



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Research Office

Toolkit

Building ethical, sustainable partnerships

International Development Research Hub



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idea together**



Building Ethical, Sustainable Partnerships Toolkit

Contents

Overview.....	1
1. Agenda Setting and Research Conceptualisation.....	2
2. Responsibility Clarification	3
3. Proposal Development.....	4
4. Research Ethics and Integrity	6
5. Capacity Building	8
6. Legal Foundations and Governance	9
7. Duty of Care.....	13
8. Risk Management.....	14
9. Communication	16
10. Payments.....	17
11. Monitoring and evaluation	18
12. Continuation of the Partnership.....	20

Overview

This toolkit is a guide for researchers wishing to build fair and equal partnerships with those in low or middle income countries (LMICs). It has been developed in the context of the changing research funding environment, where funding agencies are demanding more equitable, ethical and sustainable standards in collaborative research with LMICs to tackle global challenges.

The toolkit identifies important issues that academics should address in order to:

1. ensure research collaborations are fair, equal, sustainable and have long lasting impact
2. strengthen research proposals and increase chances of being awarded funding
3. maintain the University's good reputation for developing partnerships with integrity

The toolkit identifies challenges in developing ethical and sustainable partnerships and provides best practice guidance to address these challenges. A review of existing external guidance from a range of disciplinary backgrounds (including Wellcome, DfiD, KPFE, and THET) has been coupled with the first-hand experience of academics and university administrators, feeding into the 12 identified Guiding Principles.

Whilst guidelines for developing ethical partnerships are widely agreed upon, what happens in practice is dependent on a high number of variables – from the capacity of partners to the political and economic environment they operate in. This toolkit provides guidance on how to deal with a wide range of these variables, reducing the risk of unethical, unsustainable practice.



The following values should be upheld when considering all 12 Guiding Principles:

Trust: to achieve the aims of the partnership there must be high levels of mutual trust embedded in the relationship.

Independence: The partners' relationship with UoE must not result in the loss of the partner's autonomy. Without independence, the fundamental values associated with partners are diminished.

Empathy: Consider how would you feel if you were at the other side of the partnership?

Awareness: Explore how well you know your partners and reflect on your understanding of their motivations and drivers for engaging in the partnership.

1. Agenda Setting and Research Conceptualisation

Guidance on setting a co-created and inclusive research agenda.

Research agendas need to be inclusive and co-created. They should: be driven by the needs of LMIC partners and local stakeholders; be realistic and flexible enough to be achieved; address national research priorities within the partner country; and include the right people to create a fruitful and long-lasting partnership.

Committing time and energy to open, honest dialogue to fully understand partners' needs, expectations, interests, motives, priorities and concerns will help to ensure project success.

Challenges include:

- overcoming top-down agenda setting
- encouraging intellectual equality between partners, where research is mutually owned and researchers are mutually accountable

Best practice:

- **Inclusive agenda setting:** Work with your LMIC partners (and associated stakeholder) to develop research programmes that meet their needs. This will ensure research fits within the local political, social and cultural environment and that outputs have a better chance of uptake.
- **Clarify mutually expected outcomes** to ensure all partners are working towards the same goals.
- **Clarify expectations, interests and intended outputs upfront** and assess how these align with shared partnership objectives and goals – or where modifications might be necessary.



- **Ongoing communication:** support LMIC institutions to regularly update and communicate their priorities, expectations and concerns.
- **Develop strategic priorities** so as to be (i) independent of budgeting pressures (ii) open and honest on objectives with funders (NB: this allows the partnership to extend beyond a single response to a proposal or call).
- **Conflict resolution:** jointly agree on/define routes for resolving disagreements and disputes within the partnership. The Conflict Resolution Network's [Conflict Resolution Kit](#) may be useful to consult.
- **Consider a principle-based approach to negotiation:** this focuses on differences in interests, and is an effective tool for dispute resolution. It concentrates on creative problem solving and fair accommodation of diverse interests. Focus on how different goals, motivations and diverse perspectives can be integrated to achieve cooperative objectives and outcomes.
- **Adhere to stated international principles:** check the Principles of Alignment and Harmonization outlined in the [Paris Declaration 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action 2008](#)

2. Responsibility Clarification

Guidance to realistically and effectively divide workload.

Partners need to understand one another's unique skillsets so they can realistically and effectively divide workload. Values of inclusivity and trust should be nurtured to ensure local ownership and participation. As a result, research will benefit from the local knowledge/expertise and will tackle the context-specific needs of the partner country.

Challenges include:

- seeking agreement on expected benefits and costs of sharing
- demonstrating (co)leadership in practice, on mutually agreed terms
- addressing possible power imbalances
- bringing all research and non-research groups together to create a network that has awareness and trust in the ability of each partner to carry out their agreed tasks

Best practice:

- **Identify partner competencies and assign roles:** At proposal development stage, negotiate a co-created agreement between all partners on roles, responsibilities and contributions (at individual and institutional level). This includes roles at all stages of research: design, implementation, writing up and follow-up actions. Take into account partners' preferences and social obligations, as well as their competencies. It may be advisable to capture this in writing and ensure that all partners have copies, outwith the commitments for delivery made in the proposal.



- **Flexibility:** Ensure there is flexibility so that teams can develop structures to carry out roles responding to their different capacities and challenges.
- **Responsibilities:** Clarify which partners will have scientific, management and administrative responsibilities (this will vary depending on the type of partner they are - eg. academic vs. NGO)
- **Capacity building:** Recognise where partners have the potential to carry out certain tasks but currently lack the capacity to do so. Agree on suitable capacity building activities so they can take ownership of these tasks (see [Principle 5](#) for more detail on capacity building).
- **Record, Monitor and Evaluate:** After jointly agreeing on the partners' roles and responsibilities, record, monitor and evaluate each member's associated milestones throughout the partnership (see [Principle 11](#) for more detail on monitoring and evaluation of the partnership).
- **Conflict resolution:** Agree mechanisms for solving potential conflicts over responsibilities. Create guidelines and agree appropriate steps to ensure conflicts are dealt with in the right way. The Conflict Resolution Network's [Conflict Resolution Kit](#) may be a useful guide.
- **Translation of results:** Discuss how partners can engage other stakeholder beyond research groups. Liaise early with relevant institutional partners to ensure proposals fit with national institutions' plans and strategies. Be realistic about what is within the control of your partners.
- **Governance and Management:** Identify a formal governance structure for the project direction and managing partnership evolution. The PI will have primary responsibility for project governance and management. Given the complexity of international partnerships, it is recommended that they include a dedicated project manager in their proposal. The PI is advised to contact their School RSA about how to work most effectively together on the project.
- Clarify which partners will have scientific, management and administrative responsibilities (this will vary depending on the type of partner they are - eg. academic vs. NGO)

3. Proposal Development

Guidance to co-develop proposals with partners.

Partners should co-develop their proposal as it will shape the project they are all engaged in. Different partners will be better placed to contribute to certain parts of the proposal and so understanding the particular strengths and skills of each partner is key. Expected research outcomes should be clearly defined, ensuring the partnership is justifiable in terms of producing high impact, impossible in isolation.

Challenges include:

- agreeing on hypotheses after considering perspectives of all partners



- overcoming terminology differences that may exist between partners from different cultures, disciplines or sectors
- having trust in partners to adhere to agreed schedules
- achieving clarity on fund distribution

Best practice:

- Ensure partners and relevant stakeholders have been involved in the proposal writing phase and developing the research question(s).
- Ensure there is equal opportunity for input from partners when
 - (i) developing the budget
 - (ii) developing the methodology and allocation of tasks
 - (iii) discussing capacity building
 - (iv) discussing research ethics.
- Explicitly state the short, medium and/or long-term benefits to participant organisations in the proposal.
- Partners must jointly discuss and formalise what resources they will each provide (financial, human resources, equipment, indigenous knowledge etc).
- Jointly agree on monitoring and evaluation, measurement and conflict resolution mechanisms (this may fall under [Principle 8 - risk management](#)) and incorporate into the proposal.
- Jointly carry out a political scan to identify possible issues to mitigate on the ground. You must understand the context in which you will be working.
- Ensure mutual clarity with partners on any jargon, terminology or understanding relating to funding requirements, contracts, due diligence or the proposal itself.
- **Cost-sharing:** Initially, allocate the budget as required for successful project completion. The collaboration agreement will clearly set out each partner's budget, the intended use and funder regulations. If the PI is aware of any issues (underspend/overspend), they should contact their School Research Office. Re-allocation of funds from within other budget lines could be possible but this may have to be cleared with the funder.
- Ensure confidence in partners' schedules so you can be realistic about timeframes. Field visits are likely to help with this.
- Jointly agree a durable dissemination plan for translating results to policy (where applicable), accounting for ethical, cultural and political implications of dissemination.
- Jointly agree guidelines for: publication, communication of results to the media, dissemination via the Internet, representation of the partnership at research conferences.

4. Research Ethics and Integrity

Guidance on ensuring ethical guidelines are in place and adhered to.

Ethical principles – trust, mutual respect, reciprocity of understanding, shared objectives, complementarity of skills and resources, and continuous communication – are the desired principles to bind individual and organisational interaction. These need to be stated (non-negotiable) and agreed upon, so as to guide the mission, relations and work.

Research Ethics Committees

Research Ethics Committees (RECs) have become commonplace in HIC institutions. Besides aiming to maximise protection for people participating in research, RECs have influence on study design, protocol execution, population selection, benefit sharing at individual, community and, sometimes, institutional and national levels.

A major concern is the frequent absence or neglect of an effective REC in the partnering LMIC institutions. This can lead to one-sided ethics reviews that may not optimise protection and benefits of host countries, institutions or populations. PIs must understand, and, if required, harmonise differences in the institutional ethical frameworks between partners.

Micro, Meso and Macro ethics to consider

Level of inquiry	Focus	Key ethics questions for researchers to ask themselves
Micro	Individual	Does the research impinge on the individual's right to privacy? Could the research offend subjects in any way? Could the research cause emotional distress to any of the subjects? Will the conduct of researchers in partnership be ethical throughout the research process?
Meso	Group	Do partners follow the ethical guidelines of their profession and discipline? Have partners met their duty to those who funded the research and in-country?
Macro	Society	How does the research meet societal expectations? Has the partnership met social responsibilities as a research partnership?

Challenges include:

- working with an institution where no independent or properly constituted REC exists
- variation in ethical standards between RECs, and RECs holding contrasting views on whether projects can be approved (particularly if working to differently nuanced guidelines)



- agreeing on consent: seeking appropriate consultation and participation from individuals, groups and organisations
- understanding any local power dynamics at play
- agreeing co-produced ethical guidelines

Best practice:

- Have an open discussion with your partner to ensure mutual awareness/understanding of policies and processes relating to ethical approval.
- UoE has also formally adopted the [UK Research Integrity Office's Code of Practice for Research](#) which complies with the five commitments set out in the [Universities UK Concordat](#) to support research integrity. Research ethics at Edinburgh is operationally devolved to the 22 Schools and overseen by the 3 Colleges.
 - [College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine](#)
 - [College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#)
 - [College of Science and Engineering](#)
- The principles and responsibilities set out in the [Singapore Statement](#) are a helpful resource. This statement represents the first international effort to encourage the development of unified policies, guidelines and codes of conduct. Another useful document is [DFID Ethics Principles for Research and Evaluation](#).
- Researchers must complete both (i) a UK ethical approval (ii) an in country ethical approval.
- **Ethical guidelines:** Agree guidelines (for instance use a checklist to monitor whether ethical guidelines are applied in practice, this may form part of the governance of your project where particular sensitivities exist). Openly discuss possible ethical variations and contrasting views between partners. Confronting these differences early on will help to avoid further tensions down the line. Partners need to harmonise differences between in-country, funder and UoE ethical guidelines, codes of conduct and RECs.
- **RECs:** Clarify if a relevant REC exists in-country. This could be in your partner organisation, a linked organisation (e.g. local health board), regionally or even nationally. If required, the PI will need to support the partner to build the capacity to create a REC if one does not exist, or to support an existing REC. Discuss if specific additional training or budget support is required to appoint a third party as a reviewer. Agree if the partnership will install an expert support system, such as the [RHInNO Ethics platform](#) or one of many ethics review capacity services available.
- **Funder Compliance:** Ensure LMIC partners comply with grant terms and funder conditions. PIs should keep abreast of funders ethical guidelines and seek learning across disciplines to better understand common ethical problems and solutions to them.
- **Research Support:** We are currently developing a toolkit specifically to support researchers facing ethical challenges when working with LMICs. This will be published on our website once complete.



- **Conflict:** If there is a difference in opinion on ethics between partners, any resolution sought should not conflict with UoE standards.
- **Corruption:** The University of Edinburgh has a clear [policy and related guidelines on anti-bribery and corruption](#). Where academics anticipate finding themselves in an environment where corruption is common, it is recommended they familiarise themselves with the policy and take further advice from colleagues who have experience of operating in the country or region.
- **Political context:** Consider the political situation of the partner country. How does it impact the potential partnership? Understanding local cultural, social and political context to help reveal any power dynamics that may influence the research or your partnership.
- **Research Integrity:** For guidance consult (i) the [UoE Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group \(REIRG\)](#); (ii) [UKRI Guidance on Research Integrity](#)
- **Community consultation or engagement:** Agree on appropriate consultation and engagement of local communities prior to and/or during the course of research studies. Community consultation can play a role in,
 - (i) determining the appropriateness of approaching members of a community to participate in research,
 - (ii) designing appropriate consent seeking procedures which are appropriate to the cultural context,
 - (iii) identifying areas of particular concern to the community and
 - (iv) providing feedback of research results to the community.

5. Capacity Building

Guidance on ensuring capacity building is embedded in the partnership.

The strengths and weaknesses of all partners (including the lead University team) must be understood so that partners can support and complement one another, allowing capacity to be built. To ensure the viability of the partnership, there is a need to understand the areas where LMIC partners may require support in order to carry out mutually agreed tasks. Appropriate capacity building activities and budget should be built into a proposal.

Challenges include:

- understanding where partners may lack capacities and clarifying capacity development requirements
- ensuring post-partnership sustainability, meaning knowledge gained by individuals is translated to sustainable institutional capacities
- demonstrating (and measuring) the enhancement of capacities in the short and medium-term



Best practice:

- **Dialogue with partners (in-depth):** To arrive at shared understanding of goals, current capabilities and weaknesses, there must be a mutual understanding about what will be provided, developed, shared and transferred.
- **Make capacity building an explicit component of partnerships** by jointly conducting means tests of capacity needs (including finance, project management, institutional and organisational abilities) to understand strength and weaknesses, and build these components into the partnership contract.
- **Ownership:** Anchor capacity building in institutional priorities, initiatives and structures. For sustainability, decision makers from local partner institutions should guide how resources are allocated and managed. This could require coordination and communication between different sectors or institutional departments.
- **Embed strong support and mentorship structures into the partnership:** Discuss and calculate the scope for training (formal or informal) and mentoring in the contract.
- **Training:** Jointly identify training needs at inception and as they arise throughout the project (ensure a mechanism is in place to report training needs). Identify opportunities for on-the-job training and platforms for research exchange (eg. workshops, conference attendance).
- **Mentoring:** Qualified mentors can assist in the training and career development of researchers at every career stage.
- **Sustaining the project:** Opt for capacity building initiatives that will sustain the project once funding has ended eg. train the trainer, building lasting resources, mobilising local financial resources, and working with the community to develop their own project for capacity building.
- **Indicators:** Monitor enhancement of capacity by identifying indicators for capacity building at the start of the partnership.
- **Long-term cooperation agreement:** Support for infrastructure initiatives in LMIC institutions may be provided in connection with the long-term cooperation agreement. Aim for long-term cooperation agreements to expand the competence of institutions.

6. Legal Foundations and Governance

Guidance on partnership contracts, intellectual property rights, data ownership, sharing of data and due diligence.

This principle covers the legal foundations and the governance that underpins a partnership and takes into consideration: the contractual process; UoE policies, intellectual property rights; publication, data ownership; sharing of data and due diligence.



Best practice:

- **Have an open discussion with your partner to determine if they have adequate contracting competence;**
- **For any contracts issues**, contact School admin support who will speak to their Edinburgh Research Office contact. Edinburgh Research Office has access to expert legal and contracts advice via its own in-house contracts team.
- Edinburgh Research Office Contracts Team will advise on the contracts required for a project on a case-by-case basis.
- Check the UoE **employment scale**: contact Edinburgh Research Office for up-to-date accounts of employment scales which should be relevant to local in country salary rates.
- UoE contract templates will cover UoE policies on (e.g.) on counter-terrorism and on modern slavery.

Intellectual Property Rights, Results and Publication

IP Rights are addressed in the contracts (e.g. collaboration / partnership / subcontract agreements) between UoE and the partner(s). Subject to the funders' terms and conditions, generally IP will rest with UoE or the partner institution. The Edinburgh Research Office Contracts Team will help with this once a project has been awarded by a funder and is progressing through the contracting process.

Challenges:

- ensuring all those in the partnership have an understanding of:
 - their IP rights and IP ownership
 - how IP is accessed and used
 - responsibilities related to IP
 - mechanisms for managing and negotiating IP issues.

Best practice:

- The PI should be aware of UoE's [Policy on Exploitation of Intellectual Property](#).
- The PI should be aware of the applicable funding terms and conditions.
- Edinburgh Research Office Contracts Team will support the PI in negotiation of IP terms in agreements with partners. This will take into account of (for example) GCRF requirements for commercialisation and patenting.

Ownership and Sharing of Data

There is increasing recognition among research funders that digital objects produced during the course of research have value beyond the duration of the project that generated them. As publically-



funded assets, funders now expect research datasets to be made as widely available as possible, post-project. This requirement has been articulated through policy development, most notably in the UK by URKI funders and the Wellcome Trust. Policies vary from funder to funder but tend to require that researchers develop data management plans, manage and store data appropriately through the course of the research and publish digital objects in a timely and appropriate manner at the close of the project. However, all funder policies recognise that not all data can be shared completely openly and make provision for digital objects that carry sensitive information, IP rights and other restrictions.

Researchers should plan for sharing data at an early stage of their research project and engage primary stakeholders in discussions to ensure that planned actions are appropriate.

There are two aspects to data sharing:

1. Best practice: Sharing data among partners in a collaborative project

- Establish a mutual understanding of terms relating to data sharing with project partners including pseudonomisation, anonymisation, open data and data publishing.
- Be aware that in May 2018 the new EU-wide General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force. This will apply to all personal data held / processed in the EU – Edinburgh Research Office Contracts can advise further how this impacts on the project and associated contracts.
- Produce a data management plan which summarises the expected digital outputs and methods of the research and highlights any potential restrictions to data sharing at the end of the project. Guidance on producing DMPs is provided by the [Digital Curation Centre \(DCC\)](#).
- Agree a collaborative methodology for data management and sharing.
- Clarify which partners will own what data and who will have responsibility for data storage and management during the project, agree data flow.
- If timings allow, Edinburgh Research Office Contracts Team may include data transfer / sharing provisions in the collaboration / partnership / subcontract agreement. Otherwise they can assist with a separate data sharing / transfer agreement later in the project.

2. Best practice: Sharing data at the end of a project to a wider audience

Most major UK and European funders advocate open data and expect that data will be made available at the end of a project (unless there are legitimate reasons not to). Be aware that the LMIC(s) you are working with may have a very different approach to data sharing and this needs to be agreed at project inception and set out in the collaboration / partnership / subcontract agreement.

- Ensure you have an understanding of your funder's data policy. Most major funders' policies can be found through the [DCC](#). Guidelines on the legal, ethical, disciplinary and regulatory frameworks and norms relating to open data sharing are available from [UKRI](#).
- Ensure Research Ethics Committees are taking funder requirements for data sharing into account.



- Whilst planning the project clarify with your partners whether there are legitimate limitations for not sharing data at the end of the project, eg.
 - if using data form a third party who will not give permission for it to be shared publically
 - if data cannot be sufficiently anonymised
 - if data or digital outputs could be commercialisable
- Make sure your partner is aware that even in cases where full datasets cannot be shared, there may be a requirement to share high-level descriptive information (metadata) about the datasets.
- Make sure all necessary consent is taken from research participants at the beginning of a project so that there are not issues with sharing it at a later date. The practice of obtaining broad consent from participants, allowing for unspecified future uses of data, is becoming more widely adopted. The UK Data Archive offers good advice on [consent and data sharing](#).
- You may wish to contact your School for more information relating to data sharing. The UoE policy for Research Data Management Policy is available [here](#)

Useful resources:

- [UK Data Archive advice on data management and sharing for social science researchers](#)
- Digital Curation Centre's guides on [funder policy](#) and [data management planning](#)
- [Public Health Research Data Forum report on data sharing and LMIC countries \(2014\)](#)
- [Global Health Bioethics – research data sharing](#)

Due Diligence

Edinburgh Research Office will carry out the due diligence on partner organisation, formally addressing the financial history and reputation of an organisation. However, it is critical that the PI themselves has confidence in the trustworthiness of the partner institution (this is part of the value of early field visits).

It should be noted that your partner may want to undertake their own due diligence on UoE prior to signing any legal agreement and this can readily be supported by Edinburgh Research Office.

Challenges:

- establishing, with a high degree of certainty, that the partner institution is financially secure and legitimate
- establishing the commitment and reliability of researchers from the partner institution



Best practise:

- The **PI needs to carry out an intuitive assessment** on the reliability of the partner before passing onto Edinburgh Research Office, which will then undertake a formal, recorded process.
- Contact Edinburgh Research Office who follow the [URKI Due Diligence Procedures](#) to mitigate against any risks.
- Consider conducting a pre-research assessment to identify key areas on environmental impact/gender equality (fair inclusion of women), in the context of the proposed research.
- Co-create a plan addressing environmental, social and cultural concerns without detracting from the primary research purpose and without (unreasonable) increase in project costs.
- The PI is responsible for ensuring the auditable financial management of the partners' share of any grants, and must be aware that any third party involvement complies strictly to the UoE terms and conditions, linking in with and following URKI (or other funder's guidance).

7. Duty of Care

Guidance to ensure all partners adhere to the same duty of care obligations.

Duty of care (DoC) is an implicit obligation as a partner. Each partner owes a duty of care to all those involved in the research – from colleagues and research participants, through to associated stakeholders and the wider society impacted by the results. Any mismatch in DoC provision between partners should be addressed with a view to adhering to the same principles, guidelines and procedures.

Challenges include:

- partners agreeing on health and safety concerns as a priority
- monitoring partners' commitment to the legal obligations
- understanding and agreeing on the difference between 'implicit' and 'explicit' human rights and health concerns
- balancing the moral obligation to tackle the biggest issues, whilst ensuring a commitment health and safety standards

Best practice:

- Examine existing DoC provision utilised by the LMIC partner and clarify any need to upskill or increase awareness relating to health and safety standards; training; surveillance; accuracy of records of safe working practice; and confidentiality.
- Make your partner aware that their own employees (and anyone involved in the research) must be fully briefed, aware of safe and appropriate working practice, and provided with appropriate health surveillance.



- State the unacceptability to delegate work, or accept delegated work, unless it is clear that the person to whom the work is delegated is competent to carry out the work in a safe and appropriately skilled manner.
- Adhere to the [Social Research Association 'Code of Safety' for social researchers](#).
- **Modern Slavery:** The UoE is committed to protecting and respecting human rights and has a zero-tolerance approach to slavery and human trafficking in all its forms. Guidelines on the UoE approach to tackling modern slavery are available through this [briefing document](#) and this [presentation](#).
- To check the political situation in an LMIC partner country, refer to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for [guidance](#).
- Check immunisation requirements.
- **PI/Academic responsibility:** Conduct a DoC risk assessment. Travel and Fieldwork Risk Assessments are normally undertaken at School level, with specific approaches to these Assessments varying a little between Schools. The onus is on the academic to be as transparent as possible about what risks they may face and agree processes for updating and communicating their activity and progress when in the field. It should also be considered for any members of the research team in the field, including partners. Academics should in the first instance speak to their school research administrator to determine school requirement.
- **Overseas crisis:** The UoE uses [RED 24 Risk Management](#), a leading crisis management assistance company, to provide support to employees caught in extreme situations overseas.

8. Risk Management

Guidance to identify and minimise potential risks to the partnership.

Risk is the extent to which the partnership is vulnerable to threats, issues of partnership breakdown or research problems. There is a need to reduce this vulnerability. Risks may include: violation of agreed consent with research participants (see [Principle 4](#)); financial risk through fund misuse (see [Principle 6](#)); legal risk when legal commitments set out in the partnership agreement are violated (see [Principle 6](#)); health and safety risks (see [Principle 7](#)); and unintended consequences, such as human rights violations.

Risk assessment and analysis enables a partnership to identify the most likely threats, whilst risk response planning identifies the ways in which to address them.

Best practice:

- **Consider when developing your risk assessment:**
 - (i) Infrastructure
 - (ii) Communications



- (iii) Technology
 - (iv) Economic factors (exchange rates, inflation, interest rates, parallel market, market)
 - (iv) Theft and fraud
 - (v) Insurable Legal and regulatory environment (laws that could disrupt your work e.g. UK Bribery Act and the laws of the partner country)
 - (vi) Environmental liability
 - (vii) Political, Human rights
 - (viii) Staff recruitment and retention
 - (viii) Health, safety and security
 - (ix) Community (eg. buy-in/up-take)
 - (x) Reputation (of individuals, partners, funders)
- **Manage Risk:** Co-create a risk register. Conduct a genuine, honest dialogue with partners. An example of a risk register is below but there are many different variations you could choose from.

Date raised	Risk description	Owner	Likelihood	Impact	Severity	Mitigating action	Contingent action	Progress on actions	Status
[12/12/17]	[There is a risk that...if this happens...]		[High/medium/low - 1,2,3]	[High/medium/low - 1,2,3]	[High/med/low. See severity table]	[Actions that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring.]	[What will be done if risk occurs. Usually actions to reduce impact on project]	[Action taken and date]	[Open, Waiting, Closed]

- **Consult your School for guidance on risk:** Use any school-relevant resources; PIs need to address the context specific risk elements surrounding their topic.
- **General risk information:** check the [UoE Risk Management Policy](#) for more general guidance.
- **Mitigate:** Consider how potential negative impacts will be assessed and communicated between partners. Agree with partners on policies or mechanisms that enable preventative actions to be put in place. Consider compensatory mechanisms in the event that preventative action still results in negative consequences.



- **Ongoing activity:** Agree with partner on commitment to periodic written reports, updating on progress in regular shared meetings of all participants, PI, CoIs, to identify issues, develop solutions and mitigate negative situations.
- If relevant, agree on a [Free, Prior and Informed Consent](#) (FPIC) framework.
- **Keep up to date:** Generally, partnerships should have mechanisms in place to ensure that they remain informed of the most up to date conditions on the ground. Sources of information include:
 - (i) Partners or others working in country for local knowledge
 - (ii) [FCO websites](#)
 - (iii) [THET](#) (Health)
 - (iv) Relief and Development agencies, [reliefweb](#); and [alertnet](#)
- UoE [Travel Insurance](#) information.

9. Communication

Guidance to ensure effective communication between partners.

Regular and sustained communication throughout the course of the project is paramount to an effective partnership. Partners must: clarify the best approach for effective communication given the geographical and cultural context; be clear on expectations and roles; determine how communication channels are to be managed and maintained; and understand the infrastructure for communication. Communication strategies can then be established and procedures agreed.

Challenges include:

- understanding cultural difference/customs in communication
- adapting to different technological capacities (e.g. inefficient institutional infrastructure)
- communicating with researchers from frugal environments
- practicalities of working in different time zones

Best practice:

- Encourage a culture of openness, sharing success and (importantly) failure, between all partners.
- **Communication plan:** Produce a jointly negotiated communication plan within the proposal to ensure regular and effective communication on project progress/milestones between all partners. Ensure any plan includes regular space for partnership monitoring and evaluation.
- **Type of meeting:** Balance in-person meetings (eg. field visits), group discussions with all project partners (eg. on skype), and methods to keep regularly updated on progress and



emerging problems. Research has highlighted the most successful partnerships use the following format:

- Regular two-way email traffic as required dealing with the day to day.
- Scheduled weekly or fortnightly quick catch-up calls/Skype (this has been found to be the most important exchange).
- Monthly exchange of operational and financial information using a pro-forma.
- Bi-annual or annual reciprocal visits.
- **Communications platforms:** Discuss and agree on platforms for communication. Discuss any technical constraints, (eg. lack of reliable internet connection for frequent email exchange or Skype) and decide if there is a need for investment in communication infrastructure. Ensure a mutual understanding on how communications equipment is to be used/stored/maintained.
- **Culture of communication:** Discuss how to most effectively communicate with partners and gain an understanding of the working culture in order to adapt and work together more effectively, eg. the formality of meetings, quickness to respond to emails etc. may differ between partners.
- Partners should establish a 'simple as possible' administrative procedure for communicating eg. recurring teleconferences.
- Discuss whether all the partners will be included in the scientific supervision and the administrative responsibility (as against it being purely PI-led).
- Ensure partners have easy access to any required documents.

10. Payments

Guidance on payments of salary to partner staff, payments to research participants, and per diem payments.

Important issues in partner research with LMICs are the financial aspects surrounding payments of salary to partner staff, payments to research participants, and the ethics of per diem payments (PDP) during field work research.

Remuneration needs to be context specific time and energy should be invested into consulting locally to ascertain appropriate remuneration levels. An organisation that pays excessive salaries can dramatically skew local economies, pulling staff from other NGOs and undermining important local projects. Partner organisations should be able to provide salary costs for any of their staff working directly on a project.

Challenges include:

- ensuring fair pay



- overcoming institutional structural constraints that limit capacity to transfer money in international currencies
- ensuring that if PDPs are involved, they do not undermine the essential elements of the partner collaboration

Best practice:

- Take time to commit to two-way dialogue (and genuine listening) about budget share and financial management before plans are set out.
- All UoE salary calculations will be undertaken by Edinburgh Research Office, they will also work with the PI and partners to provide other project costs.
- **Factor in inflation** based on a 1-2 year historical average. Otherwise, projects often find themselves losing good staff, as the cost of living drastically outstrips wages. Projects may need to budget for partner staff annual salary uplift of 20-30% if partners are based in a country with high inflation. It is therefore important to provide a clear narrative on this to the grant assessor.
- **Currency exchange rate changes:** Salaries are calculated by UoE based on exchange rates at the time of the proposal. During the award there can be substantial fluctuation which can be difficult to predict. Therefore, consider if this is likely to be a significant issue based on the country's recent fluctuation. It may be possible to justify having a flexible line in the budget to address this.
- Include the risk of unforeseen fluctuations in exchange rates in your risk register. Set down plans to mitigate this risk and adapt effectively, should it occur.
- You may choose to develop systems to monitor exchange rates (both official and on the ground). Agree levels of variance (up or down) beyond which you would notify your partners, funder and/or other stakeholders. Most funders will have a stated policy on any underspend as a result of changes in exchange rate.

11. Monitoring and evaluation

Guidance on effectively monitoring and evaluating a partnership, throughout the project lifetime.

Partnerships should regularly take stock of what they have achieved together so far and how their work together can be improved. Monitoring and evaluation (M+E) should be practiced throughout the lifetime of the partnership and is essential for internal learning between partners, as well as to demonstrate transparency, accountability, and clarity on program activities.

Challenges include:

- creating an effective learning environment, relevant to local cultures
- balancing long-term mutual learning with short-term M+E activities



- agreeing on performance indicators
- encouraging all partners' to reflect on success and failures

Best practice:

- Aim to mitigate challenges by clearly identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a partnership from the outset.
- Set expected Key Performance Indicators and milestone targets for all phases of the research project cycle.
- Jointly agree on and adopt an M+E system that is based both on results and learning.
- Consider M+E activities for reflection, self-assessment and peer-to-peer learning, eg. training sessions, mid-term and annual review meetings, workshops.
- PI(s) and Col(s) should regularly stocktake partnership performance. This should include considering:
 - Have partners documented any changes in the vision or governance of the partnership, including: (a) Intentions, motivations and goals; (b) Formal institutional agreements (MOU, TORs etc.); (c) Governance structure; (d) Ethical practice; (e) Capacity building
 - Is each member of the partnership satisfied in terms of:
 - (a) Monitoring and Evaluation;
 - (b) Project goals “on track”;
 - (c) Communication;
 - (d) Meeting timelines;
 - (e) Ethics;
 - (f) Mentorship;
 - (g) Infrastructure support;
 - (h) Skills development;
 - (i) Functioning of governance structure;
 - (j) Conflict resolution;
 - (k) Allocation of resources;
 - (l) Management and implementation
- If project seems to be stalling, you may consider some of the following steps to get back on track:
 - explore and understand why changes have occurred, or why certain aspects of the partnership have not met expectations
 - treat changes to the partnership or negative responses to the stocktake as an opportunities to regroup and move forward



- revisit the pre-established structures and agreements in your Partnership Agreement. The terms agreed to at the outset of the partnership will protect and guide the partnership through its lifetime
- revisit the original goals and objectives outlined at the outset of your partnership
- take advice from colleagues who may have previous experience of similar situations
- Foster ongoing self-evaluation, discussion, and concrete actions to improve equity, effectiveness and sustainability in partnerships. This goes beyond the above checklists to encourage in-depth discussion among partners (at all stages) and acts as a means of continuous M+E.
- Determine whether external evaluation required. Independent reviews and recommendations can range from a simple 'health check', to 360 degree comprehensive evaluation. Consider the efficiency of setting up and operating this kind of review framework.
- Ensure planned or promised financial resources is adequate for monitoring and evaluation.

12. Continuation of the Partnership

Guidance to sustain a partnership beyond the lifetime of a project.

Many HIC-LMIC partnerships are tied to individual research projects and this short-term nature can lead to the loss of existing achievements. There is therefore a need to ensure research taking place in LMICs, through the partnership, becomes sustainable. If what has been achieved so far is not secured, researchers upskilled through the partnership may seek employment opportunities overseas (known as brain drain).

Challenges include:

- overcoming funders commitment to short-term funding, when longer-term engagement is needed
- incorporating local research institutions and their programmes into national research environments and helping to strengthen these environment
- ensuring that partnership does not inadvertently contribute to brain drain

Best practice:

- PIs should encourage partners to jointly negotiate, agree upon and formalise a closing plan/programme that:
 - continues the benefits of the project
 - articulates how resources are to be allocated
 - states how staff are to be redeployed or transitioned



- details ownership of IPR management at the end of the project
- **Retention:** Jointly create a core strategy to promote the retention of a critical mass of skilled and experienced researchers, managerial and support staff (e.g. career pathways, job security, networking opportunities). Where necessary, determine personal career planning as early as possible. (NB. This may require a change in the mindset of research sponsors, to allow the use of core funds towards these purposes.)
- Agree on efforts to **secure core rather than project funding** in the long run. Support partners to become better able to access competitive grants, and to influence national authorities to increase research system funding in a more predictable manner.
- PIs are encouraged to:
 - start a discussion on sustainability targets in the research design phase
 - jointly discuss measures to strengthen partners after the project through a post-project plan
 - discuss a process for supporting policy dialogue between recipient governments and donors
 - discuss training needs
 - diversify financial resources
 - aim to achieve political commitment in the local context
 - consider active promotion of think-tank/consultancy opportunities