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## Mid term review July 2008

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Printed and bound in the UK by INASP on-demand

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## **Acknowledgements**

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I would like to thank the programme partners for their time and contributions to this review. Their candidness was appreciated and contributed to efforts to ensure this review is supportive to the next phase of the project. Inputs from the workshop participants were also much appreciated and their enthusiasm indicative of the warm, supportive team spirit in AuthorAID. I would particularly like to thank Julie Walker and the AuthorAID team for their flexible and friendly support to this process and hope that it will be a valuable input to the next phase of project development.

Teresa Hanley

## **Executive Summary**

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AuthorAID @ INASP seeks to help researchers in developing countries to communicate their work more effectively particularly through publication with the aim to increase the visibility and influence of research undertaken within the developing world. The project has three components:

- the development and support of a web-based community;
- an on-line mentoring system; and
- outreach work through workshops.

The three-year pilot project phase began in January 2007 and, following preliminary work and recruitment, began in earnest in autumn 2007. So far a teaser site has been tested, a new full website has been launched, there has been consultation with potential and current users of the site, workshops have been undertaken in Nairobi and Addis Ababa, and 25 teams of mentor-mentees have been matched and started collaboration. The project team has expanded beyond the original members of INASP, International Foundation for Science (IFS), and World Health Organisation's Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) also to include National University of Rwanda. Funding has been predominantly from Sida with additional funds from DFID and other cross-programme funds received by INASP. The full project budget is approximately £157,000 per year, which required a revision of the original plan, which was based on planned expenditure of over £250,000 per annum.

Consultation and the interest generated by the project in both the global north and south has confirmed the need and gap that a project like AuthorAID can fill. The website, mentoring process and workshops have all been trialled and shown potential. AuthorAID has developed considerably over the past twelve months after a somewhat slow start in the first six months. The project team has cemented into an efficient, effective group that works well together.

**The priority for the next 18 months** is a considerable expansion in the scale of activities to explore its potential effectiveness and to demonstrate impact. Now that the website is launched, this will include a:

- scaling up online mentoring
- increasing promotion of AuthorAID to target groups
- running more workshops
- increasing the multiplier effects of workshops
- adding more resources to the website.

## **Recommendations**

- a) Sustain internal momentum and build external involvement in AuthorAID by developing strategies for:
  - promotion of AuthorAID
  - website development including its management, content, dialogue promotion and community development
  - management of "informal" mentoring relationships
- b) Explore different ways of working including:
  - longer workshops
  - support for co-facilitators and participants to increase the multiplier effects

- exploiting further the partners networks and opportunities they open to AuthorAID
  - partnership with other similar organisations eg Panos, Scidev, Researchgate.
- c) Review and agree on criteria for success at end of 2009 including :
- the numbers of participants to be aided through mentor-mentee relationships
  - characteristics of a “successful knowledge community” for the pilot in terms of scale and other factors.
- d) Identify and explore systematically issues to be addressed in future phases including:
- models for sustainability and management of AuthorAID and
  - potential areas for its expansion to further the overall aim of the project.
- e) Adapt monitoring and evaluation tools in the light of feedback. Ensure data storage systems are held in INASP for data collection including, for example, mentor and mentee contact details and learning agreements; workshop participants, co-facilitator reports and contact details.

## **1. Introduction and background**

AuthorAID @ INASP seeks to help researchers in emerging countries to communicate their work more effectively. The goals are two-fold: to increase the success rate of researchers in obtaining publication and, ultimately, to increase the visibility and influence of research undertaken within the developing world. AuthorAID aims to achieve its aims through three components, which are:

- the development and support of a web-based community;
- an on-line mentoring system; and
- outreach work.

This three-year pilot phase of the project began in January 2007. INASP is the contract holder and project lead with participating partners including International Foundation for Science (IFS), World Health Organisation's Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), and National University of Rwanda (NUR). The project team includes a knowledge community editor based at Texas A&M University, website team Pure Usability based in Bristol and coordination team in INASP, Oxford. The project is funded by Sida (£85,000 per annum) with some additional support from DFID and INASP flexible funding.

The purpose of this mid-term review is to:

- identify progress and effectiveness of the three AuthorAID components as well as any early indications of these meeting the project purpose;
- identify any early lessons for the implementation of AuthorAID and feed into the approach for the next stage of the pilot project;
- ensure data collection processes are set up to enable a final evaluation of the pilot phase in quarter four of 2009.

## **2. Methodology**

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The monitoring and evaluation framework is arranged around the three components of AuthorAID:

- the web-based knowledge community;
- on-line mentoring system;
- outreach through training workshops.

This review also considers some of the organisational aspects of the project including efficiency, sustainability and implications for the long term as well as implications for the final evaluation.

This review was carried out in June/July 2008 through:

- analysis of paperwork and available data—including website data from Google Analytics, budget, feedback forms from workshops, learning agreements, INASP reports, and survey reports from Pure Usability;
- email survey of participants who attended AuthorAID workshops in Kenya and Ethiopia;
- interviews by phone with project participants from workshops;
- Interviews with key stakeholders including Sida, INASP team, IFS, TDR, Pure Usability, University of Rwanda.

Interviews and surveys were coordinated with Pure Usability research for the development of the website so as not to overload participants with requests for information and feedback.

It was acknowledged by all that whilst this is a mid-term point in terms of the funding cycle, it is still quite early in terms of activities getting going, and so it is likely to be premature to see impact. However, a review was felt to be valuable to gather data and reflections on progress to date and any early indications of issues that need to be addressed. It also is a chance to ensure that appropriate data will be available for the final evaluation of the pilot in the final quarter of 2009 and make any refinements necessary to the monitoring and evaluation framework. The project is developing quickly. Some of the issues raised in this review are already being discussed and addressed.



## **3. Progress and review findings**

### **3.1 Web-based knowledge community**

#### **3.1.1 Progress and site development**

The focus in this first phase has been on the development of the website. UK-based company Pure Usability (PU) are contracted to develop the site. Institute of Learning and Research Technology (ILRT) based at Bristol University are sub-contracted by PU to host and maintain the site. To develop the website, an iterative process has been followed in which site development is phased and follows consultation with users and potential users. A “teaser site” was set up and launched in December 07. The full site was launched at the end of July 08.

Two online surveys were carried out with potential users in 2007/08. These were mainly promoted via the TDR and IFS networks and gathered responses from 112 junior researchers (potential mentees) and 56 senior researchers. The surveys found that one of the main difficulties facing junior researchers is a lack of statistical analysis skills. Other issues they identified included:

- Page costs
- Lack of constructive criticism during peer review
- Data analysis and presentation
- Structuring and organising content
- Language difficulties
- Lack of professionalism in the developing world journals.

This early consultation found that potential users have quite limited web awareness. For instance, most had rarely used an online social network or created web content but there was interest to learn and participate in these.

A second phase of consultation took place in May 2008. This included 10 face-to-face interviews in Nairobi taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the AuthorAID workshop. It identified key constraints users face in getting published, which include those that are related to:

- infrastructure (eg, internet access),
- knowledge limitations (eg, technical vocabulary)
- financial (eg, costs for post, internet and proofreading)
- institutional (eg, a discouraging working culture) and
- cultural (eg, perceived bias against developing country researchers from editors).

Additional significant findings were the willingness of junior researchers to share their research and talk about it and also their desire for help. The interviews confirmed earlier findings about limited web use and skills. The team has created a model of the publication lifecycle which is informing their work in site development. This considers the publication lifecycle from the stage of idea formulation through stages of securing funding, carrying out research- analysis-report-dissemination-manuscript development-submission to journals-publication and distribution.

In addition to the face-to-face interviews, the 100 existing AuthorAID members (people who have registered on the website) were sent a survey to probe impressions of the teaser site, understanding of what was there and what they could do with it and key task performance eg sign up and posting a question. Findings from this consultation were fed into to the design of the final site.

Most stakeholders interviewed for the review agree that the iterative process has been valued and improved the site. However, there is some frustration with the time it has taken. Maybe more time should have been built in for a UK-based organisation for induction and to become familiar with the working context for potential users in developing countries and also for the consultation process given time that is necessary for email/telephone surveys. The on-site visit and consultation carried out during the Nairobi workshop have clearly been valuable.

Content has been up-loaded to the site, particularly by the Knowledge Community Editor and some by the PU team. Content on the teaser site has included resources – presentations from the workshops and occasional blogs from the editor on subjects relevant to researchers interested in publication. The site is also the location to register interest in being a mentor or mentee. Further content is planned with the launch of the main site.

### 3.1.2 Findings

a) Feedback on the teaser site indicates:

- Reception of the home page has been favourable.
- Discussion, resources and events have been of particular interest. This finding is backed up by the site usage since the survey, with the resources section one of the most visited – though it should be borne in mind it is one of the areas with most content.
- The predominant descriptions of the site from respondents were that it was accessible, interesting, inviting and friendly. This matches the desired look that project stakeholders decided on early in 2008.

Users like the interactive nature of the website, discussion forums and helpfulness of the site. Some disliked the colour scheme and had problems with the download speed. Most users were able to complete the tasks set them in the consultation, indicating ease of use in signing in and in posting a question or reply on the community discussion. Overall, users gave a very high satisfaction rate.

b) Useful suggestions for future content and development included:

- A geographical map to show other users from participant's country and a categorical layout to show users in participant's field or discipline
- Reassurance of confidentiality for private communication between mentor and mentee
- More links (eg, sites for ethics, donor agencies)
- More publicity of AuthorAID.

c) Use of site:

The following information is based on the teaser site records, particularly drawing from Google Analytics (on 16.7.08). It considers site use in 2008 only. However, whilst interesting it is useful only up to a point as it is based on the site whilst in development and before any major launch and dissemination. This does demonstrate what information will be available for ongoing monitoring and also provides some interesting indications of site visitor behaviour.

*Visitors to the site* – It is estimated that there have been 702 absolute unique visitors to the site making a total of 1610 visits between them. This may underestimate the number of visitors if some people are using the same computer and/or overestimate it if the same person is using different computers. The site's bounce rate is nearly 50% ie users visit only one page and then leave the site. A rate to aim for is 21-35%, and recent figures indicate that AuthorAID is moving towards this level.

Monthly numbers of visits to the site range from 170-220 per month with the exception of January, which had 450 visits, possibly due to the background research and development and launch of the teaser site. It is probably more useful to identify

the numbers, characteristics of visits and usage of the site that is wanted to set a benchmark for AuthorAID rather than to compare to other sites eg Panos, Scidev, AJOL, which all have a somewhat different focus.

*Location:* Visitors to date are predominantly from the US and UK. Ethiopia and Kenya are the next two highest sources of users, which correlates with where AuthorAID has run workshops so far. In total, visitors come from 83 countries, with more than 25 countries providing more than 10 visitors.

*Length of visit:* Visitors are on average staying on the site for less than five minutes – be they new or returning visitors. Most look at just one page but a third look at 2-4 more pages and a few have gone more deeply into the site.

*Content - What's popular?* Feedback on the website content has commented on the positive tone of blogs and accessibility of resources. However, blog postings during the teaser site phase have been irregular.

The page visited most frequently (after the home page) is the resources page. However, as the average visit time is just over two minutes, it is not clear how much is downloaded from this.

*Connectivity of users:* For those for whom the information is available, the vast majority of people visiting the site have standard or fast connection speeds. Just 4% of visitors were using dial-up, which is likely to be slow. For nearly half of visits it is not possible to know the connection speed for users. Internet access is an issue identified by many potential users in surveys and interviews. Addressing this is probably beyond the remit of AuthorAID but needs to be borne in mind in site construction and in planning assumptions of who will be able to access content. It is not unusual to come across examples such as one participant, a staff member of the University of Nairobi who shares a computer with the rest of the department which is held in the office of the Head of the department.

d) Management of the site

Administration is currently provided by INASP – eg. answering queries about lost passwords etc. A number of these tasks will be picked up by the new site automatically so will not have to be done manually. Pure Usability also support the content.

The tone of the site – to a large extent set by the blogs and also by guidance of the site – is friendly and direct. It has been received positively by those accessing the site. Its content and style also take into consideration that English may not be the first language for many users.

At present the amount of traffic on the site means that moderation has not been an issue.

### 3.1.3 Implications for the future

The priority for all project partners is for the full website to be up and running, to build the knowledge community and enable mentor-mentees links to be catalysed online. The launch of the full site has been eagerly anticipated by all project partners. It will allow the possibility to create a real community with more interaction on the site and the establishment of more mentor-mentee links between site users.

There are questions at the moment about how the site will be moderated, administered and tone maintained. In the long term there are ideas that members of the on-line community will take on roles such as guest moderation as well as contributing content to the site. This is an idea that needs testing and also may take some time to build up.

The editor is contracted on a half-time basis, and if the site grows this may expand beyond the time that is available—also depending on the number of workshops to facilitate and support which is also part of the role. PU contract currently runs until the autumn 2008. It will be necessary to have a clear plan for technical support and maintenance from this point on to the end of the pilot at least and to say what are the roles and responsibilities of the different groups involved – ILRT, Pure Usability and INASP. It appears sensible to renew Pure Usability contract for the next phase.

A plan outlining roles and responsibilities for site management, administration and moderation would be useful for both the remainder of the pilot phase and also identifying what ideas will be tested during it (eg, guest moderators).

There is no target size for the community at present, only range of types of participants that the project wishes to attract to the site and to be part of the community – authors, scientific mentors, editors, publishers, scholarly and professional societies, archivists and librarians.

In interviews with stakeholders there is no consensus on what size of community would equal success other than that it will be a growing and dynamic community by the end of 2009. One possible comparator is the African Journals Online site. In 2007 it attracted visitors from 214 countries with a total of just over half a million visits. However, this is an established site and maybe AuthorAID is targeting a more specific audience. The criteria for success for the community are likely to have implications for the site development plans over the next 18 months.

A priority is to address the issue of privacy, trust and confidentiality. This is an issue in mentoring relationships generally and to some extent may be exacerbated by online nature of this mentoring where some people, particularly those less familiar with internet use, will need clear reassurance of what parts of the site are confidential.

There has been some discussion about whether it is appropriate to host the site in the UK and/or feasible to host in the global South. As technology develops it would be useful to monitor the potential for a southern host and to identify clear criteria for what conditions and standards need to be met to enable smooth, efficient management of the site.

### **3.1.4 Implications for monitoring and evaluation**

Google Analytics provides good basic information on site use and allows this to be compared over time.

Site development needs to enable:

- A means to monitor the extent, progress and effectiveness of “informal mentor/mentee” relationships
- The identification of the range of participants (eg, according to role, level of seniority, location)
- Monitoring of what materials are downloaded most frequently as well as pages visited most often.

It would be useful to agree the characteristics that will define a successful community generated by the project and be clear if there is a size ambition or not.

## **3.2. On-line mentoring system**

### **3.2.1 Progress**

In this pilot phase two main approaches to mentoring are being explored. The first is a “formal” process when mentors and mentees are identified and matched by either INASP or a partner. These are identified by the three partner organisations involved in this pilot phase – IFS, TDR and NUR. There is a target of 20 mentees to be matched each year

from each partner. So far, IFS has matched 16 couples. TDR has identified 6 mentees and recruited some mentors. NUR has identified 18 potential mentees, 2 of whom have been matched so far. This total of 24 couples includes participants with subject interest areas of water and sanitation, social sciences and particularly from Rwanda a range of humanities subjects. Some additional mentees generated by the workshops will also be matched by INASP.

The second approach is through “informal mentoring” which will be facilitated via the website. There is currently no formal target size for this group.

The target number for the whole project was that AuthorAID would work with 200 researchers over three years through mentoring approaches which would result in 80 articles to be published.

As part of the website development, current mentors and mentees were approached. This led to five interviews. Follow-up for this review with additional mentors/mentees did not generate a response. Given that mentor/mentee relationships are in very early stages, it is suggested that further follow-up be deferred until later in 2008. Findings to date are below.

### 3.2.2 Findings

#### a) Mentor-mentee communication

Interviewees reported using email as the most common method of communication, which is in line with the original consultation. However, a number had had a phone conversation at the beginning of the relationship which was found to be crucial for the establishment of trust and rapport within the couple. Reassurance for some mentors that they have something to offer seems to have been important in some cases.

Those interviewed at this stage reported communicating between once and three times a week, which seems quite high but may be necessary in the early stage. The main problem they faced was poor internet reliability.

#### b) Aims

Mentee objectives tend to be quite broad (eg, to improve writing skills, to be published). Formally setting objectives through a discussion between the mentor and mentee has been found to be useful in a number of instances to manage expectations and achieve clarity. The learning agreement, originally created to aid monitoring, appears to have been helpful in making expectations explicit.

#### c) Mentor and mentees

Recruitment of mentors on the whole seems to be good but for some subjects difficult. Early indications of a substantial pool of existing mentors was not quite accurate, as most contacts gathered in early stages of the project development focused on the subject area of health. Other areas have proved more of a challenge to recruit, notably from the social sciences. Recruitment has been carried out online, eg, email recruitment via AJOL and other journals run online by INASP (in Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal). These generated immediate responses from potential mentors offering their services. Promotional talks in the UK and elsewhere on related INASP issues including AuthorAID information have also generated offers of mentoring. However, IFS has reported some difficulty locating mentors both to suit the right subject and then that are reliable. This will be an area for future monitoring.

There is a range of mentors recruited already both in terms of their role (senior scientist or editor) and location (north-south). It is likely that different types of mentor are most suited to different tasks. It seems that the majority of current mentors are senior scientists themselves. There are plans in place to increase the recruitment of all types – north and south, editors and senior scientists. It would be useful to develop a strategy for how appropriate mentors and mentees will be

matched both in the “formal” process and online matching.

Early consultation on the website found that senior researchers who would be potential mentors seemed to be genuinely philanthropic about their role. They expected to be able to help but also to gain personal satisfaction and a chance to be stimulated by new research ideas. Their concerns, where they existed, were around time and resource constraints, being misquoted, acknowledgements, language barriers and lack of financial incentive. Preferred methods of communication were email (the favourite by far), with face to face meetings and instant messaging the next.

A number of people have signed up to be mentees, though less than ten are now waiting to be matched by INASP and there are under 50 who will be referred to the website matching system when it is launched, indicating the need to promote the project to increase users. Consultation as part of the website design has reconfirmed the desire for mentors and potential mentees’ support for the idea. Participants at the workshops have also reconfirmed this. Indeed, participation at the workshop has led to some signing up to be a mentee and many indicate their intention to do so at a later stage in their research.

Early consultation identified the following concerns potential mentees have:

- being used/exploited
- bullying/lack of encouragement from mentor
- becoming dependent on the mentor
- academics having limited time
- intellectual property rights
- geographical distance.

The plan for the support of “informal” mentor-mentee matching is a little unclear, pending the launch of the formal site. As this area has not yet started, it is too early to comment. Formal mentoring relationships are also at an early stage.

### **3.2.3 Implications for the future**

Key activities upcoming for online mentoring include:

- launch of online mentoring system (where participants find their own match). This requires a strategy for its promotion and management – particularly to maintain interest and commitment of early joiners in case of any delays in finding matches;
- matching by INASP and partners of more mentor relationships. There is still a way to go to reach the original target of 20 mentees from each partner to be matched with an additional 20 generated by workshops.

### **3.2.4 Implications for future monitoring and evaluation**

The online mentoring system is just starting and formal mentoring is at an early stage, so some additional monitoring will be carried out later in 2008 to follow up more closely on this. To facilitate this and final evaluation, it would be useful if a centralised list can be held by INASP of all those who have been formally matched by either INASP or partners. Listed details should include:

- mentor and mentee names
- subject areas
- contact details
- subject
- country of residence/nationality
- date when matched
- whether learning agreement available with INASP.

Learning agreements seem to be useful both as a monitoring tool and as a basis for a conversation between the mentor and mentee to make explicit expectations. Central

storage of these with INASP plus agreement as to who should pursue these if they have not been completed would be useful. Suggested amendments include adding the points that:

- mentee expresses a willingness to share their published work which is the subject of the mentoring process in the AuthorAID open access repository (if their publisher allows)
- mentee expresses a willingness to be a mentor in the future upon successful publication.

Throughout the pilot phase two approaches to matching mentor/mentees will be pursued – “formal” matching by INASP or partners of participants identified from IFS, NUR and TDR and also “informal” mentoring when mentors and mentees find each other on the website. This will enable the effectiveness of mentoring and of online matching to be assessed independently. The website data will need to provide details of mentors and mentees who self-match to enable monitoring. It may also be useful to make a learning agreement available to them to facilitate an early discussion and to ask for this to be shared with INASP for central storage.

### **3.3 Outreach workshops**

#### **3.3.1 Progress to date**

Two workshops have been run to date: the first a two-day workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 8-9 March 2008 and the second in Nairobi, Kenya, on 29 April-4 May. The latter was combined with a workshop being organised by IFS on the revision of research proposals for water resource researchers. AuthorAID content formed approximately three days worth of the time during the IFS workshop. Thirty people attended the Addis Ababa workshop, including 18 who attended both of the two days. In Nairobi 9 people attended all of the AuthorAID sections of the workshop, with up to 30 attending some of the additional and supplementary lectures. The workshops were co-facilitated by the Knowledge Community Editor and local co-facilitators. Further workshops have been run by AuthorAID partners, not funded by AuthorAID, which are not covered here.

Both AuthorAID workshops were organised at relatively short notice and were viewed as pilot approaches. Previous workshops run by the facilitator had tended to be either shorter 1/2-or 1 day events or a fair bit longer running over the course of semester/term.

A 2008 schedule includes AuthorAID support for a workshop being organised by the National Institute for Scientific and Industrial Research Zambia as well as workshops to be managed directly by AuthorAID in Central America, likely to be in Nicaragua, and another in Bangladesh, though this may now be held in January 2009.

The workshops include lectures and practical sessions which focus on

- approaching writing
- writing scientific papers
- publishing papers

In the two day workshop in Addis, the first day was open to a wider number of participants as it was predominantly lectures and discussion. The second day focused on practical work and participant numbers were limited to twenty. In the longer workshop in Nairobi, the AuthorAID components ran concurrently over the five days alongside IFS sessions on proposal writing and revision.

At each workshop participants were asked to complete a feedback form. All participants were also contacted by email as part of this mid term review – six replied and two were followed up for telephone interviews. The findings below are based on these sources. Organisers of the workshops have already acted on some feedback, for instance introducing a certificate of attendance which was found to be important in countries participating so far and also moving to INASP usual process for contracting workshop organisation to a local partner in the future for smooth organisation.

### 3.3.2 Findings

- a) The objectives of the participants in the workshop were in line with those of the workshop organisers and content. Most aimed to build their skills, knowledge and confidence in writing and publishing. Nearly all participants report that their objectives were met and that they found the workshop useful. The overall rating given to the workshop by participants was 4 or 5 (out of 5).
- b) The parts of the workshop they reported as most useful include:
  - how to structure a scientific article
  - identifying journals
  - manuscript planning and preparation
  - manuscript writing.

The support in organising how to *prepare for* manuscript writing comes across as particularly valued by participants. This is confirmed in the feedback forms when all participants reported that as a result of the workshop they will do “most things” differently. They give examples of:

- “do what is easiest first when drafting a manuscript”
- “write notes about ideas which pop into my mind about chapters when writing other chapters”
- “organise the writing process”
- “reduce time wastage”.
- “identify a journal before any write up”.

Clearly many of the practical tips are valued.

- c) Suggestions for how to improve future workshops included having better internet facilities in the training location. A number of people recommended longer workshops with more time for practical work and support. They also requested more information in advance of the workshop so they would come prepared with relevant materials for consideration and use in practice. Participants in Addis also requested copies of materials after the workshop, one suggesting making them into a small booklet. At the Kenya workshop they received a CD of all materials.

Areas suggested for inclusion in future workshops included:

- Examples relevant to participants’ research areas
- More discussion sessions
- Preparation of graphics and illustrations
- Preparation of CVs
- Writing letters to the editor
- Poster presentations.

- d) Part of the rationale of AuthorAID and the workshops is that they have a multiplier effect – both through the co-facilitators and through the students. During these first two pilot workshops there was not a focus on the facilitators and whether they will continue any similar work without the support of AuthorAID. This is being addressed in workshops later in 2008 when observers are being invited who may run similar workshops themselves in the future.

However, all participants who responded in the follow-up three months after their attendance reported that they had shared their learning. Examples of this are below.

- “I have given a comment to my friend’s article and a shared my learning with friends in brief”
- “I have shared all what I have got from the workshop with my friends and instructions in the preparation of our theses paper”
- “I have shared my information from the workshop with two of my friends who are working on their MSc research project. I have provided an entire copy of the workshop materials. Besides I have forwarded emails to selected list of my



contacts of the online presence of AuthorAID.info and its rich resources/services for scientific writing”

- “I have run a 2 and half hours orientation to our students as they were preparing to start their theses. I used the material I got during the workshop”
- “I have shared the information learnt at the conference with my colleagues in the department by giving them copies of the presentations and explaining to them the contents”.

e) Linkage with other AuthorAID elements

Most of those who have attended workshops reported that they expect to join the mentor scheme in the future. They also reported using the website. The website visitor information suggests the workshops resulted in increased usage of the AuthorAID site as Ethiopia and Kenya fall in the top five countries generating visits. There are also blog postings on the site about each of the workshops and also materials (PowerPoint presentations etc) available from the workshops on the site.

### 3.3.3 Implications for the future

In the future, INASP plan to increase the linkage between the elements of the project, for instance ensuring that all mentees in a country hosting a workshop are invited to it; ensuring all workshop participants are encouraged to join the mentoring scheme if appropriate and gathering feedback and building involvement in the online community.

It would be useful to explore further the potential of a longer workshop of 4-5 days in duration to enable greater practical support to participants.

It would be useful to develop materials for co-facilitators and participants to be able to share learning with their colleagues and others. Presentations from the workshops are available, and there are some plans under consideration to develop some teaching materials to support these. There will need to be some consideration of how the practical aspect of workshops may be addressed in ones which are not facilitated by AuthorAID. AuthorAID could provide advice on who would be appropriate to draw on for advice on practical issues and for comments on manuscripts.

AuthorAID may want to consider ways to support co-facilitators in their future workshops. This may include facilitation training if appropriate. It may also be useful to make explicit how AuthorAID can and cannot provide financial and other support for workshops in the future. This could be the establishment of a workshop fund for facilitators to apply to, administered by INASP.

### 3.3.4 Implications for monitoring and evaluation

The workshop feedback forms seemed to work well along with the overview provided by the facilitator. It will be necessary to make sure that all facilitators provide this and if necessary arrangements need to be made to translate feedback forms eg into/from Spanish for workshops in Central America.

It would be useful for INASP to hold a centralised list of participants at the workshops to ensure that contact details are easily accessed. This should include:

- name, contact details, subject, workshop attended (place, date).

Co-facilitator contracts should include a clause where they express their willingness to be contacted to give feedback in the 2009 review.

## 3.4 Management and organisation

- a) The official start date for the project is January 2007. However, whilst a number of key aspects were put in place during the first nine months of the project, it was with the recruitment of the full team including the new Head of Publishing that the project really progressed. Initially it was held up by organisational issues and different

perspectives of how the project would be managed amongst the staff of INASP and consultant advisers. It seems that these issues have now been resolved. This review did not focus on this issue but rather concentrated on project activities and progress.

b) Team

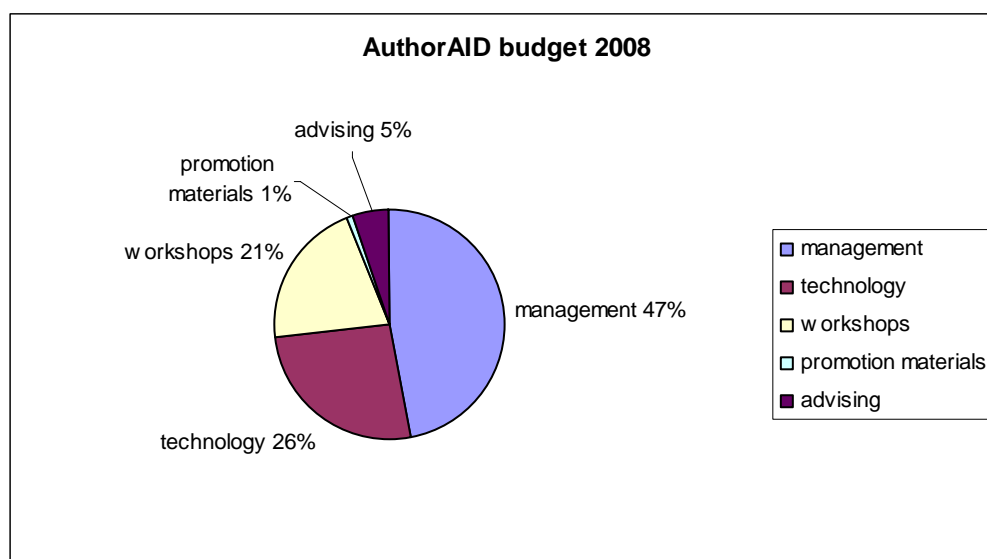
The three original partners in the project—INASP, TDR and IFS—were recently joined by National University of Rwanda. The virtual project team which includes Pure Usability too seems to work very well. Regular email updates, teleconferences and the annual project team meeting provide an opportunity for all to meet and discuss developments and any issues arising. All participants commented on the high value they place on the team, its effectiveness and positive spirit and also gave credit to INASP project team for setting and maintaining this tone and efficiency.

In terms of time, the original proposal envisaged full-time 1.5 INASP staff members providing central support. It also included quite high costs for an advisory group. At present the INASP Oxford based team spend approximately 5-10 working days per month but this is changing and likely to increase. It is difficult to predict the future time input that will be needed but it would seem at least a half time position would be realistic. This is in addition to the technical team including Pure Usability and a half-time knowledge community editor. Time is input from partners TDR, NUR and IFS on an unpaid basis and is in effect an uncosted partner contribution to the overall project. The advisory group has not really met in 2008 and so costs for this have reduced considerably.

c) Resources

The original project budget was just over £250,000 per year. Reduced funding meant this was changed. The average annual budget now is approximately UK£157,000. This is divided as shown in the following chart. The category of management is a little misleading as it includes the costs for the knowledge community editor, monitoring and evaluation as well as INASP's coordination of the pilot project and active involvement in certain aspects such as matching mentors and promotion of the project. However, this gives some indication of how costs have been divided in this first full year of the project.

The division of costs seems fair and indeed good value for money. The future costs on technology are likely to be less as the most time and hard cost intensive element has been the development of the site. Workshop costs depend on their number. They are budgeted at £10,000 each though so far have been costing much less than this being less than £5000. Management and staff costs are currently based on actual costs and are all northern salaries.



It is a little difficult to estimate the costs that would be incurred in any ongoing project, but it is likely it would be somewhere in the region of £70-100,000 if workshops continued at the rate of six per year and the budget allowed for funds for the maintenance and further development of the site, including staff costs to manage, maintain and fill the site.

d) Cost effectiveness

Whilst the cost of the project pilot and expenditure so far has represented value for money, it is difficult at this stage to estimate the cost effectiveness of the project because the only target that has been quantified so far is the number of mentees to be supported in the “formal” process (200 over the three year pilot).

e) Promotion

So far promotion of AuthorAID has been relatively opportunistic. All project partners report promoting the project in their networks, at speaking opportunities and so on. The knowledge community editor and overall project coordinator have probably been most involved in promotional activities, with both taking up opportunities to promote awareness of AuthorAID at conferences. Some materials have also been developed for AuthorAID’s promotion, but some early plans for materials development seem to have stalled whilst there are staff changes at INASP.

This relatively opportunistic approach has been suitable during the site development phase, as there was also a fear of attracting potential users to the site before it was ready to cope with them, which could deter potential users from returning.

However, there are wider opportunities for promotion of AuthorAID. The AuthorAID team does already have plans for increased speaking opportunities. A more planned and shared strategy for promotion is likely to be useful for this next phase targeting particular users for the site, mentors, editors and other target audiences. The strategy could include:

- target audiences
- means to reach them – speaking opportunities, articles, participation in online opportunities
- roles and responsibilities.

Materials for promotion (eg. fliers and slides) could be made available to project partners but also to interested parties such as workshop participants.

## 4. Discussion

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### 4.1 External environment

There are a number of developments taking place in the wider environment which may impact on AuthorAID. These seem to be all on the horizon of AuthorAID partners with a readiness to adapt if and when these impact. These include:

- Open access movement –this development, in which publications become openly accessible to the public, is likely to be of benefit to AuthorAID. Indeed, AuthorAID includes a repository accessible to all members is part of the movement.
- Increasing legitimacy of online journals – online publication is increasingly credited by universities and accreditation groups. Any aspects of writing for online journals will need to be built into writing guidance. INASP involvement in online journals is of benefit to the project.
- Similar initiatives – a number of online communities are emerging such as Researchgate. Some are similarly not for profit whilst some are profit making services being advertised. AuthorAID may need to be positioned in relation to these being clear of its distinctiveness (in this case the workshops and mentoring activities).
- Professional editorial services are increasingly available. AuthorAID has negotiated agreements with some language editing services and shares this information with its members though does not officially endorse any of these services. A similar arrangement may be made with other types of editorial services. However, AuthorAID would not want to appear to be endorsing a particular company and would want to avoid liability for their service. One idea is to make these the subject of a blog to guide users through the process of engaging an editorial service with pointers of what questions to ask and factors to consider.
- Technological change – one of the biggest challenges facing AuthorAID is internet access for members in the South. It is hoped with developments in technology this will improve. However, at present it poses a challenge to develop an approach suitable to meet the needs of researchers with good internet access and those without.

### 4.2 Breadth of AuthorAID's ambition

AuthorAID users include all subject areas across sciences and humanities. The addition of mentees from NUR has broadened the range of disciplines included in the mentor groups with subjects such as law and other non-scientific subjects represented. It is felt across the project group that there are advantages in maintaining this breadth due to the similarity of challenges facing junior researchers regardless of discipline in developing communication skills and becoming published.

The overall purpose of AuthorAID is to increase the visibility and influence of research undertaken in the developing world. The current focus of AuthorAID is on publication. However, there may be other aspects which the project could consider to contribute to the overall purpose of AuthorAID and indeed some are already being discussed.

The success of the online community and the perspective of the members need to define its presentation and direction. Feedback to date indicates an interest in knowing about research funds and many aspects of the research process not directly linked to the publication process. AuthorAID may benefit from considering if and how it takes these on board. It could be through links, resource pages and contacts with other organisations which focus on these in particular or an expansion of AuthorAID's own remit. However, there is also a risk of broadening AuthorAID too far.

Broader approaches it could take on include looking at other aspects of communication eg dealing with the media, presenting research to policy makers and advisers – how to make it relevant, writing articles for more popular outlets and publications, presenting in public, and use of new media. Some of these were included as an “optional extra” in the Kenya workshop and were well received. This could be part of AuthorAID workshops or be via links with other organisations involved in some similar work such as Panos with the media, Scidev with scientific researchers and ODI’s programme looking at linking research to policy, RAPID.

In addition, AuthorAID could consider different target groups such as editors, new PhD supervisors and support more generally to universities and research to develop peer learning approaches e.g. how to set up the “invisible colleges” that exist in many successful universities. These invisible colleges, a term coined by Diana Crane, describe the informal processes of presenting to peers, dealing with critique and defence of research that are active in many research institutes. These are not always part of the routine life of universities with less resources but are not necessarily costly to run. Support to universities to set these up could be a positive development. If these do not run already in NUR, this could be a useful inclusion in the pilot phase.

### **4.3 Defining pilot phase success**

There are target numbers for how many researchers will participate in the pilot and produce published articles (200 researchers to produce 80 articles). However, these figures are felt by some members of the project team to be unrealistic to achieve by December 2009, given the delays experienced in the first year of the pilot. If this is the case, new figures need to be determined and negotiated.

Other aspects for success need to be agreed such as the appropriate size of the knowledge community.

Funding for AuthorAID is now more clearly linked within INASP as part of grants to the broader INASP programme which go beyond 2009. This means the AuthorAID project is very likely to extend beyond December 2009 under the coordination of INASP. This new situation needs to be built into the project concept and milestones.

### **4.4 Focus and impact**

One dilemma facing the project is how to maximise its impact without reducing its geographical range. It is viewed by project partners that a global knowledge community, open to all, is of most benefit. However, there is a fear that promotion on a global level may lead to a level of demand that cannot be managed at this stage.

Some project components (eg, workshops) can take place only in certain countries. An option may be to focus promotional activities on countries which will host AuthorAID workshops.

Other options for focus may be to consider particular disciplines to concentrate on in this phase. Another possible approach is to focus on research relevant to particular policy or practice areas.

Another dilemma for AuthorAID is whether to focus on supporting researchers to publish in their national journals or in international journals. International journals are generally more highly valued by researchers and policy makers alike, but efforts by a number of organisations, including INASP, aim to improve the quality and impact of nationally produced journals. Considering if and how the AuthorAID negotiates this dilemma would be useful in this next phase.

#### **4.5 Maximise potential of the partner networks**

All project partners report their intention to increase their AuthorAID activity in this next 18 month phase with the website now newly launched. This includes building on the networks they have access to and possibly creating platforms to contribute to AuthorAID's success. It may be useful to discuss these options to ensure that all partners are pushing the same direction and in case of any prioritisation being needed.

#### **4.6 Sustainability and future development**

INASP does not plan to manage AuthorAID on a permanent basis, though it may and indeed probably will lead it for a period beyond the pilot. This is increasingly likely given the delays in the first year of the pilot and the developments in AuthorAID funding which allows flexibility and links between related research communication projects. There are a number of ideas for how AuthorAID could run in the long term. These include:

- hosting and management of the site by a southern partner. This raises questions of technological capacity;
- exploring commercial, self-financing options (eg, advertising space funding the site, establishment of an endowment fund to generate interest to finance the site, building commercial elements to finance areas of low income, eg, commercial editing services for the north to finance the AuthorAID activities in the south).

Developing some scenarios for the long term future over the next 12 months would help planning and decision making at the end of this pilot. Useful factors to include in scenarios could be:

- main aims of AuthorAID
- types of activities and which of these are online and which face to face
- what type of support and input are needed to sustain momentum for these activities (method and location for these)
- costs
- areas to explore.

Alongside the scenarios, realistic estimates of the time and financial demands of the project need to be maintained. There is a fair amount of undocumented, time contributed by all project members at the moment.

Meanwhile, in the short term another priority is to sustain the momentum now generated during this pilot phase.

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

AuthorAID has developed considerably over the past twelve months after a shaky, somewhat slow start in the first six months. The project team has cemented into an efficient, effective group. The website, mentoring process and workshops have all been trialled and shown potential. The priority for the next 18 months is a considerable expansion in the scale of activities to explore its potential effectiveness and to demonstrate impact. Now that the website is launched, this will include

- scaling up of online mentoring;
- increasing promotion of AuthorAID to target groups
- running more workshops
- increasing the multiplier effects of workshops
- promoting AuthorAID to target groups
- adding more resources to the website.

### **Recommendations**

*For the pilot phase*

- a) Sustaining momentum – Develop a website strategy which includes plans for the frequency of new materials and approaches to stimulate discussions and the development of the community.
- b) Website management – Develop a plan for its content, moderation, administration.
- c) Mentoring – Develop a strategy to manage the “informal” mentoring process.
- d) Workshops
  - Explore further and evaluate the potential of a longer workshop (4-5 days).
  - Support the multiplier effects of workshops – eg. consider the further development of materials and other support for participants and co-facilitators.
  - Consider funds to be allocated on a competitive basis for groups that want to run AuthorAID workshops.
- e) Partnerships – Explore the potential of links with complementary initiatives and other partners, eg, Scidev, Panos, other online communities, complementary groups, editorial groups.
- f) Promotion – Develop a promotion strategy shared by the project group which will target key audiences. Consider a focussed approach (eg, in terms of geography, subject, other) for the pilot phase promotion.
- g) Successful pilot – Agree the characteristics of a “successful knowledge community” for the pilot in terms of scale and other factors.

*For the long term*

During the pilot phase:

- Develop scenarios for the long term and identify which of these AuthorAID can trial, eg, guest moderation of the website in phase two;
- Identify criteria for and potential lead organisations that could take over AuthorAID management in the long term;
- Identify a range of funding models for the long term to be explored in phase two;
- Maintain good records of time and other resources required to run and sustain AuthorAID.

*For monitoring and evaluation*

- Adapt the M&E tools in line with feedback: (learning agreements, workshop feedback).
- Ensure all data is stored centrally with INASP (ie, mentor and mentee contact details and learning agreements; workshop participants, co-facilitator reports and contact details, other).
- Ensure that website data collection systems allow the following data to be collected:
  - downloads from the website (what materials),
  - informal mentor/mentee relationships to be traced
- Ensure qualitative data allows for unplanned benefits to be captured.
- Consider focus countries for M&E for interviews in 2009 with editors and those in which AuthorAID hopes to make developing country research visible.
- Ensure data collection allows for a range of AuthorAID approaches to be compared eg different mentoring models (within countries, between countries etc).

## **About INASP**

*Enabling worldwide access to information and knowledge*

The mission of INASP is to enable worldwide access to information and knowledge with particular emphasis on the needs of developing and transitional countries. Established in 1992, we work with partners around the world to encourage the creation and production of information, to promote sustainable and equitable access to information, to foster collaboration and networking and to strengthen local capacities to manage and use information and knowledge.

We act as an enabler, connecting worldwide information and expertise. Working through networks of partners, we aim to strengthen the ability of people in developing and transitional countries to access and contribute information, ideas and knowledge. In particular we seek to:

- improve access to scientific and scholarly information
- catalyse and support local publication and information exchange
- strengthen local capacities to manage and use information and knowledge
- foster in-country, regional and international cooperation and networking
- advise local organisations and agencies on ways to utilise information and publishing to achieve development goals.

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