Safeguarding Children in Research

1st April 2015
LINEA Meeting, Cumberland Lodge, UK
Key Considerations:

- Assessing the harms and risks is not always straightforward.
- Ethical regulatory & review processes in different contexts.
- Need for appropriate follow-up & referral services.
- Harm can occur in both quantitative & qualitative research.
- Safety management of data is integral.
- Expect contingent ethics responses in the field.
Safeguarding Principles

- ‘Do no harm’
- Voluntary Participation
- Confidentiality
- Appropriate referral
- Ethics Boards & Reviews
‘Do no harm’

• Harm is often invisible...

• Consider research topic, methods, socio-political context, local setting;

• Match to child’s capacity, maturity and recovery;

• When to inform parents/care-givers/community members?

• Incompetent researchers and poor practice can harm children;

• Take care when disseminating research findings;
Voluntary (& Meaningful) Participation

• Know your target group!
• Autonomy and agency of respondents;
• Identify inclusion and exclusion criteria;
• The ‘right to say no’;
• Equitable participation;
• Carefully consider remunerations & promises;
• Discuss safety, participation & ethics with children;
• Be sensitive to power differentials;
Question for Discussion:

What criteria could be used to balance children’s right to participation with the right to protection?
Appropriate Referral

- Develop guidelines on dealing with disclosure or distress & confidentiality;
- Be aware of resources that are available (or not!);
- Understand the negative and legal implications of reporting/referral;
- Consider psychosocial harms post field research;
- Use ‘visiting cards’ with relevant contact information;
Confidentiality

- Develop guidelines for when researchers suspect on-going abuse;
- Explain limits of confidentiality re: disclosure;
- Ensure anonymisation of respondents and locations;
- Identify ‘private spaces’ for research respondents participation;
- Establish data storage and data retention policy;
Research Ethics Review Boards

• Based on international standards, guidelines, professional associations and Codes;
• Reflect national regulations;
• Key cultural and professional concepts of risk;
• May be seen as supportive or restrictive;
• Cannot replace researchers’ contingent ethics;
• Ensure Research Protocol with robust child protection framework;
Final Thoughts....

• Ethical guidelines often struggle to provide concrete guidance for researchers;
• Emphasizes the central role of the researcher in responding to safeguarding considerations;
• Challenge is what to do if no services available for referral;
• Autonomy/agency issues vs. Protection;
• Cultural, social, political and economic factors pose particular challenges;
Thank you!

Mark Capaldi
Head of Research and Policy
Email: markc@ecpat.net