



3ie Replication contracts notification and communication policy

June 22, 2015

3ie's Replication Programme is committed to ensuring that appropriate professional communication occurs between replication researchers and original authors. An open and collegial exchange is in both of the parties' benefit. This policy outlines the requirements replication researchers must follow when conducting a 3ie-funded replication study. The replication researcher who holds the 3ie contract is responsible for ensuring that any co-authors or research assistants on the replication study also follow the policy.

There are five primary points of direct or indirect communication between the replication researchers and the original authors that are governed by this policy. Throughout the study, replication researchers are required to document all communication with original authors. While the five points of communication give the original authors many opportunities to provide comments to the replication researchers if they choose, at no time are the original authors expected to serve as or considered to be formal reviewers or referees for the replication study.

Data gathering

Upon agreement with 3ie to conduct a replication, the replication researcher must contact the original author(s) to obtain replication-ready data and log files. The replication researcher is expected to introduce his or herself, briefly describe 3ie's Replication Programme, and ask for the required materials. He/She should clearly explain that theirs is one of many studies selected for replication by 3ie, with the assistance of the development community at large. Even if the data are publicly available, the replication researcher is required to contact the original authors to notify them that he/she will be conducting a replication study of their paper and that the replication plan will be published online.

If the original authors are unable or unwilling to provide the necessary data and/or log files within 10 weeks of the request from the replication researcher, the replication study will be canceled. The replication status page on the 3ie website will be updated to reflect that the study is not replicable due to the unavailability of the data.

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Replication plan

During the data gathering stage, the replication researcher revises the proposed replication plan based on the comments of the application scorers, 3ie internal reviewer and assigned external project advisor. Once the revised replication plan is approved, 3ie posts it publicly on the 3ie website.

Pure replication

Upon completion of the pure replication component of the replication study, the replication researcher is required to write a simple report with the full results of the pure replication and send that report, along with the programming code used for the pure replication, to the original authors. If the original authors respond with a request to discuss the process and findings of the pure replication, the replication researcher is expected to cooperate.

Beyond this requirement, 3ie strongly encourages the replication researcher to make all possible attempts during the pure replication stage to obtain the information needed from the original authors in order to reconcile the findings in their study. Such communication will ensure the quality of the replication researcher's work.

Before presenting and/or publishing results

If at any point before the final study is approved for publication by 3ie, the replication researcher intends to make public any of the results of the replication study, the replication researcher is required to submit to 3ie and to the original authors all findings to be made public at least one month prior to the planned public release. Public release includes presentation in a seminar, conference, or workshop and/or dissemination in hard copy or soft copy, whether by email or internet. The findings must be submitted to 3ie and the original authors in a format as close as possible to the format of the public release with sufficient detail for the original authors to check the claims being made.

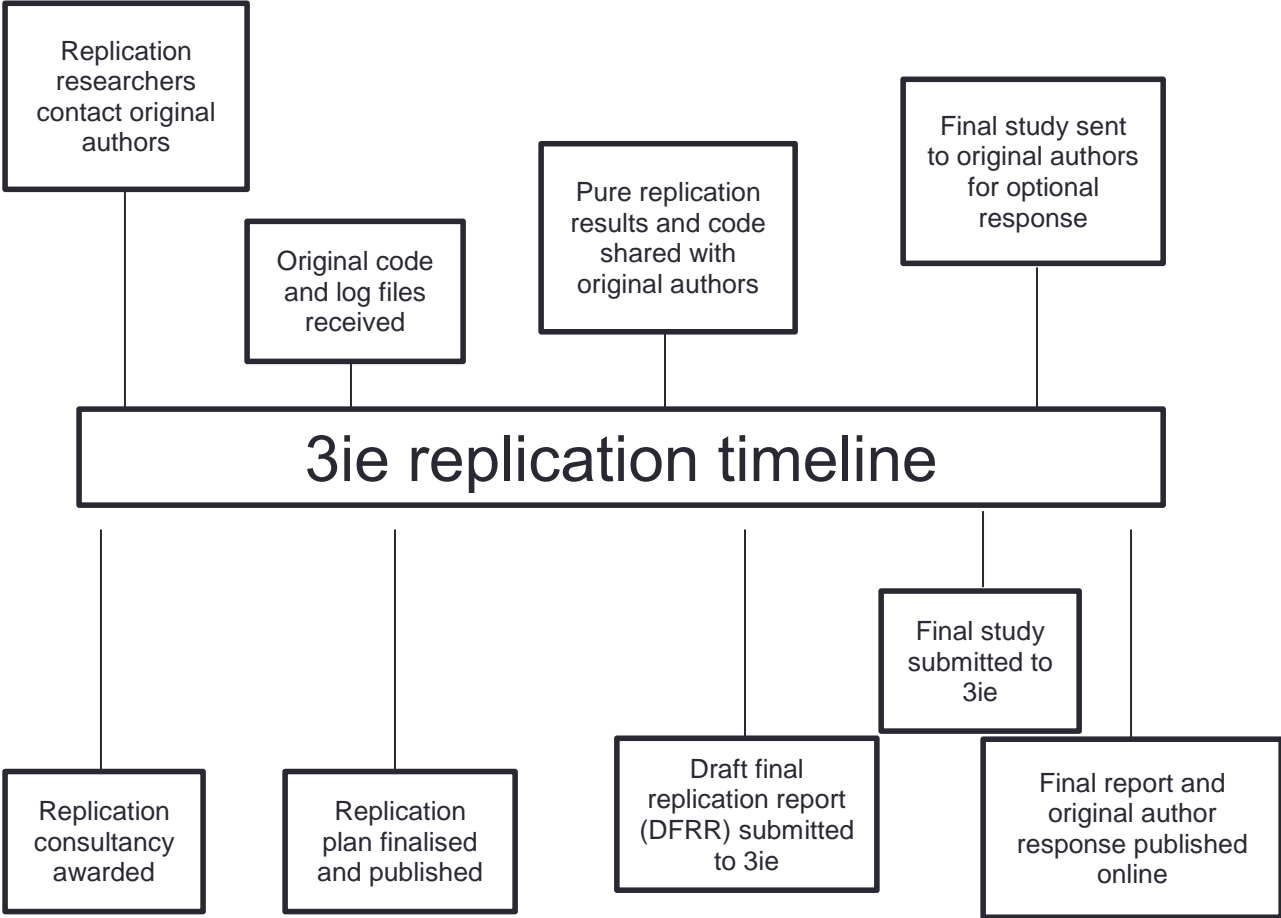
Approval of final report

The draft complete replication study submitted to 3ie is reviewed by the 3ie internal reviewer, the external project advisor, and an anonymous external referee. The replication researcher is expected to make revisions based on the comments from those reviews. 3ie then sends the revised completed study to the original authors (concurrently with the copyediting of the study for publication). The original authors have one month to submit a formal written response if they choose to do so, which will be published on the 3ie website at the same time as the replication study is published.

Tone of communication

3ie is committed to promoting a professional and collegial exchange between replication researchers and original authors. If any party feels the other is not communicating professionally and collegially, he/she may report that to 3ie. If 3ie finds a 3ie-funded replication

researcher to be violating the intended tone of communication, 3ie reserves the right to terminate the replication contract. Similarly, if 3ie finds an original author to be violating the intended tone of communication, either in the discussions with the replication researcher or in the written response, 3ie reserves the right to not publish the written response.



Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What data does 3ie expect original authors to share with replication researchers?

Answer: Original authors will be requested to supply replication ready data, meaning the raw data that were used to construct the variables involved in the research. In addition, original authors will need to provide code to transform the data from the raw form to the pre-estimation level. Replication researchers are expected to independently transform the data and then verify their transformations through a comparison with the code from the original authors. At this point, the replication researchers should be able to compare summary statistics with the original authors to determine similarities and differences. Original authors are not expected to provide estimation code.

Question: Are there data public release requirements for 3ie-funded replication researchers?

Answer: Original authors own their data. Replication researchers will not publicly release any data without the expressed written consent of the original authors.

Question: Are 3ie-funded replication researchers required to share their code with original authors?

Answer: Yes and no. The policy clearly states that replication researchers must share their pure replications with the original authors. Measurement and Estimation Analysis (MEA) and Theory of Change Analysis (TCA) are beyond the scope of the original work and are thus the replication researcher's intellectual property. If another researcher, including the original author, wishes to replicate the replication study, the initial replication researcher is expected to cooperate. As original authors are not required to share their code beyond transformation from raw to pre-estimation levels, replication researchers are held to similar standards. In addition, the replication plans are published online and therefore made available to the original author before any funding is released to the replication researcher.

Question: If original authors refuse to provide log files or the codebook, but the data are available publically, will 3ie still fund the replication?

Answer: 3ie will address these situations on a case-by-case basis, but it will be fairly difficult to conduct a replication without a basic level of cooperation from the original authors.

Question: What does 3ie consider to be “appropriate tone” in regards to the original author and replication researcher communication?

Answer: 3ie is striving to create a productive replication space, where researchers are able to objectively verify evidence that may influence the allocation of limited development funds. The appropriate tone of communication and write up is simply a professional tone that conveys full respect for the other party and assumes that all parties have the same overall objective, which is to produce more credible and relevant evidence for policymaking in low- and middle-income countries.

Question: How will 3ie enforce the publication and presentation clause of the policy?

Answer: It will be the duty of the replication researcher to provide 3ie and the original authors with access to materials one month before any presentations or publications. Replication researchers who fail to provide the required materials within a sufficient time period will violate the terms of their contract with 3ie. 3ie will determine internally if the replication researchers have met that requirement. Any discontinued replications will no longer be eligible for funding from 3ie and will not be published by 3ie.

Question: Will 3ie's Replication Programme convene an independent arbitration panel as means of recourse if either party disagrees with one of the Programme's decisions?

Answer: 3ie's Replication Programme will take all opinions under consideration and will make a concerted effort to satisfy everyone involved in the replication study. Any disagreements over a decision should be made apparent to 3ie's Replication Programme management. 3ie will not establish a sitting arbitration panel. In cases where a 3ie Replication Programme decision is appealed, 3ie's executive director will request opinions from up to three independent professionals before making a final decision.

Question: Do these guidelines apply to only pure replication studies?

Answer: No, these guidelines apply to all pure, MEA and/or TCA elements of replication studies undertaken through 3ie's Replication Programme. 3ie-funded replication researchers are required to share their pure replication code with original authors, as this is the part of the research that speaks directly to the original estimations and demonstrates the replication researchers' understanding of the original work. 3ie generally encourages greater levels of communication and sharing for all parts of the replication study.

Question (from the original author's perspective): Why don't the original authors have more time to respond after submission of the final replication?

Question (from the replication researcher's perspective): Why must replication researchers wait a month after submission of the final replication to present or publicise their results?

Answer: 3ie is attempting to balance the differing needs of replication researchers and original authors. 3ie is also aiming to provide a space for original authors to discuss their initial opinion pertaining to the replication. The one month waiting period is intended to not hinder the replication researchers in their desire to present their findings. The original author's response period is not intended to allow for a replication of the replication study. In addition, the replication plans are published online and therefore made available to the original author before any funding is released to the replication researcher. 3ie believes one month will allow original authors enough time to read and provide their first reactions to the replication study, while not significantly influencing the replication researcher's potential presentation and publication schedule.