



The ZEF *Ethics Policy*

In effect from 15th January 2014

Why ZEF has developed an ethics policy and ethical clearance procedure

Field research is a common part of our work in ZEF. The ZEF Ethics Policy and Ethical Clearance Procedure is necessary to help us as researchers reflect upon our planned activities in advance, to 1) ensure that we treat our respondents and research assistants correctly, 2) and in the medium and longer term, secure the reputation of ZEF.

Who this applies to?

This policy applies to all staff, senior and junior researchers, research fellows, and assistants, if the work is being carried out in their capacity as members of ZEF or using University of Bonn facilities.

It applies to field research and collecting data for the doctoral thesis, a research project, assignments, or consultancies.

Does your research require Ethical Clearance?

All research which involves collection of primary data e.g. recorded/unrecorded interviews, photographs/videos, emailed responses to questions, text- and voice-messages. Also the use of secondary data that contains personal or confidential information e.g. records of participants in a program requires ethical clearance.

Applications for ethical clearance using the **ZEF Ethical Clearance Form** should be made at least four weeks before the start of your field research. Once clearance has been granted, changes to research design may still be made provided a description of the changes are emailed to a representative of the ethics committee. This includes changes that are made during fieldwork.

Research involving the use of archived data or review of previous studies may not require ethical clearance, but it will be best to check.

The ZEF Research Ethics Committee

The ZEF Research Ethics Committee comprises one representative each from the ZEF Doctoral Studies Program BIGS-DR, ZEF A, ZEF B and ZEF C.

Issues to keep in mind when designing a research project

The safety and well being of participants, i.e. respondents, locally-hired research assistants, the public, and other researchers in the host country/ region must be assured by paying attention to:

Confidentiality – assure confidentiality and take steps to preserve anonymity and keep data secure

Consent – recognize that consent must be informed, voluntary, and made by a competent individual. Consent does not always need to be written, and ‘stages of consent’ may also be recognized.

Children – working with children requires consent from children and their parent/guardian

Vulnerable and dependent persons – care should be taken when considering how consent is to be taken from vulnerable persons e.g. politically/economically marginalized and dependent

Environment, organisms, animals and plants – appropriate measures should be taken to protect animals, plants, ecosystems, including genetic resources, and to reduce the impact of the research upon the environment

Integrity – using appropriate techniques, reporting findings accurately and truthfully

Feedback – steps should be taken to explain how findings will be used, and how findings will be shared with participants appropriately. Participants should understand from the outset that they are unlikely to benefit directly from the research

Impact of the research – try to show that you understand the full range of risks and impacts, that you have taken appropriate steps to mitigate these, and that remaining risks and inconveniences are justifiable in light of the research

Obligations of the researcher

The researcher should not:

1. Convey personal information identified in the course of the research to others except where a participant has explicitly given permission for you to do so
2. Give unrealistic guarantees of anonymity or confidentiality
3. Make unrealistic promises about the impact of the research on the community/ participants, or about future actions, e.g. employment, contacts, delivery of materials or goods

The researcher should:

1. Store data in a secure manner
2. Take care to prevent the publishing or release of data which could allow identification of participants
3. Take care to ensure the research does not put him/ her or others in danger
4. Take all possible measures to ensure his/ her own and others' safety

Payment to research subjects

If people participating in the research are to be offered payment or incentives over and above what is an appropriate amount to cover their expenses, please justify this in your research proposal.

Informing participants about the results of the research

Where possible a researcher should consider how participants will be informed of the results of the research.

Note that this policy draws heavily on the: 'Ethics Policy of the School of International Development and International Development UEA (DEVCo)'. We thank Professor Janet Seeley at the University of East Anglia UK for her guidance.