

**Project Proposal Application**

To be completed by the lead proposed supervisor,  
with input from the non-HE Partner Organisation(s).



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPLICANT DETAILS			
<b>Proposed Project Title:</b>	<b>The role of women’s organisations in social dialogue for gender just transitions in global food supply chains</b>		
<b>Project Summary:</b> <i>(Maximum 100 words)</i>	In partnership with Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and Women Working Worldwide (WWW), this research explores the involvement of diverse women’s organisations in collective organising and social dialogue to promote gender just transitions in global food supply chains. Through archival research, stakeholder interviews, oral history interviews and participatory photography with women workers in the tea production and supply chain, the research brings together development studies, labour geographies, and historical geographies, to develop a multi-scalar understanding of the challenges in achieving gender just transitions, and the role of women’s organisations in social dialogue processes aiming to secure workers’ rights and affect change.		
<b>Host University:</b>	Northumbria University		
<b>Name of Non-HE Partner Organisation(s):</b> <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
1. Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)			
2. Women Working Worldwide (WWW)			
<b>Contact(s) at Non-HE Partner Organisation(s):</b> <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
Name:	George Williams	Email:	
Name:	Linda Shaw	Email:	
<b>Primary AHRC Subject Area:</b> <i>Select one subject area from the list here. Please do <u>not</u> add or amend subjects, as there will not be a corresponding Subject Area Review Panel to assess your nomination.</i>		Development Studies	
Does the project include a Creative Practice component?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Do you consider the project to be interdisciplinary?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	

**If you consider the project to be interdisciplinary, please state why:**

*(Maximum 100 words. Please note that your application will be assessed by the relevant **primary AHRC subject area review panel**. However, in this space you should indicate which other subject areas your proposal covers and how your methodology is genuinely interdisciplinary.)*

The proposal brings together methods and theoretical approaches from across Development Studies and Historical Geography to enable the creation of new knowledge around women's collective organising for gender just transitions. Bringing archival research and oral history interviews into conversation with pressing contemporary global development challenges around the impacts of climate change and the need for gender just transitions, provides an opportunity for usable past-making that can help make connections across histories and presents of women workers' collective organising.

## SECTION 2: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND CASE FOR SUPPORT

**Please provide full details of the proposal and make your case for support below:** *(Maximum 750 words)* This research emerges from ETI's work promoting just transitions in the food, farming and fisheries sector through an emphasis on social dialogue between workers, communities, trade unions, companies and civil society, alongside WWW's support for women workers' collective organising across the global South. As the impacts of climate change deepen and the need to achieve a low-carbon economy intensifies, ensuring just transitions for affected workers and communities becomes ever-more pressing. Originating in the US trade union movement in the 1970s, the idea of 'just transitions' has been adopted to recognise the need to protect "workers' rights and the socio-economic wellbeing of communities while phasing out fossil fuels" (Banerjee & Schuitema 2022). Research on how workers navigate just transitions has predominantly focused on the global North, especially fossil fuel sectors (Brecher 2021; Banerjee & Schuitema 2022). Here, we focus on global South workers, whose livelihoods are threatened by the impacts of climate change *and* the consequences of moves towards a low-carbon economy. We use the ILO's (2024) definition of just transition: "greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind". Little research has explored how these transition processes impact unequally on workers from different backgrounds (Brecher 2021), especially understanding the negative impacts of just transitions on women workers and their human rights (CARE 2022). Women workers have a long history of successful collective organising to improve working conditions and human rights in the context of the globalisation of production across the global South, both within and outside of formal trade union structures (e.g. Downey 2020; Kabeer et al 2013; Mather 2012). However, this has received little critical attention in the context of just transitions (Walk et al. 2021). Despite significant progress, the most disadvantaged women workers continue to experience vulnerabilities within globalised supply chains, whilst in many contexts women activists face a narrowing of civic space, and suffer violence as a result of their defence of human rights (BHRC 2024).

The apparel sector has been a focus for understanding just transitions (e.g. Härrä & Levänen 2024; Sharpe et al. 2022). However, less is known about just transitions within global food supply chains - a sector responsible for over one third of greenhouse gas emissions (FAO 2021). The sector is characterised by the involvement of small-scale producers, with high numbers of women occupying the most precarious jobs. These women are organising collectively in diverse ways (Downey 2020), but often excluded from formal social dialogue; we therefore foreground the importance of critically analysing how these dynamics shape just transitions.

The tea production and supply chain provides an emblematic example; a fieldwork location will be agreed with the student. Provisional options are India or Malawi, both of which provide an opportunity to understand women's organising across a variety of contexts (tea estates, smallholders, co-operatives, trade unions, and various women's organisations), and situate contemporary organising in relation to longer histories of collective action. The proposed collaboration provides a rare opportunity to engage with all stakeholders in a commodity supply chain. This enables a multi-scalar approach capturing the perspectives of women workers and companies in the global South, and UK corporate stakeholders, promoting equitable relationships and strengthening workers' rights within this sector.

### Research Questions:

How is organising by women workers in tea production and supply chains shaping gender just transitions?

- What formal and informal spaces are women workers involved in, or excluded from, in relation to collective organising around just transitions?
- How can organising by, and social dialogue with, women workers in tea supply chains contribute to more equitable just transitions that prioritise workers' human rights?
- What examples are there of current good practice within the UK food sector in ensuring a gender just transition, in line with the priorities of women working in their supply chains?

- How can WWW archives and women workers' oral histories be harnessed to support greater inclusion of women workers in social dialogue, and connect with longer histories of labour organising?

The project adopts a feminist framework, paying attention to intersectionality (e.g. around race, age, disability, migrant workers) and prioritising marginalised workers' voices. Ethics processes will be co-designed with partners. Data collection combines archival research (year 1), with oral history interviews and participatory photography with women activists (year 2), alongside stakeholder interviews (years 1 and 2). A project exhibition (year 3) will share research findings with a diverse audience including academics, civil society organisations, practitioners, and food industry stakeholders.

**Provide details of any resources and facilities, including equipment, fieldwork, training, etc., that will be required to complete the project successfully. NBC has limited Research Training Support Grant funding, which may affect the feasibility of high-cost projects. Please note where you might also secure additional funding, (e.g. partner organisations; department or school). Include estimated costs:**

*(Maximum 200 words)*

Student will access **specialist training (year 1)**: NINE DTP's 'International Fieldwork in Development Contexts' workshop; Photovoice course in London (£725, plus travel costs £505).

**4 months' fieldwork (year 2) (2 trips - 1 month and 3 months):**

2 x international flights=£2,000

Contribution to accommodation costs (16 weeks @ £150 a week)=£2,400

Digital cameras x 5 for Photovoice=£500

Participant payment, recognising women's precarious economic situation and compensating their loss of earnings and travel costs (approx. £5 per woman per day, 20 women x 3 days)=£300 There may be additional costs for translation during the fieldwork.

**Exhibition costs (year 3)=£500**

These costs (£6930) are fundamental to the project's success and originality. If costs cannot all be covered by NB, the student could apply for support to the Faculty of Engineering and Environment. They could also apply for the Development Geographies Research Group Travel Grant, and similar grants.

The student will present their research at appropriate external events – e.g. events run by the Royal Geographical Society's Development Geographies Study Group, which particularly supports PGR students. They will present their work at ETI's sector meeting with UK supermarkets and food retailers. The student could apply to NU's Graduate School for support with these costs.

**Outline the arrangements for communication between the non-HE partner organisation and the academic host institution in regard to project management and monitoring academic progress:**

*(Maximum 200 words)*

The entire team will be in regular communication as needed via email, with formal meetings with all partners (student and Northumbria primary supervisor, WWW and ETI) scheduled quarterly via Zoom. Additionally, annual in-person meetings will provide an opportunity to ensure all parties are satisfied with the direction and progress of the project, to review timescales, and enable WWW and ETI to provide formal input as the research evolves. As lead supervisor, Jenkins will also maintain contact with the partner organisations and ensure any concerns are resolved at an early stage. Partner input will vary across the lifetime of the project, but it is anticipated that they will be closely involved in agreeing fieldwork location and identifying relevant women's organisations (year 1); will provide support with fieldwork logistics and negotiating access (years 1 and 2); and will provide early feedback on draft chapters (year 3). A strong pre-existing relationship between ETI and WWW, and the clear alignment between the interests and approaches of both organisations, will underpin the partnership working within this project. Briefing and blogs prepared by the student will

be drafted in close consultation with partners, and proposed academic publications will be shared for review at an early stage.

**What benefits will there be for the candidate and the non-HE partner organisation as a result of your collaboration?**

*(Maximum 200 words)*

WWW and ETI will benefit from in-depth research on a topic which they have identified as crucial to collect evidence on and share with industry. This will allow them to better shape their interventions within the field of gender just transitions, positioning them as thought-leaders within this emerging area. The collaboration will strengthen partners' relationship with the Centre for Global Development, enabling future activities including joint bidding. The student will produce 3 briefing papers and 6 blog posts for a practitioner audience. Project data will be made available for partners, in line with jointly established ethical protocols. Participatory photography will provide rich resources to raise awareness of the need to ensure gender just transitions.

The student will benefit from both partners' extensive networks, enabling access to stakeholders across the global tea supply chain. The student will have the opportunity to contribute to organisational learning and to shape current practice, including through regular in-person and virtual meetings with the partners and through sharing their research with a business audience via ETI's networks and events. ETI/WWW and CGD will host a webinar sharing research findings with their engaged audiences, and will publish briefing papers and blogs on their websites and social media.

**State what financial (if any) or in-kind contribution the non-HE partner organisation will be making over the duration of the award:**

*(Maximum 200 words. A financial contribution is **not** a requirement. However, the AHRC expect that **non-HE partners based overseas** will make a financial contribution to the costs of the student's return travel and accommodation when visiting.)*

The partner organisations will contribute in-kind through leveraging their networks to facilitate the student's access to key corporate stakeholders within the sector, and to women's organisations and potential research participants. Both organisations will contribute their extensive expertise and knowledge to ensure the success of the project, including supporting the student in developing their presentation and communications skills for a corporate and practitioner audience. Additionally, they will provide access to relevant organisational information and archival materials, including WWW's archives held at the People's History Museum in Manchester and in Manchester University. ETI will provide access to the members only 'community site' within their website. ETI will take a critical friend role to support the researcher in thinking through the business/supply chain and human rights due diligence implications of their emerging findings. During fieldwork, both partners will play a key advisory role in relation to safety and risk management. In this regard, ETI's connections with tea estates and international brands will be crucial in ensuring the research can be safely conducted, and ETI and WWW's extensive networks on the ground, will also be essential in brokering access to women workers.

**Describe the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the activities the candidate will be undertaking with the non-HE partner organisation:**

*(Maximum 200 words)*

WWW and ETI both work predominantly virtually, and the student would be integrated into these ways of working, having the opportunity to join relevant meetings and events of both organisations throughout the research. This involvement will be ongoing but will involve particularly close collaboration at crucial points in the research: year 1 – refining the scope of the project and agreeing fieldwork plan, and year 3 – curating the final exhibition. The student will have access to WWW and ETI's organisational archives and documents, which will support them in developing an in-depth understanding of both organisations' work in supporting gender just transitions. The student will collaborate closely with both partners to produce 3 briefing papers to be published on ETI/WWW's websites and social media platforms. They will participate in ETI's just transitions working group, and present their work here as the project develops.

The proposed visual and archival methods provide strong pathways to impact, enabling connections between

contemporary experiences of social dialogue and longer trajectories of collective organising. This will position the student to make a strong contribution to raising public awareness about the histories and presents of women’s collective organising in the context of climate change, in collaboration with partners.

<b>SECTION 3: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS</b>	
<b>Primary (or Co-) Supervisor:</b>	Professor Katy Jenkins
School or Department:	Dept of Geography & Environmental Sciences
Email Address:	
<b>Secondary (or Co-) Supervisor:</b>	Dr Sarah Peck
School or Department:	Dept of Geography & Environmental Sciences
Email Address:	
<b>Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:</b>	George Williams
Organisation/Institution:	Ethical Trading Initiative
Email Address:	
<b>Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:</b>	Dr Linda Shaw
Organisation/Institution:	Women Working Worldwide
Email Address:	
<b>Additional Internal or External Advisors or Academic Supervisors, if any:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Dr Paul Griffin
Organisation/Institution:	Northumbria University
Email Address:	
<b>Explain how the expertise of the supervisory team and external advisor(s) will allow them to support the proposed project and the selected candidate:</b> <i>(Maximum 500 words)</i>	
<p>The supervisors’ and external advisors’ combined expertise provides excellent support for this research. Supervisors have completed all mandatory training – including PhD supervision and ethics.</p> <p><b>Professor Katy Jenkins</b> is co-Director of Northumbria’s Centre for Global Development. She conducts impactful research on women’s collective organising in the global South, and volunteering in development. Jenkins leads participatory and feminist research with women activists, including Leverhulme Trust funded research using Photovoice to explore visions of development and food sovereignty. Jenkins prioritises PGR development, and has delivered PGR training in the UK and internationally. She will oversee all aspects of the project, particularly advising on Photovoice and oral history methodologies. Jenkins has supervised 7 PhD students to completion, has 4 current PhD supervisions, and has examined 8 PhDs as external examiner.</p> <p><b>Dr Sarah Peck</b> is Assistant Professor in Geography &amp; Environmental Sciences. Her research explores civil society and civic mobilisation for global development. Her recent Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship attends to civic organising in the</p>	

context of the migration-development nexus. Working collaboratively with three civic organisations, this research brings together scholarship and methodological approaches from development and historical geographies, including oral histories and participatory archival co-curation. Recent joint work with Paul Griffin considers labour organising by 'migrantised' communities. She currently supervises 1 PhD student.

**Dr Paul Griffin** is Assistant Professor in Geography & Environmental Sciences. His research cuts across historical geography with a particular interest in labour organising. This project connects with his methodological expertise in oral histories, archives and the provision of usable pasts. Griffin will bring disciplinary expertise from historical geography, alongside theoretical insights from his contributions to labour studies, which include reflections on diasporic and working-class communities. He has supervised 1 PhD student to completion and currently supervises 3 PhD students.

**George Williams** is Just Transitions Advisor at ETI. He previously worked as Impact and Gender Advisor at Practical Action, an INGO working on climate resilience, renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, and water and sanitation. He also worked at ETI member NGO, Transform Trade for 11 years, including as Impact and Learning Manager, supporting teams in Africa and South Asia to measure and assess the impact of their programmes with smallholder farmers and informal workers. He holds an MSc in Wellbeing and International Development. Williams will lead on liaison with ETI members and facilitate access to ETI's just transitions working group.

**Dr Linda Shaw** is a trustee of WWW. She has extensive experience supporting women workers, including around tea, in India and Malawi. Her other research and practice has focused on small producer organisations, especially co-operatives in Africa and Asia. Shaw has been an advisor on 4 PhDs. She will lead on brokering connections with women workers' organisations in the field. Shaw will be supported by the Executive Director of WWW, Caroline Downey, who has worked on behaviour change, women's rights, ethical trade and sustainability programmes around the world, for organisations including FAO, World Bank, Oxfam and IUCN, and at WWW leads programmes on due diligence, gender-based violence and harassment and worker voice.

#### SECTION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

**Please provide details about the research environment the selected candidate will be joining and its suitability:**

*(Maximum 500 words)*

The student will be based in the Centre for Global Development, a thriving interdisciplinary research centre within the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences. Staff in CGD conduct are internationally recognised for their research in areas including volunteering and activism, climate crises and community action and adaptation, and gender-equitable approaches to development. The extensive experience of CGD staff in conducting fieldwork in challenging global South contexts, working with an established network of practitioners, academics and development organisations, will be an especially important resource for the student. Beyond the immediate supervision team, involvement in CGD will enable the student to engage with staff conducting research in related areas, including Prof Matt Baillie Smith (volunteering for climate adaptation), Dr Joanna Allan (women's resistance and oral histories), Dr Oliver Hensengerth (climate adaptation and livelihoods). The student will benefit from CGD staff expertise in creative and participatory methodologies, and experience in creating public-facing impactful research outputs in collaboration with practitioners and organisations (e.g. Baillie Smith & Fadel's boardgame for the RYVU project; Jenkins and Boudewijn's recipe book and artworks in the RECLAMA project; Peck's development of online archives). CGD is also home to one of the University's Peaks of Research Excellence 'Volunteering, Humanitarian Crises and Development', ensuring the applicant will have opportunities to engage with, and contribute to, debates at the cutting edge of Development Studies. The student will be based in CGD's dedicated PhD and postdoctoral researcher suite, and will also have access to the Department's Qualitative Research Suite, equipped with audio and visual recording capabilities, and specialist transcription and analysis software.

The Centre for Global Development has a vibrant and active postgraduate and postdoctoral community, hosting a range of events and invited speakers. The student will also benefit from wider development opportunities presented by the Dept of Geography & Environmental Sciences, including the Social and Cultural Geography seminar series and annual lecture, as well as a PGR reading group. Griffin's membership of the Social and Cultural Geography Research Group will provide further opportunities for the student to share their research with a wider group of scholars and PGR students working on related themes (e.g. Dr Sarah Hughes' work on resistance and Dr Isabel Meier's work on activist solidarities).

The wider Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences provides a research-rich environment bringing together over 80 staff and postdoctoral researchers, and 70 PGR students. Key funders include Research Councils (ESRC; NERC; GCRF); EU; DFID; major charities (British Academy; Leverhulme Trust) and UN organisations (UNDRR, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF), with RGCI income for REF 2021 in excess of £4.5 million (UoA14). The Geography submission to UoA14 recorded 46 PhD completions for REF2021, compared to 16 for REF2014. The Department participates in the ESRC's NINE DTP and the NERC-funded One Planet DTP, ensuring a significant cohort of high calibre students. PGR students benefit from a Departmental research training programme tailored to student needs. The Department holds a Bronze Athena Swan award and is committed to embedding EDI across its activities.