

Helicopter Research Guidance for Scholarly Publishing

What Is Helicopter Research?

Helicopter Research (also known as parachute science or parachute research) occurs when well-resourced researchers —often from high-income countries— conduct research or field work (“drop into”) in lower-income or marginalized regions or communities to collect data or samples and publish their findings, without meaningfully involving local researchers or communities and without providing reciprocal benefits or recognition. This practice exacerbates existing inequities in international research collaboration.

Why policies or guidance regarding Helicopter Research are important

1. Compliant with ethical research practices
2. Support drive to ensure equity and inclusion
3. In keeping with scholarly publishing integrity standards
4. Reputation and accountability
5. Alignment with existing global equity standards, including UN SDGs, The Trust Code, COPE recommendations, etc.

How to develop your policy or guidance

Developing anti-Helicopter Research guidance for a journal or publishing organization involves creating clear, enforceable recommendations and guidelines that promote ethical, equitable, and collaborative research practices.

1. Define the scope and objectives

Start by clarifying:

- What constitutes Helicopter Research in your context (e.g., fieldwork, data collection, authorship).
- Why your journal or organization is developing a policy (e.g., to promote equity, uphold research integrity, support local research capacity).

2. Establish Core Principles

Base your policy on values such as:

- Equity in collaboration
- Respect and acknowledgement for local knowledge and autonomy
- Transparency in authorship and contributions
- Ethical data collection and consent
- Equitable citation practices

3. Develop Specific Policy Requirements

These should be clear, actionable, and enforceable. Examples could include:

Authorship and Acknowledgment

- Encourage inclusion of local researchers as co-authors when research is conducted in their region and when they meet the journal authorship criteria. Those who do not meet the criteria should be recognized appropriately in the Acknowledgment section.
- Mandate disclosure of contributions using CRediT taxonomy.

Ethical Approvals

- Encourage researchers to obtain and share ethical clearance from **local** institutions and/or organizations, not just the researcher's home institution.

Data and Benefit Sharing

- Encourage or require **data sharing agreements** that benefit all parties, including local communities.
- Enable open access to findings for local stakeholders.
- For data relating to Indigenous Peoples, refer authors to the [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#).

Capacity Building

- Encourage inclusion of local researchers in on-going and future studies, including resource and knowledge sharing

4. Integrate into Editorial Workflow

- Add policy checks to submission guidelines, submission systems, and peer review processes.
- Train editors and reviewers to identify potential Helicopter Research practices.
- Include a checklist or declaration form for authors to confirm compliance.
- Consider recommending authors to include a statement in their published papers to properly address disclosure of the ethical and scientific considerations of the study, which can include disclosure of permits and formal agreements with local communities or authorities and additional acknowledgements of local contributions. This information can be added to an existing ethics disclosure statement or a new standalone section. See Statement examples below.

5. Provide Support and Education

- Offer guidance documents or webinars for authors and editors unfamiliar with these issues.
- Highlight examples of good collaborative practice in your journal.

6. Monitor and Enforce

- Set up mechanisms to flag and investigate potential violations.
- Be transparent about consequences (e.g., rejection, retraction, public statement).

7. Collaborate and Align

- Work with other journals, publishers, institutions and initiatives (such as the Joint Commitment) to develop and harmonize standards.
- Reference frameworks like:
 - COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics)
 - The TRUST Code
 - San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

Suggested policy template

Policy on Ethical Global Research Collaboration and Anti-Helicopter Research

At [Journal Name], we are committed to promoting ethical, equitable, and inclusive research practices. We recognize the importance of meaningful collaboration with local researchers and communities, particularly in studies conducted in low- and middle-income countries or marginalized regions and communities.

Include definition (see above)

Policy Requirements

To uphold research integrity and global equity, authors submitting manuscripts based on fieldwork or data collection in regions outside their primary institutional base must:

- 1. Demonstrate Local Collaboration**
 - Include local researchers as co-authors where appropriate. Those who do not meet the authorship criteria should be recognized appropriately in the Acknowledgment section
 - Clearly describe the role of local collaborators in the study design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- 2. Provide Ethical Approvals**
 - Report ethical approval from relevant **local** ethics committees or institutional review boards as well as the researcher's home institution, region, or country's approving body.
- 3. Ensure Fair Authorship and Acknowledgment**
 - Use the **CRedit taxonomy** to disclose individual contributions.
 - Acknowledge community partners, field assistants, and institutions that supported the research.
- 4. Support Data and Benefit Sharing**
 - Outline how data, findings, or benefits will be shared with local stakeholders.
 - Where possible, ensure Open Access to research outputs for local communities.
 - For data relating to Indigenous Peoples, please follow the recommendations of the [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#).
- 5. Promote Capacity Building**
 - Describe any efforts made to support local research capacity, such as training, infrastructure development, or knowledge exchange.

Editorial Oversight

Submissions that do not meet these standards may be returned for revision or rejected.

Commitment to Equity

This policy aligns with global standards for responsible research, including the Global Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships, and reflects our commitment to fostering inclusive and respectful scientific collaboration.

Resources

- **Council of Science Editors**
<https://www.csescienceeditor.org/article/addressing-helicopter-research/>
- **The TRUST Code**
A Global Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships (previously known as Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings)
<https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/>
<https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/trust-code/>

Reading (not endorsed)

- [Haelewaters et al. 2021: "Ten simple rules for Global North researchers to stop perpetuating helicopter research in the Global South".](#)
- [Giller 2020: "Grounding the helicopters".](#)
- [The Lancet Global Health 2018: "Closing the door on parachutes and parasites".](#)
- Tackling Helicopter Research. *Nat. Geosci.* <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41561-022-01010-4>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0092867424002307>
- <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/HYPERTENSIONAHA.123.20631>
- [Closing the parachute and opening the umbrella: Strategies for inclusivity and representation in producing impactful coastal ecosystem research.](#)
- <https://www.statnews.com/2021/09/23/health-equity-tourists-white-scholars-colonizing-health-disparities-research/>

Existing Journal Policies and Articles:

- **PLOS ONE**: Developed a policy to promote equity, choice, credit, and transparency.
- **Nature**: Addressed Helicopter Research, encouraging authors to provide statements on how equity was promoted and calling for systemic change.
- AGU Publications ([article](#), [policy](#)): Updated their authorship policy to foster greater equity, transparency, and to help address concerns of Helicopter Research with the launch of their Inclusion in Global Research policy.

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