Ethics Guidelines of the German Network for Forced Migration Studies

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PREAMBLE

The multidisciplinary and multimethod field of Forced Migration Studies focuses on various aspects of displacement and demands the utmost commitment to rigorous ethical standards. Researchers working on forced migration must prioritise the human dignity, rights, safety and well-being of research respondents. This applies to all those involved: especially individuals with lived experience of displacement but also members of host communities, activists, journalists and those engaged in forced migration infrastructures, including policymakers, practitioners and legal advocates. Researchers are obliged to ensure ethically responsible data collection, management, analysis and dissemination, to do no harm and prevent any form of harm occurring, to assess their work's impact on all those involved as well as to carefully consider the interests of and potential conflicts of interest between diverse stakeholders – including interlocutors, funders and scholars.

The *Ethics Guidelines of the German Network for Forced Migration Studies* (Netzwerk Fluchtforschung e.V.) aim to support ethical research practices in Forced Migration Studies. The Network's Executive Board appointed Ulrike Krause, Franzisca Zanker and Christiane Fröhlich to prepare the Guidelines in 2023 after the need for such a framework document had been voiced in discussions several times since 2018. The Guidelines were refined and finalised in 2024 based on a participatory process with Network members and additional scholars with and without lived experience of displacement (see Annex 1); they draw on existing codes of ethics and long-standing debates about research ethics in Forced Migration Studies (see Annex 2).

The Guidelines place the respect for human dignity and safeguarding the rights and well-being of all research participants, especially but not exclusively those with lived experience of displacement, at the heart of all research processes. The aim is to support ethical considerations, reflections and practices in Forced Migration Studies scholarship regardless of the chosen research methods. The Guidelines provide a practical framework for academics to make ethically informed decisions throughout the research process.

The Guidelines approach research ethics as both a code of conduct as well as a broader framework for normative reflection. As a code of conduct, research ethics serve to outline the fundamental principles which should inform scholars' approaches to all those involved and the contexts: namely, to ensure they do no harm and prioritise the dignity, rights, well-being and safety of all involved persons. As a framework for normative reflection, research ethics offer a means to deliberate on and refine ethically informed research processes, including via close consideration of diverse social, political, cultural and economic perspectives. Both the code and stimuli for normative reflections serve as a guide which scholars will need to adapt to the individual research project.

1. PLANNING AND DESIGNING THE RESEARCH

Ethical considerations are an inherent part of the research process, and must, as such, be made central to research design and planning. Necessary early reflections include researchers' skill sets and intersectional positionalities, the suitability of methods, access to interlocutors and contexts, research relations and power dynamics, as well as structural requirements regarding ethical clearance and formal approval of research.

1.1. Preliminary ethical considerations

In the early stages of research planning and design, it must be evaluated whether empirical work with individuals with and without lived experience of displacement is necessary to answer the research question(s) to hand, and whether scholars have the requisite methodological and scientific training and know-how to carry out the planned research. These fundamental ethical considerations are crucial to avoid asking interlocutors unnecessary questions and potentially retraumatising, stigmatising and othering them through their participation in the research.

Researchers must further familiarise themselves with the persons and contexts of their research, be aware of the moral obligations which may ensue therewith, as well as assess potential effects. Possible trauma experienced by interlocutors must be considered and appropriate methodological approaches for sensitive data collection designed. To ensure that researchers do no harm (see 2.3.) and negate bias (e.g. arising from language, accessibility of interlocutors, cultural sensitivity, representation and similar), strategies for procedures are necessary.

Deliberations on language are essential, including whether interlocutors will be able to choose in which language they participate and how (the choice of) language may affect the information they share. Sampling strategies must thoroughly reflect social and cultural diversity and dynamics and, where possible, should aim for diversity in terms of age, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities and further identity markers. Careful consideration of diversity is crucial to preventing a biased sample, and to enable the production of more nuanced findings.

1.2. Reflecting on researchers' intersectional positionalities

It is important that researchers recognise, deliberate on and manage personal interests, values, biases and privileges during the research. To pursue and uphold professional integrity, researchers should consider their individual positionalities, including vis-à-vis gender identity, ethnicity, class, education, passport, language, insider/outsider/in-betweener, cultural belonging and further identity markers. They should reflect on how these factors may affect the research process, and plan concrete ways to address them. Researchers should also critically assess and self-reflect on the chosen topics, methods and individuals involved, as well as their own abilities, know-how and skills – and, if necessary, acquire additional training. This is relevant not only to research with human beings but also on texts such as media, visual arts and legal documents.

While central to the planning stage, these considerations are not limited to it; scholars should continuously assess and self-reflect on their intersectional positionalities throughout the research process, including during the course of data collection, analysis and dissemination.

1.3. Power and hierarchy in research

Conducting research with humans always requires extensive ethical reflection on power and hierarchy. This is particularly important in studies with individuals with lived experience of displacement and/or those involved in forced migration infrastructures in diverse capacities.

Scholars must seek to reflect on and understand power structures in research processes, including the relationships with those persons involved in or excluded from them as well as arising from social and cultural dynamics. Based on this awareness, they should design research projects which minimise hierarchical decision-making by ensuring interlocutors' own interests and concerns are heard, respected and integrated, therewith laying the grounds for relationships of trust to develop with them. Researchers should carefully assess the contexts and openly discuss with interlocutors where and how interactions should take place to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Where possible, feasible and applicable, inclusive, participatory and/or collaborative methodologies should be used so that individuals with lived experience of displacement and other interlocutors are partners in the design, implementation and dissemination of research (see chapter 3).

1.4. Trauma sensitivity, care and well-being for all involved in research

Research can be intense, and scholars are responsible for considering the wellbeing of all those involved – including interlocutors and each member of the research team. While this must be ensured throughout, appropriate measures and means for (self-)care and trauma sensitivity should be established from the outset. Placing (self-)care centre stage in one's research design and planning means developing and integrating strategies for safeguarding mental, emotional and physical well-being. This can include, for example, strategies for respondents such as providing information on their rights, on psychological, economic and legal assistance or on ways to contact the researchers in the future. Strategies for researchers can include establishing support networks with other scholars, developing and discussing approaches for dealing with potentially traumatising material or accessing counselling services available at one's research institution or university. Researchers are responsible for designing and implementing appropriate strategies. Depending on the research focus, the development of a trauma-sensitive research design is necessary, and it may be helpful for project members to access trauma-informed research training beforehand.

1.5. Ethical clearance and research approval at universities and in respective countries

Scholars are responsible for familiarising themselves with all the ethical and research requirements at their institution and in the country in which research takes place at the beginning of the research. Assessments of projects for ethical clearance by institutional review boards are not yet required for all research endeavours at institutions of higher education in Germany or elsewhere. However, this is standard procedure regarding the research process in many countries worldwide and must be considered and pursued to ensure ethical work. Moreover, research permits are obligatory in many countries to conduct research, with scholars responsible for obtaining them from respective government ministries.

Local, national and regional regulations are evolving constantly, so when planning projects the necessary time to gather information about such requirements and to obtain ethical clearance and research approval must be factored in.

2. RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN FORCED MIGRATION RESEARCH

Conducting research with individuals with lived experience of displacement as well as further interlocutors requires close consideration of their safety, well-being and prospective means of involvement. Ensuring that scholars do no harm as well as establish approaches for informed consent, voluntary participation and data protection is important.

2.1. Do no harm

Upholding 'do no harm' as the golden rule is not sufficient in itself. Instead, scholars are responsible for making sure their actions do not create or increase risks to respondents. They are thus in charge of countering potential exploitation, coercion or harm, and of actively mitigating any adverse consequences arising from their research activities. This requires establishing suitable strategies that take into account social and cultural dynamics as well as different levels of vulnerability.

Do no harm should be implemented as a conceptual framework to prevent and offset danger prior to, during and after data collection alike. This involves continuously assessing potential risks, ensuring informed consent and promptly addressing any emerging ethical concerns to safeguard interlocutors' well-being and rights.

2.2. Right to safety and well-being

When gathering qualitative and/or quantitative data about and with individuals with and without lived experience of displacement, researchers are obliged to respect every involved person's rights and privacy and ensure their well-being and safety. Interlocutors have the right to be treated fairly and respectfully, regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, economic status or any further characteristics. Interlocutors' rights and safety are non-negotiable and must be upheld and guaranteed throughout the research process. Respecting the rights and ensuring the well-being of interlocutors requires researchers to ensure informed consent, voluntary participation and respectful interaction. This includes prioritising the autonomy, agency and privacy of all individuals involved in the research, choosing and using suitable data-collection methods, maintaining open communication for reflection and feedback, and developing appropriate strategies for data protection and anonymisation.

2.3. Right to informed consent and voluntary participation

Informed consent and voluntary participation are the cornerstones of conducting ethical research with people with and without lived experience of displacement. Researchers are obliged to uphold the three core tenets of informed consent and voluntary participation: respondents must (1) receive sufficient information about the research to (2) understand what they are agreeing to, including the use of data

and degree of anonymisation, and (3) have the ability and freedom to decide whether to participate, and to what extent. Respondents have the inalienable right to give or withhold consent, to (re-)negotiate the scope of consent and to withdraw consent without needing to provide reasons.

Standardised consent forms which respondents fill out and sign are widely used to gather and certify that they possess sufficient knowledge about the research, the use of their data, their rights and their voluntary participation. These forms protect respondents and serve as records of informed consent and voluntary participation for research institutions. Yet, these standardised consent forms have also been criticised for their oversimplified approach and limited assurances regarding informed and voluntary consent. Requesting that individuals with and without lived experience of displacement fill in and sign such a document can cause concern and potentially compromise anonymity. Despite translation, diverse languages, educational backgrounds and social norms of the individuals involved in the research may hinder the ability to obtain genuinely informed and voluntary consent. Hence, additional alternative forms of consent (e.g. oral) should be given due consideration.

It is thus recommended to treat informed consent and voluntary participation not merely as a bureaucratic moment fixed in time but as a continuous process of interaction with those involved in the research. Such a relational approach includes initial deliberation by researchers and respondents alike about any foreseeable factors which may influence the latter's willingness to participate (e.g. risks, discomfort or adverse effects). These negotiations should be ongoing throughout the course of interactions. The focus is therefore on respondents' agency and autonomous decision-making, via which they maintain control over the manner of their engagement.

2.4. Right to receive information about the research

Respondents have the right to ask questions and receive clear answers as well as sufficient information about the research in which they have been asked to take part. This is key for ensuring their involvement is the result of an informed and voluntary decision. Scholars should, as such, provide clear explanations of the purpose, procedures, methodologies and duration of the research. They should also discuss potential effects, including benefits and any foreseeable risks that may arise with the research, and elaborate on how they plan to address and mitigate them as well as guarantee data protection, confidentiality and anonymisation. Moreover, researchers are obliged to provide respondents with details on whom to contact for questions about the research and their rights, and actively offer opportunities to do so. It is also good practice to ask respondents whether they want to be informed about research results, and to ensure compliance with their choices.

2.5. Right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Respect of privacy is a fundamental ethical principle, one essential for safeguarding the rights and well-being of individuals with and without lived experience of displacement. Upholding privacy rights includes respectful interaction with all persons involved and protecting them from harm due to the sharing of sensitive information and personal narratives.

Given the oftentimes difficult life circumstances of people with lived experience of displacement, researchers must meticulously plan and ensure privacy concerns.

Respondents' right to privacy must take precedence over research interests. Scholars should guarantee, and provide respondents with information about, their rights to decide whether to participate, to respond to only selected questions as they so choose and to end interactions and data collection whenever they want to.

Along with this, respondents have the right to have their data anonymised and handled confidentially to guarantee their privacy. Researchers must develop suitable data-management procedures which ensure respondents remain anonymous and their data is protected. They must train all members of the research team accordingly (see also 4.). Anonymisation and confidentiality strategies should be thoroughly explained to respondents and possible limits to confidentiality, along with tangible ways to address them, transparently outlined.

2.6. Reciprocity and compensation for participation

Reciprocity and compensation for interlocutors' involvement in research have been critically debated in Forced Migration Studies. Reciprocity generally signifies mutual benefits of research for both respondents and researchers, but ethical issues can arise. Examples include biased decision-making and assessments of what is considered beneficial, or viewing reciprocity as merely token gestures. Researchers are responsible for deciding together with respondents how the research should integrate reciprocity in an ethical manner.

Moreover, compensation is a polarising topic in research ethics. While financial or other forms of (im)material compensation have been partly noted to risk maintaining strict top-down power structures and influencing interlocutors' responses, as they may feel obliged to answer questions (in a certain manner), arguments for offering compensation revolve around issues of fairness. Respondents devote their time and potentially resources to research (they may have to travel to take part), and thus should receive fair compensation.

Respondents have the right to be fully informed about the means of reciprocity and compensation when taking part in research.

3. RESEARCH COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF DISPLACEMENT

Forced Migration Studies includes transdisciplinary and other collaborative approaches which make it possible to cooperate with partners with lived experience of displacement. However, such collaborative research is not automatically more ethical and requires thorough reflection concerning the scope of collaboration and accompanying power imbalances, hierarchies and decision-making processes. Collaborative research can also take place with people without lived experience of displacement (e.g. those involved in forced migration infrastructures). Yet, given the key importance to Forced Migration Studies, the focus here is on collaboration with partners with lived experience of displacement.

3.1. Scope of collaboration with research partners with lived experience of displacement

Research 'about' individuals with lived experience of displacement has been increasingly criticised and instead approaches 'with' them are proposed. Such approaches can take a variety of forms: working with partners at certain stages

(e.g. during data collection, analysis and/or publication); seeking advice from them about research design, processes, cases and similar; or cooperating throughout the entire research process from design and planning to the publication and dissemination of findings. Researchers should aim to foster genuine and equitable partnerships, and be aware that this requires established networks, significant time and financial resources.

Ethical considerations must encompass a thorough assessment of potential benefits and risks arising from cooperation, discussed openly with partners with lived experience of displacement. This also involves reflecting on the willingness, level of interest and necessary means for cooperation at every step. It is crucial to prevent any form of tokenism and the instrumentalisation of partners at any stage, and to continuously reflect on power dynamics – therewith ensuring respectful teamwork and prioritising the well-being of all involved.

3.2. Power, hierarchies, and decision-making in collaborating with research partners with lived experience of displacement

Conducting collaborative research with partners with lived experience of displacement requires thorough and continuous ethical reflection and negotiation on power structures and decision-making hierarchies. It is important to recognise that collaboration as well as partners' both willingness to cooperate and capacity to do so can change over time. All researchers involved – with and without lived experience of displacement – are responsible for addressing power imbalances, fostering inclusive decision-making processes, discussing and deciding how to work together, and establishing transparent channels of communication. They are responsible for jointly designing appropriate approaches for conducting research. Those with greater access to power (e.g. project leads or those managing funding) possess particular responsibilities for tackling any imbalances and fostering collaboration prioritising equity, fairness, transparency, mutual respect and collective care in the team.

3.3. Appropriate compensation of research partners with lived experience of displacement

Whereas reciprocity and compensation vis-à-vis respondents have been widely discussed (see 2.6.), it remains imperative to compensate all partners in collaborative research for their work – regardless of their lived experience of displacement. This includes financial remuneration as well as proper acknowledgment of their work (e.g. attributing authorship where applicable). It may further include capacity-building opportunities. Ethically responsible research in Forced Migration Studies requires the devising of compensation strategies honouring the dignity, contributions and well-being of all involved partners to ensure equitable, fair and respectful collaboration.

3.4. Possible dangers for research partners with lived experience of displacement

Collaborative research with partners with lived experience of displacement may offer a more inclusive and nuanced research process but can simultaneously also pose risks for these partners in certain circumstances. Collaborative research can amplify their visibility, and findings might unveil critical information which restrictive political regimes come to perceive as threatening, potentially

subjecting partners to scrutiny, reprisal or even manifest danger to their personal safety and well-being. Legal or other restrictions, (politically) dangerous contexts, logistical constraints, language barriers, limited resources or the absence of established networks may hinder the comprehensive engagement required here.

The entire research team is responsible for assessing possibilities and limitations as well as potential benefits and risks regarding collaborative research. In case working with partners with lived experience of displacement is planned and carried out, the team must ensure equitable, fair and respectful team relations and address any ethical concerns arising throughout the course of the research endeavour. This includes plans for safeguarding all research partners and detailing the measures to be taken to prevent or reduce potential risks.

4. PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH DATA

Effective protection and management of research data in Forced Migration Studies is essential to respect the dignity, safety and well-being of the individuals involved, to preserve the integrity of the research as well as to meet ethical standards and legal requirements.

4.1. Legal basis for data protection and management

Data protection and management encompass the researchers' responsibilities to protect all data gathered during research. It does not end when finalising data collection but continues to be central throughout the research process.

Many states around the world have legal requirements for data protection in research. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies across member states of the European Union and forms the basis for data protection. It is supplemented by the Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG) in Germany, which offers national provisions and specific requirements on data protection. Researchers are responsible for familiarising themselves with, and adhering to, the legal requirements for the respective contexts in which they plan to conduct research and/or in which they are based. Moreover, many universities, research institutions and funding bodies have their own policies and/or requirements for data protection and management. Researchers are responsible for reviewing and following these policies, too.

Hence, researchers have the duty to ensure compliance with relevant data-protection laws and institutional guidelines. They should be aware of and comply with regulations governing data collection, storage, sharing, publication and disposal. In cases where adherence to these regulations might endanger interlocutors, researchers are responsible for re-assessing and adjusting their data-management practices to prioritise respondents' security without compromising the integrity of the research. This might involve implementing additional security measures, seeking ethical approval for alterations to data-handling techniques or, if necessary, refraining from collecting or sharing sensitive data that could jeopardise interlocutors' safety.

4.2. Researchers' responsibilities on data protection and management

In addition to having to adhere to relevant data-protection laws and institutional guidelines, scholars are responsible for protecting and managing research data in a secure, confidential, anonymised and ethical manner. Since individuals with lived experience of displacement are frequently confronted with precarious life conditions and heightened political, legal, social and economic risks, researchers must implement strict data security measures to safeguard their anonymity and well-being. Such measures are also crucial for research with interlocutors without lived experience of displacement.

Researchers must handle data ethically, respecting respondents' rights, privacy and anonymity. This involves obtaining informed consent, ensuring data anonymisation and protecting sensitive information from unauthorised access or disclosure. The research institution should ensure the right and obligation of scholars to protect their data so that under no circumstances can they be forced into handing it over to a third party.

Data security should be implemented through appropriately secure means of storage, encryption, password protection and access control. Many universities offer secure servers which researchers can use. Researchers should take every precaution to prevent data breaches and unauthorised access to safeguard interlocutors' information. Moreover, scholars should identify potential risks associated not only with data collection but also with data management and implement strategies to mitigate these risks. This involves evaluating potential harm to interlocutors, such as privacy breaches or re-identification risks, and taking measures to prevent them.

Researchers must inform respondents clearly about data-handling procedures, including how their information will be used, stored and protected. Transparent communication builds trust and ensures that respondents are aware of their rights regarding any information shared. Finally, regularly reviewing data-management practices and seeking ways to improve data-protection measures is crucial. Researchers should stay updated on evolving technologies, best practices and the latest ethical guidelines on data management.

4.3. Open Access and data accessibility

Publishing datasets via Open Access and thereby making them available to other researchers is increasingly common practice. This is often led by the 'FAIR' principles: findability, availability, interoperability and reusability. Researchers should ethically reflect on the feasibility of such practices in their work, considering factors such as the sensitivity of data, potential privacy risks to interlocutors and any legal as well as ethical obligations regarding data-sharing or confidentiality. The decision to share data openly should be carefully assessed to ensure it aligns with legal and ethical regulations and does not compromise anonymity (see 5.2.).

4.4. Artificial intelligence

In Forced Migration Studies – as in all research fields and disciplines – employing artificial intelligence tools and algorithms requires careful consideration to ensure ethical compliance and data protection. Researchers must prioritise the safety, dignity and wellbeing of all involved persons, and any use of AI applications must be clearly explained to respondents, ensuring their informed consent. Researchers

must comply with relevant data-protection laws and regulations, and maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of individual data, especially given the sensitive conditions when working on forced migration topics and/or with people with lived experience of displacement. When using AI tools for data analysis, researchers must reflect on the fact that algorithms are biased, something potentially skewing findings. Also, using AI means data-sharing with AI, which can pose threats to data security and anonymity. It is imperative to regularly assess the impact of AI-driven findings on respondents themselves and to mitigate any potential harm which may arise from the use of such technologies.

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DATA ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION

It is of crucial importance to ensure the ethically informed and responsible handling, analysis and dissemination of information obtained from research, including with regards to its publication. It is vital to continually safeguard the privacy, rights and confidentiality of interlocutors, to maintain data integrity and to promote the accurate representation of findings while preventing any potential harm or misinterpretation.

5.1. Do no harm during data analysis and dissemination

Do no harm remains pivotal in data analysis and publication in Forced Migration Studies. It necessitates great care being taken to avoid presenting information which could potentially endanger the safety, well-being and privacy of individuals with lived experience of displacement and of further interlocutors. Ensuring anonymity, confidentiality and care in data representation, particularly when dealing with sensitive or personal accounts, is essential. Additionally, framing findings and conclusions in a manner which avoids stigmatisation and/or re-victimisation is vital.

Researchers are responsible for reflecting on the analysis and writing processes. This encompasses not only conducting thorough and careful analyses but also critically reflecting on how researchers describe experiences, events and issues, as well as share arguments in publications. Employing language in an ethical and sensitive manner is key to ensuring respectful representation and to avoiding the perpetuation of harmful or damaging misconceptions. Moreover, in case of collaborative research, data analyses should be carried out in partnership and means of data protection ensured, especially when partners are situated in different countries worldwide.

5.2. Anonymisation

Anonymisation is not only a fundamental ethical responsibility for researchers during data collection but also in its analysis and subsequent publication. This is particularly true for studies involving individuals with lived experience of displacement and other interlocutors, but also applies to non-personal data (e.g. about the religious composition of refugee camps). This process of anonymisation ensures the protection of respondents' identity, privacy and confidentiality. In case anonymisation cannot be guaranteed, results must not be published if any risks to interlocutors may arise in consequence.

Anonymisation might be a difficult undertaking, as much of the research in Forced Migration Studies focuses on the encounters of individuals with lived experience of displacement or of further people involved in forced migration infrastructures. Hence, researchers must present certain data while at the same time also carefully anonymising it, namely by removing or disguising any information potentially rendering a person identifiable. Stripping data of direct markers, and employing techniques like aggregation, pseudonymisation or redaction, helps safeguard privacy. While anonymising data, however, researchers should also strive to maintain the essence and context of the obtained information to ensure the integrity and usefulness of findings.

Overall, researchers should weigh up, and explain, their anonymisation techniques and procedures in research methodologies or supplementary materials to ensure transparency, including in the informed-consent process. Ethical responsibility demands continued reflection on the potential impact of anonymisation approaches on data integrity and privacy throughout the research process.

5.3. Co-production and co-authorship of research results

Especially when it comes to the various forms of collaborative research, questions about the co-production of findings and co-authorship of publications are of central importance. As a basic principle, research in general and collaborative research in particular require acknowledging and valuing the insights, experiences and expertise brought by all contributors, and especially individuals with lived experience of displacement.

In collaborative research, all partners share ethical responsibility to adhere to ethical standards during data analysis. It is imperative for the research team to actively reflect on and mitigate any power imbalances which might exist or arise among team members in their production of findings. Those in positions of greater power (e.g. project lead or those managing funding) continue to bear particular responsibility for ensuring equitable and respectful research cooperation on data analysis. All team members must recognise the respective contributions as essential to the co-production process. Even in research which was not designed in collaborative ways, co-production of findings and subsequent co-authorship are still possible. Ethical responsibilities entail equitable participation, and the need to ensure that individuals with lived experience of displacement are not tokenised, but rather engaged as genuine partners in the research process, including in publication. Thus, all partners in collaborative research should discuss and reach clear agreements on authorship, credit and decision-making regarding publications.

However, potential harm and risks can arise for those involved, and thus thorough deliberation is required. Careful consideration of how partners' identities and personal information are presented in publications is crucial to ensure their safety and well-being. The research team must anticipate and assess potential risks or sources of backlash for research partners due to their involvement in a publication. This includes placing collective care centre stage, and safeguarding against the repercussions which may ensue from the publication of sensitive or controversial content.

5.4. Sharing information with research respondents

Research results are not only relevant for scholarly publications but are also something for sharing with interlocutors as well as with further relevant organisations, groups and individuals. Researchers must reflect on and establish appropriate ways to share these findings ethically. This is particularly important when research focuses on sensitive issues such as precarity and violence. Sensitivity in sharing findings involves engaging respondents respectfully, using accessible and appropriate language, and ensuring that dissemination does not further marginalise or stigmatise vulnerable individuals. Wherever possible, researchers should facilitate respondents contributing to the interpretation and use of the obtained research outcomes.

6. COLLEGIAL EXCHANGE IN ACADEMIA

Collegial behaviour in academia is key to a thriving intellectual community, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment among colleagues. Exchange among colleagues should be characterised by mutual respect, open communication and a shared commitment to the pursuit of knowledge. Given the frequent abuse of power in academic settings, Forced Migration Studies scholars should take concrete measures to ensure collegial and supportive structures exist in their direct research environments, especially when working with colleagues with lived experience of displacement. This has repercussions for the responsibilities carried by the research team as well as for data-sharing.

6.1. Responsibilities towards research partners and teams in collaborative research

A researcher's responsibilities extend beyond individual pursuits: namely, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for their team and colleagues, including those with lived experience of displacement. This necessitates effective and open communication, acknowledging and valuing diverse perspectives, being sensitive to power imbalances and promoting a culture of mutual care and respectful cooperation. A project lead bears the heightened responsibility to also provide guidance and mentorship, and to facilitate an atmosphere which encourages intellectual growth. Fair acknowledgment includes appropriate and just distribution of authorship. Particular care should be taken when interacting with students, research assistants or further colleagues – especially those with lived experience of displacement – potentially experiencing marginalisation more frequently than oneself.

6.2. Sharing data with peer-researchers in academia

While making data available to the wider research community (perhaps even Open Access; see also 4.3.) might be considered good research practice, scholars must consider legal requirements as well as the sensitivity of data – especially in relation to potential issues of anonymisation. Data protection must be prioritised over its sharing with other scholars in the academic environment. In case the data is sufficiently anonymised and can be shared, researchers must ensure that safe and appropriate storage mechanisms are guaranteed.

ANNEX 1 PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines were developed and finalised in a participatory process taking place from 2023 through 2024. The Executive Board of the German Network for Forced Migration Studies appointed Ulrike Krause, Franzisca Zanker and Christiane Fröhlich to prepare the Guidelines. The draft was revised and refined together with the Board in January 2024, as well as with scholars with and without lived experience of displacement at a workshop organised in February 2024. The Board invited all members of the Network as well as additional scholars to this workshop to ensure geographical balance and active involvement of scholars with lived experience of displacement. The following scholars participated in the workshop (in alphabetical order):

Rosa Bühler
Martina Blank
Cordula von Denkowski
Fenna tom Dieck
Franziska Feldhahn
Lisa Johnson
Birgit Kemmerling
Nadiya Kiss
Anne Koch
Lena Laube
Dariia Orobchuk
Laura Reisser
Kerstin Rosenow-Williams
Liane Rothenberger
Maryam Rutner
Fardosah Salah
Madeleine Sauer
Caroline Schmitt
Lesya Skintey
Joyce Takaindisa
Olaf Tietje
Maria Ulrich
Zeynep Yanaşmayan

The working version of the guidelines used in the workshop was in English for maximum inclusivity; an early German version was discussed with the German speaking participants. Finally, all members of the German Network for Forced Migration Studies were invited to review and comment on the revised Guidelines in May/June 2024. Based on that, the Guidelines were finalised and translated to German (thanks to Marina Sommer and Laura Reisser, who assisted in the process) and launched at the 5th Conference of the German Network for Forced Migration Studies held in Bonn in September 2024.

ANNEX 2 RESOURCES INSPIRING THE DRAFTING OF THE GUIDELINES

The Guidelines are informed by existing codes of ethics and long-standing debates about research ethics in Forced Migration Studies.

Existing codes of ethics

Atem, Atem, Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward, David Nguyen, Rooan Al Kalmashi, Bashar Hanna, Maree Higgins, Caroline Lenette, EJ Milne, Caitlin Nunn, & Josie Gardner (2021), *Ethics and community-based participatory research with people from refugee backgrounds* (UNSW Sydney, STARTTS NSW, Coventry University, Manchester Metropolitan University), https://www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/unsw-adobe-websites/arts-design-architecture/social-sciences/resources/Atem-et-al-2021_Ethics-and-CBPR-report.pdf.

Clark-Kazak, Christina R., Canadian Council for Refugees, Canadian Association for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies, & York University's Centre for Refugee Studies (2017), Ethical Considerations: Research with People in Situations of Forced Migration, *Refuge 33*(2), 11-17. https://doi.org/10.7202/1043059ar.

Harley, Tristan, & Najeeba Wazefadost (2023), *Guidelines for Co-Produced Research with Refugees and Other People with Lived Experience of Displacement* (Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, Asia Pacific Network of Refugees and Act for Peace), http://dx.doi.org/10.26190/ghnc-sy80.

International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) (2018), *Code of Ethics: Critical Reflections on Research Ethics in Situations of Forced Migration*, http://iasfm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/IASFM-Research-Code-of-Ethics-2018.pdf.

Refugee Studies Centre (2007), Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice, *Refugee Survey Quarterly 26*(3), 162-172. https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdi0250.

Women's Refugee Commission (2023), *Ethical Guidelines for Working with Displaced Individuals through Programs, Research, and Media*, https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/ethical-guidelines/.

Information on and for research interlocutors' rights

Asylum Access (2021), *Building Equitable Partnerships: Shifting Power in Forced Displacement*, https://asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Building_Equitable_Partnerships.pdf.

Clark-Kazak, Christina R. (2021), *"Your rights in research": Information sheet for people taking part in forced migration research* (Canadian Council for Refugees, Canadian Association for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies, York University's Centre for Refugee Studies), https://carfms.org/new-resource-your-rights-in-research/.

This information sheet has been translated in several languages, see: https://carfms.org/new-resource-your-rights-in-research/.

Comprehensive volumes on research ethics in Forced Migration Studies

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