

Ethical challenges when conducting research in rural, post-conflict areas: experiences from South Sudan

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South Sudan is the world's newest state and due to its conflict-ridden history, it experiences some of the worst human developmental outcomes. Humanitarian organizations are increasingly recognizing the need of evidence-based research to inform policy and programming.

Ethical challenges faced by researchers in the field

- The capacity of the ethics review board to review technical proposals is unknown.
- Language barriers complicate informed consent processes; it is difficult getting native speakers who can translate complex research terms to the local language.
- Lack of qualified translators affects data collection especially during translation as important nuances may be lost.
- Due to low education levels, it is also difficult to find and hire literate research assistants in rural areas.



-Laptops and any type of recording devices are viewed with suspicion and requires special permits to carry.

-Identifiers such as names and tribes is difficult to collect owing to historical issues of ethnic profiling of specific groups thus emphasizing the need for confidentiality.

-In some instances, community gatekeepers are armed actors, making it difficult to discern between coercion and voluntary participation among study participants.

- In South Sudan, study respondents travel long distances to participate in research activities. However they are not reimbursed as it is difficult to balance between reimbursing them for their time and exposure to the study risks and giving them an amount that does not constitute undue influence.