



ANNEX 11

ECPAT INTERNATIONAL

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR RESEARCH ON OR WITH CHILDREN¹

Before any research that involves children is undertaken, a careful consideration of the ethics of the research methodology must be done. This assessment includes balancing the rights of children to participate in the research with the potential harms that they may be exposed to (such as security risks or re-traumatisation). The ECPAT International Safeguarding Focal Point can be consulted for advice.

ECPAT has developed '*Guidelines for Ethical Research on SEC Involving Children*', and these guidelines must be **systematically considered carefully** when developing any research project or related activity concerning children. The document provides useful guidance regarding ethical standards to ensure that child participants in our research work are not harmed prior, during and after the research process, and that research is beneficial to the individual and society.

Distinction between safeguarding and ethics²

Both safeguarding and research ethics are concerned with preventing harm to people and participants in the delivery of development and humanitarian assistance and research. The two terms are often used interchangeably and whilst there are complementarities and overlaps there are also some clear differences.

- **Research ethics** are the moral principles that govern how researchers should carry out their work involving data collection, analysis and reporting. Key ethical considerations include ensuring data collection is necessary, the benefits of data collection outweigh the potential risk of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent and protecting the confidentiality of participants. Safeguarding risks are considered as part of delivering ethical research, however research ethics extends beyond safeguarding.
- **Safeguarding for research** concerns all aspects of the behaviour of the researchers and the safeguarding risks for individuals participating in the research. It involves understanding power imbalances, how power can be abused, and putting in place the necessary measures to prevent harm to staff, research participants and communities, as well as mechanisms to respond to concerns. Safeguarding encompasses harm caused by staff behaviour, and harm caused by monitoring & evaluation and research.
- Research ethics encompasses safeguarding; however, it does not always explicitly capture all safeguarding risks.

- ▶ Be able to justify why the research is being done, why children should be involved and what they would benefit from the research.
- ▶ Work to ensure that children are not harmed because of their participation in research from the outset of the project through to its completion and dissemination.
- ▶ Ensure regularly that the participation of children in the research is voluntary and ensure child participants are aware of their entitlement to withdraw at any stage.

¹ Adapted from [Ethical Research Involving Children \(ERIC\) guidance](#); Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University; [Childwatch International Research Network](#); UNICEF Office of Research; University of Otago (2009). *Is mandatory reporting of child abuse an appropriate child protection tool for adolescents?*.

² Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2021). *How To Note - How to design and deliver safe and ethical monitoring, evaluation and research*.

- ▶ Ensure fully informed consent and assent is properly and regularly obtained by children and caregivers as appropriate and properly documented.
- ▶ Consider, as widely as possible, any potential harms and/or benefits for child participants, their families or wider community groups.
- ▶ Employ strategies to minimise possible negative impact for children participating in the research and put in place measures to ensure mitigating strategies to ensure the research can contribute to the rights and well-being of children.
- ▶ Consult locally when planning the research and developing protocols, to ensure children's safety or well-being.
- ▶ Ensure that support for children, if needed during and after the research process, has been planned for and is available.
- ▶ Take measures to ensure that harm is not caused to children, families or communities in the dissemination of the research.
- ▶ Ensure proper data management and confidentiality of data, during the research and until the data is destroyed and while transmitting and sharing data.
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