

Innovation Ethics

Research involving human participants, including use of their data, requires approval by the MSF Ethics Review Board (ERB) and, similarly, innovation projects that constitute medical research (i.e. involving human participants or their data) should follow the research ethics review process. However, innovation projects can involve ethical risks and have consequences for populations even if human participants are not directly involved. Therefore the project sponsor (or whoever is responsible for oversight of the initiative) should consult the [MSF innovation ethics framework](#) to ensure that their project is ethically sound.

When to seek further guidance

If you can answer 'yes' to any of the following questions, we suggest you seek advice on whether your project requires ethical evaluation:

- Does your project involve vulnerable participants such as children, disabled people, the elderly, prisoners, people in health or social care settings, addicts, or displaced persons – either contacted directly or via a gatekeeper (e.g. a service provider, care-giver, relative)?
- Does your project involve any risk to the participants' health, or involve psychological stress, anxiety, physical pain or discomfort to the investigator and/or the participants?
- Does your project involve financial inducement offered to participants other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time?
- Does your project involve the collection of participants' personal data other than gender, age and address; and have you ensured all reasonable steps are/will be taken to safeguard their anonymity?
- Does your project involve sensitive materials or topics that might be considered offensive, distressing, politically or socially sensitive, deeply personal or in breach of the law?
- Does your project have a detrimental impact on the environment, habitat, or species?