A GLOBAL VIEW

MAPPING ETHICAL DISPARITIES, RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

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A global view: introduction

"The moral earth, too, is round," wrote Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*.

Research activity conducted in, or in partnership with collaborators in, Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) is an area that is significantly under-developed and also an area of increasing political importance to High-Income Countries (HICs). It therefore presents a rare opportunity for researchers in HICs to undertake work that is potentially high in both academic and non-academic impact.

The combination of contrasting and mutually unfamiliar legal/ethical/political frameworks and research infrastructures, and of substantial social/economic/power asymmetries between the partners, brings significant risks in the management of research ethics and ethics review.

Example (A): global supply chain

Background:

Researchers in Wakanda, a HIC, are collaborating with researchers in Ruritania, an LMIC, on an exciting new project. The work is in the biological sciences and the engineering sciences, and has the potential to save thousands of lives. The project draws on work each team have previously conducted in their own countries. Research ethics expectations in Wakanda and in Ruritania are quite different, though. The research teams discover that their earlier work would not have been permitted in each other's country.

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Should the researchers in Wakanda use the results/data from the previously-conducted work from Ruritania? Or vice versa? How important is it that the work could save lives?

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Key concepts:
- Provenance of data / results
- Outsourcing ethically challenging research
- Global supply chain in international research

Example (B): ethics and the law

Background:

A research team from Wakanda, a HIC, want to conduct research in Ruritania, an LMIC, on an activity/community that is legal in Wakanda but illegal in Ruritania. The work is in the humanities and social sciences, and has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life of thousands. The research project is designed to protect the anonymity or confidentiality of the participants in Ruritania, and it passes ethics review in Wakanda.

Example (B): ethics and the law

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Challenge:

Should the researchers from Wakanda conduct this work in Ruritania? What if the roles were reversed? How important is it that the work could improve people's lives?

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Key concepts:

- Ethical obligations and legal obligations
- Ethical relativism and national sovereignty

Workshop objectives and key issues for group discussion

Workshop objectives

i) Approaches for developing ethical practice/culture, not just ethics review processes.

ii) Mechanisms for seeking parity in international development, so partners learn from each other.

iii) Transform risks into opportunities.

iv) Identify interventions can we make, or influence we can exercise, as research professionals or associations.

Workshop objectives and key issues for group discussion

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Key issues for group discussion

1) that the rights and dignity of research participants are misunderstood or otherwise not upheld
2) that the rights and dignity of researchers are misunderstood or otherwise not upheld
3) that the unintended consequences of the research do more harm than good

Group discussion 1

Workshop objectives

i) Approaches for developing ethical practice/culture, not just ethics review processes.

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Group discussion 2

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Group discussion 3

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Group feedback

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Next steps

Resource:

- Library of case studies?
- Network to exchange/develop good practice?
- Your suggestions…

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