



Guidance on
**Safeguarding in International
Development Research**

1. Introduction

What is safeguarding in international development research?

Everyone involved in the international development research chain, from research funders, planners and practitioners to local community members, has the right to be safe from harm.

The UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) define safeguarding as preventing and addressing *“any sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment of research participants, communities and research staff, plus any broader forms of violence, exploitation and abuse... such as bullying, psychological abuse and physical violence.”*

International development research is defined as any research undertaken for the social or economic benefit of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Who is this guidance for?

The guidance is designed to be used flexibly and collaboratively by a wide range of people involved in the international development research process, whether based in low-, middle- or high-income countries. These include:

- 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 (may include under- and post-graduate students, staff members and those contracted on a casual or temporary basis)
- Research participants
- Community members or stakeholders (non research participants).

While the suggested principles are cross-cutting, there are specific questions targeted at each of the above roles to encourage reflection on and application of good safeguarding practice in international development research.



Why is it needed?

Many universities and research institutes have a long history of engagement in research linked to development. However, new funding opportunities (such as the Global Challenges Research Fund and others) have recently encouraged the entry of a range of new actors, bringing some of them into unfamiliar territory regarding safeguarding policy, practice and partnerships in an international context. At the same time, in response to widely publicised cases of sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment (SEAH) in the wider development sector, there has been an urgent focus on – and an evolving understanding of – concepts of vulnerability, risk, harm and power relations that are also relevant to those carrying out or participating in international development research.

UKCDR recognises the strength of good practices across the international development sector, including the valuable work of and progress made by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private sector actors in this area. However, the nature of research presents specific situations in which abuses of power may occur and requires a tailored framework and approach. Therefore, it is imperative to draw on the research sector's wealth of knowledge on ethics and integrity, in order to develop principles and guidance specifically for international development research.

We build upon the Department for International Development (DFID) due diligence guidance that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that specific policies are needed to support research to 'do no harm' (DFID, 2018:4). In this guidance, we consider safeguarding as applying to all people involved in and connected to research, and suggest that 'doing no harm' requires gaining information about what the potential harms may be, which may not always be immediately apparent. The concept of 'victim/survivor-centred safeguarding' is also expanded upon here from its original meaning (Orr et al., 2019) to encompass a model of safeguarding which:

- Responds to and addresses the needs of victims/survivors¹ of harm (through complaints, investigations, actions of redress, care and support)

- Responds to and addresses the needs of research participants who are or have been victims/survivors of crimes or harm (e.g. trafficking/contemporary forms of enslavement, familial violence, violence through discrimination)
- Appreciates that there is the potential for all people to be victims if harm in research is not prevented or addressed, and this specifically can disproportionately harm minoritized groups (e.g. LGBTQI, women, children, older people, people in subjugated socio-economic groups or castes, Black, indigenous and people of colour, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, refugees and internally displaced people)
- Does not assume that victim/survivor status or geographical location automatically equates to universal vulnerability.

How was the guidance developed?

The foundations of this work are an evidence review and briefing paper commissioned by UKCDR² from Dr David Orr and team and published in 2019 (see the [Useful resources](#) section at the end of the Guidance), including a set of 9 draft principles. The specific material contained in this Guidance is based on a wide-ranging international consultation via an online survey, in-depth interviews in three regional hubs (Latin America and the Caribbean, West Africa and South Asia) and events/workshops with different stakeholder groups in the UK, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania. Details of the consultation methodology, process and findings are available in the **Report** which forms a companion piece to this Guidance.

We received consistent feedback during the consultation process, through all of the data collection methods and across geographical regions, that a fixed set of requirements would not only be impractical but also potentially reinforce Global North/Global South power dynamics. In acknowledgement of this, the Guidance is framed as a series of key questions for different audiences to ask themselves and each other as we all think about our roles and our responsibilities in preventing and addressing harm in international

¹ Note on terminology; for consistency, we have adopted the use of 'victim(s)/survivor(s)' in this report. We recognise that those potentially or actually affected by harm may use one, both or neither of these terms to refer to themselves, and respect the right of people to decide for themselves how they wish to be identified.

² With the guidance of DFID, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Wellcome Trust, all of whom are represented in UKCDR's safeguarding funders group.

research practice. The aim is to promote a process of dialogue on concrete practical measures that each of us in our respective roles and varying contexts can take, individually and collectively, to promote good safeguarding practice at every stage of the international development research process. The question-based format, designed to be flexible and broad enough to be useful to a wide range of stakeholders, also reflects one of the Phase 1 draft principles: *“Safeguarding is a shared responsibility between collaborating research organisations and should be approached in a spirit of inclusiveness and mutual learning, with attention to risk of unintended harms that could arise from dictating standards.”*³

2. Using the guidance

Key themes

The guidance has been constructed to utilise and respond to the consultation findings, by creating a grid/matrix to ask questions about safeguarding which inform actions by 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.

- **Anticipate** – as far as possible, working collaboratively with diverse partners/advisors, gather information on all the potential harms that your research/research call could inadvertently create or exacerbate
- **Mitigate** – take actions and put processes in place to mitigate the harms you have identified
- **Address** – take actions to ensure adequate processes to report, investigate and provide redress for any safeguarding harms which may arise.

³ Orr, D. et al. (2019a) Safeguarding in International Development Research: Briefing Paper, p 4. Available at: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/safeguarding-in-international-development-research-briefing-paper/>

The questions are designed to be proportionate and sensitive to expectations around levels and types of responsibility and accountability in a range of research settings. They are organised around a small number of key themes that cut across the draft principles. These themes were identified through analysis of the survey results, discussions with stakeholders and the in-depth interviews carried out in the regional hubs, and represent core principles for good safeguarding practice in international development research:



- **Rights of victims/survivors and whistle-blowers** – The rights of actual and potential victims/survivors of safeguarding incidents should be central, and there should be meaningful and effective pathways for support and redress.



- **Equity and 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 to researchers, participants or communities. Responsibilities and rewards in the research process should also be clearly identified and fairly shared.



- **Transparency** – Transparent practice, policy and procedures for safeguarding form a touchstone characteristic of good practice. Transparency requires clear and public safeguarding commitments and policies, as well as openness about incidents or breaches and the measures taken to address them, while upholding confidentiality to avoid secondary trauma or harm.



- **Accountability and good governance** – Accountability is a significant feature of approaches to address and prevent harm and underpins good governance in the research process. In order for accountability to be proportionate and realistic, the expectations of all actors/partners in the research process must also reflect the distribution of legal responsibility, power and resources, as well as recognition of realities on the ground in often challenging contexts.

Each of the above themes could be seen as cross-cutting the others to some extent, and any form of ‘slicing up’ is bound to be an artificial construct. The rights of victims/survivors, for example, could be understood to include the rights to equity and fairness, transparency and accountability. However, the

research team agreed, with the support of UKCDR, that it was important to keep the rights theme separate as a way to focus on and prioritise survivor rights, which also aligns with DFID’s survivor-centred approach.

Indeed, there are many possible ways to frame safeguarding work, and readers of this guidance may well use different terms, such as protection, safety, respect or research integrity, to encompass similar concepts. The point is to identify core values and interrogate the extent to which our practice throughout the research process does (or does not) support each of those values, using the guidance to lead thinking and initiate organisational change. Users are encouraged to work together with local, national and international colleagues and partners to go through the questions, and to add new ones as needed. Likewise, if particular roles are not captured, the matrix can be used as a guide to develop questions that are relevant for additional stakeholder groups.

Case studies

Even when research planners and practitioners understand and support safeguarding principles, there may be concerns about how to put them into practice, or to know 'what good looks like'. The six case studies below, developed through the first and second phases of UKCDR's safeguarding evidence review and consultation, aim to illustrate different facets of good practice, from policy development through to support in the field for participants and researchers. They may help to give users a sense of how other organisations have approached safeguarding issues and challenges, as a basis for embarking on the specific role-based questions found in Section 3.

The case studies cover the following areas:



CASE STUDY 1: SAFEGUARDING POLICY⁴

A UK higher education institution (HEI) developed its safeguarding policy for research with reference to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the Keeping Children Safe international child safeguarding standards and the CHS Alliance PSEA Implementation Handbook.⁵ There is a distinct safeguarding policy designed to ensure that research projects build in safeguarding centrally from the outset of planning. Among the steps it takes to do so are:

- Setting out key questions for Principal Investigators to consider in research design in assessing risks of encountering sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment
- Clearly stating that due diligence requirements based on DFID's, including sign-up to a safeguarding policy and code of conduct, will be required for any research collaboration to proceed
- Describing a clear organisational safeguarding incident investigation process for learning lessons, which incorporates a risk level rating system and a clear threshold for reporting to funders and regulatory bodies
- Describing how to offer support to the person affected by the incident
- Providing a safeguarding risk mapping tool for use in research planning

Policies on safeguarding students and bullying / harassment are cross-referenced and dealt with in separate documents.

⁴ Adapted from Orr, D. et al. (2019b) Safeguarding in International Development Research: Evidence Review, p 34. Available at: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/safeguarding-in-international-development-evidence-review/>

⁵ See the [Useful resources section](#) at the end of this Guidance for details of these.

CASE STUDY 2: EMBEDDING SAFEGUARDING⁶

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.

⁶ Adapted from Orr, D. et al. (2019b) Op cit., p 32.

CASE STUDY 3: **ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES**⁷

An interviewee working in an HEI in sub-Saharan Africa spoke about their approach to community engagement and the facilitation of reporting. Regular visits to the communities are built in as an integral part of the research relationship, and a community meeting always takes place at the start of a study. Flyers and community booklets are produced and distributed. While research institutions are often set apart from the community, as a health research group this organisation can be accessed on a walk-in basis, and tours are organised from time to time for community groups. The organisation prioritises an open relationship, providing two helplines with free call-backs to allow community members to raise any concerns individually, which can then be investigated by the institution. If the concerns raised are of a disciplinary nature, this investigation would be carried out by the HR office.

After the conclusion of any investigation, an HR committee re-examines the safeguarding policy and assesses where there may be a 'weak link.' A report on any investigation into community concerns will go back to the community so that it is clear how the institution has responded.

Throughout the research process, the organisation is careful to provide all possible opportunities for contact and engagement, to break down potential barriers to raising dissatisfaction or worries. However, it is acknowledged that the organisation is perceived to be a powerful institution which employs many local people and the community might have concerns about the consequences of raising very serious concerns and thereby jeopardising people's jobs. This is discussed with community leaders to emphasise that reporting will not lead to reprisals.

⁷ Adapted from Orr, D. et al. (2019b) Op cit., p 40.

CASE STUDY 4: **RESPONDING TO REPORTS**⁸

An organisation specialising in international research has a safeguarding policy that sets out an obligation to report all concerns, suspicions or allegations to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). The policy also sets out some explicit guidelines which should inform the response:

'The person(s) reporting the matter and the DSO / Deputy must act in accordance with the local law and with sensitivity to local custom and practice. The DSO / Deputy will carefully evaluate the implications of reporting any incidents to local authorities as the authorities to which incidents are reported and the manner in which they are outlined can have a fundamental impact on the child or vulnerable person concerned. The first priority should always be to do no harm, or where harm has already occurred, ensure that subsequent action does not increase the extent of that harm.'

These guidelines go some way to addressing concerns raised by multiple stakeholders about the potential for reporting to have negative consequences for victims / survivors in certain situations.

⁸ Adapted from Orr, D. et al. (2019b) Op cit., p 26.

CASE STUDY 5: AVOIDING RETRAUMATISATION OF PARTICIPANTS⁹

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 retraumatising 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.

CASE STUDY 6: SUPPORTING RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS¹⁰

Support for those affected by safeguarding issues could also be needed for research team members. In one research project discussed, fieldworkers came across emotionally challenging situations which exposed them to death, grief and violence. In such circumstances it was essential to build emotional support into the research plan and budget. Even though these fieldworkers had a careful map of resources for referral, sometimes continued responsibility for involvement was unavoidable. In some cases when fieldworkers suspected abuse, participants initially denied it was happening to them, but later would call and confirm the fieldworkers’ suspicions. Fieldworkers might be asked to accompany participants to the police, attend court proceedings and support plaintiffs during the process. The fieldworkers emphasised that these experiences highlighted the need for continuing research involvement in communities and the value of having built into the project relevant training, review of experiences and referrals (though researchers must recognise that their opportunity or right to find out what has happened post-referral may be limited).

This example highlights that even referral to an appropriate source may present added, unanticipated demands, and underlines the importance of building in capacity for contingency. While in this case, the nature of the project meant that the fieldworkers were better prepared and supported to play this role than others might be, researchers must also be aware of the boundaries of their expertise and role.

Additional support materials

¹⁰ Adapted from Orr, D. et al. (2019b) Op cit., p 42.

Following the grid below is a section on [Safeguarding in practice – Perspectives from practitioners](#), containing extracts of in-depth interviews with three people involved in international development research in Latin America, South Asia and West Africa, to help further illustrate some of the issues and concerns in different research contexts.

The final section contains [Useful resources](#) with a wealth of additional material such as toolkits, codes of conduct, minimum standard operating procedures and other detailed guidelines to support the development of strong, evidence-based safeguarding policies and practices.

9 Data from 2019/20 consultation exercise.

3. Key questions by role and theme

Quick links



3. Key questions by role and theme

1. RESEARCH FUNDER / DONOR / GRANTING ORGANISATION



Rights of victims/survivors and whistle-blowers

- How do we monitor the way our grantees deal with, or are prepared to deal with, complaints and redress for victims/survivors, along with referral for appropriate care and support?
- What procedures and policies do we have in place to deal with safeguarding issues and/or whistle-blowing, both within our organisation and among grantees? Who specifically deals with allegations and what is the process of responding?
- What training is in place for those dealing with allegations?
- Do we have the capacity to carry out investigations ourselves, or access to expertise to do that?
- Do we know when we should be reporting cases to national authorities or international law enforcement? Are we being guided by the rights and wishes of victims/survivors around reporting?
- To what extent are we willing to accept modification or even cancellation of planned research if potential harm to researchers, participants or communities is too great?



Equity and fairness

- How do we collaborate with Global South partners to design our funding calls to ensure that we are informed by the communities we want our research to benefit?
- Who bears the burden of ensuring safety / preventing and addressing harm in the research that we fund? How are we avoiding simply shifting the responsibility further down the chain?
- How can we ensure that our processes are not disadvantaging (or even exploiting) research partners, e.g. payment waiting times?
- What funds/resources are we allocating for safeguarding policy development and training?
- How much time are we allowing in our funding cycles for potential applicants and their partners to reach consensus on their approach to safeguarding? e.g. time to develop a joint approach, training time, adequate field communication, etc.
- What actions are we taking to diversify the research partners we fund, e.g. lead researchers or PIs from Global South, peer researchers, groups fighting discrimination?
- How are we building our own understanding of the needs of diverse groups?
- How do we encourage grantees to develop equitable partnerships early on in their application, which make explicit the values that underpin the research partnership and address issues of financial equity, equal authorship, co-designing research, collaborative delivery etc.?

1. RESEARCH FUNDER / DONOR / GRANTING ORGANISATION



Transparency

- Do we have a clear and agreed policy on safeguarding that is appropriate and responsive to context? If so, how do we communicate it to applicants / grantees and reviewers? If not, what are our plans to develop our policy?
- What is our process to review and evaluate this policy, in response to changing conditions and/or contextual factors? Who has ownership of this?
- Do we have sufficient knowledge and understanding on safeguarding in order to know what issues may arise in our field? What are our plans to mitigate these issues and how they affect those involved in the research we fund (researchers/ participants/ wider community)?
- How do we demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding principles e.g. in how we design a call, what we require of grantees, how we ourselves deal with safeguarding concerns or incidents, etc.?



Accountability and governance

- What (if anything) do we require from applicants in relation to safeguarding and is this written into formal agreements? How are we balancing that with our own responsibility?
- What (if any) sanctions do we have in place in relation to safeguarding misconduct in research that we fund?
- How do we ensure that grantees demonstrate accountability within research partnerships, and to research participants and wider communities (e.g. as outputs do we require shared authorship, require feedback/ presentation of findings to participants)?
- How do we ensure that grantees demonstrate accountability for their safeguarding commitments through concrete actions?
- How do we hold ourselves accountable if our action (or inaction) leads to safeguarding breaches?
- Is there any provision for follow-up exercises to evaluate or assess issues experienced by researchers and participants following the end of funding?
- How are we listening to and learning from feedback from our grantees around safeguarding?
- Does data collection by grantees on cases allow for follow-up and results of investigations and response? Is data reported of good quality? Are parameters used for data collection and reporting similar (or not) across grantees? Do they allow for good analysis, highlighting trends that could inform policy and practice?
- How do we ensure that we learn from any safeguarding breaches in order to improve our policies and practices?

2. UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLOR / HEAD OF RESEARCH INSTITUTION / AGENCY CEO OR EQUIVALENT



Rights of victims/survivors and whistleblowers

- How am I personally demonstrating leadership in putting the rights of actual or potential victims/survivors at the centre of our response?
- In determining what constitutes risk or harm, and formulating appropriate responses, how are we building on the experiences and priorities of victims/survivors?
- What support mechanisms or services (our own or by referral) are in place for those affected by safeguarding concerns or incidents?
- How do I ensure that there are processes in place in this institution to allow people to report safeguarding issues or concerns free of fear, including those which could involve us?
- Do we as an organisation have policies and a code of conduct which adequately cover SEAH?
- Do we have the capacity to carry out investigations, or access to expertise to do that?
- Are we being guided by the rights and wishes of victims/ survivors around reporting cases to national authorities or international law enforcement?



Equity and fairness

- When we consider the impact of our research, are we thinking enough about the economic and social benefits for the communities being researched?
- How do we promote equality for all partners, and for under-represented groups including women, in our research work – e.g. fair and transparent systems and processes for pay, acknowledgement, authorship, etc.?
- How do we ensure any research we are involved in is collaborative rather than extractive in nature?
- Are we considering equality aspects of the make-up of our research teams? What are we doing to address any gaps?
- What are our policies on conflicts of interest and research integrity?

2. UNIVERSITY VICE- CHANCELLOR / HEAD OF RESEARCH INSTITUTION / AGENCY CEO OR EQUIVALENT



Transparency

- Do we have a clear and agreed policy (or set of policies) on safeguarding that covers our staff, students, research partners, participants and the wider community? If so, how do we communicate it to them and to other relevant stakeholders? If not, what are our plans to develop our policy, or to map out and link together our relevant policies?
- Do we collect and publish data (appropriately anonymised) on safeguarding incidents and responses involving our institution or organisation, both in the research field and in everyday practice?
- How do we prepare researchers (undergraduate/postgraduate/postdoctoral) to address safeguarding in research through our curriculum and training?
- How do we ensure that we are not publishing or communicating research results in ways that exploit people's suffering for media appeal?



Accountability and governance

- As a leader, how am I promoting a positive culture that prioritises safeguarding?
- What safeguarding training, resources or other information do we provide for our staff, students, research partners?
- What systems do we have in place to raise awareness and actively encourage reporting of safeguarding concerns?
- What whistle-blowing processes do we have in place, and do they provide adequate protection from reprisals?
- How as an institution are we responding to reports?
- How are we learning and incorporating lessons from safeguarding incidents and responses?
- What specific resources (financial and human) have we allocated to addressing safeguarding issues?
- Do we have a designated safeguarding senior lead on our Board (or equivalent)?
- Is the Board (or equivalent) considering safeguarding as part of its regular risk discussions?

3. RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



Rights of victims/survivors and whistleblowers

- In determining what constitutes risk or harm, how are we building on the experiences and priorities of victims/survivors?
- How has our definition of vulnerability evolved to reflect changing understanding of this concept, e.g. around situated power dynamics? Are we still using a static/outdated definition, e.g. 'women = vulnerable'?
- How well do we understand the vulnerability of specific groups to SEAH, e.g children, people with disabilities?
- How are we considering the rights and needs of the researchers, research participants and the wider community (geographical or community of interest) in our criteria and processes?
- How do we get information from projects about any safeguarding concerns that are raised after approval?
- What happens with research that does not trigger an ethics review? How are the safeguarding risks identified/ mitigated? Who is responsible and how should this be done?



Equity and fairness

- How do we make our ethics committee more inclusive and diverse?
- What training have our ethics committee members had in relation to safeguarding in international development research?
- How are we ensuring parity of treatment for research applications for ethical approval which are undertaken in high- and in low- or middle-income countries?
- Does our process encourage or allow for an early involvement of partners/stakeholders in research design e.g. co-designing research questions and tools to anticipate and mitigate potential harm?
- What room are we allowing for flexibility in methods? How can we move away from a focus on procedures towards more relational ethics?
- How are we ensuring that our procedures do not exclude or discourage research groups with less access/experience from applying and seeking approval?

3. RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



Transparency

- How are we sharing learning from ethical approval applications, and from safeguarding processes, across the institution/ locality?
- How does this learning link to curriculum development?



Accountability and governance

- Do we explicitly acknowledge that the ethics process is not sufficient to address all issues of safeguarding in the research process (design, delivery and dissemination)? Do we signpost researchers to additional support/advice?
- What follow-up do we undertake after ethical approval? e.g. monitoring during implementation of the research, learning after research completion?
- When safeguarding issues arise, what is our process to review our decision and gather lessons learned?
- How has consideration of safeguarding issues and the protection of vulnerable groups been incorporated into our research ethics application process?

4. RESEARCH MANAGER OR ADMINISTRATOR



Rights of victims/ survivors and whistle-blowers

- What safeguarding risk assessment do we carry out for research sites?
- What sources of expert knowledge are we using for decisions on contexts outside of our own direct experience?
- Do we carry out pre-departure briefings and/ or debriefs on return? If so, how do we evaluate their usefulness?



Equity and fairness

- How are we and our partners sharing the administrative burden of due diligence requirements?
- How can we assess safeguarding risks collaboratively with our research partners?
- How can we broaden the focus of these assessments beyond protecting our own staff to consider the risks to people they interact with?



Transparency

- How good are we at collecting and sharing information and lessons learned about safeguarding incidents and concerns? Is it systematic or patchy and ad hoc?
- If I receive a report of a safeguarding incident caused by one of my researchers, do I know who I need to report it to and how?



Accountability and governance

- Have we worked with colleagues to map out where safeguarding roles and responsibilities lie across our institution? (e.g. HR, Finance, Legal, etc.)
- How can we overcome a tendency towards siloes or fragmentation of safeguarding responsibility?
- With planned or ongoing research, are there other research projects in the same area I need to coordinate with on safeguarding?

5. HUMAN RESOURCES, FINANCE AND LEGAL TEAMS



Rights of victims/survivors and whistle-blowers

- What actions do we take to prevent safeguarding situations arising in research, e.g. recruitment procedures, pre-employment checks, references, codes of conduct, induction and training, financial due diligence?
- Are our procedures to deal with researcher complaints or whistle-blowing adequate?
- Do we have a separate safeguarding reporting system that actively encourages the raising of concerns, such as a “Freedom to Speak Up” approach?



Equity and fairness

- How can we ensure that our processes are not disadvantaging (or even exploiting) research partners, e.g. payment waiting times?
- How can we assess safeguarding risks collaboratively with our research partners?
- How do we support all research partners to engage in research on equal footing, e.g. funding travel?
- Do our processes safeguard researchers from financial vulnerability e.g. travel in cash economies?



Transparency

- Do we have clear policies and procedures or agreements that are shared with research partners regarding recruitment, selection, payments etc.?
- Are our contracts adequate in explaining safeguarding responsibilities, and do they reflect a fair balance of responsibility?



Accountability and governance

- Are we considering previous safeguarding violations in the hiring process? What systems are in place to note/record this? e.g. seeking references that would flag up SEAH or other misconduct?
- Have we considered whether our policies (e.g. lone working policies) are appropriate and applicable for research staff operating outside of their home country?
- How do we brief researchers on what conduct is expected of them, and what to do if they have any concerns about the conduct of others?

6. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR / HEAD OF RESEARCH TEAM



Rights of victims/survivors and whistleblowers

- What information do I have on the potential harms this research can address or exacerbate for researchers, participants and wider communities?
- How am I considering the rights of the wider community (of interest or geography) in relation to this research?
- How am I building the rights of potential or actual victims/ survivors of safeguarding incidents into the research design, including questions and methodology, to ensure respect, dignity and safety?
- How am I ensuring that access to community-based complaint mechanisms to raise safeguarding concerns are built into the programme design, and are discussed and explained with participants?
- If researching 'victim/survivor' groups, how am I led by their own definitions of safety and vulnerability?
- To what extent am I willing to modify or even cancel planned research if potential harm to researchers, participants or communities is too great?



Equity and fairness

- How am I ensuring that this research is collaborative rather than extractive in nature? e.g. how am I involving local stakeholders?
- How and at what stage am I involving potential partners in the formulation of research agendas and questions?
- How and at what stage am I involving partners in the formulation of bids and budgets?
- How am I ensuring that we and our research partners reach a shared understanding of safeguarding?
- How am I ensuring that my research team is representative of the diversity of the groups and communities we are researching?
- How am I ensuring fairness in compensating and acknowledging all parties' contributions to this research?

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 we including SEAH-related questions when hiring research staff?
- Do we have an adequate process for safeguarding concerns to be raised that is developed, understood and fairly shared across the research partners?
- How will the research team feed back to research participants and communities on the use of their data? How are we consulting them on whether and how they want this to happen?
- What is our agreed process for how safeguarding concerns will be reported and escalated across research partnerships?
- How will lessons be learned and shared?

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 arrangement (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. about 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?

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



Transparency

- Am I being completely honest about the limitations of myself as a researcher and of my research, to avoid raising false hope or expectations?
- Am I being open and reflective about my own biases and the gaps in my knowledge or experience?
- Am I confident about raising and discussing safeguarding concerns with the research team?



Accountability and governance

- How am I, as a member of the research team, modelling best practice in terms of my personal conduct and treating others with integrity, dignity and respect?
- How will I feed back to research participants and communities on the use of their data? Have I asked them whether and how they want this to happen?
- How am I trying to learn about the participants' or the community's own ideas about risk, harm and how to keep themselves safe?
- What training and development have I received in relation to how and when to raise concerns?

8. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT



Rights of victims/ survivors and whistle-blowers

- Do I fully understand what my rights are when taking part in research? e.g. consent, withdrawal, not answering some questions, photographs and their ongoing use, access to my home, not being out of pocket etc.?
- Do I know what I can expect in terms of researcher conduct, and how to report if these standards of behaviour are not met?
- Do I understand how I go about raising a safeguarding concern?
- Do I understand how to make a complaint if I believe that concerns I have raised have not been listened to or dealt with?



Equity and fairness

- What arrangements are in place so that I am not disadvantaged by taking part in this research, e.g. reimbursement for travel, accommodation, childcare costs?
- Has the timing of my involvement taken into account my commitments, e.g. work and family obligations?



Transparency

- What sources of advice and support are available to me if an incident occurs? Has the researcher supplied me with correct, up-to-date contact details?
- Am I clear about the limitations of the advice and support I may get, especially if reporting historic cases unrelated to the carrying out of the research?



Accountability and governance

- Do I understand how my personal data will be protected?
- Do I understand how the information being collected from or about me will be used?
- Will I see the results?

9. COMMUNITY MEMBER OR STAKEHOLDER (NON RESEARCH PARTICIPANT)



Rights of victims/survivors and whistle-blowers

- How has our community responded to previous safeguarding issues? How are victims/survivors, whistle-blowers and perpetrators treated here? Has this been taken into account by researchers?
- How can we best protect and promote the rights of victims/survivors and whistle-blowers?
- Do I know what I can expect in terms of researcher conduct, and how to report if these standards of behaviour are not met?
- Do I understand how I go about raising a safeguarding concern?
- Do I understand how to make a complaint if I believe that concerns I have raised have not been listened to or dealt with?



Equity and fairness

- How can we ensure that all members of the community have the right to participate (or not participate) in setting the agenda for and input to research taking place here, and to enjoy any benefits that may arise from it?
- Are there groups with particular characteristics who risk being excluded or not represented?



Transparency

- How are we involved in identifying and prioritising the key safeguarding issues in the area in which the research is being carried out?



Accountability and governance

- What are the locally applicable systems for justice in relation to safeguarding incidents or concerns? What is our level of confidence in these? What are the alternatives?
- What are the locally available care and support services for safeguarding incidents or concerns? What is our level of confidence in these? What are the alternatives?
- What can we do to encourage an accurate reality of our community through data collection without overburdening people with data extraction?

4. Safeguarding in practice – Perspectives from practitioners

To help further illustrate some of the issues and concerns in different research contexts, we provide below three extended extracts from key informant interviews in Latin America, West Africa and South Asia.

Latin America: From an international development NGO [translated from Spanish by the interviewer]

“These efforts have to start from a change in mentality and that implies working with people to see what they cannot see. Because preventing means avoiding and in order to avoid you have to anticipate; you can’t see something that you do not have the mindset for....

I think that what you have to be very clear about is that if you are working with victims or vulnerable people you have to avoid revictimization by all means possible, even when that means you cannot publish your research. When you have very important things to say that you found, but you cannot say them because that would harm people, even when you don’t mention names, sometimes you reveal operating modes, for example, that can put groups at risk, things like that. I think at the level of research one has to be willing to stop the investigation if necessary. I believe that researchers, in the obvious case, they want to know stories, they want information and this information often goes through... the pain of difficult events and you can revictimize someone. So, yes, you have to have a psychological counsellor very active in the design of your research, in the design of the instruments and in the application because, really, it is not worth revictimizing someone in the name of scientific enquiry. I believe that sometimes that means settling for secondary sources.

I think that organizations that work with victims in the field have to be firmer in saying, ‘I don’t want them to investigate me anymore’ because, sometimes there are organizations or donors that are going to ask for information, media that are going to ask for information, universities from who knows where that are going to ask for information. And I say, all these people should agree and fill out one single form and ask me for all the information you want at once. This is difficult, but I think that from our side you have to be a little more aware. People are generous, and just because they give you informed consent, people will always give it to you because people are generous. The people who have been victims of violence, the vulnerable people are people who have gone through very difficult things and somehow many of them have incredible individual transformations and are brilliant human beings... and they will never say no. So, I believe that our ethics have to go a little further.

And no, of course, you should not offer what you cannot give. If your only outcome is publishing your doctoral thesis or a very good report in an academic journal, do it, and that is fine, but it is not worth offering anything else to people.... People will understand it. I may say, ‘I will never see you again, but I can tell you that if something positive can come out of this, [it is] that decision makers understand a little more about what this problem is about.’ I think that one has to be very ethical, with the capacity to empathize by putting oneself in the other person’s shoes and really being much more rigorous in what research is still needed, because there are spaces that are over-studied.”

“You have to have a psychological counsellor very active in the design of your research, in the design of the instruments and in the application because, really, it is not worth revictimizing someone in the name of scientific enquiry.”



West Africa: From a community-based organisation providing support to people living with HIV

“Because we work with persons living with HIV and in our context HIV is still highly stigmatized, when we plan research we take into consideration the level of stigma, discrimination and especially the people we work with which are key populations, so if you do not use the people in the constituency itself it becomes difficult for you to conduct the research. There is what we call unacceptable disclosure which we tell our data collectors, so therefore if you recruit data collectors outside the constituency, that is, the community, the people will say that you are trying to disclose their status without their consent and that is unacceptable...”

It is all part of Do No Harm, so whenever we conduct research, we consider this very carefully, we don't just take people from outside. We try to identify people from the constituency, we train them and then we let them know that these are the people we want to use to collect data especially if we want to assess the impact a project is making in the lives of the different people living with HIV...

On all the research we do, once we recruit, we train, and we agree on a strategy on how safeguarding will be maintained and then of course we have supervisors that ensure quality control... We have a complainant pathway that runs from the communities right to the top of the organization...

In the first place, during research planning stage, it is important to cultivate meaningful participation of the people in the community. It is important that they are part of the discussion, so that they understand what you are going out there to do... It is important for them to know where you are going and what you are going to do to achieve the overall goal of the research. It is also important to explore the emotions around sensitive topics. If you are to explore the issues affecting sex workers, and you don't include people from that constituency, I will tell you for free that they will not respond to you....

Working with vulnerable communities such as people with disabilities or Ebola victims, you have to give them time to understand the research, what the benefits of the research are and what impact it will make... Personally, I believe that people we work with are part of the process... At the end of such research, we should be able to equally help them to understand the findings. This HIV Stigma Index I am doing, we brought the participants back to the table and shared the findings with them and even compared with the results from 2013. So this will be helpful to them, to see where we are now between 2013 and 2019 and what interventions or design programs have been helpful in reducing HIV stigma and bringing it down.... So, the communities we research should get access to the report that we develop. Also, even international donors and partners, we seldom access the result from data they collect with us.”

“In the first place, during research planning stage, it is important to cultivate meaningful participation of the people in the community. It is important that they are part of the discussion, so that they understand what you are going out there to do.”

South Asia: From a university public health researcher

“What I have often felt in the kind of research that we do...is that there is exploitation, and that is taking information, or perhaps even raising certain expectations, in research populations, that have nothing to do with bullying and violence or anything of that sort. But they are certainly exploiting them as subjects of a particular research effort. And converting them into just conduits for gathering certain types of information.... It's a very instrumental relationship. And in fact, there were a couple of places, where those research subjects had been parts of many research activities before. Because you know, we all have our favourite sort of populations that we keep going to. And they said you know, okay, you have come back – I mean not ‘you’, but people like you, with the information that we provided them. And...you know, was there any outcome because we are not seeing any difference in our situation from having participated in all those studies before. So, why should we even... participate in this particular effort? What is the great thing that you're going to do for us? For which, there's actually very little answer.

So, in fact, one of the things that I tried to do later on is that we go back to those communities and at least tell them the research findings, if nothing else.... But at least to [take] the responsibility to go back and tell the communities, what information did we get out of our conversation and how did we try to communicate that to people who might be able to make a difference. So, I feel that part is not actually reflected in this definition [of safeguarding] because it's largely focusing on some kind of violence. But often, research does not actually involve that kind of violence,

it involves violating people's trust.... I don't know if it's helped, but certainly to show respect, you know. And to stop having this kind of instrumental relationship with the subjects of any particular study. So that the least you can do is to go back I feel, and communicate what you've done with the information that they have given you. And often, obviously it is in a language that they don't understand, so you can't actually give them the paper or the book and say, this is what we did. But at least to invite them back... show them the courtesy of discussing what meaning you were able to glean from your interaction with them...

What I'm finding now though, is that research is driven by funding and by timelines.... okay, I have to deliver this thing in the next three months or within the next six months, as the case may be. And I have time in my busy schedule to give like three days in January and four days in February and (snaps fingers) and then you go to meet somebody...I don't know the language...I have an interpreter...the interpreter does the talking and tells you...and they will talk for ten minutes and the interpreter will tell you two sentences in the meantime (laughs) and you have to make some sense out of that... In terms of this kind of research, it has become very goal-oriented, transactional....

I think we all need to reflect on this and see what is it that we're actually doing and how can we give a voice to the people. And I don't mean by just giving them a voice, inviting them to some meeting and... having them share, because, you know, I feel that that's another layer of exploitation actually.... I think... nuanced issues of what constitutes people's rights and responsibilities in this research relationship, I think those should be reflected somewhere in this conversation around safeguarding.”

“Nuanced issues of what constitutes people's rights and responsibilities in this research relationship, I think those should be reflected somewhere in this conversation around safeguarding.”

5. Resources

Bond (2018) *Our Commitment to Change in Safeguarding: Our approach to tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment in the aid sector*. Available at: <https://www.bond.org.uk/resources/our-commitment-to-change-in-safeguarding>. Additional Bond safeguarding resources available at: <https://www.bond.org.uk/resources-support/safeguarding-resources>

Core Humanitarian Standards [CSA] Alliance (2017) *PSEA Implementation Quick Reference Handbook*. Available at: <https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/psea-implementation-quick-reference-handbook/>

Department for International Development [DFID] (2018) *Enhanced Due Diligence: Safeguarding for External Partners*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/767037/safeguarding-external-partners.pdf

Department for International Development [DFID] (2019) *Progress Report – One year on from the October 2018 London Safeguarding Summit*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840063/Cross-sector-Safeguarding-Progress-Report-Oct_19.pdf

Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC] (2016a) *Best Practice Guide: Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms – Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*. Available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/best_practice_guide_inter_agency_community_based_complaint_mechanisms_1.pdf

Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC] (2016b) *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA: Inter-agency cooperation in community-based complaint mechanisms – Global Standard Operating Procedures*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-psea-inter-agency-cooperation-community-based>

Keeping Children Safe resource library <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/how-we-keep-children-safe/capacity-building/resource-library>

Orr, D. et al. (2019a) *Safeguarding in International Development Research: Briefing Paper*. Available at: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/safeguarding-in-international-development-research-briefing-paper/>

Orr, D. et al. (2019b) *Safeguarding in International Development Research: Evidence Review*. Available at: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/safeguarding-in-international-development-evidence-review/>

Research Fairness Initiative (2018). Available at: <https://rfi.cohred.org/>

Rethinking Research Collaborative <https://rethinkingresearchcollaborative.com/resources-and-links/>. The website includes links to the *Rethinking Research Partnerships Discussion Guide and Toolkit* and other resources.

Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries [KFPE] (2018) *A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships, 3rd edition*. Available at: https://naturalsciences.ch/uuid/564b67b9-c39d-5184-9a94-e0b129244761?r=20190807115818_1565139307_8ef687bc-7b14-5a4f-ad9e-bf494cddcd17

TRUST Consortium (2018) *The Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings*. Available at: <http://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/> In addition to the Code itself, there are learning materials available on the website.

UKCDS (2017) *Building a Partnership of Equals: The role of funders in equitable and effective international development collaborations*. Available at: https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Building-Partnerships-of-Equals_-REPORT-2.pdf

UK Collaborative on Development Research [UKCDR] <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/guidance/safeguarding-resources/>

Universities UK (2019) *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. Available at: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf>



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