

One Health Ethics: The need for policy before research and action

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Introduction

One Health institutions working with animals or plants should not underestimate the importance of human research ethics. There is need for broader ethical frameworks to encompass One Health research.

The universal ethical principles of human-subject research presented in the Belmont report as **Respect for Persons, Beneficence and Justice**,¹ should be applied to custodians of animals and the environment.

Here, we describe experiences of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in implementing human research ethics in livestock projects.

Justice: Flexibility in documenting consent may increase participation (Kenya)²

- Signatures and thumbprints may be associated with risk or ritual in some communities.³
- When given the option, 61% (140/230) Nairobi milk traders chose verbal consent, 39% (90/230) signature and none chose to provide a thumbprint.
- Sex and occupation were associated with consent mode chosen.

Risk factors for signature as the method of consent among 230 milk traders in Nairobi, Kenya

Variable	Odds ratio (95% CI)	P
Constant	0.09	0.112
Sex (male vs. female)	2.2 (0.92–5.4)	0.077
Employment Position (employer vs. employee)	1.9 (0.56–6.4)	0.305

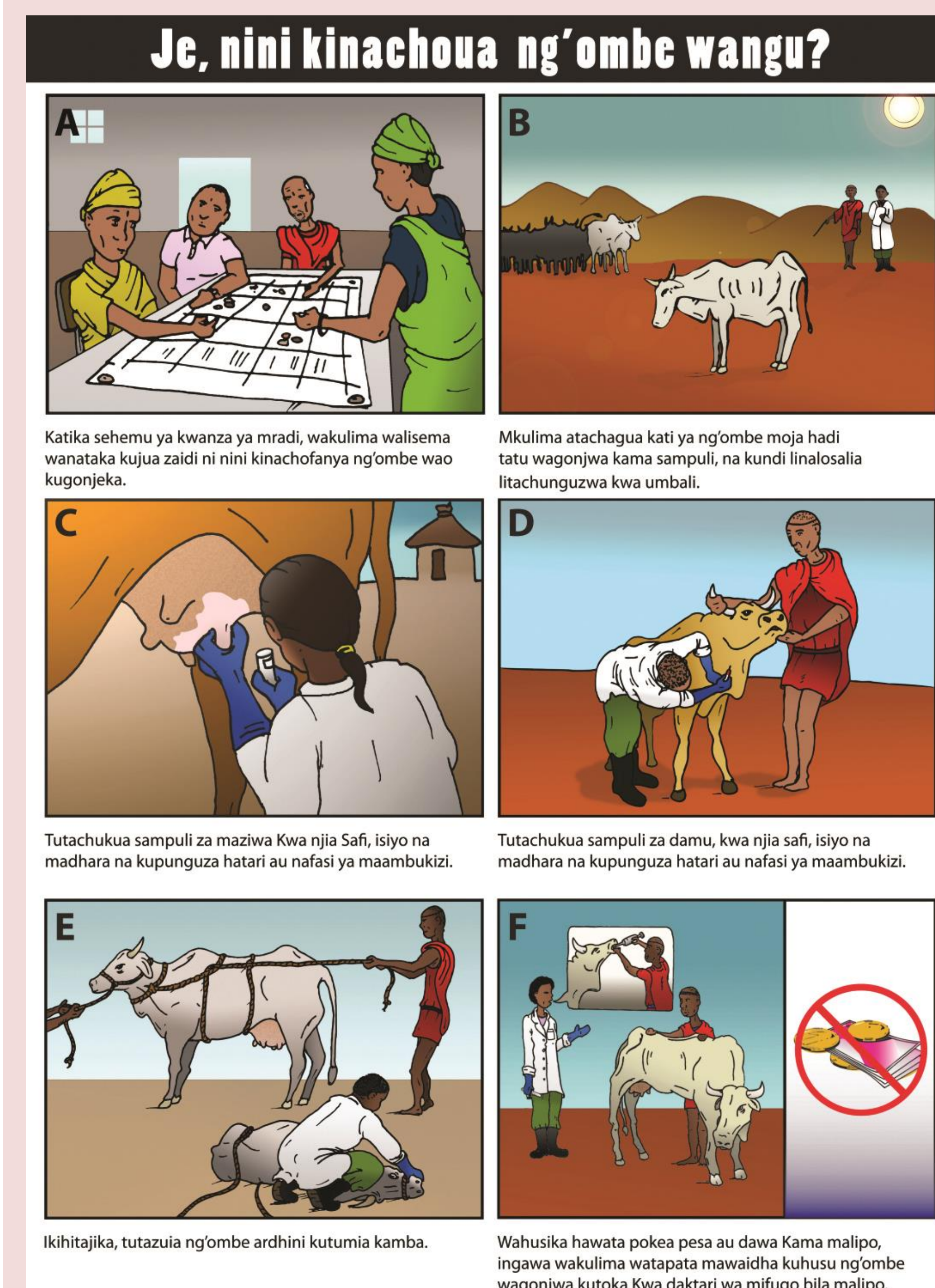
Multivariable logistic regression model with enumerator as a fixed effect
Model Wald Chi2 p = 0.126

References

1. U.S., 1978. The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research. The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research: Department of Health & Human Services, United States.
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3. Marshall, P.L., 2007. Ethical challenges in study design and informed consent for health research in resource-poor settings. World Health Organization.

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These projects were funded by CRP Agriculture for Nutrition and Health, and BMZ
All photographs: ILRI/T.Cooper; Cartoons – Matatu Media matatu.media@gmail.com

Respect for Persons: Visual tools for better-informed consent (Tanzania)²



Visual tool for seeking informed consent

- Livestock owners do not always comprehend project information and therefore consent is not truly informed.
- A cartoon research tool was found to improve comprehension and engagement in the informed consent process compared to a conventional, written information sheet (typically read to participants).
- Dialogue stimulated by images led researchers to better understand the unique relationship of each participant with their livestock.

Key learnings from these experiences

- A One Health research ethic considers animals and the environment to be intrinsically valuable and also acknowledges the relationships humans have with them.
- Human research ethics committees have an important role in institutional policy around animal and environmental research.
- Adaptive and context-specific approaches must be used when applying a One Health ethic.

Beneficence: Sharing benefits using participatory photo (Vietnam)

- During a long-term impact assessment, participants took photographs to represent changes on their pig farms
- Voluntary participation in a photography exhibition gave farmers the opportunity to teach and learn from each other's experience in pig production, thus sharing benefits of research.
- Participation rate was 90% (45/50).
- Feedback was positive: 78% (35/45) named one or "many" things they learned, 62% (28/45) something they taught and 69% (31/45) something new they would try.
- This peer-sharing democratised the knowledge created and served as a method to share research results with participants.



Photograph sorting

Photograph Exhibition

Non-maleficence: Point of contact

- ILRI policy is to provide research participants with institutional research ethics committee (IREC) contact details.
- IREC has never been contacted.
- Language barriers, cost of communication and cultural dimensions, such as high relative power-distance scores, may contribute.



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