# ESRC Welsh Graduate School for Social Sciences

# Research in Practice Placement Opportunity

The following information has been provided by the Host Organisation and outlines the opportunity available. Any queries about this placement should be addressed to the host organisation in the details provided below.

This placement is aimed at Postgraduate Researchers who have funding through the ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership from October 2024 onwards, who must complete a Research in Practice placement as part of their award.

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| **Name of Host Organisation** | ESRC research project "The Unarmed Civilian Protection in South Sudan (UCP-SS) Dataset" |
| **Registered Address** | Department of International Politics<br>Aberystwyth University<br>Penglais<br>Aberystwyth<br>SY23 3FE |
| **Website** | - Department: https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/interpol/<br>- Project: https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=UKRI3924 |
| **Brief description of the Host organisation:** | Aberystwyth University is a public research university in mid-Wales, UK. The Department of International Politics (InterPol), founded in 1919 as the world's first department of its kind, is internationally recognised for the quality of its research and for its critical approaches to questions of international politics. The Department has a lively research culture, hosting a range of specialised research groups, centres and seminars, as well as various UKRI- and EU-funded projects. These have included the international, interdisciplinary AHRC research network "Creating Safer Space: Strengthening Civilian Protection Amidst Violent Conflict" (2020-2025). The "UCP-SS Dataset" project, to which placement holders will contribute, builds on this work. |
| **Company registration Number** | Prifysgol Aberystwyth University: RC000641 |

| **PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITY** | |
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| **Placement role title**: *e.g Policy officer* | Visiting Doctoral Fellowship |
| **Background/expected impact of the project:** | This placement opportunity is located within the ESRC-funded secondary data analysis project "The Unarmed |

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| | Civilian Protection in South Sudan (UCP-SS) Dataset", hosted by the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University.<br><br>The project aims to make a major contribution to the study of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) – a nonviolent mechanism used by civilians to protect other civilians and/or themselves in contexts of armed or social violence – by creating the world's first comprehensive quantitative dataset on UCP initiatives: the Unarmed Civilian Protection in South Sudan (UCP-SS) Dataset.<br><br>The project partners with Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), the world's largest UCP organisation, using existing primary data (c.4,500 text-based weekly incident reports) collected by NP's South Sudan mission to create a new dataset on UCP activities and types of violence in South Sudan and conduct first in-depth analyses of UCP effectiveness and trends using this new dataset.<br><br>The core project team consists of Prof Berit Bliesemann de Guevara (project lead), Dr Luke Abbs (consultant/visiting researcher), and Dr Jennifer Hodge (research associate). |
| **Outline of duties/description of opportunity** | The Visiting Doctoral Fellows will have the unique opportunity to contribute to UCP research and the organisational learning of NP, by supporting the creation a bespoke codebook, coding (and potentially geocoding) data using textual information from incident reports, and running first analyses, based on an allocated subset of the data available. Placement holders will be able to make an important contribution to the UCP-SS Dataset project due to the large number of incident reports to be processed by the team within a limited timeframe.<br><br>Visiting Doctoral Fellows will gain insights into:<br><br>- Types of UCP, and how different types of UCP are likely to be protective against various types of violence and harms;<br>- Best practice in dataset construction and validation, including processes to verify the quality and consistency of primary data generated in a real-world operational settings, by stakeholders rather than by researchers;<br>- The decisions required to create and refine the codebook to maximise its usability by both researchers and practitioners;<br>- The experimental use of AI tools for data coding;<br>- The analytical possibilities and limits of the emerging dataset, which may include both descriptive statistics and early quantitative analyses; |

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| | - The ethical implications of dataset construction in violent and sensitive conflict-affected settings.<br><br>If applicable, they will be invited to contribute to co-authored project publications. |
| **Expected output(s)/deliverable(s)** | 1. Hand-coding of an allocated subset of the UCP-SS dataset;<br>2. Documentation of coding decisions and questions in the project codebook;<br>3. Active contributions to online project team meetings;<br>4. Active engagement with intercoder reliability checks. |
| **Skills and experience required for the role** | *Required:*<br>- Evidence of some experience with data management, data coding, quantitative data analysis, and/or geolocation of data<br>- **OR:** Evidence of qualitative skills in operationalisation of concepts, classification, categorisation, thematic analysis, and/or qualitative coding<br><br>*Desirable:*<br>- Evidence of interest in, knowledge and/or an understanding of problems in the areas of conflict, peacekeeping, nonviolent resistance, or similar<br>- Familiarity with the use of Microsoft Excel<br>- Evidence of some experience of data analysis using R Studio<br>- Knowledge of South Sudan (conflict, politics, geography) |
| **Please indicate which of the following skills could be developed or applied during the placement, you may select more than one.** | ☒Research skills: researchers will develop their skills in the conceptualisation, operationalisation and coding of variables in the dataset, and how quantitative codebooks are constructed and amended during data collection projects.<br><br>☒Communication skills: at weekly online meetings, researchers will develop skills in presenting the outcome of that week's coding tasks, highlighting issues that have arisen for discussion and resolution amongst the team.<br><br>☒Project management: researchers will take responsibility for managing the timely completion of a bespoke subset of tasks assigned to them during their placement.<br><br>☒Policy understanding or engagement: throughout the placement, researchers will contribute to team discussions on the policy and practice implications of the research findings, in particular the possible implications for decisions on the prioritisation of certain types of UCP to respond to/prevent different types of violence and harms. |

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| | ☒Collaboration / teamwork: working within an international team of researchers and practitioners in the field of unarmed civilian protection, the researcher will develop their skills in multi-level collaboration at the interface of research and practice.<br><br>☐Data collection<br><br>☒Specific methodologies (please specify): dataset construction methodologies, including decision making around coding, inclusion/exclusion criteria, what counts as a case, and identifying potential sources of bias. Researchers will develop skills in descriptive and potentially quantitative analyses.<br><br>☒Software skills (please specify): experience using R Studio for analyses, if applicable (depending on the project phase in which the placement takes place).<br><br>☒ Professional and transferable skills: working on real-world data with an NGO partner/user in mind<br><br>☐Other (please specify): |
| **What support will be provided for the Postgraduate Researcher** *e.g necessary resources, training, support and equipment for the student to undertake their placement* | The placement holders will receive training and mentorship throughout their placement. This element will be led by Dr Jennifer Hodge, Research Associate with experience in leading quantitative coding teams of PGR students.<br><br>Jennifer will provide structured training and support throughout the placement, with weekly meetings to discuss core concepts, and how to conduct high-quality data collection. Themes such as transparency, reliability, ethical considerations, feasibility and completeness of data collection will be covered. Team discussions will allow the visiting doctoral researcher to discuss and compare their coding decisions to other members of the research team, and to identify areas of disagreement for group resolution.<br><br>In addition to weekly meetings, the visiting doctoral researcher will be added to the research team's Microsoft Teams chat for the project, where they can share live coding problems that they are facing, which can be collectively discussed and resolved by the team. Researchers can also contact Jennifer directly if they need to resolve any issues that arise quickly, at any point during the placement.<br><br>The aim is to build the PhD students' confidence in handling and interpreting text-based data and turning it into a quantitative dataset fit for quantitative empirical analysis in R or similar programmes. |

| KEY INFORMATION | |
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| **Number of placements available:** | Up to 4 per cohort (across 3 cohort) |
| **Location of placement** | Online |
| **Placement duration:** | 3 months full-time (part-time equivalent possible) |
| **Full time or part-time** *attend in a single block or spaced out over period of XXX months* | Full-time and part-time placements are possible.<br>Ideally placement holders will attend the placement in a single block. |
| **Working hours or core hours** | Full—time working hours:<br>Mondays – Thursdays, 9-12 and 13-17:30<br>Fridays, 9-12 and 13-16:30<br>(part-time hours can be discussed) |
| **In-person, online or hybrid:** | Online |
| **Anticipated start date:** | Fellow Cohort 1 start date: 1 June 2027<br>Fellow Cohort 2 start date: 1 September 2027<br>Fellow Cohort 3 start date: 1 January 2028 |
| **Security/health and safety restrictions (if relevant)** | N/A |
| **Language requirements (if relevant)** | N/A |

| HOW TO APPLY | |
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| **Closing date and time for applications** | Applications deadlines:<br>Fellow Cohort 1: 15 December 2026<br>Fellow Cohort 1: 15 March 2027<br>Fellow Cohort 1: 15 August 2027 |
| **How to submit an application** | Please submit the following application documents:<br>- Your CV<br>- A short cover letter outlining your experience relevant to the role (max 2 pages), especially if you have:<br>  ○ Any experience with data coding, quantitative data analysis, or geolocation of data (essential)<br>  ○ **OR** evidence of qualitative skills in classification, categorisation, thematic analysis or qualitative coding (essential) |

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| | ○ Any interest in, or experience or knowledge of, researching problems in the area of peace and conflict studies, peacekeeping, nonviolent resistance, or similar (desirable)<br>- Any supporting information (e.g. publications, datasets, references) (optional)<br>- Application documents should be sent by email to Prof Berit Bliesemann de Guevara (beb14@aber.ac.uk) |
| **Recruitment process** | 1. Applications will be evaluated and shortlisted by the core members of the project team.<br>2. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online interview, where they can also raise any questions they have.<br>3. The successful candidates will be invited to start the placement process with the WGSSS. |
| **Contact name and email for any queries related to the placement:** | Prof Berit Bliesemann de Guevara (beb14@aber.ac.uk) |

| **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION** | |
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| *Equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is about valuing all people equally, fairly and with respect, avoiding all forms of unlawful discrimination irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.* | |
| **Do you agree to uphold the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the placement process and experience.** | Yes |
| **Does your organisation have an EDI policy?** | Yes |
| **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**<br>*WGSSS Postgraduate Researchers receive their studentship stipend whilst attending their Research in Practice placement/opportunity.*<br><br>*It is expected that any travel expenses incurred during the course of the placement i.e. travelling to business meetings or placement events, will be covered by the placement host.* | |
| **Please confirm if your organisation would be willing to contribute towards additional expenses** | N/A – we do not foresee any travel expenses since the role is an online role with team meetings taking place via MS Teams |