Research ICT Africa Research Ethics

Research ICT Africa's research involves people, as it focuses on their access and use of ICTs. The subject of the research as volunteers for social sciences research, will be required to provide informed consent. Our research involves minors (i.e. individuals between the age of 15 and 18y-o). For this specific group of people, a Parent/Guardian Informed Consent form and an Informed Assent Form for Minors are collected before each questionnaire administered to a minor. Examples of these forms are provided in appendix.

Our research involves personal data collection and/or processing, through surveys and interviews. However, this excludes the collection and/or processing of sensitive personal data (e.g.: health, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinion, religious or philosophical conviction) or genetic information. It involves tracking or observation of participants, to understand their connectivity patterns, needs and availability, however it does not involve further processing of previously collected personal data. All data and information collected are anonymised and it is not possible to identify individuals from the processed or un-processed data.

Our research is based in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the countries where we conduct research, we do not use local resources (e.g. animal and/or human tissue samples, genetic material, live animals, and human remains, materials of historical value, endangered fauna or flora samples) nor do we import any material or export any material from these countries. Our research does involve low and/or lower middle-income countries, and the main objective of the research is to measures current access and use for the purposes of improving ICT connectivity and digital equality.

The specific political situations in some of these countries could potentially present some risks for the researchers. For this reason, we are working in close partnerships with local Universities, organisations and institutions so that local knowledge of the research sites will always guide our day to day choices and decisions on these risks.

Our research does not involve physical interventions on the study participants and does not involve animals.

Finally, our research does not involve the use of elements that may cause harm to the environment, to animals or plants and does not deal with endangered fauna and/or flora and/or protected areas or elements that may cause harm to humans, including research staff, neither our research has any focus on military applications. The limited number of digital devices utilised in country are left there for local institutional use and the institutions undertakes to dispose of them in an environmentally friendly manner.

Our research is managed centrally by Research ICT Africa, which is a local non-profit organisation (NPO) based in South Africa and has had more than a decade experience in carrying out ICT access and use surveys and in obtaining full ethical approval based on the adherence to the ethical guidelines required by each one of the surveyed African countries. This adherence is reinforced by the University of Cape Town where RIA is associated with a doctoral programme in the Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice. The ethics code for research involving human subjects as stated below:

- Researchers will respect the right of individuals to refuse to participate in research and to withdraw their participation without prejudice to them at any stage.
- Researchers will protect participants against foreseeable physical, psychological or social harm or suffering which might be experienced in the course of the research.

- Researchers will be especially sensitive in their protection of the rights and interests of more vulnerable participants, such as children, always older than 15, and the aged. When there is risk of harm, discussion of this with participants or their guardians must precede the research and be included in the informed consent procedure. No research should be undertaken on such vulnerable subjects if the required information can be obtained by other means.
- Information obtained in the course of research which may reveal the identity of a participant is confidential unless the participant agrees to its release.

Our research complies with:

(a) ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity and including, in particular, avoiding fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other research misconduct) and

(b) Applicable international, EU and national law.

As our research activities are carried out in Sub Saharan African countries, we confirm that all the proposed activities are compatible with International legislation and could have been legally conducted in one of the EU Member States.

National legal and ethical requirements

All of the researchers, and surveys facilitators will take full responsibility for all procedures and ethical issues related to RIA research projects. The public engagement and research will be carried out in full compliance with, and awareness of, local customs, standards, laws and regulations, especially given its cross-cultural nature and the engagement of researchers from diverse academic backgrounds. However, given that there has to be a common reference point, all researchers and surveys facilitators will comply to standards for the treatment of human participants as set out by international organizations (such as the British Psychological Society or the American Psychological Association).

All the researchers, and surveys facilitators will provide a safe and easily accessible environment for data collection. They will also do their best to ensure that people from various backgrounds are given an opportunity to participate in the project. Gender balance is sought in all our research projects. Special care will be made to ensure that all participants are provided information about the project and give their consent in a way that is suitable for their cultural, linguistic and cognitive level.

Research methodology

All the people who will participate in the study will devote the minimum possible amount of time to explore a topic that is of benefit not only to them, but to society as a whole. Innovative participatory methods will be used to ensure that their voices are heard, while they will be able to provide constructive feedback at many stages during the engagement process. The topics that will be discussed do not pose any threats (physical or psychological) to the participants.

Consent

Written informed consent will be solicited and obtained from the participants before their active engagement in the project and special permission will be obtained to record any material (visual or auditory). The researchers and facilitators will ensure that the informed consent is based on adequate information, voluntariness and competence. This implies that, prior to consenting to participation, participants will be clearly informed of the public engagement goals, possible adverse

events, possibilities to refuse participation or withdraw from the event, at any time, and without penalties. In the case of minor, a consent form will be solicited and obtained by a Parent/Guardian of the minor. After the consent form from the Parent/Guardian is obtained, and assert form is solicited and obtained by the minor.

Privacy and data protection:

The project will be in compliance with the Data protection legislation of the countries where the research will be conducted. In particular, identifiable data will be rendered irreversibly anonymous wherever practicable. Where such action is not possible, stringent measures in relation to data protection will be taken, such as security of records, encryption, coding, use of pseudonyms and removal of identifying contextual information.

All the information collected will be anonymous and shared only among the researchers. Participants will have access to research results, presented in a manner and language they can understand. This material will be kept in a safe place and will be destroyed after being transcribed and reviewed for reliability. Personal details and consent forms will be retained for three years following the study.

Data storage will be organised in our platform and no participants I.D are collected or stored.

RIA's research projects will not involve **activities or results raising security issues and** classified information' as background or results.

Annexure 1

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

DRAFT

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by (Names of Investigators) from (name of the institution). The purpose of this study is to (briefly state research objectives). This study will contribute to a better understanding of ICT access and use in your country.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to allow your child to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a survey that will be administered to individual participants in (location). Your child will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to (state purpose of study).

Time Required

Participation in this study will require ____ minutes/hours of your/your child's time.

Risks

The investigator(s) do(es) not perceive more than minimal risks from your child's involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

The investigator perceives that there are no risks arising from your child's involvement with this study.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include a better understanding of individual ICT access and use.

Payment for participation

Participation is voluntary, free and no compensation is given to the respondents.

Confidentiality

The privacy of the participant is respected and no personal information are divulgated to anybody. Responses are completely anonymous.

The results of this research will be presented at workshops, conferences and during training activities. Your child will not be identified in the research records. The researcher(s) retain(s) the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your child's identity. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher(s). Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents (including name) with their answers will be destroyed.

There is one exception to confidentiality we need to make you aware of. In certain research studies, it is our ethical responsibility to report situations of child abuse, child neglect, or any life-threatening

situation to appropriate authorities. However, we are not seeking this type of information in our study nor will you be asked questions about these issues.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. He/she is free to choose not to participate. Should you and your child choose to participate, he/she can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your child's participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name

Research ICT Africa

Email Address

Telephone: (540) …

Advisor's Name

Email Address

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. Name Surname

Principal Investigator

Research ICT Africa

Tel

Email

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of my child as a participant in this study. I freely consent for my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent for my child to be interviewed._____ (parent's initial)
(*Please only include this consent box and statement if you are video or audio taping your participant(s).)

_____

Name of Child (Printed)

_____

Name of Parent/Guardian (Printed)

_____ _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (Signed) Date

_____ _____

Name of Researcher (Signed) Date

Annexure 2

Minor Assent Document
Project Title:
Investigator:

We are doing a research study about ***ICT access and use in your country***. A research study is a way to learn more about how people use ICT to improve the way they do it. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to ***answer to a questionnaire. The questionnaire is between 30 and 40 minutes long.***

There are some things about this study you should know. These are ***procedures, things that take a long time, other risks, discomforts, etc.***

Not everyone who takes part in this study will benefit. A benefit means that something good happens to you. We think these benefits might be a better understanding of using ICT.

When we are finished with this study we will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you decide to stop after we begin, that's okay too. Your parents know about the study too.

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, _____, want to be in this research study.

_____ _____
(Sign your name here) (Date)

Parts in Italics should be modified for your specific project. Other parts may need to be modified as well depending on your research methods.