

Memorandum of Understanding for *Young Lives* field researchers

Key Points: Respecting Children in Research

Note: *the form of wording below is directed to children, and may need to be adapted for different respondent groups. This is a protocol, to be translated into relevant languages using locally relevant examples and forms of expression.*

1. Introduce yourself. Be sensitive to local concerns about children (parental fears of child abduction, for example. Young Lives aims to learn about the lives of children within their families, Young Lives will never take children away without consent.)

Consent

2. You must obtain informed consent from children, their parents or carers, and community members. To do this you must explain the following :

- **Who you are:** For example, explain to children: *Young Lives is a study of children growing up in 4 countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru, Vietnam) taking place over 15 years. We are trying to find out about children's everyday lives: the things you do, and the important people in your life, and how these things affect how you feel. Bits of what you say/write/draw will be used in reports that we write that we hope will be helpful to local and national governments when making plans/planning services for children in the future. Our research may not change things in the short term, because that depends on local and national governments.*
- **Archiving:** *The information you give us will be stored on a computer. We are sharing the information that we collect now, and that we collected on our previous visits, with other trusted researchers (people like us) in Ethiopia/India/Peru/Vietnam and internationally.*
- Take particular care not to raise expectations about the impact of the research. *We are here to learn from you, but we cannot promise to improve your life.*
- **The details of our work:**
 - How long you will be in the community on this visit.
 - What you are asking them to do and how long this might take.
 - Why you are asking them to undertake activities (whether talking individually, in groups, drawing, body-mapping, etc).
 - How the data (including photos and videos) might be used.
 - If you are doing group activities, and other adults are present, politely suggest they leave (if appropriate). For individual interviews, explain that if a child wants another person to be there, such as a sibling, friend or parent/carer, this is o.k., but emphasise that you are interested in the child's answers.
- **Anonymity:** *Data will be anonymous e.g. your name will not be used so we can describe what you think without anyone knowing that it is you. We will also disguise the name of the community where you live. If children want to*

put their name on material they produce, let them, but disguise it before the materials are digitally photographed.

- **Confidentiality:** *e.g. I will treat what you tell me as 'confidential'. This means what you say will be shared with other members of the research team, but I am not going to tell your family or anybody in the community what you tell me. Your name will not be used when we tell people what we have found.*
- **Child protection:** *If you say something that makes me worried about your safety, I will talk to you about it first, then I may talk to my boss/supervisor.*
- Explain to children/caregivers that they may **opt out** at any time – i.e. they may ask for all the information they have given/ data to be removed from the project/records destroyed at any point.

Respecting children's views and feelings

3. Emphasise that you are interested in children's descriptions in their own words and that there are no right or wrong answers. They can leave an activity if they don't want to carry on. They don't have to answer all the questions or participate in all the activities.

4. Be respectful that a child may be reluctant to speak about a sensitive topic. If you feel that children are unwilling to speak for any reasons, move on to the next question. This is especially important in a group so they don't feel embarrassed in front of other children. Be sensitive to children's body language and tone of voice. Do not put words into their mouths, though you may need to probe, in which case avoid leading questions. Some examples of leading questions are: *School is good, isn't it? Healthcare workers treat people in your community badly, don't they?* Use open questions, not closed questions that lead to yes/no answers. For example: *tell me how you feel about school. How do healthcare workers treat people in your community?*

5. Ask children for permission to audio record, and explain why. (If they ask, let them hear themselves for a short while.) Ask children for permission to take photos or video, and for permission to photograph their drawings or other material they produce. Leave their drawings with them to keep.

Conduct in the field

6. Be punctual, organised, and listen. Keep appointments, find the room, set out chairs and materials in advance. Turn off your mobile phone. Offer refreshments. Keep a flexible timetable and be prepared to have a break between activities, especially when children appear to be unmotivated or struggling to focus on certain tasks.

7. As a representative of Young Lives, under no circumstances should you hit /strike a child, even if this is acceptable within local practices. Do not speak to children in a rude or insulting way. Avoid raising your voice throughout the sessions. Try not to have a school-like atmosphere where discipline is valued, but a place where children can communicate freely and spontaneously. Avoid guiding or directing children, for example when drawing (e.g. by questioning their choice of colours, or shapes, etc.) or when discussing in groups (e.g. by contradicting them).

8. At the end of your visit, explain to the children what will happen next with the information they have produced. (i.e. it will be taken back to local HQ, typed up, and then sent to the main HQ in Oxford). Ask them if they have any questions, and allow them time to prepare questions before you leave. If appropriate (i.e. they seem

comfortable and forthcoming), ask them how they experienced the activity, and include examples of this in your group report.

9. Thank the children for their participation. They do not need to thank you, nor should they be expected to. Let the children to say goodbye to you, if they wish to.

Finally

10. After fieldwork, you must return all material (written, audio, visual) to the Lead Researcher. Be sensitive to the possibility of inadvertently revealing personal information in the community (e.g. don't recycle paper in the community/locally; after typing your reports, manually shred your notes if necessary). You must respect confidentiality at all times, i.e. not discussing data with people outside the team.

11. Young Lives (country office) and Oxford HQ retain full responsibility for the use of Young Lives material.

I have read the instructions above and agree to them.

Signed

Name

Date