

## DFID ETHICS PRINCIPLES FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

DFID expects the research and evaluation it funds to adhere to the highest standards of integrity. To facilitate this it has drawn up these Principles on ethical practice in research and evaluation. All research and evaluation conducted or funded by DFID (wholly or partially) is expected to uphold these Principles. These Principles should be read in conjunction with DFID's Ethics Guidance for Research and Evaluation.

### PRINCIPLES

**1. Researchers and evaluators are responsible for identifying the need for and securing any necessary ethics approval for the study they are undertaking.** This may be from national or local ethics committees in countries in which the study will be undertaken, or other stakeholder institutions with formal ethics approval systems.

**2. Research and evaluation must be relevant and high quality with clear developmental and practical value.** It must be undertaken to a sufficiently high standard that the findings can be reliably used for their intended purpose. Research should only be undertaken where there is a clear gap in knowledge. Evaluations might also be undertaken to learn lessons to improve future impact, or in order to meet DFID's requirements for accountability.

**3. Researchers and evaluators should avoid harm to participants in studies.** They should ensure that the basic human rights of individuals and groups with whom they interact are protected. This is particularly important with regard to vulnerable people. The wellbeing of researchers/ evaluators working in the field should also be considered and harm minimised.

**4. Participation in research and evaluation should be voluntary and free from external pressure.** Information should not be withheld from prospective participants that might affect their willingness to participate. All participants should have a right to withdraw from research/ evaluation and withdraw any data concerning them at any point without fear of penalty.

**5. Researchers and evaluators should ensure confidentiality of information, privacy and anonymity of study participants.** They should communicate clearly to prospective participants any limits to confidentiality. In cases where unexpected evidence of serious wrong-doing is uncovered (e.g. corruption or abuse) there may be a need to consider whether the normal commitment to confidentiality might be outweighed by the ethical need to prevent harm to vulnerable people. DFID's fraud policy will apply if relevant.

**6. Researchers and evaluators should operate in accordance with international human rights conventions and covenants to which the United Kingdom is a signatory, regardless of local country standards.** They should also take account of local and national laws.

**7. DFID funded research and evaluation should respect cultural sensitivities.** This means researchers need to take account of differences in culture, local behaviour and norms, religious beliefs and practices, sexual orientation, gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity and other social differences such as class when planning studies and communicating findings. DFID should avoid imposing a burden of over-researching particular groups.

**8. DFID is committed to publication and communication of all evaluations and research studies.** Full methodological details and information on who has undertaken a study should be given and messages transmitted should fully and fairly reflect the findings. Where possible, and respecting confidentiality requirements, primary data should be made public to allow secondary analyses.

**9. Research and evaluation should usually be independent of those implementing an intervention or programme under study.** Independence is very important for research and evaluation; in fact evaluations in DFID can only be classified as such where they are led independently. Involvement of stakeholders may be desirable so long as the objectivity of a study is not compromised and DFID is transparent about the roles played. Any potential conflicts of interest that might jeopardise the integrity of the methodology or the outputs of research/ evaluation should be disclosed. If researchers/ evaluators or other stakeholders feel that undue pressure is being put on them by DFID officials, such that their independence has been breached, this should be reported to the Head of Profession for Evaluation who will take appropriate action

**10. All DFID funded research/ evaluation should have particular emphasis on ensuring participation from women and socially excluded groups.** Consideration should be given to how barriers to participation can be removed.