Ethics Policy of the School of International Development and International Development UEA (DEVCo)

Who Does This Apply to?

This policy applies to all staff, students and DEVCo associates whether the work is funded or unfunded, if the research is being carried out in their capacity as members of DEV/DEVCo or using University facilities.

Faculty, DEVCo Research Associates and Research Fellows – if you are planning a research project, a research-related activity as part of teaching, or consultancy you will need to submit an ethics application. If your activity is part of teaching, please complete the DEV Ethical Clearance Form for Module-Based Research Exercises.

Undergraduates – if you are collecting data for your dissertation, even if this was originally collected during your Development Work Experience (DWE) module, you will need to submit an ethics application. Ethics applications need to be submitted by May of your second year or by April if you plan to start collecting data for your dissertation before July. There is a separate procedure for obtaining ethical clearance for DWE which is outlined in the DWE module outline.

Postgraduates (taught and research) - if you are collecting data for your dissertation or thesis, another assignment, or consultancy.

Does Your Research Require Ethical Approval?

All research which involves the collection of primary data (for example, notes of conversations, photographs, emailed responses to questions) or the use of secondary data that contains personal or confidential/restricted information (for example, records of participants in a particular programme) requires ethical clearance.

Please apply for ethical clearance and submit your risk assessment form at least two months before you plan to start fieldwork, even if you have not finalised your research instruments. It is possible to make minor changes to your research design once clearance has been granted by emailing a description of the changes to the Chair of the International Development Ethics Committee responsible for your particular area (undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research/ faculty).

Research that involves reviewing previous studies or analysing archived data such as nationally representative surveys does not usually require ethical clearance or risk assessment, but it is always best to check.

<u>Some issues to bear in mind when designing a research project which involves research with people</u>

The safety and wellbeing of participants must be assured by paying attention to:

Confidentiality - Respecting their confidentiality and taking appropriate steps to preserve their anonymity and keep their data secure

Participation - Explaining that participation is entirely voluntary and that they can refuse to take part and withdraw their participation and/ or data at any stage prior to the finalisation of the research. Understanding that in some settings it may be difficult for people to say no, or they may be pressurised by others to participate in the research.

Consent - Recognising that all consent should be informed, i.e. efforts have been made to ensure that participants understand the objectives of the research, the procedures to be followed, and the anticipated outcomes (e.g. forms of dissemination). However, consent does not need to be written - if participants are reluctant to sign anything it can be audio-recorded, or the time and place it was given noted by the researcher.

Children - Working with children presents particular issues and requires assent from children and where possible consent from guardians. The researcher should always try to inform the parents about the research, but it may not be necessary to obtain consent in every case, for example, in relation to sensitive topics such as child work or violence where asking consent from the parents could put the child at risk. If research is being conducted in a school consent should also be obtained from a person such as a teacher who is in loco parentis (acting in the place of a parent). Researchers can work with groups of children, but should avoid being alone with a child. They should also be aware of the forms of physical contact that are considered appropriate, both in international guidelines and locally.

Feeding back - Appropriate means should be found for explaining how the findings will be used, and, in many (but not all) instances, sharing the findings with the participants (for example, by drafting a summary of the findings in the local language/s). However, participants should understand at the outset that they are unlikely to benefit directly from the research. Do bear in mind that it can be very easy to promise extensive feedback, or raise expectations of benefits of the research whilst in the field with participants, but find later that you do not have time or agency to deliver.

Finally, it may be impossible to control the impact of your research as whenever we interact with people we affect their perceptions, experiences and use up their time. In your ethics form you should not be trying to justify how your research will definitely have no risks or impacts, but make the case that you understand the full range of risks and inconveniences, that you have taken appropriate steps to mitigate these and that remaining risks and inconveniences are justifiable in the light of the research. A good rule of thumb is to think whether after your research, your participants would be happy for you or another researcher to conduct research with them again.

The Obligations of a Researcher

The researchers should <u>not</u>

- Convey personally identifiable information obtained in the course of research work to others except where the participants have given permission for this to be done or where you are subject to a legal obligation to disclose information
- Give unrealistic guarantees of anonymity or confidentiality
- Make unrealistic promises about the impact of the research on the community or individuals involved (raising expectations of development aid, legal help or other interventions which are beyond your influence or control)

The researcher <u>should</u>

- Store all data in a secure manner and taking into account the obligations under relevant Data Protection Act or other legislation.
- Take care to prevent data being published or released which would allow the identification of participants to be traced
- Take care to ensure that the research does not put you in any danger and
- Take all possible measures to ensure your own safety and security.

Payment to Research Subjects

If people taking part in your research are to be offered any payment or incentive over and above appropriate expenses you should explain this in your research proposal and seek guidance from the Committee. Small tokens of appreciation for taking part in a study may be given provided they are not seen as an inappropriate inducement to take part.

Informing Participants About the Results of Research

You should where possible inform participants of the results of the research, explaining where necessary that they may not be able to obtain their individual results. Given that participation in your project is voluntary it is appropriate to provide feedback on the results and explain how the information is being used.

Full details of DEV/DEVCo's ethics policy, guidelines and forms can be found at:

https://www.uea.ac.uk/international-development/ethics and on the School of International Development Blackboard site

Useful Resources on the Ethics of Research With People

- British Sociological Association -- http://www.britsoc.org.uk/about/ethics.htm
- Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth -- http://www.asa.anthropology.ac.uk/ethics2.html
- Social Research Association -- www.the-sra.org.uk/ethics03.pdf