Appendix G: UNAM Ethical Guidelines

University of Namibia Research Ethics Guidelines

(Draft, not for circulation)

Authors
Kapiriri L., Elize de Valliers, Ashton D, Shannon H together with participants at The UNAM/UoT workshop on capacity building for HIV/AIDS
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Preface

Forward
1. Background

1.1 General definitions

Research ethics: a branch of applied normative ethics that attempts to resolve particular moral problems associated with the pursuit of biomedical/social research such as: “Is proxy consent ever justifiable- if so under what circumstances? Should societal benefit from the research outweigh individual risks?”

Research: A set of scientific activities whose aim is to contribute to generalizable knowledge about chemical, physiological, psychological processes involving human functioning. Research can be; (i) therapeutic where the primary aim is to improve research participants’ quality of life by relieving pain, restoring health, maintaining health or prolonging life such as in most of the biomedical research and, (ii) non-therapeutic research where the primary focus is to furnish data that contributes to generalizable knowledge but providing therapy for research subjects is not regarded as a primary aim, such as social science research.

Codes of conduct: Legally binding documents, such as the Nuremberg code of 1947, which should be strictly observed, with possible legal consequences if not adhered to.

Ethical Guidelines: Guide and influence the decisions to be made. They are inspired by a purpose to improve on prevailing practice and remedy its defects. Guidelines have no legal consequences.

Although codes and international guidelines should and do provide a framework for national and institutional guidelines, researchers may face challenges if these are just exported without realising the inherent limitations in other settings. Hence every effort should be made to adapt the guidelines should be adapted to the local culture and norms.
1.2 Namibian National guidelines

The Ministry of Health and Social Services has two guiding documents on research namely; the Research Management Policy and the Guidelines on Clinical Trials on Human Subjects. Researchers interested in guidelines on clinical trials are referred to these documents.

1.3 Justification for research guidelines for UNAM

There is need for the University of Namibia to have research ethics guidelines based on the national policy and guidelines because:

- The university is a teaching institution and has an obligation to train students to carry out "ethically sound research"

- The university is a research institution and university researchers need guidance that addresses their special ethical issues.

- The university is an organisation with a culture of itself which should be recognised.

- The university as the highest institution of learning has a moral obligation to act as "gate keepers” for the research participants and their communities.

2. Overview of ethical principles

2.1 The principle of non-maleficence

Non-maleficence (the duty to avoid, prevent or minimise harm to others) is directly related to balancing harms and benefits. Research subjects must not be subjected to unnecessary risks of harm, and their participation in research must be essential to achieving scientifically and societally important aims that cannot be realised without the participation of human subjects. In addition, it should be kept in mind that the principle of minimising
harm requires that the research involve the smallest number of human subjects and the smallest number of tests on these subjects that will ensure scientifically valid data.

2.2 The principle of beneficence

The principle of beneficence imposes a duty to benefit others and, in research ethics, a duty to maximise net benefits. The principle has particular relevance for researchers in professions such as social work, education, health care and applied psychology. As noted earlier, human research is intended to advance knowledge or to produce benefits to subjects themselves, to other individuals or to society as a whole. In most research, the primary benefits are the advancement of knowledge and benefits to society as a whole.

2.3 The principle of autonomy

The principle of autonomy recognises the sovereignty, liberty or freedom of an individual to have control of what happens to them. This principle safeguards individual rights and dignity and forms a basis for most of the ethical principles such as the respect for human dignity, informed consent, respect for privacy and confidentiality (presented in section 3.0).

2.4 The principle of justice

The principle of justice refers to the ethical obligation to treat each person in accordance with what is considered to be fair, and morally right. There are two types of justice: (i) Procedural justice: concerned with the ethics review processes. This demands that fair methods, standards and procedures for reviewing research protocols are used, and that the process is effectively independent. (ii) Distributive justice: requiring equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of research in classes of persons. It seeks to protect individuals or communities from undue research burdens and risks.

The four principles are operationalized in the general guiding principles below.
3.0 General guiding principles

3.1 Respect of human dignity

One of the cardinal principles of modern research ethics is respect for human dignity. This principle seeks to protect the multiple interests of the person from physical to psychological to cultural integrity.

3.2 Respect of vulnerable persons

The category of vulnerable persons is very broad and may include, children, people who are not legally competent to consent, the mentally incompetent, “captive” groups such as employees, students, legal wards and the therapeutically dependent.

In cases where participants are vulnerable because their mental or behavioural disorders prevent them from adequately providing informed consent, permission must be obtained from a responsible family member or a legally authorised representative in accordance with applicable laws. Therefore, vulnerable persons with diminished competence and/or decision-making capacity must be safeguarded with special protection against abuse, exploitation or discrimination.

3.3 Respect of free and informed consent

3.3.1 Definition

From a human rights perspective, the right to free and informed choice derives from the right to security of the person; that is, the right to have control over what happens to one’s body. This is explicit in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and
Political Rights, as well as Article 7 of the same treaty which guarantees the right not to be “subjected without free consent to medical or scientific experimentation”

There are three main elements of informed consent (Belmont report) namely information, comprehension and voluntariness.

3.3.2 Information

Researchers should provide sufficient information to research participants, which should include:

- Introduction of the investigator (and their contacts) and sponsor of the research (where applicable)
- The research purpose, procedure, participant selection
- Anticipated risks, benefits and outcomes
- Opportunity to ask questions
- Freedom to withdraw from the study
- Any additional factors that might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate.
- Should a research require concealment of information, participants should be given the reasons for concealment as soon, as is practically possible.
- How participant’s confidentiality is going to be ensured.
- How the results/ information gathered is going to be used/ publicised

3.3.3 Comprehension

Considers the manner and context in which the information is conveyed. The following should be considered,

- Researcher should consider organised presentation of information;
- Evaluate participants competence to understand the information provided;
- In case participants have limited understanding (terminally ill patients, or there are language barriers), involve third parties in obtaining informed consent, and in the research process.
3.3.4 Voluntariness

Informed consent is only valid when it is voluntary and free of coercion and undue influence by the researcher. Researchers should enhance the protection of vulnerable subjects and consider position of authority and prevent manipulation.

In addition to the elements of informed consent; there are cross-cultural concerns which should be considered.

3.3.5 Cross-cultural issues and informed consent

Depending on the local context and norms, the researcher should use locally accepted procedures to obtain informed consent. In some contexts, this may mean first obtaining permission from a respected elder, community leader, mediator, or council in an effort to respect the hosting community. It is imperative that cultural meanings of informed consent and power relations be discussed with communities to ensure this principle is upheld (and civil society can often help this discussion). This, however, should not take precedence over the rights of the individual in providing consent.

Informed consent can be written or oral depending on the local context and the competence of the research participants. Informed consent should be obtained in a language that is easily understood by the research participant.

3.4 Respect for privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Researchers must establish secure safeguards of the confidentiality of participants’ research data. In light of social discrimination and stigma, particularly as experienced by individuals living with HIV/AIDS, privacy and confidentiality must be maintained, as they are considered fundamental to human dignity and autonomy. Standards of privacy and confidentiality protect the access, control and dissemination of personal information
3.5 Maximising benefit and minimising harm

The analysis, balance and distribution of harms and benefits (physical, psychological, social, economical and legal) are critical to the ethics of human research. In all types of research undertaken there is an underlying imperative that foreseeable harms should not outweigh anticipated benefits. Harm-benefit analysis thus affects the welfare and rights of participants, the informed assumption of harms and benefits, and the ethical justifications for competing research paths. Since the objectives of research consist of improving the well-being of humankind and advancing knowledge, it must be recognised that there are risks (a possibility of harm) and benefits linked to the process of betterment.

Researchers should ensure that the research design obtains the sought benefits and justifies the potential risks. They should have the competence to assess individuals or groups who likely to benefit or are at potential risk. Risk/benefits to immediate participants should have higher priority.

3.6 Respect for justice and inclusiveness

Researchers should mitigate institutionalised societal biases e.g. social, racial, cultural, gender, sexual, and prevent unjust selection of vulnerable participants.

Researchers should not discriminate between desirable or undesirable participants. They should also consider the order of preference in the selection of participants; vulnerable populations such as children, institutionalised persons should be protected.

4.0 Cross-cultural research considerations in research

Research involves "cross-cultural" interactions. The complexity of lived local moral experience may be obscured when ethical guidelines are simplistically applied to particular cases or settings.
Researchers should demonstrate awareness and sensitivity to the local cultural practices and norms in the communities where the research is undertaken (for example when entering a community and obtaining informed consent).

5.0 HIV/AIDS research

HIV/AIDS has had a big and negative impact on the Namibian population and the world at large. Consequently, there is a lot of interest in HIV/AIDS research.

Although the above principles should be considered in research involving human participants in HIV/AIDS, the potential ethical concerns are even more relevant. For example, there are cultural issues that are associated with HIV/AIDS and sexuality which may lead to unforeseeable harm due to cultural taboos, and associated stigma. HIV-infected people are vulnerable since they are often poor, may lack education, may be marginalised and stigmatised. This makes more people such as, orphaned children, the women, injection drug users and sex workers more vulnerable, in addition to those identified in section 3.2. Usually, vulnerability is not a permanent characteristic of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Rather, it is a state that changes based on the person’s situation at any point in time.

Researchers proposing to carry out HIV/AIDS-related research should demonstrate knowledge of the cultural and potential ethical concerns. They should also demonstrate competence to protect participants’ confidentiality, while balancing the risks and benefits for both the individual and communities.

6.0 The Researcher

6.1 Capacity of the researcher

Researchers and/or their supervisors should be knowledgeable, trained and competent enough to provide research participants with information about the research. They must also demonstrate the experience and capacity to carry out the proposed research.
6.2 Transparency and Academic freedom

 Investigators should have the right to publish adverse or negative findings and inform the relevant audiences without restrictions from the research sponsors. Investigators should also disclose the sponsors of the research and any potential limitations they may encounter during the research, publication and implementation (where applicable) processes.

6.3 Conflict of interest, Integrity, Scientific and academic professionalism

Conflict of interest is a situation where professional judgement is unduly influenced by secondary interests such as financial or professional benefits, which may influence the integrity of the research process and/or the reporting of the research findings.

Researchers should disclose all actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest which may interfere with their objectivity.
Researchers should conduct their research according to the established national and institutional laws and guidelines.
Researchers should demonstrate the potential contribution of the proposed research to either scientific knowledge, student's skills or to society at large.

6.4 Incentives/ coercion and withholding of information

Researchers should exclude the possibility of justified deception, undue influence and intimidation. Researchers should not give any unjustifiable assurances or rewards that may influence the potential participants decision to participate in a research. Deception of the study participant is not permissible. However, some information can be withheld till completion of the study in the interest of the quality of the study results.

Participants should be reimbursed for lost earnings, travel costs and other expenses incurred while taking part in a research study. Those not receiving direct benefits from
research may also be paid or compensated for inconvenience and may be entitled to receive free medical services. Payments and compensations should never undermine a person’s capacity to exercise free choice; otherwise this would invalidate consent. A Research Ethics Committee (REC) or an equivalent body should therefore always approve recompense.

6.5 Accountability, Releasing and publishing results

Researchers should demonstrate detailed accountability to their sponsors and the REC, with regards to the research problem, expected deliverables, budget, timeframe and a dissemination plan. At the conclusion of the study, they should provide copies of the research reports, and any other publications to the host institution. According to the University of Namibian policy, the researcher should also provide 10 copies of such publications or reports to the Information, Learning and Resource Center (ILRC) or the Northern Campus library.

Researchers should indicate in their proposal who has ownership of the data and clear mechanisms of accountability to the research participants.

6.6 Research approval

It is the primary responsibility of the researcher to abide with the institutional research ethics guidelines. The researcher should seek ethics approval first, from their home institution(s), then from any other existing relevant research ethics committees, and from the relevant local stakeholders (such as traditional chiefs and village head men..) before they contact the research participants.

They should also provide progress reports to the research ethics committees. The frequency should be determined by the ethical committees depending on the study.
Should there be any changes in the study procedures, the researcher should inform the REC.

7.0 The Research Ethics committees

International and national guidelines recommend that all countries and institutions, respectively, should have Research Ethics Committees (RECs) which should protect the interests of the research participants.

7.1 Recommended composition

RECs should be established in accordance with the applicable existing laws and regulations and in accordance with the local values. The REC should be composed in such a way as to ensure competence in evaluation of ethical aspects of the research proposals; as such, REC should be multidisciplinary, balancing age, gender and lay persons representing the interests of the general public.

7.2 Roles and responsibilities

The role of a REC in reviewing research is to contribute to the protection of the dignity, rights, safety and well being of actual and potential research participants

REC should be independent from the political, institutional, professional and market influences and should demonstrate competence and efficiency in their work.

REC are responsible for evaluating the proposed research before commencement and they should also ensure regular evaluation of ongoing studies that received a positive decision.

RECs should have standard operating procedures.
The composition, standard operations and guiding principles of the RECs should be publicized on a regular basis. And RECs should operate in accordance with their operating procedures.

8.0 The Ethical review process

8.1 Protocol review

The protocol should be distributed to the various members of the REC. The members reviewing the protocol should understand the purpose of the proposed study, and also be able to evaluate potential risks to the study participants. The office of research should decide if the proposal can be expedited or not; and whether the assessment can be done through mail or a meeting.

A summary of the REC comments/recommendations should be sent to the researcher when the final decision is made. Based on these, the researcher can either proceed to conduct the research if approved, or make the necessary revisions to the protocol, which should be re-submitted to the REC.

Once the study has been approved, REC should have the responsibility to ensure that the research is carried out as approved.

8.2 Protocol requirements

In general, a protocol must include information on the following issues:
1) Executive summary (the design, specific procedures, interview schedule, sampling strategies)
2) Study participants: A detailed description of the methods of recruiting the participants including their ages, the study settings and who and how the participants
will be contacted. A description of the information that will be provided to the participants.

3) Risks and Benefits: The REC should receive adequate information on the risks and benefits of the research to enable them to make a decision.

4) Consent: A detailed description of the type of information that will be given to the participants before they consent to participate, the form of informed consent proposed and its justification, the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality. A copy of the consent form should be submitted with the protocol.

8.3 Protocol format

1. Title page:
   - The title of the proposal
   - The names and faculty affiliations of the researcher

2. The purpose of the study

3. The study methods and procedures including:
   - a description of the study population
   - investigators relationship to the participants (if applicable)
   - a description of how informed consent will be obtained
   - a statement of any rewards or compensations which will be given to the participants
   - the information to be gathered and the sources of this information
   - Safeguards to ensure confidentiality

4. The consent forms, information statements, research tools or questionnaire, and any other relevant documentation.

9.0 Levels of review

Four levels of review may be considered; (I) full board, (ii) Expedited, (iii) Review by a student research ethics committee, (iv) Executive review.

9.1 Full Board Review
All research involving human participants should undergo full board review unless it meets the criteria for the other three reviews.

This includes research involving:
- vulnerable populations (Section 3.2, 5.0),
- experimental drugs or devices,
- invasive procedures,
- deception and sensitive questions or information about HIV/AIDS.

9.2 Expedited Review

Expedited review involves sending the proposal to two members of the REC who should provide their written assessment. This is sent to the researcher.

Research proposals can be expedited if the proposal involves no more than minimal risk OR, the proposal is a replication of a proposal that has been approved by the REC previously

9.3 Review by a Student Research Ethics Committee

This committee is responsible for reviewing course, individual and honours thesis research by undergraduate students. The proposals should meet the following criteria

- The research should be part of an undergraduate course, offered by the university
- The research involves no more than minimum risk
- The research is not of a faculty member’s research which has or is under research ethics review

9.4 Executive Review

Executive review involves review of the proposal by only the chair of the REC.

Proposals which have been previously approved by another ethics committee, those whose research does not involve human subjects and those who replicate previously approved research; can undergo executive review.

9.5 Decision Making by the REC

The REC may make the following decisions
1. Approved without questions or request for modification
2. Approve subject to clarification and/or revisions
3. Deferred, pending receipt of additional clarifying information
4. Deferred, pending revisions
5. Disapproved

In case a proposal is disapproved, the researcher can appeal.

9.6 Procedures of appeals

The REC should have clear appeals mechanisms and researchers should have an opportunity to appeal should they feel aggrieved by the decision made by the REC.
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Appendix H: Closing Remarks

CLOSING BY MR AKISER POMUTI
DIRECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY CENTRAL CONSULTANCY BUREAU
(UCCB)

HIV/AIDS CAPACITY BUILDING AND MAINSTREAMING WORKSHOP

- Director of Ceremonies
- Representatives from the university of Toronto
- UNAM Academics
- Deans of Faculties and Heads of Centres
- The organizing committee
- Dear workshop participants

It is a great pleasure for me today, to be ranted this opportunity to come and say some closing remarks at this important workshop where all of you have been busy trying to address issues related to HIV/AIDS capacity building and mainstreaming at the University of Namibia for the last two weeks. I am extremely happy with the fact that the University of Namibia has a strong partnership with the University of Toronto and through this partnership has managed to organize this important workshop, through the South North Collaboration.

I am informed that this workshop was aimed at mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into all activities of the University and also to build the capacity of all participants on issues related to this dreadful disease.

As you all might know by now (especially our visitors), the University of Namibia is expected to be a lead institution of higher learning in producing highly educated and skilled graduates with useful information on the prevention, care and support related to HIV/AIDS into the general population. As part of the education sector, UMAN is committed to its obligation as stipulated in the national HIV/AIDS NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN (MTP
II; 2004). I am convinced that if we mainstream HIV/AIDS effectively into our programmes we shall in the end provide all of our students with enabling information which can facilitate their meaningful contributions in the fight against HIV/AIDS at the end of their studies.

I looked at the objectives of this workshop and I believe you can achieve most of your expectations. Is it right for me to conclude that you have reached a common understanding on the concept ‘mainstreaming’ and cold at least agree on the process to be followed when mainstreaming? If so, then you as participants should be happy and proud of yourself for your hard work in this regard.

I was informed hat you also have developed some teaching modules on HIV/AIDS as related to various topical issues, among these are gender, culture, counseling, management and care, research methods and the guidelines for ethics which the University can use to mainstream into its existing programmes and to offer as certificate courses to the general public and various sectors. I am touched by the fact that all topics addressed are of importance in the fight against HIV/AIDS in this country if not in the world. You are really committed to fulfilling the mandate of the University of education, research and community services.

After this workshop, the UNAM colleagues must commit themselves to a larger extent to negotiate and sell these modules to all those involved in teaching and research; and even to advice the UNAM management on the next step to ensure that HIV/AIDS is addressed properly at all levels. I would like to warn you that this is long to be a battle with most of the academics but it is your duty to convince the UNAM Management to take a stand with regard to some of these important issues.

I am informed that most modules you have developed will allow people to take such courses at certificate and diploma levels although some are aimed at degree levels. This fulfills one of your objectives which is “to ensure that curriculum development work you have completed is linked to the broader HIV/AIDS management needs of Namibia through the active participation of government and non-governmental organizations.”
The certificate modulates will be hosted in the UCCB to provide those in the general public and government/private sectors/NGOs for their use and to inform their employees. I am happy to announce that UCCB will be happy to market these modules with your support by conducting trainings as requested.

It should also be understood that by running these courses at UNAM and outside UNAM we are continuing with the plans for developing capacities that are necessary among the Namibians.

I am also informed that the exciting UNAM/UofT student research program is to broaden other faculties beyond the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences which gives more chance for more students to become engaged in research on issues, not only related to health. I must stress that UNAM must work towards the creation of a module that would earn such students some credits in all faculties.

Joint research is another area that is of importance for UNAM where faculties and possibly students could learn to share and network with other members from University of Toronto. I am requesting the representatives from the University of Toronto together with our faculties to identify projects of common interest and carry out research jointly to answer most of the questions related to HIV/AIDS in Namibia and in the world. We at the UCCB will be happy to be of assistance in this research.

I am looking forward to receiving the outcomes of the workshop and I hope that such outcomes can be replicated at other Universities in Southern Africa and in other regions. I also hope that this workshop process could serve as a model for comprehensive and holistic tertiary responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa. I am particularly happy that Prof Otaala was fully involved in the process and I know he can help disseminate this type of work and partnership at various foras among Universities in the sub-region.

I am also happy that UCCB’s Capacity Building and Organizational Development Advisor, Prof. Diana Ashton, has also been involved in this process.
It is my hope and belief that the outcomes of this workshop will revamp the UNAM programmes with regard to HIV/AIDS education and through that, it will put UNAM on the map as a lead Institution of Higher Learning in the country in addressing the HIV/AIDS in Namibia.

With these few words, I declare this workshop closed and let us all continue fighting this dreadful disease.

I THANK YOU.
# APPENDIX I: WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

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* unable to attend workshop
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