

Putting Ethical Principles into Practice

Lessons from a mid-term evaluation across diverse communities in Bangladesh

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The Fred Hollows Foundation

The Fred Hollows Foundation acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands on which we work and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures;

and to Elders both past and present.



Restoring sight at scale

Our Vision: A world where no person is needlessly blind or vision impaired.

THE GLOBAL NEED

43 million people are blind | **1.1 billion** live with some form of vision loss | **9 in 10** people with vision loss can be treated



3 million+

People whose sight has been restored



100 million+

Doses of antibiotics delivered for trachoma



25+

Countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific

The project

A mid-term review of a gender-sensitive eye care model in Bangladesh.

- Gender-sensitive eye care model delivered across Dhaka, Sylhet and Mymensingh.
- Evaluation Purpose: program improvement and learning, not compliance reporting.
- Project Period: the project began in 2022 and was later extended to 2028.
- The evaluation was organisationally commissioned, but ethically accountable to the people whose experiences shaped the evidence.



Who participated

Whose experience the evaluation set out to understand.

- Women and girls using or missing out on eye care services.
- People with disabilities.
- Ethnic minority communities.
- Tea plantation workers.
- Community leaders and service providers.
- Perspectives could be filtered through language, gatekeeping, institutional systems and unequal access to services.



How we run evaluations

1

Scoping & Planning

Build ethics into design

2

Evaluation Management and data collection

Monitor ethics in practice

3

Findings, management response and action planning

Responsible use of findings

Ethics review begins at evaluation planning

1 Initiating the Conversation

Evaluation Reference Group reviews participant, data, harm and use risks.

2 Developing the Safeguards

Consent, confidentiality, accessibility, language support and safeguarding pathways.

3 Confirming Ethics Pathway

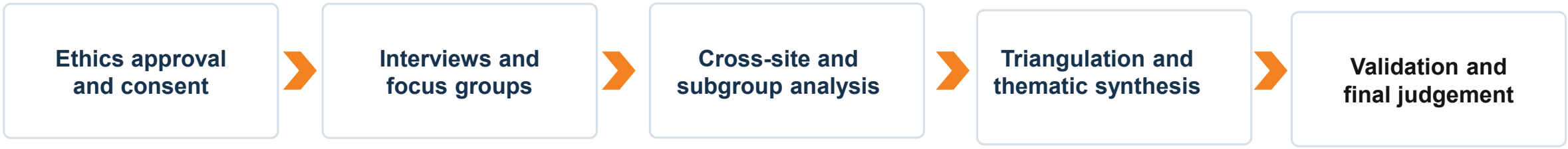
Internal safeguards are sufficient, or external ethics review is triggered.

Children and young people	**Social, legal or relational risk**	**Sensitive data**
Groups experiencing marginalisation	**Language and culture**	**External use**

Identify ethical risks early, strengthen evaluation design, and determine whether internal safeguards are sufficient or external review is needed.

How evidence was generated

Qualitative methods were selected to understand experience, meaning, inclusion and context.



Validation included partners, local facilitators, community representatives and gatekeepers.
It was used to sense-check and contextualise findings, not to approve or replace the evidence.

How did we incorporate communities in the validation? How did we feedback to communities?

Three questions we kept asking

Connecting design, fieldwork, analysis and use.

- **Whose voice is heard?** Women, ethnic minority communities, tea workers and people with disabilities.
- **Whose meaning is preserved?** Local-language support, probing, subgroup comparison and triangulation.
- **Whose priorities shape use?** Organisational learning informed the purpose, while evidence remained the basis for judgement.

Ethics became practical when these questions were asked repeatedly, not only at the approval stage.



Where ethics become real?

1 Use ↔ voice

Who is the evaluation for, and whose experience shapes the conclusions?

2 Inclusion ↔ constraint

What time, access, language and budget are needed for participation to be meaningful?

3 Validation ↔ judgement

How do we respect stakeholder perspectives without turning findings into negotiated agreement?

Ethical practice involved balancing competing priorities throughout the evaluation.

Ethics decision log

What we got wrong and how we responded:
A lightweight record of judgment calls during the evaluation.

Decision point	Ethical risk	Choice and reason	Strengthen next time
Interpreters	Loss of meaning	Local-language support, probing and triangulation	Build time to review interpretation
Validation workshop	Findings become negotiated	Clarify context without replacing evidence	Set boundaries and roles upfront
Inclusion sampling	Less visible groups under-represented	Prioritise groups missed by routine data	Plan language and accessibility earlier

The aim is visibility and learning, not another compliance template.

What this means for the participants?

Why the ethical choices mattered for the people whose experiences shaped the evidence.



- Participants shaped the evidence, not only supplied it.
- Local-language support and probing kept meaning intact for women, ethnic minority communities, tea workers and people with disabilities.
- Findings were sense-checked with communities, while judgement stayed with the evaluation team.
- Better practice showed up as clearer consent, safer participation and services that reflect what people said.

Key take away | Four practice shifts

1

Build reflection into design

Plan for sampling, language, accessibility, power and validation before fieldwork.

2

Treat language as evidence work

Translation and interpretation shape what can be understood and concluded.

3

Set boundaries for validation

Use stakeholder feedback to strengthen context, not negotiate conclusions.

4

Document judgement as it happens

Record risks, choices, reasons and learning while decisions are still live.

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Thank You!

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