

No:

**Research Ethics Application**  
**for University Staff and Post Graduate Research (PgR) students**  
**Application for study involving Human Participants**

All fields will expand as required.

<p>1. Title of Project: As a development economist how do I contribute to the establishment of the human capabilities of the people I work with in the developing countries?</p>
<p>2. If this is a PgR student project, please indicate what type of project by ticking the relevant box:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PhD Thesis    <input type="checkbox"/> PhD by Published Works    <input type="checkbox"/> MPhil</p>
<p>3. Type of study</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Involves direct involvement by human subjects</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Involves existing documents/anonymised data only. Contact the Chair of Ethics before continuing via research office.</p>
<p>4. Peer Review</p> <p>It is expected that all research is peer reviewed before applying for ethical consideration. Please indicate who your proposal has been discussed with (Mentor, Supervisor (s), Expert in field). Supervisors, colleagues of the organisation I work with, senior researchers, senior development workers.</p> <p>I have been collecting and analysing data in presentations and journal publications at national and international conferences with my main supervisors' approval, for the last two years. My proposal has been discussed with the executive director of the Swedish foundation I work for in Albania, and with the CEO of the international NGO I co-founded in 2012 (I'm the deputy CEO) active in Afghanistan and Ethiopia. Moreover I have discussed my data and research with numbers of colleagues from the living educational theory arena as well as from the international development arena. I'm also a member of the Living Theory Research Group that e-meets every Sunday evening at 8pm GMT to critically engage in each other's research. Members of the group are researchers from Canada, the USA, Italy, Denmark and the UK. Our research group uses the latest release of the Skype platform that allows various people to simultaneously be on the screen and communicate together. I'm a Peer-reviewer of internationally refereed journal The Educational Journal of Living Theories (<a href="http://www.ejolt.org">www.ejolt.org</a>).</p>

**Applicant information**

5. Name of applicant/researcher:

6. Appointment/position held by applicant  Ph.D. Student
7. Contact information for applicant:  E-mail:  Address:
8. Project supervisor(s)/mentor, if different (or applicable) from applicant:  Name(s):  E-mail(s):
9. Appointment held by supervisor(s) and institution(s) where based (if applicable):
10. Names and appointments of all members of the research team (including degree where applicable)

### The Project

**NOTE:** In addition to completing this form you must submit all supporting materials such as participant information sheet (PIS) and consent form.

11. Summary of research project in lay terms (maximum length 150 words).

I am a development economist and practitioner who has worked and lived in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Georgia and currently in the Balkan region tackling sustainable development from the perspective of those at the receiving end of aid. By asking the beneficiaries from development interventions what sustainable development is, my research also aims to communicate how it is educational for my practical work in developing countries and to what extent my work impacts on people's lives. I use Living Theory Research (LT) as a methodology, which strengthens my ability to contribute to the establishment of the human capabilities of the people I work with in developing countries. I will be using methods of auto-ethnography, participative action research and multimedia representations. Moreover I'll be using my own reflections both recent and historical from my field experience and evidence from development interventions I have taken part in.

12. Anticipated project dates

Given the nature of my practice and experience I've been gathering data throughout my engagement in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Georgia and the Balkan region even prior to 2015 and in particular from January 2015. I have been collecting and analysing these data in presentations and journal publications at national and international conferences with my main supervisors' approval, for the last two

years.

Therefore according to the above, data collection goes from **January 2015 to December 2018** and is divided into 2 periods:

1. January 2015 - February 2017

During this period ethical processes (the same stated in this paper) were followed under the supervision of my main supervisors and permission to use the data was granted by the main supervisors.

2. March 2017 -January 2019

13. Please describe the sample of participants to be studied (including number, age, gender):

My research uses a living theory methodology (LT), which takes the form of a self-study. By this I mean that as a self-study researcher I can express myself using various research-techniques such as my methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Hart, 2001, p. 169). This helps me in exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' (Whitehead, 1989) using various research methods such as auto-ethnography (Ellis, Adams and Bocher, 2011, p. 273). It also helps me to research, analyse and explain my personal and professional experience and be critically reflexive about my practice in order to understand social formations based on cultures different from my own and what can I do to improve people's well-being. Hence I will not be studying participants as objects or sources of data; instead they are living participants in the creation of knowledge together with me. They represent an integral part of my research and inform my understanding and knowledge on various issues such as poverty, human capabilities, sustainable (generative) development. We will influence each other and eventually I will improve my practice as a development worker through my own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations (Whitehead, 2008).

My research includes various participants, mainly colleagues (development and humanitarian workers) as well as direct beneficiaries of the various development/humanitarian projects I am involved in within various countries. For the latter I will use the following documents:

1. Participant Information Sheet (PIS)
2. Participant consent form (CF)

For those who are not directly engaged, such as some of the colleagues with whom I share my daily work, I make it public that I am researching my practice so there is an understanding that they will be indirectly involved in my research.

- c.ca 15 colleagues with similar field experience in international development and LT research from various countries such as Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Kenya, Georgia, Western Europe, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina aged from 26-75, (female & male);

- Afghanistan: at least 5 members of the local staff involved in development interventions in Kabul where I used to work from 2005-2008 and now I support pro bono (aged 18 to 60); the number of direct beneficiaries of past and current interventions is 1.293. I can't predict how many of them I'll be talking to since it depends on their willingness to speak about sensitive issues. However, I know I can count on a core group of 25 people who are willing to participate in my research. It's important to stress the fact that the security situation in Afghanistan does not provide me with the freedom I used to have, to travel there as often as I want.
- Ethiopia: at least 5 direct beneficiaries of development interventions aged 18 to 42 female;
- Balkan region: up to 10 beneficiaries of various projects run by the foundation I work for here in the Region, namely Cultural Heritage without Borders;
- At least 15 partners from external agencies and stakeholders
- Family members (7 adults)

14. How will participants be recruited and from where? Be as specific as possible.

I will involve those who are part of my practice as a development worker - colleagues, practitioners and beneficiaries from around the world. I will ask them to be involved in my research via email or in person. I will be interviewing them in person (when possible since my research focus on an international activity), via Skype or by using online-questionnaires. Email correspondence is also a means for collecting data. The participants will be able to choose freely whether to take part or not.

15. What procedure is proposed for obtaining consent?

I know the vast majority of the people who will be part of my research well, since they have been, and still are, part of my professional life. Hence my aim is to ensure my research maintains an ethical approach to gaining consent and to fully respect them and their opinions on the matters we discuss throughout my research. However, I'm aware of ethical boundaries arising from the fact that we all belong to different cultures and we have different ways of looking at, and understanding, research. The majority of the beneficiaries I work with do not view research as a priority. This is probably because they are often struggling for survival in countries where their basic human rights are neglected. I don't want to, and I will not, violate the cultural boundaries that might lead them to deny consent. Many of those people, particularly women, may not be comfortable with videoing our conversations; many are more likely to prefer to talk informally within the privacy of their own homes and would consider it a lack of respect if I took notes or asked them to fill in a survey. Some are illiterate and in many cases we don't share a common language, so an interpreter would be needed. This is normally a trusted person or family member. However I have to make the scope of my research clear to the interpreter, and that no harm is intended to those who take part. On the one hand the presence of the translator (when needed) eases communication and helps me in obtaining consent.

This is why I will use my intercultural competences to explain (mainly orally) what my research is about; and I will have to explain clearly the aim of the research itself to both the beneficiaries and the interpreter. I am also aware that I am in a position of power since I have been working with those people for quite some time and they might consider me as a 'highly respected person'. In many countries it is not acceptable to say no to such a person, thus I'm extremely careful that their consent is not solely motivated by cultural norms, which could cause them personal discomfort. I aim at always being transparent about that. In the past what has proved favourable to the beneficiaries' interest (which is my priority) is to guarantee anonymity by using pseudonyms

and avoid showing faces while recording. I will always stress that participants are free to withdraw at anytime (this is stated also in the participant consent form), and that I will use video recording or photography if permission is granted to me in written. Often the only thing I can do is to take field notes after the conversations to avoid cultural clashes.

In particular, in Afghanistan women do not feel comfortable in being recorded, so I spend time in explaining why I am advocating the use of recording. However I also clarify that the recording is not compulsory and that we can have our discussion off-camera. Sometimes women agree to being recorded but don't want their faces to be visible.

In order to reach saturation I plan to recruit a minimum of 50 participants and maximum of 100 participants. The final number varies according to the reasons stated in point 13.

I engage in the following:

I both verbally explain my research and provide an easy-to-read synopsis of my research translated into their local language;

I ask all the direct participants in my research to fill in a consent-form explicitly (translated into their local language if necessary) asking for their consent to use the gathered data. The consent-form will explicitly explain they have the right to anonymity and can withdraw at any time. The participants often give me their oral consent, according to their cultural norms, which endorses an oral agreement more than a written 'contract'. According to those norms it would be culturally insensitive to insist on signing a 'contract', which might be perceived as a lack of trust on my side. In order to avoid this I accept when participants decide to seal our 'agreement' orally. Trust is at the base of my work as a development practitioner and I don't want to jeopardise my trust relationship with the participants;

I ask for the participants' feedback on the data I collected and my written exposition to ensure that everyone feels transparently represented in my research;

16. What discomfort (including psychological), inconvenience or danger could be caused by participation in the project? Please indicate plans to address these potential risks.

The beneficiaries of development interventions I work with belong to vulnerable groups (i.e. disadvantaged girls, women and men) destitute, discriminated against and marginalised by society. I try to provide those people with my professional support in different ways. My presence might have had a positive impact on their lives. Thus some of them might feel morally obliged to participate in my research although this might cause psychological discomfort due to the nature of the questions related to their condition. Others in the past have shown a genuine wish to share their insights with me and other colleagues. Another danger that many could face is a sense of being encouraged to disclose their most intimate thoughts, which could impact negatively on their social lives, if their identity were to be revealed. This is why I offer all the participants anonymity by using pseudonyms and avoid revealing their faces while recording. I will also offer them the possibility of talking with me off camera and I will then rely on my field notes. If the consent for video and/or audio recording is given, it will be done in written form (see participant-consent form).

Inconveniences might occur in case of my inability to travel long distances due to challenging situations (i.e. security) related for instance to the political stability of the countries I work in.

I will be sensitive to the above challenges by:

1. Ensuring that colleagues, volunteers, partners and beneficiaries know that participation is

voluntary;

2. Going to the most convenient place for the staff and volunteers to minimise the inconvenience to their work;
3. Complying with social norms to ensure that my questions are appropriate in the different cultural environments;
4. Assuring anonymity for all the participants;
5. Avoiding the use of photographs or video material (unless written permission is given);
6. Clarifying that participation or lack of participation has no impact on their access to further activities.

Among colleagues a challenge is to make the time to get involved because of the hectic lives we all lead. Therefore I usually:

1. Meet them at places most convenient to them, including their own homes (if we are based in the same region);
2. Clarify that I value whatever amount of time they can give me;
3. Send material via email (i.e. open questions, surveys, etc.) they can fill in whenever they have time; and organising Skype calls that I can record only with their permission. This is also helpful, since it saves me having to travel long distances to gather interviews.

17. What potential risks may exist for the researcher(s)? Please indicate plans to address such risks (for example, details of a lone-worker plan).

I'm researching my practice as a development worker, which means I collect data in various developing countries where I used to operate or am still operating. This implies that I have to travel to various countries, evaluate on-going projects and finalise my data gathering. Some of those countries are politically unstable, and I might not be able to travel there often. This applies particularly to Afghanistan and Ethiopia. I address this risk by asking the interviewees to discuss over Skype or Viber. Alternatively if the internet connection is poor, I ask them to answer questions in a written form. As for the organizations I work for, I make sure that my managers are aware of my research and liaise with them on lone visits. Since my position is twofold, namely as an employee of the organisation as well as a researcher, I need to clarify what motivates my interest in interviewing the participants. Many of them are used to discussing interventions aimed at ameliorating their lives with me. Then it becomes fundamentally important for me to explain that our discussion has a different scope, i.e. to inform my doctoral research with fieldwork-experience. This is a particularity sensitive point, since I want to avoid raising expectations in the form of further support to them and their families.

Moreover I'm aware of the University's 'Lone Work Procedure for Researchers' and I will fully comply with the guideline, in particular with those concerning:

- Fieldwork
- Conducting interviews with participants in their own homes or on the streets

18. Whilst we do not generally expect direct benefits to participants as a result of this research, please state here any that result from completion of the study.

My research has various potential benefits for the participants and for myself. I am learning from

my research how to improve my practice, which provides me with the opportunity to improve my skills as a development worker and apply those in my daily work. Moreover by interviewing the participants I get to know them better. They have the opportunity to tell me about their goals in life, and explain what impact the development interventions have had on their lives. I learn how to design activities that may contribute to enabling them to come closer to the realisation of happiness. Carers and young carers may well become more involved in the running of services as I am able to listen and learn from them. Another indirect benefit is that many of the women I'm interviewing, perceive me as a 'success story. In other words I can be seen as a woman, who has managed to educate herself and now has a good life and is free to speak her mind. This is clearly a simplification of the situation, but it has often happened that disadvantaged women have felt reassured that life can get better, even for a woman.

19. Details of any incentives/payments (including out-of-pocket expenses) made to participants:

There will be no out-of-pocket expenses

20. Briefly describe your data collection and analysis methods, and the rationale for their use

I use multi-media approaches, such as a video-camera to record conversations with participants who feel at ease and also with a voice-recording device when preferred.

I use video footage to analyse the material and extract conversations and quotations from them. I find this method particularly useful when analysing the body language of the interviewees when in the same space with me. I like to capture the flow of life-affirming energy (Whitehead, 2011), and the nuanced reactions, which often defy reproduction in written language. The significance of multi-media narratives form of research is that they can compensate for some of the limitations in our physical vision and reach into our relationally dynamic awareness of the movement of bodies in space and boundaries, in other words, our proprioception (ibid).

I use a range of written data such as emails; letter from participants, field notes, group interviews, semi-structured interviews; and documents I write as a part of my work such as projects' proposals, mission-reports and evaluation-reports. Moreover, I utilise my various research-writings such as reflective diaries, academic papers, book and article-reviews. This is all helpful in monitoring how my learning evolves over time.

21. Describe the involvement of users/service users in the design and conduct of your research (where applicable). If you have not involved users/service users in developing your research protocol, please indicate this and provide a brief rationale/explanation.

This is not applicable in my research. In fact I'm working on the qualitative end of the spectrum for research.

22. What plan is in place for the storage of data (electronic, digital, paper, etc.)? Please ensure that your plans comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and University of Cumbria Data Storage Guidelines such as consideration of data archiving, password protection and data encryption.

I keep data on my laptop which is password-protected. All the data are backed up in two different external hard-disks (password-protected) and stored on the iCloud.

I will make participants aware when I seek consent of how their information will be shared. I will also ensure that when participants ask for their data not to be shared, I will use anonymised and,

where necessary, semi-fictionalised data.

Any hard copy data will be stored in the combination safe of my private house. The combination is only known to me and to my spouse.

23. Will audio or video recording take place? ☐ no ☒ audio ☒ video

If yes, what arrangements have been made for audio/video data storage? At what point in the research will tapes/digital recordings/files be destroyed?

I keep data on my laptop, which is password-protected. All the data are backed up in two different external hard disks (password protected) and stored on the iCloud.

The videos/audio of the conversations with my supervisors, validation group and participants are accessible only by those who receive the url from me. The data will be made public only if I'm granted permission to do so.

The recordings will only be used as agreed by consenting participants on the completion of my studies. They will remain private if the participant has requested it, and will only be publicly available if permissions have been granted.

24. What are the plans for dissemination of findings from the research (reports, transcripts, summaries, publication, conferences)?

I plan to strengthen my research-ability by writing at least two papers a year and presenting them at international conferences and in publications dealing with my research-topic. The collaboration with young as well as experienced researchers from different contexts and locations and who are not linked with my academic affiliation, have proved crucial in deepening the understanding of my research and in improving my research skills. Since 2016 I have been a peer-reviewer of the internationally refereed journal, The Educational Journal of Living Theories ([www.ejолts.org](http://www.ejолts.org)) in which I published a paper in 2015.

In 2016 I attended and presented my papers at the following international conferences:

The 4th Conference on Sustainable Development in Rome;

The 5th International conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development in Lisbon, where my paper has been awarded the best paper among early stage researcher's papers.

When possible I video-record my presentations as well.

25. What particular ethical problems, not previously noted on this application, do you think there are in the proposed study?

The main ethical problems are related to the cultural differences, norms and beliefs the participants hold. The vast majority of those who will inform my research belong to different cultures from my own. I therefore have to be conscious of where the (cultural) boundaries are and behave in an acceptable manner. I don't have a background in anthropology thus my skills are limited. However I research in contexts where I live, and where I know whom to contact whenever support is needed.

Many participants are not fluent in English or might not have an understanding of academic English, so it is not possible for them to read my thesis in whole or in part. However I will offer them an oral summary of its contents and use a translator if needed.

I will make both my final dissertation as well as preceding drafts available for people to read.

Signatures:

Applicant:

Date: February, 2016

Project Supervisors:

### Supportive Materials Checklist

Please attach all necessary supportive materials and indicate in the checklist below.

Please tick as appropriate

<a href="#">Participant Information Sheet</a>	Yes  sent via email to .....as attachment to the Research Ethics Application
<a href="#">Consent Form</a>	Yes  sent via email to .....as attachment to the Research Ethics Application
Letter of invitation	no
Other (please state, and explain)	