COHRED Colloquium 5

The Research Fairness Initiative

Towards a Global Reporting Standard
for Fair Research Partnerships

Meeting Report

Geneva Welcome Centre (CAGI)
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Hosted in collaboration with:

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Swiss Academy of Sciences
Akademie der Naturwissenschaften
Accademia di scienze naturali
Académie des sciences naturelles

COHRED
Council on Health Research for Development

Executive Summary

The Research Fairness Initiative (RFI) is designed as an institutional reporting system on existing policies and practices in engaging and implementing research partnerships – especially with institutions in low and middle income countries. The immediate aim is to document and improve fairness of research partnerships across the globe while the ultimate goal is the growth of sustainable global research systems – particularly in low and middle income countries and populations.

The RFI is conceived as a strategic instrument to be applied by all key science stakeholders concerned with achieving health, equity and socio-economic development. Its design process includes regular and wide consultations at key stages of its development. This Colloquium 5 is one such opportunity for intensive, face-to-face review of progress to date. Three questions were asked:

1. How can we measure impact of the RFI ?
2. What governance structure is needed for optimal up-take of the RFI globally ?
3. What improvements can be made – even at this early stage – in general and to enhance the added value of the RFI to research funders ?

Using the opportunity of the Geneva Health Forum, COHRED and the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE) convened a small meeting of 13 people from health and development research backgrounds to debate these three questions. Each session only had one or one-and-a-half hour of time, so no 'definitive solutions' were expected. Instead – areas in all aspect of the RFI system requiring immediate attention were identified:

- Designing an impact metric is both essential and urgent.
- **An 'advisory board of interested parties' is to be constructed** to accommodate all stakeholders who identify themselves with the goals of the RFI – as a preliminary to a more permanent governance structure outside the COHRED organisational confines.
- The revision of the current 'version 1' of the RFI in view of experience gained with RFI Reporting should be guided by the 'advisory board'. In fact, the advisory **board's main mission will the custody and evolution of the RFI framework**.
- **While the RFI began in the field of 'health research', it is clear that it applies in** all science fields. For that reason, future versions of the RFI Guides will be made 'science-neutral'. At the same time, such expansion should be done with care to minimize possible (negative) push-back .
- The FAIR principles and other data sharing systems or protocols offer synergy with RFI Topic 9 on "Data ownership, storage, access and use".

COHRED Colloquia aim to advance global health through intense, focused and multi-sector interactions of those key people and institutions who can shape research and innovation by viewing current challenges in a new light to create opportunities for new partnerships and finding new solutions

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Abbreviations

COHRED	Council on Health Research for Development
EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
EUVADIS	European Vaccine Development Institutional Support
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable (data)
IHMT	Institute of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, NOVA University of Lisbon
KFPE	Commission for Research with Developing Countries
LMIC	Low and Middle Income Country
RFI	Research Fairness Initiative
RRO	RFI Reporting Organisation
TDR	Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Background

The Research Fairness Initiative (RFI) is a global reporting system aimed at creating transparency and global learning in research collaborations with the ultimate goal of increasing fairness and equitability in partnerships and at supporting the growth and sustainability of research systems in low and middle income countries.

The RFI provides a pragmatic definition of fairness and a framework of the key aspects of research collaborations and enables institutions to self-report on their own current policies, practices and plans to improve in the short-term.

The RFI was developed – 'co-created' – with active involvement of all stakeholder groups globally over more than three years. Essentially, the years 2015-2016 were used for conceptual development, while 2017 focused on application in several institutions in Africa and Europe as well as an international organisation to deliver 'proof of concept'. From 2018 onwards, the RFI is being widely disseminated and used. More on the timeline and participants can be found here: http://rfi.cohred.org/timeline-of-the-rfi/

At COHRED's Colloquium 4 held in London at the Wellcome Trust in April 2015, the name was changed from the "COHRED Fairness Index" to the "Research Fairness Initiative/RFI". This name change was very significant as it represented a major shift in thinking about what we know about research partnerships. Whereas an "Index" implies the existence and wide acceptance of established criteria, norms and cut-off points – of which there are virtually none in terms of fairness of research partnerships – a Reporting Initiative emphasizes that there are few standards and benchmarks and that, instead, reporting, sharing and transparency of collaborative policies and practices is essential to learn and possibly to develop standards and benchmarks in the future.

The Research Fairness Initiative has therefore two synergistic components – the RFI provides *a pragmatic framework for institutional reporting* that encourages transparency and making improvements explicit, and, the RFI creates ***a 'global learning platform'*** that encourages mutual learning, and the co-creation of standards and benchmarks, where these are possible. Both together are referred to as the 'RFI system'.

The RFI is NOT meant to evaluate individual research partnerships per se – although – in large and long-term collaborations, the RFI can certainly add value. Instead, the RFI has been designed for use at institutional, organisational and at (inter-) governmental levels.

In its current version, the core of the Research Fairness Initiative is its set of 3 domains with 5 topics in each that cover the most important aspects of research collaborations. An RFI Reporting Organisation (RRO) self-reports on current policies and practices in each of these – AND is asked to indicate how it will improve over the next 2 years. The RFI

Report is therefore a strategic tool for continuous quality improvement for research stakeholders. It does NOT encourage a 'report card' approach nor 'ranking' or 'rating' – instead, the RFI focuses on transparency and continuing quality improvement.

Application of the RFI can help to achieve the following impact:

- *Improved internal management* – completing the RFI report enables RFI Reporting Organisations to identify in which aspects of research partnerships they are doing well and where improvements can be made. Often, the RFI report constitutes the first time organisations consider 'partnerships' as a strategic issue and – as a result of completing their internal RFI report – discover opportunities to improve for more impact. It is also usually the only document available to guide research and research management staff and create alignment with organisational values pertaining to research collaborations they will engage in.
- *Increased transparency towards partners* – prospective partners and other stakeholders, including tax-payers and funders, can make informed choices about which organisation they will partner with, and under what conditions. In this sense, the completion of the RFI report can be seen as a 'due diligence effort' by all concerned to ensure that the partnership aims of research funding are being systematically addressed.
- *Aggregate learning* – as we discovered during the first applications in 2017, when multiple institutions in one country complete their RFI Report, common areas for strengthening are easily identified and can, sometimes, be easily remedied. Similarly, a country's research and development partners can use such collective analysis to identify a targeted programme of support to research systems and institutions in these countries. (This applies, of course, also to any other 'aggregation' of RROs).
- *Enhanced global learning* – the RFI Web provides a systematic platform to share, collate and analyse what is currently being practiced, what policies and guidelines are available and being used, and where there are gaps that require to be addressed. Over time, this will certainly lead to a global improvement in research collaborations but also – where possible – in new guidelines, better formulated practices, and new standards and benchmarks beyond current institutional or national applications

The RFI is therefore NOT a new 'best practice guideline' – instead, it points to existing guidelines, like the KFPE "11Principles and 7 Questions" and practices through its Evidence-Base and indicates areas where new ones are needed. The RFI report is therefore more of a 'compliance tool' in that it makes existing guides and best practices visible and asks institutions to make explicit which one, if any, they will use.

The RFI began its implementation in Europe and Africa in 2017, with workshops run in Senegal, South Africa and Kenya. Following from this, three Senegalese institutions have submitted RFI Reports for review, one of which has been validated and is in the process of publication. Several South African institutions are showing great interest in the initiative, with one about to start the reporting process. In Europe, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), published its first RFI Report in March 2018. TDR is hosted at the World Health Organization (WHO) and sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and WHO. Also the RFI report of the NOVA University of Lisbon's Institute for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (IHMT) has been validated and is in the process of being published.

At the time of the Colloquium 5 – there are expressions of interest of 13 other institutions in both high, middle and low-income countries to complete their own RFI report. Meanwhile, the RFI receives serious consideration from funders in the UK and continental Europe as an instrument to formulate and measure impact in terms of the partnership goals of joint research funding.

At the time of printing this Colloquium 5 meeting report, three institutions have published their own RFI report – TDR (WHO, Geneva), University Alioune Diop de Bambey (Senegal) and the Institute of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine of the NOVA University of Lisbon (Portugal). As they appear, reports are listed here: http://rfi.cohred.org/rfi-reports/

The RFI material is contained in three guides:

- Summary Guide
- Reporting Guide
- Implementation Guide

The guides have thus far been translated into French, Portuguese, German and Mandarin, and will soon be available in Spanish. The three guides provide institutions with all relevant information required to write their own RFI report, while COHRED's RFI team of staff and Associates is at their disposal for any technical support.

The guides can be downloaded from: http://rfi.cohred.org/download-guides/

Aims of Colloquium 5

Following global consultations in 2015-2016 and first ('trial') reporting in 2017, the year 2018 has been earmarked to begin global implementation of the RFI resulting in an increasing number of institutions subscribing to the RFI and submitting their RFI reports.

In anticipation of this, an early review of the RFI indicators and the implementation process becomes essential to make improvements where needed before large numbers of users begin RFI report writing. As the RFI grows in numbers of users across the globe, it is expected that some rapid learning will take place both in terms of the RFI framework, the RFI reporting process and the RFI system in general. Through this learning and co-creation, it is anticipated that a second version of the RFI framework develops, that possible standards and benchmarks are defined, and that new criteria for validation will become necessary.

The first purpose of Colloquium 5 was, therefore, to consult with a small group of external stakeholders to reflect on early experiences and elicit ideas about improving the RFI reporting process itself and to consider the role of COHRED in terms of necessary institutional capacity and governance to manage the global scaling of the RFI.

Secondly, from its inception, the RFI was conceived as a stakeholder-owned, global mechanism. This implies the need to reflect on a new governance structure beyond COHRED as organisation. Understanding better what governance structure will enhance RFI adoption and impact was the second goal of this Colloquium.

The final goal of this Colloquium 5 was to begin formulating criteria and mechanisms to measure its impact on (health) research systems, both globally and in low and middle-income countries in particular.

COHRED Colloquium 5: April 12, 10:00 am – 15:30pm

This Colloquium was jointly organized by COHRED and the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE – see: www.kfpe.ch). Our organisations are joining for several events this year in recognition of the synergy between the KFPE's "11 Principles and 7 Questions [for Transboundary Research Partnerships]" and COHRED's Research Fairness Initiative – and partly because each organisation has reached a milestone in corporate life – 25 years for COHRED and 20 years for the KFPE Guidelines.

Topic 1: Measuring impact of the RFI – best measures for impact, best ways to communicate this, dealing with complexity

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This session focused on measuring the impact of the RFI, and the bests ways to communicate this impact. The group held a wide-ranging discussion regarding the potential opportunities and barriers presented by the use and implementation of the RFI.

A first issue considered was the need to clarify the character of the RFI reporting as a self-reporting / self-evaluation process. The first and primary benefits accrue to RFI Reporting Organizations (RROs) themselves and may well remain 'internal' or 'undisclosed'. The RFI system is currently free for use – guides can be downloaded and used without any cost to the RRO. A first 'internal' report can be prepared to understand what a final RFI will look like.

Through external validation of RFI reports by the RFI team, the report will be branded as 'RFI Report', its results collated and analysed, and can the 'global learning' aspect of the RFI be operationalized. The full benefits to a RRO will only become available in this manner.

This approach – an 'internal report' first and followed by an externally validated report thereafter - encourages institutions to develop insight and confidence in already existing policies and practices, and to decide on issues where disclosure is possibly not appropriate, before publishing their institutional RFI report.

A related aspect discussed was that some institutions in low and middle-income countries had expressed the concern that issues listed as 'areas for improvement' could become reasons for partners not funding them. *For example, the indicator asking whether or not a research institution has a regular audit done of its financial statements was mentioned in this context. "Will the absence of an external financial audit actually be a reason not to provide funding to us?" or "Where we are, we have no external auditors – so even if we would like to engage an external auditor, we either do not have the funding to engage them or are not able to find an auditor".*

COHRED's (informal) experiences with research funders and partners so far seems to indicate the exact opposite. From their point of view an institution's RFI report can actually provide a benefit to such an institution, as it helps to identify specific areas for improvement in which partners can assist. In addition, if the issue of an absence of external financial audit capacity or the absence of the means to pay for these proves to be

common, then funders and partners may decide on systemic interventions to provide these. *For example, providing funding support to contract external audits will create a* **market for audit expertise and will possibly increase 'research system capacity' in this** *very meaningful way: more audit expertise in low and middle income countries.*

The "Access to Medicines Index" was mentioned as a model that could be looked at. This index provides "report cards" and is a way for the public to be able to determine which institutions are doing well. While it was emphasized that the RFI would rather avoid becoming an Index/Report Card, it was recognized that the types of metrics used in an index such as Access to Medicines Index could be a useful way to measure impact.

In conclusion, it was thought to be important to emphasize that the purpose of the RFI is not to highlight institutional 'failures' nor to rank institutions, but that the RFI rather serves as a tool to facilitate the development of equitable and fair research partnerships through continuing quality improvement. It may be better to consider the RFI as a tool that helps to identify "good practices rather than best practices" so that it can enhance productive competition in research collaboration. Once institutions have written consecutive RFI reports, it will be possible to assess impact of the RFI reports on institution building by monitoring and evaluation of the improvements that have been made over time.

In TDR's RFI report, a table system using colours was introduced as a way to highlight areas in which they felt they were doing well or where further work is needed, as well as areas which were deemed to be 'not applicable' to TDR. Such a system helps to provide a "snapshot view" of the status of an institution with regard to the topics listed in the RFI, and can be the start of a more comprehensive metric.

Another route is to conduct specific 'Return on Investment' studies in terms of funder benefits, institutional benefits, regional impact. This could be forward looking or focus on past events. *For example, referring to the 2014-2016 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in West Africa, one can attempt to answer the question whether or not West African countries would have been able to reap more and more sustainable 'research system building' and 'health system building' benefits from the massive global support efforts, if an RFI system had been in place and used by all stakeholders in this event, or, even more to the point, had the RFI been in existence since discovery of Ebola Virus in 1976.*

It was concluded that the RFI Team will have to devote time and effort in the year(s) to come to co-create and design a comprehensive metrics system to measure improvements and impact. At the start, consecutive RFI report analysis is probably adequate but in the medium-term, a more substantive metric will need to be put in place.

Topic 2: Governance of the RFI – Moving from a 'project' to a globally accepted reporting standard

The second topic discussed focused on the governance, global ownership and global applicability of the RFI. The RFI system is designed as a 'learning' system – using the

experiences and lessons from current implementation to improve both the RFI framework and the RFI system as a whole. The current framework is labelled as 'version 1' – and it is clear, even at this stage, that a 'version 2' is not far off. We anticipate that the first two years of use of the RFI system will lead to many new insights that will encourage changing our metrics and indicators.

The key question in this is – who will decide on future additions and modifications in the framework or in the validation system. Similarly, when more analysis and evidence becomes possible and available as more institutions complete their RFI reports, how will decisions be made on 'minimum standards' or 'benchmarks' where these are going to be possible, or how can users challenge such standards or other decisions? Decisions on these issues should, ideally be taken by 'critical users' and stakeholders.

We are now clear on the 6 'critical user groups' in the RFI system – these are:

1. Government Departments most involved with research (Ministries of Science & Technology, Health, Agriculture, Higher Education, and others).
2. National research and innovation agencies – often acting in multiple roles as funders, research performers and national science development agency.
3. Research and academic institutions.
4. Business with substantial research portfolios.
5. Science and innovation funders.
6. International Agencies, multi-lateral bodies, large non-profits for whom research or science or innovation are key aspects of their work.

There was general agreement that RFI needs to be 'owned' by all key stakeholders in global (health) research. Although COHRED initiated the RFI and is the current host of the RFI Team, COHRED does not intend to 'own the RFI' itself but envisages sharing the ownership and influence on its future development with other key stakeholders.

Global implementation may well depend on structuring the RFI governance – which is the rationale to place this issue on the agenda - even at this early stage of RFI implementation.

The current 'governance' situation is that COHRED has established an RFI Team comprising staff and non-staff for dissemination, support and review of RFI reports. COHRED's Board provides 'arms-length' guidance but is not operationally involved. And, finally, RFI reporting institutions are asked a specific question at the end of the reporting process related to improvement of the RFI process and framework.

Options discussed include:

It was suggested that during the start-up phase of the RFI, it could be worthwhile to have **"ambassadors"** before trying to achieve a more formal global governance structure. These individuals or organisations should come from different stakeholder groups, and can advocate for the RFI within their communities.

Another suggestion was that the RFI report itself could be used to receive continuous feedback on the governance structure. Currently, RFI reporting organisations are asked for

suggestions and advice to improve the report, the indicators, and the process of the RFI. A specific question on the governance of RFI could be included.

A third topic discussed was the 'science-neutrality' of the RFI. Although COHRED's generic expertise is grounded in the life sciences, the RFI is not limited to applications in this field. In fact, it is already being applied to other scientific fields, relevant for 'development ', such as agriculture and 'development research'. The RFI is also being used by institutions that operate in a much wider field than in health research only. This was another reason for COHRED to search for a governance structure that is inclusive for other fields of scientific research in which the RFI system can be applied.

Finally, it was decided that a steering group or advisory board with representatives from different disciplines and stakeholder groups in research should be constituted. While broad and inclusive representation would be ensured, COHRED should continue to drive and administer the initiative. Professionals from Academies of Science, International Research Organisations, from Research networks in the Global South, Universities, UNESCO and from other health and development research organisations, were suggested as possible members of such a 'committee of interested stakeholders'.

This 'Committee of Interested Stakeholders' should be constructed in the next year or two. Not too much time should be spent on designing a final structure now. Its membership should be drawn from those who have actively engaged the RFI and have expressed interest to make it work. This Committee can also be given the task to develop a more permanent RFI governance structure.

Topic 3: How can the RFI be improved in general – and to support research funders in achieving their mission in funding global (health/development) research

As the RFI will be implemented in different types of research institutions over time, improvements will need to be made as experience grows through implementation and use of RFI reporting by RFI reporting institutions themselves, and through the analyses of validated RFI reports, the communication of results and the potential actions taken following this.

Improvements are likely in all components of the RFI system – the RFI framework, the reporting process. Internal utilization, and the RFI Web for analysis and global communication.

To date, the RFI team has been working towards making the RFI Guides more 'science neutral' – in terms of language used, examples given, and specific questions asked. The aim is to ensure that the RFI is applicable to any partnership in any field of science, research, evidence creation and innovation.

One of the participants commented that it may be better to maintain a focus on health-related research, especially during the start up phase of the RFI, as 'health' is a relatively 'safe' science environment. By keeping the RFI focused on general acceptance within health research before attempting more competitive fields of science, may make for an easier start-up process.

At the same time, there were also strong opinions expressed that it is important to reach out to the broader research community to learn about the RFI at this early stage. This did not only refer to dissemination of the RFI but also to maximise understanding of what the RFI can potentially achieve in improving fairness in research partnerships on other domains of science, research and innovation. For this to succeed, communications about the RFI should be as 'science neutral' as possible at the risk of losing interest from other sciences if it remains to health focused. Given that there are no conceptual differences between research partnerships in health and in other science fields, and given that the RFI is seeking both global application and ownership, and early engagement of other fields seems logical.

Following these discussions, it was decided to continue the move extending from **'health research' to** any other research – **particularly focused on impacting on 'health, equity and development'** but do so with caution in view of this comment. Extension can still be done, for example, from 'health research' to 'research for health, equity and development' – without directly confronting potentially problematic issues *such as intellectual property sharing, which was used as an example that could possibly derail the well intended RFI process given its potential economic impact.*

A second important comment related to the perceived amount of effort required to produce an institutional RFI Report. Up to now, there seem to be several grounds for this perception – some of these are:

1. *Based on the RFI presentation of "3 domains, 15 topics, and 45 indicators".*

   We have found that presenting the RFI framework **as "15 topics that cover the** phases before research even gets started, the research process itself, and the post-**research phase"** is more encouraging.

   We also found that emphasizing the basic simplicity of the responses required for an indicator - 1) *what is currently done* – 2) *share policies or practices or examples* – and 3) *what improvement is intended in the next 2 years* – greatly reduces perception of work load.

2. *Based on the perception that 'researchers are already overloaded' – the RFI adds even more "administration".*

Experience so far is that it requires effort to make an audience understand that the **primary focus of the RFI is 'institutional' and 'research management', not 'researchers'**. Once it is understood that the RFI is really a strategic management tool for research organisations – and that it is a 'research office' or 'research officer' established or appointed by an institution and the organisation's CEO or his appointee who carry the main responsibility for RFI implementation – this concern diminishes substantially.

3. *Based on the perception that "to complete an RFI report, all collaborations that an organisation has need to be assessed individually".*

Faced with a statement like *'we have hundreds of partnerships in over 50 countries'* – the work that the RFI reporting seems to require may look insurmountable, indeed. The essential response is that the primary aim of the RFI report is to bring to the surface existing policies and practices – and stimulate discussion and decision on how to improve these in the short term. Refer to the first item above – the answers sought for each indicator. It is therefore NOT necessary to assess all collaborations. Instead, it is essential to investigate what corporate guidance exists, which practices are explicit or implied, and where the organisation needs to add and improve in the next two years. Once this is understood – the perception of workload does not disappear but is significantly reduced. In addition, institutional managers understand that – for the first time – the RFI report offers them an opportunity to create alignment of staff with institutional values in this important area.

We were fortunate to have a presentation from TDR on their experiences with implementing their own RFI report. The presentation noted several issues that ensured their own successful RFI implementation:

- *active support and leadership from the Director/CEO is essential* – to overcome internal administrative obstacles, staff concerns, and facilitate future action on findings;
- *appointment of a senior person to coordinate the work;*
- *finding short-term help* in the form of a capable intern to find all relevant documents over TDR's 40 year history. Of course, smaller institutions with less history would have substantially reduced work to implement the RFI.
- *the early realisation that subsequent RFI reports would need much less effort* as these reports will concentrate on improvements following from the previous RFI report, made the work of preparing a first RFI report more acceptable;
- **producing an 'internal report' first** encourages the organisation as it highlighted that many 'good practices and policies' were already in place. This makes it easier to accept and state that there are also areas where improvements can be made;
- a final note was made that *understanding and communicating the benefits that the RFI can bring to the institution itself ("the first time we sat down as a team to*

consider partnership as a strategic issue for us", for example) and its value to global research system development as a public good, was an important motivator.

Various other suggestions were made to reduce the actual and perceived workload: appointment of interns, offer sabbaticals, create post-doc research opportunities - all of whom will be able to obtain substantive experience and knowledge useful for their own learning while completing the work needed for the RFI report.

I addition, *it is important that the RFI Report is not understood as a (once-**off)** 'event' but as a 'process of continuing organizational improvement'.* Understood in this manner, "the RFI report does not have to be exhaustive in the first go – there is a next report coming in 2 years time".

Based on TDR's experiences, the RFI Team will modify the "RFI Implementation Guide" to emphasize the 'confidence building' first step in order to lower the threshold for completion.

Future RFI system improvements need to include more ideas or alternatives to reduce perceived and real administrative load.

At the same time, it was noted that research partnerships are currently not monitored in any systematic way – certainly not in a shared systematic way between stakeholders – even though successful partnerships are at the heart of delivering successful research and sustainable research systems, especially in low and middle income countries (LMICs). From **a funder's** and impact point of view, the RFI represents a relevant and feasible reporting requirement. Given the concern expressed by some LMIC institutions, *research funders can provide a substantial boost to RFI uptake by making it clear that* **'having an RFI report is an advantage'**.

It was further suggested that it would be worthwhile to have the RFI added to university curricula as an academic topic in order to increase not only its use but also to demonstrate its benefits and enthusing future generations of researchers and research managers.

A specific recommendation for the improvement of the RFI framework dealt with providing substance to RFI Topic 9 : "Data Ownership, Storage, Access and Use". At present, the RFI is not able to make specific recommendations on how to partners can improve their corporate policies and practices. For that reason, the potential of the EU Horizon 2020 funded initiative titled "Go FAIR" which promotes the "FAIR" principles of creating data access through the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) was introduced to the Colloquium. "FAIR" stands for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data and provides an internet based solution that combines better and global access to data –

including research data – with better control of and ownership of these data by those generating them. [1]

The discussion centred on the mutual supportive and synergistic nature of the "FAIR" principles and the RFI system, and how these "FAIR" principles could become a specific guide under Topic 9. The potential of the "FAIR" principles to enhance the access to and at the same time the control of data sharing by low and middle-income countries, was one key aspect highlighted. This sparked a lively discussion, as other potential data sharing protocols are, apparently, in preparation. There was consensus that there is 'a priori' synergy with the "FAIR" principles and other data sharing systems, and that this will need to be considered for future improvements in RFI framework, Topic 9.

[1] Barend Mons, Cameron Neylon, Jan Velterop, et al. Cloudy, increasingly FAIR; revisiting the FAIR Data guiding principles for the European Open Science Cloud. Information Services & Use 37 (2017) 49–56. DOI 10.3233/ISU-170824

Conclusions and Way Forward

The Although this was a small meeting – and probably because of this – it led to wide-ranging discussions on the future development of the RFI. The following are the key ideas :

- The RFI is an important tool to improve research partnerships and fairness across the globe. This, in turn, is essential to building sustainable research institutions and systems anywhere: in high as well as in low & middle income countries. We can only hope to tackle global health and development challenges if all countries have the capacity to pose and answer research questions. Working towards global implementation is important as the more it is used, the more impact it will have.

- If the RFI is to become a global reporting standard, it is essential that its impact can be measured. A one-hour session during this Colloquium was clearly insufficient to reach consensus on impact evaluation. However, there was unanimity that this is a key priority.

- The governance of the RFI needs to be external to COHRED to the extent that it can be representative of as many stakeholders as possible and in a way that it **can be "owned by the stakeholders"**. For the immediate term, it was suggested that a multi-disciplinary "advisory committee of interested stakeholders" be established which could begin the process of expanding RFI ownership and governance.

- The RFI **reporting framework, process and 'system'** will evolve as its use increases. As more reports are being written, any aspects of any parts of the RFI system should be open to improvement through experience.

- The RFI system applies to research partnerships – in any field. Given COHRED's history, the RFI was started in the field of 'research for health'. The RFI Team is now busy to ensure that the RFI system and framework become 'science neutral' so it can have wider appeal and application. At the same time, the caution was noted that creating acceptance in the 'health research' field is possibly less controversial than in other, economically perhaps more important, fields of science. To prevent early 'push back', expansion needs to be done diplomatically.

- The possibility of using academic courses as a way of disseminating the RFI and of increasing global efforts to use it and improve it was noted.

- The Go FAIR Initiative and other data sharing systems or protocols might offer **useful synergy with RFI Topic 9 on "Data ownership, storage, access and use"**. This will be further explored by the RFI Team.

Participants

Name	Organisation	Position	Country
Jean Albergel	IRD	Director of Research	France
Francis Bwalya	Zambian Mission	Councillor	Zambia
Cathy Garner	Centre for Ageing Better, London	Trustee and Non-Executive Director	United Kingdom
Carel IJsselmuiden	COHRED	Executive Director	Switzerland
Kirsty Klipp	COHRED	RFI Implementation Manager	South Africa
Francis Kombe	COHRED	RHInnO Ethics Manager	Kenya
Jon-Andri Lys	KFPE	Executive Secretary	Switzerland
Sheila Mburu	UKCDS	Research and Policy Officer	United Kingdom
Suerie Moon	Graduate Institute	Director of Research at the Global Health Centre	Switzerland
Sarah Plowman	UKRI	ODA Policy Manager	United Kingdom
Holger Postulart	COHRED	Administrative Manager and FRC Manager	Germany
Harry van Schooten	EUVADIS	Consultant	Netherlands
Robert Terry	TDR	Manager Research Policy	Switzerland
Apologies Marcel Tanner	Swiss Academy of Science	President	Switzerland

Annexure 1 : Publications on the RFI

The Broker published an article on the RFI as a system which can be used to help institution building – an essential for LMIC institutions. The article can be found by following the link below:
 Beyond good intentions – fair research partnerships essential for resilience in low income countries. van Schooten, H. & IJsselmuiden, C. (2018).
http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/Inclusive-Economy-Africa/Beyond-good-intentions-fair-research-partnerships-essential-for-resilience-in-low-income-countries

An article was published on SciDev.Net which discussed the RFI and how it has helped Senegalese Institutions to identify gaps in their research policies.
Research fairness tool reveals policy gaps. 2018. Irwin, A.
https://scidev.net/global/intellectual-property/news/research-fairness-tool-reveals-policy-gaps.html

The RFI was mentioned as an important ancillary service for health research in a report by the Work Bank and Wellcome Trust entitled:
"Money & Microbes. Strengthening clinical research capacity to prevent epidemics". (2018).
http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/pandemics/publication/money-and-microbes-strengthening-research-capacity-to-prevent-epidemics
For the full report, follow the link below:
http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/120551526675250202/pdf/126338-REVISED-27231-IVTF-Report-reduced.pdf

Policies for Equitable Access to Health (PEAH) has published an article on funders and fair research partnerships:
Fair Research Partnerships in European Commission Funded Research – Do We Know What is Actually Happening with Public Funds? 2018. IJsselmuiden, C. & Klipp, K.
http://www.peah.it/2018/04/fair-research-partnerships-in-european-commission-funded-research/

TDR RFI Report 2018 - http://www.who.int/tdr/publications/year/2018/rfi-report/en/

A chapter on the RFI was included in a book published in 2018 on Africa-Europe cooperation:
Botti L, IJsselmuiden C, Kuss K, Mwangi E, Wagner IE. Equality in health research cooperation between Africa and Europe: the potential of the Research Fairness Initiative. In: Africa-Europe Research and Innovation Cooperation. Global challenges, bi-regional responses. Cherry A, Haselip J, Ralfphs G, Wagner IE, Eds. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland. 2018, 99-119. ISBN 978-3-319-69928-8 (hardcopy) ISBN 978-3-319-69929-5 (eBook). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69929-5

Research Africa has released an article discussing how institutions in South Africa believe the RFI could benefit them, following a two-day workshop held in Cape Town in October 2017:
Disadvantaged SA universities see promise in research fairness scheme. (2017). Nordling, L.
http://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1370602

The RFI was mentioned in a correspondence article by David Beran, Peter Byass, Aiah Gbakima, Kathleen Kahn, Osman Sankoh, Stephen Tollman, Miles Witham, and Justine Davies (2017) called "Bringing all together for research capacity building in LMICs" in The Lancet Global Health.

The UK Collaborative on Development on Development Sciences (UKCDS) mentions the RFI in a report on 'Building Partnerships of Equals: The role of funders in equitable and effective international development collaborations'. (2017).
http://www.ukcdr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Building-Partnerships-of-Equals_-REPORT-2.pdf

Research Africa has shared a FAQs article on the Research Fairness Initiative. Fairness initiative ready to roll. Research Africa. (2017). Nordling, L. http://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1366849

Policies for Equitable Access to Health (PEAH) has published an blog on the Research Fairness Initiative on their website. Creating and maintaining fair, trustworthy and sustainable research collaborations. Policies for

Equitable Access to Health (PEAH). (2017). Botti, L. and IJsselmuiden, C. http://www.peah.it/2017/03/creating-and-maintaining-fair-trustworthy-and-sustainable-research-collaborations/

The UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS) have published a text on the Research Fairness Initiative in their blog. Implementing an intervention for fairness, trust and equity in research collaborations. UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS). (2017). Botti, L. and IJsselmuiden, C. http://www.ukcds.org.uk/blog/implementing-an-intervention-for-fairness-trust-and-equity-in-research-collaborations.

The Swiss National Science Foundation's magazine, Horizons, made a mention of the Research Fairness Initiaitve in its editorial section.
Horizons. Swiss National Science Foundation. (2016). Hofmeier, P. 111: 2.
http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/horizonte/Horizonte_gesamt/SNF_horizons_111_December_EN.pdf

The RFI is mentioned in a publication by Lyn Horn (2016) called "Promoting Responsible Research Conduct: A South African Perspective". L, Horn. (2016). Promoting Responsible Research Conduct: A South African Perspective. Journal of Academic Ethics, 15(1), 59-72.

An interview was conducted by SciDev.Net on the Research Fairness Initiative following the RFI Conference in Brussels on September 28th, 2016.
Q&A: Why we need a standard for fair partnerships. SciDev.Net. (2016). Makri, A.
http://www.scidev.net/global/capacity-building/feature/standard-fair-partnerships-Carel-IJsselmuiden.html

Research Africa followed up on the Research Fairness Initiative Conference held in Brussels on September 28th, 2016, by publishing an article on the event and the way forward for the RFI.
Global research fairness initiative enters pilot phase. Research Africa. (2016). Nordling, L.
http://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1363261

SciDev.Net published an article on the Research Fairness Initiative providing a summary on the discussions held at the RFI Conference in Brussels on September 28th, 2016. This event was organised by CAAST-Net Plus. Tool targets fairness deficit in research. SciDev.Net. (2016). Makri, A. http://www.scidev.net/global/policy/scidev-net-at-large/tool-targets-fairness-deficit-research.html

The CAAST-Net Plus website published an article as front-page news on the Nigerian and Senegalese RFI Workshops in August 2016. CAAST-Net Plus Backs Fairness Initiative. CAAST-Net Plus. (2016). https://caast-net-plus.org/object/news/1588

Issue 7 of the CAAST-Net Plus Magazine in June 2016 discusses the outcome of the RFI Workshop in Kenya, hosted by the Kenya Medical Research Institute in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and the Spanish Foundation for International Cooperation, Health and Social Affairs (FCSAI) through CAAST-Net Plus.
The full version of the magazine is available here.
Fairness Initiative Ramps Up. CAAST-Net Plus Magazine. (2016). Kuss, K, et. al. https://caast-net-plus.org/object/news/1566/attach/CN_Mag_7thEd_V6_[WEB_.pdf

SciDev.Net publication in April 2016 discussing the Research Fairness Initiative for the South East Asian context. Global initiative bats for fair research agreements. SciDev.Net. (2016). Arkin, F. http://m.scidev.net/asia-pacific/r-d/news/global-initiative-bats-for-fair-research-agreements.html
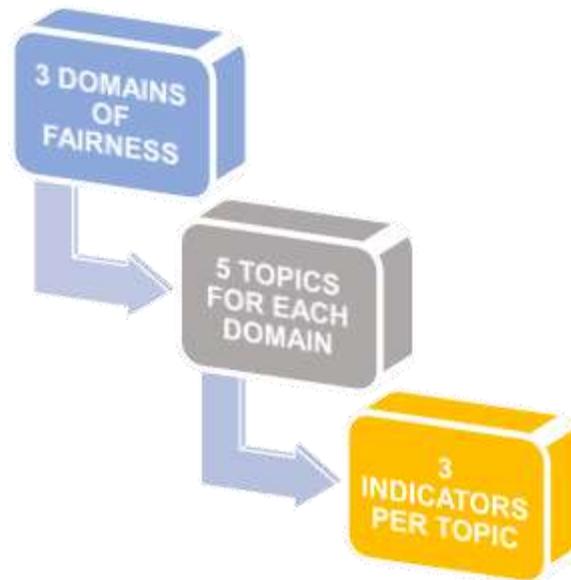
Contact us

The Research Fairness Initiative

Website:
http://rfi.cohred.org

Contact person: Kirsty Kaiser –
rfi@cohred.org

Commission for Research Partnerships
with Developing Countries

Website:
www.kfpe.ch

Contact person: Dr Jon-Andri Lys –
jon-andri.lys@scnat.ch

Resources

Download the RFI Guides: http://rfi.cohred.org/download-guides/

This document can be found on our website at http://rfi.cohred.org/rfi-source-documents/