co-Investigators commit to the project.
- Employment of a Research Assistant to help with the research.
- Professional development activities for project staff (e.g., funding for a Research Assistant to participate in an academic conference or a methods training related to the project).
- Travel and subsistence for research activities (e.g., fieldwork, workshops, interviews, or visits to archives).
- Travel and subsistence to communicate the research (e.g., to present the project findings at an academic conference or to organise a dissemination workshop for the local community).
- Consumables for research activities (e.g., materials necessary to undertake creative research methods).
- Consumables for dissemination activities (e.g., to set up an exhibition or to design a policy paper).
- Translation or interpretation (e.g., to support research engagements or to translate project findings into languages spoken by local communities).

- Publication (e.g., to ensure journal articles are freely accessible).
- Indirect costs (overheads) associated with the project.

Applicants are required to demonstrate that any resources requested are reasonable in the context of the proposed research, and that the expected outcomes of the project are worth the funding requested.

Organisations in countries on the [OECD DAC List of ODA Recipients](#) (except China, India, or countries due to graduate from the list) will receive funding to cover the full costs of the project (100%). Organisations in the UK will receive funding in accordance with standard procedures for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) grants, in other words 80% of full economic cost, with the recipient organisation required to cover the balance.

How do I apply for funding?

Applicants are required to send us an [application form](#) and specific supporting evidence. The application must be completed in full, and all requirements must be met. Please send the application form and the supporting evidence to creating-safer-space@aber.ac.uk by midnight (UTC) on **15 April 2022**.

The [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) contains detailed guidance on how to answer each question on the application form. We reserve the right to reject applications that do not meet the requirements or that have not been received by the stated deadline.

Applications should normally be submitted in English. We expect English-speaking Co-Investigators to help with translation or proof-reading, where this is possible. Applications in Spanish are also welcome, but please contact creating-safer-space@aber.ac.uk at least **one month** before the application deadline, so that we can make the necessary arrangements for Spanish-speaking reviewers.

Please be aware that writing a grant proposal takes a long time. It normally takes at least two months, but we recommend that you start as soon as possible to increase your chances of success. Please subscribe to our [newsletter](#) to find out about workshops on how to write grant applications.

We would like to support potential applicants to connect with each other. Creating Safer Space hosts regular events, such as research cafés and training workshops. These present a good opportunity to meet others in the field. Events are advertised on our [website](#) and via our [newsletter](#).

What happens after I have submitted my application?

Assessment of applications

The Creating Safer Space network is committed to assessing grant applications fairly, to ensure the best projects are funded. When you have submitted your application, the Creating Safer Space administrative team will check the application to ensure it meets the stated criteria (e.g., in respect to eligibility, allowable costs, supporting documents and word limits).

The application will then be reviewed by an Assessment Panel. Before the panel meeting, 2 panel members (for the Small Grant) or 3 panel members (for the Large Grant) will assess the application against the criteria summarized on page 7-8. The panel members will assess the application independently of each other, so as not to influence each other's scores. Each panel

member will give the application a score between 1 and 6, where 1 is 'unfundable' and 6 is 'exceptional'. The Assessment Panel will then meet online to discuss the suggested scores, to agree on the final grade, and to rank applications in order of funding priority.

A final decision is made by the Executive Committee of the Creating Safer Space network. The Executive Committee will not re-rank proposals, but it will decide how many projects to fund. It will also decide whether to fund the most highly ranked proposals overall, or the most highly ranked proposals for each core country (Colombia, South Sudan, Myanmar and the Philippines) to ensure a balanced portfolio of projects.

Setting up projects

We will inform you of the outcome approximately 6 weeks after the application deadline. Unsuccessful projects will be welcome to request feedback. Successful projects will be informed of the next steps, which are also described on our [website](#). It normally takes approximately 4-5 months to conclude the required contracts and to undertake other start-up requirements. The start dates for each grant are listed on page 5.

During projects

Grant holders will be expected to provide regular progress reports, to participate in workshops to share project findings, to contribute to network-wide dissemination and knowledge exchange activities, and to contribute to the Creating Safer Space network in other ways. We are particularly keen to encourage grant holders to use participatory and creative research methods in their Creating Safer Space projects and their wider work, and grant holders are expected to participate in training, collaboration and exchange workshops and to engage with mentoring initiatives.

What are the ODA cuts, and will it affect my funding proposal?

In spring 2021, the UK government reduced its budget for Official Development Assistance (ODA). As a result, our funders, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and UK Research and Innovation, had to cut funding to all ODA-funded projects, including the *Creating Safer Space* network.

The UK government has recently communicated to our funders that "legal commitments for existing projects from 2022/23 will be met". Our funders have confirmed that "our current understanding is that we will be able to support projects still running for the remainder of their grant period and that no further cuts will be applied" (see the [full statement](#) for more information).

Our funder has invited us to launch a funding competition, and we are doing this on the assumption that the UK government does not change its mind. In the unlikely event that further cuts are announced, we will let applicants know through our [newsletter](#) and through our [website](#).

Who do I contact with questions?

In the first instance, please consult the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#). If you still have questions, please contact creating-safer-space@aber.ac.uk. We look forward to hearing about your projects!