Research Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

Rigorous research projects require technical, programmatic, and operations support. When the quality of research and evidence suffers due to inadequate support we are less likely to contribute meaningfully to the evidence gaps. These guidance notes aim to address this challenge.

The objectives of these guidance notes are to:

- Inform effective research management structures, roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure that adequate Airbel staff and time is budgeted

The Research Management Structure table below provides a default example of how each research roles and responsibilities are shared amongst research team members, including country programs and regions.

These responsibilities should be adjusted on a case-by-case basis, depending on the research management structure (see table 1 below for tasks where roles and responsibilities may vary). Notably, a project may have:

- A larger role from research staff at headquarters (in IRC's case, this is often the Airbel Impact Lab but can also be other staff within IRC's technical units).
- A larger country program role
- A larger research/academic partner role

How to decide which research management structure will work best? Each model presents trade-offs around roles and responsibilities, independence and collaboration, and technical expertise. The choice depends on a number of factors. The questions below can help guide this decision:

- What is the size and level of complexity of the research and evaluation component? To what extent is implementation of the program model or intervention technically or operationally demanding?
- What is each partners' expertise on the research topic?
- What resources (including human resources) are currently available at the country program to perform high quality implementation and monitoring of research and evaluation activities?
- Are there strong data collection firms in country?
- To what extent are program and research and evaluation activities stand-alone or embedded in existing programs?

- Is the project part of a multi-partner consortium?
- Are there donor requirements or preferences for third-party evaluators? Is the donor defining evaluation independence defined as having minimal interaction with the implementing organization?

TABLE 1: RESEARCH MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

	Task	"Default" Research Management Structure	Alternate Options
Phase 1: Go/No-Go	Lead go/no-go process for research	Researcher at HQ leads/facilitates. Country program and/or region approve.	-
Phase 2: Research Design and Proposal Development	**Develop research questions**	Researcher at HQ leads/facilitates, often in collaboration with academic/research partner	Academic/research partner leads OR Technical advisors and/or country program leads
	Proposal development: Research design & tools, Develop evidence syntheses, Conduct research design workshops	Researcher at HQ leads/facilitates, often in collaboration with academic/research partner	Academic/research partner leads
Phase 3: Research Start-Up	**Field work preparation:** Hiring Data Collection Firm; Procurement of data collection equipment and materials	Researcher at HQ hires data collection firm Country program leads on procurement	Academic/research partner leads: Hires data collection firm and leads on procurement OR Country program leads: Hires data collection firm and leads on procurement
Phase 4: Research Implementation	**Data collection and verification**	Researcher at HQ leads	Academic/research partner leads OR Country program leads

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Phase 5: Research Close-Out and Results Dissemination	**Writing outputs**	Researcher at HQ co-writes research outputs with academic/research partner Country program and technical advisors may lead on specific outputs, with researcher at HQ and external research partner providing reviews or contributions.	Academic partner leads
	Result validation workshop	Researcher at HQ leads/facilitates	Academic partner leads
	Dissemination of results	Researcher at HQ leads on dissemination to research community, with academic/research partner Technical advisors leads on dissemination for practitioner/programmatic audiences Country program leads on dissemination in country.	Academic partner leads
Phase 6: Learning/ After-Action Review	**After-Action Review**	Researcher at HQ leads/facilitates	-

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