



Research Contracting

Benefits of Fairer Research Contracts

The growing volume of research in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is welcome. It brings with it a number of new challenges for research institutions and government departments dealing with research in those countries. In particular, experience suggests that, on occasion, northern institutions proposing to either collaborate with or commission research from southern institutions insist on a number of preconditions which disadvantage southern institutions. With the often multi-centre and multinational nature of such research, key issues in the allocation of resources, capacity and post-study benefits arise. The necessity for LMIC institutions to have access to the legal resources and capacities to negotiate fair partnerships with their funding partners has become more important than ever. The issue of inequitable research partnerships is not new, and is not limited to the health sector. Although best practice guidelines have been developed, implementation strategies – the key to ensuring that guidelines change practice – appear limited. Previous work has not addressed the crucial role that equitable contracts and contract negotiations play in defining the nature of research collaborations, in building the foundations for successful long-term partnerships, and in enhancing the research systems of LMICs. All stakeholder groups will benefit from more equitable research contracts.

- **Institutions** will share a greater proportion of the benefits that result from their work, enabling them to build a more effective research base;
- **Southern institutions** have the potential to become the primary recipient in securing research grants. The issue is then how to empower and capacitate them as the main contractor to negotiate fair sub-contracts with their northern partners, and to manage these contracts effectively;
- **Countries** will benefit from research that strengthens rather than fragments national systems;
- **Research sponsors** will benefit from the stronger research capacity available in countries in which they operate; and
- **Society** in general will benefit from more rapid access to new evidence based services and interventions that have the potential to avert morbidity and mortality.