SIPRI Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

Safeguarding is an integral part of any research process, from the planning to the closing stage. Safe conditions both for researchers and for participants in research projects and other SIPRI activities always need to be in place.

The Institute strives to ensure that all staff members are sensitized to safeguarding. As ambassadors of SIPRI, and of the principles the organization stands for, staff members are expected to act at all times in full compliance with the rules and procedures provided for by the current policy.

SIPRI implements a wide range of projects with diverse participants and audiences. Because no policy on such a sensitive issue touching on such a broad range of activities can be exhaustive, this current document sets up a guiding framework rather than a rigid set of rules and procedures.

Scope of application

This policy and its guiding framework apply to all SIPRI staff. It is an expression of the fundamental principle of Do No Harm. SIPRI expects all its staff to apply this principle when planning, implementing, concluding and following up on any research initiative.

Purpose

The objective of this policy and its guiding framework is twofold:
1. To raise awareness among SIPRI staff about safeguarding;
2. To ensure that a safeguarding dimension is an integral part of all research activities and proposals.

Definitions

Safeguarding in a broad sense means avoiding inflicting harm to people and/or to the environment. Harm to people can be both physical and psychological; related risks can be both material and non-material.

In SIPRI's context, safeguarding applies to all staff and all participants in SIPRI's research, projects and activities. The latter group includes, for example, interviewees, informants, participants in workshops and focus groups, research staff from partner organizations, contracted consultants, participants in activities such as seminars, conferences and roundtables, and local communities, organizations and individuals who constitute the subject of research or might be affected by its results.

Possible harm in a research setting could be emotional, psychological, economic, reputational or legal. Damage may be long-standing and, at worst, irreparable. Risks include, among others, undermining individual or community privacy, values and beliefs, social standing,

status and occupational activities. Insufficient protection of private information may lead to discrimination, humiliation, stigmatization or, at worst, physical harm.

Project leaders and researchers should do their utmost to ensure their work does not put the peace and stability of the places where the work is conducted, individuals' safety and the natural environment at risk.

Safeguarding objectives
Safeguarding at SIPRI seeks to achieve the following four interdependent goals:
- *Protection*: the focus is on ensuring the welfare and safety of researchers and research participants by treating them fairly, without discrimination and with respect.
- *Prevention*: the focus is on preventing harm from occurring.
- *Proportionality*: the focus is on applying safeguarding measures that are proportionate in relation to identified risks.
- *Partnerships*: the focus is on promoting consultation and close cooperation with donors, research partners and local communities. This will provide jointly owned and jointly supported safeguarding solutions.

As regards the four interdependent goals, the focus of SIPRI is on ensuring welfare, safety and security issues during a project, as well as after a project has ended. However, there are limitations in terms of post-project responsibilities.

Safeguarding measures
Below is a general overview of fundamental safeguarding measures that should be applied to any SIPRI research initiative. Researchers are encouraged to identify the specific measures needed under each heading in accordance with the scope and the nature of a concrete research initiative. Researchers are furthermore encouraged to regularly exchange lessons learnt and best practices in terms of safeguarding.

Informed consent
In order to give their informed consent, research participants need to be informed about the purpose, methodology and outputs of the research in clear and understandable language. Where possible, it is recommended that participants should be offered access to research results in a manner and language that they can understand. As a general principle, any research participant retains the right to withdraw his/her consent; this right should always be respected.

Protection of privacy and data
Safeguarding privacy has increasingly gained importance. Research activities are no exception to the need to safeguard privacy. Researchers should therefore introduce appropriate measures for processing, handling, profiling, storing and disposal of all personal data at all stages of research, and beyond.

The most comprehensive reference tool for this purpose is the European Union (EU) General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR), in force since 25 May 2018. SIPRI is also bound by its provisions and applies them accordingly in all its projects[1]. GDPR will also be adhered to in projects where SIPRI works with local partners.

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[1] *See also SIPRI GDPR guidelines for more information (cf. Staff Handbook, section 14).*

In addition, the following rules should be applied with regard to protection of privacy and data:

- Researchers must ensure that data is kept securely. Concrete steps for doing so must be outlined in the research proposal;
- Publication of research findings must not cause or increase the risk of a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity. The outreach strategy should contain elements to prevent such breaches;
- Participants shall be informed in advance of any potential limitations to the confidentiality of any information that they supply. Participants should be allowed to decide on their right to withdraw their consent;
- Particular care must be given to data protection in research initiatives that use large-scale surveys. This applies to protecting data physically and limiting the potential to attribute data to individuals or groups.

Sensitivity to local environment

When carrying out field research, especially in conflict and post-conflict environments, the highest level of sensitivity and respect to local conditions is expected from all researchers. This also applies to formulating and publishing research results. Legal requirements might also include duly notifying country authorities on the purpose/timing/scope of the research. It may also be a matter of courtesy to contact and notify local authorities (official or traditional). Sensitivity to the local environment is especially important if and when research may identify the need for questioning or even challenging customs or long-standing behaviours.

Safeguarding measures aimed to ensure well-being of participants, groups and communities and to address potential vulnerability of local stakeholders need to be adapted to the context.

Equally important are measures planned to ensure the safety and well-being of researchers themselves. These measures may include 'working in hostile environment' training for staff and insurance coverage. SIPRI and external project staff cannot be obliged to travel to unsafe areas (as defined by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) or other actors familiar with e.g. local conditions) when there is a risk that such travel may cause physical or psychological damage. The definition of what is unsafe will be based on Swedish MFA notifications, notifications by national or local authorities in a given country, or partner organizations with whom SIPRI works and with whom SIPRI staff would be embedded for local travel.

Special protection of children

In the case in which a project might—directly or indirectly—negatively affect the integrity and welfare of children,[2] all preventive safeguarding measures need to be envisaged in order to eliminate all risks of such negative impact. If a child is envisaged to be a research participant, informed consent of parents or legal guardian should be duly obtained in advance. Such consent should always follow the laws applicable in the state of activity. Promoting the best interests of the child throughout the entire research process as such also constitutes a safeguarding measure.

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[2] *A child is defined as someone aged under 18 years old as per Art.1 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

Other vulnerable groups

International law and many national legal systems provide for an additional category that requires specific protection—vulnerable adults[3]. In SIPRI's research context, some individuals or some groups of individuals might indeed be more vulnerable than the others. That extra vulnerability might often be context-related and does not necessarily emanate from a disability, mental or physical. Victims and witnesses of violence, members of minority groups, illegal migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons are just a few examples of individuals and groups that might require additional safeguarding measures if/when becoming involved in or potentially affected by research. Potential risks include retraumatization, stigmatization, exclusion or even physical harm.

Vulnerability might also exist within research teams, for example, interns or junior researchers being in dependent relationships with senior members of the team.

Safeguarding vulnerable individuals includes identifying the source of vulnerability and adopting measures to avoid exacerbating this vulnerability through research or research participation.

Roles and responsibilities

Project and programme leads should ensure that the safeguarding dimension is an integral part of project and programme planning and implementation. Anticipating all risks at the project planning stage is not always possible; risk assessment and adjustment of safeguarding measures is thus a continuous activity in a project. Risk assessments for partners, local researchers and research participants is part of the research set-up for places where there is a potential for such risks.

Line managers are responsible for informing and sensitizing all new staff members to the present policy.

SIPRI management promotes good research conduct at all times and aims to lead by example.

SIPRI's Safety and Health Officer and Human Resources are natural focal points for advice on safeguarding measures as well as for channelling safeguarding concerns.

Accountability

If harm occurs, SIPRI will undertake all necessary steps, if need be in cooperation with local partners and/or donors, to investigate the situation and all surrounding circumstances in a transparent and speedy manner, to minimize the harm already done and to prevent any further harm from occurring.

In Sweden, researchers are subject to the provisions of the *Act on responsibility for good research practice and the examination of research misconduct* (2019:504), in force as of 1 January 2020[4]. The Act provides for responsibility held by researchers and research institutes in case of allegations of research misconduct.

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[3] *Please see e.g. definition of vulnerable adults formulated in Art. 1 of the 2000 Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults: 'Adults who, by reason of an impairment or insufficiency of their personal faculties, are not in a position to protect their interests.'*

[4] *Lag (2019:504) om ansvar för god forskningssed och prövning av oredlighet i forskning*

Useful links

'Good research practice', Swedish Research Council, 2017.

'A guide to Internet research ethics', Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), Second edition, May 2019.

'Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology', NESH, Fourth edition, June 2016.

'Ethics in Social Science and Humanities', European Commission, October 2018.

'Sweden's National Action Plan for Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation (S2008.024), Swedish Government, 2007.

'Child safeguarding policy', Council of Europe, 2019.

'Safeguarding for Research Projects', Imperial College London.

'Safeguarding Policy', UK Research and Innovation, January 2020.

'Investigating Research Misconduct Allegations in International Collaborative Research Projects: A Practical Guide', OECD Global Science Forum, April 2009.