



## **Protecting the Unprotected: ethical challenges in conducting research on drug use, sex work, HIV and rights in Pakistan**

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**Thursday 27th May 2010 (12.30 - 13.30)**

**LSE Health and Social Care**  
**Summer Term Formal Seminar**  
**Graham Wallas Room (A 550)**  
**Old Building, Houghton Street, WC2**

### **Abstract**

This seminar discusses the methodological and ethical issues raised in doing research in Pakistan amongst high-risk groups (male, female and transgender sex workers and drug users), namely how to conduct research without bringing additional stigma and unwanted attention to research populations that were already highly stigmatised and marginalised. A second issue was whether it was ethical to conduct research at all among these groups in an environment where the policy implications of the research would not necessarily be heeded in a way that respected or protected their rights, and could potentially violate them.

This project addresses these challenges in two ways. Firstly, the National AIDS Control Programme was involved at every stage of the research which allowed them to feel ownership of the project and thus helped to ensure their acceptance of the rights-component and their buy-in to the need to protect the rights of vulnerable groups as part of a coherent national AIDS strategy. Secondly, the project used participatory methods (a peer ethnographic approach) to engage high-risk group members in a relationship of responsibility and self-affirming dignity through the research process itself. The presentation will describe this approach, its benefits and challenges.

### **Biography**

Dr Susannah Mayhew is a Senior Lecturer in Reproductive Health and Policy at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Prior to this she worked at the Nuffield Institute for Health, University of Leeds. Her research interests are in analysing the health policy and systems development issues in relation to population, sexual and reproductive (including maternal) health and services.