

Frequent Asked Questions

Call for abstracts – Feminist Frontiers

The XCEPT Research Fund is commissioning research that applies a feminist lens to the study of conflict-affected borderlands. The call for abstracts opened on 19 August 2025. A Q&A was held on 2 September. The deadline for clarification questions was 8 September.

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document was published alongside the Call. It has now been updated to provide responses to questions asked during the Q&A and via email. New questions asked appear at the end of each section, under a sub-header called 'Updated FAQs'.

The answers to these questions take precedence over what is written in the original Call for Abstracts.

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1 About XCEPT

1.1 What is XCEPT?

The Cross-border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends ([XCEPT](#)) research programme brings together world-leading experts and local researchers to examine conflict-affected borderlands, how conflicts connect across borders, and the drivers of violent and peaceful behaviour. Funded by UK International Development, XCEPT offers actionable research to inform policies and programmes that support peace.

XCEPT's focus on conflict-affected borderlands and how conflicts connect across borders sets us apart. We view conflicts as complex systems that connect across borders and ensnare conflict actors and communities, intertwining the licit and illicit, the formal and informal.

We argue that since conflicts are not bound by national borders, responses to conflict should not be bound by national borders either. Responses to conflict should be transnational. They should work at local, state, and regional levels and enable integrated and coordinated international responses.

Chemonics UK is the lead implementing partner for XCEPT, working with King's College London. Other core partners during the life of the programme have included: The Asia

Foundation; Chatham House; Conciliation Resources; Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center; and Rift Valley Institute.

XCEPT works with many other research organisations through the XCEPT Research Fund (XRF). These include leading universities and think tanks and grassroots organisations dedicated to building peace. XCEPT offers awards to both individuals and institutions to support high-quality mixed-methods research, published in leading journals and institutional channels. We support researchers in innovative application of remote research methods alongside field data collection, pushing the boundaries of how technology can be used to track conflict dynamics.

1.2 What are examples of projects XCEPT has previously funded?

Examples of other projects funded through the XRF can be found in the 'ongoing and completed' awards section of the 'Research Fund' page on our [website](#). To search across XCEPT's research outputs, use the website's [search function](#).

2 Eligibility

2.1 Who can apply for an award?

Papers may be authored individually or co-authored. To be eligible for this opportunity, the lead author must meet the criteria described in the call document. This includes holding a PhD in a relevant discipline, and having at least one publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

2.2 Are there specific affiliation requirements for individual researchers?

No, individual researchers do not need to meet any specific affiliation requirements, provided they fulfil the eligibility criteria outlined in the Call for Abstracts.

2.3 Can I apply as a team?

Yes, you may submit a proposal as an individual or in collaboration with other researchers. We encourage collaboration between academics from different disciplinary or geographic backgrounds. However, only one lead author should submit the proposal. That individual will be named in the contract and will be responsible for project implementation, should the application be successful.

2.4 The call states that Global South researchers are strongly encouraged to apply. Which researchers are considered 'Global South'?

For the purposes of this call, a 'Global South researcher' refers to an individual who is a national of a country that is a recipient of official development assistance (ODA) ([see OECD list here](#)), that is based in an ODA-recipient country (or has been displaced from one in the past several years), and is conducting research in or on an ODA-recipient country.

Updated FAQs

2.5 Can someone without prior published research or a PhD apply for this award?

According to the eligibility criteria, applicants need a PhD and at least one published article in a peer reviewed publication to apply for this award as a 'lead author'. You will need to provide evidence of this – an attached or linked pdf is sufficient. Peer review articles published in a non-English language are acceptable. If you don't meet these qualifications, you can apply as a co-investigator or co-author with another researcher who meets the criteria.

2.6 Can a PhD scholar apply if they do not have any peer reviewed publications?

Lead applicants need to meet both the eligibility criteria: hold a PhD at the time of submission and have at least one publication in a peer reviewed journal. In this case, the researcher would not be able to be the 'lead author'.

2.7 Does the lead author need to have completed the PhD degree at the time of application, or if someone is enrolled in a PhD program and nearing completion – and is otherwise well published and well versed with the themes covered by the call – are they eligible to apply just the same?

To be eligible for this opportunity, the lead author must meet the criteria described in the call document. This includes holding a PhD in a relevant discipline, and having at least one publication in a peer-reviewed journal. They must hold the PhD at the time of application.

2.8 Can we apply as an institution?

We expect to contract individuals. However, if you cannot apply as an individual, please include this in your application form; in exceptional circumstances we may contract an institution.

2.9 Is there a maximum number of team members that can be included in the application?

There is no maximum number of team members. However, the budget is limited, so applicants should ensure that team composition is proportionate and clearly justified. Please list all team members and their roles in the application form.

2.10 Can applicants apply without collaborations with the Global North?

Yes, we encourage Global South applicants to apply independently, or in partnership with, a researcher in the Global North.

3 Application process

3.1 How do I apply for this funding opportunity?

Applications should be submitted via email to xcept-fund@chemonics.com. Detailed instructions on how to submit an application are included in the Call for Abstracts document. All applications should include:

- Completed Application Form
- CV(s)
- Proof of peer-reviewed publication

3.2 Is there a deadline for abstract submission?

Yes, the deadline to submit applications is **Monday 15 September 2025 at 10:00 BST**.

3.3 In what language can proposals be submitted?

All applications and supporting documentation must be in English.

3.4 Can I submit more than one proposal?

Yes, applicants may submit more than one proposal, but no author will receive more than one award. Each proposal should be submitted separately.

3.5 Can I submit to more than one XCEPT funding call?

Yes, the same applicant can submit proposals to different XCEPT funding calls.

3.6 Can a rejected proposal be resubmitted?

No, proposals cannot be resubmitted after the applicant has been notified that they were unsuccessful in their application.

3.7 When will I be notified about whether I've been selected?

Applicants will be notified by XCEPT regarding selection within one month of the submission deadline.

3.8 Who decides the allocation of funds?

A Selection Committee will evaluate the applications based on the evaluation criteria detailed in the call. In addition to the strength of individual submissions, some decisions may be made on a strategic basis across the programme, for example, based on geography or thematic area, or to promote equity and inclusion.

3.9 How many projects will be funded?

We anticipate funding three applicants for full paper development. However, this is indicative only. The final number of awards may be higher or lower, depending on the quality and strategic fit of the proposals received.

Updated FAQs

3.10 Should a bibliography be included in the 'abstract'?

XCEPT expects applicants to reference the literature in footnotes. Footnotes will not count towards the word limit.

3.11 In the Application Form, do applicants need to include the names of journals that could possibly publish their work? Is it the applicant's responsibility to be published?

Applicants are expected to submit their final academic article to a peer-reviewed journal. While you do not need to name a specific journal in the application form, the *Research Development and Publication Plan* should outline the types of journals you intend to target.

Responsibility for journal submission lies with the applicant, and XCEPT will support the process as needed. The final deliverable will be considered complete once the awardee shares with XCEPT the submitted article alongside evidence of submission to the journal.

4 Technical requirements

4.1 Should research abstracts be based on a single methodological approach, or is there scope for applications involving multiple methods and disciplines?

The main goal of this call is to mobilise a feminist approach to explore conflict-affected borderlands. Research abstracts should include a clear description of what a feminist approach is to them and how they are applying it to explore their research questions. Given that feminist approaches are by nature plural and transdisciplinary, XCEPT encourages abstracts to include a combination of methods and perspectives from different disciplines

where appropriate. Interdisciplinary and mixed-methods approaches are welcome, provided they are well-justified and clearly linked to the research objectives.

4.2 What are the preferred outputs?

The primary output of each award will be a high-quality paper prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed academic journal.

Successful applicants also will be expected to produce a public-facing output — such as a commentary or blog post — to share key insights with broader audiences, such as policymakers, practitioners, and borderland communities.

4.3 Do we need to have Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in place ahead of submission?

No, you do not need it in place ahead of submission. However, applicants must indicate in the abstract submission whether ethical review (e.g., for human subjects research) is required from an Institutional Review Board (or equivalent ethics review body). The applicant will be responsible for obtaining any required approvals and provide relevant proof to XCEPT before any funds can be dispersed.

Updated FAQs

4.4 The Call references feminist analysis, intersectionalities and decolonising practice. Does XCEPT expect proposals to align with recognised feminist theoretical frameworks or is there flexibility to combine approaches?

We understand that there is no one feminist approach. XCEPT does not expect proposals to align to any specific theoretical framework. However, we would expect applicants to outline the feminist framework they are applying to their research.

4.5 Does XCEPT expect proposals to directly address one of the three guiding research questions? Would it be acceptable to develop a hybrid question that integrates elements of more than one?

Applicants are invited to submit an abstract that explores one of the guiding questions and themes shared in the Call. However, it is acceptable for applicants to come up with their own research question(s). This could integrate multiple elements of the guiding research questions and themes.

4.6 What kind of disciplines are prioritised between gender studies, border studies, conflict and war studies?

We do not prioritise any field of study and would welcome an interdisciplinary approach. For this call, we are not just looking at gender perspectives but for proposals that mobilise a feminist approach.

4.7 Are you looking for research questions that relate directly to border dynamics? Can it be an underlying theme?

No, we are not expecting publication to necessarily occur within the project timeline. Journals can take months/years to publish an article. XCEPT will support you to get to the point of journal submission with the best article possible. The final deliverable will be considered complete once the awardee shares with XCEPT the submitted article alongside evidence of submission to the journal; however, we request that the awardee keeps XCEPT informed of the manuscript's progress through the journal's review and publication process, beyond the end of the project.

4.8 Can applicants focus on refugees as research targets?

Yes, XCEPT welcomes proposals that focus on refugees. We have previously supported research involving refugee populations, recognising their importance in understanding conflict dynamics and displacement.

However, research involving refugees carries heightened ethical considerations, particularly around vulnerability, consent, and potential risks to participants. Given that this call anticipates limited new data collection, we would expect such proposals to primarily draw on existing research or secondary data, unless a strong case is made for additional fieldwork.

Applicants should clearly outline how ethical risks will be mitigated and demonstrate familiarity with best practices for conducting research with displaced populations.

4.9 Can you clarify your expectations in terms of impact and recommendations? Who are the target audience?

Given the limited timeframe, budget and the expectation that the research will largely rely on existing data, we expect the audience to be largely academic for this award.

However, successful applicants also will be expected to produce a public-facing output — such as a commentary or blog post — to share key insights with broader audiences, such as policymakers, practitioners, and borderland communities.

4.10 Can you clarify the quality assurance process?

Each awardee will be assigned a Senior Research Manager from the XCEPT team. This individual will provide ongoing support throughout the research process and serve as a key point of contact. Their role includes advising on research design, methodology, and outputs,

and supporting with quality assurance, while respecting the autonomy and integrity of the awardee's work.

The quality assurance process for the final paper will likely follow these steps:

1. *Internal review by awardee*: The awardee conducts their own internal quality checks prior to submission to XCEPT.
2. *Submission to XCEPT*: The draft paper is submitted to XCEPT for review.
3. *XCEPT review*: XCEPT assesses the deliverable for completeness and alignment with quality standards. This review is collaborative and aims to uphold the researcher's autonomy and research integrity. It may include feedback from other experts within the XCEPT team, such as XCEPT Research Fellows, where relevant.
4. *Feedback and revisions*: XCEPT will share feedback with the awardee, which the awardee can choose to implement.
5. *Journal submission*: Once revisions are complete, the awardee submits the paper to a peer-reviewed journal. We request that the awardee keeps XCEPT informed of the manuscript's progress through the journal's review and publication process.

4.11 What are the options for obtaining ethical approval if a country does not have an Institutional Review Board or equivalent ethics review body?

Applicants should outline their proposed approach to ethical approval in the *Research Development and Publication Plan* section of their application. We recognise that in some countries, formal ethical review bodies – such as Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) – may not exist or may be inaccessible.

In such cases, XCEPT expects applicants to demonstrate a clear understanding of ethical research principles and to propose appropriate alternative mechanisms for ensuring ethical oversight.

If selected, XCEPT will work with awardees to ensure that ethical standards are met and that appropriate safeguards are in place. We encourage applicants to proactively address these considerations in their proposals.

4.12 Will XCEPT provide the ethical review? Or do we need to arrange it ourselves?

XCEPT will not provide a formal ethical review process equivalent to an Institutional Review Board (IRB). Applicants are responsible for arranging appropriate ethical oversight for their research.

We recognise that formal ethical review bodies may not exist in all contexts. In such cases, applicants should propose alternative mechanisms to ensure ethical standards are upheld.

Applicants should outline their proposed approach to ethical approval in the *Research Development and Publication Plan* section of their application. XCEPT will engage with selected awardees to ensure ethical considerations are appropriately addressed throughout the research process.

5 Geographies

5.1 Is there a preferred geographic focus for proposals?

The proposed research should concentrate on conflict-affected borderlands in XCEPT's core geographies:

- The Middle East, especially Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen
- The Horn of Africa, especially Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia
- Coastal West Africa and the Sahel
- Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Myanmar

Research may focus on a single region or span multiple regions. Proposals that address other geographies will be considered, with particular interest in research that offers comparative value for XCEPT's core areas of focus.

Updated FAQs

5.2 Do applications need to focus on the specified regions in the Call for Abstracts? Would the DRC be an eligible focus area?

Yes, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) would be an eligible focus area. While the regions listed in the Call for Abstracts reflect geographies where XCEPT has conducted substantial research to date, we welcome proposals that explore other contexts, particularly where the proposed research offers comparative insights or relevance to XCEPT's core areas of interest. We encourage applicants to clearly articulate how their chosen context contributes to broader understanding of conflict dynamics and complements XCEPT's existing research portfolio.

5.3 Would XCEPT consider it a 'core geography' if investigating borderlands rights outside the country specified in the Call?

Yes, in principle, XCEPT would consider research on borderlands outside the countries specified in the Call, provided the proposed study offers clear comparative value to XCEPT's core geographies.

However, please note that XCEPT is funded by UK International Development, and therefore all research must focus on countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA). Applicants should ensure that their proposed geography meets this criterion and clearly articulate its relevance to XCEPT's thematic and regional priorities.

5.4 Would an application that focuses on one country be eligible?

Yes. However, in that case it should be a country within one of XCEPT's core geographies.

5.5 Can applications focus on internal borders?

XCEPT does not prescribe a specific approach in this regard. We welcome research that engages meaningfully with the concept of borders – whether internal or international – provided the proposal offers strong conceptual justification and demonstrates relevance to XCEPT’s thematic priorities.

5.6 Is Central Asia and the South Caucasus an eligible area?

XCEPT welcomes submissions that explore geographies offering clear comparative value to its core areas of research. While Central Asia and the South Caucasus are not currently among XCEPT’s core geographies, proposals that include these regions may be considered if they demonstrate strong analytical relevance or comparative insights that enhance understanding of conflict dynamics in XCEPT’s primary focus areas.

Applicants are encouraged to clearly articulate how their proposed research connects to or complements XCEPT’s existing work, particularly in terms of thematic or regional comparisons.

5.7 Are Mozambique and Tanzania eligible countries?

XCEPT welcomes submissions that explore geographies offering clear comparative value to its core areas of research. While Mozambique and Tanzania are not currently among XCEPT’s core geographies, proposals that include these countries may be considered if they demonstrate strong analytical relevance or comparative insights that enhance understanding of conflict dynamics in XCEPT’s primary focus areas.

6 Budget

6.1 How much funding is available?

We anticipate funding individual papers up to **£15,000**. In exceptional cases, a slightly higher budget may be considered where there is a clear and compelling justification, for example, related to the complexity or scope of the proposed research, data collection, or authorship arrangements.

6.2 What level of detail is required in the budget submission?

Applicants are expected to submit a budget that provides a high-level breakdown of costs with accompanying justification. A detailed budget is not required at this stage.

Updated FAQs

6.3 Are UK University estates and indirect costs eligible for the application budget?

Awards for this Call are designed to be contracted directly with individual researchers. However, in exceptional circumstances, a contract with an institution may be issued.

In such cases, for UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), applicants may use Full Economic Costing (FEC) when preparing budgets. However, we expect non-project attributable costs (NPAC) to be proportionate to the total budget. We would expect to see a breakdown of the budget and would then make an assessment on the proportionality of NPAC.

6.4 Do applicants need to include Open Access costs in the proposal budget?

No, applicants do not need to include Open Access publication costs in their proposal budgets. However, if you have an existing arrangement that enables Open Access – such as institutional agreements with publishers or access to other funding sources – you are encouraged to note this in the Research Development and Publication Plan section of your application. This helps XCEPT understand how Open Access will be achieved and ensures alignment with our commitment to making research outputs widely accessible.

6.5 Can applicants budget for additional data collection?

Proposals should primarily rely on existing data, and the £15,000 award is mainly intended to cover researcher time. However, limited new data collection may be included if it is clearly justified – particularly for updating or validating existing data. In these cases, XCEPT may consider a modest budget increase. If relevant, please include a clear rationale in your application.

6.6 Can travel expenses for data collection and fieldwork be included in the budget?

Proposals should primarily rely on existing data, and the £15,000 award is mainly intended to cover researcher time. However, limited new data collection may be included if it is clearly justified – particularly for updating or validating existing data. In these cases, XCEPT may consider a modest budget increase. If relevant, please include a clear rationale in your application. You can indicate travel and accommodation costs for data collection under 'material (all other expenses)' in the summary budget in the application form.

6.7 Can I confirm that "labour" costs may include our own time and contributions to the research?

Yes, labour costs may be included in the budget. You should include any costs required to support the writing of your journal article and the production of a public-facing output, such as a blog post or commentary.

6.8 Do applicants need to budget for dissemination activities?

Applicants do not need to budget for travel or conference attendance, as XCEPT will cover these costs separately on an ad-hoc basis. However, you should include any costs required to support the writing of your journal article and the production of a public-facing output – such as a blog post or commentary – in your proposal budget.

6.9 Does XCEPT expect a particular structure for budgets?

At this stage, XCEPT only requires a high-level budget. A more detailed budget will be developed in collaboration with successful applicants later in the process.

7 Contract

7.1 With whom are contracts signed?

Successful applicants will be contracted directly by Chemonics UK, which manages the XCEPT Research Fund (XRF).

If joint or co-authorship is proposed, XCEPT will issue the award contract to the lead author; co-authors should be subcontracted to the lead author (or institution). If this raises significant complications, XCEPT will work with the selected awardee to determine an alternative approach.

7.2 What is the average contract length?

XCEPT anticipates these awards will run for 6 to 9 months.

7.3 When are the projects likely to start?

XCEPT anticipates these awards to start in late October 2025.

7.4 What are the reporting requirements?

Successful applicants will be expected to report their progress on a regular basis, through quarterly reporting.

7.5 Who owns the Intellectual Property Rights?

Any project-specific Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) created under these awards shall be owned by the awardee. In order to ensure the proper dissemination and uptake of the research, the awardee shall, as part of their contract with Chemonics, grant to Chemonics and FCDO a perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive, assignable, royalty-free licence to use these project-specific IPRs.

8 Contact information and Q&A

8.1 How can I find out more about this funding opportunity?

To learn more about this funding opportunity, please join the virtual question and answer (Q&A) session on **2 September 2025 at 14:00-15:00**. This will be an opportunity to ask questions about this call for papers. If you are interested in joining the Q&A, please confirm your attendance by completing this form:

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/c951bff2-0267-432b-a278-02778523b756@7c1f24a6-7d39-452c-8237-0726e3b19a73>.

8.2 How can I contact the XCEPT team to ask questions?

You can contact the XCEPT Research Fund team via email at xcept-fund@chemonics.com

If you have any clarification questions, please ask them at the Q&A or email them to the email above by the clarification questions deadline on **Monday 8 September 2025, 18:00 BST**.