

Research Ethics Policy for Documenting Tribal Cultures

Introduction

This Research Ethics Policy outlines the ethical principles that will guide all research and documentation activities conducted by Archival and Research Project related to the festivals, culture, art, dance, and song of tribal communities in India.

This policy aims to:

- Protect the rights and cultural integrity of tribal communities.
- Ensure the ethical and responsible collection, use, and dissemination of cultural information.
- Build trust and respectful partnerships with tribal communities.
- Contribute to the preservation and revitalization of tribal cultural heritage.

Guiding Principles

- **Respect for Tribal Cultures and Traditions:**
 - Prioritize Community Engagement: Obtain prior informed consent from the community as a whole, followed by individual consent from participants.
 - Culturally Appropriate Methods: Utilize culturally sensitive methods for data collection, respecting local customs, beliefs, and social structures.
 - Language and Communication: Ensure clear and respectful communication in local languages, using qualified interpreters when necessary.
- **Beneficence:**
 - Maximize Benefits: Ensure that the documentation process benefits the community, such as through cultural revitalization, tourism development, or community empowerment initiatives.

- **Minimize Harm:** Avoid any practices that may be detrimental to the cultural integrity or well-being of the community.

- **Justice:**

- **Fair Representation:** Ensure fair and accurate representation of tribal cultures, avoiding stereotypes and misrepresentations.
- **Equitable Access:** Ensure equitable access to the benefits of the documentation process for all members of the community.

- **Autonomy:**

- **Respect for Decision-Making:** Respect the right of tribal communities to make decisions about how their culture is documented and shared.
- **Right to Withdraw:** Allow participants to withdraw from the documentation process at any time without any negative consequences.

- **Transparency and Accountability:**

- **Open Communication:** Maintain open and transparent communication with tribal communities throughout the documentation process.
- **Data Security and Privacy:** Ensure the confidentiality and security of all collected data, respecting the privacy of individuals and the community.
- **Intellectual Property Rights:** Acknowledge and respect the intellectual property rights of the community, including traditional knowledge, art forms, and cultural expressions.

Specific Considerations for Cultural Documentation

- **Informed Consent:**

- **Community-Based Consent:** Obtain informed consent from the community as a whole through culturally appropriate mechanisms, such as community meetings or consultations with tribal elders.
- **Individual Consent:** Obtain individual informed consent from all participants, clearly explaining the purpose of the documentation, potential uses of the materials, and the implications for privacy and confidentiality.
- **Consent Forms:** Use culturally appropriate consent forms that are easy to understand and available in local languages.

- Community Participation:
 - Involve Community Members: Actively involve community members in all stages of the documentation process, including planning, data collection, analysis, and dissemination.
 - Community-Based Archives: Consider establishing community-based archives to preserve and share cultural materials within the community.
- Intellectual Property Rights:
 - Acknowledge and Respect: Acknowledge and respect the intellectual property rights of the community, including copyright, trademark, and traditional knowledge.
 - Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms: Explore mechanisms for sharing the benefits of the documentation process with the community, such as through royalties, licensing agreements, or community development projects.
- Culturally Sensitive Documentation:
 - Respect for Sacred Sites: Avoid documenting or photographing sacred sites without proper permission and respect.
 - Sensitivity to Cultural Taboos: Be mindful of cultural taboos and avoid any practices that may be considered disrespectful or offensive.
 - Accurate Representation: Strive for accurate and authentic representation of tribal cultures, avoiding stereotypes and sensationalism.

4. Prevention of Harm and Promotion of Safety

- Physical Safety:
 - Ensure the physical safety of all research team members and community members during data collection activities.
 - Take necessary precautions to prevent accidents, injuries, and exposure to hazards.
 - Provide appropriate medical care and support in case of any unforeseen incidents.
- Psychological Safety:

- Avoid any practices that may cause psychological distress, trauma, or embarrassment to community members.
 - Create a safe and respectful environment for all interactions with community members.
 - Be mindful of the potential impact of the documentation process on individual and community well-being.
- Social, Economic and Cultural Safety:
 - Avoid any practices that may disrupt or undermine the social fabric of the community.
 - Respect local customs, beliefs, and social hierarchies.
 - Minimize the potential for social conflict or disruption within the community.
 - Actions that may cause socio-economic harm, including but not limited to a participant's loss of livelihood, insurance, or benefits due to the researcher's failure to maintain confidentiality; putting people from marginalised communities at risk by disclosing personal information; and if applicable, failure to reimburse participants for expenses they may have incurred for the study.
- Environmental Safety:
 - Minimize the environmental impact of research activities.
 - Avoid practices that may harm the natural environment of the tribal community.
- Sexual Safety:
 - Maintain professional and respectful boundaries at all times.
 - Avoid any behavior that could be construed as sexual harassment or exploitation.
 - Ensure that all interactions with community members are conducted with utmost sensitivity and respect.
 - Implement clear policies and procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints related to sexual harassment or exploitation.

5. Ethical Review Process

- Internal Review: All documentation projects will undergo internal ethical review by a designated committee within ARPO.

- External Consultation: Where appropriate, seek external consultation from tribal experts, anthropologists, or other relevant stakeholders.

6. Monitoring and Enforcement

- Regular Monitoring: Regularly monitor all documentation activities to ensure compliance with this policy.
- Addressing Violations: Investigate and address any violations of this policy promptly and appropriately.

7. Resources and Training

- Training for Staff: Provide staff with training on cultural sensitivity, ethical research methods, and best practices for working with tribal communities.
- Access to Resources: Provide staff with access to relevant resources, such as guidelines on ethical research with indigenous peoples and information on tribal cultures and traditions.

8. Dissemination and Sharing

- Community Input: Involve the community in decisions regarding the dissemination of documented materials.
- Benefit-Sharing: Ensure that the benefits of dissemination are shared equitably with the community.
- Culturally Appropriate Platforms: Utilize culturally appropriate platforms and channels for disseminating information, such as community events, local media, and community-based websites.

9. Collaboration and Partnerships

- Collaborate with Tribal Organizations: Collaborate with tribal organizations, community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that documentation activities are conducted ethically and effectively.

10. Continuous Improvement:

- Regular Review: Regularly review and update this policy to reflect evolving ethical standards and best practices.

11. Declaration of Adherence

All research studies, reports, and activities conducted at ARPO are required to have a declaration stating that the provisions of this policy have been followed entirely, along with a disclosure of the steps taken to adhere to this policy.

12. Relationship with other policies

This policy is to be read and implemented in collaboration with other policies at ARPO.

Revision #2

Created 5 January 2026 09:52:02 by Sruthin Lal

Updated 5 January 2026 09:57:04 by Sruthin Lal