

Session	Session 13 Paper B
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Title of presentation	Ethical research in humanitarian crises
Abstract	<p>The humanitarian principle of impartiality requires that assistance be based on need alone. In order to ascertain needs, and then to assess what types of assistance have been most effective in meeting those needs, we need to gather evidence. In humanitarian crises this is generally done through needs assessments, monitoring and evaluation, and it generally involves collecting information from those we seek to assist – who are often highly vulnerable. In the fast-paced environment of humanitarian crises, the question of whether the collection of this information is ethical is frequently overlooked. For research participants, the consequences can be extremely severe.</p> <p>This paper examines the ethics of research in humanitarian crisis, primarily in the form of assessments, monitoring and evaluation, drawing principally on the personal experiences of the author. The paper first considers the general principles of ethical research (respect, beneficence, research merit and integrity, and justice), and then considers the guidelines that are available to assist humanitarian practitioners in applying these principles. It then examines a number of key considerations requiring particular attention in humanitarian crises: the justificatory threshold (when is and isn't it ethical to conduct research in humanitarian crises, when vulnerabilities are exacerbated and resources must be carefully prioritised); the need to recognise and accommodate the vulnerabilities of research participants; and safety and security. The paper also examines key components of the research process that are particularly important (and frequently overlooked) in humanitarian crises, including the privacy and confidentiality of research participants, informed consent, and feedback to research participants.</p>
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