



Module 8

# RESEARCH ETHICS:

## Ethical Dilemmas of Research in Humanitarian Context

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# Learning Outcomes

- Have knowledge of humanitarian settings and humanitarian principles
- Recognize issues related to deciding on research priorities when resources are limited and there are urgent humanitarian needs
- Show critical reflections on research planned or carried out in humanitarian settings
- Be familiar with guidelines and resources on research in humanitarian settings
- Address power imbalance between researcher and participants





## Complex contexts, power inequality

- *The potential for causing harm must be considered from the outset.*
- *Lack of infrastructure, resources increase vulnerability*
- *Contexts where there is a need for humanitarian or other assistance pose particular ethical challenges*





# Power inequality, sensitive topics

- *Unequal power relationships between those doing research, and communities and those subject to research, increase the risk for abuse or exploitation of the affected population*
- *Personal and sensitive topics*

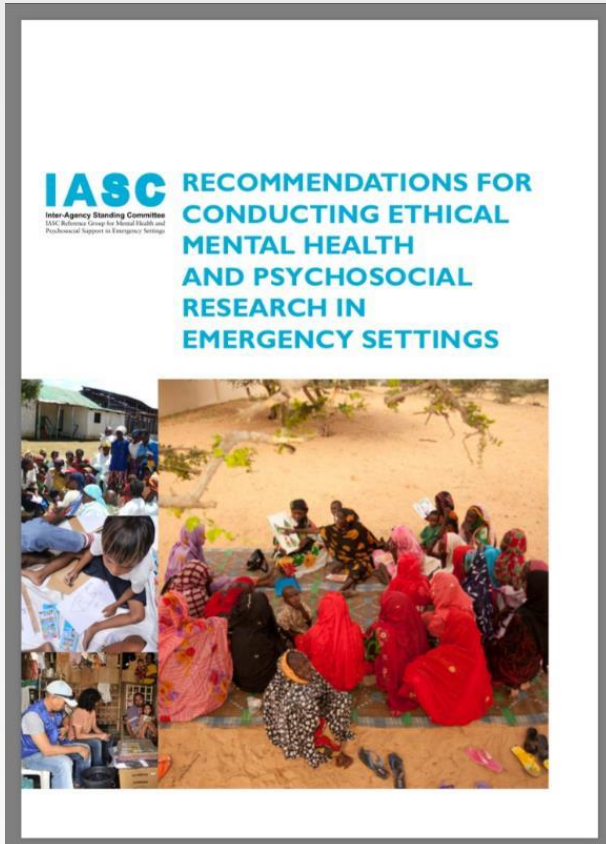
The screenshot shows a mobile news article from Reuters. At the top, there is a back arrow, the Reuters logo, and a 'Follow' button. The article title is 'Exclusive: EU suspends funding to WHO programmes in Congo after sex scandal'. Below the title, it says 'BY STEPHANIE NEBEHAY' and '28 OCTOBER 2021 AT 16:29 · 3-MIN READ'. The main text reads: 'The European Commission has suspended funding to the World Health Organization's programmes in the Democratic Republic of Congo due to concerns over the U.N. agency's handling of the sexual abuse scandal.' A second paragraph starts with 'An Oct. 7 letter from the Commission marked "SENSITIVE", seen by Reuters, informed the WHO of the immediate suspension of financing for five WHO programmes, including its Ebola and COVID-19 operations.'



# HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

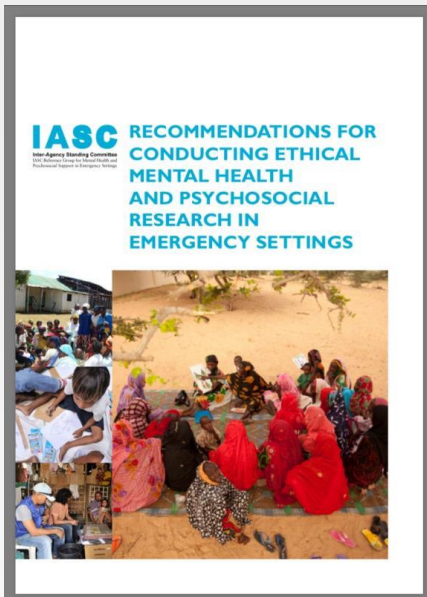
- At the core of all humanitarian actions lie the fundamental principles of **humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence**, incorporated into the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief, as well as the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#).





## DO'S AND DON'TS

DO	DON'T	FURTHER READING
Deliver immediate and direct benefits to communities.	Conduct research with no benefit to communities.	Research benefit: p. 14-15
Identify gaps in current knowledge and conduct research to fill these.	Duplicate previous research. <i>(note: not applicable to monitoring and evaluation measuring service delivery)</i>	Research purpose: p. 13
Carry out a thorough risk and benefit assessment, and develop risk management plans. Share with participants and staff.	Conduct research where risks and benefits are unknown.	Risk and benefit: p. 14
Consult with communities to identify fair compensation for research participation.	Randomly set compensation.	Compensation: p. 15
Share research knowledge <u>with</u> a range of audiences, including the participating community.	Disseminate in hard-to-reach formats.	Dissemination: p. 16–18
Ensure research plans consider these recommendations, other guidelines and legal standards, and is approved by relevant authorities prior to starting [where applicable].	Start research before obtaining all required approvals and support (i.e. ethical review [where applicable], community approval, informed consent etc).	Analysis of ethical issues: p. 18
Conduct research with meaningful participation of local stakeholders in research design, conduct and dissemination.	Conduct research <u>on</u> participants with no opportunities to contribute to design, conduct or dissemination.	Participation: p. 21
Identify research participants according to the scientific objectives of the study.	Allow gatekeepers to control access to participants.	Fair selection: p. 22–23
<u>Always</u> obtain informed consent before starting research.	Proceed with research if there are concerns about the reliability of consent.	Informed Consent: p. 24–26



DO	DON'T	FURTHER READING
Ensure participant protection needs take priority over the conduct of research, including referral pathways to accessible services and safety measures.	Conduct research without referral pathways and safety measures to respond to participant protection needs.	Protection: p. 32
Work to ensure the protection of participant anonymity, confidentiality and the right to privacy. Provide participants clear information about the limits to these.	Proceed with research when it may not be possible to maintain anonymity, confidentiality and the right to privacy, and the participant's security.	Confidentiality: p. 35
<u>All</u> members of staff must undergo training and supervision to ensure their competency.	Involve staff without training or supervision specific to the research being conducted.	Training the staff: p. 38
Have in place staff self-care, support and monitoring of competency to practice.	Continue with staff who are experiencing negative reactions.	Staff care: p. 43
Ensure that safety concerns are raised and responded to.	Conduct research where participant and / or staff safety cannot be reasonably managed.	Safety: p. 44
Maintain equity (treating all humans as equal) and impartiality (not taking sides or passing judgement).	Conduct research in emergencies due to perceived ease of access or prevalent conditions of interest alone.	Neutrality: p. 45
Be transparent about reasons for conducting research.	Allow outside interests to override ethical research practice.	Transparency: p. 46

# Examples of Do No Harm approach

- Collaboration/consultation with community members on cultural relevance and appropriateness
- Collaborate with PWLE for accessibility and participation
- Supervision of MHPSS staff
- Informed consent from all caregivers, ensure adolescents and children understand implications and expectations
- Information accessible and understandable
- Referral mechanisms
- Feedback to participants and community members, respecting confidentiality

IASC

IASC Guidelines  
on Mental Health and  
Psychosocial Support  
in Emergency Settings



**GUIDELINES FOR CONSULTING  
WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG  
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

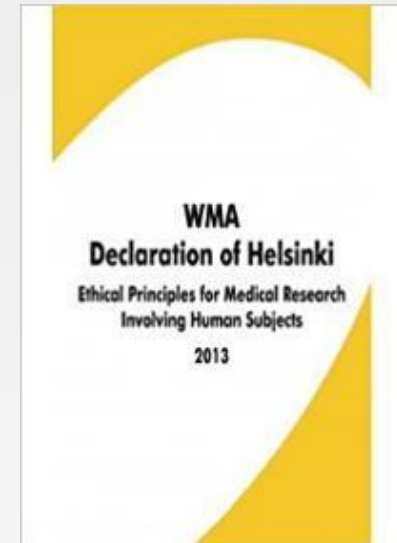






# Respect for persons

- Autonomy
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity
- 3rd party
- Voluntary & compensation
- Access to results and fruits



# Informed consent



*When I go into a horrendous camp situation as a white researcher, the people are so desperate for any form of assistance they would agree to anything just on the off-chance that I might be able to assist. It makes asking for permission to interview them or take photographs a farce... What does 'informed consent' mean in an isolated refugee camp with security problems and no proper interpreters?*

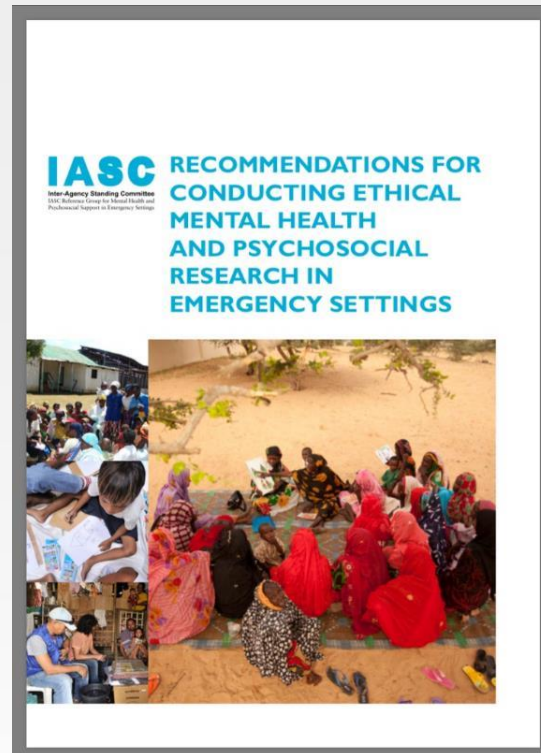
Comment by Linda Bartolomei, 2004, in Pittaway et al., 2010

Pittaway, E., Bartolomei, L., & Hugman, R. (2010). 'Stop stealing our stories': The ethics of research with vulnerable groups. *Journal of human rights practice*, 2(2), 229-251.





# Useful guidelines for research



<https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/medical-and-health-research/medical-and-health-research-in-low--and-middle-income-countries/>





# Relevance of volunteer guidelines

- Safety and security of staff and volunteers
- Financial arrangements
- Tasks (content, amount)
- Supervision
- Social media policy
- appropriate skills
- Long-term impact

<https://matadornetwork.com/life/dear-volunteers-youve-asked-four-questions/>  
<https://epicureandculture.com/volunteering-at-ar>



## Watch: This Hilarious Parody Sums Up the Problem With Volunteering Abroad

PHOTO + VIDEO + FILM | ACTIVISM

by MORGANE CROISSANT FEB 9, 2016

GUIDES ▾

VIDEOS ▾

TOPICS ▾

MATADOR  NETWORK

CREATORS

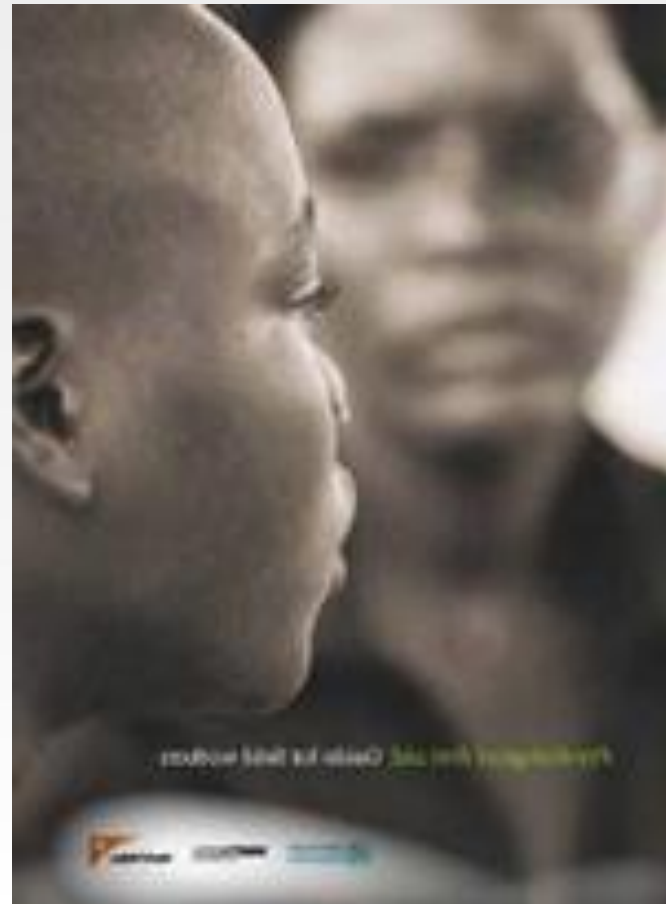
SIGN IN





# Meeting people in crises: Psychological first aid

- Safety
- Calm
- Help
- Information
- Connections





# What about the researchers?

## THE WELL-BEING GUIDE

REDUCE STRESS, RECHARGE  
AND BUILD INNER RESILIENCE



**+C IFRC**  
Psychosocial Centre

## Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide

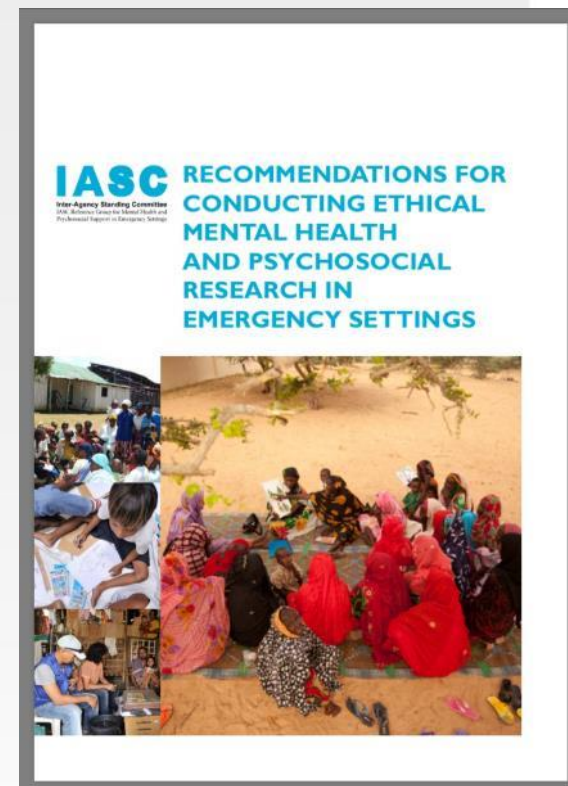
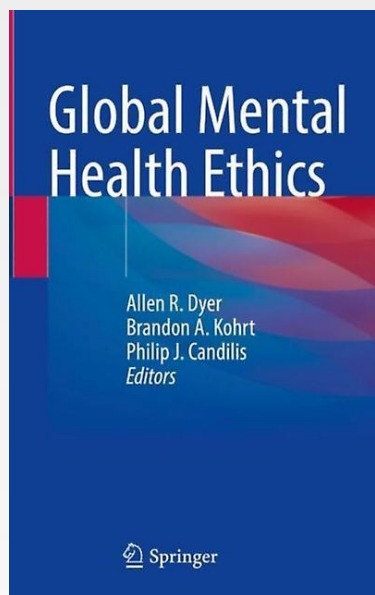
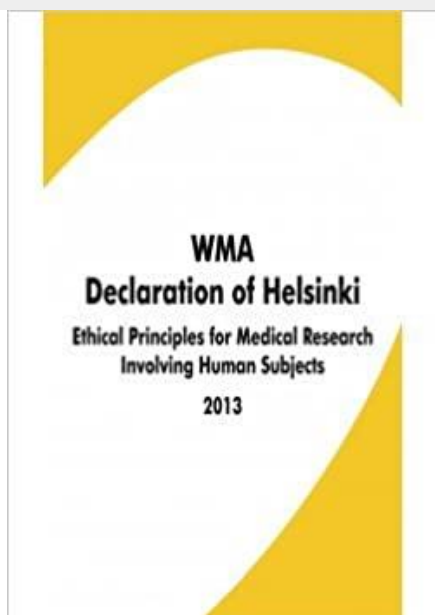
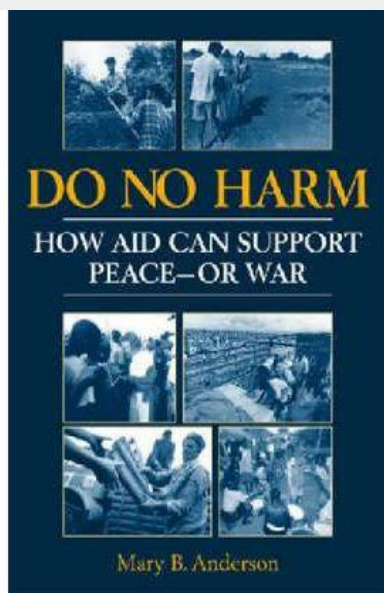


 World Health  
Organization





# RESOURCES



SPRINGER BRIEFS IN RESEARCH AND  
INNOVATION GOVERNANCE

Doris Schroeder  
Kate Chatfield  
Michelle Singh · Roger Chennells  
Peter Herissone-Kelly

# Equitable Research Partnerships

## A Global Code of Conduct to Counter Ethics Dumping

*Foreword by Klaus Leisinger*

OPEN

 Springer

SPRINGER BRIEFS IN RESEARCH AND  
INNOVATION GOVERNANCE

Doris Schroeder · Julie Cook  
François Hirsch · Solveig Fenet  
Vasanth Muthuswamy *Editors*

# Ethics Dumping

## Case Studies from North- South Research Collaborations

 Springer Open





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