



Safeguarding and Misconduct Policy

Abbreviations

PI: Principal Investigator

Co-I: Co-Investigator

ROs: Research Organisations

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

CSOs: Civil Society Organisations

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation

MEL: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

EDI: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UKCDR: UK Collaborative on Development Research

Background

This policy begins from a definition of safeguarding as the prevention of and appropriate response (whether protection or prosecution) to 'any sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment of research participants, communities and research staff, plus any broader forms of violence, exploitation and abuse relevant to research, such as bullying, psychological abuse and physical violence' (UKCDR).

One of MADAR's principles states that Researchers, Project Partners and Research Organizations (ROs) should work together to avoid harm and maximise benefits for individuals and society. This means understanding potential harms and taking necessary precautions and mitigating actions wherever possible. The safety of researchers, participants and the wider community is central to MADAR's aims.

As MADAR's activities and commissioned projects will take place in the context of conflict-induced displacement, stakeholders (including Researchers and Project Partners, as well as research participants and community members) may be at risk due to intersecting factors such as gender, sexuality, age, race, ethnicity, marital status, class or economic precarity, maternity and paternity (as well as other care roles), migration status, colour, religion, language, etc. While at the operational level, MADAR's activities will avoid exacerbating these risks and address them, commissioned projects will address the after-effects of harm, seek to limit risk exposure, and promote changes that protect the rights of displaced people (see

Ethics document). This policy is applicable throughout the Network Plus and takes into account variation in laws and rules in each country context within the Maghreb. But we also aim through this policy to go beyond legal obligations, considering the impact of our activities upon both human relationships and knowledge production. This document and associated procedures will be monitored and revised, as partnerships and priorities shift across the lifespan of the Network Plus.

Purpose

This is intended to be accessible within the Network Plus, to provide a code of conduct for the core team, Project Partners, ROs and grant holders, as well as to provide a point of information for stakeholders (including communities and research participants).

Scope

This safeguarding policy covers all MADAR Network Plus activities (including communications between team members and researchers, meetings, workshops and trainings). Because our approach is collaborative, we acknowledge that our activities with Project Partners must be informed by an awareness of potential harm and exploitation. It covers all research undertaken by MADAR, and is not just limited to interactions in the field between researchers and participants, but extends to relationships between research team members, and to the impact of research upon other stakeholders and communities. Lastly, MADAR's outputs (some of which will be co-authored or part of public engagement) also fall under the remit of this policy, both in terms of how research participant confidentiality or authorship may present issues, and in the impact of such decisions upon the politics of knowledge production.

MADAR's Safeguarding Principles

Duty of care

- Protection is a key aim of MADAR, and ethical conduct is central to how the Network Plus operates. The core team, Project Partners, and ROs, commit to strengthening protection measures for displaced people, while protecting staff, researchers and research participants from harm through careful attention to ethics.
- Carrying out research in the context of displacement necessitates an understanding of vulnerabilities and positionalities among stakeholder communities, as well as within the Network Plus itself. As a North-South partnership that also brings together researchers from across sectors and disciplines, MADAR is permeated by existing economic, socio-historical and race-based power structures that must be acknowledged in order to facilitate care and protection from harm.
- PI and Co-Is will provide communication channels sensitive to the needs of all parties, ensuring that voices are heard from across disciplines and sectors and that power imbalances are

understood and addressed. The core team should engage in ongoing dialogue with Project Partners and ROs about safeguarding issues. The Network Plus as a whole makes a commitment to due diligence in collaborations, and to ensuring that no one within MADAR or externally is put at risk through partnerships.

- This duty of care relates to the long-term impact of Network Plus activities, both internally and in working with stakeholder communities.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- MADAR aims to put non-discriminatory rules and policies in place, in a manner that both addresses local manifestations of injustices and speaks to transnational forms of solidarity. Mechanisms for inclusion such as our EDI policy are premised on the understanding that the Network Plus, Project Partners and stakeholder communities are co-learners in establishing systems and policies that will meet everyone's needs. The extent to which MADAR is inclusive will be monitored via the Network Plus MEL strategy.
- MADAR acknowledges that the core team, Project Partners, ROs, research teams and stakeholder communities will be diverse, and advocates respect for rights and dignity across differences, whether they be material or at the level of values. Project Partners and ROs may differ in their research cultures and their methodologies. Equality is premised on the fact that this diversity is not simply tolerated but actively respected and valued.
- This respect for different values, positionalities and viewpoints is important in carrying out research and should be reflected in how researchers communicate with participants and communities. Communities and participants should be provided with the resources to report any risks or concerns in relation to research activities (see Safeguarding and Misconduct Procedure).
- MADAR aims through its commissioning process to include early career researchers and research teams from a wide range of institutional and practitioner backgrounds. Researchers will be properly supported through the distribution of appropriate resources, feedback, and communication. Researchers should consider how participation in research may be made accessible to a wide range of community members, e.g. through appropriate methods of compensation, and provision of care and respectful conduct.

Transparency

- Important information about MADAR (the Network Plus structure, its mission, vision and objectives) will be accessible to stakeholders via the website and associated dissemination channels (e.g. social media, blog posts, creative outputs and exhibition). Similarly, commissioned projects, their aims and outcomes will also be accessible to a broader public (without compromising the protection of participants' and researchers' personal information).

- MADAR's co-developed policies (ethics, safeguarding, risk and EDI) will be shared across ROs, CSOs, and projects. The bank of resources will be made available in French, English and Arabic. This will not only facilitate co-learning but also transparency as to what the code of conduct is, and how it has been developed.
- Mechanisms for reporting concerns or feedback are outlined within an accompanying document (Safeguarding and Misconduct Procedure) as well as in further policies. These will be applicable both for concerns raised internally, as well as external concerns that stakeholders or communities may have.
- Researchers should provide participants and communities with as much information as possible about the objectives of research activities. Researchers should understand what informed consent means in their research context (e.g. whether it should be sought in written or verbal form). Consent in this policy is understood as an on-going process. Finally, researchers should respect the right of participants to withdraw from research, and make sure that participants are themselves aware of this.

Moral and Financial Efficiency

- In adhering to the principle 'do no harm', the core team will provide clarity and oversight on health and safety guidance, risk, and related issues (e.g. finance, communications, conflict of interest). PI and Co-Is, Project Partners and ROs should be responsive to any issues that do arise, ensuring that reporting pathways are clear, accessible, and used. Policies will be regularly reviewed and updated, informed by Project Partner and community knowledge as well as institutional best practice.
- Researchers should follow health and safety guidance, ensuring that any issues are reported or recorded in the most appropriate manner. They should take care to minimise harm towards research participants and wider communities, or populations within those communities who may (due to their positionality) be especially at risk. At the application stage, while outlining risks and mitigation strategies, they should consider harm broadly and conceptualise the impact of research throughout and beyond the lifespan of the project.
- MADAR's core team are responsible for clarity on how breaches of research integrity (such as misconduct – see Definitions) are dealt with, ensuring that reports are followed up on, and that anyone reporting a concern or grievance has adequate support.
- Whistleblowers reporting misconduct that compromises the integrity of research must not be treated unfairly, risk losing employment, or suffer negative consequences from reporting. This is true even if it is later discovered that they are mistaken, provided they have a genuine concern and reasonable belief that reporting is in the public interest. Those found to be making false allegations maliciously will have disciplinary action taken against them.

- Researchers should commit to not engaging in misconduct, and should not conceal misconduct where it occurs, but should instead use available channels for reporting to make sure that any incidents or patterns of unethical conduct are made known.
- In addition to preventing physical harm, all parties should be protected from reputational and moral harm, both within the Network Plus and in the context of stakeholder communities. MADAR's Data Management Plan outlines how research data, and personal data (e.g. applicants' information) will be securely stored and accessed.
- Research participants and stakeholder communities are also vulnerable to misuse of personal data or sensitive information. Prior to carrying out research, researchers should put in place a data management plan that outlines how data will be stored and accessed throughout and beyond the lifespan of the project, and will be supported in this by the core team.
- Researchers should appreciate that there are risks of reactivating trauma that may arise from disclosure, especially in the context of research projects that deal with sensitive topics, and should treat research participants with sensitivity and discretion. They should consider available channels for further support, including community resources, should such support be required by research participants (see Safeguarding and Misconduct Procedure – *Getting support*).
- MADAR's challenge-led approach and mechanisms for financial oversight will allow Project Partners and research teams to ensure that financial resources are fairly distributed and value for money. The Oversight and Operational Group, led by PI Palladino, will manage finances and issue quarterly reports on commissioned projects spending.

Participatory approaches

- MADAR's approach is fundamentally participatory, both internally (in creating synergies across disciplines and institutions) and externally (in commissioning projects that will be challenge-led and recognise the contributions of stakeholder communities and research participants).
- Policies and project documents are co-designed and updated if needed.
- Research teams should communicate with communities and research participants about rights, expectations, and what matters to them in terms of protection. Wider communities are as essential to this process as research participants. At the more individual level, research participants are to be respected as co-producers of knowledge and co-authors, and safeguarding issues – such as attribution and anonymity, the consequences of disclosure for all parties – should be considered carefully in relation to this.

Responsiveness

- The core team commits to responding efficiently and compassionately to the needs of those within the Network Plus, through maintaining a dedicated budget for safeguarding, monitoring reports and outcomes; responding in a timely and sensitive fashion to reports; frequently

revising and updating safeguarding principles; acknowledging opportunities for learning and sharing lessons learnt. With Project Partners and ROs, the Network Plus will work to develop safeguarding capacity wherever this is necessary, and to identify areas where further support could be provided.

- Researcher teams will be asked, during the commissioning process, to carry out an ethics self-assessment and produce a MEL strategy that takes safeguarding into account, as well as sharing what has been learned with communities, stakeholders and the Network Plus as a whole. The knowledge exchange and public engagement activities that form a key part of MADAR's strategy also provide further opportunities to adjust approaches to safeguarding.

Definitions

Vulnerability: Where this policy (and the related procedure) makes reference to vulnerability, this is understood as relational. All people may potentially be vulnerable to harm based on intersecting factors such as gender, sexuality, age, race, colour, ethnicity, religion, marital status, class or economic precarity, maternity and paternity (as well as other care roles), migration status or access to citizenship. These factors are understood less as inherent qualities of particular people (e.g. LGBTQI+, women, children) than as ways that people may be positioned in relation to power structures.

Misconduct: This includes (but is not limited to) the issues listed below:

- Financial wrongdoing including theft, bribery, fraud, money laundering and aid diversion
- A failure to comply with any legal obligations
- Sexual misconduct, including sexual abuse, harassment or exploitation
- Abuse or exploitation of children, vulnerable adults or beneficiaries
- Breach of MADAR policy
- Abuse of position
- Danger to the health and safety of individuals or damage to the environment
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Activity which would bring MADAR into serious disrepute
- The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the matters listed above

Misconduct is not related to the performance and behaviour of a manager or other work colleague – such concerns are to be considered grievances. This policy separates misconduct into general and serious misconduct, in order to maintain specificity about what constitutes bad practice, and what may necessitate the intervention of authorities.

General misconduct: This refers to a failure or unwillingness to follow not only the letter but the spirit of the principles set out above, and covers behaviour internal to MADAR as well as with research participants and communities.

Severe misconduct: This aligns more closely with abuse and exploitation, which may be understood as violations of human and civil rights. It may be planned or unplanned, may recur or be a single act, and cause harm of varying degrees. Severe misconduct may include physical, discriminatory, emotional, sexual, financial, historic and peer abuse. Neglect (especially in relation to children or anyone towards whom a person has caring responsibilities) is also recognised as abuse. Bullying, intimidating, undermining or enacting microaggressions towards other people may create a climate in which other forms of misconduct cannot be recognised or addressed, and there is no motivation to come forward.

Abuse: MADAR adheres to Keele University's definition of abuse (see <https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/policyzone20/studentandacademicservices/Safeguarding%20policy%202018%20JUNE19.pdf>)

Concern: A person may raise a concern about an issue or risk that does not directly personally involve them. A concern could take the form of a question or query, rather than being a report; but it may also encompass whistleblowing and issues of serious misconduct.

Allegation: This refers to a concern that centres against a specific person or group of people.

Grievance: This refers to an issue or risk that has a direct impact on the person reporting and their ability to work (in contrast to whistleblowing, which is in the public interest).

Informed consent: This may be written or verbal (recorded or documented), depending on the context.