



International
Labour
Organization

▶ Ethical guidelines for research on forced labour



- ▶ **Ethical guidelines for research on forced labour**

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2023
First published 2023



This is an open access work distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Users can reuse, share, adapt and build upon the original work, as detailed in the License. The ILO must be clearly credited as the owner of the original work. The use of the emblem of the ILO is not permitted in connection with users' work.

Attribution – The work must be cited as follows: *Ethical guidelines for research on forced labour*, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2023.

Translations – In case of a translation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: *This translation was not created by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and should not be considered an official ILO translation. The ILO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation.*

Adaptations – In case of an adaptation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: *This is an adaptation of an original work by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Responsibility for the views and opinions expressed in the adaptation rests solely with the author or authors of the adaptation and are not endorsed by the ILO.*

This CC license does not apply to non-ILO copyright materials included in this publication. If the material is attributed to a third party, the user of such material is solely responsible for clearing the rights with the right holder.

Any dispute arising under this license that cannot be settled amicably shall be referred to arbitration in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). The parties shall be bound by any arbitration award rendered as a result of such arbitration as the final adjudication of such a dispute.

All queries on rights and licensing should be addressed to the ILO Publishing Unit (Rights and Licensing), 1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email to rights@ilo.org.

ISBN 978-92-2-039610-0 (pdf web)

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the ILO of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

Information on ILO publications and digital products can be found at: www.ilo.org/publns.

Funding for this publication is provided by the United States Department of Labor under cooperative agreement number IL-30147-16-75-K-11 (MAP16 project). 100 per cent of the total costs of the MAP project is financed with Federal funds, for a total of US\$23,945,000.

Statements in this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Acknowledgements | VI |
| Abbreviations | VII |
| Glossary | VIII |
| Key icons | XI |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Background, rationale and objectives | 1 |
| Principles behind the guidelines | 2 |
| Audience for the guidelines | 3 |
| Structure of the document | 3 |
| Part 1. Research design | 5 |
| Guiding Question 1. What is an ethical and safety protocol for research? | 7 |
| Guiding Question 2. Which local organizations and other stakeholders, including at-risk populations and survivors, are beneficial to advise on the safe and ethical conduct of the study and ensure reliable referral resources are in place? | 8 |
| Guiding Question 3. What conflict-related, sector-specific, or population-specific local risks arise during a study, and what ethical or safety concerns might they pose for study participants or researchers? | 12 |
| Guiding Question 4. What are the benefits and challenges of obtaining local ethical review and approval? | 16 |
| Guiding Question 5. What sampling and access challenges create ethical concerns, and how can they be addressed? | 17 |
| Guiding Question 6. What are the benefits, risks and opportunities related to participatory or co-produced research? | 19 |
| Guiding Question 7. What ethical concerns and practices relate to research design and study instruments? | 24 |
| Part 2. Research implementation and data collection | 27 |
| Guiding Question 8. What are key concerns and good practices for informed consent? | 28 |
| Guiding Question 9. What ethical concerns are associated with the recruitment, screening and training of research team members? | 33 |
| Guiding Question 10. What safeguarding and protection concerns might arise during fieldwork, and what obligations and limits arise related to participant assistance? | 37 |
| Guiding Question 11. What are ethical risks and safe practices during fieldwork for research team members? | 42 |
| Part 3. Data analysis, interpretation, reporting and dissemination | 47 |
| Guiding Question 12. What are the ethical and safety concerns related to data entry, analysis and interpretation of findings? | 48 |
| Guiding Question 13. What are the ethical obligations related to dissemination and follow-up with communities and stakeholders? | 50 |
| Conclusion | 53 |
| References | 56 |
| Appendix: Methodology | 58 |

▶ Acknowledgements

These guidelines were developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Samuel Hall (N. Majidi, K. James, and H. Dayri), and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (C. Zimmerman and N. Kyegombe), under the supervision and coordination of Maria Gabriella Breglia (Research and Evaluation Unit – ILO FUNDAMENTALS).

The authors are particularly grateful to the members of the International Advisory Board of the MAP16 and RTA projects¹ for the valuable inputs and guidance provided in the development of these guidelines.

¹ The ILO projects [MAP16](#) (Measurement, awareness-raising and policy engagement to accelerate action against child labour and forced labour) and [RTA](#) (From research to action: Using knowledge to accelerate progress in the elimination of child labour and forced labour) have established the International Advisory Board (IAB) to provide guidance to key research activities to address child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking issues. The IAB consists of technical experts from the ILO, international organizations, workers' and employers' organizations, USDOL, Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder countries, national statistical offices, INGOs and the research community.

▶ Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------------|
| IAB | International Advisory Board |
| FLEX | Focus on Labour Exploitation |
| FPAR | Feminist Participatory Action Research |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| NSO | National Statistics Office |

► Glossary

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Academic misconduct | Any action which gains, attempts or gain, or assists others in gaining or attempting to gain unfair academic advantage. ² Academic misconduct can take several forms, including plagiarism, the deliberate misinterpretation or fabrication of data, or deliberate bias in reporting findings. |
| Anonymity | This refers to situations in which someone's name is not given or known. ³ It means that either the research does not collect identifying information on individuals (such as the name or address) or that individual responses cannot be linked with participants' identities. ⁴ |
| Confidentiality | A condition in which the researcher knows the identity of a research subject but takes steps to protect that identity from being discovered by others. ⁵ A confidential participant is known by the researcher, but their identity is disguised in the research report. |
| Conflict of interest | This refers to situations in which someone cannot make a fair decision because they will be affected by the result. ⁶ Research can be influenced by people or organizations, and conflicts can occur when there are expectations about the research findings, when organizations deliberately select sample populations to influence results, or when the data collection and analysis is influenced by personal relationships. |
| Dependency | A situation in which you need something or someone and are unable to continue normally without them. ⁷ In the case of research, this refers to research participants who develop a relationship with the researcher whereby they depend on them for information, safety, or advice. Dependency may occur when research participants develop expectations that the researcher can help them, for example to find a better job or to escape an exploitative relationship. |
| Forced labour | According to the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), forced labour is "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily." ⁸ Forced labour may be imposed by the state, by private companies ⁹ or by individuals on both adults and children |

² University of Cambridge, "Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct", available at: <https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/what-academic-misconduct>.

³ University of Cambridge, "Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct".

⁴ Endicott College, "What Is the Difference between Anonymity and Confidentiality?", available at: <https://www.endicott.edu/about/research-at-endicott/institutional-review-board-irb/what-is-the-difference-between-anonymity-and-confidentiality#:~:text=Anonymity%3A%20Providing%20anonymity%20of%20information,individual%20responses%20with%20participants%20identities>.

⁵ Endicott College, "What Is the Difference between Anonymity and Confidentiality?"

⁶ University of Cambridge, "A Conflict of Interest", available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conflict-of-interest>.

⁷ University of Cambridge, "Dependency", available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dependency>.

⁸ Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

⁹ ILO, Guidelines Concerning the Measurement of Forced Labour (2018).

in a variety of sectors, including agriculture, construction and domestic work. Forced labour may take different forms, such as bonded labour, trafficking for forced labour, forced commercial exploitation and forced begging. Forced labour and exploitation are not interchangeable terms. Forced labour differs from exploitative employment situations, such as those characterized by extremely low wages and substandard working conditions.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Migrant worker | A migrant worker, as defined in ILO instruments such as the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), ¹⁰ is someone who migrates or has migrated from one country to another in search of employment. |
| Positionality | Social or political influences that might push the researcher to personally interpret findings in a particular way. |
| Power relations | In interpersonal interaction, the relative status, power, and/or dominance of the participants, reflected in whether expectations and behaviour are reciprocal, and consequently in communicative style. ¹¹ Several factors, including wealth, gender, education, and country of origin, may shape these differences. |
| Research integrity | The standards expected of a researcher in ensuring that the research findings are valid, reliable, and free of bias. |
| Trafficking for forced labour | A person trafficked for forced labour is a victim of a form of crime in which the victim is recruited, transported, transferred, or harboured or received by certain means, including coercion, deception or abuse of vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation in forced labour. When the victim is a minor, the means are irrelevant. ¹² |
| Victims and survivors | The use of the term “victim” for those in forced labour situations or in human trafficking has legal implications, suggesting the guilt of a perpetrator. While the term “victim” denotes legal rights, the term “survivor” is often preferred over victim, as it points to empowerment and grants agency. ¹³ |
| Vulnerability | The conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes that increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards. ¹⁴ |

¹⁰ Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143).

¹¹ Oxford Reference, “Overview: Power Relations”, available at: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100341187;jsessionid=184F42772EB0A6565BFB4C77DC9B2FB4>.

¹² ILO, Guidelines Concerning the Measurement of Forced Labour (2018).

¹³ Kaitlin M. Boyle and Kimberly B. Rogers, “Beyond the Rape ‘Victim’–‘Survivor’ Binary: How Race, Gender, and Identity Processes Interact to Shape Distress,” Sociological Forum 35, No. 2 (2020).

¹⁴ United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction, “Vulnerability”, available at: <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/vulnerability#:~:text=The%20conditions%20determined%20by%20physical,to%20the%20impacts%20of%20hazards.>

▶ Key icons



National statistics office: case studies



Questions to ask yourself as the researcher, ideas or tools



Case study



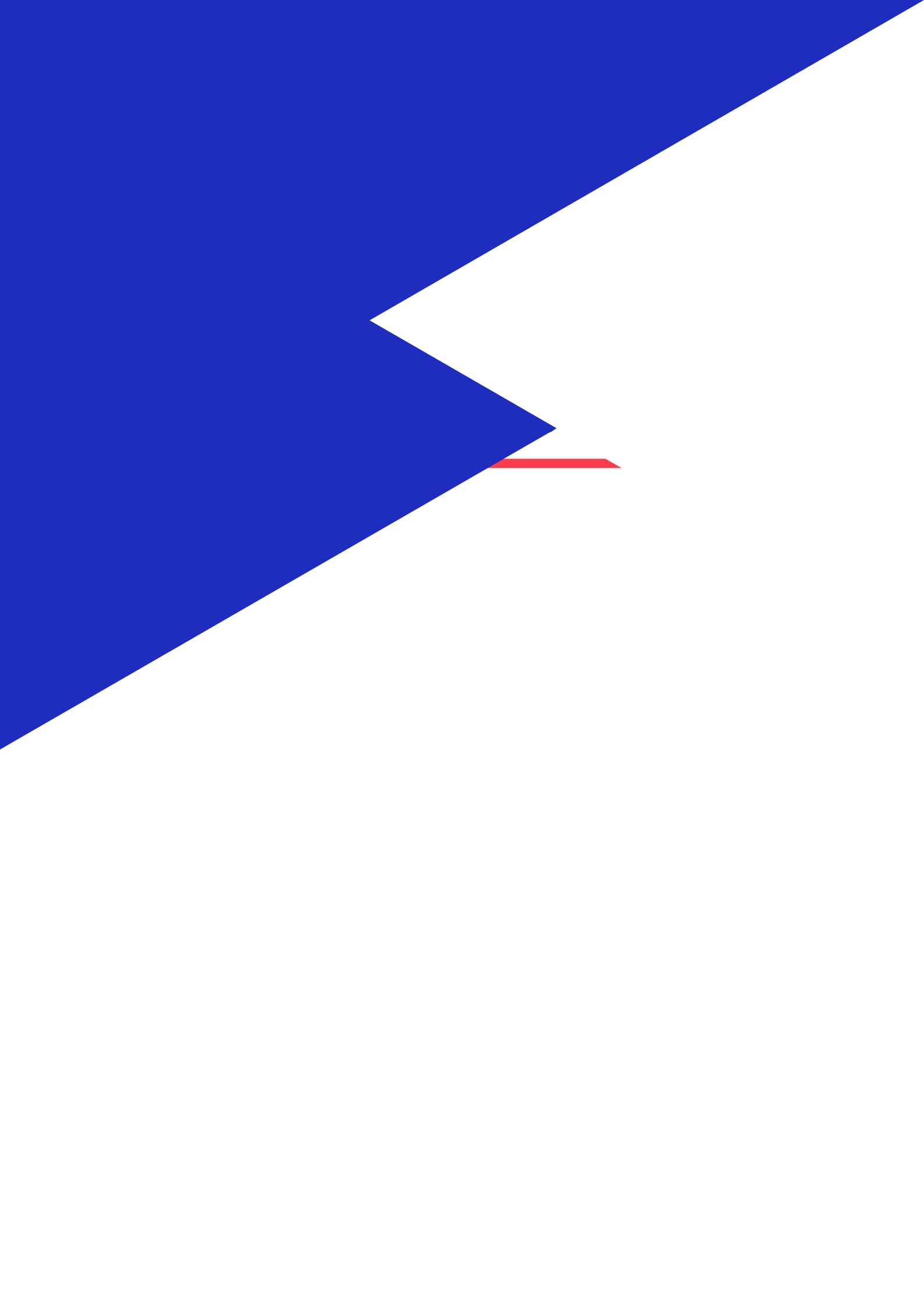
Checklist



Actions



How



Introduction

► Background, rationale and objectives

For researchers studying individuals at risk of, involved in, or previously involved in forced labour, data can contribute to an improved understanding of different forms of forced labour, including state-imposed forced labour, privately imposed forced labour, bonded labour, trafficking for forced labour, and forced commercial sexual exploitation (ILO 2018).

When researching forced labour, the target group is generally a population that has been exposed to or is at risk of exploitation. Trafficking for forced labour involves situations in which traffickers coerce, deceive or exploit victims to recruit, transport, transfer, harbour or receive them for the purpose of performing forced labour. Research on forced labour often relies on methods to study people who are marginalized and difficult to reach. Study methods must take account of the potential risks of harm that study participants may face from their family, traffickers, state institutions and the media. The study methods applied also depend on the status of the participant in question – if they are at risk of forced labour (before), a current victim of forced labour (during), or a survivor (after). To address the ethical and safety challenges associated with researching forced labour, it is important for everyone on the research team to understand the potential risks that study participants might encounter by participating in a study, as well as the potential risks for the research team members themselves.

At the most basic level of ethical research, researchers must adhere to the principle of “do no harm”. This means ensuring that study participants are not worse off for having participated in the research. Research has the potential to improve the circumstances for individual study participants and for the wider population by ensuring findings are used to reduce risks of forced labour and trafficking and respond to survivor needs.

These guidelines are intended to be used for research with adults. For guidelines on research on child labour, including forced labour of children, please refer to the Ethical Guidelines for Research on Child Labour.

While there has been growing attention to the ethical obligations associated with research on forced labour, there remains a need for standardized principles of practice. Conducting research on sensitive issues such as forced labour calls for careful attention to key ethical and safety considerations to protect study participants and interviewers and to produce and use findings that will benefit the affected communities. Safeguarding and protection protocols for research on forced labour require strategies that are specifically designed for (a) individuals who are at risk of forced labour; and (b) those who are being or have been harmed by various forms of forced labour. Research can potentially expose

individuals to further risk of harm simply through eliciting their participation in a study. For example, if a participant is seen talking to “outsiders”, traffickers may punish the individual. Incorporating ethical practices within the research is essential to keep study participants safe and ultimately improves the quality of data collected.

The aim of this document is to provide guidelines on the safe and ethical conduct of research on forced labour and human trafficking for forced labour. This guidance is designed to help researchers to:

- ▶ identify ethical issues with research involving exploited individuals;
- ▶ provide user-friendly guidance to protect the safety of study participants and researchers and simultaneously strengthen research quality of the study.

▶ Principles behind the guidelines

Researching exploited individuals requires an understanding of their circumstances and factors that might increase their risk of being exposed to harm, plus their exposure to traumatic events. Further, it is important to take account of the cultural, political, social and economic context, which can affect risks related to the research. It is incumbent on the research team to work proactively to assess and mitigate risks of harm and implement measures to protect study participants, research team members and the community that is under study.

This ethical and safety guidance is intended to help research teams to conduct qualitative and quantitative studies in ways that minimize potential harm to study participants and to research team members, that go beyond the “do no harm” principle, and that maximize the potential benefits of the research to study participants.

Research-related risks can arise – and mitigation efforts have to be implemented – at each stage of a study, including study design, recruitment processes, fieldwork and data analysis methods, and dissemination of the findings. Researchers must also consider imbalance of power between a researcher and those being researched and consider approaches to address it.

There are several fundamental principles to consider when preparing an ethical research project:

- ▶ respect each research participant’s autonomy and decision-making and protect those with different capacities;
- ▶ apply informed consent procedures that ensure research study participants clearly understand the study and provide their consent without any duress, inducement or pressure;
- ▶ ensure ethical and safety protocols are guided by the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence, which requires researchers to maximize the benefit of the research and minimize potential risks of harm, including physical, legal, economic, psychological or social harms to study participants and researchers;
- ▶ ensure equitable treatment of study participants throughout the study, including in the data analysis, interpretation and dissemination stages;
- ▶ maintain confidentiality and data protection to ensure that study participants’ identities are concealed;
- ▶ ensure that research methods are transparent and that findings faithfully represent an unbiased and accurate interpretation of the data without causing harm to the study population.

▶ Audience for the guidelines

The guidelines are designed for use by a range of researchers, including teams from national statistics offices (NSOs), local and international research institutes, and individual researchers. They are designed to inform ethical protocols for both qualitative and quantitative work. While the guidance assumes that the research will be conducted with data collected from persons potentially affected by or at risk of forced labour rather than with secondary data analyses or with data collected from policymakers or programme staff, principles within the guidance can also apply to research on forced labour more generally.

▶ Structure of the document

The overall guidelines consist of three parts, each associated with the research phases.

- 1. Research design.** This section, which includes study preparation, aims to outline key ethical issues for researchers to consider when setting up a study on forced labour. This includes local partnerships, local ethical review and approval, and sampling and access challenges for vulnerable populations.
- 2. Research implementation and data collection.** This section, which includes processes for study instruments, data analysis, interpretation and validation, aims to highlight the key ethical questions that researchers should consider during the data collection phase, including the recruitment, screening and training of study participants, as well as safeguarding and protection during fieldwork.
- 3. Data analysis, interpretation, reporting and dissemination.** This section aims to help researchers consider key ethical issues related to data entry, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of findings among communities and stakeholders.

The guidelines are structured with essential guiding questions, as well as other key questions that researchers should consider when carrying out the different phases of a study. These questions are followed by a checklist of suggested actions and illustrative case studies. Specifically, each section of the guidance includes the following.

- ▶ **Guiding questions** that should be considered in all studies, alongside recommendations and checklist items.
- ▶ **Other key questions** to consider based on context-specific and population-specific concerns and dilemmas – which may not be relevant for all research. These are included as numbered questions under each broad guiding question.
- ▶ **Checklists** of recommended actions and tools to help practitioners decide what steps to take to ensure that research is safe and ethical.
- ▶ **Illustrative case studies** are included throughout the document where relevant and represent different ethical dilemmas and scenarios, with suggested strategies. Case studies are specific to trafficked or forced labour populations and cover people at risk, current victims and survivors. They can be used for training curricula, for example those developed by research leads and NSOs.

These guidelines apply to forced labour overall, but some specific ethical considerations are needed when conducting research on specific forms of state-imposed forced labour, such as prison labour or among conscripts and members of the armed forces. Forms of forced labour such as bonded labour, trafficking for forced labour, and forced commercial exploitation are discussed in these guidelines. Additionally, examples are provided of forced labour in different sectors, including domestic work and agriculture.



Part 1.

Research design

This first section includes guidance on ethics considerations during the research design phase. The guiding questions in this section cover the following topics: (a) ethical and safety protocols for research; (b) establishing local partnerships to advise on safe and ethical referral resources; (c) assessing local risks posed for study participants and researchers; (d) assessing the benefits and challenges associated with obtaining local ethical review and approval; (e) considering sampling and access challenges that create ethics concerns; (f) identifying the benefits, risks and opportunities related to participatory research; and (g) considering risks potentially associated with different research approaches.



▶ Research design and ethical considerations checklist

Establish ethical and safety protocol

- ▶ Draw on previous ethical and safety protocols from studies conducted in the country, in similar contexts or on related subjects.
- ▶ Adapt all protocols to the local context to the appropriate extent, ideally with the help of local partners whenever it is possible.

Establish local partnerships and referral mechanisms

- ▶ Engage local partners from the start and establish partnerships with relevant groups, including to recruit local researchers.
- ▶ Ensure trustworthy referral resources are in place.
- ▶ Map the positive and negative implications of different partnerships, especially government involvement in the research.
- ▶ Budget for all aspects of partnerships throughout all research study phases.



Assess risks within populations and establish safeguarding processes

- ▶ Consider which stage of forced labour (before, during, after) raises specific ethical issues within the particular context of study and select research targets.
- ▶ Develop safeguarding and protection mechanisms that account for key risks within the research context.
- ▶ Adapt safety and ethical protocols to the local context, research-specific topics, and population-specific characteristics, which should be approved by country-level ethical review boards.
- ▶ Consider the recruitment of study participants, and interview location and duration.
- ▶ Involve local advisers to seek feedback on the study design, methods and participant protection mechanisms.
- ▶ Provide the research team with training and information on referral practices for study participants who need assistance or are in danger.
- ▶ Ensure that consent guidelines secure study participants' understanding of (a) their right to ask questions and stop the interview at any time; (b) the content and purpose of the interview; and (c) the ways in which the data will be used.

Get approval from an ethical review board

- ▶ Submit and obtain approval for ethical review from a formal institutional or governmental ethical review board within the study country.
- ▶ Establish a local ethical review committee if no other national authority is available.

Establish an ethical sampling strategy

- ▶ Engage with a local advisory committee or local representatives of the sample group.
- ▶ Consider recruitment processes or how study participants will be safely and confidentially invited to participate.
- ▶ Consider where study participants will be interviewed, the length of time, and the effects these choices might have on their safety, anonymity, childcare needs or income.
- ▶ Consider options for involving study participants in the analysis and recommendations and ways to present the study findings to participants.

Consider the benefits, risks and opportunities in research

- ▶ Outline the roles and responsibilities of all researchers
- ▶ Provide formal training and support to local co-researchers.
- ▶ Strengthen relationships with local collaborators to foster cooperation.
- ▶ Include survivors of forced labour amongst stakeholders consulted and include them in the research process.
- ▶ Consult local actors to determine appropriate compensation levels and types.

Assess ethical concerns related to research study instruments

- ▶ Determine the contextual, sector-specific and population-related risks, and especially protective measures at each of the study sites.
- ▶ Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different data collection approaches and possible risk reduction measures.
- ▶ Consider question content and weigh the importance of the information collected via sensitive questions against the risks to the study participants.
- ▶ Include warning phrases before sensitive questions.
- ▶ Use non-accusatory phrasing of questions.



Guiding Question 1.

What is an ethical and safety protocol for research?

Every study must adhere to a written ethical and safety protocol that either accompanies or is built into the study design document. This ethical guidance document, drafted for researchers conducting fieldwork, should describe the main protective strategies for study participants and research team members throughout each study phase. The most effective ethical protocol, and one more likely to be approved by a local ethics board, needs to be locally informed. While research teams must invest more time and incur a higher cost to develop and seek approval for an effective ethics protocol, these resources are necessary to maintain the highest standard of safety and protection for both the study participants and the research team.

The inclusion of a quality country-level ethical review and approval can assist in the development of a well-informed research ethics and safety protocol and give the research team and project both local and international credibility. Ethics approval also ensures that results will be eligible for publication in peer-reviewed journals – which is increasingly a prerequisite for publication.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Provide clear and detailed instructions within the ethical and safety protocols for members of the research team on how to ensure the safe and respectful conduct of the study, protect participant security, and monitor the safety of the research team.
- ▶ Ensure the ethics protocol is reviewed by all members of the research advisory team.
- ▶ Adequately account for the development of the ethical and safety protocol when setting the research timeline and delivery milestones.



▶ How

- ▶ Draw on previous ethical and safety protocols from studies conducted in the country, in similar contexts, or on related subjects.
- ▶ Adapt all protocols to the local context, with the help of local partners.



▶ National Statistics office: case study. Local universities as ethical reviewers

In Country P, the NSO has partnered with faculty members at local universities for review of study tools used in research on forced labour. They often act as ethical reviewers of survey questionnaires, given their knowledge of the local context, including who is most at risk of forced labour, people currently engaged in forced labour, and survivors in communities.



Guiding Question 2.

Which local organizations and other stakeholders, including at-risk populations and survivors, are beneficial to advise on the safe and ethical conduct of the study and ensure reliable referral resources are in place?

During the research design, research teams should examine which local stakeholders – including at-risk populations and survivors of forced labour – would be useful to include. This includes establishing partnerships with key stakeholders, such as service organizations and local experts, which will require involving them from the beginning and determining what types of speciality expertise is required. This section also contains guidance on how to determine whether governments should be involved in research, as well as questions of data ownership.

How can partnerships be established with local stakeholders?

Local partners, such as service organizations and local experts, are an essential resource who can advise on foundational evidence and contextual knowledge to inform research on forced labour. Local stakeholders can serve as, or help identify, viable options for referral services and provide accurate guidance for the safe and ethical conduct of a study, depending on whether the target population concerns those at risk, victims, or survivors of forced labour practices. For example, migrant workers from certain countries might be more at risk of being exploited in the textile industry of Country B. Establishing partnerships with community-based services is particularly important, as they can serve as reliable sources of assistance for study participants in need of care, including services such as security and protection, safe accommodation, health care, legal aid or social services, and employment services.



► Actions

- Engage local partners, as well as those at risk and survivors of forced labour, in research design from the beginning.
- Establish local partnerships with trade unions, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, civil society organizations, employers' organizations, local authorities, and – where possible and safe – those at risk of forced labour and survivors.
- Check whether national referral mechanisms exist and assess their reliability. If they do not exist or are unreliable, establish referral mechanisms to community-based services to serve as sources of assistance for those involved in the study.
- Include international and national partners based on expertise and on-the-ground presence.



► How

- Determine which actors have solid local knowledge and a good reputation.
- Set up study advisory groups or research co-production partners.
- Create a list of referral services, including shelters, psychosocial care, legal aid, health services, and trustworthy law enforcement contacts. Guidance on developing referral systems during the fieldwork is included under Guiding Question 10.
- Use organizational capacity assessment tools to vet partners (USAID 2016).
- Develop terms of reference for international and national partners.

What types of local organizations and stakeholders, including survivors of forced labour, can help ensure the ethical conduct of a study? How can local partnerships foster good communications with and support for study participants?

Local mapping and consultation should identify the groups or individuals who are able to offer reliable information, can provide high-quality services, and can help determine local ethical and safety risks associated with various study designs related to research concerning those at risk, victims or survivors of forced labour.

Local partners can foster good communication with at-risk individuals, people currently engaged in forced labour and survivors. They can also help facilitate safe access to study participants, and can connect study participants to potential care options that are appropriate. Partners should be carefully selected based on whether the study focuses on people at risk (before forced labour occurs), people currently engaged in forced labour (during), or survivors of forced labour (after). For example, appropriate partners for research studies on populations at risk of forced labour – such as potential migrant workers in countries of origin – could be engaged in preventive measures, such as information and awareness campaigns. Local partners often have knowledge of potential risks and the experience to confer safely with potential study participants in vulnerable situations, for example when those currently engaged in or survivors of forced labour fear being treated as criminals if they self-identify during a study.

Selecting a local partner to help with the ethical conduct of a study depends on the focus of the study – including what stage of forced labour the study covers, the characteristics of the study participants and the context. For example, studies involving potential and current victims of forced labour are likely to benefit from the involvement of trusted local trade unions, trafficking survivor representatives, survivor services, and government representatives within the ministries of labour and occasionally within law enforcement.

What are approaches to fostering ethical, inclusive local research input and guidance?

The principles to follow when inviting research partners are threefold: (a) involve advisers from the beginning to the end – from the design phase to the dissemination phase; (b) promote equal participation and an open dialogue amongst all partners – public, private, civil society and government; and (c) share information and technical skills and include bilateral capacity-building activities to improve ethical research on forced labour. Advisers are individuals who are technical experts on the topic or context of the research study. Advisers should be able to provide well-informed guidance about the study subject or demonstrate strong expertise based on previous on-the-ground experience. Some service-oriented partners may also be positioned to respond to the need of study participants, and potentially research team members, for protection, and may be able to utilize or help communicate the study findings. The collaboration terms should ensure that all partners, including international organizations, national agencies and local groups, take part equally in decision-making processes, contributing their various strengths and expertise related to the study. Lastly, building capacity is an important element of sustainability – and a crucial element to supporting research over the long term.

What types of specialty expertise from partners might be needed?

Forced labour research often requires assistance from specialists in different fields. Local partners may be able to provide expertise or assistance related to the following areas, for example:

- **Protection and security** – to ensure study participants have options to protect them from harm, including problems from traffickers, current or former employers, acquaintances or family members.
- **Legal information and action** – to strengthen the governance and regulatory landscape or refer to legal service providers for legal assistance.
- **Health** – to provide or advise on medical and public health services to support the health needs of at-risk populations, current victims, and survivors of forced labour.
- **Psychology** – to support the psychosocial well-being of research study participants, including providing referrals to mental health counsellors as needed or appropriate.
- **Business and economic transformation** – to break down supply chains to pinpoint how business and economic actors can better identify forced labour within these systems at the national, multinational and global levels, including preventing forced labour amongst at-risk populations.
- **Advocacy** – governmental and non-governmental global actors can use their platforms to engage in wider outreach and advocacy related to the prevention of forced labour, as well as support for current victims and survivors. They should be included in the study's advisory group and initial design.



► Case study: Identifying local partnerships to implement counter trafficking strategies

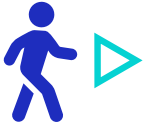
Labour shortages in destination countries can lead to increased human trafficking from origin countries. For example, human trafficking trends in Country A have changed from a focus on women involved in commercial sex work to the involvement of both men and women in various forms of bonded labour overseas. Trade union federations offer specialized knowledge to better identify forced labour trends and provide those affected – including both those populations who are most at risk of being targeted by traffickers, and current and former victims of trafficking - with targeted aid.

In Country A, a federation of trade unions has ensured that current victims of forced labour can be identified and supported. They have been using their research in specific sectors – agriculture, brick kilns, and domestic work in Country A – to identify affected families and provide them with housing grants and rehabilitation programmes to free them from their labour bondage.

The trade union federation has used a human trafficking assessment tool to assess legal frameworks in compliance with international trafficking protocols, to enable local stakeholders to design and implement counter-trafficking strategies to prevent trafficking of vulnerable populations, and to monitor progress to eliminate human trafficking. It considers the legal landscape of the country and provides information on the status of efforts to combat human trafficking. Through these assessments in Country A, this federation has been able to identify organizations working for women's rights in order to prevent trafficking in persons, as well as counselling centres able to provide information for current and former victims of trafficking.

Should governments be involved in research?

Research can benefit from government involvement by identifying government representatives who are most informed and most influential in labour-related matters. However, it is important to consider the breadth, limits, benefits and potential challenges of the government's role in research. These considerations are particularly important when the research involves current victims or survivors, who may not feel at ease with government representatives.



► Actions

- Assess the capacity, goals, and research intentions of potential local government advisers. Consider the positive and potential negative implications of their involvement in the research.
- Ensure researchers secure government authorization to conduct the research, including through an in-country institutional review board, if applicable.
- Assess the risk of potential conflicts amongst government entities and clarify roles at the outset of the research.



► How

- Assess and map the risks and benefits of working with government advisers.
- Develop a checklist containing specific steps on how to involve government on forced labour prior to enrolling public advisers.
- Develop terms of reference for government partners and advisers.

What will be the extent and limits of participation of government representatives?

The government is one of the key actors in addressing forced labour and their involvement can help ensure that research results are taken up by policies and interventions – both preventive, and designed to identify current victims of forced labour and support survivors. Government advisers are often well placed to identify and address local needs, such as survivor services. Central government representatives are also well situated to address national policy and budgeting matters.

How might the government influence the conduct or results of the study?

Governments can both positively and negatively influence the implementation or results of a given study on forced labour. Governments may support an ethical study by helping to identify, prevent and mitigate risks. However, governments can also hamper research, especially if study findings are likely to be unflattering or have controversial policy implications. To determine how to involve government advisers, it is useful to consider the following points.

- **Source of data to inform research design.** Government advisers can facilitate access to information, such as records of forced labour collected through labour inspections in specific sectors or census information. They act as a valuable source of data, which can contribute to the study's research design, including the selection of sampling. The involvement of the government in data-sharing should be formally addressed in the terms of reference before the commencement of the research.

- ▶ **Sampling.** Governments may have lists of companies or individuals previously identified as using forced labour – including domestic and international companies identified who recruit in certain communities. These lists can provide greater detail on forced labour in specific sectors and locations, and amongst different populations.
- ▶ **Independence.** State actors can also block access to specific sectors and may want to influence the scope or focus of the study. The independence of the research should be clarified with government representatives from the start.

Who owns the data?

The research team should discuss data ownership and use prior to the start of the study. Key discussion questions can include the following.

- ▶ Will one or several research teams own and be responsible for the data?
- ▶ Will the donor have partial ownership of the data?
- ▶ Will the data be made public?
- ▶ Who will have access to and use of the data?
- ▶ Where will the data be stored, how, and for how long?

These questions should encourage discussions on data anonymity and security, promises made to study participants during the informed consent process, and open-access research. Research teams are advised to make decisions about data ownership based on principles of equity and inclusion. To the extent feasible, individuals and groups who can use the data for policies, programming or research should have fair access to the data, with particular care taken to maintain the privacy and security of research study participants (Lee-Ibarra 2021).

Where researchers identify study participants who need assistance, the team should develop a referral system so their data are shared in a proportionate and timely manner with relevant groups in a way that does not put the participant at risk.



Guiding Question 3.

What conflict-related, sector-specific, or population-specific local risks arise during a study, and what ethical or safety concerns might they pose for study participants or researchers?

The research design should assess the potential risks of the research to the research study participants and whether it is necessary to collect data. This includes selecting the target group to study – including evaluating whether certain stages of forced labour pose more risk than others within the context of the research study. The ethical guidelines should be informed by this assessment and should try to mitigate unintended effects of the research activities.

How should target groups be identified and selected?

When determining sampling, the question of selecting the target group for the research should be addressed during the research design phase. Research on forced labour can include participants who are (a) at risk (that is, research on populations at risk of exploitation); (b) currently in situations of forced labour (that is, research on decent work); or (c) survivors of forced labour (for example, research on returning migrants previously in forced labour situations).

If implementing research with current victims of forced labour in a given sector raises ethical or safety issues, then the research design should be changed to collect the information from survivors instead of current victims. Similarly, selecting family members of current migrant workers at risk of forced labour as a target group for a research study on forced labour may also raise specific ethical issues – especially if the group in question is at risk of forced labour due to specific family members (that is, potential victims of trafficking whose family members are encouraging and even facilitating this practice).



► Actions

- Identify and select the appropriate target groups for the study during the design phase.



► How

- Consider which stage of forced labour (before, during, after) raises specific ethical issues within the particular context of study.
- Revise the research design in order to limit the research to target groups that are not put at risk by the research.

What are the risks of stigmatizing or further marginalizing the individuals or groups under study?

What are common individual vulnerabilities?

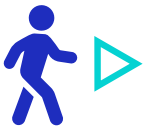
It is common for individuals to be vulnerable to harm in multiple ways. This suggests the need for an ethical protocol that offers guidance for “intersectional” risks, such as those related to socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or religion (Bauer et al. 2021). Conflict and humanitarian crises may also compound existing vulnerabilities. For example, where ethnic tension plays a role in a conflict, study participants identified with ethnic minority groups are often placed at a higher risk of harm.

Individual vulnerabilities are likely to vary depending on the form of forced labour. For example, the risks posed to individual adults in forced labour for commercial sexual exploitation differ from the risks posed to those who are forcibly recruited by military groups. Similarly, certain populations may be more at risk of finding themselves in situations of forced labour. For instance, perpetrators of forced labour may target adults in vulnerable conditions, often by promising employment. The aspects of vulnerability should be understood prior to the start of research to ensure the research team has designed an appropriate protocol for the location and population.

How might laws and policies protect or inadvertently marginalize individuals or groups?

To address unequal power relationships that can arise in research between researchers and study participants, it is helpful to consider the ways in which people are legally or systematically marginalized, disempowered, and excluded before, during, and after forced labour has occurred – and to approach the research design with a view to upholding the dignity of beneficiary groups to the greatest extent possible.

Research teams should first ask the participant whether they would prefer to be interviewed by a man or a woman, if both options are available. The research team should also consider preferences related to language or cultural practices, and accommodations related to the physical and mental well-being of the study participant. A specialist or victim service provider, such as a non-governmental organization, can often provide specific interview training procedures for research staff members.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Assess risks – specific to populations, sectors, local power dynamics and inequalities.
- ▶ Examine the ways in which individuals or groups under study are affected by local conflicts and humanitarian crises.
- ▶ Develop safeguarding and protection mechanisms when working with disadvantaged and marginalized populations.



▶ How

- ▶ Identify aspects of vulnerability within the cultural context, including social constructions and cultural interpretations that might create risks while conducting the research.
- ▶ Be aware of legal restrictions and protections. Perform an analysis of local legal frameworks to assess the transposition of international standards into domestic norms.
- ▶ Include the voices of impacted communities in the research process.
- ▶ Create a safeguarding protocol during the design phase and train research teams on safeguarding (including data management and protection), implement safeguarding protocols with external partners, and ensure that the protocol is reviewed regularly throughout the research process.



► Case study. Male trafficking victims and survivors

In Country A, men who have been trafficked often choose not to report their experiences to the police or to government agencies for fear of being stigmatized as failed migrants or “weak” men, and deny being victims. Additionally, although many men in Country A experienced abuse related to transnational labour trafficking, the government’s efforts have mainly focused on female victims and survivors of trafficking. This neglect increases men’s unwillingness to report their abuse during and after abuse. Accounts suggest that Country A officials often lacked understanding of trafficking as a crime and required standard operating procedures to identify and refer male victims and survivors (United States Department of State 2018). In all trafficking cases, interviewers must be trained to interact with study participants while considering their specific vulnerabilities.



► Case study. Commercial sexual exploitation of young girls

During the expert workshops, a participant discussed the commercial sexual exploitation of young women brought from neighbouring states who were returned to their embassy in Country B after being arrested for “prostitution” at a gold mining site. When traffickers recruited the young women, the traffickers told them that they would be taking on small household jobs at mining sites. However, upon arrival, they were forced into commercial sex work to pay back the debt for their transportation costs to Country B.

This example highlights the importance of collaboration with many actors present in the field to comprehend multiple perspectives on forced labour when conducting research. If researchers had only spoken to the embassy, they would only have understood one aspect of the story – how the state viewed these girls’ situation from a legal perspective.



► Case study. Brick industry and bonded labour

The brick industry is known for working arrangements in which workers get paid per brick they produce – contracts often refer to this form of remuneration as “piecemeal”. Typically, there is an intermediary between the workers and the employer who monitors their work and manages their pay. Labourers are often coerced to work, mainly to repay a loan, and they cannot leave – otherwise, they may forgo remuneration.

This example highlights the need for researchers to speak to study participants currently engaged in forced labour one on one to ensure that they can speak freely without fear of any repercussions. However, the researcher may have to consider ways to best determine a time and private place for the interview, for example, by negotiating with both the employer and intermediary. One common approach is to begin by interviewing the employer and the intermediary about mundane aspects of the work to gain their trust prior to interviewing the workers or their family. However, if the worker sees the researcher speaking with the manager, the worker may not trust the interviewer enough to disclose their true situation. This challenge might be managed by conducting interviews with managers, intermediaries and workers on separate days or by separate team members.



Guiding Question 4.

What are the benefits and challenges of obtaining local ethical review and approval?

During the research design, the team should also assess the benefits and challenges of obtaining approval from local ethical review boards for their study.

How can researchers gain approval from a local ethical review board?

Ethical review board procedures and pathways to approval can be identified through local research institutes, academic institutions, or government departments, particularly ministries of health. Challenges may include identifying research institutes with relevant experience in the geographical area of intervention that are willing and able to perform the ethical review. Survivors' communities and law practitioners should be consulted to comment on the ethics protocol.

For the official ethical review process, researchers should seek national or local institutional review board options. However, in some cases, an official ethical review board may not be available. If no review bodies exist in the country, researchers can establish a local ethical review committee, which might include senior academics or local experts in the subject area, representatives of local or international organizations familiar with the topic or geographical area, or government representatives with jurisdiction over the topic or region. For example, in areas with ethnic minorities (such as border areas), individuals – from both minority and majority groups - can provide key insights.

Prior to submitting official research documentation for approval to centralized ethics committees, it is useful to provide a strong background paper detailing the subject area, including key definitions and references to other relevant studies. This allows reviewers to become informed on the subject area. A review of the ethical protocol by an advisory group – made up of local or international experts and governmental representatives relevant to the study topic or area – is also highly recommended.



► Actions

- Submit and obtain approval for ethical review from a formal institutional or governmental ethics board.
- Establish a local ethical review committee if no other authority is available.



► How

- Obtain institutional review board approval.
- Establish a local ethical review committee.

? Guiding Question 5. What sampling and access challenges create ethical concerns, and how can they be addressed?

Questions of sampling and access challenges can create ethical concerns, which should be considered by research teams during the research design phase. Teams should build ethical sampling strategies into their study and ensure that appropriate steps are taken in order to limit bias.

How can an ethical study sampling strategy be built into the study design, implementation and dissemination?

When deciding upon a research design and sampling strategy, researchers must first determine safe and ethical ways to identify, contact and interview study participants. Local advisers can provide guidance on local inequalities and safe ways to include individuals in a study. While individuals who have been exposed to forced labour may be able to share information from their first-hand experience, these experiences may be traumatic – regardless of whether they are at risk of forced labour, current victims, or survivors. Individuals must be included in the research sensitively, taking a gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approach, to ensure that their needs, rights and preferences – including the right to decline to participate – are respected during the study. As with all research, the sampling method should minimize the risks to which individuals are exposed and ensure that their autonomy and privacy are continuously protected.

When conducting sampling for both qualitative and quantitative data generation methods, it is important to ensure that no individual is denied a benefit to which they would otherwise have been entitled, and that no individual has a burden unduly imposed on them because of the sampling frame or sampling method used. Consideration must also be given to the sampling method used when conducting qualitative interviewing to ensure that no individual's privacy, autonomy or well-being is compromised. For example, snowball sampling – a sampling method in which an individual who is interviewed is approached to identify other individuals who may fit the study inclusion criteria – is often used in qualitative interviewing when trying to access hard-to-reach, marginalized or vulnerable populations. Here, however, it is important to ensure that the individual does not provide any identifying or contact information of others who fit the study inclusion criteria. Instead, the individual may be asked to provide the people they know with information about the study and the contact details of the researchers with an invitation to contact them should they wish to participate in the study. In this way, their privacy is protected.



► Actions

- Engage with a local advisory committee and local representatives of the sample group. Ensure that selection criteria for local advisers are defined prior to the start of the research project.
- Consider recruitment processes and how study participants – including survivors of forced labour – will be safely and anonymously invited to participate in the study.
- Consider where study participants will be interviewed, the length of time needed for the interviews, and the effects these choices might have on their safety, anonymity, childcare needs or income.
- Consider options for involving study participants in the analysis and recommendations generated from the data, and ways to present the study findings to study participants.



► How

- Establish a consultation process with the advisory committee or advisers.
- Report to and seek feedback from the local advisory committee on the study design, methods and participant protection mechanisms.
- Pilot-test recruitment and interview techniques with a small number of study participants.
- Draft an operational planning document to clarify the ways in which recruitment, logistics, safety and security procedures, and contingency plans will be implemented during fieldwork.
- Develop a decision tree or a flowchart to illustrate these steps.

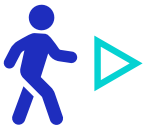
How can common sampling biases create ethical concerns, and how can the study design limit biases and potential discrimination?

Sampling biases occur when some members of a population are systematically more likely to be selected in a sample than others and, as a result, the study participants are not reflective of the population. A study may, for example, overrepresent individuals who speak a particular language or are in a geographically convenient location. Instead, individuals should be sampled based on whether they meet a study's inclusion and exclusion criteria.¹⁵ In this way, fair subject selection avoids disproportionately representing groups or networks. Forced labour is a rare and isolated phenomenon and victims are often hard to reach. Of particular concern in studies on forced labour are harder-to-reach individuals – such as those who have limited mobility, are geographically isolated, are prevented from having contact with outsiders, are involved in criminal or illegal activities, have lower levels of literacy, or are less competent in the language in which research may be conducted. These groups may be underrepresented. Marginalized and oppressed groups are, in many cases, also excluded or underrepresented in studies.

While it is crucial to seek local viewpoints, researchers must reflect upon whether these perspectives are representative of all groups. Researchers should ensure that the research objectives do not privilege certain groups or overlook inequalities when setting a sampling frame and selecting study participants. They should also aim to include the widest participation possible of potential forced labour victims in terms of gender, age group, language, family structure and socio-economic background. In addition, researchers should reflect on how sampling strategies may introduce representation bias. Snowball sampling, for example, demands fewer resources. However, it is associated with phenomena such as “masking” – the process by which representatives selectively refer other members of the target population to the study, protecting close friends or relatives by not referring to them.

Research teams should also consider how the question of remuneration for research study participants – which is discussed at length in later sections of this document – could impact sampling bias of the study.

¹⁵ Research on forced labour often focuses on specific groups or regions: in these cases, belonging to a specific group or living in a specific location would be among the inclusion criteria.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Identify marginalized or hard-to-reach populations who are at risk of, are engaged in, or are survivors of forced labour.
- ▶ Remain transparent regarding possible sampling bias.



▶ How

- ▶ Use relevant data (census, sector, etc.) to identify the range of individuals in the target group.
- ▶ Sample individuals based on the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria related to the specific research objective.
- ▶ Consider using respondent-driven sampling to reduce sampling bias.



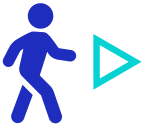
Guiding Question 6.

What are the benefits, risks and opportunities related to participatory or co-produced research?

Participatory research is increasingly used by research teams studying forced labour. However, the ethical issues should be assessed during the research design phase, which should also include a protocol to establish trust with people at risk, victims, and survivors of forced labour. Lastly, questions of compensation of research participants' time should be considered as part of the trust-building process during this step.

What ethical issues arise when conducting co-produced or participatory research?

"Participatory" research, emphasizing the participation of members of communities affected by that research, represents an increasingly common approach adopted by those studying forced labour. Co-produced research includes several local beneficiary representatives as part of the research team in the design, planning and conduct of the research. Partnering with local organizations, community leaders and industry representatives helps foster well-informed research and can improve the utilization of the findings. However, these approaches present ethical challenges to researchers – particularly related to the questions of positionality in research – such as internal group power dynamics that influence interactions between stakeholders and researchers, blurred boundaries between researchers and research subjects, conflicts of interest, the preservation of anonymity, and questions of data ownership (Durham University Centre for Social Justice and Community Action 2011).



▶ Actions

- ▶ When undertaking participatory research, work with several different partners, including community members, local organizations and government representatives. Consider possible conflicts of interest among partners.
- ▶ Outline the roles and responsibilities of all researchers before commencing the study.
- ▶ Provide formal training and support to local co-researchers.
- ▶ Strengthen relationships with local collaborators to foster long-term research cooperation.
- ▶ Include survivors of forced labour among stakeholders consulted within the research process.

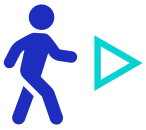


▶ How

- ▶ Identify and engage potential partners at the outset of the research process.
- ▶ Develop a capacity-building protocol for co-produced research.
- ▶ Draft a document detailing the roles of research team members.
- ▶ Ensure that all researchers, including translators, and research partners sign data protection and confidentiality agreements.

How can a research team build trust and engage with current victims or survivors of forced labour to serve as part of a participatory study?

When involving current victims or survivors of forced labour or human trafficking, it is essential to ensure that disclosing their status as a victim or survivor will not put them in any danger or add to existing social stigma within their current community. Local community organizations, especially intervention or survivor groups, can generally provide the safest means of contacting current victims and survivors of forced labour. The choice of whether to offer compensation to study participants – notably current victims and survivors – is connected to ethical considerations. In some cases, it may be important to compensate individuals for their time to avoid recreating situations of exploitation and to demonstrate appreciation of their worth and time. However, compensation should not act as an undue inducement to take part, as it may reduce the agency of victims and survivors who are motivated to support the research in order to fight forced labour. In cases where current victims of forced labour are interviewed, compensation may invite further risk if discovered.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Contact local groups working with current victims or survivors to facilitate introduction and communication. This should include formal and informal survivor groups, as well as individual victims and survivors of forced labour.
- ▶ Budget for remuneration to survivors who serve in an advisory capacity.



▶ How

- ▶ Hold discussions in the study design phase with local groups who are respected for their work with current victims or survivors of forced labour and develop a plan for reaching out to potential study participants.
- ▶ Set a fair remuneration rate for participating survivors.
- ▶ Assess whether compensating current victims of forced labour will place them at further risk if discovered.
- ▶ Relationships between research team members, study participants and survivors should remain strictly professional.



▶ Case study. Women's participation

Women face specific forms of exploitation and are often vulnerable in ways that can affect their participation in a study. They may also have different views from men on certain issues affecting their community. When researchers conducted a study on alcoholism in bonded labour situations, women flagged alcohol as their main concern and a source of arguments with men. Researchers drew this conclusion from data collected through embedded participatory approaches facilitated by non-governmental organizations; this approach worked through the community and involved the government and businesses in affecting regulatory and sectoral changes. They identified the following key principles.

Study participants should be actively engaged in key decisions about research design.

Study participants are the primary units of analysis of the study and should make the decisions on actions that flow from it.

Study participants must benefit directly from the research.

Researchers are part of a learning process that takes place as research is conducted (Oosterhoff and Nanda 2020).



► Case study. Researching labour exploitation via Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

Researching labour exploitation through Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) aims to empower women at high risk of labour exploitation by including them in the research process (Focus on Labour Exploitation 2021). It requires time and human resources as well as flexibility in adapting the research design to women's availability and available modes of communication.

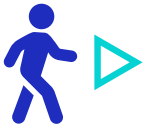
One of the steps that the Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) research team has taken to operationalize FPAR in practice is to discuss measures to mitigate potential safety issues related to recruitment through personal networks. This has been done through recruiting peer researchers via social media to conduct interviews with study participants or eliciting online contributions to the research. The research team thus outlined mitigation measures to address both the in-person and online safety of study participants and the research team. FLEX also carried out regular debriefings with peer researchers after the interviews to ensure the continuous inclusion of their insights and feedback into the data collection and analysis processes.

What ethical concerns are related to the compensation of study participants?

Several ethical concerns arise when considering whether research teams should compensate study participants and the ways in which compensation should be allocated. If compensation is to be disbursed, research teams should ensure that the level is adequate – whether it be equal and fair cash-based compensation reflecting the cost of their time and effort, or in-kind assistance representing useful resources or services. Compensation should not however act as an undue inducement to take part – that is, a compensation that is so great in amount or nature that it decreases participants' ability to rationally consider participation in the research and compromises the voluntary nature of the study (Wilkinson and Moore 1997).

Compensating current victims of forced labour for their time is important – especially as their participation could entail lost income or significant costs borne by the respondent, such as childcare or transportation. Moreover, compensation can demonstrate appreciation of their worth and time, contributing to their empowerment.

However, compensation can pose certain risks for the study participant. As outlined in the WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women (Zimmerman and Watts 2003), undeclared money found by employers, traffickers or pimps can endanger the study participant. In addition, avoid providing compensation for intermediaries, for example police, employers, traffickers or brothel owners, which is likely to put undue pressure on study participants.



▶ Actions

- ▶ When determining appropriate remuneration levels and types, it is useful to consult local actors, especially potential study participants.



▶ How

- ▶ Ask respondents about the safest and most useful forms of compensation from a set of options, tailored to whether they are at risk, a current victim, or a survivor of forced labour.
- ▶ Maintain transparency when discussing compensation with study participants and research team members.
- ▶ Include details and a justification for compensation in ethical review board proposals or in discussions with advisory groups.
- ▶ Avoid compensation to intermediaries when possible and, if not, carefully consider the risks of compensating them.



▶ Case study. In-kind compensation related to the study theme

During the country expert workshop organized in Country B to discuss key ethical challenges in forced labour research, many attendees highlighted in-kind compensation related to the theme of study. One example given was related to a study on menstrual hygiene by women in a national statistics school. In return for their time, respondents were provided with hygiene kits including soap and other key hygiene products for girls and women. Given the isolated nature of the community visited for the study, this form of compensation was found to be useful to study participants and helped strengthen relationships between researchers and community members because it demonstrated an active interest in their well-being.



Guiding Question 7. What ethical concerns and practices relate to research design and study instruments?

When designing research study methodology and instruments, research teams should account for any potential ethical and safety risks associated with different research approaches and select the approach that will pose the least risk for researchers and research participants.

What are potential ethical risks associated with determining a data collection approach?

Research team members should design data collection approaches that account for the ethical and safety risks identified by local partners and other experts. Some methods are more amenable to protecting study participants and research team members than others, depending on the setting and the study population. For example, in certain settings, large surveys amongst current forced labour workers at their workplace can cause potential problems with their employer by arousing suspicions about the purpose and content of the interview. Household surveys that identify trafficking survivors may, for example, inadvertently disclose a survivor's status to family members or community members. At the same time, the study design determines who is omitted as a participant of a study, possibly overlooking a particular marginalized group. For example, a study on women in commercial sex work may cover women working in open venues but bypass those who are working in more closed communities or in undisclosed locations.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Consult with local groups and advisers to determine the risks associated with contacting, recruiting and interviewing individuals in vulnerable groups – including at-risk populations, current victims and survivors of forced labour.
- ▶ Determine the contextual, sector-specific and population-related risks and especially protective measures at each of the study sites.
- ▶ Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different data collection approaches and possible risk reduction measures.

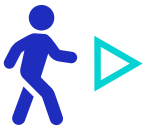


▶ How

- ▶ Map the risks associated with each stage of data collection to assess the safety of potential study participants and research team members jointly with local partners.
- ▶ Utilize training sessions with fieldworkers to reassess their perceptions of the potential dangers of a data collection approach.

What are potential risks associated with the study instrument?

When developing the study instrument, the content and formulation of each question must be assessed for possible risks of retraumatizing study participants or using accusatory or stigmatizing language. For example, respectful terms for ethnic minorities should be checked with local populations, and interviewers should be trained to avoid terms and phrases that are disrespectful or accusatory. For example, phrasing such as “Why didn’t you leave?” or “Why didn’t you get paid more?” places blame on the individual – whether they be a current victim or survivor – for not escaping, and could be rephrased, for instance, to: “What prevents [or prevented] you from leaving?” or “What are [or were] you paid?”



▶ Actions

- ▶ Consider question content. When considering the inclusion of questions that are particularly sensitive or potentially distressing, such as questions about sexual abuse, the importance of the information should be weighed against the risks to the study participants.
- ▶ Consider the inclusion of warning phrases before sensitive questions. If sensitive questions are included, they could be introduced with statements that alert study participants that the following questions may be difficult to answer and that remind them that they can choose to skip them.
- ▶ Use non-accusatory phrasing of questions. Questions should be phrased in non-stigmatizing and non-accusatory ways, particularly related to study participants.



▶ How

- ▶ Assess whether posing particularly sensitive questions is necessary considering the data analysis framework and study objectives. Research teams should ask themselves: Are these data necessary? How will we use these data?
- ▶ Conduct pilot interviews and check local terminology with the target population to learn about and use respectful terms.
- ▶ Where possible, undertake cognitive testing of particularly sensitive questions, phrasing to determine appropriate terminology (Benes and Walsh 2018).



Part 2.

Research implementation and data collection

This section includes guidance for researchers on ethical considerations during the fieldwork data collection phase. This section includes guidance on (a) key concerns and best practices for consent; (b) recruitment and training of research team members; (c) safeguarding procedures and legal obligations during fieldwork; and (d) ethical risks and safe practices during fieldwork for research team members.



▶ Preparing for and conducting fieldwork checklist

Informed consent

- ▶ Prior to the start of interviews, ensure that participants understand the interview purpose, potential risks and benefits, why they have been selected, how the information collected will be used, that their participation is voluntary, and that they have the right to end the interview at any time.
- ▶ Use clear and appropriate language, tailored to the age, education and developmental level of study participants, as well as the local context.
- ▶ Encourage questions from study participants and ensure that the processes of providing pre-interview information and obtaining consent are not rushed.

Forming a research team

- ▶ Screen potential research staff to evaluate whether they are prepared to work with vulnerable groups and identify significant biases.
- ▶ Develop training tools to ensure that research staff are trained in safeguarding measures and have contingency plans for challenges that may arise during fieldwork.
- ▶ If the study requires an interpreter, ensure that they are vetted and trained on project objectives and the topic-specific terms.

Safeguarding procedures and legal obligations

- ▶ Equip all research team members with the list of referral services developed during the design phase.
- ▶ Train all interviewers and interpreters on possible signs of distress and appropriate ways to respond to study participants showing signs of distress during interviews.

- Develop referral procedures that are simple to implement and train all interviewers on how to use these procedures. Ensure all referral services are aware of and agree to these procedures.
- Never refer study participants without their consent (except in cases in which unaccompanied children may otherwise be at risk of harm).

Safe practices during interviews

- Identify and articulate the risks of harm to researchers in each study context.
- Consider whether research should be done in areas that are affected by conflict, under threat of natural disaster, or geographically isolated.
- Ensure the entire research team is aware of emergency procedures.
- Establish check-in procedures with researchers to monitor their physical and psychological well-being, such as a regularly updated field log.



Guiding Question 8.

What are key concerns and good practices for informed consent?

During research implementation, it is important to consider and prioritize consent and assent processes to ensure participants fully comprehend them. Processes to ensure confidentiality should be established during this step, in order to ensure the safety of both the researcher and the research participant.

What are ethical considerations during the informed consent and assent processes?

Prior to beginning an interview, interviewers must ensure that the study participant understands the following:

- the content and purpose of the interview;
- the potential risks and benefits of participating;
- why they have been selected and the ways in which the information will be used;
- that their participation is voluntary, and they have the right to refuse to answer questions and stop the interview at any time without fear of consequence;
- their right to restrict the ways in which any information they shared is presented or disseminated.

Informed consent is usually – though not exclusively – obtained from those aged 18 years and older, and procedures for obtaining consent must ensure that all study participants fully understand the consent language, know they can decline for any reason, and comprehend their right to withdraw their consent at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences. For children below 18 years, it is recommended whenever possible or appropriate to gain informed consent from a parent or legal guardian. Additionally, study participants under 18 should be invited to give their “informed assent”, in which age-appropriate language is used to explain information about the study and the child’s rights to refuse to participate, stop the interview, or decline to answer questions (University of Oxford 2021). For further information regarding informed consent with child study participants, please refer to the ILO guidelines for ethical research on child labour (ILO 2005; ILO forthcoming). In forced labour contexts, the choice of data collection sites has implications for the informed consent process; for example, the presence of third parties may void consent given in some contexts.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Use clear and appropriate language, tailored to the age, education, and developmental level of study participants, as well as the local context.
- ▶ Encourage questions from study participants and ensure that the processes of providing pre-interview information and obtaining consent are not rushed.
- ▶ Inform respondents that they can stop the interview or take a break at any time while the interview is being conducted.
- ▶ Assure respondents that their consent or responses will not affect their eligibility for services to which researchers may refer them.
- ▶ Consider the safest, most ethical way to document consent: verbally, with a signature, or through fingerprints.
- ▶ Ask permission to (a) record the interview, and (b) quote the participant directly in the study.
- ▶ Choose data collection sites where adult study participants and researchers are alone during the informed consent procedure.



▶ How

- ▶ Test consent language in the training through engagement of fieldworkers and mock interviews.
- ▶ Test consent language and consent procedures during piloting.
- ▶ Set clear guidelines for participant selection and map preferred and excluded sites for data collection based on participant profiles.

When interviewing current victims and survivors, many respondents may be wary of attaching their name, signature or biometric data to a physical document, especially those engaged in activities considered illegal or criminal by the state, such as commercial sex work. At-risk populations may belong to systematically marginalized groups or be undocumented migrants and may share similar concerns about giving consent to interviewers. Members of marginalized groups, victims and survivors of forced labour have generally had negative interactions with various authority figures and thus may be uncomfortable signing or fingerprinting a formal consent form. Verbal consent alone is a viable alternative to paper consent forms that can be used in these contexts and should always be obtained, even where written consent is provided.

When approaching issues of confidentiality within forced labour research, researchers must protect both themselves and their study participants. Confidentiality measures should be developed for both the research team – especially if the topic of research could potentially place members in danger of persecution or harm – and for research study participants. Researchers must ensure that the sites selected for research are safe for researchers and study participants – if possible, researchers should not conduct interviews in areas with no phone signal or in the presence of an unnecessary third party. Additionally, research team members should set up processes to ensure their safety in the field. This may include contacting colleagues in the office or at home to inform them of their arrival in and departure from a participant's home or community or deciding upon a safe word with other team members that researchers can use when they are in uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situations while conducting research in the field.



► Checklist. Monitoring consent

- The informed consent process is obtained and documented appropriately by the research team verbally and – where possible – on paper.
- All respondents have enough time to consider the possible risks and benefits of their participation in the study and to ask questions about the research.
- Coercion or influence by members of the research team is not present during the informed consent process – respondents feel their participation is truly their own choice.
- Information about the study and its objectives is explained and understood by study participants.
- Research study participants appear to understand the information provided and give their voluntary consent.



► Case study. Confidentiality in research

The research team identified three ethical issues related to confidentiality in Country C: (a) ethics for internal bureaucratic purposes within certain ministries; (b) requirements set by the government to perform ethical research; and (c) the definition of ethics and confidentiality as they relate to the population of study. Ethical review boards might in some instances privilege the safety of institutions over research study participants. For example, they sometimes require researchers to record the names and ID numbers of current victims of forced labour, such as sex workers, or at-risk populations such as irregular migrants, even when this information may be submitted to a federal agency. This places respondents at risk of harm by government authorities, as both groups are considered illegal by Country C. This may lead the research team to decide not to pursue further the research. Conversely, the guidelines from Country C's national academic association are more concerned with protecting informants – however, they fail to mention protection mechanisms for researchers, as there is always a risk of federal investigation against researchers working on certain topics, such as human trafficking or commercial sex work.



► National Statistics office: case study. Consent practices used by NSOs

When interviewing study participants in studies on forced labour, the NSO in Country F drafts a consent form, which is read out to all potential study participants in the research study. This script is always translated into the local language and drafted in a way that ensures the participant understands the purpose of giving consent and that they have the right to refuse or stop the interview at any time. In cases where the participant does not give consent, the interview ends – the research team members must not, in any case, try to persuade or coerce the person to consent to the interview.

Depending on the methodology used for the study, NSOs also inform households or individuals of the methodology used, and topics covered by the questions in the research tools used. This is included in the consent script read to all potential study participants in the study.



▶ National Statistics office: case study. Sending informative letters ahead of implementing phone-based surveys – NSOs

In Country S, the NSO sends study participants a letter before a phone-based survey, which allows them to gain an understanding of the agency collecting data as well as the purpose of the study. The letters sent contain a phone number that study participants can call to opt out of the survey if desired. This avoids potentially distressing study participants by calling them without prior notice, and can also help increase the number of study participants who consent to participate in the study, as they are well informed ahead of time.



▶ Example of informed consent script

We are conducting research on *[research topic]* for *[name of organization or institute]* to *[broadly state research purpose, for example, identify better ways to provide psychosocial services]*. We would like to talk to you about *[general topics to be discussed]* and ask you questions about *[key topics that will be covered, including any sensitive materials]*. I won't ask your name and will assign you an anonymous code or fake name. Everything you tell me will be kept secret, and no identifying personal details will be revealed. There are no wrong or right answers.

Your participation is voluntary – it is your choice whether you want to participate. The discussion should take about *[approximate length]*. Some questions may bring up difficult memories – please take your time to answer. You do not need to answer every question I ask you, and you are free to add any information that has not been asked or stop me at any time to ask a question. You are completely free to decide whether you feel comfortable talking to me, and you can stop this conversation at any time. If you don't want to participate, this is fine. If you need or want to leave, you may do so at any point. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed to participate earlier. You don't have to explain why, and you can always talk to us individually, for whatever reason.

Your responses about your experiences will be used to help others *[insert group or community name]* who have had similar experiences and psychosocial health needs. I will be asking you to share your experiences and will be taking notes on what you say. We would like to record this conversation, if you are comfortable, so that we do not miss any details. We will never share your name or contact information with anyone or allow anyone outside the research team to listen to your recording. Do you have any questions for us? Has everything been clear? Do you agree to participate in this research? Do you agree to being recorded?

If you agree, we will also provide your contact information to the research team, should any questions arise later on.

How can researchers maintain confidentiality?

Information provided to researchers by study participants should be treated as confidential. Confidentiality may, in some cases, become compromised if some members of the research team, such as interpreters, are excluded from relevant discussions and agreements. In addition, the ways in which data are stored and processed, for example via third-party platforms, may also compromise confidentiality. Researchers should also reflect on the ways in which the location of the interview may compromise confidentiality, for example, where information shared during the interview could be overheard or where the interview could be interrupted.

De-identification processes, which ensure the removal of personal information from a data set, help maintain the confidentiality of study participants. However, de-identification alone does not prevent reidentification, or the attempt to identify a participant through combinations of information that alone would not reveal the identity of an individual (Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario 2016). Protecting the anonymity of sources becomes difficult when the research is focused on specific target populations – such as transgender victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. To combat this, researchers can choose to interview a larger sample size and target population (Zimmerman and Watts 2003).



► Actions

- Establish strict processes for the anonymization of study participant data.
- Encrypt and securely store all data collected on populations impacted by forced labour.
- Require all interpreters and all research team members, including interpreters, to sign a confidentiality agreement. All team members, including those who may not be directly interacting with study participants, must sign these agreements.



► How

- Remove any personal, organization, company, place or institution names. Assign codes to all study participants.
- Determine the level of reidentification risk to study participants and consider removing “quasi-identifiers”, such as locations, event dates, and the gender, age, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, income or profession of study participants (Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario 2016).
- Inform respondents of their right to request the destruction of data pertaining to them at any time.
- Choose research sites free from potential interruption, for example, avoiding public locations or those where children may be present.
- Stop the interview if either the interviewer or participant feels the interview location has become unsafe and reschedule or cancel the interview until a more secure site is identified.



Guiding Question 9.

What ethical concerns are associated with the recruitment, screening and training of research team members?

Ethical considerations are highly important during the recruitment of research team members due to their interactions with vulnerable populations who are at risk, victims or survivors of forced labour. The research team should also include ethical considerations in the training of research teams, including interpreters, in order to ensure that team members are adequately prepared and understand safeguarding practices.

How should research managers recruit, screen and select research team members?

Careful recruitment, screening and selection of research team members are essential because of their interaction with abuse victims. It is useful to consider, for example, conflicts of interest or cultural, gender or social biases that might influence the way a research team member treats study participants and interprets or presents findings (figure 1).

When selecting the research team, it is useful to consider team members' skills and capacity to establish trust and rapport and analyse and interpret data (Geddes, Parker and Scott 2017). However, some research study participants may hesitate to disclose sensitive information to individuals who are from their own community due to concerns about confidentiality breaches. All research team members should be given training on non-disclosure of any study information outside the study team, even anonymous quotes, or stories.

Gender is also a consideration for interviews. To the extent possible, it is best to consult each participant regarding their preference for a man, woman or non-binary person.



► Actions

- Screen potential research staff to ensure they do not have any involvement with forced labour or human trafficking. Check for potential conflicts of interest.
- Assess the understanding of forced labour amongst potential research team members.
- Screen research staff to determine if they have biases against certain groups (for example by gender (sexism), ethnicity, nationality or socio-economic status) (Zimmerman and Watts 2003).



► How

- Identify and screen potential staff, drawing on references via trusted contacts, and examining national and international databases of human traffickers. In many cases, access to databases may not be feasible.
- When conducting job interviews, include questions or tests to assess the ability of researchers to conduct interviews in sensitive, non-stigmatizing and empathetic ways.

► Figure 1. Recruiting research team members



What components should be included in a training to ensure research team members can conduct ethical and safe research?

To ensure ethical and safe conduct throughout the research process, training should include the core principles of safeguarding and ethical research. Training content might include:

- the key concepts and relevant laws on human trafficking and forced labour;
- how to pose sensitive questions;
- how to identify situations in which a participant’s safety or mental well-being is compromised and deciding when to stop an interview (see also figure 2);
- how to conduct informed consent processes in non-coercive ways;
- how to apply measures to protect confidentiality and anonymity;
- how to respond to distress and employ trauma-informed interview techniques;
- how to respond to unexpected reactions or interruptions (Easton and Matthews 2015);
- how to make safe referrals;
- how to ensure data security;
- how to ensure fieldworker safety and provide emergency assistance;
- how to prepare context-sensitive questions in study instruments.



► **Actions**

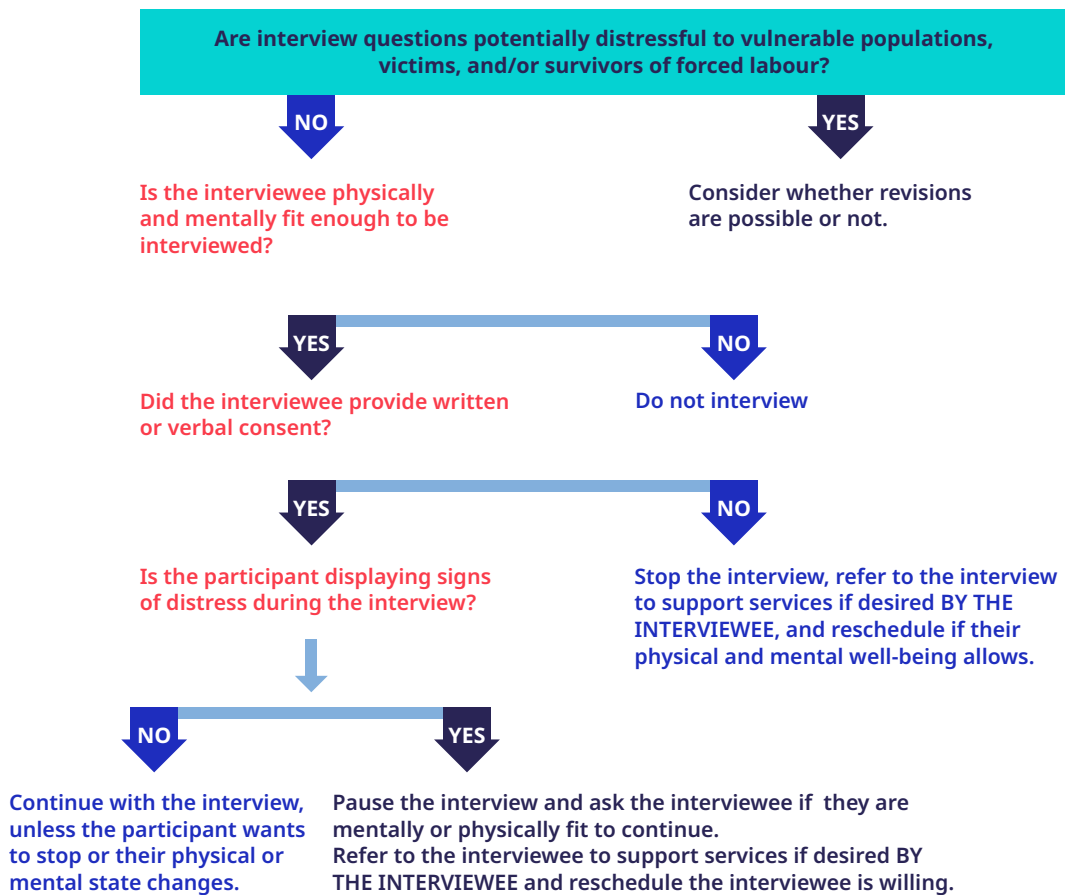
- Ensure fieldworkers are prepared to detect and respond to trauma and psychological distress.
- Ensure teams understand ethical and safety concerns related to local trafficking dynamics and victim characteristics.
- Design practical scenarios and use case studies to highlight common ethical dilemmas and problem-solving strategies.



▶ **How**

- ▶ Develop adequate safeguarding training materials.
- ▶ Develop selection criteria for study participants, including when study participants should not be selected.
- ▶ Invite local experts, including survivors, to provide information and training on trauma, mental health and psychological support.
- ▶ Invite local experts to consult on the sensitive formulation of interview questions during training and piloting.

▶ **Figure 2. A decision tree: Responding to interviewee distress**





► National Statistics office: case study. Training carried out by NSOs

In Country E, the NSO develops training modules for field staff, to incorporate the necessary ethical considerations required for research studies on forced labour. Topics include working conditions, tasks carried out and interview procedures. There are several presentations focused on how interviewers can build a rapport with respondents, including probing. Special consideration is given to phrasing questions – as often questions related to forced labour must be indirectly asked and require training to ensure that all members of the research team (interviewers and interpreters) understand the purpose of the questions in study tools, as well as what responses should elicit follow-up probing questions from interviewers, and how to handle asking sensitive questions ethically.

In Country F, for certain studies, the NSO carries out preliminary trainings for team leaders, who are given ethical training on the piloted tools. These team leaders then lead training of teams of enumerators. This practice is used especially in cases of large-scale surveys, which may lack the financial and human resources to hold one large training session.



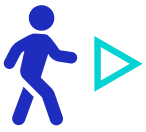
► National Statistics office: case study. Cognitive testing in training used by NSO

In Country S, the NSO has used cognitive testing in training, which trains researchers on how to pinpoint illogical answers during interviews. This is important in carrying out research on forced labour, as definitions used are often complex.

Cognitive testing proved to be helpful in defining questionnaires and answers to questions on different forms of forced labour. Two days were dedicated to cognitive testing during training of the research team, and the questionnaire was revised when needed if questions elicited illogical answers.

What is the role of interpreters in an ethical study of forced labour?

Some studies require the assistance of an interpreter, who helps translate between the interviewer and study participant. Selecting the right interpreter is important because the interpreter must build the same level of trust with the study participant as the interviewer. The interpreter can be someone from the research team or an independent actor. Interpreters should participate in the fieldwork training and should be as carefully screened as research team members (for example, for possible biases or relationship to human trafficking).



▶ Actions

- ▶ Assess the skills, possible biases, and trustworthiness of potential interpreters.
- ▶ Include interpreters in fieldwork training to ensure they understand project objectives and the appropriate language to be used. Unless requested, recruit interpreters from outside the community, as study participants may not feel comfortable speaking in front of people from their community.
- ▶ Understand and address situations in which there are potential ethnic, religious or other forms of conflict between the interpreter and study participants.



▶ How

- ▶ Advertise for or recruit interpreters via trusted sources.
- ▶ Include interview questions that assess possible biases, forms of discrimination, or opinions that might offend the study population.
- ▶ Check with potential study participants whether they would or would not feel at ease speaking in front of local community members as interpreters.



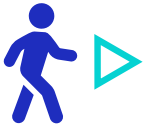
Guiding Question 10.

What safeguarding and protection concerns might arise during fieldwork, and what obligations and limits arise related to participant assistance?

During fieldwork implementation, research teams should consider all safeguarding and protection concerns – which should determine the selection of study participants. The research team should also consider when interviews should be stopped, any special approaches required for particularly vulnerable individuals, and how to facilitate referrals when necessary.

What are factors to consider when selecting study participants and detecting when an interview should be stopped?

When selecting and interviewing individuals who are currently engaged in or have experienced forced labour, it is essential to identify whether the individual is physically and psychologically fit to participate in an interview. It is common for current victims and survivors of forced labour and human trafficking to suffer from various forms of distress, such as post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. Interviews can exacerbate these symptoms by evoking painful memories or drawing out new memories of upsetting events. In accordance with the “do no harm” principle, the research team is responsible for detecting when an interview should not be conducted and when an interview should be stopped to prevent harm to the participant.



▶ Actions

- ▶ When interviewing children, consult with caseworkers or organization representatives to better assess which potential participants are fit to be interviewed.
- ▶ When interviewing victims or survivors who are in contact with service providers, consult with caseworkers or organization representatives to assess whether potential study participants are fit to be interviewed.
- ▶ When interviewing victims or survivors who are not in contact with service providers, train research teams to detect signs of distress. In all interviews, include information in the consent process about any potentially upsetting questions and ensure that study participants understand that they can opt to skip these questions.
- ▶ If interviewers detect a participant's distress, interviewers should be instructed to ask the participant if they wish to pause or stop the interview. The interviewer should comply with whatever the individual prefers.
- ▶ Provide all participants with information about referral services, regardless of whether they show signs of evident distress.



▶ How

- ▶ Include information on forced labour reporting requirements in the country under study in the fieldwork training.
- ▶ Equip all research team members with the list of referral services developed during the design phase.
- ▶ Train all interviewers and interpreters on possible signs of distress and appropriate ways to respond to study participants showing signs of distress during interviews.
- ▶ Develop referral procedures that are simple to implement and train all interviewers on how to use these procedures. Ensure referral procedures are in line with existing referral services.



▶ How

- ▶ Include guidance in the ethics and safety protocol on assessing risks and implementing appropriate mitigation measures for children.
- ▶ Develop referral procedures specific to children.

What needs to be considered when interviewing especially vulnerable individuals?

Special approaches are often required for interviews with persons with physical, learning or other disabilities or with individuals who are in high-risk circumstances, such as homeless persons, those affected by humanitarian crises, or those forced to participate in criminal activities. Each of these circumstances can affect decisions about safe locations for an interview, how questions are asked, and how an interviewer assesses the safety and well-being of the study participant. Interviews with individuals with learning disabilities may require the consent of a guardian and assent of the participant or necessitate extended time for the interview and, if desired by the participant, the presence of a support person. Increased attention to the “do no harm” principle is necessary when interacting with study participants affected by humanitarian crises, and researchers should understand that consent procedures may not seem voluntary to some study participants, who may believe that they cannot refuse (Mfutso-Bengo, Masiye and Muula 2008). In addition, interviews with individuals who are involuntarily involved in criminal activities will require a risk assessment to determine whether the interview may cause danger to the participant or the researcher.



▶ Actions

- ▶ When interviewing a person with a physical disability, accommodate the individual's needs when selecting the setting and conditions for the interview and assess the potential discomfort caused by the length or location of the interview.
- ▶ When interviewing an individual with a sensory impairment, ensure that adjustments are made to enable their voluntary participation, for example, using braille or sign language interpretation.
- ▶ When interviewing an individual with a learning disability, assess whether there is a need for the consent of a guardian and how the format of the interview might need to be adjusted.
- ▶ When interviewing an individual impacted by a humanitarian crisis, ensure that the participant is consenting voluntarily, without a sense of obligation or coercion.
- ▶ When interviewing an individual who is believed to be involved in any criminal activities, assess the risks posed to the study team by interacting with the individual and the risks posed to the individual by participating in the study.
- ▶ There is a duty to report any suspected or confirmed forms of harassment of, abuse of, or discrimination against study participants by other members of the research team.

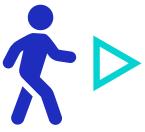


▶ How

- ▶ Develop a set of criteria and a decision tree to identify people who would be most likely to experience negative effects of being contacted or interviewed, such as those who have not recovered sufficiently from exposure to traumatic events or who exhibit clear signs of psychological distress. Exclude them from the research unless sufficient safety measures can be implemented.
- ▶ Develop special guidance on responses and referral for individuals with special needs and children.
- ▶ Incorporate information on the country's child protection reporting requirements into training sessions.

How will the research team be prepared to refer study participants to trusted service providers and facilitate the referral processes?

Safe and reliable referrals depend on the list of providers assembled at the start of each study and updated throughout. Referrals to relevant services should always be offered to individuals who have experienced or are currently in situations of forced labour or human trafficking. However, study participants should never be referred without their consent (except in cases in which unaccompanied children may otherwise be at risk of harm). If an individual requests or accepts a referral, the interviewer should make every effort to facilitate the referral beyond simply providing written information, for example, by contacting the support service on their behalf. The interviewer should, however, refrain from offering their own phone number or other contact details.



► Actions

- Update the list of referral services regularly.
- Translate referral information into relevant languages and print copies on small cards or send to preferred text or email account, so the participant can keep the information at hand but hide it easily, if necessary.



► How

- Draft written referral procedures and include instructions in training sessions.
- Develop agreements with service providers on referral procedures.



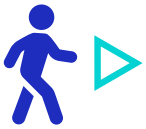
► Referral procedure options

- A helpline or referral hotline.
- Direct or indirect referral from a service provider to another service provider.
- Case conferencing – that is, a group of service providers come together to discuss a case.
- Liaison referral – a representative from one service provider liaise to another service provider to facilitate referrals.
- Network referrals – a group of service providers deliver complementary services and use similar protocols across a range of locations.
- One-stop shop referrals – a group of service providers jointly operate at one site or jointly deliver mobile services.

What must research teams consider when study participants have urgent protection needs or are in imminent danger?

Researchers may encounter situations in which they perceive the participant is in immediate danger or when the participant requests urgent help, such as cases of imminent abuse or reports of suicidal ideation. In these cases, research team members should offer all referral options available in a sensitive and confidential way, explaining the service referral options to the participant. No action should be taken without the individual's voluntary consent. Researchers should always consult the participant before acting on their behalf, because it is almost always the case that the individual knows their own risk best. However, if the participant is experiencing instances of suicide ideation, for example, they may not be able to provide explicit permission. Researchers should not contact authorities such as police or immigration services without the explicit permission of the participant.

If the participant refuses assistance, the researcher should be equipped with written referral information that the individual can use later, if or when they are ready to seek help. The research team should provide this information in an easily concealable format. Some studies on domestic violence have used "bra cards", for example.¹⁶ Researchers should never give out their own contact information to study participants.



► Actions

- Respond to reports of immediate danger with carefully planned options. Do not take action without a participant's voluntary consent.
- After explaining available referral options, enquire about what the participant would like to do, what kind of help they prefer and how they want to access the selected support.
- Do not call authorities without the explicit consent of the participant.
- For individuals who do not want immediate help, offer the participant a list of referral options they might use in the future.



► How

- Provide explicit guidance and practice modules during training sessions on how to respond to study participants in imminent danger. Include role play exercises to practise responding to such scenarios.
- List referral options in a format that the participant can keep hidden.
- Provide contact information for trusted groups or officials who are prepared to assist in high-risk situations.

¹⁶ These are clear, discreet information cards that provide essential information and support for survivors of violence, including safety advice and information about local support and advice services (Williamson and Abrahams 2010).



Guiding Question 11. What are ethical risks and safe practices during fieldwork for research team members?

During fieldwork, there are also ethical risks for research team members, especially for those carrying out research on high-risk contexts and populations. These should be identified by the team and safe practices should be established, including how to address violence and post-traumatic effects during interviews, and ensuring that all interviews are anonymized and stored safely during fieldwork implementation.

What actions can protect research team members, particularly in high-risk study contexts?

Even when research teams are experienced, well trained, and supported by other stakeholders, research on forced labour can pose various hazards. Researchers' physical safety may be in danger if interviewing individuals who are still in contact with traffickers or criminal enterprises. For example, in conflict settings researchers may not be viewed as neutral (Goodhand 2000). In some situations, researchers may be at risk of kidnapping or violence. In others, inclement weather and natural disasters may pose a risk to researchers. Researchers may also experience secondary trauma effects from stress-filled interviews, which can lead to burnout among research team members.



► Actions

- Identify and articulate the risks of harm to researchers in each study context.
- Consider whether research should be done in areas affected by conflict, under threat of natural disaster, or geographically isolated.
- Ensure the entire research team is aware of emergency procedures.
- Establish check-in procedures with researchers to monitor their physical and psychological well-being, such as a regularly updated field log.
- Check local media reports and speak with local informants about the safety and security considerations on a regular basis. Keep abreast of current events in the regions or country under study.
- Instruct researchers to keep a low profile and refrain from expressing political opinions.



► How

- Review and implement security procedures to ensure the safety of staff in each fieldwork site.
- Develop a critical information or communication flow chart and decision tree to use when incidents are reported during fieldwork.
- Include discussions of security procedures in fieldworker training sessions.
- In high-risk situations, ensure fieldworkers are experienced and knowledgeable of the local context.
- Distribute safety cards to fieldworkers with contact details for emergency services, such as urgent care sites, medical care providers, law enforcement or embassies (if not in home country).
- Collect emergency contact information for all fieldworkers.



▶ Case study. Separating the role of the researcher and the counsellor to ensure research integrity

The integrity of the research team must be ensured through the reinforcement of their identity as researchers first and foremost. The research team should understand that this is their primary role – they are not counsellors and, as such, should not report abuse against the will of study participants, as this information is shared with them as researchers, not as social workers.

In Kotch's longitudinal survey on maltreatment, social workers were employed as part of the research team to collect data from women (Kotch 2000; Runyan et al. 1998). Although information that they collected as researchers on abuse would have been previously reported by law in their social worker roles, this was not the case in their role as researchers. To avoid the risk of abuse being reported against the will of the participant, the research team chose to make the most sensitive interview questions blind. These questions were featured at the end of the interview questionnaire and handed over to the study participants, who then selected their answers by filling out the final page of the form. The data were then sealed in an envelope, which was not accessible by the researcher. The data on abuse were therefore kept separate from the researcher, ensuring that the research remained ethical.

How do interviewers address violence and post-traumatic effects in an interview?

Most survivors of forced labour will have experienced some form of physical violence, psychological abuse or exploitation (Duckworth and Follette 2012). Violent or life-threatening events – or witnessing such traumatic events – can be associated with long-lasting psychological symptoms, including post-traumatic stress symptoms. Post-traumatic stress symptoms can include flashbacks, nightmares, difficulty concentrating, hostility, anxiety and depression. Most surveys on forced labour include questions about abuse. Therefore, researchers must be prepared to pose questions in sensitive ways to avoid triggering stressful memories and ensuring individuals that they are in a safe space. It is not unusual for survivors to experience retraumatization when reporting past traumatic events, particularly during qualitative interviews. Given this fact, establishing referrals to psychological support services is necessary. Please refer to Guiding Question 10, which addresses this topic.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Train research team members to identify symptoms of distress, trauma or retraumatization.
- ▶ Limit sensitive questions to what is strictly necessary.
- ▶ Formulate questions in an empathetic manner.
- ▶ Ensure that the research team understands the limits of what they can and cannot do to respond to distress, emphasizing the importance of referral procedures.



► How

- Design and distribute a checklist to research team members to identify symptoms of trauma.
- Include training on trauma-informed research for fieldworkers and other staff.
- Include a list of resources, should study participants want to be referred to relevant service providers.

How can interviews be anonymized and data treated and stored?

All team members must be trained to anonymize interviews and maintain security for all study participants and interview data (paper, electronic, recordings) – including all personal information. Personal information refers to all information “relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’); an identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identification number or to one or more factors specific to [their] physical, physiological, mental, economic, cultural, or social identity” (European Parliament 1995).



► Actions

- Develop data security measures that detail how participant information will be anonymized and kept secure.
- Only collect data that are essential for the research project (when information is not needed or is not essential, it should not be collected).
- Replace names with code numbers and redact place names and other data that might lead to reidentification, which may include profession, education, gender, age, religion or ethnic background.
- Store code keys or code links to participant information in a password-protected system with limited access to only necessary personnel. Encrypt files to add an extra layer of security.
- Avoid using third-party platforms, such as transcription or coding services, that store data on another server.
- Destroy data and information as soon as they are no longer needed, ideally when the analysis is complete.



► How

- Use an anonymized code system for anonymizing data.
- Establish and outline data security processes and storage mechanisms.



A large blue graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of a large triangle pointing right, with a smaller triangle pointing left inside it, creating a white arrow-like shape.

Part 3.

Data analysis, interpretation, reporting and dissemination

This third and final section provides guidance for ethical research after data have been collected, during the analysis and interpretation of data, drafting reports, and disseminating information once it is published. This section includes guidance on (a) ethical and safety concerns to consider during data entry, analysis, and interpretation of findings; and (b) ethical obligations related to dissemination and follow-up with communities included in the study.



► Interpretation and dissemination checklist

Data analysis and interpretation of findings

- Ensure research findings are shared with local community members, policymakers and beneficiaries in formats they can understand.
- Provide opportunities to discuss findings and receive and integrate feedback.
- Consider any potential adverse consequences of the publication of different types of data. Take advice from local stakeholders about which data may have negative effects.

Dissemination

- Do not conceal meaningful data for political reasons.
- Translate research findings into local languages of the population under study prior to dissemination.
- Discuss the dissemination plan with survivors, participant advisory groups, and local leaders before finalization to ensure that the safety of study participants is upheld during dissemination.



Guiding Question 12.

What are the ethical and safety concerns related to data entry, analysis and interpretation of findings?

During the dissemination phase, there are ethical and safety concerns related to data interpretation and formulating findings to ensure that the analysis of research findings does not do harm to research participants. Including communities and study participants in the validation of research findings can help ensure this in practice.

Who interprets the data, and who formulates the findings?

Ethical considerations do not end once data are collected. The information collected must be interpreted and analysed in a way that accurately represents the situation, does not put respondents at risk, and aims to generate evidence to advance policies or programmes to address forced labour. For qualitative data, the well-being of those who transcribe the data should also be considered, particularly if they have not been part of the team that has collected the data and might therefore be forgotten, even though they will be exposed to the potentially traumatic narratives shared by study participants.

To ensure findings and recommendations are interpreted in context-relevant ways, to the extent possible, the data analysis team should involve local community members, policymakers and beneficiaries in discussions on the findings and recommendations.



► Actions

- Involve key stakeholders with local knowledge of the context, power dynamics and vulnerabilities in the analysis and development of recommendations.



► How

- Host workshops with intended beneficiaries and stakeholders in the data analysis and dissemination phases.
- Provide clarification to stakeholders and beneficiaries on methods and analytical procedures employed in the research.

In finalizing the analysis and interpretation of the findings, the research team should ensure that the data are not misinterpreted and that the findings do not contribute to backlash against local communities, especially negative stereotypes of marginalized groups. For this reason, the research team should share the findings with these groups prior to dissemination and incorporate their feedback where possible.

How can communities and study participants be involved in validating findings?

To the extent possible, members of the target communities should be involved in the development of the final interpretation of the findings and recommendations to offer input and identify phrases or interpretations that could cause harm to study participants or the beneficiaries.

Furthermore, reports should always include a methodology section detailing not only the research tools, study sample and locations (when possible), but also an explanation of the key ethical considerations taken into account by the research team in developing the research study design and implementing research. When speaking of the study's limitations, researchers should reference key ethical decisions that may have limited the scope of the study. This also serves as a way to avoid any risk of academic misconduct, as it provides transparency on any potential biases in the findings or gaps due to ethical considerations made by the research team.



▶ Actions

- ▶ Share and review initial findings with members of the community before they are disseminated.
- ▶ With assistance from local partners, experts and community members, identify interpretations or language that could cause harm to study participants or relevant communities.
- ▶ Translate initial findings and analyses into local languages prior to dissemination.



▶ How

- ▶ Establish a validation process with community members to ensure that the findings are accurate and that their contributions are considered.
- ▶ Host community gatherings or short follow-up interviews, where possible, to discuss findings. Ensure findings are presented in language understood by beneficiaries and that interpreters are present to help facilitate discussions. Hold data analysis team members accountable for addressing comments and requests for review received by local communities.
- ▶ Budget for the discussion and validation of the research results with the beneficiaries.



Guiding Question 13.

What are the ethical obligations related to dissemination and follow-up with communities and stakeholders?

The dissemination of research findings entails ethical obligations, particularly the obligation to communicate findings to study participants, the local population and relevant organizations, including government representatives. Communication of the findings should be conducted in language that is easy to understand. Because the purpose of research on forced labour is to prevent, reduce or respond to exploitation, research findings should be accompanied by concrete and feasible recommendations for policymakers or organizations. Long-term relationships with local collaborators can provide researchers with the opportunity to increase the impact of the study. The research team should also consider the potential adverse effects of publishing the study on the study participants included. During the analysis phase, teams should map the potential negative consequences of findings and make clear statements in reports about what not to do with findings.

When determining which findings to present, do not conceal meaningful data for political reasons (for example, to avoid causing political offence to the government) or to appease a donor or organization (for example, by aligning findings with outcome desired by the donor or local or international group). Rather, ensure that findings and recommendations are interpreted in a context-relevant way.

How can research teams prioritize the safety and confidentiality of study participants while disseminating the research findings?



► Actions

- Avoid breaching individual confidentiality by disclosing too many or specific details (particularly common in qualitative work).
- Avoid the risk of stigmatizing and discriminating against certain groups or communities by naming the groups or populations associated with potentially stigmatizing practices; avoid attributing behaviours to certain groups (for example, commercial sex work among nationality groups or high prevalence of forced labour in particular villages or districts).
- Avoid the risk of disclosing recruitment or exploitative practices that might help exploiters (for example, including detail about strategies used in forced labour in a way that enables it to be easily duplicated by abusers).
- Mitigate the risk of disclosing supportive practices that are helping individuals, but which might not be accepted locally (for example, providing abortions to women or medical assistance to irregular migrants).
- When determining which findings to present, do not conceal meaningful data for political reasons (for example, to avoid causing political offence to the government) or to appease a donor or organization (for example, by aligning findings with outcome desired by the donor or local or international group).
- Avoid any adverse consequences of the use of published findings.



▶ How

- ▶ Consult survivor or participant advisory groups prior to dissemination to guide decisions about findings that might create problems for individuals or local communities. Local leaders may also provide good insights.
- ▶ Test your dissemination plan with survivors, participant advisory groups, or local leaders before finalization through a workshop or community discussion.
- ▶ Map potential negative uses of published data by stakeholders – including the government – with local partners, and include language in reports on how findings should *not* be used.



▶ Case study. Protecting research study participants from stigma when disseminating findings

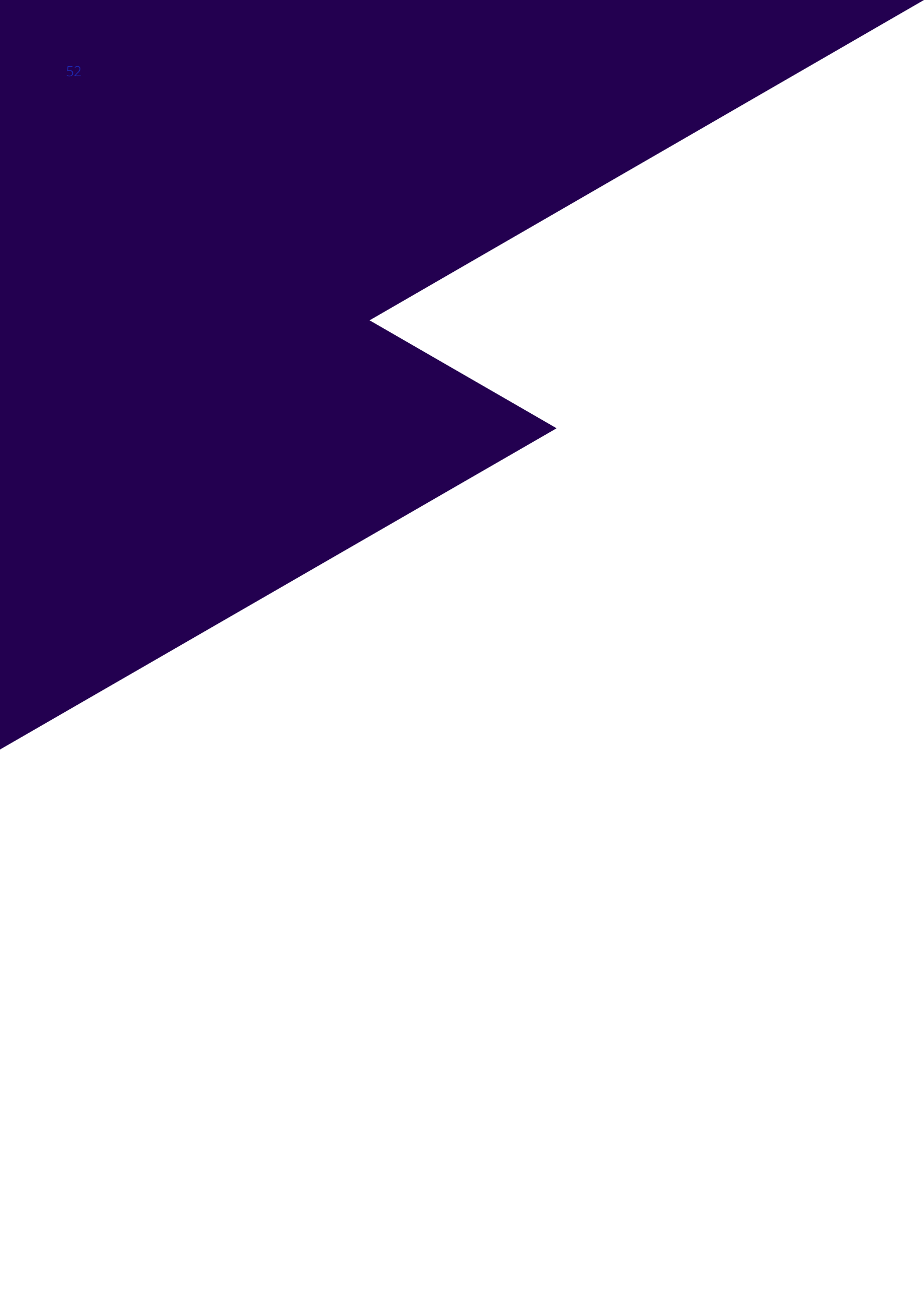
Although researchers published studies that found that substance abuse is higher amongst specific groups, and that prevalence of mental illness is higher amongst group A than group B, they must consider the ways in which the publication and dissemination of findings can create or add to the stigma experienced by marginalized groups. Although researchers published these studies with the intent of finding solutions and promoting awareness, researchers can inadvertently put these groups at risk of retribution, condemnation or harmful actions.

Inadvertent negative consequences can be avoided with thorough local processes of consultation. For example, beneficiary advisory groups can provide guidance on which findings might create risks of harm or have negative consequences for marginalized groups.



▶ National Statistics office: case study. Increasing impact of statistical survey data in country T

In Country T, NSOs publish statistical survey data on forced labour publicly, so they can be used by government ministries, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector. As statistical data collected by NSOs constitute a public good, this increases the potential impact of data collected, as it is open to multiple stakeholders implicated in researching or developing policies related to forced labour.



Conclusion

Research, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, has the potential to improve the circumstances for research participants and for the wider population by ensuring findings are used to reduce forced labour. However, research can also expose research participants to harms, raising ethical and safety challenges.

Through recommended questions and actions, these guidelines provide contextual guidance for research teams to develop approaches to mitigate risk and gather resources to support the ethical design, preparation, implementation and dissemination of studies on forced labour.

To implement these guidelines in the most effective way, research teams should engage with well-positioned stakeholders, including local partners and community members. This type of coordination will help create a network for knowledge-sharing, safe and effective referrals, and, thus, strong ethical and safety procedures to support high-quality data collection and dissemination. Each research team is responsible for ensuring that a study is ethical and identifying the ways in which this guidance can be applied to produce ethical and equitable research within their research context.

At the most basic level of ethical research, researchers must adhere to the principle of “do no harm”, meaning that researchers shall ensure that study participants are not worse off for having participated in the research. In practice, the research team should work proactively to assess and mitigate risks of harm and implement measures to protect survey participants, research team members, and the community that is under study. This implies understanding the circumstances and factors that increase the risk of being exposed to harm, including the cultural, political, social and economic context, and the exposure of research subjects to potentially traumatic events. Against this framework, it is particularly relevant to consider any legal obligation to report abuses or exploitation and its safety implications, particularly when there are limited or poor-quality support services.

However other principles can help ensure that research goes beyond the “do no harm” principle and maximizes the potential benefits of the research to study participants. These are as follows:

- **Respect for autonomy of participants.** Each research participant’s autonomy and decision-making should be respected, and those with different capacities protected. Upholding the dignity of participants, whether they be adults or children, involves accepting their decision, when fully informed, to participate in the research or not and to withdraw at any moment. Recall that children have a right to express their own views in all matters affecting them, and their views should be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.¹⁷
- **Informed consent.** Informed consent procedures should be applied that ensure research study participants clearly understand the study and provide their consent without any duress, inducement or pressure. Informed consent is usually – though not exclusively – obtained from those aged 18 years and older, and procedures for obtaining it must ensure that participants understand the consent language, know they can decline for any reason, and comprehend their right to withdraw their consent at any time without giving reason and without fear of negative consequences. For children below 18 years, it is recommended whenever possible or appropriate to gain informed consent from a parent or legal guardian and to gain informed assent from the child using age-appropriate language.
- **Beneficence and non-maleficence.** Ethical and safety protocols should be guided by the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence, which requires researchers to maximize the benefit of the research and minimize potential risks of harm, including physical, legal, economic, psychological or social harm to study participants and researchers. If harm is possible, researchers should consider not proceeding with the research.
- **Equitable treatment of study participants.** Equitable treatment of study participants starts at the very beginning of the research and should be ensured throughout the study. While individuals should be sampled based on whether they meet the research inclusion and exclusion criteria, in accordance with the research objectives, ethical considerations at the research and sampling design stage can limit bias and discrimination. At the data collection phase, the selection of a safe location for an interview, and attention to circumstances such as gender or disability, are elements that can contribute to equitable treatment of research participants. At the data analysis phase, to the extent possible, members of the target community should be involved in the final interpretation of the findings and recommendations to offer input and identify interpretations that could cause harm to study participants or beneficiaries. The dissemination of research findings also entails ethical obligations, particularly the obligation to communicate findings to study participants, the local population and other stakeholders. The communication of the findings should be conducted in a language that is easy to understand.
- **Confidentiality.** Confidentiality and data protection should be maintained to ensure that study participants’ identities are concealed.
- **Transparency.** Research methods should be transparent, and findings should faithfully represent an unbiased and accurate interpretation of the data without causing harm to the study population. The information should be interpreted and analysed in a way that accurately represents the situation, does not put the respondents at risk, and contributes to the advancement of interventions that address forced labour.

¹⁷ See Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

The above elements shall be reflected in written ethical and safety protocols describing the main protective strategies for study participants and research team members throughout each research phase. Ethics protocols are specific to local contexts and populations as well as the specific study. Examples of such protocols are not given to provide “model answers”; instead, we list key questions and critical steps and processes that should be considered. The most effective ethical protocol needs to be locally informed, and it is best practice for research ethics protocols to be submitted to local ethical review boards, or institutional review boards, so that ethical risks are considered by a third party not involved in the research. In addition to ensuring that research is conducted according to high ethical standards, ethics approval also gives the research local and international credibility and ensures that results will be eligible for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Ensuring that ethics is mainstreamed in the research process from its design to the communication of results requires investment in both time and financial resources. However, this investment will not only avoid any harm to research subjects and research team members; it will also contribute to the quality of the research, improve the circumstances for research participants, and help ensure that findings are used to address forced labour.

► References

Bauer, Greta R., Siobhan M. Churchill, Mayuri Mahendran, Chantel Walwyn, Daniel Lizotte, and Alma Angelica Villa-Rueda. 2021. "Intersectionality in Quantitative Research: A Systematic Review of Its Emergence and Applications of Theory and Methods." *SSM – Population Health* 14 (June 2021): 100798. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352827321000732>.

Benes, Elisa M., and Kieran Walsh. 2018. *ILO LFS Pilot Studies Cognitive Interviewing Tests: Methodology, Process and Outcomes*. ILO Statistical Methodology Series. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_627874.pdf.

Duckworth, Melanie P., and Victoria M. Follette. 2012. *Retraumatization: Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention*. New York: Routledge.

Durham University Centre for Social Justice and Community Action. 2011. *Community-Based Participatory Research: Ethical Challenges*. Available at: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/departments-/sociology/Research-Briefing-9---CBPR-Ethical-Challenges.pdf>.

Easton, Helen, and Roger Matthews. 2015. "Getting the Balance Right: The Ethics of Researching Women Trafficked for Commercial Sexual Exploitation." *Studies of Organized Crime* 13: 11–32.

European Parliament. 1995. Chapter 1, Article 2a of European Parliament and Council Directive 95/46/EC. *Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals regarding the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31995L0046>.

Focus on Labour Exploitation. 2021. *Experts by Experience: Conducting Feminist Participatory Action Research with Workers in High-Risk Sectors*.

Geddes, Alistair, Charlie Parker, and Sam Scott. 2017. "When the Snowball Fails to Roll and the Use of 'Horizontal' Networking in Qualitative Social Research." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21 (3): 347–358.

Goodhand, Jonathan. 2000. "Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability." *FMR* 8 (January 2000): 12–14.

ILO. 2005. *Ethical Considerations When Conducting Research on Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Nepal, 2005*. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_1341/lang--en/index.htm.

ILO. 2018. *20th International Conference on Labour Statisticians (ICLS), Geneva, 10–19 October 2018*. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_646530/lang--en/index.htm.

ILO. Forthcoming. *Ethical Guidelines for Research on Child Labour*.

Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. 2016. *De-Identification Guidelines for Structured Data*. Available at: <https://www.ipc.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Deidentification-Guidelines-for-Structured-Data.pdf>.

Kotch, Jonathan B. 2000. "Ethical Issues in Longitudinal Child Maltreatment Research." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 15 (7): 696–709.

Lee-Ibarra, Joyce. 2021. "Data Equity: What Is It, and Why Does It Matter?" JLI Consulting, 10 July 2021. Available at: <https://www.jliconsultinghawaii.com/blog/2020/7/10/data-equity-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-matter>.

Mfutso-Bengo, Joseph, Francis Masiye, and Adamson Muula. 2008. "Ethical Challenges in Conducting Research in Humanitarian Crisis Situations." *Malawi Medical Journal* 20 (2).

Oosterhoff, Pauline, and Rituu Nanda. 2020. "Participatory Action on Research on Alcoholism and Bonded Labour in Times of Prohibition in India." *Educational Action Research* 30 (3).

Runyan, Desmond K., Patrick A. Curtis, Wanda M. Hunter, Maureen M. Black, Jonathan B. Kotch, Shrikant Bangdiwala et al. 1998. "Longscan: A Consortium for Longitudinal Studies of Maltreatment and the Life Course of Children." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 3 (3).

United States Department of State. 2018. *2018 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nepal*. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-trafficking-in-persons-report/nepal/>.

University of Oxford. 2021. "Informed Consent: Information and Guidance for Researchers." In *Research Support: Governance and Integrity*. Available at: <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/consent#:~:text=What%20is%20informed%20consent%3F,before%20they%20enter%20the%20research>.

USAID (United States Agency for International Development). 2016. "Organizational Capacity Assessment: Resources." In *USAID Learning Lab*. Available at: <https://usaidlearninglab.org/resources/organizational-capacity-assessment>.

Wilkinson, Martin, and Andrew Moore. 1997. "Inducement in Research." *Bioethics* 11 (5): 373–389.

Williamson, Emma, and Hilary Abrahams. 2010. *Evaluation of the Bristol Freedom Programme*. University of Bristol. <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/migrated/documents/rj4997finalreport.pdf>.

Zimmerman, Cathy, and Charlotte Watts. 2003. *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42765>.

▶ Appendix: Methodology

This research builds on a desk-based and consultative approach with global and country experts and researchers who are well versed in the study of forced labour in various contexts. Several methods were used to develop this guidance.

Method 1. Rapid evidence assessment

This followed three steps to ensure a rigorous approach to identifying, selecting and synthesizing evidence.

1. Review of the current research material (studies, monitoring reports, methodological approaches, ethical guidelines, practices and training sessions).
 - ▶ What are existing guidelines and study protocols for research on forced labour?
2. Synthesis and assessment of current debates and concepts in ethical research along major themes surrounding research on vulnerable groups.
 - ▶ What are the questions and ethical dilemmas for conducting research on forced labour?
3. Identification of gaps, challenges and opportunities for protection from harm when conducting research with vulnerable groups.
 - ▶ What key elements and considerations are necessary? What elements have been missing from previous guidance? What aspects need to be further supported, addressed or developed for safe and ethical research on forced labour?

Method 2. Expert discussions: Global and country level

This involved case studies and consultations at both the global and country levels.

- ▶ Global expert group discussion (held remotely on 16 August 2021) with researchers and practitioners who work on forced labour from a variety of geographical, industry and sector perspectives.
- ▶ National expert group discussions (one per case study country) to inform country-level research practices. These discussions targeted statisticians, qualitative researchers and service providers. The expert group discussions were conducted between 27 August and 1 September 2021.

Findings from these expert group discussions were triangulated with the rapid evidence assessment, which provided a contextualized understanding of how research on forced labour operates in the field, across different contexts. The case studies brought a richer understanding of the variety of complexities and vulnerabilities associated with research on forced labour and informed the development of the guidelines by identifying or confirming key areas that require attention. Ultimately, the ethical guidance draws on study participants' feedback, well-informed recommendations, suggested good practices, and lessons learned from past experiences. The research team drew lessons and good practices from the sessions held with researchers in three case study countries.

The criteria for selecting the case study countries were as follows:

- documented practices of forced labour;
- types, forms and sectors of forced labour defined by the ILO International Conference of Labour Statisticians, from overt to more hidden forms;
- relevant research at the country level;
- geographical representation and accessibility;
- buy-in and existing expertise from a core number of local stakeholders;
- regular settings and fragile or conflict settings.

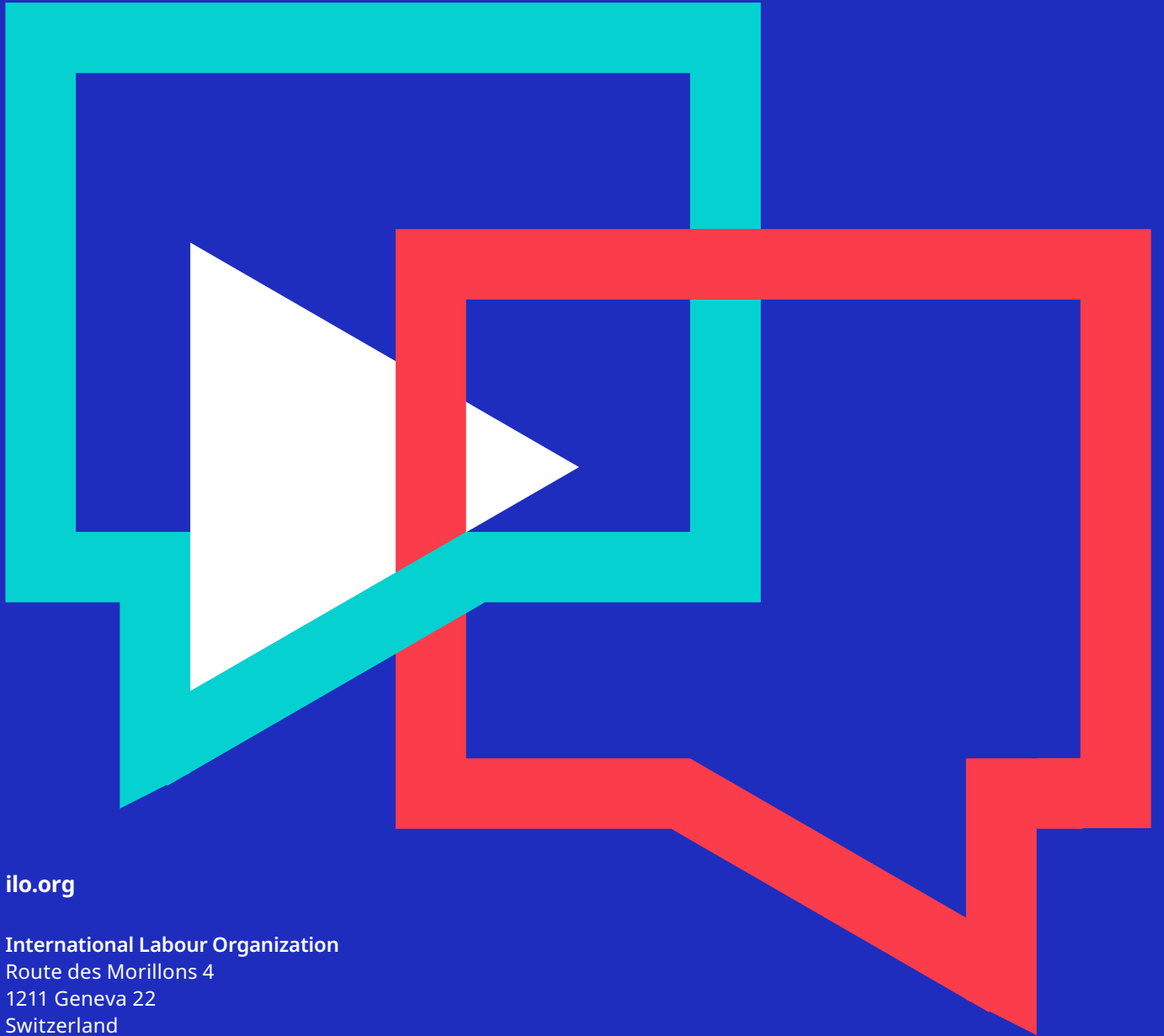
Based on these criteria, 16 countries were selected for further examination, based on recommendations from the Committee of Experts. From these, four countries (anonymized in the table below) were selected to ensure geographical diversity and cover a range of forced labour situations and different capacities for local research. Due to the events of August 2021, the Afghanistan case study had to be removed.

| Forms of forced labour | Country 1 (West Africa) | Country 2 (Central Asia) | Country 3 (South Asia) | Country 4 (South America) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| From more overt to more hidden forms of forced labour, within diverse sectors and at internal, regional or international level | Agriculture (cocoa, coffee) | Hazardous child labour | Construction | Agriculture (coffee) |
| | Domestic work | Agriculture | Manufacturing (carpet weaving) | Construction |
| | Mining, manufacturing, carpentry, construction | Bonded labour (brick kilns, construction, carpet weaving) | Garment or textile industry | Domestic work |
| | Commercial sexual exploitation | Mining (coal, gold, salt) | Commercial sexual exploitation | Commercial sexual exploitation |
| | Drug trafficking | Domestic work | Domestic work | Forced labour in drug trafficking |
| | Forced begging | Commercial sexual exploitation | Forced labour in drug trafficking | |
| | | Forced recruitment for armed groups | Forced begging | |

Method 3. Expert review by the ILO International Advisory Board

This involved a presentation on 30 September 2021 to members of the ILO International Advisory Board¹⁸ to receive and incorporate feedback contributing to the development and finalization of the guidelines.

¹⁸ The International Advisory Board (IAB) has been established by the ILO within the framework of the MAP16 and RTA projects to provide technical and strategic advice and guidance regarding child labour and forced labour statistics and research. It convenes technical experts from USDOL, international organizations (ILO, IOM, UN University, UNICEF and UNODC), academia and Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder countries, or other countries with expertise in research on child labour or forced labour; and the external research and development community.



ilo.org

International Labour Organization
Route des Morillons 4
1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland