

Ethics and Professional Standards

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Over the last decade many practitioners have realized that Participatory Research and Development can be done well or not. The quality of participatory research and development can affect the well-being of people and the environment and poor quality initiatives can have serious social, economic and ecological consequences. Furthermore, a high quality participatory process is not sufficient to guarantee success. The wrong approach or design – however well implemented – is unlikely to lead to the desired outcomes. The question of ethics, professional standards and accountability is one of several key elements crucial to improving the design and quality of participatory research and development.

Ethical frameworks and professional standards and accountability mechanisms for these are well developed in the medical field and in academia among researchers who study human subjects, however has been relatively little discourse about these in the arena of participatory research and development. Nevertheless, some participatory research and development organizations have explored these issues and examples of key elements from a variety of frameworks are summarized below.

Ethical Principles

1. Researchers should conduct research in a manner that respects the local community including its functions, its culture, and its members' privacy.
2. Researchers must maintain the accuracy and integrity of their data while allowing a process for the community to understand and provide input into the process, findings and conclusions.
3. Researchers should seek to avoid harming a community and be sensitive to long term repercussions and conflicts surrounding negative assessments.
4. Any research process that involves community groups must implement a methodology that provides both contributions and benefits for the community and the researcher.

Source: Firehock, K. 2003. Protocol and Guidelines for Ethical and Effective Research of Community Based Collaborative Processes. Community Based Collaboratives Research Consortium.
http://www.cbrc.org/CBCresearch_Protocols.pdf

1. Research is an educational process leading to mutual learning among researchers and the collaborating individuals, communities and institutions.
2. Just as the proprietary rights of scientific knowledge are well established and respected, such rights are due to the producers and providers of traditional knowledge and contemporary innovations from local communities.
3. Research should be based on respect for the local cultural values and norms.
4. Benefits should accrue to all partners in a fair and equitable manner.

Source: Suggested Ethical Guidelines for Accessing and Exploring Biodiversity. The Pew Conservation Scholars Initiative. Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics 5 (1995), 38-40. <http://www.biol.tsukuba.ac.jp/~macer/EJ521.html>

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Suggested Ethical Guidelines for Accessing and Exploring Biodiversity

1. **Approval:** In most cases the researchers should obtain clearance from the appropriate central or state government authority and, where applicable, from institutions of indigenous peoples.
2. **Initial disclosure of Information:** When first contacting a community or individual to seek access, the researcher:
 - should carry out all communications in the local language
 - must explain the nature and purpose of the proposed research, including its duration, the geographic area in which research would take place, and research and the collecting methods:
 - must explain the foreseeable consequences of the research for resources, people, and accessors, including potential commercial value
 - should explain the potential non-commercial values, such as academic recognition and advancement for the researcher
 - should explain any social and/or cultural risks
 - must notify the community at large by some means, e.g. public meeting
 - should consider explaining the guidelines that the researcher is following, as well as his/her practice in previous similar research projects
 - should be willing to provide copies of relevant project documents, or summaries thereof, preferably including the project budget, in the local language. In the case of commercial prospecting, researchers must share such documents.
 - must agree on a protocol of acknowledgments, citation, authorship, inventor-ship as applicable, either citing local innovators or conservators, or respecting request for anonymity.
 - must share findings at different stages with the providers
 - must not engage in bribery or making false promises
3. **Involvement/Negotiation:** In negotiations, the researcher:
 - must make a reasonable effort to identify and negotiate with those with the proper authority to negotiate.
 - should conduct initial discussions with small groups (but obtain final approval from higher legitimate authority wherever applicable)
 - should consider, where there is no existing authority or capacity for such negotiations, helping the community develop the institutional capacity to appraise and (if it chooses) enter into such agreements.
 - should be willing to provide copies of relevant project documents, preferably including the project budget
 - must disclose commercial interest or other possible interest of present or future third parties
 - should include a local institution as partner in research, where an appropriate one exists
 - should consider drawing up a collaborative agreement
 - if such an agreement is made, the researcher should consider depositing a copy of it with a relevant regional/sub regional body
 - should ensure that the actual entity that is directing the research is a party to the agreement whether they are carrying out the work themselves or through contractors
4. **Compensation and Other Terms of Access:** The researcher:
 - must make every effort to ensure that providing communities and counterpart institutions will share equitably in the benefits.
 - shall make every effort to develop effective mechanisms for benefit-sharing, (recognizing that no proven universal methods exist, and that cultural and other circumstances will vary widely from one case to the next).

Parties should arrive at the scope, extent and form of compensation keeping all the following stages in mind.

- when accessing is done
- when a new use is discovered
- when a product is developed
- when commercialization is done

Arrangements for compensation should incorporate the following obligations:

- The community's right to any organism or part thereof extracted by any biotechnological or other method must not be exhausted merely by publication or collection. The community can assign these rights or associated intellectual property rights (IPRs) to anyone it feels appropriate.
- The community has the right to refuse collection by any researcher even after the initial research has shown its utility.
- Any research collecting from an alternative location/community/species/country should take into account the contribution of the original source in generating commercial returns.
- The period of production should be considered to be valid as per the law in force for the property or form of accessed material being commercialized.
- At stage 'b' or 'c' above, researchers must negotiate with the source community the terms of profit-sharing from commercialization, even when knowledge is provided by an emigrant belonging to that community.
- Researchers should consider helping to set up local/community-managed institutional funds or other augmentative mechanisms for local community development in cases where individuals/communities refuse(s) monetary compensation.

5. Professional Societies, Academic institutions and Funding Agencies:

- should encourage citation of intellectual contributions of local innovators, communities and groups
- should ensure sharing in the local language the insights gained from local communities or innovators either by the prior agreement or by the time of publication, or within reasonable time but not beyond one year of publication.
- should help set up a system of registration of innovations/practices so that IPRs of local communities or innovators are not exhausted
- should set up rules of good conduct and practice by researchers
- should recognize, support and reward ethical practices in research
- should set up bioethics committees to protect the rights of researchers, communities and individuals contributing to the conservation of biodiversity.

Source: Suggested Ethical Guidelines for Accessing and Exploring Biodiversity. The Pew Conservation Scholars Initiative. Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics 5 (1995), 38-40.
<http://www.biol.tsukuba.ac.jp/~macer/EJ521.html>

CARE International Program Standards Framework

VISION STATEMENT

We seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. CARE International will be a global force and partner of choice within a world-wide movement dedicated to ending poverty. We will be known everywhere for our unshakeable commitment to the dignity of people.

MISSION STATEMENT

CARE International's mission is to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from our global diversity, resources and experience, we promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility. We facilitate lasting change by:

- Strengthening capacity for self-help
- Providing economic opportunity
- Delivering relief in emergencies

- Influencing policy decisions at all levels
- Addressing discrimination in all its forms

Guided by the aspirations of local communities, we pursue our mission with both excellence and compassion because the people whom we serve deserve nothing less.

In order to fulfil CARE's vision and mission, all of CARE's programming should conform with the following Programming Principles:

- Promote Empowerment
- Work in partnership with others
- Ensure Accountability and Promote Responsibility
- Oppose Discrimination
- Oppose Violence
- Seek Sustainable Results

We hold ourselves accountable for enacting behaviours consistent with these principles, and ask others to help us do so, not only in our programming, but in all that we do. These CARE standards apply to all CARE programming and all forms of interventions.

These standards and accompanying guidelines should be used to guide the work of project designers; as a checklist for approval of project proposals; as a tool for periodic project self-appraisal; and as a part of project evaluation. The emphasis should not be only on enforcement but also on the strengthening of capacity to be able to meet these standards for program quality. At the time of initial approval, if a project can not meet one or more standards, allow for explanation of why, and what will be done about it. More than a "passed/failed" checklist, these call for a description of how well a project meets each standard.

PROJECT STANDARDS

Each CARE project should:

1. Be consistent with the CARE International Programming Principles.
2. Be clearly linked to a Country Office strategy and/or long term program goals.
3. Ensure the active participation and influence of stakeholders in its analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.
4. Have a design that is based on a holistic analysis of the needs and rights of the target population and the underlying causes of their conditions of poverty and social injustice. It should also examine the opportunities and risks inherent in the potential interventions.
5. Use a logical framework that explains how the project will contribute to an ultimate impact upon the lives of members of a defined target population.
6. Set a significant, yet achievable and measurable final goal.
7. Be technically, environmentally, and socially appropriate.
8. Indicate the appropriateness of project costs, in light of the selected project strategies and expected outputs and outcomes.
9. Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan and system based on the logical framework that ensures the collection of baseline, monitoring, and final evaluation data, and anticipates how the information will be used for decision making; with a budget that includes adequate amounts for implementing the monitoring and evaluation plan.
10. Establish a baseline for measuring change in indicators of impact and effect, by conducting a study or survey prior to implementation of project activities.
11. Use indicators that are relevant, measurable, verifiable and reliable.
12. Employ a balance of evaluation methodologies, assure an appropriate level of rigor, and adhere to recognized ethical standards.
13. Be informed by and contribute to ongoing learning within and outside CARE.

Source: CARE International Program Standards. 2003

<http://www.kcenter.com/care/dme/CARE%20Documents%20PDF/CIProgrammeStandardsFramework.pdf>

It is also important to think beyond institutional guidelines. This is reflected the following questions which arose during an electronic discussion on ethics and codes of practices held in 2003 by members of the working group on Participatory Natural Resource Management of the CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis.

- Instead of taking up prescribed guidelines through institutional obligation, could they instead be taken up as a tool or means for improving the quality of participatory science and relationships with stakeholders?
- How can we build capacity of communities by sharing power and so that they can negotiate conditions for giving or not giving consent to researchers
- What does the changing institutional context of research imply for ethics and codes of professional practice?
- Who can we turn to for ethical standards if the conventional organisations of scientific communities disappear and we are left as individuals?
- What can we do to ensure directives on ethics in non-institutionalised research?
- What can we do to bring directives on ethics of knowledge generation into agencies that actually do no research , but who still develop and apply untested 'empirically-derived' norms for their technology development and natural resource exploitation?

In his 2001 discussion paper on “Professional error, critical awareness and good science” Robert Chambers contends that institutional codes abound, while little or no attention has been paid to the dimension of self-reflection. He poses an initial set of ideas for a critical self-reflection "code" in the form of questions that we can ask ourselves in the course of our work as practitioners of participatory research and development:

- What do my disciplinary training, research commitments and career and institutional interests predispose me to look for, see, select, accept, believe and disseminate?
- What am I conversely predisposed to overlook, not notice, reject, and disbelieve?
- What facts, views or simplified ideas have I internalised through selective experiences?
- What have I internalised, simplified and stripped of qualifications through unchallenged repetition?
- Am I disabled by power from being able to learn?
- What would be threatened if I were to change my view?
- What alternative or more nuanced views are there, and who holds them?
- Can I argue their case against mine?
- When I do, does my original view change?

References

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http://www.prgaprogram.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=Web_Links&file=index&req=visit&lid=197