UKCDR

Four Approaches to Supporting Equitable Research Partnerships

2022

ESSENCE and UKCDR Good Practice Document
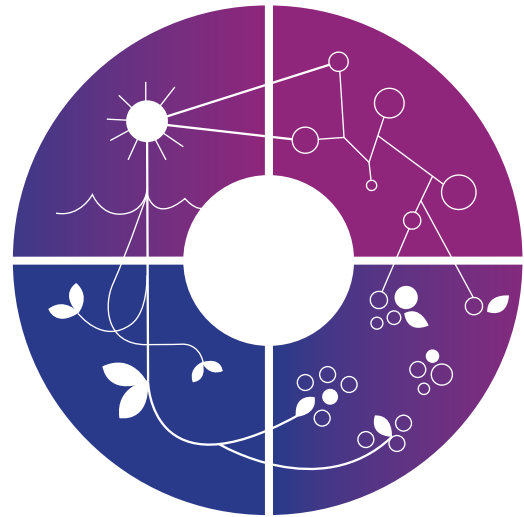
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Transforming the global research partnership ecosystem in ways that increase equity and restore balance requires consistent action and reflection; the crux is finding a balance between flexibility and equity that enhances trust and respect among all partners.

Drawing on the experience of funders, research organisations and researchers in low-, middle- and high-income countries, **_Four Approaches to Supporting Equitable Research Partnerships_** provides insights into how the principles of equitable partnership can be applied in multi-country research consortia and partnerships.

Each of the four approaches highlights potential barriers to equity and provides practical recommendations for how these can be addressed and overcome. Strategies for building mutual respect and trust between collaborators and institutions – the software of equity – are outlined, while the hardware of equity – such as funding procedures and contractual conditions – receives equal attention.

Practical recommendations and relevant case studies underline the interdependent and mutually reinforcing roles of relational hardware and software in strengthening equity in research partnerships.

We hope this Good Practice Document will help equip readers to address issues of equity across the research partnerships they help to establish or join, and draw attention to resources that are available to support these efforts.

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on Health Research

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UKCDR provides data analysis, tools and guidance to build coherence and best practice among government departments and other funders of international development research in the UK. A core part of UKCDR's work is supporting the impact of research through the strengthening of safeguarding, research capacity and equitable research partnerships. Our core contributing members include the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS); the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO); the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); UK Research and Innovation (UKRI); and Wellcome. UKCDR is governed by the Strategic Coherence for ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board, and exists to amplify the value and impact of research for global development by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action among UK research funders.

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Contents

Frequently used acronyms

HIC	high-income country
HRP	Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction
LMICs	low- and middle-income countries
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TDR	Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases
UK	United Kingdom
UKCDR	UK Collaborative on Development Research
UN	United Nations
US	United States

About ESSENCE, UKCDR and this Good Practice Document

ESSENCE on Health Research is an initiative of international funding agencies to improve the coordination and harmonisation of research capacity investments in health. ESSENCE members embrace the principles of donor harmonisation and country alignment expressed in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action. In following these principles, donors align and harmonise their activities and procedures with the priorities of the countries in which they work.

UKCDR provides data analysis, tools and guidance to build coherence and best practice among government departments and other funders of international development research in the UK. A core part of UKCDR's work is collaborating with funders and the research community to support the impact of research through the strengthening of safeguarding, research capacity and equitable research partnerships. By providing guidance, resources and opportunities for engagement, UKCDR helps to ensure that research investments optimise development outcomes, while helping to support scientific and research systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

In 2019, UKCDR cohosted the International Research for Development Funders Forum with the African Academy of Sciences and the Science Granting Councils Initiative. Delegates at the event identified knowledge gaps in relation to the implementation of equitable partnership principles, enablers of equitable partnerships and examples of good funding practices.

ESSENCE and UKCDR then sought to identify how the principles of equitable partnerships can be realised in practice. The aim of this document is to provide funders, research institutions and researchers with practical advice and recommendations on establishing and sustaining equitable research partnerships. See Annex 1 for a brief description of the research and consultation processes that supported the development of the text.

Acknowledgements

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Expert taskforce

This document was developed with the support of a taskforce of international research funders that included representatives from the following organisations: Addis Ababa Science and Technology University; African Academy of Sciences; African Centre for Technology; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, UK; Department of Health and Social Care, UK; Elrha; European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership; Fiocruz, Brazil; Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, UK; Fundio National de Investigaco, Mozambique; Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana; Ministry of Scientific Research, Senegal; National Commission on Research Science and Technology, Namibia; National Science and Technology

Council, Zambia; Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research; Research Council of Norway; South African Medical Research Council; UK Research and Innovation; Université de Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; US National Institutes of Health; Wellcome; World Bank.

Alongside the taskforce, the following organisations were also key to developing this Good Practice Document: African Research Universities Alliance; Association of Research Managers and Administrators, UK; Ebola Data Platform; India Alliance; India Research Management Initiative; Infectious Diseases Data Observatory; International Research for Development Funders Forum; Medical Research Council, UK; N8 Research Partnership; National Institute for Health Research, UK; Sustainable Futures Global Network; Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology; UK Research and Innovation International Development Peer Review College.

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UKCDR members: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK; Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, UK; Department of Health and Social Care, UK; UK Research and Innovation (UKRI); Wellcome.

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Introduction

Why equity in research partnerships is vital

Many funders and academic institutions acknowledge that cross-regional research partnerships improve the focus and quality of research, and that greater alignment with the national and local development priorities of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) enhances the impact of their work (Bucher et al., 2020).[1] At the same time, the clear benefits that derive from equitable research partnerships and the localisation of development (Kok et al., 2017) are also helping to change the power imbalances that characterise the contemporary global research ecosystem.[2]

In the past, efforts to strengthen equity have focused mainly on the terms under which research takes place, and the partnerships that form to carry out projects and programmes. However, working at the project level alone limits the extent to which equity can be ingrained (Fekadu et al., 2021). In 2017, UKCDR published a report identifying ten ways in which funders can influence equitable partnerships (see Table 1), and increasing numbers of funders and research institutions have since added their weight to the process (see ESPA, 2018; Mkwananzi and Cin, 2021).

The effect of power dynamics in preventing equity in research partnerships is well-established. In response to a survey that supported the development of this document, 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that unequal power dynamics impacted equity in research partnerships they experienced. Calls to decolonise global research demand that we pay attention to research partnerships between and among wealthy and less well-off nations, and interrogate the imbalances of power and resources that plague them (Alba et al., 2020).

Achieving equity in research partnerships has real potential to contribute not only to the decolonisation of research agendas and knowledge production (Harle, 2020; Zaman et al., 2020), it is also critical to ensuring the ethical integrity of research agendas and processes (Fransman et al., 2021). For all of these reasons, equity deserves to be prioritised in international research partnerships.

1 See also Oswald, Gaventa and Leach (2016), who suggest that excellence in engaged research is based on four pillars: quality, impact, partnerships and co-construction.

2 The principles of the Busan Partnership emphasise local ownership and the alignment of development efforts around a country's national development strategy (OECD, 2011), while The Grand Bargain (IASC, 2016) is relevant to the localisation of humanitarian action.

Table 1. Ten ways in which funders can help make research partnerships more equitable

1. Prioritise inclusive agenda setting.
2. Fund new research questions and value complementary indigenous skills and knowledge.
3. Set the tone around expectations of equity within partnerships.
4. Reward skilled project managers and team players.
5. Look for equity beyond the project leaders.
6. Check for equity in budgets and in all aspects of financial and research management.
7. Continuously strengthen institutional capacity.
8. Widen participation by supporting new research partnerships – look beyond the 'usual suspects'.
9. Invest for the long term.
10. Collaborate and learn from other funders and agencies in the North and South.

(Adapted from UKCDR, 2017)

Conceptualising equity in research partnerships

So, what makes a partnership equitable? At the 2019 International Research for Development Funders Forum, participants characterised equitable research partnerships as: 'exhibiting mutual trust, participation, responsibilities and benefits for all partners, with equal value placed on each partner's contribution'.[3]

In the survey that supported the development of this document, we asked stakeholders to comment on this definition. Their responses revealed some additional elements of the research ecosystem that they saw as enabling or obstructing equity in research partnerships.

Some of these elements relate to what is sometimes described as the intangible yet crucial aspect of 'relationship software' (such as mutual respect and understanding); others relate to the concrete realities of 'relationship hardware' (such as funder requirements and contracting arrangements). (See Figure 1 for a graphic representation of participants' comments; see also Annex 1 for a fuller list of these responses.)

[3] More information about the International Research for Development Funders Forum is available online here.

INHIBITING EQUITY   **ENABLING EQUITY**

Regional disparities
Relegation
Favouritism
Misunderstanding   Exclusion
Doubt
Underestimate Southern partners
Impatience
Insecurity
Resentment   Lack of resources
Disempowerment

Assumptions and misconceptions

Expediency
Charity
Paternalism

Creativity
Inclusive partnerships   Robust networks
Shift of resources
New knowledge
Trust
Lasting impact
Skills exchange
Redistribution of power
Time
Reciprocity
New opportunities
Mutual respect

Understanding and knowledge

Awareness
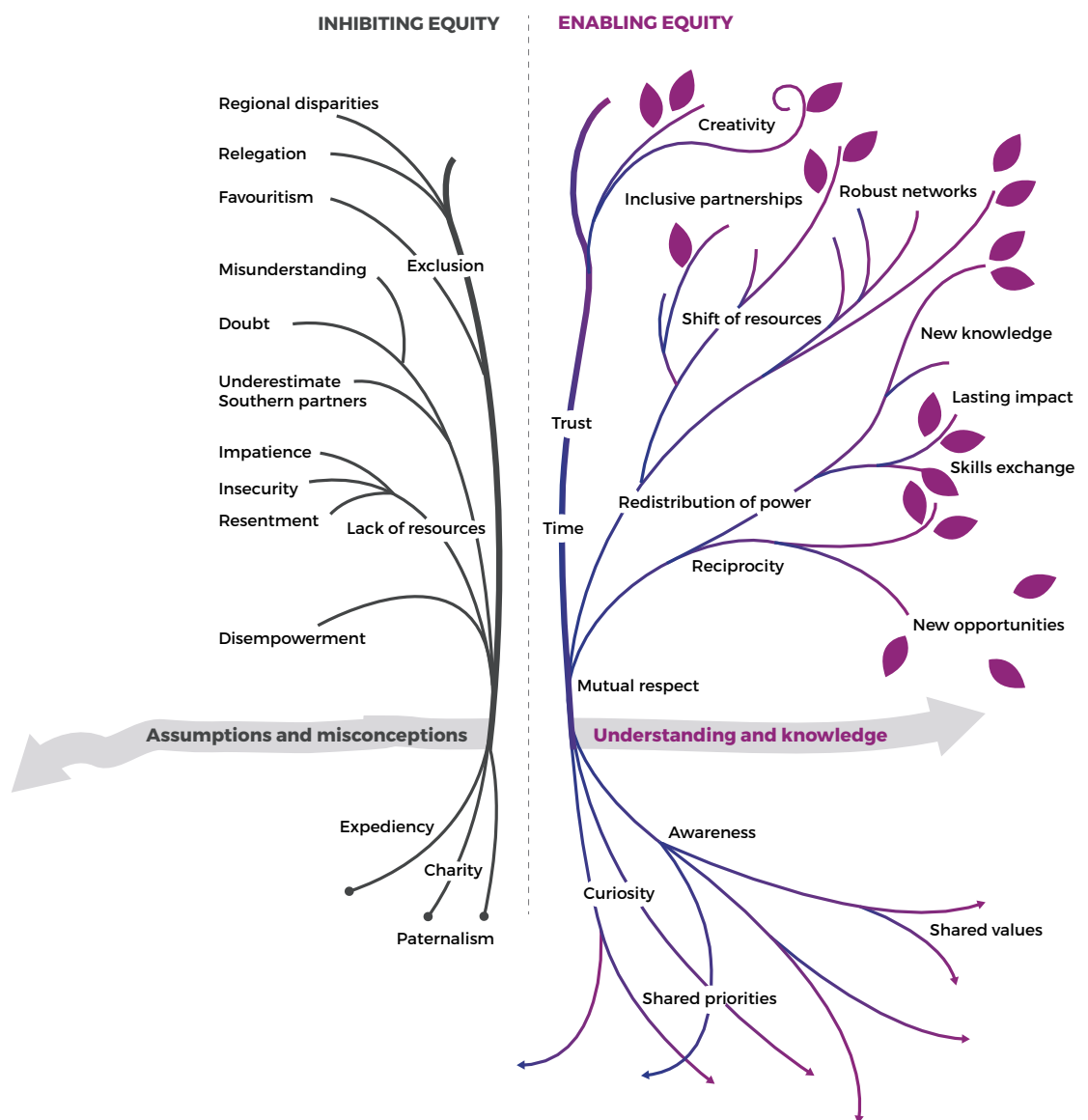Curiosity   Shared values
Shared priorities

Figure 1. Elements of the research ecosystem that enable or inhibit equity in research partnerships
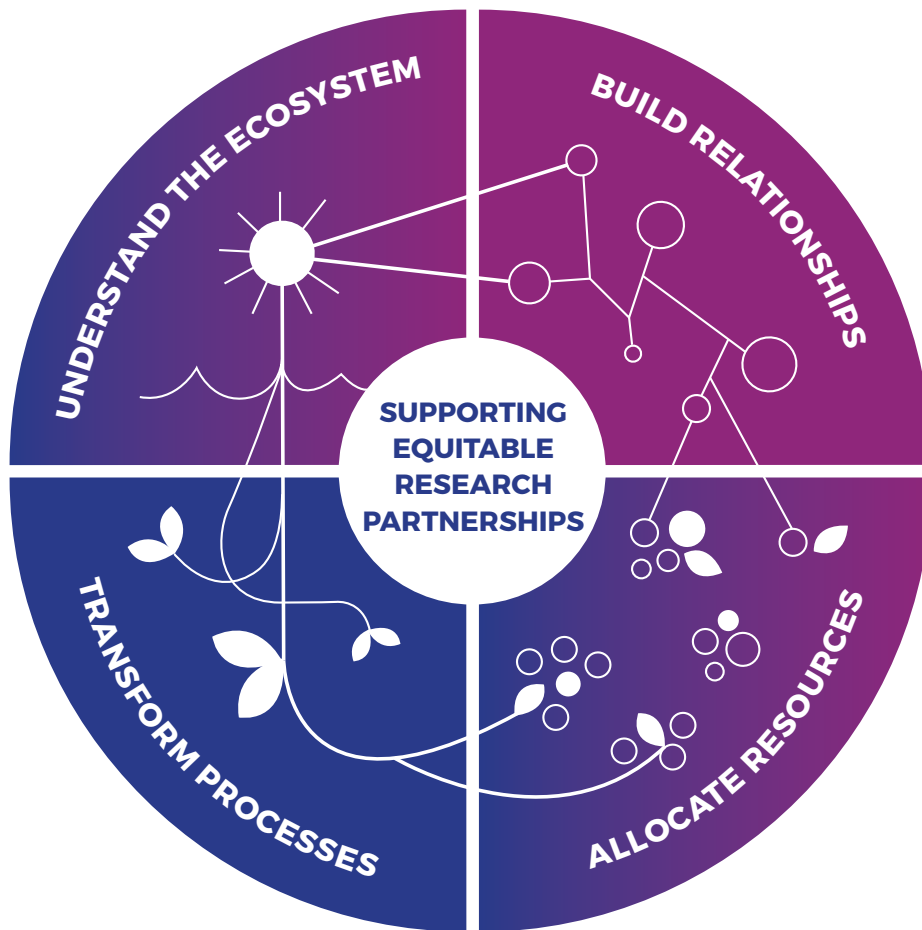
Figure 2. The four interconnected approaches to supporting equitable research partnerships

Subsequent discussions and consultations on the policies and practices related to equitable partnerships affirmed the centrality of research contexts, the global research ecosystem, and the responsibilities of research institutions and funders in driving change.[4]

In this process, two important issues were confirmed. Firstly, equitable relationships are far more likely to continue beyond an initial project and mature into productive long-term collaborations. Secondly, when contextual specificity and partners' different needs are acknowledged in the design and roll out of research programmes, the impact and the uptake of research findings increase.

From our discussions and consultations, the four approaches suggested here (and summarised in Figure 2) were identified as pathways to entrenching equity, and ensuring that the expertise of all research partners is equally valued and utilised. Within each approach, funders, research institutions and research teams will find recommendations tailored to their own contexts, and case studies that provide examples of learning in practice. Acknowledging the excellent work that has already been done in this area, the list of additional resources in Annex 2 is provided to guide further conversation, action and reflection.

This document is not intended to be prescriptive. The recommendations, case studies and resources should all be viewed as context dependent, and applied with due consideration of their relevance to the specificity of each situation. Whether you are in an organisation that funds research, part of a research institution or a member of a research team, we hope the four approaches will help expand your options, knowledge and skills in initiating and sustaining truly equitable research partnerships.

4 For more information about the research supporting this document, see Annex 1. Most of the evidence gathered relates to research partnerships and multi-country consortia involving high-income countries (HICs) and LMICs. However, similar dynamics and issues often play out in partnerships between LMICs, and especially between low-income and middle-income countries.
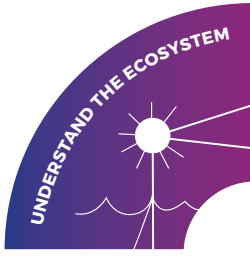
Approach 1. Support the research partnership ecosystem

> **Effective and truly equitable partnerships require financial security and long-term commitment.**
>
> – Researcher, Nepal

The principle of equitable partnerships is not new to research or development. However, improving equity in international research partnerships requires careful consideration of, and changes to, the broader research ecosystem. This includes:

- Shifting attitudes to what constitutes value in research partnerships.
- Taking a more holistic approach to equity in research partnerships.
- Ensuring that funders, research institutions and governments implement policies that support equity when partnership agreements are negotiated.
- Allocating funds to help sustain long-term partnerships between research institutions.

1.1 Expand the value mindset

Our research suggests that the issue of value often has most impact in the early stages of research partnerships, when objectives and methods are being aligned with funding criteria.

HIC funders tend to adopt a risk averse attitude to funding research in LMICs and, rather than attempting to include and engage with a range of LMIC stakeholders, they fund individuals and institutions they already know and whose understanding of research excellence they share.

In this context, it matters little how keen HIC and LMIC researchers are to learn from each other, build trust or respect each other's interests.

Simplistic assessments of value (often based solely on minimising financial risk) will prevent or undermine potentially successful and mutually beneficial research relationships, and recurring low-risk funding allocations will sustain existing inequities. For equity to be realised in policies *and in practice*, the basis of what is valued in personal and institutional relationships has to change.

1.2 Take a holistic approach to equity

Achieving equity assumes an end to the notion that HIC-funded research in LMICs necessarily or primarily involves a transfer of knowledge and expertise in one direction only. A holistic approach means *all* policies and procedures are designed in ways that incentivise equity in partnerships rather than maintain or reproduce inequity.

Inclusion builds equity and, if partnerships are to be truly fair and mutually beneficial, LMIC stakeholders must be included in all decision-making processes. This includes research agendas, budget allocations, leadership roles, outputs and impact measurements, etc. (see Approach 4).

HIC funders are increasingly engaging with LMIC partners, institutions and other stakeholders when deciding on research priorities and designing funding calls. However, such engagements can be difficult when funds are limited and derive mainly from HICs. Equitable agenda setting requires that LMIC stakeholders are able to alert funders and other HIC partners to their nations' strategic priorities and also to the practical obstacles they encounter in research partnerships (see Case Studies 1 and 2).

Setting longer call windows and requiring LMIC representatives to be included in programme leadership can facilitate the co-design of research initiatives in ways that support and sustain relationship building (see Case Study 2).

1.3 Address power imbalances

As noted in the Introduction, 67% of respondents to our survey agreed that unequal power dynamics undermined equity in research partnerships they had experienced.

Most discussions of equity assume that HIC funders and research institutions are primarily responsible for ensuring equity, and our research suggests that many HIC funders, research institutions and researchers take this obligation seriously. Policies and practices on research leadership and resource distribution are being revised. For example, LMIC research institutions are being funded directly and LMIC-led research proposals are being prioritised.

However, achieving equity also requires LMIC partners to develop the capacity and the confidence to negotiate equitable terms for themselves. It is encouraging that LMIC research institutions and governments are increasingly active in this.

The role of LMIC governments

LMIC governments can play a key role in ensuring that their research priorities are adequately represented and that research resources are equitably allocated. HIC and LMIC governments could also work together to support research ecosystems and improve LMIC institutions' negotiating positions in relation to their HIC partners. For example, HIC funding programmes could be designed to leverage and encourage co-funding by LMIC governments and/or research-funding bodies.

In addition, funders can work with LMIC governments to establish or strengthen national ethics review boards comprised of senior academics. These boards could provide general research oversight and arbitration in LMICs. And where institutional partnerships exist, HIC and LMIC partners should engage with governments wherever feasible, and wherever research ecosystems could benefit from this kind of macro-level involvement.

1.4 Invest for the long term

A major challenge to equity in HIC–LMIC research partnerships is the haste with which collaborations have to be formed and research proposals developed – all too often, funding calls are issued with very short deadlines. In the rush, opportunities for elaborating different perspectives and approaches are lost, and there seems to be no time to address imbalances of power and project ownership.

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, HIC and LMIC research institutions are increasingly seeing the benefits of building ongoing relationships that last beyond specific projects or collaborations and cross multiple fields and disciplines.

The role of funders

Long-term funding, sustained and invested beyond specific projects or research teams, is crucial for sustaining equitable partnerships. The funding of research institutions and their partnership building ecosystems must move beyond notions of short-term portfolios or investments. However, the need to continually encourage new entrants to the field makes the situation more complex for funders. It is vital that funders prioritise opportunities for institutions and countries that are underrepresented in international research partnerships while simultaneously seeking to enhance financial security for research programmes.

The role of research institutions

Equity thrives when researchers and research institutions can build and maintain long-term relationships. Extending a project's scope, or ensuring that relationships and research ecosystems are adequately maintained between projects, inevitably deepens mutual understanding and vastly improves the chances of partnerships being equitable.

In fact, when determining how institutions relate to one another in practice, collaborative arrangements between partner institutions (such as a memorandum of understanding) can be as important as the terms of funding awards.

Such arrangements can define how partners interact, when they meet, how resources will be allocated, how intellectual property will be managed, as well as where and how results are published.

1.5 Monitor, evaluate and learn from successes and failures

Monitoring, evaluating and learning about equity in research partnerships is complex, and requires novel approaches to understanding the hardware and software of relationships, as well as how relationships change. Tilting relational software towards equity should facilitate attitudinal shifts, while adjusting the hardware should ensure that the structures and systems are increasingly supportive and appropriate.

Introducing and monitoring changes in relational software and hardware requires long-term thinking and planning. Equity must be seen to be integrated not only within particular research partnerships and projects, but in all aspects of institutional practice and cooperation. Here, too, enhancing equity requires both *pull* from funders and HIC research institutions and *push* from LMIC institutions and researchers everywhere.

UNDERSTAND THE ECOSYSTEM

For funders	For research institutions	For researchers	RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPROACH 1 SUPPORT THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP ECOSYSTEM
On expanding the value mindset			
●			Recognise the value inherent in equitable partnerships and establish funding policies and practices that go beyond identifying and managing risk in purely financial terms.
●			Consider how the attitudes and culture in HIC funding organisations impact on LMIC partners, and address inclusion and representation in internal decision-making structures.
On taking a holistic approach to equity			
●	●		Reflect, monitor and reward the implementation and promotion of equitable partnership building practices across the research continuum, and create an enabling environment that encourages researchers to strive for equity in all dealings with project partners.
●			Ensure LMIC representation in funder-level partnerships (see Case Study 1) as well as in research-priority setting and call design (see Case Study 3).
●			Work with partners to design research calls in ways that enhance equity, including, for example, pre-call announcements, long call windows and clear eligibility guidelines.
	●	●	Support the co-development of collaboration agreements that guide partnerships between research teams in multi-country consortia.
On addressing power imbalances			
●			Develop policies that facilitate and increase LMIC leadership and ownership, such as funding LMIC partners directly and supporting LMIC-led research proposals (see Case Study 2 and Approach 3).
●	●		Ensure greater involvement of LMIC institutions in policy- and decision-making processes within research programmes and institutional partnership arrangements.
●			Recognise and develop the role of LMIC governments in ensuring equity in partnership building and agenda setting processes.
●			Strengthen research capacity in LMICs by supporting the development of reputable national and institutional ethics review boards.
●	●		Include questions about the balance of power between partners in proposal documents and make equity a criterion for programme and project approval.
●	●	●	Take responsibility for practising and promoting equity, especially in challenging situations.

For funders	For research institutions	For researchers	RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPROACH 1 (continued) **SUPPORT THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP ECOSYSTEM**
On investing in long-term partnerships			
●			Encourage the continuation and sustainability of research partnerships by evaluating partnership arrangements when considering grant applications.
●			Support institutional relationship building in and between LMICs, as well as with HIC institutions.
●	●		Commit to long-term research partnerships by investing in relationships beyond specific funded programmes.
●	●		Avoid sudden fluxes in research funding as this can damage relationships and hinder partnership building.
	●	●	Pursue long-term cross- and inter-regional institutional relationships based on equitable principles and shared priorities.
●			Balance continuity and competition while recognising the value of long-standing relationships between institutions and/or researchers.
●			Expand the reach of research funding by including new entrants, and monitor this by including the level of existing relationships in proposal evaluations.
On monitoring, evaluating and learning from equitable partnerships			
●			Require partners to state how they intend to achieve and sustain equity in their relationship; then create measures for assessing equity in relation to stated goals and make future funding dependent on how well the goals are met.
	●		Review and evaluate existing research partnerships to develop institutional guidelines and polices that support and enhance equity.
●	●	●	Document successes and failures, and share what you learn (see Case Study 8).
	●	●	Assess the capacity and resource needs of all partners when research partnerships are established; then develop measures to address and monitor progress in meeting these needs.

Case Study 1 │ Trusting LMIC partners with call design and budget allocations

When the UK's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy launched the Newton Fund in 2014, the country's Medical Research Council (MRC) already had a strong relationship with its institutional equivalent in South Africa, the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). As the largest national funder of medical research in Africa, SAMRC has a good reputation and considerable influence. In 2015, multinational pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) launched a strategic investment plan with the aim of building local expertise in sub-Saharan Africa within and beyond their organisation. To this end, the MRC, the SAMRC and GSK established a trilateral funding programme to facilitate research partnerships between South African, African and UK-based scientists that focus on some of Africa's most prevalent non-communicable diseases.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **The LMIC funder leads call design and administration:** in an attempt to avoid misalignment of research priorities, SAMRC took the lead in developing and managing the call, as well as acting as the awarding body and grant administrator.
- **Upending standard funding arrangements:** typically, under the Newton Fund, the MRC would fund the UK components of collaborative research projects and SAMRC would support the LMIC components. However, in this call, all funding flowed directly to the SAMRC for distribution to the South African, African and UK collaborators. This reversed the standard HIC–LMIC funding/aid relationship that dominates international research partnerships.

Impact of this way of working

- The MRC–SAMRC model prioritised LMIC research needs, and the success of the approach led to it being replicated in four subsequent bilateral funding partnerships in fields such as anti-microbial resistance and mental health.
- The funding model supported the sustainability of African research programmes by ensuring that the research was fully visible within local health research systems.
- African-led programme management strengthened connections with local government departments and policymakers, thus widening the impact of the programme.

Lessons learned

- When using public money and collaborating with industry, a strong legal and financial framework is vital. The development of a trilateral contract (covering everything from financial arrangements and audit expectations, through to peer review processes and grant terms and conditions) took time and effort from all partners. However, this also helped to build trust among partners and created a template for future joint initiatives.
- Intellectual-property management that met the legal and organisational requirements of each country and partner was a significant challenge that required significant investments of time and expertise from all parties prior to the launch of the call.
- Solutions to complex problems in global development require innovative approaches that ensure the participation of LMICs in shaping global and local research agendas. This includes not only funding LMIC researchers but ensuring that LMIC research institutions take a leading role in budget allocations and research management.
- Insufficient investment in research by LMIC governments compounds inequities in working conditions between researchers in LMICs and HICs.

For more information, see https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/international-funding/newton-fund/

Case Study 2 | Research consortia to build equitable decision-making

In 2016, the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) launched a call for proposals on the research and clinical management of patients in poverty-related disease epidemics in sub-Saharan Africa. This led to the funding of ALERRT and PANDORA-ID-NET – two large, collaborative, multi-disciplinary epidemic-preparedness networks that span sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. The networks have two main aims. The first is to provide accelerated evidence for the optimal clinical management of patients. The second is to guide public health responses to severe infectious outbreaks in Africa that have pandemic potential or could significantly undermine human and socio-economic well-being.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **Funding calls are designed to encourage equitable partnerships:** this is achieved by requiring at least one partner to be a legal entity based in sub-Saharan Africa; ensuring that proposals are assessed not only in terms of scientific excellence but also on how they strengthen research capacity; interrogating the appropriateness of resource and task allocations within partnerships; and ensuring that local priorities are addressed by enabling African researchers from disease-affected areas to lead the networks.
- **Governance arrangements that require distributed leadership:** to ensure equitable decision-making and management, all participating entities are represented on the networks' executive and steering committees. Representatives from clinical centres have a particularly strong voice in committees, and equity in terms of gender, sub-regional representation and seniority is also maintained.

Impact of this way of working

- Equitable agenda setting has enabled the networks to rapidly initiate research responses to outbreaks of Lassa fever in Nigeria, Ebola Virus Disease in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chikungunya Virus in the Republic of Congo, plague in Madagascar, Monkeypox Virus in the Central African Republic and COVID-19 across sub-Saharan Africa.
- Rapid responses have been possible because both networks' governance structures have built strong ties with local research organisations that are responsible for coordinating research during disease outbreaks, as well as with the EDCTP's Regional Networks of Excellence and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Lessons learned

- While the networks helped facilitate equity in research-priority setting, institutions that rely on access to grant funding before they start work will struggle to respond rapidly if asked to initiate research activities.
- Consortium agreements can facilitate and encourage ownership by less experienced partners, and (if needed) provide skill-strengthening opportunities through the allocation of tasks and responsibilities; training for female and upcoming researchers should be explicitly included and monitored.
- To facilitate rapid integration of research findings into national policies and systems, as well as ongoing evaluation of their impact, research funding should be delivered in partnership with key regional stakeholders.
- Established research networks and partnerships are well placed to respond rapidly to emergencies. These networks should engage in ongoing research and/or the provision of services while ensuring that they have the capability (including financial) and flexibility to respond to sudden crises.

For more information, see http://www.edctp.org/networks-excellence/ and https://africacdc.org/

Case Study 3 | Recruiting LMIC experts to help set research agendas

The primary objective of Norway's Global Health and Vaccination Research Programme (GLOBVAC) is to promote equity by supporting high-quality research that contributes to improving the health of disadvantaged populations in sustainable ways. Having run two rounds of the programme between 2006 and 2020, the Research Council of Norway (RCN) sought to develop priorities for a third phase, taking the initiative to 2031. Priorities had to be developed in line with the guidelines supplied by the funding ministries (Foreign Affairs plus Health and Care Services) and the OECD's official development assistance regulations.[5] Initially, the RCN appointed a working group of Norwegian researchers to set priorities for the funding period. After the working group had compiled a draft set of priorities, they decided to consult an expert panel of senior researchers based in LMICs.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **Prioritising inclusivity:** geographic representation and gender balance were used to determine the final composition of the expert panel, and senior researchers from Africa, Asia and Latin America were included.
- **Reinforcing trust:** asking working group members to nominate members for the LMIC expert panel worked well because members could vouch for the knowledge, skills and reputations of those they recommended.

Impact of this way of working

- The LMIC expert panel's recommendations were sent to the entire working group and to the RCN administration. This ensured that the process was transparent.
- The LMIC expert panel's recommendations led to equitable partnerships becoming a key priority for future GLOBVAC funding allocations.
- RCN's network of reputable LMIC research partners expanded and GLOBVAC's priorities were shaped by recommendations from LMICs.

Lessons learned

- Few funders have relevant networks or real experience of the realities of research in countries outside their own. Without these insights, they remain unaware of the benefits of involving LMIC researchers in setting priorities.
- As a government body, the RCN is legally prohibited from allocating funding to research organisations abroad. However, Norwegian research institutions can apply to the RCN for funding that covers costs incurred by LMIC partners, and RCN can set requirements for access to such funding to ensure that equity is built into these partnerships.
- Research funders should plan for LMIC involvement in priority setting from the outset, and avoid investing in projects that do not adhere to the principles of equitable partnership. LMIC representatives should be included in working groups that shape future research priorities to ensure that requirements for equitable partnerships are set and followed throughout funded projects' lifespans.

For more information see https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm

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5   OECD member states are required to channel research funding to LMICs through official development assistance (ODA) programmes. This funding comes with certain stipulations that specify how ODA benefits must flow to LMICs. These stipulations do not yet guarantee, or even require, equity with regard to research partnerships. In fact, some research that is conducted solely by HIC research teams is still eligible for ODA funding. Until this changes, funders' commitment to improving equity in partnerships remains critical.
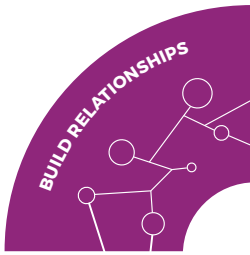
Approach 2. Strengthen research relationships and research systems

> " For a partnership to be truly equitable, all parties have to realise they need each other and can learn from one another.
>
> – Researcher, Netherlands

To support equitable partnerships, funders, research institutions and research communities have to prioritise the strengthening of relationships and research systems. This involves focusing on both the software of partnerships (fostering mutual respect, developing shared priorities, etc.) and the hardware of partnerships (such as funder and institutional requirements that promote equity within the research ecosystem). In this section, we outline barriers and enablers across these areas, and provide recommendations for strengthening relationships and research systems to create a platform for equitable partnership building.

2.1 Prioritise relationship software – understand contexts and cultures

Mutual respect and understanding are key enablers of successful partnerships, and their absence is a major barrier. This is especially true when relationships cross national, institutional, cultural, financial, disciplinary and regulatory boundaries. Where mutual respect and curiosity are present, research partners find it easier to acknowledge their different capacities or resource levels, and can tailor their agreements to address likely implementation challenges.

No researcher or institution can be expected to understand every research context. However, teams that take the time to get to know each other, and become aware of differences in their socio-cultural, political and institutional contexts, are better placed to prepare research proposals that reflect their shared priorities and deliver high-quality research. If given opportunities to articulate expectations and assumptions, partners are more likely to negotiate agreements without defaulting to the agendas, policies and regulations of HICs and their institutions. As noted

in Section 1.4, long-term institutional partnerships are also key in this regard.

Several research institutions have developed training programmes and written guidelines on partnership development. These can be invaluable in helping research teams and institutions to not only build equitable partnerships, but to do so in ways that inform wider institutional culture and practice.[6]

Questions such as how HIC and LMIC institutions initiate research collaborations and develop partnership contracts that respect their different priorities and approaches are covered. The programmes and guidelines also offer options for acknowledging respective contributions to intellectual property and knowledge production.

Similarly, research institutions in several LMICs (South Africa being one example) have developed policies on addressing partnership challenges with HIC institutions by aligning research agreements with support for mechanisms that strengthen research capacity.[7] These policies and processes are being shared to inform and assist similar institutions worldwide.

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[6] See Annex 2 for additional resources, such as the ESSENCE Good Practice Document Series, and the *Guide to Good Practice for Inclusive Research in Global Development* (Altink et al., 2022) which was co-developed by partners from HIC and LMIC institutions.

[7] A good example is the *Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings*, which was developed by TRUST Equitable Research Partnerships (2018).

2.2 Equip researchers well

❝ **Funders should provide dedicated ring-fenced components in all grants for training and capacity building.**

– Researcher, Nepal

Respect and understanding also support the recognition of different capacities and unequal access to resources, empowering partners to address these within specific partnerships and in the wider research ecosystem. HIC researchers and institutions have much to learn from LMIC partners about conducting and supporting research in LMICs, and it is when all partners acknowledge their own knowledge gaps that capacity building becomes a two-way process (see Case Study 5). This not only strengthens the research system and enables LMIC institutions to help drive research agendas, it also supports research application and impact.

However, structural inequalities between HIC and LMIC institutions create barriers and challenges in resourcing collaborations, often contributing to inequity at the onset of partnerships when academics are in the process of relationship building. In this context, building equitable partnerships requires a systems-based approach. That is, systemic barriers to equity, such as the paucity of research funding, infrastructure and facilities, and even access to publications in LMICs, have to be considered alongside support for individual researchers.

A critical mass of scholars is needed to empower LMIC institutions to shape and lead research. This critical mass can be achieved through, for example, appointing LMIC researchers as principal investigators and expert reviewers on international projects. More opportunities and funding for early career researchers would also help. Again, this requires that funders and institutions think beyond standard project cycles and make longer-term investments that help shift power and resources to LMIC researchers and institutions (see Case Study 4).

2.3 Invest in research management

Vast discrepancies in levels of research support can exist within and between LMIC research institutions when compared to their HIC partners (see Wellcome et al., n.d. and Case Study 5). It is not unusual for HIC research managers to find themselves negotiating partnership agreements with LMIC researchers who have little or no access to managerial or legal support during the negotiation process. Limited research support undermines the ability of LMIC researchers to secure grants, manage projects and negotiate fair terms of agreement.

For these reasons, strengthening research capacity in LMICs requires that HIC funders and institutions help to provide and support research management training and resources. In the longer term, a broader role for research management should support the shift towards equal negotiating power between HIC and LMIC partners (see Approach 1 and Case Study 4).

❝ **Research capacity needs to be complemented by funder and institutional investment in research management, acknowledging the importance of the support system around research.**

– Research Manager, UK

For funders	For research institutions	For researchers	RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPROACH 2 STRENGTHEN RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS
On prioritising relationship software			
●	●	●	Learn about LMICs' political economies and research ecosystems and consider how the working and living conditions of research partners and participants compare with your own.
●	●	●	Adopt a collaborative approach to developing equitable partnership agreements and learn from institutions that have made progress in this regard.
●			Share learning about LMIC research contexts with other funders to avoid duplicated efforts.
On using existing guidelines and policy to build solid partnerships			
●	●	●	Use existing resources and training to enhance awareness of differences in research ecosystems, as well as regional discrepancies, language barriers, gender and ethnic inequalities, etc. to improve your partnership building processes and polices (see Annex 2).
	●	●	Develop additional resources to deepen understandings of research contexts and ecosystems as well as asymmetries of power and resources (see Annex 2).
On equipping researchers well			
●	●		Acknowledge the impact of different research and political contexts and adopt a systems approach to enhancing research capacities at individual, institutional and ecosystem levels.
●	●		Require capacity assessments for all partners and ensure that plans for addressing gaps are included in project plans and budgets.
●	●		Monitor projects to ensure that partners share publishing and impact opportunities fairly.
●			Make training and mentoring of early career scholars in LMICs a grant requirement.
●	●	●	Support cross-regional institutional networks that encourage and enable academics in LMICs to drive global partnerships.
●	●		Invite LMIC researchers and evaluators to co-design tools that monitor research-capacity improvements in specific projects and in long-term institutional partnerships.
	●	●	Ensure that opportunities for individual capacity development are equitably shared.

For funders	For research institutions	For researchers	RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPROACH 2 (continued) STRENGTHEN RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS
On investing in research management			
●	●		Ensure that project funding contributes to a strategy for strengthening institutional research systems, including research management and financial capabilities.
●	●		Engage purposefully with HIC and LMIC partners about requirements, timelines and processes to address discrepancies in research management capacities.
●	●	●	Develop strategic and institutional partnerships that support long-term capacity strengthening in research and research management in *and* beyond specific research projects.
	●	●	Participate in research management networks to help shift understandings about the importance of co-designing projects and sharing resources when entering into research partnerships.
	●	●	Assess respective research management capacities at an early stage in a partnership and develop responses that deepen mutual understanding and extend everyone's skills.
	●	●	Facilitate communication between research managers in HIC and LMIC institutions to support knowledge exchange and learning.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Case Study 4 | Strong partnerships build self-reliance

Co-funded by India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and Wellcome, the UK-based charitable foundation, the India Alliance was established in 2008. As a charitable trust, the India Alliance invests in transformative ideas and builds research capacity to advance discovery and innovation in health and well-being. Much of its funding is directed at strengthening India's research ecosystem through supporting teams of scientists and research fellowships, as well as clinical research centres and stakeholder groups that are tackling important health challenges.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **Strengthening research management:** to promote a more robust and supportive research ecosystem in India, the India Alliance set up the India Research Management Initiative (IRMI). IRMI provides leadership training, fellowships and networking opportunities for research managers that support interdisciplinary collaboration and public engagement.
- **Increasing local investment:** at first, DBT and Wellcome invested equally in the Alliance. Recognising the value of the Alliance, DBT doubled its contribution for the period 2019 to 2024, bringing the ratio close to 2:1 in favour of local funding.
- **Encouraging distributed leadership:** DBT and Wellcome are trustees of the Alliance; they are advised by a strategic advisory council made up of independent scientists. This ensures broad stakeholder ownership and input on questions of policy and strategy.

Impact of this way of working

- The Alliance is developing a community of practice capable of sustaining knowledge creation in response to global health challenges.
- The Alliance established and funded India's first research management fellowships and grants.
- Increasing Indian ownership of the Alliance means that research priorities are identified and defined at the local level before attempting a pan-Indian or global reach and relevance.

Lessons learned

- Long-term strategy backed by long-term funding supports effective HIC–LMIC collaborations.
- When LMIC partners take more responsibility for funding, local ownership allows local leaders to set research agendas and allocate funds.
- Adopting a holistic perspective (by supporting functions such as research management and public engagement alongside scientific funding) enhances the whole research ecosystem.
- Funders can strengthen research capacity by coordinating their efforts and pooling funds.

For more information, see https://www.indiaalliance.org/ and https://www.indiaalliance.org/india-research-management-initiative

Case Study 5 | Building systems for quality research

As a state-funded research institution, the Commission for Science Technology (COSTECH) is entrusted with coordinating and promoting the development of science and technology in Tanzania. Since 2015, COSTECH has collaborated with Stockholm University's Department for Computer and Systems Sciences (DSV) to create a research capacity development programme with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Their aim is to strengthen COSTECH's capacity to coordinate and manage research and innovation activities in ways that increase the use of evidence-based knowledge and technologies for legislation, policy and programme decision-making for sustainable development in Tanzania. To date, the partnership has assisted the development of new research management systems, helped set up online databases, installed the COSTECH knowledge studio, developed an institutional repository, and expanded skills in the design and preparation of policy briefs, promotional materials and public engagement strategies. The programme is implemented in Tanzania with Swedish institutions providing practical training.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **LMICs lead agenda setting:** Sida invited COSTECH to submit a proposal on how to strengthen research and innovation in Tanzania, ensuring that COSTECH's priorities inform programme design.
- **Joint planning and management:** COSTECH and DSV work together to develop annual plans and budgets for Sida. Sida then disburses funds to both partners for their respective activities. This facilitates transparency while allowing each partner to manage funds according to their country's regulations.

Impact of this way of working

- The focus on capacity building has supported locally led approaches to research management, enhanced COSTECH's visibility, and increased public access to scientific research. For example, the partnership assisted COSTECH to establish a new research and innovation management system, and created a knowledge hub that has improved the content and functionality of its website and its use of social media.
- Both partners learned the value of communicating with the public in their own languages (Swedish and Swahili) rather than English. At the time of writing, COSTECH had produced over 2000 products in Swahili, including television and radio programmes, infographics, news articles, posters, adverts, leaflets and banners. Using the vernacular improved the reach of this communication.

Lessons learned

- Exchange visits between partners strengthen collaboration, build trust and contribute to two-way learning. Travel restrictions related to COVID-19 confirmed that virtual meetings seldom address all partners' needs and can hamper knowledge exchange and relationship building.
- Close collaboration is key for building relationships and for the successful implementation of a programme. Monthly coordinators' meetings supported joint management.
- The programme struggled to retain communications staff recruited to help with science writing and graphic design; addressing this required a shift in focus to building the capacity of existing staff.
- COSTECH submitted the initial proposal outlining the capacity support they required, which helped the Northern partners provide appropriate support to their Southern partners instead of imposing their own agenda.

For more information, see https://www.costech.or.tz/
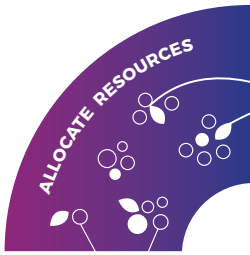
Approach 3. Budget for partnership building

> " We have no funding for pre-proposal work to set the agenda and thresh out the issues. There needs to be support for the pre-proposal stage, that is what is lacking.
>
> – Researcher, India

Power imbalances, resource inequalities and questions of equity inevitably arise when HIC funders and institutions initiate and fund research in LMICs. Funding that is dedicated to partnership building can mitigate these imbalances by supporting the development, maintenance and sustainability of research partnerships and relationships. Some examples of dedicated partnership funding are outlined in this section, underlining the fact that such initiatives can be highly effective in building solid partnerships founded on shared priorities and values, reciprocity and respect.

Table 2. Some options for effectively supporting relationship building across and between funding phases

Pre-award funding	Post-award funding
Pre-call workshops Seed funding Two-stage funding calls Generous timeframes	Follow-on and bridging funds Research dissemination and impact monitoring
Throughout the process	
Fund Global South institutions directly Sponsor staff and post-graduate exchange programmes Provide travel and visa grants Support research management capacity building	

> " When funders insist on including Global South organisations as lead applicants, they are ensuring equitable collaboration.
>
> – Researcher, Kenya

3.1 Plan for partnerships when calling for proposals

A frequently cited barrier to the establishment of equitable research partnerships is the lack of time and funding to foster meaningful and equal participation in the development of grant applications. Where such resources do exist, they tend to be concentrated in HIC institutions. Prior to a call being announced and a research proposal developed, time and resources are needed to bring potential collaborators together to develop a shared vision and agree on ways of working that give all partners a stake in decision-making (see Case Study 6).

Research consortia need time to build their teams, develop trust and agree on equitable decision-making processes. The process can also be costly. However, funders and research institutions are increasingly realising that allowing time for and funding such partnership-building processes can be extremely worthwhile, especially when these resources are distributed among LMIC partners. Participants in our research and consultations cited pre-call workshops as a good way of enabling LMIC researchers to gain recognition and establish international partnerships, noting that emerging lineages of successful partnerships originated in these kinds of workshops (see Case Study 7).

Researcher-level relationships are often the basis on which ongoing collaborations between HIC and LMIC partners are built. However, individual relationships tend to be more sustainable if they are institutionally encouraged (and, ideally, supported by research managers – see Section 2.3). Funding for partnership building can also help to bring a wider range of researchers and stakeholders together to develop ideas in advance of a funding call. And even if an initial proposal does not succeed in winning a grant, the ground will be prepared for future collaborations.

3.2 Direct funding to LMIC institutions and researchers

Some funders have made significant shifts in their eligibility criteria to facilitate more equitable funding arrangements and reduce the power imbalances that occur when funds flow exclusively via HIC institutions. In these situations, funding calls can:

- Require joint lead applicants (one from an LMIC institution and one from an HIC institution), with contracting occurring via the HIC applicant.
- Appoint an LMIC applicant as the administering institution and choose a joint lead from another LMIC or an HIC.
- Encourage LMIC institutions to apply without requiring the involvement of HIC institutions.

Explicitly calling for and funding LMIC principal investigators and research institutions has a substantially equalising effect, and ensures that LMICs are involved in leading research teams and programmes. This can also help LMIC organisations to secure future funding when they develop reputations as sound international partners (see Case Studies 1, 6 and 7).

A thorough knowledge of country contexts and varying regulatory dynamics are crucial when funders structure their calls. In some contexts, de-coupling fiscal management from research leadership can be optimal. In others, shifting fiscal management favours middle-income countries and can amplify imbalances within LMICs.

Here again, panels of international peer reviewers can help funders track these complexities and respond optimally.[8]

9 While this idea is not new in the development arena, it is still relatively weak in academic partnerships. The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is funding a programme on Strengthening Evidence Use for Development Impact (SEDI) that has published some useful analysis (see Menon et al., 2021); Sustainable Futures Network's *A Critical Resource for Understanding Impact for International Participatory Research* also contains valuable insights on this issue; and the International Development Research Centre's Research Quality Plus (RQ+) approach embraces a broad definition of research quality that includes scientific rigour as well as other critical contextual factors, and offers flexible and holistic tools for evaluating the quality of research for development (see McLean et al., 2022).

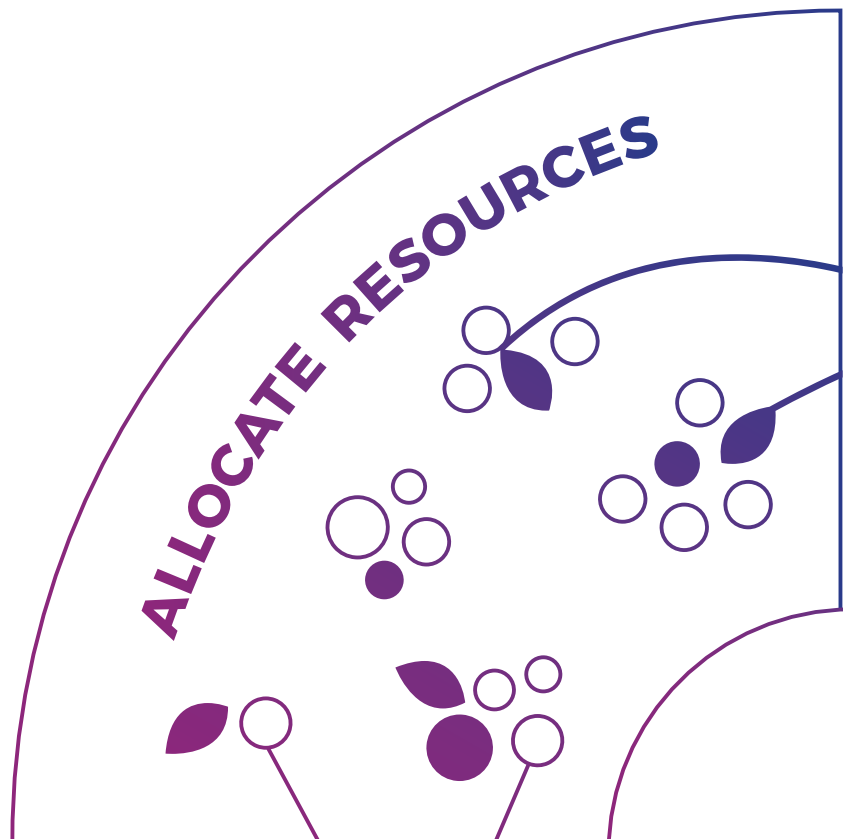## 3.3 Follow-on funding and support for research outputs

Most research partnerships end when the research is complete and/or funds have been spent. Costs related to the dissemination of research findings, and the monitoring of their uptake by practitioners and policymakers, are seldom included in project budgets. This work requires novel approaches in countries where neither evidence-based policymaking nor publishing traditions are well established.

A lack of funding (or failure to budget) for the development of research outputs presents another barrier to the continuity of partnerships at a time when the academic community is increasingly measuring research impact (defined in terms of contributions to social and/or economic development) as an indicator of its value.[9]

The issue of publication rights, including access and affordability, is also at the forefront of debates about equity. Research and publishing have long been defined by standards of competitiveness and prestige that are all set in HICs. LMIC academics find themselves contending with unattainable and sometimes irrelevant obstacles that hinder their opportunities to publish (Harle and Warne, 2020).

While HICs led the shift towards open-access publishing with the aim of widening access to journals and research outputs, academics in LMICs argue that this has not changed the system enough. One of the premises of open-access publishing – that costs can be borne by the author – creates a cost barrier that researchers and their institutions in LMICs might not have the resources to overcome (Kwon, 2022; Ross-Hellauer, 2022). In addition, language barriers and editing costs mean that it is often easier for HIC partners to assume the role of lead or corresponding authors, and they then reap the benefits of this. LMIC partners must begin to claim the principal investigator *and* lead author roles when appropriate, with HIC partners acting to support and co-author research outputs.

ALLOCATE RESOURCES

For funders	For research institutions	For researchers	RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPROACH 3 BUDGET FOR PARTNERSHIP BUILDING
On planning for partnerships when calling for proposals			
●			Use flexible pump-prime funding mechanisms such as pre-call workshops and two-stage funding calls (see Case Study 7). These enable researchers, research managers and other stakeholders to network and test potential collaborations while developing funding proposals. Complex issues, such as theories of change and impact pathways, can be developed without the onerous administrative requirements of standard partnership grants. Ideally, workshops should begin with participants reflecting on the power dynamics and resource inequalities in the research ecosystem and on the principles of equitable partnerships.
●	●		Make travel and visa grants available (in line with institutional commitments to net-zero carbon emissions) to support in-person relationship building within research teams. This is particularly important in large consortia and for projects involving early career researchers. Ensure that travel is not uni-directional.
	●	●	Create opportunities for staff exchanges to help make partner institutions aware of each other's assumptions and limitations. Ideally, such exchanges should target researchers and research managers, prioritising women and younger staff, and should not be uni-directional.
On directing funding to LMIC institutions and researchers			
●			Provide equitable access to funding opportunities, and level the playing field for LMIC applicants (see Case Studies 1, 6 and 7).
●	●		Make consistent efforts to shift funds and resources to LMIC partners within the constraints of regulatory environments (see Case Studies 1, 6 and 7).
●			Ensure that LMIC perspectives inform funding proposals, funding decisions and project evaluations.
●	●		Monitor progress and adjust systems to refine and sustain their equalising effects.
On building in follow-on funding and support research dissemination			
●			Allow grantees to budget for follow-on or bridge funding to sustain longer-term partnerships.
●	●		Support research teams to develop their skills in communication and research dissemination so that they can maximise the impact of their work.
●	●	●	Budget for research dissemination (including open-access fees and journal subscriptions) and stakeholder engagement activities to avoid reproducing inequities in knowledge production.
●	●	●	Work across disciplines to help ensure context-appropriate research dissemination and drive the uptake of relevant findings.

Case Study 6 | Widening call eligibility to enhance equity

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) is the UK's largest funder of research on health and social care. In 2016, NIHR established a Global Health Research portfolio, using UK aid funding to support applied health research for the direct and primary benefit of people living in LMICs. When NIHR launched its first Global Health Research call in 2016, lead applicants were required to be based at a UK institution and working in equitable partnerships with LMIC institutions. By 2020, the NIHR had changed its focus and strengthened its systems, processes, guidance and award requirements so that all Global Health Research programmes were able to fund LMIC partners directly. When applying to the Research and Innovation for Global Health Transformation (RIGHT) Fund, LMIC institutions do not even require a UK partner. Similarly, in the Global Health Policy and Systems Research (Global HPSR) programme, joint leads are required but two LMIC institutions can qualify.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **Enhanced call communication to target LMIC research institutions:** to improve uptake among LMIC institutions, NIHR organised webinars and workshops to help applicants understand what is expected and required of grantees. This included initiatives to encourage collaboration at the pre-application stage.
- **Changing contracts and due diligence measures:** direct funding of LMIC institutions required that contracts be adjusted to the context of LMIC partners. Alongside this, due diligence processes were enhanced to provide assurance regarding the management of funds by institutions outside the UK.

Impact of this way of working

- Continually increasing levels of interest in and reach of funding calls indicates that NIHR's applications process has improved in ways that support and promote equitable research partnerships.
- LMIC leadership in call applications has steadily increased. In the 2020 calls for Global HPSR and RIGHT, 40% of applications were LMIC-led.

Lessons learned

- Due diligence measures need attention to ensure effective assurance. These measures should be resolved at the pre-contracting stage or built in as contractual milestones. The African Academy of Sciences' Good Financial Grant Practice Standards have helped research institutions to refine their accounting systems.
- To understand barriers and enablers related to LMIC leadership, NIHR is analysing applications that were rejected at the first stage of the process. This will inform changes to future calls, including award requirements and guidelines for applicants.
- Call eligibility and assessment criteria should be used to clarify the expectations of partnering institutions; activities that support the early stages of partnership development, such as NIHR's Proposal and Partnership Development Awards, have been useful in this respect.
- Effective communication targeted at LMIC applicants is key to ensuring that eligible applicants are aware of funding opportunities, and can access guidance (including budget templates) when finalising their proposals.
- Funders must invest in revising and improving systems, processes and skills to facilitate direct funding of LMIC researchers and institutions.

Note: NIHR is the research-funding division of the UK Department of Health and Social Care. For more information, see https://www.nihr.ac.uk/ and https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/global-health.htm

Case Study 7 | Using seed funding to incubate research partnerships

In 2013, Elrha, a global charity that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation, launched its globally recognised Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises programme (R2HC). R2HC seeks to improve health outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by strengthening the evidence base for public health interventions. It focuses on maximising the potential for public-health research to positively influence humanitarian responses.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **Offering dedicated partnership funding:** when Elrha established R2HC, they had recognised that partnerships between health researchers and humanitarian aid organisations were crucial and needed more support. They therefore offered all shortlisted grant applicants seed funding to spend 12 weeks developing a full funding proposal together. In the 2021 funding round, over 80% of eligible groups accepted the seed-funding offer. R2HC usually provides between 10 and 25 seed funding grants each year.
- **Providing partnership tools:** to support the effectiveness of its seed funding, R2HC also runs workshops and provides resources on partnership building (see Annex 2).

Impact of this way of working

- Seed funding is used to facilitate equity by involving all partners, enabling them to co-design their research and clarify roles and responsibilities at the outset. Research proposals developed in this way are more informed by contextual considerations and local expertise. Methodologies and operational plans are also more suited to purpose, and thus more likely to deepen the equity and respect between partners.
- Seed funding has also been used to include local partners, stakeholders and communities in planning research uptake. For example, a research team in South Sudan used seed funding to establish an advisory committee that includes local government stakeholders, thus securing the state's commitment to engage with the research findings.

Lessons learned

- Although seed funding tends to be relatively small in value, standard due diligence and contracting processes must be followed, and can take substantial time and effort. To circumvent unnecessary delays, activities start in parallel with contracting, and are funded retrospectively with payments in arrears.
- Inviting applicants to apply for seed funding once shortlisted is more effective than at the expression of interest stage.
- Most applicants would not be able to fund partner workshops or site visits without seed funding, although teams often require less than the £10 000 available.
- Most teams have used seed funding to strengthen existing partnerships rather than to build new ones.
- Funding activities linked to research management and public engagement (in addition to the scientific work) facilitates better and more holistic outcomes.

For more information see Bingley (2019).

Approach 4. Implement processes and procedures that sustain partnerships

> " When HIC and LMIC institutions see partnerships as purely contractual, short-term thinking magnifies power imbalances.
>
> – Research Manager, UK

Shifts towards increased equity in partnership *hardware* (the systems and structures that uphold the global research ecosystem) and *software* (awareness, respect, understanding, etc.) tend to be mutually reinforcing. As these shifts occur, it is crucial that funders and research institutions refine policies, procedures and processes to ensure that they promote equity in more meaningful ways. As equity is embedded and encouraged in policies and in practice, the need to address inequity on a project-by-project basis should decrease.

4.1 Review governance arrangements

International funders, national funding bodies and research institutions are each responsible for specific aspects of research governance. For this reason, they need to tackle the issue of equitable governance in ways that are appropriate and relevant to their own contexts. For example:

- International funders should include LMIC stakeholders not only when defining research priorities, but also when devising accountability and oversight mechanisms for partnerships.
- Participants in our research indicated that when national research bodies play a strong role in overseeing the governance of multi-country partnerships between research institutions, levels of equity tend to increase. That is, national policies and best-practice guidelines established by national research bodies provide research institutions and researchers with the resources they need to address issues such research costing, as well as intellectual property, data ownership and publication rights before these become contentious (see Section 4.2).

- For research institutions, achieving equity in relation to governance requires long-term thinking and strategic planning. Planning for long-term relationships helps institutions identify partners whose values, research interests and skills are complementary to their own.[10] For instance, some UK institutions have made long-term research cooperation with LMICs part of their core strategy.[11] These are transforming how the UK institutions engage with LMIC partners, and making issues such as intellectual property easier to acknowledge and resolve.
- At the researcher level too, governance structures within research institutions can work to either obstruct or facilitate relationships (see Case Studies 2 and 8). Shared ownership of projects can be encouraged by co-design workshops and administrative models that allow responsibilities to be allocated fairly. Diffuse leadership, that requires an equal presence of all partners in project committees or workstreams, is another option.

Adopting fixed governance modalities over the lifetime of a project can be another barrier to the evolution of partnerships, especially where political or

10 The word 'complementary' as distinct from 'equal' is important here in relation to skills and knowledge. When HIC institutions search for partners whose knowledge and skills can be seen as 'equal', they tend to mean 'conform to HIC-defined levels of excellence'. This privileges certain institutions and LMICs while also devaluing other forms of knowledge and expertise. In this context, improving equity involves providing contextual support that enables all institutions to access the same opportunities.

11 A few examples are: Glasgow Caledonian University, the Perivoli Africa Research Centre at the University of Bristol; the Africa Oxford Initiative; Coventry University Africa Centre; and the Sussex Africa Centre.

other disruptions could have unexpected consequences. While funder requirements play a major role here (see Section 3.2), research institutions can take the initiative to change such arrangements.

4.2 Revisit the terms of research

The level at which contractual agreements are negotiated in research partnerships can vary. In many LMICs, the lack of adequate administrative support means that researchers often have to take on the work of negotiating contractual terms with research officers in HICs. Perceived levels of risk can mean that researchers in LMICs also have to contend with strict funding terms and conditions, as well as a risk averse approach to the partnership from their HIC partner. In such situations, research collaborations between LMICs and HICs are further constrained by:

- Accounting systems and compliance requirements that are lengthy and difficult to understand.
- Extensive and complicated due diligence processes that might have to be duplicated from project to project.
- Contractual terms that favour HIC partners, such as arbitration clauses on where conflict must be resolved.
- Conflict between principal investigators and institutional contract teams, who have to ensure compliance with funder requirements, if the former push for more equity.

Payment terms are another often cited barrier to equitable partnerships. In low-resource environments, LMIC partners can be hamstrung if contracts specify that payments will occur only after certain project milestones have been reached. More flexible approaches allow for certain kinds of upfront payments but these tend to require additional monitoring measures that can also be costly and time consuming.

When inundated by paperwork, it can be useful to remember that international research collaborations tend to be rooted in hope for impact and development.

As participants in our research pointed out, they never enter into partnership agreements with the intention of taking legal action if partnerships fail. This calls into question the role of contracts, especially where LMIC partners' lack of authority or capacity to challenge agreement terms helps perpetuate inequalities in the research ecosystem (see Section 1.3). Ideally, contracts should articulate and strengthen shared understanding of the partnership, and provide details that clarify responsibilities such as reporting schedules and payment terms (see Case Study 8).

Rethink due diligence

Due diligence processes in international research partnerships depend heavily on levels of risk linked to perceived differences in administrative systems and expertise, as well as in national and institutional norms and values. In general, the organisation providing financial support determines what due diligence processes are used. In the UK, some funders have developed frameworks to guide the process,[12] but, as Stergiou et al. (2021) point out, this can mean pointless duplication of effort for grant recipients, as well as difficulties in verifying and monitoring information. This means that due diligence practices can, in effect, lead to the exact opposite of what was intended – poor and ill-informed decisions.

Misperceptions about LMIC partners' systems are part of the problem here. Accounting and administrative systems in some LMICs can require multiple signatures to sign off. Strict hierarchies between institutional managers on the one hand, and academics and support staff on the other, add complexity and can mean long delays. An understanding of this is crucial for identifying who to invite to negotiations and who to ask to sign off on due diligence reports.

The size and capacity of partner institutions is also a critical factor. Small research institutions seldom have the policies or systems that large ones do, making

> " I worked on a jointly funded project where I was unable to pay my collaborators. I had to find people able to work on a voluntary basis but money was available for staff on the UK side. This should never happen. It is unequal and affects the quality of outcomes.
>
> – Research Manager, South Africa

12 Those developed by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR, 2020) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI, 2021) are useful examples.

it more difficult for them to develop and demonstrate their competence in due diligence. Recognising partners' administrative and financial capacity is vital to being able to make reasonable requests regarding risk mitigation. For example, a South African research team was once asked to provide evidence of a comprehensive insurance policy that would have constituted a major unforeseen financial expense for their institution.

Of course, funders' and HIC institutions' drive to show value for money is valid. This is especially pertinent to ODA-funded research. Few funders appreciate how heavily their contractual terms and due diligence measures rely on cultural and legal assumptions that are specific to their own national legislative systems, or how little resonance these might have in LMIC contexts.[13]

HIC institutions can find themselves compelled to act as translators (of the national thinking and rules behind contractual terms), assessors of project milestones (as per funder requirements) and compliance monitors (providing assurance). Each of these roles can impact heavily on relationships with partners and negatively affect equity. HIC and LMIC researchers and research managers need to be aware of these realities and find ways to openly discuss and resolve tensions and difficulties as they arise. As noted in Approach 1, LMIC reviewers and representatives can assist funder and HIC institutions by assessing and advising on forms of due diligence that are meaningful, necessary, acceptable and achievable for all partners.

Apply fair costing practices

Issues related to costs and budgets are central to fairness and equity in partnership agreements and research partnerships.[14]

Indirect costs have long been a point of contention in HIC–LMIC research partnerships. One reason for this is the divergence in definitions of indirect costs,

and a lack of awareness about what the divergence signifies.[15] LMIC partners often have to find co-funding to support the cost of doing research, and this is not always possible or viable. For example, one South African institution charges indirect costs at 25% of the project budget. If a project funder refuses to cover this cost, the university has to find alternative funding to subsidise the project. In another LMIC, one research institution proposes allocating 20% of the project budget to indirect costs as a starting point for negotiating contract terms.

Many HIC institutions charge far more than this but their overhead costs tend to be covered by governments, endowments and other donations – a situation that is not as common in most LMICs. Nevertheless, even if there is equitable financing of resources, HIC institutional costs are astronomical compared to those in many LMICs.

Cultural misunderstandings of what can be considered a research cost is another barrier to equity. In HIC countries, the remuneration of researchers is assumed and included in research costing. This is not always the case for research teams in LMICs.

Staffing costs and the ability to buy-out (or allow staff to take) time for research remains a challenge in many LMIC institutions, where academics have high teaching loads and research is drastically underfunded. Consequently, some LMIC institutions lack policies or frameworks for establishing staffing costs in research projects – a challenge that is amplified by the lack of research support staff (see Section 2.3).

Revisit publication and intellectual property policies

A major barrier to achieving equity in relation to intellectual property is the inherent bias in value attributed to the respective knowledge and contributions from HIC and LMIC institutions (see Section 1.1). In fact, some funder policies even specify that the role of LMIC

13 For example, in the UK, banking and tax laws regulate payments from HIC institutions to LMIC partners. The fact that UK-based institutions do not always apply the rules in identical ways adds further complications.
14 The ESSENCE Good Practice Document Series has several useful resources on improving research costing and pricing in LMICs. They are all available online.
15 Many funders insist that research grants cannot be used to pay for basic research infrastructure or dictate the percentage of funding that LMIC institutions can allocate to such line items. This disregards the fact that some LMIC institutions have little or no access to basic resources, such as appropriate laboratory equipment and adequate IT, data processing and library facilities.

institutions is to provide access to local resources and 'research subjects' rather than contextual knowledge or intellectual expertise. Furthermore, global policies on intellectual property are framed by HIC settings and institutions. These policies affirm and sustain the existing inequalities and Northern bias of academic publishing, with its ranking systems that marginalise LMIC publications and over-attribute intellectual contributions to first authors rather than research teams. Academic rankings systems and the commercialisation of higher education have intensified competition so that HIC academics who try to allocate intellectual property equitably risk pushback from their own institutions' commercialisation and legal teams.

All of this leaves LMIC researchers, especially those in the low-income range, at a disadvantage. Consequently, LMIC partners tend to undervalue their own contributions – the intellectual property of data being just one example. The lack of support for LMIC researchers who have to negotiate issues of intellectual property and its exploitation exacerbates this problem. The enforcement of these agreements while projects are ongoing is another challenge (see Case Study 9).

Reconsider ethics review processes

Although equity is of course an ethical issue in itself, the focus here is on perceptions of ethics review processes required for project approvals. Where HIC partners undervalue the validity of LMIC ethics boards or processes, they have been known to mirror or duplicate review processes conducted in LMICs.

One example of this is the lengthy process required for the transfer of biological materials from India. Rather than recognising the robustness of the Indian system, some HIC institutions see this as a point of frustration. Unsurprisingly, this kind of reaction exacerbates mistrust and reinforces power imbalances.

Transforming the global research partner-ship ecosystem in ways that increase equity and restore balance requires consistent action and reflection. Stronger partnerships have clear benefits at every level of the system and for all stakeholders; the crux lies in finding a balance between flexibility and equity that enhances trust and respect among project partners.

> **"** HIC researchers look at us as contractual partners. They assume that our intellectual input is low and that authorship of publications should rest with them.
>
> – Research Manager, India

TRANSFORM PROCESSES

For funders	For research institutions	For researchers	RECOMMENDATIONS ON APPROACH 4 IMPLEMENT PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES THAT SUSTAIN PARTNERSHIPS
On reviewing research governance			
●			Work with LMIC and HIC research institutions to assess what reforms are needed to improve and harmonise research governance at national, regional and international levels.
●			Require project partners to specify in grant applications how they will achieve and demonstrate distributed governance and LMIC ownership.
	●		When building institutional partnerships, think long term and support governance arrangements that reinforce shared values and priorities.
	●	●	Ensure LMIC partners help drive partnerships from the outset and establish mechanisms for equitable governance, ownership and agenda setting.
On revisiting the terms of research			
●	●		Revise contracts so that they articulate shared understandings, strengthen trust and specify how partners will work together.
●	●		Strengthen the roles and abilities of research management professionals so that they can help to embed equity in all institutional agreements (via international offices, for example), and help to train research managers from LMIC institutions in negotiating contracts (see Section 2.3).
	●		Be aware that LMIC partners might require funding in order to start working, and allow for flexible payment terms if advance payments are necessary.
	●	●	Use standards to streamline contracting processes, highlight different institutional capacities and needs, and strengthen research management, without unnecessarily increasing complexity or costs (see Annex 2 for resources).
On rethinking due diligence			
●			Prioritise knowledge development on due diligence standards, and encourage LMIC institutions to conduct due diligence on potential partner institutions to assess whether the relationship will be a good fit.
●	●		Ensure that due diligence processes are appropriate to the research being conducted, and to the social and infrastructural characteristics of LMIC partners.
	●		Prevent administrative problems by discussing due diligence requirements early in partnership negotiations. This will enable partners to clarify who is responsible for collating and securing sign-off on due diligence documents, and to challenge arrangements that they see as overly complex or costly.

| --- | --- | --- | --- |
	●		Rather than suspending partnerships if due diligence requirements are not fully met, seek solutions that enhance flexibility and ease administrative burdens (including changing payment terms if necessary).
●	●		Secure judicial impartiality by ensuring that the country where a conflict arises is also the country of arbitration.
On applying fair costing practices			
●	●		Ensure programme budgets cover the costs of research, research management and necessary infrastructure in full.
	●	●	Develop robust systems for calculating indirect research costs and allocate income accordingly.
●	●		Strengthen LMIC research management systems by covering indirect costs and funding training in research management.
On revising publication and intellectual property policies			
●	●	●	Monitor and account for how authorship of project outputs is allocated to promote equity and inclusivity.
●	●	●	Where LMIC partners do not have the capacity to exploit intellectual property, develop other models for sharing ownership and benefits.
	●	●	Use national legislation to create publication and data-sharing policies, and ensure that *all* researchers and institutions are properly acknowledged.
	●	●	Establish editorial boards or publication committees to support and guide upcoming researchers on engaging effectively with HIC partners and publishers.
	●	●	From the outset, identify the intellectual property brought by each partner, and develop fair polices on co-authorship.
On revisiting ethics review processes			
●	●	●	Acknowledge the differences in ethics review processes, and create more awareness of the extra hurdles LMIC partners face.
	●	●	Ensure that all parties agree on which ethics review processes will be followed, and avoid duplicating or undermining partner institutions' ethics approval processes; identify any additional measures needed and schedule accordingly.
	●	●	Agree that partner institutions will conduct ethics processes independently and apply these to joint projects.

Case Study 8 | Grounding partnerships in reciprocity and shared vision

In 2017, the Sustainable Futures in Africa Network was set up to bring together researchers, practitioners and communities in Malawi, Uganda, Nigeria, Botswana and Scotland. By 2020, the network had grown to include research hubs in nine countries in Africa, Europe and Asia, all driven by a vision of how to bring about a genuinely equitable and sustainable world. Now known as the Sustainable Futures Global Network, the nine hubs support a range of activities and interdisciplinary projects underpinned by strong ethical values, grounded in participatory research and reciprocal relationships.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **Distributed leadership:** at the time of writing, the network was co-directed by a member in the UK and another in Eswatini, and managed by a network manager in Canada. To ensure that decision-making and leadership is distributed throughout the network, hubs are managed at country level by members with the support of hub directors and research administrators. Each hub identifies its own research priorities and manages its own budget. Hubs collaborate on funding proposals, with the Northern ones facilitating connections between the hubs and helping to channel funding and training opportunities into the network.
- **The Network's commitment to sharing their experience of ethical partnerships** led to the publication of *A Critical Resource for Ethical International Partnerships*. The explorations and propositions in that document are designed to encourage readers to question what equity, inclusivity and sustainability mean in contexts where research funding can perpetuate power asymmetries and exploitation. The Network suggests ways of undermining the divide between 'experts' and 'beneficiaries', thus helping to prevent further exploitation and deepen transparency, accountability, responsibility, trust and critical reflexivity in research partnerships.

Impact of this way of working

- Distributed leadership, and working across sectors, contexts and disciplines with a commitment to participatory research has improved research design and led to more meaningful definitions of impact.
- A commitment to building partnerships between and within hubs has enabled the Network to be more responsive to the needs of partner communities.
- Supporting the autonomy and capacity of hubs in terms of digital and human resources has reduced their reliance on specific funding periods and built the Network's resilience.

Lessons learned

- To date, the most successful funding applications have been led by University of Glasgow researchers using UK-based funding streams. The aim is for regional hubs to submit Southern-led applications on behalf of research consortia made up of Network members.
- Adequate time (up to six months) is required to establish governance and financial arrangements that sustain equitable partnerships across diverse contexts. Deadlines can both drive and undermine partnerships, and the time needed to nourish and sustain equitable partnerships is seldom included in project design, budgets or institutional workloads; without time, top-down decisions and a lack of inclusivity are far more likely.
- The Network has faced difficulties in funding administrative positions that act as a bridge between projects, supporting long-term partnerships. While project management is partly covered by research projects, finding additional income to support this role between projects is challenging.
- To ensure that more appropriate and Southern-led projects are funded, reviewers must be from the relevant LMIC contexts, or have longstanding direct experience of them.

For more information, see https://sustainablefuturesglobal.org/sf-global-about/

Case Study 9 | Selectively widening access to standardised data

The Ebola Data Sharing Platform was built to address the inaccessibility and lack of standardised data that occurred during the West African Ebola epidemic of 2013 to 2016. On the platform, governments, academic institutions and NGOs collaborate to aggregate, preserve and share clinical data about the disease, so as to generate new evidence and inform advances in diagnosis and treatment. The platform informs the development of knowledge and analytical capacity across the health, research and humanitarian communities, while extending the responsible use of data that is essential for reducing the impact of Ebola Virus Disease.

Approach to equitable partnerships

- **Finding fair ways to share intellectual property and data access:** the initiative worked on strengthening relationships with national and regional health agencies in West Africa, to set up a model that ensured fair access to data as well as sufficient recognition and benefits for data contributors. Access guidelines encourage the use of data by researchers in Ebola-affected countries; researchers from other countries must state how their access to the resource will strengthen health equity and capacity in affected countries.
- **Ensuring LMIC leadership:** the platform is led by the governments of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia, and guided by a committee of independent experts made up of members of national ethics review boards from affected countries and other eminent health professionals who have relevant experience to share.
- **Strengthening research capacity:** the initiative was accompanied by investments in research capacity strengthening, including fellowships, to support planning for future outbreak responses in the countries affected and empower LMIC researchers. Training provided a means of engagement that built partnerships and enabled two-way capacity building.

Impact of this way of working

- The design and development of the platform was guided by the needs, ethics and expectations of countries at risk of Ebola Virus Disease outbreaks. This created scalable and locally driven data governance and research.
- Involving primary researchers and data generators in the reuse of data created trust between partners and confidence in the governance framework that increased their willingness to share data. This also increased data accuracy and the relevance of analyses, thereby increasing the uptake of research findings.
- Integrating capacity building with data sharing benefitted the communities where data were collected by strengthening research skills where these are needed most.
- Improving the skills of researchers strengthened the research environment, increasing the likelihood of equitable collaborations in future.
- To ensure continuity of data access, the Infectious Diseases Data Observatory has committed to continue hosting the data, administering access and supporting related research fellowships so that the platform does not have to keep fundraising to sustain itself.

Lessons learned

- Sharing benefits with communities in which the data originated is challenged by the resource constraints that researchers in West Africa still face. This is despite efforts made to overcome the research inequalities and the heightened political sensitivities that were exacerbated during the 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak.
- Sustaining an equitable partnership with multi-disciplinary stakeholders requires a commitment to invest time and resources over the long term. However, the longevity of the partnership also facilitates the kind of trust that reduces research barriers, accelerates science and strengthens the impact of evidence-based findings. Funders should prioritise ongoing funding for successful projects that are based on equitable collaboration.
- Visiting the UK is time consuming and costly for LMIC researchers. The costs of visa applications (allowing for some to fail) and travel (including foreign) to the nearest UK embassy have to be covered. Similarly, the time and resources needed to meet application requirements related to two-way capacity building have to be factored in.

For more information, see https://www.iddo.org/research-themes/ebola

Annex 1 How this document was created

In 2020, ESSENCE and UKCDR convened an international taskforce of funder institutions to reflect on and share their experience of moving beyond the principles of equitable partnerships to focusing on how these work in practice.

In March 2021, after gathering a wealth of resources and tools available on this issue, the taskforce launched the Equitable Partnerships Resource Hub that quickly became a go-to source of information for those seeking to improve their practice.

To complement this, the taskforce decided to conduct its own research on what enables and what prevents equity in partnerships.

The research process included a stake-holder survey that was translated into French, Spanish and Portuguese, and sent out in June 2021. Responses were received from 418 researchers, research managers and funder representatives located all over the world (see Figure 3).

To obtain a deeper perspective on the survey findings, five discussion groups were convened to examine best practices in equitable partnerships and develop recommendations. Each group was comprised of 10 to 20 people from the following organisations:

- The African Research Universities Alliance (a network of 16 leading African universities) and the N8 Research Partnership (encompassing the eight most research intensive universities in the North of England).
- The UK's Association of Research Managers and Administrators.
- UKRI's International Development Peer Review College.
- India Alliance's India Research Management Initiative.
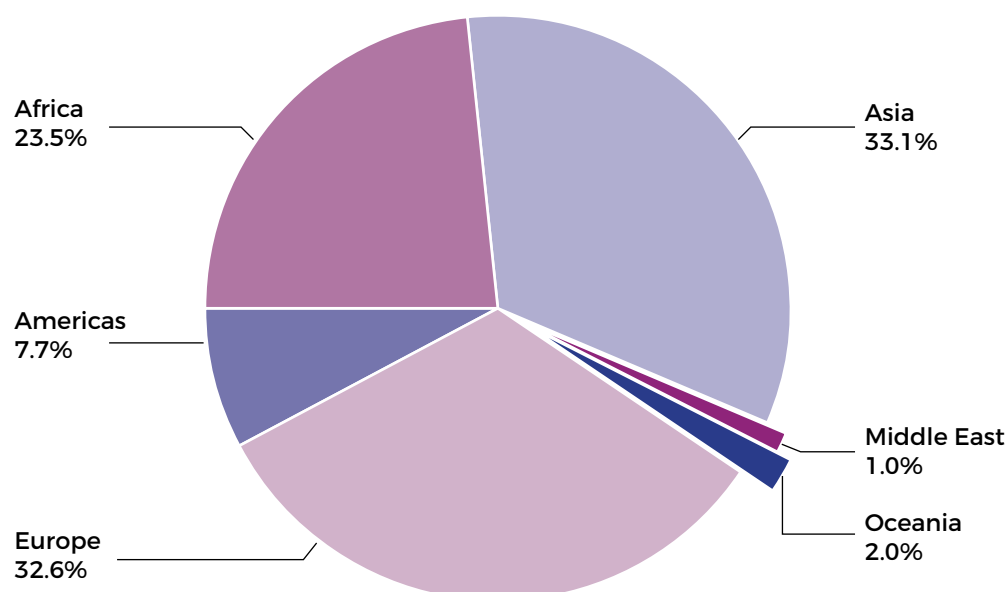- The Biennial Forum of the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership.

Figure 3. The location of survey respondents

The four approaches described in this document emerged from the synthesis of data from the survey and discussion groups. Each approach was then linked to existing resources and tools (available on the Equitable Partnerships Resource Hub and beyond), and case studies that had been collected were mapped against the themes raised in each approach. The project taskforce and ESSENCE members then reviewed and critiqued early drafts of the document manuscript, adding focus and clarity to the content.

The table below contains actual statements made by participants that were echoed by many others during the research process.

The statements are included here as a reminder of how much inequity remains entrenched in the research ecosystem, and to motivate readers to try to implement those aspects of the four approaches that are likely to be most achievable and effective in their particular contexts.

Barriers to equity cited by research participants	Suggested solutions
I have seen several examples where the research question is driven by [Northern] partners.	Shared priorities
Funding and training disparities mean that the research agenda is often dictated by researchers from the global North and global South researchers are relegated to the role of data collectors.	
In practice, low-income countries have no say in setting their research agendas.	
Grant holding [partners have a] paternalistic attitude of charitable benevolence.	Mutual respect
It is essential for Northern partners to respect the work done in their Southern partners' institutions.	
We undervalue the lived experiences and research priorities of our Southern partners and overvalue the money and training of Northern partners.	
[Partners] don't understand each other's needs and requirements.	Mutual understanding
Grant recipients impose excessively bureaucratic practices on sub-awardees.	
Local processes, such as ethical reviews conducted within a country, are not recognised even though the work is done there.	
Researchers in [Northern] universities can draw on many resources.	Shifting of resources
Partners in the Global North already have better connections, infrastructure, equipment and time to allocate to specific projects.	
To shift money and resources to LMIC partners doesn't come naturally. You have to push people to work in this way.	
Often the funding source or lead partner has the most 'power'.	Redistribution of power
Colleagues in the Global South are less autonomous and resent their (financial) dependency on Northern organisations.	
LMIC partners are less likely to take on leadership roles, such as principal investigator or lead author.	
It feels like junior staff often have to jump through extra hoops to receive funding.	Inclusivity
Funders have a tendency to go to their 'usual allies'.	
We have a South Africa / rest of Africa imbalance.	

Annex 2 Recommended resources

Please note that UKCDR's online Equitable Partnerships Resource Hub expands as new resources become available; please check in regularly at https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/guidance/equitable-partnerships-hub/

Guidelines and tools that support all four approaches

Altink A, De Jong S, Gascoigne J, Grugel J, Mazumdar P, Omukuti J, Roy I and White P (2022) *Guide to Good Practice for Inclusive Research in Global Development*. Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre, University of York. Available online.

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UKCDR (2021) *UK Funding Landscape for Research Capacity Strengthening in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. UKCDR Briefing Paper. Available online.

On Approach 1: Support the research partnership ecosystem

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On Approach 2: Strengthen research relationships and research systems

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On Approach 3: Budget for partnership building

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