Ethics and Methodological Issues: Research and Training with Survivors of Conflict and post-Conflict Sexual Violence and Torture in Africa

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Ethical and Methodological Issues: Research on Conflict and Post-Conflict Sexual Violence and Torture in Africa

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Research in Uganda
Ethical and Methodological Issues of PhD Research with Women Conflict Survivors (Liebling, 2009)

- Collaboration with Isis-WICCE and community-based organisations
- Feminist/participatory/action methods
- Reflexivity
- Sensitivity: gender, power & culture
- Recruiting participants and safety
- Negotiating ‘my position’
Ethical and Methodological Issues of PhD Research

- Working with interpreters
- Payment for participants
- Identity and representing participants
- Equalising power relationships
- Informed consent
- Use of focus groups and empowerment
- Political context
“Governance of Sexual Violence in northern Uganda” (Liebling & Baker, 2010)

- Human rights abuses ongoing
- Kitgum Women’s Peace Initiative
- Stigma, shame and fear
- Number of participants
- Dissemination
- ‘Giving back’ to communities
“Experiences of Trauma Counselling Services in Northern Uganda: Implications for Mental Health Policy and Legislation” (Liebling & Davidson, 2013)

- Ethics and research clearance
- Conflicting roles
- Individual interviews and methodology
- Care of researchers and interpreters
- Expectations of organisations
- Relationship building and time-scale
- Dissemination
Research in Liberia
Research and Training in Liberia

- Research reviewer and policy documents.
- Training in Harper: increase capacity for medical and psychological support
- Medical Intervention (2009)
“Health and Justice Responses for Women and Girls Bearing Children from Rape: Case study of Goma, eastern DRC” (Liebling & Slegh, 2011)

- Political context and security
- Ensuring safety: care of participants and researchers
- Sensitivity but challenging culture
Research in eastern DRC

- Managing competing demands
- Being fully briefed
- Managing researchers and participants feelings
- Dealing with risk issues
- Empowering participants
- Use of research diary
- Ethical processes and procedures
Ethical Framework

- Close collaboration with organisations and community engagement essential
- Special attention to study feasibility
- Harm/Benefit analysis
- Political agendas
- Ethical processes and procedures
- Sustainability and Impact
- Culture and traditions
Concluding Guidance

- Research consistent with international human rights: strategies that strengthen efforts to combat impunity
- Reflexivity and negotiation for challenging ethical issues: best interests of participants
- International research strategy
- Increased awareness, training and capacity building
- Empowering methods
- Sharing practice and experience
- Duty of care for participants and research team
Concluding Guidance

1. Benefits of documenting sexual violence greater than risks
2. Research presents least risk to participants, good methods and builds on evidence
3. Basic care locally available
4. Safety and security paramount
5. Confidentiality when disclosure of human rights abuses must be protected
6. Informed consent always obtained
7. Research team carefully selected and trained
8. Additional safeguards if children are involved

World Health Organization (2007)
Thank you for listening
Any Questions?