

Application Form for Ethical Clearance for Research Involving Human Participants

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

It is the responsibility of the School of Natural and Rural Systems Management, through its Research Committee, to assess, and, where appropriate, approve the 'ethical conduct' of research activities. This applies to research involving human subjects conducted by undergraduate, honours, masters and PhD students (coursework and research). For research on animals and plants, the School has arranged for the School of Animal Studies to be the approving body for ethical clearance.

Working with their course convenors or advisors, students are expected to seek ethical approval for any relevant research they conduct. Applications for ethical clearance for research including human participants can be downloaded from the School web site (www.nrsm.uq.edu.au) and should be forwarded to Prof Helen Ross, Chair of the School's Research Committee.

The rationale for ethical approval is to ensure that the *process* of research is conducted 'ethically' responsibly, and mindful of courtesy, protection of privacy and not exploitative of participants. This mainly involves establishing procedures for the informed consent of those subjects involved in the research, as well as appropriate handling of research findings (e.g. secure storage of data, confidentiality where agreed etc).

Researchers undertaking fieldwork that involves *contact with human subjects* should complete an *application form*. In the type of work associated with research within the School, this often includes questionnaires and/or interviews. These require ethical clearance.

Passive observation of human subjects in a public arena, or research involving accessing public documents does not require ethical approval.

The procedure for obtaining ethical clearance involves:

1. Being familiar with the University's policy on research ethics (see website: www.uq.edu.au/research/orps/?id=5064&pid=5256)
2. Filling out the enclosed application form and submitting this for approval to the Chair of the School Research Committee, Prof Helen Ross.
3. Enclosing with the application form a sample Research Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form (where applicable) (see below).

The application will then be reviewed by at least one member of the Research Committee who will, if necessary, seek clarification of the application with the applicant and their principal advisor, before making a recommendation to the Chair. The recommendation may include review by the whole Research Committee.

Further information may be obtained from the Ethics Co-ordinators, Dr Annie Ross (ph. 07 5460 1480 / 07 3365 1450 or annie.ross@uq.edu.au) or Dr Bill Carter (ph. 07 5460 1023 or r.carter@uq.edu.au).

or from:

The Ethics Officer, Michael Tse
Office of Research and Postgraduate Studies
Ph. 07 3365 3924
humanethics@research.uq.edu.au

Further information on ethics clearance is at:
www.uq.edu.au/research/services/human



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

School of Natural and Rural Systems Management

Ethical Research Application Form ¹

Project title Assessing the Impact of Collaborative Extension Approach on Resource Poor Farmers: A Case Study of Lugari District in Kenya.			
Project location (e.g. institutions, communities)	Lugari division; Mautuma and Lumakanda focal areas	Project duration	July, 2006 - April, 2007
Investigator	John Okumu Adhola		
Student No.	41129333		
Contact details of investigator	<i>Phone</i> +61 421 002286	<i>Fax</i>	<i>Email</i> s4112933@student.uq.edu.au
Degree enrolled	Master of Rural Systems Management		
Co investigators (if applicable)			
Supervisor/s	Richard Fell		
Contact details principal supervisor	<i>Phone</i> +61 7 32528321	<i>Fax</i>	<i>Email</i> etf@optusnet.com.au

Answer all of the following questions

1. Provide a brief description of your research (what you will do, with whom, where etc)

(At least 200 words please)

This research study will assess the impact of a collaborative extension approach on resource poor farmers in Lugari district, Kenya. The aim is to investigate the extent to which collaborators and stakeholders have involved resource poor farmers in their day-to-day extension activities in an effort to determine the impact of these activities on their economic, social and physical well being. The focus will be on previous focal areas (locations), two of which will be studied. To gain an in-depth understanding of the farmers perceptions, the respondents will be asked a set of semi-structured questions, relating to the demographics, problems and collaborative group extension activities. The farmers to be interviewed will be picked from two categories; those who are members of Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and those who are not members. There also will be short interviews with key members of the Divisional Stakeholders Forum (DivSHF) who will be asked to share their experiences and roles when working with the farmers and the challenges they face. This is the forum that co-ordinates the activities of all the

¹ See final page.

This University requirement for ethical approval is not directly about your research area, methodologies and methods. These are matters for you to determine with your advisors! However, this form is about ethical issues that may/will arise from your chosen methodology and methods. In completing this form, the emphasis must be on ethical issues, and all parts of the form should be completed with this in mind. Explanation of methodological approaches and methods should be sufficient for reviewers to clearly understand the ethical issues that might arise from your chosen area of research.

stakeholders/collaborators in the division. Additional information will be derived from literature review of past reports and other relevant documents.

2a. Who are the participants/research subjects?

The research subjects will include 20 randomly selected farmers from each focal area in a stratified sample, giving a total of 40, with 10 farmers in each focal area being members of a common interest group while the other 10 will be non-members. There also will be short interviews with 5 purposefully selected key members of the Divisional Stakeholders Forum.

It is hoped that nearly all the selected respondents will avail themselves for the interview. However, in order to ensure that the required number of respondents is interviewed, a randomly generated list of 30 farmers (15 being members of common interest groups and the other 15 non-members) in each focal area will be developed, giving a total of 60 farmers for the two focal areas. This means that if a respondent withdraws or declines to be interviewed for whatever reason(s), then the next name on the list will be picked until we attain the target number. If this happen, then any data that may have been given by the informant will be destroyed immediately. Similarly 2 extra names for the collaborators will be purposely selected, giving a total of 7.

From local experience of the investigator while working with these farmers in the past years, 50% extra names will definitely cover the part of the group who may decline to be interviewed. The researcher has a positive relationship with the selected collaborators and as such there should be no serious issues while interviewing them. However, it will be necessary to make appointments with them in advance.

2b. How will they be recruited?

The participants will be sampled at random from a list of farmers in the two focal areas with the help of the Divisional Extension Team (DET) in each of the focal areas. They will include those who are members of Common Interest Groups and those who are not. The members of the Divisional Stakeholders Forum to be interviewed will be purposefully selected from a list of active stakeholders in the division.

3. Provide a summary of the ethical aspects in this project².

- The research will involve direct interaction with the less privileged farmers in the community, who will be interviewed and their responses recorded in writing and with a tape recorder. These farmers may feel intimidated by the interview process.
 - Farmers will be asked questions that may be personally very sensitive and which they may feel uncomfortable to give details. These may include areas such as finances, family and cultural issues.
 - Extension officers are perceived differently by the farmers as people who cannot provide to their needs. In the past years they were used to giving handouts in the form of farm inputs and tools or even money but now they only advice. There could therefore, be a lack of farmers cooperation.
 - The fact that these farmers are the less privileged may cause them to give some false information in order to please the interviewers with the hope of winning their sympathy and consideration for any donations and grants that may come their way. The interviewers may also have some empathy with the farmers because they have worked with them and understand them well.
 - The responses by the farmers and collaborators/stakeholders may contradict each other and as such may cause some rifts between the two sides which may impact negatively on the way forward and on future collaborative activities.
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4. Provide a summary of methods that will be developed to address each of the ethical concerns identified in 3. above.

- There will be need to explain logically why the research is being carried out and the reasons for choosing the particular group or individual and to explain the value of their opinions to the study and to future extension service delivery. Special care will be taken not to have people from one ethnicity being interviewed through stratified sampling. The Divisional Extension Team will come in handy at this stage to ensure that there is wide range of representation of the different ethnic groups in those areas.
 - Respondents will be assured that participation is optional and voluntary and that they may withdraw at will without any further reference. Any information that may have been given by the respondents will be destroyed forthwith and will not be used in this study or for any other purposes.
 - The information gathered will be treated with confidentiality and will not be accessible to other persons other than those directly involved in the research. There will be anonymity that will not reveal the names or details of the farmers and as such the respondents will be given reference numbers at random. This will be clearly explained to the farmers before they give consent to be interviewed.
 - The researcher/interviewers will explain how the information collected will be used and if there will be any feedback given to the farmers and collaborators/stakeholders.
 - The interviewers will be government extension officers who have had some training and experience in interviewing farmers and worked in past focal areas but not that particular one. They will be sourced from outside.
 - It is unlikely that there will be major differences of opinions. Confidentiality provisions will assist as well as a full explanation of the purpose of the study will be given.
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² The issue here is that there are a range of ethical issues that arise in research that may be directly related to the research, or hidden, or incidental. We are not interested in preventing genuine research of a sensitive nature. On the contrary, such research can be a vital part of any environmental or social study. The issue is to ensure that the researcher is fully aware of the possible consequences of their research and develops appropriate methodologies and mechanisms to address each and every possible ethical situation that might arise. Carefully consider all possible ramifications of your research, both intended and unintended. Think about issues of personal distress, topic relevance, cultural appropriateness, gender sensitivity, age related concerns, power relationships and inequalities, privacy etc. If you are not sure of what should be considered here, go to any methodological text; for example Silverman, D. (2005) Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook. London: Sage Publications. See also footnote 6.

5. How will informed consent be obtained from participants? ³

- Verbally In writing Via computer
- Via QPWS or other permit (be specific)
- Other (be specific)

6. Provide details of procedures for establishing confidentiality and protecting privacy of participants⁴.**6a. Nature of consent to participate**

- Via informed consent
- Via gatekeeper⁵ The agriculture and livestock officers in charge of both the district and the division will be informed about the research and thereafter seek permission to access the farmers. The same will apply to the collaborators/stakeholders.
- Other (be specific)

6b. Will participants be identified in your report?

- De-identified (all data will be made anonymous) The farmers will be given reference numbers/codes that will conceal their identity while at the same time giving the data summary in a collated form. The same will be done to the Divisional Stakeholders Forum members to be interviewed.
- Identified if requested⁶

7. Provide details of data collection⁷, security and storage⁸

- Data stored at UQ for duration then destroyed The two officers who will help with the questionnaire administration will have to be briefed accordingly on all ethical issues related to the research. They will be explained all the important steps to be followed especially those that relate to research information sheet as well as obtaining informed consent from the respondents. Confidentiality and security of the information obtained from the participants will be emphasised to them. This information will be in a hard copy as well as electronic form. ⁹
- Data stored elsewhere (state where) for duration then destroyed ⁸
- Other (be specific)

³ Participants must fully understand the implications of their involvement, acknowledging that for some methods, full disclosure is not appropriate to the research.

⁴ Check relevant boxes and provide explanations of the procedures.

⁵ For example, an organisation that is hosting your research; however, while a gatekeeper may facilitate access to participants, informed consent is always (except in exceptional circumstances) necessary.

⁶ Usual practice is not to identify participants, to protect their privacy. However, in some contexts participants may appreciate being listed in an acknowledgements page, or having their names given as 'pers. Comm'.

⁷ This should be covered by your methods and methodology. Return to items 3 and 4 if you now think of ethical issues that might arise in data collection.

⁸ An issue here is securing the data and maintaining confidentiality. This is required at the collection and storage stages. Remember, you may have hard copy of interviews and e-copy. Any record that identifies the participant is a risk to be considered. Consider if you really need to identify the participant; will a code suffice? How will you ensure this can not be accessed by unauthorized people! Also, when you collect your data are others present who may not be subject to ethical considerations. How will you address this! Some of these issues are also methodological! Reconsider items 3 and 4.

⁹ Describe storage format and security measures.

8. Give specific details of whether and/or how feedback will be available to participants.

Feedback via report The final copy of the report will be made available to the focal areas and the divisional stakeholders forum through the district and divisional agriculture and livestock offices. ¹⁰

Via visit

Via video/audio

No feedback will be provided (Give justification)

Via special publication

Via conference ¹¹

Other

9. Does the project involve any of the following issues? ¹²

YES, detail strategies to minimise ethical issues that might arise. **NO**, go to 10.

The possibility of psychological/mental stress/distress or discomfort

Some of the respondents who were settled in this district from other parts of the country by the government may feel distressed when they are asked questions that touch on land issues. Such sensitive areas will be handled with utmost caution by the interviewers who are government officers and have special training and experience in interview skills.

Participant involvement by any "Vulnerable Groups" (e.g. Aboriginal/TSI, abused, children, etc)

Other (be specific)

10. Indicate what you think is the level of risk for prospective participants against the scale below and provide a brief justification for your assessment.

Extreme risk ¹³

High risk

Some risk The focus of this research is on resource poor farmers who have varied history and experience of their current state and as such could have some issues of ethical concern as mentioned in Q9 above. However, these issues have been addressed as outlined in Q4.

Minimal risk

11a. For all projects that relate to, or involve, vulnerable groups, outline all additional ethical issues that need to be considered as a consequence of the special needs of these groups and detail how you propose to address them?**11b. For all projects that relate to, or involve, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, outline any additional ethical issues that need to be considered as a consequence of the special needs of these groups and detail how you propose to address them?**

Have you also attached?

If 'no' briefly give reason ¹⁴

¹⁰ For example, personal, community, wider public.

¹¹ Identify conference.

¹² Cross-reference to item 3.

¹³ 'Extreme' will definitely apply to any legal or community requirement/expectation for privacy (e.g. medical records and the high likelihood of obtaining this information purposefully or accidentally). The researcher must have a strategy in place in this eventuality. Informed consent is only a start to addressing these issues.

¹⁴ 'Have not completed as yet' is not acceptable.

1. Informed Consent Form (see below) Yes No
 2. Research Information Sheet for Participants (see below) Yes No
 3. Inquiry Instrument (e.g. Sample questionnaire) Yes No
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Statement of Investigator ¹⁵

I have reviewed the University’s policy and guidelines on ethical research Yes No

In designing this research, I have paid particular attention to the ethical issues relevant to:

- the methods and protocols to be used for this research Yes No
- the questionnaire/s to be used for this research Not applicable Yes No
- the interview questions to be used for this research Not applicable Yes No
- the process of obtaining informed consent from participants Yes No
- the procedure for maintaining confidentiality and protecting privacy Yes No
- the approach to providing feedback to participants Not applicable Yes No
- other matters relevant to the ethical conduct of this research Yes No

Specify

I confirm that the proposed research meets the ethical requirements of the University of Queensland and that I have fully considered all foreseeable ethical ramifications of my research both intended and unintended.

Signature of investigator:

Date: 2nd August, 2006.

Statement of independent reviewer of inquiry instruments ¹⁶

I have reviewed:

- the University’s policy and guidelines on ethical research Yes No
- the methods and protocols to be used for this research Yes No
- the questionnaire/s to be used for this research Not applicable Yes No
- the interview questions to be used for this research Not applicable Yes No

I confirm that the inquiry methods, protocols and inquiry instruments meet the ethical requirements of the University of Queensland.

Signature of independent reviewer:

Position and affiliation:

Date:

¹⁵ Your role, and the purpose of this form, is to clearly indicate to the Ethics Committee that you are aware of your ethical obligations.

¹⁶ Your role is to ensure that procedures and research instruments meet the ethical requirements of the University. You may be the only independent person to review the detail of the research. You must consider the ethical requirements assiduously.

Statement of supervisor ¹⁷

I have reviewed

- the University’s policy and guidelines on ethical research Yes No
- the methods and protocols to be used for this research Yes No
- the questionnaire/s to be used for this research Not applicable Yes No
- the interview questions to be used for this research Not applicable Yes No
- the process of obtaining informed consent from participants Yes No
- the procedure for maintaining confidentiality and protecting privacy Yes No
- the approach to providing feedback to participants Yes No
- other matters relevant to the ethical conduct of this research Yes No

Specify

I confirm that the proposed research meets the ethical requirements of the University of Queensland and that this application adequately describes actual and potential ethical issues that might arise and how it is planned to address these issues.

Signature of supervisor:

Date: 2nd August, 2006.

Ethics Committee Review

	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2
Name		
Comment		
Recommendation		

Ethical clearance

The School of Natural and Rural Systems Management Research Committee has reviewed the ethical issues relating to this research against The University of Queensland’s policy and guidelines on such matters. The Committee confirms that the research meets University requirements.

Ethical clearance is granted subject to (mark as necessary)

- additional independent review of the inquiry instruments
- sighting of the inquiry instruments by the research committee
- sighting of the informed consent form by the research committee
- sighting of the research information sheet by the research committee
- other special requirements or clarifications as listed below

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.....

Ethics Coordinator

Date

¹⁷ Ultimately, you will be held responsible for any breaches of the University's ethical protocols. The Ethics Committee relies on your judgement. You must consider the ethical requirements assiduously and honestly.

Informed Consent Process

Information

To give 'informed consent' participants must be given sufficient information about the research to make an informed decision on whether to participate. Usually this will require information on the nature of the research (its purpose), how data will be used and secured to ensure confidentiality, and the time or other commitment required. In most cases it is useful to provide your research subjects with an information sheet describing the project and ethical steps you are taking to protect their interests.

Consent

Consent represents a 'contract' between the researcher and the participant. You, as the researcher, have an obligation to the participant and the University to fulfil any commitment made when providing information to the potential participant and meet University ethical requirements.

Consent may be given verbally or formalised by the participant with their signature on a consent form. Verbal consent is often appropriate, for example, when undertaking questionnaire surveys where voluntary participation is indicated simply by participation. Formal signed consent is usually appropriate, for example, where in-depth interviews are conducted with individuals.

So, while signed consent is preferred, it may be waived where this is considered culturally inappropriate, where participants are illiterate, or for certain forms of data collection (e.g. street polls). In addition, some potential participants may feel threatened/disempowered by an excessively formal Informed Consent process. The best approach for your research should be discussed with your Advisors.

Note that it is possible to combine the information sheet and consent form into a single document, provided you leave one copy with the participant for future reference. It is also useful to provide a means of reporting back to participants as a gesture of good-will.

Research Project Information Sheet

At a minimum, the basic elements of informed consent require the researcher to provide the participant with a **Research Project Information Sheet** which provides the research subject or informant with information on:

1. the title of the project
2. the purpose of the proposed study
3. the expected duration of their participation in the study
4. a clear and precise description of procedures for their involvement
5. a clear and precise description of any foreseeable risks due to their involvement in the study
6. the method used to maintain their confidentiality and privacy, along with the security of the data once collected and stored
7. a statement that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at anytime without prejudice
8. the name and contact details of the appropriate person to answer any further questions they may have concerning their participation in the project
9. a statement on gaining feedback or results concerning either their individual involvement in the project or the completed study.

The information sheet must be written for your research participants, and in a style and language which they will easily understand.

The **Research Project Information Sheet** should also contain the following paragraph.

This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland. While you are free to discuss your participation in this study with the researcher (contactable on), if you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact Dr Annie Ross on 07-54601480 or 07-33651450, or annie.ross@uq.edu.au or Dr Bill Carter on 07-54601023, or r.carter@uq.edu.au.

Example of acceptable Informed Consent Form

Name of Project

Investigator

Date

I agree to be involved in the above research project as a respondent. I have read the relevant research information sheet and understand the nature of the research and my role in it.

.....
Signature of research subject.

Please remove this page before submitting your application.

The findings of this research in the form of a final report will be availed to the District Agriculture and Livestock offices as well as the Focal Area Development Committee (FADC). Similarly, another copy will be issued to the Divisional Stakeholders Forum.

If you have any questions or you need further clarification regarding your role in this research, please feel free to contact the following;

Mr. John Okumu Adhola,
2, Dwyer Street,
Gatton, Queensland, 4343,
Australia.

Mobile Number: +61 421 002286, E-mail: s4112933@student.uq.edu.au

This study adheres to the guidelines of the Ethical Review Process of The University of Queensland. While you are free to discuss your participation in this study with the researcher, if you would like to speak with an officer of the University not involved in this study, you may contact Professor Helen Ross on +61 7 54601648 or +61 7 1410 195324, or hross@uqg.uq.edu.au or Richard Fell on +61 7 32528321 or etf@optusnet.com.au