



Guidance on Research

Ascend Learning & Innovation Fund

Ascend
West and Central Africa



Guidance on research and ethics review

In universities and many other research organisations, Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and/or Research Ethics Committees (RECs), alongside national ethical review boards, are responsible for ensuring that research activity is conducted in a manner consistent with established ethical standards. Whether an activity is labelled “research” or “non-research”, FCDO has provided new guidance on their principles and standards that should underpin and guide all research evaluation and monitoring activities funded by FCDO - **FCDO Ethical Guidance for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Activities** (May 2019). The guidance document is structured primarily around the monitoring and evaluation work that typically falls outside of the remit of IRBs and RECs, to ensure that the collection and use of all data commissioned by FCDO is conducted in a manner that adheres to appropriate ethical standards, at each of the 4 stages of the project cycle: Stage 1: Commissioning, planning and design; Stage 2: Data collection and analysis; Stage 3: Reporting, dissemination and use of evidence; and Stage 4: Monitoring, follow up and data use.

FCDO notes that **all research, evaluation and monitoring activities should receive ethical clearance from local institutional review in advance of being implemented**. In many countries ethical clearance is provided by the Ethical Committee for Health Research in the Ministry of Health. In some situations, the Ministries of Health may consider the proposed activity to be part of routine **public health practice, program evaluation, or quality improvement** and therefore do not need a formal institutional IRB or REC review. Regardless of whatever waivers are provided, permission to conduct research, evaluation, or monitoring activities in a community should still be obtained from community leaders upon arrival and all individuals who are asked to participate in the activity provide written or verbal consent prior to participation.

If it is not clear if a particular activity should receive ethical clearance **do not attempt to determine this for yourself. Instead, please consult with the fund team** (fundteam@ascendwest-innovationfund.org).