



# The Cape Town statement on fostering research integrity through fairness and equity: A recap and overview

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A/Prof Lyn Horn MBBch, PhD





7WCRI Cape Town Statement on fostering research integrity through fairness and equity,

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## 'Helicopter research' comes under fire at Cape Town conference

Statement presses for equity when scientists from wealthy nations do research in poorer ones

5 JUN 2022 · 1:40 PM · BY CATHLEEN O'GRADY



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Respected global medical journal *The Lancet* will continue to reject papers with data from Africa that fail to acknowledge African collaborators, in the interest of building African research and of promoting integrity, equity and fairness in research collaboration, according to Senior Executive Editor Dr Sabine Kleinert.

The journal made the decision after coming across manuscripts submitted by researchers from outside Africa and with data collected from the continent, but with no mention or acknowledgement of a single African collaborator, she told the 7th World Conference on

# The Cape Town Statement on fairness, equity and diversity in research

The benefits of scientific collaboration are too often skewed towards wealthier countries. Bioethicists and others present guidance on how stakeholders such as researchers can change this.

Lyn Horn , Sandra Alba, Gowri Gopalakrishna, Sabine Kleinert, Francis Kombe, James V. Lavery & Retha G. Visagie



<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00855-y>





- [CTS Poster](#)
- [CTS Press Nature Comment](#)

See also: Lyn Horn, et. al., 'The Cape Town Statement on fairness, equity and diversity in research,' *Nature* 615, 790-793, 24 March 2023.

The Cape Town Statement on Fostering Research Integrity through Fairness and Equity advocates for fair practice from conception to implementation of research and provides 20 recommendations aimed at all involved stakeholders.

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### Preamble

The 7th World Conference on Research Integrity (7thWCRI) was held in Cape Town in May 2022 with the conference theme "Fostering

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# Cape Town Statement on fostering Research Integrity through Fairness and Equity

## Goals for Research Integrity

Research should deliver accurate, replicable, and unbiased results reported responsibly, with the appropriate acknowledgement of all stakeholders. To be valuable, trustworthy, and usable in local settings the research should be translatable into locally relevant and locally owned and accessible interventions or policies, where applicable. Research integrity educational programmes and other related initiatives should support researchers to reflect these goals in the planning, conduct, and dissemination of their research.

## Concluding remarks

This is not the first set of principles or similar, focusing on research fairness and equity particularly in collaborations, and these documents have informed our discussions. They include the Swiss KPFE (The Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries) [2], the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings [3] and the BRIDGE Guidelines which also linked research fairness to research integrity in the context of epidemiological research [4]. Furthermore, we would also like to acknowledge that while this statement can encourage stakeholders to act, a tool already exists, namely the Research Fairness Initiative (RFI) [5], that can assist both RPIs and funders with evaluating their current practices. After completion of this evaluation the tool assists stakeholders to identify implementation steps that can lead to improvement of fair and equitable research and innovation partnerships and practices. The RFI was discussed in some detail in the 7th WCRI pre-conference paper and informed discussions at the 7th WCRI [6].

The Cape Town Statement specifically links the issue of research fairness and equity with research integrity broadly. We hope that by doing so this statement will strengthen the call to recognise fairness and equity as an essential component of research.

## Preamble

The 7th World Conference on Research Integrity (7th WCRI) was held in Cape Town in May 2022 with the conference theme "Fostering Research Integrity in an unequal world". Participants at this conference recognised that unfair and inequitable research practices remain prevalent at all stages of research from proposal development to funding application, data collection, analysis, sharing and access, reporting and translation. These practices can impact the integrity of research in many ways, including skewing research priorities and agendas with research questions that are irrelevant for local needs, power imbalances that undermine fair recognition of knowledge contributions within collaborations, including unfair acknowledgement of contributions to published work, lack of diversity and inclusivity in collaborations, and unfair data management practices that disadvantage researchers in low resource environments. Furthermore, a drive towards open science as a pillar of research integrity fails to recognise the financial burden placed on under-resourced researchers and institutions, and the reality that highly trained and well-resourced researchers in HIC may disproportionately benefit from re-analysing openly shared data by LMIC researchers. In response to these challenges the following statement of goals, values and recommendations aims to contribute to the growing global recognition that fairness and equity are essential requirements of integrity in all research contexts.

This statement advocates for fair practice from conception to implementation of research and provides 20 recommendations aimed at all involved stakeholders. These recommendations are grouped under values that were identified as important underpinning considerations in discussion groups at the 7th WCRI. These values include diversity, inclusivity, mutual respect, shared accountability, indigenous knowledge recognition and epistemic justice [1] (ensuring that the value of knowledge is not based on biases related to gender, race, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status et cetera).

## Recommendations to uphold values and achieve research integrity goals

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY AS A PATHWAY TO FAIR PRACTICE AND ATTRIBUTION

- Researchers should recognise the value of collaborating with colleagues from different disciplinary, geographical, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds and strive to achieve this diversity, especially when doing research in contexts and environments that are different from their own.
- Research Performing Institutions (RPIs) should develop and implement policies, structures and processes that support and promote diversity and inclusivity in their research.
- Funders from high-income countries (HICs) should aim to avoid so-called 'helicopter research' by including diversity stipulations in funding calls and funding local researchers directly.
- Journals and publishers should question the practice of excluding local researchers from low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs) from authorship when data are from LMICs and have a low threshold for rejecting such papers.

### FAIR PRACTICE FROM CONCEPTION TO IMPLEMENTATION

- All research stakeholders should be aware of potential power imbalances in their research collaborations and ensure their actions do not exacerbate them, but rather contribute to redressing imbalances.
- Funders should specifically identify and adopt practices that support fairness and equity in research collaborations and avoid practices that undermine fairness such as unfair indirect cost allocations to LMICs.
- Barriers to 'open science' participation by researchers working in low-resource settings need to be identified and addressed by publishers, and other appropriate national and global stakeholders, such as science councils, funders, and similar institutions. Journals and publishers should adjust page costs for authors from low-resourced environments.

### MUTUAL RESPECT AS A PATHWAY TO TRUST

- Research priority and agenda setting should include all research partners. HIC research agendas should not be imposed on LMIC collaborators.

- Research teams should identify mechanisms to enable planning and budgeting that minimise power and opportunity imbalances in teams and make roles explicit early.
- Full cost transparent budgeting is an essential mechanism to enable fair practice and ensure equitable resource allocation.
- Data access, use, sharing and openness requirements should not unfairly disadvantage LMIC collaborators.

### SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

- Research fairness requires a commitment from all stakeholders to address deficiencies in research capacity and systems in LMIC contexts.
- LMIC governments need to recognise the value of funding research to support locally relevant research priorities and be accountable for reducing reliance on HIC funders.
- RPIs should prioritise the development of adequate research support systems to support researchers, including support for research management capacity development and open access page costs where possible.
- HIC funders should incorporate some funding for local capacity development, mentorship, and research support systems.
- Funders should take steps to minimise the negative impact of currency fluctuations on LMIC collaborators when they agree to fund research that involves HIC and LMIC collaborators.
- RPIs from HICs collaborating with researchers from low-resource settings should ensure their researchers engage in fair practice and where possible and appropriate, contribute to local capacity development and strengthening of research management systems and processes.

### INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE RECOGNITION AND EPISTEMIC JUSTICE

- The unique value of indigenous knowledge must be recognised. Researchers and community researchers from indigenous communities are often best placed to articulate and translate this value into beneficial outcomes that can have impact.
- All stakeholders must ensure adequate recognition and respect of Indigenous knowledge; avoidance of exploitation and stigmatisation of such knowledge by external researchers is essential.
- Researchers involved in co-creation of Indigenous-led knowledge must ensure collaborations are grounded on mutual trust and respect and result in appropriate benefit-sharing and recognition.

#### Authors

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#### References

[1]Htun, Phyllis. "System to justice as a million of published researchers". *South Africa*. 167 (2022). [2]Htun, Phyllis. "System to justice as a million of published researchers". *South Africa*. 167 (2022). [3]Htun, Phyllis. "System to justice as a million of published researchers". *South Africa*. 167 (2022). [4]Htun, Phyllis. "System to justice as a million of published researchers". *South Africa*. 167 (2022). [5]Htun, Phyllis. "System to justice as a million of published researchers". *South Africa*. 167 (2022). [6]Htun, Phyllis. "System to justice as a million of published researchers". *South Africa*. 167 (2022). [7]Htun, Phyllis. "System to justice as a million of published researchers". *South Africa*. 167 (2022).



<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-02313-1>

**OCEAN MERCIER:** Put Indigenous people, not their knowledge, first

*Marine and freshwater researcher at Victoria University of Wellington.*

**SAMIA CHASI:** Shift lingering colonial power dynamics

*Internationalization practitioner-scholar at the International Education Association of South Africa in Johannesburg*

**ALINE GHILARDI:** Demand repatriation of extracted fossils

*Palaeontologist at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte in Natal, Brazil.*

**MINAL PATHAK:** Abandon tokenism and gatekeeping

*Climate-change scientist at Ahmedabad University in Ahmedabad, India.*



The image shows a screenshot of a Nature article page. At the top, the 'nature' logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'View all journals', 'Search', and 'Log in' are on the right. Below the logo, there are links for 'Explore content', 'About the journal', 'Publish with us', and 'Subscribe'. On the right side, there are links for 'Sign up for alerts' and 'RSS feed'. The article title is 'Pack up the parachute: why global north-south collaborations need to change' by Virginia Gewin, dated 24 July 2023. The subtitle is 'Global-south researchers want equal partnerships that value intellectual exchange.' Below the article information, there are social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and Email, along with a 'Find a new job' button. The main image of the article shows a woman with curly hair, wearing a colorful floral shirt, standing in a lush green environment with large ferns.

# Much interest in the statement over the last year.

- I have given about 20 invited webinars and conference presentations both locally and at international conferences over last year.
- Some of the co-authors have been involved in similar.
- **Big question : How does one measure the impact of a statement such as the CTS?**
- How can this be researched?
- What methodologies could be used?
- Who can take this up?
- How can future WCRI outputs/ statements/ legacies build on this work



Why is inequity and unfairness  
in research a research integrity  
matter?

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# Research Integrity

Unfairness and inequity, lack of diversity can undermine integrity at every stage of the research lifecycle and lead to detrimental research practices or even frank misconduct



## Research priority/agenda setting

Research Integrity requires that the most pertinent research questions for any given problem and context are asked and adequately answered.

How does this work in reality ? (not always but often)

- Funding call developed by HIC funders; require LMIC partner
- HIC consortium established, LMIC partner invited to join ( may be a recognised as a leader in the research field, but may also be seen as someone providing valuable access to sites and participants)
- Research questions often already set.
- **Power imbalances between teams** lead to neglect of pertinent research questions
- **Valuable local community input** including that of peer researchers is ignored or given to late

## Establishing the research team.

A lack of diversity (geographical, cultural, language, discipline etc) in a research team can result in biases that undermine the integrity of the research

- Lack of diversity in a research team can lead to **bias in interpretation of data** especially when race/ gender/ culture/ ethnicity involved
- Collaborations that are a means to an end for HIC researchers ( access to sites and participants) can lead to **inadequate acknowledgement** of the contributions of some team members
- Late involvement in a collaboration can result **poor allocation of budget** and the need for 'short cuts' that can influence data validity (e.g. field workers on short term contracts)
- A dominant perspective of the HIC grant holder **unduly influencing** methodologies and analysis, e.g. lack of nested social science studies that may help answer important local research questions e.g involving health-related behaviours.

## Develop funding proposal; get funding

Research Integrity requires honesty, transparency, scrupulousness throughout the entire research life cycle and this needs to be supported by adequate resources both financial, human, systems and infrastructure.

- Research systems that support researchers are essential.
- These are often very underdeveloped at LMIC institutions: pre-award due diligence, contracts office, post-awards, procurement systems, HR support, financial reporting, data management infrastructure etc : end result is a disadvantaged LMIC researcher struggling to compete/ keep up with HIC collaborators, even to the point of been viewed as 'incompetent', 'untrustworthy'
- This could have a knock-on effect that leads to various DRPs, undermines relationships, reinforces power imbalances etc.

# Engage with stakeholders and communities

Responsible research conduct ensures that, where appropriate (more often than not!) local stakeholders play an important part in setting research priorities and advising research teams on how to conduct culturally sensitive, valuable research.

They are also key to identifying key benefits from the perspective of communities and ensuring appropriate translation of findings

- Late entrance into a collaboration can mean this step is skipped.
- Community input into research priority setting is missed.
- Funding gets spent on research that fails to address essential research questions.
- Research translation ends at publication (as that can be the end goal for many academics.)
- Inadequate attention given to translation into locally appropriate innovation and policy (the stakeholders that are needed to take care of this not involved)
- Example: US-Ugandan transgenic banana study, funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “nutritionist” vs “food sovereignty, sustainability” of local agricultural practices. (ref: See Ethics Dumping Casebook. Doris Schroeder et al Chapter 11. Jaci van Niekerk and Rachel Wynberg. Springer. 2018.

Collect, analyse, store,  
share, data

Research Integrity requires that data is analysed, stored, reanalysed, and shared in a manner that is trustworthy, scrupulous, transparent and that maximises the utility of the data, particularly where public funding is involved.

- Inadequate research support systems can result in **data being stored and protected sub-optimally** with the potential for data breaches
- Funder requirements **for early sharing of data** can force under-resourced collaborators to have to share data on open platforms or via data access committees before they have had an opportunity to interrogate the data ( that they have usually been instrumental in collecting) for additional secondary analyses or to attempt to address local research priorities that were not included in the original study ( perhaps for some of the reasons discussed above)

## Collect, analyse, store, share, data

Research Integrity requires that data is analysed, stored, reanalysed, and shared in a manner that is trustworthy, scrupulous, transparent and that maximises the utility of the data, particularly where public funding is involved.

- Funder requirements or lead PI requirements, may mean that the **data is hosted on servers at centres in the global north that local collaborators don't find easy to access for various reasons**: lack of human and infrastructure capacity to download and analyse large data sets, unsurfaced power imbalances, difficult processes
- Better resourced researchers from HICs may be able to use the data more quickly. However **secondary analyses done by those that are removed from the context/environment/ community where the data was collected may produce analyses that are biased or interpreted incorrectly**

Publish, disseminate,  
influence policy,  
feedback to stakeholders

Research integrity requires honesty, transparency and scrupulousness in authorship and publication ethics and commitment to research translation, transfer and innovation

Unfairness, inequity and lack of diversity can lead to an undermining of RI in this domain.

- Perpetuation of helicopter research where authors from HICs are writing about issues and communities in LMICs, that they are not directly involved with
- Inadequate credit to LMIC collaborators in authorship (Much literature to show this remains a huge issue)
- Inadequate translation of research into policy or innovation relevant to local context. (Careers are mostly built on publications- why Hong Kong statement on research assessment so NB)





# Concluding Remarks

- The CTS is an important document that takes an additional step, by linking unfairness, inequity and lack of diversity directly to research integrity.
- My first hope is that it will have an impact that will gather momentum amongst many stakeholders- funders, HIC RPIs, LMIC RPIs, researchers, publishers etc
- My second, is that some will take up the challenge to research the impact of WCRI statements and declarations because we hope and assume they are making a difference, but we need to find the evidence.