**End of Project Ethics Review**

**Borderlands, Brokers and Peacebuilding: War to Peace Transitions Viewed from the Margins**

**Description of the research**

1. The project involved interviews with a range of actors including international donors, government officials, NGO staff and beneficiaries, businessmen and women, community members, politicians.
2. The project did not specifically focus on vulnerable groups, but it did include interviews with community members who had been displaced and suffered directly or indirectly from armed conflict
3. The project touched on potentially sensitive issues including people’s experience of armed conflict, political mobilization, engagement with illicit/shadow economies
4. The selected field sites were relatively stable and peaceful.

**Detail the steps taken to mitigate the ethical and security risks:**

The CI and PI both had a strong background in conducting research in insecure contexts on sensitive issues. They were therefore aware of the need for ethical deliberation and the management and mitigation of security issues. We were also working with experienced partner organisations – International Alert, CEPA and Martin Chautari – who had a deep knowledge of the context and a great deal of research experience.

The project itself took more than two years to prepare and involved repeated meetings and discussions with all partners in order to consider the methodological and ethical/security challenges of the research. The CI and PI worked closely with local partners during the field work, including visiting all research sites to ensure the research follows SOAS’s ethical guidelines.

Specifically in relation to the identified ethical issues we took the following steps to mitigate risks:

1. After extensive consultation with the two research partners, Martin Chautari and CEPA in Nepal and Sri Lanka respectively, both organisations argued, based on extensive prior experience of researching sensitive issues in the two contexts that respondents would not be comfortable with written consent forms. It was therefore decided to instead seek verbal consent from all research subjects. Prior to any interview we verbally explained the purpose of the research or, where possible and appropriate, sent a project information sheet in advance (attached).
2. We worked closely with our local partners in identifying and engaging with potential research subjects. In the pre-field work preparatory phase we scoped out field sites and engaged with a range of actors in order to build up a solid understanding of the political, social and security dynamics in individual locales. We were led by the advice of our local partners in relation to identification of programmes and individual brokers for more intensive study. We took steps to ensure that research findings remained confidential and that the research process did not undermine the safety of participants. We also ensured that all outputs from interviews were anonymized.
3. In light of the sensitivity of the research topic the research team took the management of data very seriously and drew upon the team’s extensive experience of conducting sensitive research. All qualitative and quantitative data generated by the research project was carefully managed in accordance with SOAS and University of Bath’s data management policies. All laptops used in the field were installed with encryption software in order to protect personal data of those interviewed. All researchers were made aware of the correct procedure for data storage and security by SOAS. The collection, storage, destruction and international movement of the collected data was carried out in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act (1998), which ensured a consistent approach to data throughout the project. Research data was not shared with third parties and research participants were informed of the fact that information could be shared across the team and were given the option of saying no to this procedure. Where appropriate research findings generated by the project were made easily accessible through the Project’s website. However, no sensitive information was disseminated in this way and the specific survey sites will be made anonymous in order to protect the identity of informants.
4. We worked to mitigate security risks through a number of strategies including; pre-trip safety and ethical clearance (based on liaison with in-country research partners, and international officials on the ground); careful negotiation of access to sensitive areas; secure data management (including using encryption software on fieldwork laptops), constant exchange within the team during the course of the research, as well as ascertaining direction and advice from the ‘collaborative enquiry group’ throughout the duration of the project.