

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Information Note: 05/2023

Subject: Attribution of authorship and acknowledgements

Distribution: All staff

Date: 25 January 2023

The purpose of this Information Note is to inform all WHO staff of the revised policy on attribution of authorship of publications issued by the Organization (WHO eManual [VIII.2.1](#)). These revisions take into account the requirements relating to publications involving non-State actors and clarify the categories of contributors that should be acknowledged. These revisions were discussed and approved by the Publishing Policy Coordination Group at its thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh and fortieth meetings in September 2021, January 2022 and November 2022, respectively.

This Information Note replaces Information Note [14/2007](#) (Attribution of authorship).

WHO's policy on authorship and acknowledgements should be made clear to external collaborators, including those involved in the editing and production process, as early as possible.

Attribution of authorship

Attribution of authorship will be determined by the category of health information that the material falls into. There are two broad categories.

1. Material that represents official WHO views, for which WHO takes responsibility for the content, and that meets other specified criteria, including consistency with the Organization's policies

Material in this category should be issued under corporate authorship only. There should be no mention of authors on the cover or title page, though people and/or entities (e.g. groups or organizations) who have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the development of the publication should be acknowledged. The majority of WHO publications fall into this category.

2. Material that WHO decides to issue, but that reflects the views of others, such as individuals or a group of individuals, and not necessarily the views of the Organization

Material in this category should be issued with clear identification on the cover and title page of the name of the group or individuals whose views the material represents (e.g. a commission reporting its views to WHO or a WHO expert committee), and a disclaimer attributing responsibility to the group or individuals, as appropriate.

Other examples of material in this category include articles in WHO periodicals (e.g. the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*) that represent the views of individuals, articles submitted to external peer-

review journals and chapters contributed to multi-authored books that are published by external publishers.

In the case of books published by external publishers containing contributions by multiple authors, it should be made clear whose view is being expressed, with identification of authors as appropriate (e.g. in individual sections). In such cases, the cover and title page should bear the names of the editors who were responsible for the overall content of the publication, rather than those of the individual authors.

Acknowledgements

Due acknowledgement should be made of all those who have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the development of a publication. Such contributions may include, inter alia, contributions to the technical concept, evidence review or synthesis, study design, data collection or analysis, writing or review. In all cases, the nature of the contribution being acknowledged should be made clear.

The main contributors (external experts and WHO staff) should be listed first, in order of their respective technical contributions, followed by the individuals and/or groups or external entities involved in reviewing and revising the text, in alphabetical order. Collaboration with external entities should be mentioned, as should participants in relevant consultative meetings.

WHO staff who are not the main contributors, but have nevertheless provided a substantial technical contribution, should usually be listed together after any external contributors, in alphabetical order (unless their contribution has exceeded that of the external contributors, in which case they should be listed before).

Financial contributions to the development of a publication and/or publishing costs should be acknowledged separately from technical contributions.

Acknowledgements in WHO publications should not include WHO staff who have contributed to the publication process in the normal course of their work but not made a substantial technical contribution, such as non-technical writers, editors, graphic designers, and administrative and secretarial staff. Freelance editors, proofreaders, translators and indexers should also not be included.

Graphic design and layout are conventionally acknowledged in a by-line on the copyright page. If these tasks are carried out in house, the name of the relevant unit should be given.