

Guidelines

ICTD co-authorship

June 2024

Motivation

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure a transparent and consistent process to discuss authorship expectations for ICTD-funded projects. Given the power dynamics that are inherent to research processes and that may particularly affect junior researchers and researchers from the Global South, these guidelines support the ICTD's broader goals of inclusivity and equity. These guidelines are not meant to create strict rules for determining authorship or to eliminate these power dynamics but instead create opportunities for transparent communication and accountability between project contributors throughout a project's lifecycle.

The content of this document has been informed by IDS general authorship guidelines, a survey sent to the ICTD team, and a review of literature and best practices relating to this topic. These guidelines act as a starting point, accompanied by a commitment within the ICTD to routinely review and improve the process when and where necessary. The guidelines apply to the Local Government Revenue Initiative (LoGRI) and other ICTD autonomous or semi-autonomous initiatives.

General guidelines

If a publication is to be written jointly by more than one author, the authorship credit should be mutually decided at the beginning of the collaboration process based on type and level of contributions. Agreements should be regularly reviewed throughout the research process.

Where authorship is listed alphabetically it is assumed that contributions are relatively equivalent, if not stated otherwise. Where contributions are not equivalent, authors are listed in order of their contributions, as defined in the project-specific co-authorship agreement.

Defining authors versus contributors

To be listed as an author, the collaborator should provide a creative and intellectual contribution that is integral to the paper. What is integral to a project will be determined among the co-authors at the beginning of a project and may vary from project to project, though we may consider authorship as being defined by the following four criteria (in line with the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) standards):

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or reviewing it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Individuals involved in a study but who do not qualify for authorship should be listed by name (if they consent) as contributors in the acknowledgements.

Potential contributions that may be considered integral to the paper in line with co-authorship:

- Conceptualisation
- Research design/ methodological development
- Data analysis with interpretation
- Writing and revising
- Project management/ oversight/ planning and execution, including mentorship

Potential contributions that are valuable and should be acknowledged, but that on their own may not define co-authorship:

- Providing background research/ literature reviews
- Data collection
- Supervision of data collection
- Brokering connections/ contacts
- Data entry/ cleaning/ coding
- Data analysis
- Reviewing/ providing input
- Advising on analysis
- Visualisation (presentations/ data visuals)
- Project administration

Contributions that are valuable and should be acknowledged but never define co-authorship:

- Copyediting/ proofreading
- Translation
- Funding

Process for setting a co-authorship agreement

When a project and its contributors are bound by a project contract, contributors should clarify their anticipated roles and contributions in a co-authorship statement included in the project proposal and reviewed as part of the contracting process. Each member of the team will be required to acknowledge that they have read and agree with the statement at (a) the time of contracting, (b) the submission of the draft publication, and (c) the final submission of outputs.

When a project is not covered by a project contract, or when collaboration is with a prospective author not originally included in the project contract, the research team will be required to submit a co-authorship statement alongside the submission of the publication draft. Each member of the team will be required to acknowledge that they have read and agree with the statement at (a) the submission of the draft publication and (b) the final submission of outputs.

Co-authorship statements should be explicitly reviewed and potentially revised by research team members at the time of submitting (a) the publication draft and (b) the final version. A prompt will occur when submitting the draft paper for the researcher to confirm the co-authorship agreement is the same, or to upload a new one.

Example co-authorship statement:

Researcher 1's anticipated contributions: proposal development, background research, supervision of data collection, writing, revisions

Researcher 2's anticipated contributions: proposal development, data analysis, writing, revisions

Co-authorship agreement: equal authorship, with authors listed alphabetically (e.g., Researcher 1 and Researcher 2 2023)

Anticipated contributions by non-authors:

Research assistant: literature review

Research enumerators: data collection

Conflicts

If agreement cannot be reached on authorship or if disagreements arise throughout the research process, the ICTD Publications Editor or a Research Director will arbitrate.

Where a contributor has a grievance or feels uncomfortable bringing a dispute to the Publications Editor or a Research Director, they may contact the ICTD's inclusivity oversight group (inclusivity@ictd.ac) or any member of ICTD's Centre Management Team.