



**Making research work  
for global development**

**Safeguarding:  
Preventing and addressing harm in  
international development research**

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# Outline

1. Why this work is important and what is the scope?
2. How did we develop the guidance?
3. What is the guidance?
4. How can it be used?

# Why does international development research need its own approach to safeguarding?

Gendered and racialised dynamics within research and in international context

Power dynamics & financial disparities between international researchers, junior researchers, local research staff, field workers

Drop-in-out research – as opposed to long standing sites – researchers sometimes isolated

Knowledge exploitation of local communities

# Our work on safeguarding

## Aims

- 1. Support** UK research funders to play a leadership role in setting tone and expectation
- 2. Inform and improve** how research institutes / organisations address and manage safeguarding issues
- 3. Work towards** adoption and implementation of joint principles and guidance across sector

# Scope

- Specific to the research context
- The UKCDR definition of safeguarding agreed by UK funders and expert advisory group

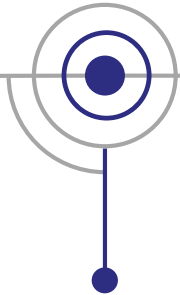
*“Any sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of research participants, communities and research staff, plus any broader forms of violence, exploitation and abuse relevant to research such as:*

- *Bullying*
- *Psychological abuse*
- *Physical violence”*

# Key Milestones



Oct  
2018



Alignment of UK funders to a **Research Funders Safeguarding Statement of Commitment** launched in October 2018 at DFID's **Safeguarding Summit**

Phase I: UKCDR publishes **Evidence Review & Briefing Paper**



June  
2019

Nov  
2019



Phase II: UKCDR & University of Liverpool, LSTM and consultation hub leads undertake **consultations & survey** towards development of final key principles and practical guidance

**Guidance in International Development Research** published, along with 'companion piece' on COVID-19



April  
2020



# What is Safeguarding Guidance?

The guidance supports all who are involved in the research processes to **anticipate**, **mitigate** and **address** potential and actual harms in the funding, design, delivery and dissemination of research.

1. Four key principles
2. Non-prescriptive and applicable to different contexts
3. Questions tailored to key stakeholder groups
4. 6 case study examples of good practice

# Safeguarding challenges in international development research

*Safeguarding 'falling between the cracks'*

*"We are dealing with labs rather than refugees"*

*"Safeguarding is for NGO's not academia"*





# Barriers to reporting



# Four key principles



## Rights of victims/survivors & whistle-blowers

Rights of victims / survivors and whistle-blowers should be central. Additionally, there should be meaningful and effective pathways for redress



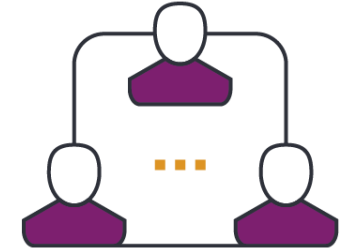
## Equity & fairness

Involvement of all research partners at the research design and planning stage is necessary to ensure that research questions and methodologies are contextually appropriate and do not pose an unacceptable risk of harm



## Transparency

Transparent practice, policy and procedures form a touchstone characteristic of good practice. It requires clear and public commitments and policies, as well as openness about incidents or breaches and the measures taken to address them, while upholding confidentiality.



## Accountability & good governance

Accountability is a significant feature of approaches to address and prevent harm and underpins good governance in the research process

# Who is the guidance for?

Research funders /  
donors / granting  
organisations

University Vice-  
chancellors / Heads of  
research institutions /  
Agency CEOs or  
equivalent

Designated safeguarding  
officers and safeguarding  
focal points

Research ethics  
committee members

Research managers and  
administrators

Human Resources,  
Finance and Legal teams

Principal Investigators /  
Heads of research teams

Individual researchers  
and other members of  
research teams – e.g.  
research assistants, data  
collectors and translators  
Research participants

Community members or  
stakeholders (non  
research participants)



# How to use it – (Individual researcher)

## 7. INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHER, RESEARCH ASSISTANT, DATA COLLECTOR, TRANSLATOR (NB MAY INCLUDE UNDER- AND POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS AS WELL AS STAFF)



### Rights of victims/survivors and whistleblowers

- Do I know what my rights are as a researcher? Do I know about being able to refuse to go to locations or undertake interviews, or to leave if I feel unsafe/uncomfortable? Do I know what safety protocols are in place to protect me?
- What sources of advice and support are available to me (through my home institution and locally) if an incident occurs? Do I have the correct, up-to-date contact details?
- Do I face any additional risks based on my contractual arrangements (e.g. freelance, temporary etc.) that may affect my rights or access to support in the event of a safeguarding incident or concern?
- Am I clear about what to do if I have a 'bystander concern', i.e. an incident affecting someone not directly involved in my research?
- Do I know what I will do and say if an interviewee reports a case and asks me for help in dealing with it?
- Am I confident that I can raise concerns freely without fear of reprisal?



### Equity and fairness

- What measures are in place to ensure fairness in compensating and acknowledging all parties' contributions to this research?
- How do I consider power dynamics in the consenting process? Have I carefully explained all aspects of consent throughout contact with participants, and checked their understanding?
- How do I consider and plan to mitigate negative power dynamics in e.g. interviews, focus groups?

- Do I know what my rights are as a researcher? Do I know about being able to refuse to go to locations or undertake interviews, or to leave if I feel unsafe/uncomfortable? Do I know what safety protocols are in place to protect me?

# How to use it – (Principal Investigators)

## 6. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR / HEAD OF RESEARCH TEAM



### Transparency

- What measures am I taking to provide financial transparency and avoid financial exploitation, e.g. sharing full details of the overall budget with all partners?
- What budget have I allocated for safeguarding per annum for this programme?
- Have we got a shared understanding in our team of how researchers should conduct themselves in the field? Is this formalised through written protocols? Has this been openly discussed with partners and researchers prior to the research taking place?
- How are we ensuring transparency on ownership and publication of data, so that participants are given sufficient assurance that their contributions are recognised, not only financially, but in the ownership of those contributions?



### Accountability and governance

- How am I, as a leader, modelling best practice in terms of personal conduct and setting the tone for acceptable behaviour?
- Are...
- Do...
- res...
- Have we got a shared understanding in our team of how researchers should conduct themselves in the field? Is this formalised through written protocols? Has this been openly discussed with partners and researchers prior to the research taking place?
- co...
- on...
- What is our agreed process for how safeguarding concerns will be reported and escalated across research partnerships?
- How will lessons be learned and shared?

# What does good look like?

The case studies cover the following areas:

1. Safeguarding policy v

2. Embedding safeguarding v

3. Engaging with communities v

4. Responding to reports v

5. Avoiding retraumatisation of participants v

6. Supporting research team members v





# Case study examples

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## CASE STUDY 2: EMBEDDING SAFEGUARDING<sup>6</sup>

One HEI took a multi-pronged approach to embedding safeguarding within the organisation. This focused on:

1. Awareness-raising sessions and the introduction of mandatory safeguarding online training. This consisted of key concepts, some scenarios, and a basic quiz at the start and end of the training module.
2. A number of key individuals were named as 'safeguarding points' throughout the institution, from among both faculty and research support staff, to address queries and act as 'safeguarding champions.'
3. Existing processes were bolstered to address safeguarding. The institution's ethics application form was adapted to ask specifically about potential safeguarding issues for researchers, for research participants as a result of the research, and for community members and others with whom the research might bring researchers into contact. Due diligence on safeguarding was boosted, building on the existing financial process.

This combination, introducing new measures while embedding safeguarding within key existing practices, has been effective in highlighting its relevance to staff across the institution.

## CASE STUDY 5: AVOIDING RETRAUMATISATION OF PARTICIPANTS<sup>9</sup>

An East African community-based organisation of and for former child combatants shared two particular examples of measures they take to ensure safeguarding in research. One has been the active involvement of potential participants in co-creating the research agenda and interview schedule, identifying the kinds of questions they do and do not wish to be asked. The consensus among the ex-combatants is that questions such as *"How many people have you killed?"* and *"How many men forced you to have sex with them?"* – which they have been asked repeatedly by successive researchers – are re-traumatising and unacceptable. They want more emphasis on positive questions about the present and future, e.g. *"What skills do you have that you are contributing to this community?"* and *"What are your hopes and aspirations for the future?"*

Secondly, in cases when translation is necessary for research interviews, participants themselves have the right to choose the translator, allowing them to select a person they trust, someone they feel safe and comfortable with – rather than someone unknown who might break their confidentiality and disclose their past to other members of the community. In both of these ways, participants in a highly sensitive area of research have been able to exercise choice and control to ensure that their needs and rights are respected throughout the research process.

# COVID-19 companion piece

- Additional considerations in the context of COVID-19 and other global health emergencies.
- Framed around four key principles.
- Main guidance still key source of safeguarding guidance.

What additional safeguarding issues do we need to consider in the current outbreak?



## Rights of victims/survivors and whistleblowers

- What measures are we taking to identify specific additional safeguarding risks in our current (whether active or suspended) or planned research in the context of COVID-19, and to ensure the resilience and effectiveness of our reporting/investigation/disciplinary procedures?
- How are we protecting the rights of participants in COVID-specific research, e.g. the right to compensation for time/loss of earnings and the right to know where and how to access health care?
- How are we ensuring meaningful, fully informed and freely given consent (especially when under pressure to produce rapid results)? Are we avoiding undue inducement in any compensation we offer for participation in research? Do our existing consent procedures need to be revisited and possibly revised in the context of COVID-19?
- How are we ensuring support in relation to the anticipated rise in mental health issues / intimate partner violence affecting research staff and students working from home, in self-isolation, under quarantine or lockdown?
- How are we helping staff and students who are away from home and may be finding it difficult to return, to access health care where they are working?
- In countries where authoritarianism is increasing as a result of enforcement of COVID-19 requirements, how are we protecting the safety of researchers, field workers, data collectors and research participants and ensuring they are not being placed at higher risk of physical violence? (e.g. if field workers/researchers are expected to work late, or research participants are involved in studies until later in the day, they may miss curfew and be subject to police brutality)



## Equity and fairness

- How are we ensuring that all research partners and participants are receiving accurate, up-to-date information about COVID-19 relevant to their project and country, so that they are not placing themselves or others at unnecessary risk when undertaking research?
- Have we taken into account individuals or groups with particular characteristics who risk being affected disproportionately by any changes made to research during this period? (e.g. additional costs or absence of income arising from pausing/freezing research, which may exacerbate their risk or vulnerability to sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, bullying, psychological abuse, physical violence)
- What support are we offering, particularly for those researchers in more precarious employment situations – such as temporary staff, sub-contractors, students – and/or with less access to credit or a social safety net, who may be more vulnerable to exploitation? (e.g. processing payments quickly, extending contracts, extending deadlines for research outputs)
- What support or alternatives are we offering for those researchers whose access to workspace, equipment, reliable electricity supply, internet, etc. at home may be limited, so that they can continue to work but do so safely?
- How are we ensuring that myths about transmission and infection (e.g. 'Chinese virus', Black people/young/poor/street children having immunity, etc.) do not influence research decisions or practice? What are we doing to prevent and address increased racial harassment of researchers/participants in relation to these myths?



# Find out more...

## Safeguarding

- UKCDR Guidance: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/news-article/international-development-research-funders-publish-guidance-to-anticipate-mitigate-and-address-harm-in-research/>
- COVID-19 companion piece: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/practical-application-of-ukcdr-safeguarding-guidance-during-covid-19/>
- UKCDR Evidence Review: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/safeguarding-in-international-development-evidence-review/>
- Summary of safeguarding activities and resources: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/guidance/safeguarding-resources/>

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