

Annex 1: Research and ethics protocol

General conduct during fieldwork and ethical considerations

This section sets out some general norms of behaviour when working in a research area. Much of this is obvious, but it is very important to ensure that our research is both ethical and accurate.

- Be clear about your role. Seek fully informed consent. Answer questions openly. Ensure confidentiality.
- Community members and research participants must not feel not offended or demeaned by anything we do, say or ask, or by our behaviour in their community. We are in their community and must respect them accordingly.
- Expectations of community members and research participants must not be raised by anything we do or say during the research.
- Potential respondents must also feel under no explicit or implicit pressure to participate, either from the research team or from those we ask to help us gather participants (e.g. village heads,, community elders or leaders, etc).
- The research will be more accurate if participants see no reason or pressure to adjust their responses in a particular way and if they feel comfortable during the interview.

We will be engaged in research that might appear very strange to many members of the community. We will ask a number of personal questions, and we will select many respondents at random. Even if this type of research has been conducted in the community before, it is very likely that many people will ask you questions about what you are doing. It is important to explain very clearly what we are doing, and to answer questions about the research patiently, clearly and honestly to each individual that asks.

Ethical considerations

The below points set out some key ethical considerations to be made in carrying out participatory research with vulnerable groups:

- Avoiding any deliberate exclusion on the basis of, for example, access or stigma?
- Ensuring that permission is sought for the focus groups to go ahead, through consultation with the local community.
- Setting and communicating clear parameters for the focus group – this means clearly stating the purpose, the limits and what the follow up will entail. It also means ensuring that demands on participants' time are not excessive and that they are aware of their right to not participate or withdraw at any time.
- Setting up FGDs and interviews at a time and in places that are convenient to respondents (e.g. after labouring hours)
- Recognising that participants are possibly vulnerable and that the exercise is carried out with full respect – power differentials will exist between community members and researchers and these need to be purposefully mitigated in planning and implementation
- Ensuring the safety and protection of participants – this means ensuring the environment is physically safe, that there are at least two facilitators present at all times and, if possible, that a local stakeholder group is involved in monitoring activities. Facilitators should also be supervised.
- Ensuring that people understand what is happening at all time. Is appropriate language being used (language, dialect, community terminology, etc)? This needs to be carefully planned.
- Ensuring the right to privacy – this includes ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, in record keeping and report writing and making sure participants understand that what they do and say in the group session will remain anonymous. In addition, respondents should be made to feel at ease and encouraged to equally ask researcher's questions.