



REVIEW OF RESEARCH TEAM PARTNERSHIPS FUNDED BY ELRHA'S R2HC PROGRAMME

Terms of Reference

Background

Elrha wants to see a world equipped to mitigate the impact of humanitarian crises.

Collaboration is at the heart of Elrha's work to improve humanitarian outcomes. We provide opportunities and expertise to support the humanitarian community in developing and sustaining effective partnerships for both research and innovation. Through supporting collaboration and partnership, including with crisis-affected people, we aim to improve the quality, impact and uptake of research and innovation.

Elrha works both with *operational* partners, such as UN agencies, INGOs, research institutions, private companies and social enterprises, and *strategic* partners, who include funders, governments, humanitarian clusters, and global humanitarian initiatives.

At the time of Elrha's establishment in 2009 the concept of transformative partnership working was still relatively embryonic, receiving little specific attention in the humanitarian space, despite humanitarian response (and research) often involving partnerships between different types of organisations, working across different sectors, and frequently across different geographical locations.

Since this time, there has been a rapid increase in the attention given to promoting fair and equitable research partnerships for responding to global challenges, with organisations such as the independent Partnership Brokers Association (PBA), established in 2012 to challenge and change poor partnering practices, promote the critical importance of partnering process management, and ensure those leading partnerships are both skilled and principled in their approach.

More funding has also become available to support collaborative research. For example, the Rockefeller Resilience Research Initiative, the UKCDR, and the Global Challenges Research Fund all support cutting-edge research that addresses the challenges faced by developing countries, promote interdisciplinary research and strengthen capacity for research, innovation and knowledge through partnership.

Alongside the increased funding available to support diverse and multi-disciplinary research across the globe, more attention is being paid to the quality of research partnerships. In 2018, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Rethinking Research Collaborative implemented a programme of strategic research and capacity building to understand and improve 'fair and equitable research partnerships in response to global challenges.'¹ The initiative aimed to bring to the fore a 'partners' perspective' on fair and equitable partnerships and seeking to offer a deeper understanding of persistent bottlenecks in partnerships that risk undermining the international development goals of research initiatives, and to offer strategies to address these. The role of funders in equitable and effective international development research collaborations was also explored in a 2017 study supported by UKCDR.²

¹ https://rethinkingresearchpartnerships.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/fair-and-equitable-partnerships_research-report-public.pdf

² <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/finding-and-building-effective-and-equitable-research-collaborations/>

With increased focus within the international development space on promoting learning around effective collaboration and, given the maturity of Elrha's grant-funded research and innovation portfolios through the Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) and Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) programmes, it is timely and appropriate to undertake a review of lessons learned on partnerships in relation to humanitarian research and innovation.

Rationale

Elrha's R2HC programme aims to improve health outcomes by strengthening the evidence base for public health interventions in humanitarian crises. The specific outcome of the programme will be an increase in the quality and quantity of collaborative research on recognised public health challenges in humanitarian crises, leading to improved health outcomes through cost effective humanitarian interventions.

R2HC uniquely requires that all research teams comprise academic researchers and operational practitioners in the same team. Recognising the challenges of conducting research in humanitarian crises, this is to ensure academic rigour on the one hand, and operational relevance, feasibility and potential for uptake on the other. This innovative approach includes investing in strengthening research partnerships through seed funding grants and workshops.

Since the programme's inception, routine data has been collected from grantee reports and end-of-project consultations, to document lessons learned on partnerships in relation to R2HC-funded grants. The findings suggest that there are some key factors influencing partnering dynamics which appear to influence both the quality of outcomes and the intrinsically transformative potential of these research collaborations. These factors include:

- whether a partnership is new or established
- the global North-South composition of a partnership
- methodological bias within multidisciplinary research teams
- organisational cultural differences between academic institutions and humanitarian organisations (such as differences in incentive structures, timescales, and the inherent value given to research)
- the relationship between INGO headquarters and field level offices
- whether the lead individual or organisation understands, esteems, and has the partnership brokering skills to invest in nurturing the values underlying fair and equal partnerships

Given that these factors are largely determined by relationship and power dynamics, rather than specific skills, R2HC has shifted its approach to partnership strengthening from a largely skills-centric approach focused on supporting systems and processes, to promoting the PBA's key principles of effective partnership working that are based on values and ways of working and delivering training to Principal Investigator's on effective partnership management.

Drawing on and analysing data from the R2HC portfolio, this review is being commissioned with the intention of deepening the understanding of Elrha and the broader research community of the key factors that result in effective humanitarian research partnerships, as well as lessons learned from the challenges faced.

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to document a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges to effective partnership working, by reviewing the experiences of R2HC-funded research teams within the wider discourse on research partnerships. Broader learning around 'what works' for global research partnerships has evolved from an emphasis on effective systems and structures, to values and ways of working, and it is anticipated that this qualitative study will document the unique experience of the academic-humanitarian research partnerships that are required by the R2HC, with a view to further informing existing evidence-informed frameworks for research partnerships. The review will include identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, fair and equitable participation in research collaborations.

There are three main objectives:

1. To contribute to broader understanding within the humanitarian health research community of the factors that contribute to and inhibit effective research partnerships in humanitarian contexts. This will include identifying emerging trends within the humanitarian research community - such as the establishment of research units within humanitarian organisations, or the affiliation of humanitarian practitioners to academic institutions - and the implications of this for advancing the agenda of public health research in humanitarian contexts.
2. To provide guidance to Elrha in terms of informing future partnership-strengthening activities based on the identification of the latest evidence of partnership effectiveness.
3. To contribute to a wider piece of work Elrha is conducting that aims to progress global learning around the value of research and innovation partnerships in humanitarian contexts, with a view to increasing the wider evidence base on how collaborative approaches increase the quality and impact of operational research and innovation.

Methodology

1. A literature review will be conducted to identify the latest developments, research and discourse on partnering and collaborative research within humanitarian and international development contexts.
2. Within the framework of the Partnership Brokers Association [key principles for effective partnership working](#), a desk-based review and analysis will be conducted to examine the existing data and documented lessons learnt on partnerships from current and past R2HC-funded research teams to identify and analyse opportunities and challenges, and develop recommendations for future partnerships strengthening support to funded research teams. R2HC partnership tools will also be reviewed.
3. The desk review will be supplemented by semi-structured interviews with a selected number of R2HC research teams to gather additional information on partnership experiences. These will contribute to the content of a number of case studies, building on the findings of the literature and desk review.
4. In collaboration with the individual identified to conduct a parallel review of HIF partnerships, the consultant will discuss and contribute to the drafting of a summary of key synergies and differences between learning from research and innovation partnerships.

Deliverables

The following outputs will be the key deliverables:

1. An **article** will be drafted and submitted to a reputable journal³ documenting the outcomes of the literature review and describing emerging trends and latest learning around humanitarian research partnerships, with a specific focus on the relationship between humanitarian organisations and academic institutions, including a focus also on global North-South research partnerships. The article will be illustrated by case studies from the R2HC-funded research portfolio, as appropriate.
2. A **short report** documenting key findings from analysis of R2HC-funded research partnerships and recommendations on additional partnership strengthening support that R2HC might offer to future or existing grantees
3. A **summary document** of key synergies and differences between partnering challenges relating to Elrha's research and innovation portfolios, including suggestions on opportunities for Elrha to add to the wider evidence base on how collaborative approaches increase the quality and impact of operational research and innovation.

Timeframe

It is anticipated that the assignment will take 25 - 30 working days between 14 January 2018 and 25 March 2019. The proposed time line is below:

Activity	Date
Research start date	14 January 2018
Draft report submitted to Elrha	25 February 2019
Elrha feedback provided	4 March 2019
Report finalised	25 March 2019

Workbase

The desk review will be conducted at the research consultant's workplace. Communication with the Elrha team is expected to take place in person, by telephone or Skype.

Reporting Lines

The consultant(s) will work closely with Elrha's Research Impact Manager and will be accountable to, and guided by, the R2HC Programme Manager. They will also liaise and collaborate with the consultant working on Elrha's innovation portfolio with the HIF to produce output 3 above.

³ Journal/s to be discussed with Elrha before submission

Person specifications

- Knowledge of, preferably accreditation with, the Partnership Broker's Association
- Post-graduate qualification (PhD strongly preferred) in a field related to international development or humanitarian response.
- Demonstrated experience of working in collaborative research teams, preferably in humanitarian crisis settings.
- Knowledge of the latest literature on collaborative research and effective partnering for research, preferably in the fields of international development or humanitarian response.
- Established connections within the humanitarian, health research and practitioner communities.
- Experience of conducting reviews and preparing guidance notes

Please submit your CV and a short proposal describing how you meet the foreseen requirements to undertake this work, along with your proposed fee, to info@elrha.org for the attention of Anne Harmer by **31 December 2018**.