# TOOLKIT OF METHODS

for Feminist Participatory Action Research

# EMPOWERING WOMEN, TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS

# TOOLKIT OF METHODS

## for Feminist Participatory Action Research

### Identifying the Research Question
Led and co-designed by communities, often in partnership with organisations or academic researchers.

### Formation of Research Group
Diverse group of stakeholders: Diverse perspectives

### Building Trust and Establishing Relationships
Establish a safe and respectful environment, fostering open dialogues and participation.

### Inclusive Data Collection
Community members participating in FPAR are regarded as 'co-researchers' rather than research subjects.

### Collaborative Data Analysis
Interpret the findings through a feminist lens.

### Action and Reflection
Reflect on the findings and develops strategies for social change

### Evaluation and Feedback
Feedback from the community and stakeholders to ensure the research aligns with their needs and priorities.

### Dissemination
Academic publications, community presentations, policy briefs, or other forms of knowledge dissemination and advocacy.

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The authors acknowledge the many co-researchers, organisations, and social movements around the world with whom they have undertaken Feminist Participatory Action Research. They acknowledge that the knowledge shared in this Toolkit is collectively owned and generated.

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# Contents

# About this Toolkit

This Toolkit was developed following a series of training workshops on Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) concepts and methods with Oxfam Cambodia's Inclusion Project 2 (IP2) partners from Lao, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. The training provided targeted capacity support and technical assistance to the IP2 partners to develop gender-responsive advocacy activities on water governance in the Mekong region.

This Toolkit was developed to provide guidance to IP2 partners on how to use FPAR methods in their ongoing activities and advocacy. However, FPAR is a process and is not issue-specific. As such, the Toolkit can also be used by communities, activists, researchers and organisations engaged in a variety of different social and environmental justice issues and contexts. The information, tools and methods provided in this Toolkit can be adapted as required. This Toolkit may also support participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning processes in communities.

## Structure of the Toolkit

This Toolkit is structured to provide information and practical guidance about how to design and undertake FPAR. The Toolkit begins with an explanation of FPAR. It then provides a template for communities to co-design an FPAR project. This is followed by information and guidance about how to apply different participatory methods in an FPAR process. The methods included in this Toolkit include:

- Storytelling
- Drawings
- Body mapping
- Social mapping
- Power mapping
- Timelines
- Performance methods: Roleplay, dance, theatre and song
- Participatory surveys
- Participatory interviews
- Focus group discussions
- PhotoVoice and VideoVoice
- Journalling
- Case studies

The Toolkit then provides guidance about participatory data analysis. It concludes with information about activism and advocacy in FPAR, and opportunities for reporting FPAR processes and findings.

Throughout the Toolkit are step-by-step processes and tips for how to implement specific methods. There are also various examples in practice of implementing these methods in FPAR processes with communities. There are also links to online resources for further information.

# What is Feminist Participatory Action Research?

Feminist Participatory Action Research or FPAR is a useful methodology for empowering grassroots women and communities to generate knowledge about their lived experiences and undertake collective action to transform patriarchal power structures that marginalise them. FPAR builds upon the ethics and practices of Participatory Action Research (PAR) , keeping gender and women's diverse experiences central. FPAR combines research and activism to support communities to drive structural change (Hayhurst et al., 2015).

The feminist element in FPAR ensures the use of feminist principles at all stages of research and action. Feminist principles seek to challenge patriarchy, account for intersectionality and honour plural voices of women and other marginalised groups . The participatory element in FPAR aims to make research and action deliberately participant-driven, ensuring that knowledge is produced and owned by the community. A participatory approach ensures that communities lead FPAR planning, implementation, reporting and activism . The action element in FPAR aims to support communities and movements to gain knowledge of rights, patriarchy and justice, and build skills and confidence in climate justice leadership, advocacy, and campaigning. Communities collectively propose solutions to social issues identified in their research, and organise actions for social change . The research element in FPAR is about communities collecting and analysing data about their lived experiences, generating knowledge to inform activism. Together, feminism, participation, action and research can support communities to engage in strategic, evidence-based advocacy to claim their rights.

FPAR projects are designed and led by communities, often in partnership with organisations or academic researchers. FPAR involves collective, democratic decision-making as the community identifies the issue that is affecting them, how they want to do research to better understand the issue, and how to use the knowledge generated through FPAR to inform action. FPAR uses a cyclical process of action and reflection and encourages a democratic process of inquiry to challenge the traditional power relationships between 'the researcher' and 'the researched'. Community members participating in FPAR are regarded as 'co-researchers' rather than research subjects . This enables collective ownership of knowledge, a culture of solidarity, drives the community to undertake collective action to address systemic injustices and engage in policy advocacy for structural change . In FPAR, co-researchers design research and action, collect and analyse data using participatory methods, report their findings in accessible formats, engage in activism informed by their knowledges, and reflect and revise their activism for impact.

FPAR encourages co-researchers to critique ongoing systems of colonialism, patriarchy, neoliberalism, militarism and fundamentalism. It centres the voices, experiences and rights of Indigenous peoples, grassroots women, and other groups of people marginalised by dominant systems. It partners well with Indigenous knowledges and methods that are place-based and informed by cultural and spiritual knowledges.

FPAR can use various participatory, creative and arts-based methods to document communities' lived experiences . Some methods can include storytelling, social mapping, drawing, dance, roleplay, PhotoVoice, as well as participatory (community-led) approaches to 'traditional' qualitative methods such as surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. FPAR also supports a flexible and inclusive approach to action, encouraging co-researches to design a range of activism strategies such as campaigns, protest and lobbying to demand their rights.

The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) is an organisation that uses FPAR as a key methodology to mobilise feminist movements to change systems and structures of oppression and injustice. APWLD frames FPAR with nine key principles, as shared in the following image.

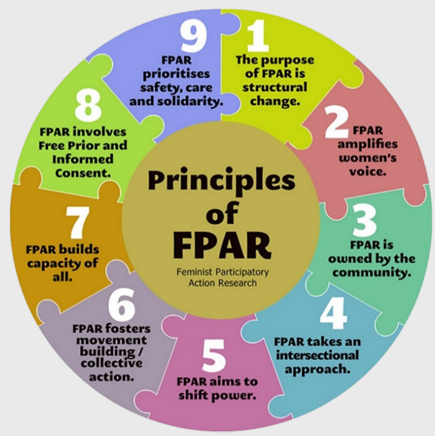



Image: Principles of FPAR (sourced from APWLD, as cited in Godden et al. 2020).

## Why use FPAR in water governance?

Various laws, policies, systems of governance, models of economic development and institutions with power and authority discriminate against women in all their diversity, Indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. In order to influence legal and policy reform to work for the people, these marginalised voices must be amplified. FPAR is a political advocacy tool that successfully organises and mobilises communities to engage with their governments to protect and secure their fundamental human rights.

The versatility of FPAR is that it can be used as a tool for climate justice, gender justice, economic justice, labour rights, land rights and more. Communities can use FPAR to challenge the unjust systems of neoliberalism, militarism, colonialism, sexism and racism. Advocacy is led by grassroots women, particularly Indigenous and tribal women, with their traditional knowledges and wisdom on living in harmony with nature and its resources. Migrant women workers, women working in healthcare, women garment workers, women working in informal sectors, women in precarious and high risk work can also collectively use FPAR to organise to demand their rights.

## Other resources

For more information about feminism, intersectionality and participatory research, see https://www.participatorymethods.org/resource/feminisms-intersectionality-and-participatory-research

Please also see Godden, N., Macnish, P., Chakma, T., Naidu, K. (2020). Feminist participatory action research as a tool for climate justice. Gender and Development, 28(3), 593-615. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1842040. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development also has a lot of resources about FPAR, see https://apwld.org/feminist-participatory-action-research-fpar/ and search for FPAR publications in their resources database.

# Ethics and safety in FPAR

FPAR must be undertaken ethically and safely. Throughout the whole FPAR process, we must consider and protect the individual and collective rights of participants, researchers and the community.

Here is a list of some ethical considerations in FPAR .

- **Voluntary participation:** Everyone who participates in the FPAR process must consent to participate without coercion or force.
- **Free, prior, informed and continuing consent (FPICC):** Before participating in the FPAR project, participants are informed in a language they understand about what the FPAR project involves, and they can give consent to participate in each of the different activities. Parental consent is usually required for children under the age of 18 to participate in an FPAR process. Participants can withdraw from the FPAR project at any time without consequence for them personally. See more information about FPICC below.
- **Anonymity and confidentiality:** The personal information that people share in FPAR processes is private. Data collection should occur in safe places where participants cannot be identified as research participants, and we should not talk about participants or their data without their informed consent. We do not use participants' names or identifying details in media, reports or public communications unless they have given their informed consent. Names and identifying information is removed from data and reports, and sata is safely stored on password protected digital files and in locked filing cabinets.
- **Do no harm to participants:** The FPAR process must be managed so that there is a minimal risk of harm to participants.

  This includes physical, emotional, psychological, economic, political and environmental harms. Harms may include discomfort, embarrassment, loss of safety, threats, endangerment of participants and their family/community, and violence. We suggest that FPAR co-researchers are actively involved in collectively identifying and assessing these potential risks, and developing strategies to manage these risks.
- **Do good for participants:** FPAR should be beneficial for co-researchers. Participants can gain skills and knowledge, and participate in actions (such as advocacy) for positive outcomes for their communities. The FPAR project may include small payments or rewards for participants, to reimburse them for their time and effort. Incentives need to be carefully considered.
- **Social responsiveness and responsibility:** Researchers are responsive to community and participants' needs and perspectives, including women's needs. The FPAR process should be flexible to participants' schedules and responsibilities, and respond to cultural and religious considerations, safety issues and health and hygiene needs. It is helpful to provide childcare, and provide a relaxed and comfortable setting for meetings and activities. The FPAR process should manage risks such as risks of violence against women and emotional triggering.
- **Sharing power:** The researcher and participants are 'co-researchers', working in partnership to design the research, collect and analyse data, take action and reflect upon its impact, and report the learnings and results. The FPAR process deliberately understands and shares power, prioritising the community's knowledge and expertise. Decisions about the FPAR project are made democratically, with decision-making processes that are collectively designed. The researcher must understand their privilege, position and power in the research process.
- **Representation:** Community members self-represent their own lived experiences.
- **Accountability:** Researchers are accountable to participants, partners and communities.
- **Reflexivity:** Researchers and participants regularly review the ethics of their FPAR process. This involves being self-aware, recognising and discussing power differences, respectful relationships, and thinking about how our personal agendas and influences impact the FPAR process. This also includes reflecting on whether the FPAR project upheld feminist values and cultural responsiveness.
- **Safe and empowering action:** Through FPAR, the community takes action to address social justice issues, and actions are community-led and are not overly risky.
- **Ethical reporting:** The FPAR findings are reported in ways that do not cause harm to participants, and are honest and transparent. It is ideal if FPAR reports are written collectively, in local languages. Co-researchers must give informed consent for any identifying information and images to be included in the report. Report in non-sexist and non-discriminatory language.
- **Using photos and images:** It is important that co-researchers provide informed consent for their photos and images to be used in reporting, presentations and any other public communications about the FPAR project. They must fully understand how the image will be used and who is likely to see the image. We recommend that images of children are not used in reporting.

## Free, Prior, Informed and Continuing Consent

Free, Prior, Informed and Continuing Consent (FPICC) is recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples . FPICC involves the following:

**'Free' consent:** Community members willingly participate in the research of their own will, without coercion, threat, obligation, bribery or force.

**'Prior' consent:** Community members consent to participate in the FPAR project and each individual activity before they commence. It is important that there is a clear process for how and up until when participants can withdraw themselves and their data from the project.

**'Informed' consent:** Participants must be provided with sufficient information to understand the research. This may be provided in a written Project Information Sheet or verbally. The information should include:

- Project aims.
- The activities in the project, the information that participants will be asked to share, and how data will be recorded.
- How and why the participant was selected to participate.
- Any funding related to the project.
- How participants can consent and withdraw from the project.
- The benefits and risks of participating.
- How the research data will be used, stored and reported.
- How the project ensures privacy and confidentiality for participants.
- How the results and reports will be shared.
- How the participant can make complaints about the project.

**'Continuing':** All of the FPAR activities may not be known at the beginning of the project. Therefore, participants must continually be invited to provide consent throughout the project for each research method, action, activity and for reporting and communications about the project.

**'Consent':** Participants must agree to participate in the FPAR project and activities. Consent can be recorded in writing or on video/tape (if safe to do so). Consent may include written consent (such as a consent form), verbal consent (vocally agreeing to participate in the research based on the conditions), or implied consent (consent is given by participating in the research, provided they have all information about the project).

## Other resources

For more information about research ethics see the Oxfam's practical guide to research ethics: https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/research-ethics-a-practical-guide-621092/

Image: Women involved in a group discussion. (Photo: Oxfam).

# Designing your FPAR

Designing and planning an FPAR project should be led by the community, and may happen in partnership with partner organisations or researchers. Planning may happen through a series of community meetings to identify the key issues, the main FPAR topic, the Change Goals that the project hopes to achieve, and how the research and activism will be undertaken. The following template can assist the community and partner organisations to plan and design an FPAR project.

## Template for designing Feminist Participatory Action Research

This template is a suggestion for organising the design of your FPAR project. Many components of the design document can later be used in your final FPAR report.

| FPAR DESIGN TEMPLATE |
|---|
| **CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND** |
| **Background**<br>» What is the context of the project? (eg economic, cultural, social, environmental, political context)<br>» What issues in the community is the project trying to address? |
| **Literature Review**<br>» What do we already know about this issue?<br>• Research and advocacy reports<br>• Other research projects<br>• Media<br>• Government documents<br>• Reports of workshops and meetings<br>• Environmental Impact Assessment reports<br>• Others? |
| **Change Goal**<br>» What is the specific change / impact that the FPAR is trying to achieve? |
| **FPAR Topic**<br>» What is the main theme/focus of the FPAR?<br>» What evidence do you need to advocate for your Change Goal? |
| **Research Question**<br>» What are the overall (strategic) question/s that the FPAR is trying to answer? (choose one or two big questions. This is NOT the specific questions you will ask the community) |

## METHODOLOGY

### Methods

- How are we going to collect evidence (data) to answer the overall research question/s?
- What methods (tools) will you use to undertake this research?
- How will you record the data when using these methods?

The following table may be helpful for planning your methods:

| Method | How will you use this method (e.g. questions and approach)? | How will you record the data when using this method? |
|---|---|---|
| Example: Focus Group Discussions | Example:<br>Hold five FGDs of 90 minutes each with up to 10 people. FGDs will be separated by gender.<br>FGD open questions include:<br>• What changes do you observe in water, fisheries and ecosystems?<br>• What are the impacts of these changes on your lives?<br>• How are women and Indigenous peoples currently participating in water decision-making?<br>• What are the barriers to women and Indigenous peoples participating in decision-making?<br>• What are enablers to women and Indigenous peoples participating in decision-making?<br>• Is there anything else you would like to share? | Example<br>Facilitator<br>Note-takers (at least 2)<br>Observer<br>Voice-recorder<br>Notes will be taken on flip-charts.<br>Voice recordings will be transcribed. |
| Method 2 | | |
| Method 3 | | |
| Method 4 | | |

## Sample

- Who will participate in each of these methods? (Be as specific as possible, e.g. number of people, women, girls, men, boys, elderly, gender non binary, persons living with disabilities, roles such as fisherfolk or student, location, etc.)
- How will you recruit participants for each method?

## Data analysis

- How will you collate and analyse the data?

# ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY

## Campaign

- What campaign will you undertake to achieve your Change Goal? (you can also get input from participants to develop the campaign)
- How will you use the data and evidence in your campaign?
- What activist activities will you undertake in your campaign?

Set out a plan with clear strategies and action to achieve your Change Goal. The evidence you collect in the FPAR underpins your strategies, such as media, advocacy, lobbying etc.

# ETHICS AND SAFETY

## Ethics and safety

- What are ethics and safety considerations in this project?
- What are the risks (physical, psychological, social, financial, environmental, political) throughout the project and how will these risks be prevented?
- How will you manage free, prior, informed and continuing consent?

# RESOURCES

## Resources

- What resources (including people, funding and materials) do you need to implement this FPAR project?
- If you don't already have these resources, where will you get them from?

# REPORTING

## Reporting

- How will you present and report the FPAR findings? (this includes writing a report and other forms of reporting, such as presentations, photos, art, etc).

## Tips for preparing your FPAR design

The FPAR Topic, Question and Change Goal should be based on each other; see the example below:

| | |
|---|---|
| **FPAR topic** | Example: The impacts of water and energy infrastructure development on the lives of women and Indigenous Peoples |
| **FPAR Community** | (This refers to who will be participating in the FPAR)<br>Example: 200 women and Indigenous peoples in XX community |
| **Change Goal** | Example:<br>• That women and Indigenous Peoples have documented evidence about the impacts of water and energy infrastructure development on their lives<br>• That women and Indigenous Peoples have increased participation and voice in water and energy decision-making and policy development |
| **Research Question/s** | Example:<br>• What are the impacts of water and energy infrastructure development on the lives of women and Indigenous peoples in XX community?<br>• How can women and Indigenous peoples be empowered to participate and have a voice in water and energy decision-making and policy development? |

### Other resources

For more information about designing an FPAR project, see the Oxfam resource for Writing Terms of Reference for Research: https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/writing-terms-of-reference-for-research-253034/

# FPAR methods

This section of the Toolkit provides information and guidance about a range of methods and tools that can be used in an FPAR project.

An FPAR project should use several different methods for 'triangulation'. This means that you will have multiple and different forms of evidence, which increases the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. For example, the FPAR project may include a survey, social mapping, and journaling. The selected methods can ask the same or similar questions, but they will provide different ways of recording people's lived experiences.

When choosing the data collection methods for your FPAR project, it is important to think about the following things:

- How many people will participate in each method?
- How long will it take to implement the method? Is this reasonable for the community?
- What resources and materials do we need to implement the method?
- Does the method require translation, literacy, or other skills or knowledge?
- What cultural and gendered considerations do you need to think about?
- How can the method be implemented safely and ethically?
- Are there any risks with the method? How can these risks be managed and prevented?
- How will the data from this method be recorded?
- How will the data from this method be analysed?
- How will the data from this method be reported?

## Tips for taking notes with FPAR methods:

For each method that you choose, it is likely that you will need to take notes to record the discussions. Here are some tips for note-taking:

- Prepare a note-taking template (on the computer or with pen and paper) based on the guiding questions of the method. For example:

| Theme | Example |
|---|---|
| Name of research activity | Body mapping |
| Date of research activity | 24 May 2022 |
| Time that research activity began | 1.14pm |
| Time that research activity ended | 1.50pm |
| Place of research activity | Community centre, XX community |
| Name of facilitator/s | Maria |
| Name of note-taker/s | Huoung |
| Number of participants | 11 female, 0 male, o non-binary |
| Notes of discussion | See tips below |

- Use dot points when note-taking. For example:

  **Question: How does climate change affect girls' bodies?**
  - Brackish water - causes skin disease, unhygienic conditions during menstruation
  - Poor health - less fish and crops to eat
- Listen for good quotes and write them down exactly as you hear them. Good quotes are usually phrases that directly answer your questions. For example:

  **Question: How does climate change affect girls' bodies?**
  - "The poor quality of water and too much sunlight cause the girls to lose their hair" (Maria)
- Assign two note-takers and cross check your notes with each other after the discussion

### Other resources

For more information about participatory methods, please see this helpful online resource from the Institute of Development Studies:

https://www.participatorymethods.org/

# Storytelling

Storytelling allows co-researchers to share their personal life experiences regarding the research topic. Community members narrate their stories in their own words, bringing diverse perspectives on the issue. Stories can be shared by individuals or groups and stories can be told through voice, writing, drawings, film, photography, dance, music, roleplays, theatre etc. In a group setting, storytelling allows for interaction between co-researchers that can bring a deeper and more nuanced perspective on a particular issue. Storytelling can also be used for documenting oral herstories, where individuals or groups of women share their herstories to inform a historical perspective on an issue. Oral herstories depend upon human memory and the spoken word / living people's testimony about their own experiences to create a historical record or generate timelines. Storytelling is a useful method to challenge traditional narratives that tend to oversimplify and universalise women's voices and experiences.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Papers and colourful pencils / markers for drawing, voice recorder, pen and paper / computer for note taking, props for role play / theatre.

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

Process for using the method

1. Facilitator chooses a safe, private and comfortable place for storytelling.
2. Facilitator prepares the recording device in advance and makes sure it is charged.
3. Facilitator explains what storytelling involves.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. Facilitator invites individuals or groups to narrate their personal stories regarding the research topic. Stories can be shared in voice or writing, or by using creative forms such as drawing, theatre, film, dance, music, and roleplays.
6. When co-researchers share their stories, notetakers record the stories in video, voice recording, or writing notes.
7. Facilitator invites co-researchers to analyse the stories together. Analysis can occur by coding (organising) written data or drawings for themes (this can be done by writing directly on a transcript); comparing stories to find common themes; or counting how many times a particular issue is raised in the stories. Note takers record the discussion using a voice recorder and/or by writing down notes.
8. Co-researchers may create a 'meta-story' that highlights the key themes and trends from other data to inform the research findings.

## Tips for the facilitator(s

- If the story has not been written down (e.g. it is depicted in a drawing, song or theatre), the co-researcher needs to provide an explanation of their story. This explanation should be recorded and written up.
- Stories can be shortened / summarised or parts can be pulled out. There is no need to report the whole story.
- Please ask the storyteller to check the story before it is published. They may want to change it.
- When reporting the stories, the co-researcher may want to share an image of their drawing / photo alongside the text of the story.
- It makes it real. The co-researchers must provide informed consent for their image to be included in the report.
- It is okay to change identifying details (such as name, age, place, number of children, job etc) to make the story anonymous, as long as the details do not change the way the story is understood.

## Example in practice

Communities affected by upstream development on the natural flow of the Mekong River (e.g. construction of dams) use storytelling to narrate the impacts of low water flow on their livelihoods, nutrition, and the economy.
First, co-researchers collectively discuss and develop the guiding questions for the storytelling. They select these guiding questions:

- What are the impacts of low water flow on river dependent communities?
- How do the experiences of women differ from the experiences of men?

The facilitator invites the co-researchers to reflect on these questions and narrate their stories. Prior to the narration, co-researchers may also draw or write their stories. The transcripts or drawings generated from these storytelling sessions are printed and then read and analysed together to identify common themes. The discussions from the collective analysis session are documented to inform the findings of the FPAR report. Co-researchers use the findings to inform policy decisions regarding dam construction in their area.

## Other resources

Read the following article (open access) to learn about how migrant women used Digital Storytelling as a feminist approach to research in a 2-day workshop:

Vacchelli, E., & Peyrefitte, M. (2018). Telling digital stories as feminist research and practice: A 2-day workshop with migrant women in London. Methodological Innovations, 11(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799118768424

# Drawings

Drawings are a form of storytelling. It is a useful method to share the story or personal lived experiences of individuals or even collectively as a community. For people who may have difficulties reading or writing or speaking the same language, drawings can be a powerful way to share stories and understand people's lives. Drawing is a way for people to express who they are, the environment they live in, and their hopes and demands. For example, drawings can help explain the people in a community, where they work, how much schooling they've had, their religion, interests and why they are being impacted by development or natural disaster or losing land, etc. The drawings can be collected and analysed for themes, common challenges and impacts. It's very important that when the drawing is shared, there is a record made of how the individual or community describes their drawing.

## How to use this method

Materials: Papers and colourful pencils / markers for drawing, voice recorder, pen and paper / computer for note taking
Resources: Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process for using the method

1. Facilitator chooses a safe, private and comfortable place for people to make their drawings.
2. Facilitator prepares the recording device in advance and makes sure it is charged.
3. Facilitator explains what drawing involves.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. Facilitator invites individuals or groups to sit together and draw their stories.
6. When co-researchers share their stories, notetakers record the stories in video, voice recording, or writing notes.
7. Facilitator invites co-researchers to analyse the stories together. Analysis can occur by coding (organising) written data or drawings for themes (this can be done by writing directly on a transcript); comparing stories to find common themes; or counting how many times a particular issue is raised in the stories. Note takers record the discussion using a voice recorder and/or by writing down notes.
8. Co-researchers may create a 'meta-story' that highlights the key themes and trends from other data to inform the research findings.

## Tips for the facilitator(s)

- The drawing illustrates the story and the co-researcher needs to provide an explanation of the story. This explanation should be recorded and written up.
- Stories can be shortened/summarised or parts can be pulled out. There is no need to report the whole story.
- Please ask the storyteller to check the story before it is published. They may want to change it.
- When reporting, you may want to share an image of the drawing/photo of the person alongside the text of the story. It makes it real. Make sure you have informed consent from the storyteller to include their image.
- It is okay to change identifying details (such as name, age, place, number of children, job etc) to make the story anonymous, as long as the details do not change the way the story is understood

Image: Women analysing drawings.
(Photo: Oxfam)

## Example in practice

In a rural community, ten women are asked to draw stories that share who they are, what the climate impacts on their lives are and what their hopes are in improving their livelihoods. They draw three concentric circles or divide the paper in three, and write their name and community on a corner of the drawing. In the first circle / box, they use coloured pens to draw family, house, school, work, trees, roads, etc that illustrate their lives. In the second circle / box, they draw climate impacts such as a hot sun, floods, destroyed farms. In the third circle / box, they draw their hopes or demands for securing their livelihoods. The process is guided by these questions:

| First box | Second box | Third box |
|---|---|---|
| • How many people are in your family?<br>• Where did you grow up?<br>• Where do you work/study? | • What are the climate impacts you're facing?<br>• Is it heat from the sun? Or floods? Or unpredictable rain?<br>• What does it do to your crops? Food? Fish? Lands? House? Roads? | • What do you think has to change to help improve your life?<br>• What are your hopes or demands? |

Facilitator invites the co-researchers to share their drawings. Note takers record and note the stories using a voice recorder and writing down notes. The drawings become a rich source of data that can be analysed to identify what is causing negative impacts for people. The discussions generated from comparing the drawings are also recorded and noted to inform the FPAR report. Co-researchers use the drawings and stories to share in the report who the people in the communities are, the environment they live and work in, how their lives are being impacted by climate change, and develop advocacy strategies to improve people's lives in the community.

## Other resources

You can learn more about how drawings can be applied in research from the following book (note, this source is not free).

Mitchell, C., Theron, L., Smith, A., Stuart, J., & Campbell, Z. (2011). "Drawings as Research Method". In Picturing Research. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. Retrieved Jun 3, 2022, from https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789460915963/BP000003.xml

# Body mapping

Body mapping is a fun and interactive activity to understand how an issue or experience affects different people's bodies. It involves a group of people drawing and writing the impacts of an issue on a life-sized picture of a body. Co-researchers can also use this method individually to draw and write impacts of an issue on smaller images of a body. This method is useful for comparing the experiences of different groups of people, and understanding the health impacts of a particular issue.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Large body-sized pieces of paper and colourful pencils/ markers for drawing, sticky notes, voice recorder, and pen and paper / computer for note taking.

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Facilitator chooses a safe, private and comfortable place for the body mapping exercise.
2. Facilitator prepares the recording device in advance and makes sure it is charged.
3. Facilitator explains what the body mapping involves.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. Facilitator leads the body mapping exercise, guiding the process, asking questions and bringing in different people into the activity.
6. Small groups of up to 10 people select one person who lies on the ground on top of a body-sized piece of paper. The outline of their body is drawn onto the paper to create a body map.
7. Facilitator asks co-researchers to draw and write on the body map how the research topic / issue affects individual people and their bodies.
8. When the body map is completed, the facilitator asks co-researchers to explain the body map and the meaning of different comments and drawings on the map.
9. Note takers record the explanations using a voice recorder and/or by writing down notes.
10. Facilitator brings together the different body maps, and invites co-researchers to analyse the data by identifying themes in the map/s (e.g., using sticky notes or writing on the maps). This can involve comparing maps for similarities and differences. Note takers record the discussion using a voice recorder and/or by writing down notes.

## Tips for the facilitator(s)

- Always check that the person lying on the paper to draw the body map is comfortable.
- Co-researchers can use a range of symbols, words and small drawings to depict the impacts of the issue on the body map. Encourage them to be creative!
- If people are feeling shy, offer them opportunities to contribute.
- During the discussion, the facilitator can ask open ended questions and probing questions for more information about the body maps.
- Check if the co-researchers are comfortable with the questions you are asking.
- You can rephrase questions if the co-researchers don't understand you.
- Be prepared to use protective interrupting if the co-researchers are at risk or feel uncomfortable. Try to keep the discussion community-oriented rather than deeply personal, unless it is a very safe space. Be prepared to pause or stop the body mapping if there is conflict.

## Example in practice

Communities affected by climate change events such as drought or sea level rise use body mapping to document the impact of climate change on women's health. For instance, food insecurity or water shortage resulting from drought and sea level rise can cause malnutrition in women and children or, lack of clean drinking water can cause sickness or diseases.

Some guiding questions for this method are:

What are the impacts of climate change on women's health in the community?

Are the health impacts different for men and women? If yes, how?

The facilitator invites the co-researchers to respond to the above questions by drawing or writing on a life sized drawing of a human body. Different body maps can be drawn by different groups (for example, co-researchers can be grouped by gender or age). After completing the body maps, the groups explain the map. Note takers record and note the explanations using a voice recorder and writing down notes. Different body maps can be compared to find common themes. The discussions generated from comparing the maps are also recorded and noted to inform the FPAR report. Co-researchers use the findings to advocate for gender budgeting for climate change that can address women's health issues.

## Other resources

You can learn more about how body mapping can be applied in research from the following book (note, this source is not free).

Dew, A., Collings, S., Senior, K., & Smith, L. (2020). Applying Body Mapping In Research: An Arts-Based Method (K. M. Boydell, Ed.; 1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429340260

# Social mapping

Social mapping is a method which can be done by individuals or in groups using drawings or paintings to describe the social impacts of an issue in their community. Social maps allow participants to move from description to reflection and analysis, creating a map (of a place or a concept) and identifying features on the map through drawing, writing and talking. The data shared in social maps can help communities understand trends of issues, define their priorities and develop plans of action.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Large paper and colourful pencils/ markers for drawing, sticky notes, voice recorder, and pen and paper / computer for note taking

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Facilitator chooses a safe, private and comfortable place for the social mapping exercise.
2. Facilitator prepares the recording device in advance and makes sure it is charged.
3. Facilitator explains what the social mapping activity involves.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. Facilitator leads the social mapping, guiding the process, asking questions and bringing in different people into the activity.
6. Small groups of up to 10 people collectively create a map of their community / story / issue. This can be done on large pieces of paper (drawing and writing), or using furniture, sticks, plants etc.
7. When the social map is completed, the facilitator asks co-researchers to explain the social map and what it means. Note takers record the explanations using a voice recorder and/or by writing down notes.
8. Facilitator brings together the different social maps, and invites co-researchers to analyse the data by identifying themes in the map/s (e.g., using sticky notes or writing on the maps). This can involve comparing maps for similarities and differences. The note taker records responses and discussion using a voice recorder and/or by writing down notes.

## Tips for the facilitator(s)

- The group needs to decide the parameters and boundaries of the map, and how they will create the map together.
- If people are feeling shy, offer them opportunities to contribute.
- During the discussion, the facilitator can ask open ended questions and probing questions for more information about the maps.
- Check if the co-researchers are comfortable with the questions you are asking.
- You can rephrase questions if the co-researchers don't understand you.
- Be prepared to use protective interrupting if the co-researchers are at risk or feel uncomfortable. Try to keep the discussion community-oriented rather than deeply personal, unless it is a very safe space. Be prepared to pause or stop the social mapping if there is conflict.

Image: Community members undertaking social mapping. (Photo: Oxfam).


Image: Social map (Photo: Oxfam).

## Example in practice

A group of women use social mapping to identify dangerous and safe places for women and girls in their community. Women form small groups to draw social maps – they start by drawing their village / urban area, including houses, roads, spiritual and religious places, schools, shops, hospital, garden / farms, animals, trees, river / lake, fishing boats, etc. Women add information to the map either by drawing or writing to identify the areas where gender-based violence (GBV) is experienced the most. GBV can include street harassment, sexual harassment or violence at work or school, family and domestic violence etc. When this exercise is done with several different groups of women, the maps together give insight into safety in the community.

There are important ethical considerations with this method. Discussing GBV can be triggering trauma for some co-researchers. Make sure co-researchers are fully informed about the method, and are given proper trigger warnings prior to consenting to engage in the activity. There should be a support structure and referral mechanism prepared in advance in case any of the co-researchers need emotional and psychological support during or after the activity.

After the maps are created, the facilitator invites co-researchers to share and explain their maps. Co-researchers can compare their maps and discuss common themes and differences. The explanations and discussions should be recorded and noted to inform the FPAR report. Women can use the findings from the social mapping exercise to discuss collective actions for making their communities safer for women and girls.

## Other resources

For a different approach to social mapping, see this resource from BetterEvaluation:
https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/socialmapping

# Power mapping

Power mapping is a powerful tool for communities to consider their allies, opponents, targets and constituents prior to embarking on an advocacy campaign. The data generated in power maps can help communities develop strategies for organising to build power for lobbying and advocacy for a particular Change Goal.

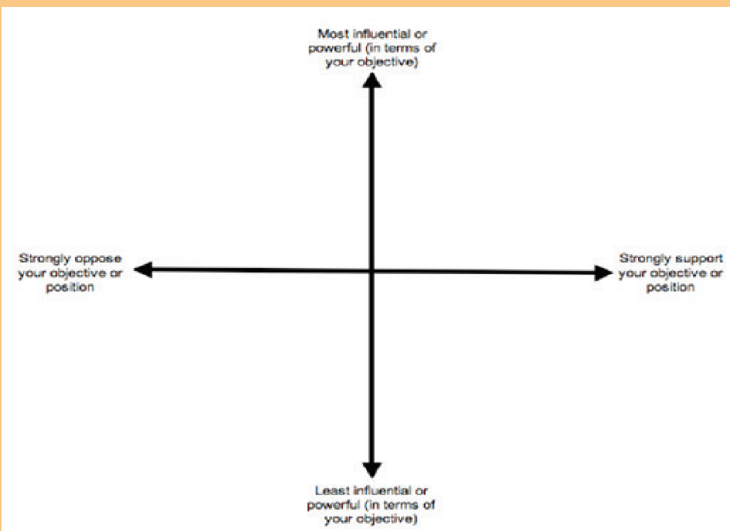
## How to use this method

**Materials:** Tape, paper plates, sticky notes, markers, example of a power map, voice recorder, and pen and paper / computer for note taking

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Facilitator chooses a safe, private and comfortable place for the power mapping exercise.
2. Facilitator prepares the recording device in advance and makes sure it is charged.
3. Facilitator explains what power mapping involves.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. Facilitator makes a blank power map on the floor and explains the process and the purpose of the power map. This is a simple matrix with a horizontal axis and a vertical axis. The vertical axis indicates the level of influence or power each actor has in relation to the desired changes or campaign goal. The top of this axis is where we would place people or organisations that have the most power or influence. The horizontal axis indicates whether people support the group's specific objectives or if they are opposed to these objectives. At the left end of this spectrum are people who are most opposed to our desired changes or objectives. At the right end are people who support our objectives most strongly.




6. Based on the Change Goal developed during the FPAR design, the facilitator asks co-researchers to discuss and write down the following:
   - Who can give you what you need?
   - Who will oppose it?
   - Who will support you?
7. The facilitator asks the co-researchers to write on individual sticky notes / paper plates the names of organisations and people (actors) with whom the community might need to engage in order to achieve this outcome. Participants can start with themselves and the main decision-maker/s. They might like to include:
   - women's rights organisations
   - other community groups, such as youth groups
   - local, state, or national government: Which councillors or officers? Which departments or ministers?
   - security forces (police; military)
   - community leaders and Elders
   - local, regional and national media
   - institutions such as research centres, or UN agencies
   - local businesses
   - experts
   - Academics and universities
   - Other stakeholders
8. Facilitator asks co-researchers to place the sticky note / paper plate with the name of their group / organisation on the power map. It will be strongly in support of their Change Goal, so it should sit on the right hand side of the map; but they will need to consider how much influence or power the organisation has to achieve their campaign goal.
9. Co-researchers identify the individuals and institutions holding the most influence or power in terms of delivering their desired outcome (i.e. their Change Goal). They take turns to place their actors on the power map measuring how much influence and how supportive of the Change Goal the stakeholder is.
10. Co-researchers explain how the identified actors are related to their Change Goal, to the main power holder / target and to other actors:
    - How much influence do they hold?
    - Do they cooperate with each other or are they in conflict?
    - Do you presently have a relationship with these people? Are they likely to agree with your position?

11. Facilitator prompts co-researchers to consider the relative power of the actors and position the notes according to the relationships that exist between them. For instance, who is closest to the key decision makers? Co-researchers move them around.
12. When the power map is complete, the facilitator asks the participants to identify the two or three locations within the map where they feel their collective action might affect the greatest influence. Are there people or organisations who hold power and who they might successfully influence or build strategic relationships with? The note taker records responses and discussion using a voice recorder and / or by writing down notes.

## Tips for the facilitator(s)

- Make sure all co-researchers understand the purpose and process of the power map prior to beginning the exercise.
- Question the co-researchers to help clarify power relationships between the actors as you develop the power map.
- If people are feeling shy, offer them opportunities to contribute.
- During the discussion, the facilitator can ask open ended questions and probing questions for more information about actors identified on the power map.
- Check if the co-researchers are comfortable with the questions you are asking.
- You can rephrase questions if the co-researchers don't understand you.
- Be prepared to use protective interrupting if the co-researchers are at risk or feel uncomfortable. Try to keep the discussion community-oriented rather than deeply personal,

## Example in practice

An Indigenous community is resisting a harmful mining project in territory that is being developed without their Free, Prior, Informed and Continuing Consent (FPICC). They create a power map to identify the actors that can influence decisions about the project and strategise how to engage them in the campaign to stop the project. The power map informs the community about which groups they can build alliances with, and which politicians/ policy makers/ government representatives they could target.
Some guiding questions for this example may be:

- Who has the most power to influence decisions regarding the mining project? What can we do to target them to support our campaign goal?
- Who can help strengthen the campaign to stop the mining project? How can we engage them in our activism and resistance against the mining project?

The facilitator invites co-researchers to respond to the above questions by asking them to identify relevant actors and placing them on the power map. After completing the power map, co-researchers collectively analyse the map and discuss their ideas about how to engage the identified actors in the campaign and how their strategic engagement can advance the campaign. Co-researchers use the findings from the power map to prepare for future activism plans and campaign strategies.

## Other resources

Read more about power mapping at the Commons Social Change Library for free:
https://commonslibrary.org/guide-power-mapping-and-analysis/

# Timelines

Timelines are useful for telling the story of a community or an issue over a particular period of time. This method involves a group of people creating a timeline using drawing, writing, collage or other creative tools. This method can help community members identify key milestones, activities, changes or issues over time. Timelines can also be used as seasonal calendars.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Large pieces of paper and colourful pencils / markers for drawing, items for a collage, sticky notes, voice recorder, and pen and paper / computer for note taking

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Facilitator chooses a safe, private and comfortable place for the timeline exercise.
2. Facilitator prepares the recording device in advance and makes sure it is charged.
3. Facilitator explains what the timeline activity involves.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. In a group, co-researchers plan the structure and content of the timeline, including the time period, the types of moments that people will highlight, and how the timeline will be created.
6. Facilitator invites co-researchers to co-create and contribute to the timeline. Facilitator guides the process, asking questions, and bringing in different people into the activity.
7. When the timeline is completed, the facilitator asks co-researchers to explain the timeline and what it means. Note takers record the explanations using a voice recorder and / or by writing down notes.
8. The facilitator invites co-researchers to analyse the timeline by identifying themes and trends (e.g., using post-it notes or writing on the maps) and any key learnings. Note takers record the discussion using a voice recorder and/or by writing down notes.

## Tips for the facilitator/s

- Make sure everyone is clear about the period of time, the theme or focus of the timeline, and how to contribute to the timeline.
- Provide lots of different ways to contribute to the timeline, such as drawing, contributing photos and sharing newspaper stories.
- Timelines can be created on the ground with sand, sticks and pebbles, and can be created online with documents (such as using Google Drawing).
- If people are feeling shy, offer them opportunities to contribute.
- During the discussion, the facilitator can ask open ended questions and probing questions for more information about the timeline.
- Check if the co-researchers are comfortable with the questions you are asking.
- You can rephrase questions if the co-researchers don't understand you.
- Be prepared to use protective interrupting if the co-researchers are at risk or feel uncomfortable. Try to keep the discussion community-oriented rather than deeply personal, unless it is a very safe space. Be prepared to pause or stop the timeline activity if there is conflict.

Image: Creating a timeline of a community literacy program in their community. (Photo: Oxfam).

## Example in practice

A community in an area affected by a dam development creates a timeline to document strategies and impacts of community resistance and activism about the dam. The timeline may include the formation of advocacy groups, alliances with other partners, and meetings with government representatives.

Some guiding questions for this example may be:

- How has the community engaged in activism and resistance about the dam?
- What are the impacts of this activism?

The facilitator invites co-researchers to respond to the above questions by selecting a period of time for the timeline. Co-researchers then draw, write or paste evidence (such as newspaper clippings or meeting notes) about key activism moments and their impacts on a large piece of paper depicting the timeline. After completing the timeline, the group talks through the timeline to explain the series of events and their impacts and changes. The group then analyse the timeline to identify effective strategies for upholding community rights with the development. Co-researchers use the findings when preparing future activism plans and strategies.

## Other resources

This resource from International Development Research Centre provides information about participatory action research, with a special section on timelines (page 8): https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/a_toolkit_for_participatory_action_research.pdf

# Performance methods: Roleplay, dance, theatre and song

Performance methods are fun, interactive and creative ways for community members to explore an issue. Roleplay, dance, theatre and song are very creative tools, and they can be used in many different ways. Community members may use performance methods to share their stories (such as through theatre), to express their feelings (such as through dance or song), and to plan for the future and imagine changes in their lives (such as through roleplay). Performance methods can involve people of different ages and demographics, and do not rely on participants being able to read or write. The performance method may be improvised (spontaneous) or planned and rehearsed.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Voice recorder, filming device, and pen and paper / computer for note taking.

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Choose a safe and comfortable place for the performance methods.
2. Prepare the recording device in advance and make sure it is charged.
3. Facilitator explains what performance methods involve.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. In a group, co-researchers plan how they will use performance methods to explore the research question, including the preferred expressive method/s, the process for doing the method, and how everyone can participate.
6. The group implements their performance method, and the performance is filmed.
7. When the method is completed, the facilitator asks co-researchers to explain their performance and what it means. This discussion should be recorded and notes taken.
8. The facilitator invites co-researchers to analyse the performance data by identifying themes in the performances, This can involve comparing maps for similarities and differences. The note taker records responses and discussion using a voice recorder and / or by writing down notes.

## Tips for the facilitator/s

- Always check that the people involved in the performance methods are comfortable.
- If some people are feeling shy, offer them diverse opportunities to contribute and participate.
- Laughter helps! Assure everyone that the performance does not need to be perfect, and that this is a fun activity.
- Be conscious of power dynamics in the performance process and name these if needed.
- During the discussion, the facilitator can ask open ended questions and probing questions for more information about the performances.
- Check if the co-researchers are comfortable with the questions you are asking.
- You can rephrase questions if the co-researchers don't understand you.
- Be prepared to use protective interrupting if the co-researchers are at risk or feel uncomfortable. Try to keep the discussion community-oriented rather than deeply personal, unless it is a very safe space. Be prepared to pause or stop the performance if there is conflict or triggering.

## Example in practice

A group of women involved in a women's literacy and livelihoods program use roleplay to demonstrate the impacts of learning to read and write on their lives. In small groups, they create an interactive role that shows their experience of the program, and how it has affected different facets of their lives.

Some guiding questions for this example may be:

- What are the impacts of learning to read and write on women's lives? This may include emotional, health, financial, social, and family impacts.
- How did the literacy and livelihoods program enable these impacts?

The facilitator can invite the co-researchers to respond to the above questions by forming small groups and planning their roleplay. Co- researchers then prepare and present their roleplay to other co- researchers, showing their different experiences of the program and how it affected their lives. The performance is recorded. Other groups also present their performances.  After completing the roleplays, each group talks through their roleplay to explain what its meaning is. The whole group then analyses the different roleplays to identify common trends, experiences and issues for women in each roleplay. Co- researchers can use the findings to advocate for resources and policy that support women to increase their literacy and livelihoods.

Image: Using props in an interactive exploration about water governance in Chiang Mai, Thailand. (Photo courtesy of Oxfam).

## Other resources

You can learn more about theatre as a method in participatory action research in this online resource from the Steps Centre: https://steps-centre.org/pathways-methods-vignettes/theatre-as-a-participatory-methodology-for-action-research/

# Participatory surveys

Surveys can collect quantitative data (numbers, statistics, and frequencies) or qualitative data (people's perspectives, opinions or experiences). In FPAR, surveys are participatory when the survey questions are co-designed with co-researchers, when the survey data is collected by the community, and / or when the survey process is interactive. For example, participatory surveys occur through a range of Participatory Rural Appraisal activities such as ranking and scoring, prioritising, or other participatory ways to count issues, opinions or experiences in a community.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Paper and colourful pencils / markers / pebbles / sticky notes; computer and an online survey platform such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms; voice recorder; and pen and paper / computer for note taking.

**Resources:** Assign someone to create the survey if it is online or on paper; facilitators and note takers are needed for participatory versions of the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Co-researchers create a list of questions and options for a basic participatory survey. The survey can be done on the ground (pictures and pebbles), in an online platform such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms, or on paper. Questions may include:
    - Demographic questions (questions about the co-researcher, such as age, gender, location)
    - Questions that ask for yes, no, maybe or don't know responses.
    - Questions that ask co-researchers to choose their preferences from a list of options.
    - Questions that ask co-researchers to rate their responses on a scale.
    - Questions that ask co-researchers to rank (prioritise) their preferences from a list of options (note, these questions can be quite difficult to analyse).
    - Open ended questions that ask co-researchers to share their perspective or opinion.
2. Choose a safe and comfortable place for the participatory survey activity.
3. Prepare the recording device in advance and make sure it is charged.
4. Explain what the survey involves.
5. Invite co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
6. Everyone individually responds to the survey questions, and participate in the activity as planned.
7. The facilitator invites everyone to analyse the data by counting and organising the responses. This is followed by a collective discussion about what the survey results mean.
8. Note takers record the responses and discussion in photographs, voice recording, and/or writing notes.

## Tips for the facilitator/s

- If you are doing an online or paper survey, keep the survey short and understandable. People often don't have a lot of time.
- Try to limit the number of open-ended questions, and keep the responses fairly short. If you want more information, it may be more effective to hold focus group discussions or interviews.
- It is often very interactive and effective to hold a participatory survey with pebbles or sticky notes on the ground. This way, everyone can see the data at the same level.
- Participatory surveys using stones or sticky notes can be done using images rather than words, which make them accessible for people who may have difficulties reading and writing.
- Be aware that everyone can see each other's responses in a participatory survey, so some people may be influenced by others. Think about safety and ethics when planning an interactive survey activity.

## Example in practice

A group of women affected by climate change use participatory surveys to identify their priority issues in the community. This can assist in narrowing the scope of the FPAR project. For instance, the women first discuss the key issues faced in the community as a result of climate change impacts. These issues can be organised in categories to generate a list.

One guiding question for this example may be:

- How has climate change affected certain things in your life at home, in school or in your community?

Some potential categories of issues generated from the discussion may be:

- ☐ Food insecurity in the community
- ☐ Water shortage in the community
- ☐ Home damaged or destroyed
- ☐ It takes longer time to collect drinking water
- ☐ Deteriorating health conditions of the women and children in the community
- ☐ Lack of firewood in the forest for cooking
- ☐ Others

The co-researchers then use a participatory survey to individually vote for the two or three most important issues they want to address through their FPAR project. The votes can be counted to rank and identify the issues that are most widely experienced in the community. The findings then can be discussed further to come to a collective decision regarding the research topic and research question the community wants to focus on for the FPAR. In the research design phase, the co-researchers may decide to use a survey questionnaire as a tool to collect more data on the issue. Co-researchers collectively develop the questions for the survey questionnaire, and use it to survey each other.

## Other resources

You can find out more about Participatory Rural Appraisal methods at this free Food and Agricultural Organisation resource: https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/292329/

# Participatory interviews

Interviews can be an effective method to dig deeply into a research topic with an individual. Interviews are participatory when the interview questions are co-designed by co-researchers, and / or when co-researchers interview each other (rather than an external researcher conducting the interview).

There are three types of interviews:

- Structured interviews: These interviews have a set list of questions and the interviewer does not expand on the questions or probe more deeply. It is similar to a questionnaire.
- Semi-structured interviews: These interviews have a list of themes / areas for the interview to ask questions about, and the interviewer can ask supplementary questions to gain more information.
- Unstructured interviews: These interviews have a general topic, and the interview is a fairly unstructured discussion that can move into various different areas.

Each type of interview has its benefits and challenges. Structured interviews can be fairly easy to analyse, as the responses directly relate to a set of questions. However, you may miss some important information if you can't ask additional, probing questions. Semi-structured interviews give some structure and guidance to the discussion, but still allow for the interviewer to ask additional questions to gain more information about responses that are interesting or unusual. Unstructured interviews allow for free-flowing discussion, but they can go in many directions if not well managed. You need to decide which type of interview suits your research topic and community.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Voice recorder, and pen and paper / computer for note taking

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Co-researchers collectively develop interview themes or questions based on their research topic. There may be a range of questions:
   - Open-ended questions that begin with 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'why', and 'how'
   - Probing questions such as "Can you tell me more about that?"
   - Safe and ethical questions: Ask about general and more broad experiences rather than personal experiences or opinions
   - Avoid leading questions, such as "Do you think that…?"
   - Avoid closed questions that ask for a yes or no answer.
2. Facilitator chooses a safe, private and comfortable place for the interview.
3. Facilitator prepares the recording device in advance and makes sure it is charged.
4. Facilitator explains what the interview involves.
5. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
6. Co-researchers interview each other as individuals.
7. Note takers record interview responses using a voice recorder or by taking notes.
8. Facilitator invites everyone to analyse the data by thematically coding (organising or grouping) responses from the interview notes, including finding key quotes. This can be followed by a group discussion of the key trends across the interviews. Note takers record the responses and discussion in photographs, voice recording, and / or writing.

## Tips for the facilitator(s)

- Try to limit the number of questions so that the interview isn't longer than an hour.
- Check if the interviewee is comfortable with the questions you are asking and the time that the interview is taking.
- Spend some time building rapport with the interviewee and getting to know each other.
- You can rephrase questions if the interviewee doesn't understand you.
- Be prepared to use protective interrupting if the interviewee is at risk or feels uncomfortable.

## Example in practice

Communities affected by upstream development on the natural flow of the Mekong River (e.g. construction of dams) use participatory interviews to document the impacts of low water flow on their livelihoods, nutrition, and the economy. Co-researchers collectively discuss and develop the guiding questions for the participatory interviews.
Some guiding questions for this method could be:

- What are the impacts of low water flow on river dependent communities?
- How do the experiences of women differ from the experiences of men?

Co-researchers interview each other to answer the questions. Note takers record the responses using a voice recorder, and/or writing down notes. The transcripts of these interviews are printed and then read and analysed together to identify common themes. The discussions from the collective analysis session are also documented to inform the findings of the FPAR report. Co-researchers use the findings to inform policy decisions regarding dam construction in their area.

## Other resources

You can learn more about preparing and conducting research interviews in this free online journal article:
McGrath, C., Palmgren, P.J & Liljedahl, M. (2019) Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews, Medical Teacher, 41:9, 1002-1006, DOI: 10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149. Available from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

# Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) can be an effective method to dig deeply into a research topic with a group of people. FGDs are participatory when the questions are co-designed by co-researchers, and / or when co-researchers facilitate the FGD (rather than an external researcher facilitating the discussion).

There are three types of FGDs:

- Structured FGDs: These FGDs have a set list of questions and the facilitator does not expand on the questions or probe more deeply.
- Semi-structured FGDs: These FGDs have a list of themes/areas of discussion, and the facilitator can ask supplementary questions to gain more information.
- Unstructured FGDs: These FGDs have a general topic, and the discussion is a fairly unstructured discussion that can move into various different areas.

Each type of FGD has its benefits and challenges. Structured FGDs can be fairly easy to analyse, as the responses directly relate to a set of questions. However, a structured FGD can be quite repetitive, and you may miss some important information if you can't ask additional, probing questions. Semi-structured FGDs give some structure and guidance to the discussion, but still allow for the facilitator to ask additional questions to gain more information about responses that are interesting or unusual. Unstructured FGDs allow for free-flowing discussion, but they can go in many directions if not well managed. You need to decide which type of FGD suits your research topic and community.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Voice recorder, and pen and paper / computer for note taking

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. The co-researchers develop FGD questions based on their research topic. There may be a range of questions:
   - Open-ended questions that begin with 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'why', and 'how'
   - Probing questions such as "Can you tell me more about that?"
   - Safe and ethical questions: Ask about general and more broad experiences rather than personal experiences or opinions
   - Avoid leading questions, such as "Do you think that...?"
   - Avoid closed questions that ask for a yes or no answer.
2. Choose a safe, private and comfortable place for the FGD.
3. Prepare the recording device in advance and make sure it is charged.
4. Explain what the FGD involves.
5. Invite co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
6. Facilitator leads the FGD, asking questions to guide the discussion and bringing in different people into the discussion.
7. The note taker records FGD responses using a voice recorder or by taking notes.
8. The facilitator invites everyone to analyse the data by thematically coding (organising or grouping) responses from the FGD notes, including finding key quotes. This can be followed by a group discussion of the key trends across the interviews.
9. Note takers record the responses and discussion in photographs, voice recording, and/or writing.

## Tips for the facilitator(s)

- Try to limit the number of questions so that the FGD isn't longer than an hour.
- Build rapport with the co-researchers before beginning the discussion.
- Check if the co-researchers are comfortable with the questions you are asking, and the time that the focus group discussion is taking.
- You can rephrase questions if the co-researchers don't understand you.
- Be prepared to use protective interrupting if the co-researchers are at risk or feel uncomfortable. Try to keep the discussion community-oriented rather than deeply personal, unless it is a very safe space. Pause or stop the FGD if there is conflict.

Image: Participating in a focus group discussion (Photo: Oxfam).

## Example in practice

Communities affected by climate change events such as drought or sea level rise use Focus Group Discussions to document the impact of climate change on women's burden of domestic care work. For instance, water shortage resulting from drought and sea level rise can increase the distance women have to travel to fetch water from its source. Soil degradation resulting from sea level rise may also impact subsistence farming opportunities in the community.

Some guiding questions for this method could be:

- How are impacts of climate change affecting women's burden of domestic care work?
- How impacts of climate change affect men's work?

Facilitator invites the co-researchers to respond to the above questions by participating in a group discussion. FGDs can be carried out with different groups (for example, co-researchers can be grouped by gender or age). Note takers record and note the explanations using a voice recorder and writing down notes. Transcripts generated from different FGDs can be compared to find common themes. The discussions generated from comparing the FGDs notes are also recorded and noted to inform the FPAR report. Co-researchers use the findings to advocate for gender responsive public services that can address women's disproportionate burden of domestic care responsibilities.

## Other resources

This resource provides a helpful toolkit for conducting focus group discussions:
https://ctb.ku.edu/sites/default/files/chapter_files/toolkitforconductingfocusgroups-omni.pdf

# PhotoVoice and VideoVoice

In PhotoVoice and VideoVoice, co-researchers take photos or record footage to share their lived experiences and stories about a particular issue. This method is creative and inclusive. It enables co-researchers to document what is important to them, and contribute their perspective to a larger, collective process.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Camera or smartphone with camera for taking photos and video, voice recorder, pen and paper for note taking.

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Facilitator explains what PhotoVoice and VideoVoice involves.
2. Co-researchers develop the questions, themes and parameters to guide individuals to take photos and videos.
3. If required, co-researchers teach each other how to use a camera or smartphone.
4. Facilitator invites co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
5. Individuals or groups take photographs or films to respond to a research question.
6. Co-researchers provide explanations of their photos and films (in writing or speaking).
7. The facilitator invites co-researchers to look at each other's photos and footage and analyse them by grouping materials with similar themes and identifying the trends across them; counting similar themes; and writing comments on photos about the themes in the data.
8. Co-researchers critically reflect on the information coming through the data. Note takers record the responses and discussion using voice recording, and/or writing down notes.
9. A photo exhibition or film can be a way of presenting a group's interpretation (meaning) of data that has been analysed.

## Example in practice

Communities affected by upstream development on the natural flow of the Mekong River (e.g. construction of dams) use PhotoVoice or VideoVoice to document the impacts of low water flow on their livelihoods, nutrition, and the economy.

Some guiding questions for this method could be:

- What are the impacts of low water flow on river dependent communities?
- How do the experiences of women differ from the experiences of men?

Co-researchers take photos / video footage in response to the above research questions. The photos / video footage taken are shown to the group, and co-researchers describe their photos / video footage. Note takers record the descriptions using a voice recorder, and / or writing down notes. The facilitator invites co-researchers to look at each other's photos / video footage and ask them to group similar photo / footage together. Co-researchers discuss any similarities or trends they observe. The discussions from the collective analysis session are also documented to inform the findings of the FPAR report. Co-researchers use the findings to inform policy decisions regarding dam construction in their area.

## Other resources

In the following article (paywalled) you can read more about a group of women anti-mining activists used PhotoVoice to inform their activism in in the city of Cajamarca, Northern Peru.
Jenkins, K., & Boudewijn, I. (2020). Negotiating access, ethics and agendas: Using participatory photography with women anti-mining activists in Peru. Women's Studies International Forum, 82, 102407. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2020.102407

# Journalling

Journals are a useful way for co-researchers to record their experiences, perspectives and observations about a particular research question. They are also useful to keep a record of the timelines, meetings, conversations and information they collect during the research. Co-researchers can also use journals to write their notes, record a film or keep voice notes on their phones. Journals are also useful for co-researchers to record notes from the various FPAR methods that are used including collecting information from different sources. The information stored in journals are invaluable when pulling together all the data from the research, particularly dates, times, location, names of people, data recorded, etc.

## How to use this method

**Materials:** Pens/notebooks/laptop/phone

**Resources:** Assign facilitators and note takers for the method.

## Process of using the method

1. Explain that journalling is keeping notes/recording information with as many relevant details that can be referred to later.
2. Co-researchers collectively develop a structure to guide the use of journals in the FPAR project, such as the purpose and process of journaling.
3. Invite co-researchers to consent to participate before beginning the method.
4. Co-researchers add titles or divide the journal into focused themes of their research topic. Some guiding question may be:
    - What am I journaling to keep a record of?
    - What is the importance of this data?
    - Who is involved?
    - When is it happening? How long will it take?
5. Co-researchers regularly input into their journals. They can use dot points notes, voice records, drawings, collages or other creative methods.
6. Co-researchers may choose to share their journals or parts of their journals with each other. The journal data can be collectively analysed to identify common themes and trends across the data.

## Tips for the facilitator(s)

- Do not write or record too much or everything because it becomes challenging when writing your report. Always focus on information/data that answers directly to the research topic.
- It is important to write your own reflections.
- Co-researchers can analyse other data by individually writing / drawing /filming / recording journals about the key themes they identify in the data.
- Journals can then be shared and compared to find key trends across the themes and identify key findings.
- Remember that a co-researcher can withdraw from participating at any time, if they do not wish to share their journal.

## Example in practice

A group of women use journaling to record observations about women's fishing activities in the village. They decide to keep individual written journals in a notebook. They write details in daily entries in the journals, such as:

- Name of activity: Observing fisherwomen in X village
- Date of activity: 26 May 2022
- Time that activity began: 7.15am
- Time that activity ended: 9.30am
- Place of activity: XY
- Observations of women fishing in the community:
    - Mostly older women using hand lines catching small fish
    - Fishing  4 times a week
    - Fish divided between families - extra sold in market
    - Harder to get enough fish
    - Supplement income by farming
    - Young women no longer interested in learning traditional way of fishing
    - Women are worried about less fish every year

# Case studies

Case studies are used in FPAR to showcase an issue or experience in a particular place or community. FPAR case studies can explain issues, actions, successes and failures, which provide future direction for programming and future FPAR work.

Features of a good case study include:

- **Clear and short:** it is easy to understand the main points of the report. Use clear language – no jargon
- **Interesting:** a report should give people new information in a format that is easy to read.
- **Evidence:** we must explain our FPAR realistically and effectively. Evidence and examples support our claims.
- **Analysis:** a report should outline the FPAR findings, and the implications of the project. Things to consider: what does our audience need to know? What do we want to say about this issue and our work? How can we best explain the issue and our work?
- **Logical:** our readers should think our FPAR and our work makes sense and flows well.
- **Audience:** always consider who are we writing for and what do they need to know?

Case studies can include written text and images (photos and drawings etc). It is important that the community and individuals give informed consent for the case study to be written.

## Tips for writing case studies

When choosing your case study methods, formulating questions, and writing up your notes, think about covering these areas:

- **The need / human impact:** Show the impact that the issue you are covering is having on people's lives, for example hunger, lack of education / opportunity, no home, no crops, no income. What will happen to people if action does not occur to address this issue?
- **The solution:** Discuss the solutions as proposed by community members; the activism / action that was undertaken by the community to address the issue; and show the difference the action has made to people's lives.
- **Tangibles:** Ask people to talk about specific impacts of the issue in their lives, how the action taken has helped them, and compare what life was like before and after they had it.
- **Clear success stories:** Build the above into a clear picture of a 'success story' that shows the need before undertaking FPAR, and the change that has happened since actions and activities have been implemented.
- **Remaining needs not covered:** What more do they need, as individuals, families, and communities? What further activities or changes would help to improve their lives? This can help to show that more needs to be done.
- **Context and project history:** Describe the country and cultural context of this case study, including levels of poverty, education, what people eat, how often they eat, daily life etc.
- **Project statistics (for program and partner staff):** Explain the number of families supported by the actions undertaken, improvements in health, literacy levels etc.

Remember that any one story that you or others put together from your notes is unlikely to include all of the above, but recording it all gives the best chance of your case study being used in different situations and for different audiences.

The following case study template can be used to document research and action taken in a specific place to understand and address a particular issue.

## Template: FPAR Case Study

| |
|---|
| **FPAR Summary, Objectives, Topic and Change Goal (Maximum 100 words)** |
| **What is the case study context and the situation before doing the FPAR project? (Maximum 100 words)**<br>It is helpful to use baselines to make a comparison. |
| **FPAR activities (methodology) (Maximum 100 words)**<br>List the FPAR activities you undertook (including FPAR design, data collection, analysis, reporting, activism) and the number of people who participated.<br>For example, interviews with 20 women; or writing advocacy letters to five local members of parliament. |
| **FPAR findings (Maximum 300 words)**<br>What did you find from the data collection? Eg what are the issues, is there anything interesting or important, and things we didn't know before? What activism activities did you undertake and what was the impact?<br>For example, we found that women feel that local water decision-making bodies are not inclusive or accessible to them. Therefore, women developed guidelines for how water decision-making bodies can be inclusive of women, and they presented these guidelines to different groups.<br>Include photos if you have them and if co-researchers have consented to their inclusion. |
| **Conclusion (Maximum 100 words)**<br>Were there any challenges during the design or implementation of the FPAR project? |
| **What changes, impacts or outcomes were created as a result of the FPAR project? (Maximum 200 words)**<br>For example, 10 women are now permanent members of a water decision-making body in their community, and have a direct voice in water planning. Also consider if there were any unexpected outcomes. |
| **Recommendations**<br>What recommendations do you have for policy, programming or action? |

# Participatory data analysis

In FPAR, it is important that the community (co-researchers) are involved in analysing the data that has been collected. Participatory data analysis is a collective process of organising the data, identifying the trends in the data, establishing the meaning of the data, and deciding the implications of the research findings.

When we collectively analyse data, there are some questions that co-researchers can ask of the data:

- What sort of ideas are coming up in the data?
- What are some common issues and responses (trends)?
- What are people regularly saying?
- What do different types of people say?
- Are there findings that are unexpected?
- What may explain the trends in the data?
- What are the key findings and conclusions?
- Do the findings lead to any new questions?
- What are the implications for practice or change?

Data collected from participatory methods is usually qualitative (perspectives and experiences rather than statistics and numbers). Data can be collectively analysed through themes to give deeper explanation and understanding of an issue.

## How to thematically analyse data?

There are several steps for groups of people to thematically analyse data.

1. **Organise the data.**

Before the group collectively analyses the data, the data needs to be organised so that it is manageable. Here are some tips:

- **Interviews and focus group discussions:** Prepare documents with transcripts or notes of interviews and focus group discussions in large print (eg 14 point). This is so the document is easy to read. Key quotes from the interviews and focus group discussions can also be printed.
- **Stories:** Prepare documents with individual stories in large print. This can be attached to the co-researcher's drawings or other depictions of their stories.
- **Photos:** Print photos or organise slides of photos on an electronic presentation.
- **Drawings:** Make sure drawings are clearly labelled with the question guiding the drawing (not the person's name) and have an accompanying explanation in written text if required.
- **Mapping:** Make sure all maps are clearly labelled with the question guiding the drawing (not the name of participants).
- **Surveys:** Prepare documents or slides with graphs and tables of the survey data.
- **Videos:** Prepare equipment to show video clips on a large screen.

**Note:** It is very important that the data is anonymous; that is, that names and personal details of co-researchers are not included in the data that the group is analysing.

2. **Identify themes in the data.**

Themes are the main ideas that describe the data. Codes (key words) are used to break down the data into individual themes or ideas. Coding involves highlighting parts of text or images and describing the theme of this data with a single keyword. Themes may be collectively decided before coding the data, or you might develop themes while you are coding.

Group of people can thematically code the data:

- **Interviews and focus group discussions:** Co-researchers can read through the transcripts or notes, and identify key themes in the data. A practical way to do this is to read the text together, collectively decide the theme for this part of the text, and use scissors to physically cut out the text that applies to that theme and put it into a thematic pile. You will soon have lots of strips of paper with quotes / text that applies to each theme. You can count the number of times a theme came up in an interviews or FGD to identify the most common themes.
- **Stories and anecdotes:** Co-researchers can thematically code stories and anecdotes with the same process as interviews and FGDs.
- **Photos and drawings:** Place all the photos or drawings on the ground. Co-researchers can look at the images and identify themes to describe the information in the images. The code can be written on a sticky note and place the note on the relevant part of the image. There will soon be various sticky notes on different images. Alternatively, you can identify a single code / theme for each image, and then place all the images with the same theme in a single pile. Remember to keep the written explanation of the photo or drawing attached to the image.
- **Maps:** Maps are coded using the same process as as photos and drawings. You can also compare maps by putting the maps side by side and identify and discuss the thematic differences.
- **Surveys:** Co-researchers can label graphs and tables with sticky notes for themes, or sort them into thematic piles.
- **Videos:** Co-researchers can collectively decide the theme that describes short parts of video data.

When all the data across the different methods are thematically coded, you then separate out all the data for each theme. This will make a pile with quotes, text, photos and graphs that have the same code.

### 3. Identifying trends within each theme

After the data is coded according to themes, we need to find meaning for the data within each theme. This involves group discussion to identify the trends or common findings within the themes> some questions to ask are:

- What are the most common issues or perspective within the data for this theme?
- How does the data show these issues?

Placemats are a helpful tool to analyse trends within each theme. Placemats can be used to group together the data for each theme into a single poster or slideshow. Co-researchers then identify common trends within the data of each theme.

### 4. Interpretation – finding meaning in the evidence

After groups have discussed the common trends within each theme, it is time to discuss and interpret the data; that is, to find the meaning of the data. To interpret the data, you can ask, 'What does the data tell us?'; and 'what does the data mean?'. The interpretation and analysis is always guided by the research questions and the change goal. It is also informed by intersectional feminist analysis to identify gendered experiences, and how gender intersects with other categories of lived experiences (such as race, age, sexuality). We can ask, "what are different lived experiences within this theme?", and "how do the different lived experiences and inequalities overlap in this theme?".

Several FPAR methods can also be used by groups to collectively interpret and summarise the data. Multiple maps can be combined into a single map. Co-researchers may use timelines to collate the different steps in a community's journey or experience. Roleplay is a great way to present, summarise or explore key issues in the data, and the actions that can be taken. Co-researchers may create collective drawings to explain that group's interpretation of the data and key themes / learnings. Co-researchers may also create an overall story that brings together all the data and findings. Importantly, all these methods need to include a final discussion to summarise the meaning and key findings of the data.

The interpretation of the data helps to finalise the key findings or messages of the research.

### 5. Checking findings with community

After co-researchers have analysed the data and identified key findings, it is important to check the findings with the community who were involved in the research. This might involve a workshop or meeting to report back the research results and hear their opinions.

# Reporting FPAR

FPAR projects often include a report to analyse the FPAR context and process, share the findings of the research process, identify recommendations for action for structural change. FPAR reports may be written reports, and they can also be non-written. There are many different types of non-written reports. This section shares a written report template, and a range of non-written reporting options.

It is important that co-researchers and communities involved in the FPAR are also involved in the reporting process. It may be difficult for co-researchers to write a report, and they may give permission to a researcher or community worker to write it on their behalf. Co-researchers should advise the author about what they want written in the report, and they should read and check the final version before it is published and disseminated.

Remember that ethics and safety are paramount in reporting. No one's name, image or identifying details should be included unless the co-researcher has given informed consent, and they understand how the report will be disseminated. It may be politically unsafe for communities and people to be specifically named in an FPAR report, so the community should discuss this at length before publishing a report.

## Other resources

You will note that many aspects of the FPAR report are also in the FPAR design document. You can reuse some of that content if it is still relevant.

| |
|---|
| **Title page**<br>• Title of report<br>• Author/s names<br>• Logos of organisations and funder (if relevant)<br>• Date of report |
| **Introduction**<br>Introduce the FPAR project and the key focus, aims and objectives of the project. Then explain the structure of the report and what is included. |
| **Background and context**<br>Provide the background to the FPAR project (the reason for doing the Project), and the context of the project, This includes the location, issues, community demographics, and information about the organisations and movements involved. |
| **Literature review**<br>Review the existing literature related to this issue and the project. What is already known and what are the gaps of knowledge and action that the FPAR project aims to address. |
| **Methodology**<br>Explain the research methods, sample (number of people who participated, disaggregated by gender), and the ethics strategies. |
| **Findings**<br>Present the research findings from the data. This can be presented thematically, with evidence from the different methods and strong quotes to illustrate the key issues. Be careful about what information is shared - safety and ethics first! |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Discussion**<br>Discuss the implications of the findings, and what they mean for policy and action. The findings can be situated with the existing literature. | |
| **Actions**<br>Share the FPAR strategies and actions that co-researchers have undertaken to demand their rights, and the impacts and outcomes of those strategies. Be careful about what information is shared - safety and ethics first! | |
| **Recommendations**<br>Provide a list of recommendations for action for different actors (different levels of government, institutions, communities, individuals). Try to keep the recommendations meaningful and achievable and based on your evidence. | |
| **Conclusion**<br>Summarise the findings and conclude the report with a call to action. | |
| **References**<br>Provides references for any literature or other materials that you have cited in the report. | |

## Writing up findings with an intersectional feminist lens

In FPAR, it is very important that research findings are reported with an intersectional feminist lens. The findings should be disaggregated (separated) by gender and other characteristics or identities (such as age or race), and we should be attentive to how these different lived experiences may overlap.

When writing up findings with an intersectional feminist lens, we share evidence and voices of different inequalities and lived experiences. Writing in this way helps the reader to understand the diversity of lived experiences, and how people of a particular group may have unique experiences. We can also compare and contrast different experiences, and highlight evidence that shows how inequalities overlap.

It is particularly important that we include the words and voices of co-researchers. This includes using direct quotes in the report, and describing local experiences or issues with the words used by co-researchers (rather than us reinterpreting what they say).

## Non-written reporting

Co-researchers may wish to report their FPAR in non-written form instead of, or as well as, a written report. Non-written reports are creative, inclusive, and accessible for communities. There are many different types of non-written reporting formats:

- **Presentations:** Co-researchers can present their FPAR through presentations to communities, authorities, and institutions. Presentations may include speeches, visual presentations with photos and images, and videos. Co-researchers and communities should design and lead the presentations.
- **Art:** FPAR findings and actions can be reported in forms of art, such as collective drawings or sculptures, comics, and graphic novels.
- **Short films:** Co-researchers can create a short film to share their findings and actions through their FPAR project. The video can include describing the context and the issues, people sharing their stories, and sharing the actions that the community has taken.
- **Theatre:** Co-researchers can create a theatre performance to share the context, findings and actions through their FPAR.

Remember, be careful about what information is shared in the non-written report. Safety and ethics first!

Image: Reporting findings in a community presentation (Photo: Oxfam).

# Activism through FPAR

The 'A' in FPAR is 'Action'. This key aspect of FPAR involves using the information, data and knowledge co-created by the affected communities to advocate and demand justice. Through using creative methods, the purpose of FPAR is to empower the communities to organise and mobilise on shared common goals. This section discusses how co-researchers and communities can use knowledge to inform activism and advocacy for structural change.

## The connection between research and activism

The information collected throughout the research methods shares how the human rights and livelihoods of communities are being affected by a system of injustices. The data also show how communities can shape their own solutions. After co-researchers have identified the key findings in the data, they will develop key recommendations for change. These recommendations can be the basis for planning advocacy to demand that these recommendations are implemented. The data data, findings and recommendations are key evidence to justify the advocacy.

Communities know what needs to change in order for their lives to be secure and safe. They have a right to demand the government, as the 'duty holder', to be responsible for ensuring that their lives and livelihoods are being protected against injustices. A research report shares the evidence base of findings and recommendations that communities can use to plan advocacy opportunities to achieve their Change Goals.

## Campaigns and movements

FPAR provides the tools necessary to develop a strong campaign that maps who the actors are that will support a community's demands and those that won't. A campaign to demand justice will only be successful if there is strength in the power of people to organise in solidarity. Members of a community may choose to set up an organisation or a coalition or a network to organise themselves on a social issue that affects them. There may be existing organisations or unions that co-researchers could join or who would be interested to support or join the community members in demanding justice. Co-researchers may be able to secure resources from large aid-development organisations to build their campaign. The FPAR report becomes the 'product' from which campaign proposals can be developed and pitched.

The FPAR report can be shared widely - among allies, but also with government stakeholders, media, the UN and other aid-development organisations - to raise awareness on what issues affect the communities and what their demands for action are. Co-researchers can host events to launch the report and invite media, allies, government and aid-development organisations to share their findings. The co-researchers can seek invitations to attend and share their report in various convenings whether local, regional and international to build further awareness. These actions are key in highlighting the issues facing the community, building support from stakeholders to join their demands and also holding the government accountable to do better.

The FPAR report forms the foundation of how co-researchers can build their campaign to demand justice. In developing a campaign strategy, co-researchers must identify their Theory of Change on 'X (who) needs to do Y (action) to achieve Z (goal)'. This is a critical step in planning the strategy, the activities and the actions needed for a successful campaign. It is good practice to evaluate and reflect at each stage of the campaign planning that the resources and capacity are aligned with the speed and scale with which advocacy is being shaped. One of the best ways to be informed whether the advocacy and campaign is on track is to sustain and build relationships with allies that will work together to achieve a winnable goal. The beauty about mobilising on a campaign goal is that it will resonate among many other social movements and groups that will join to support the demands because the goals would be a win for different communities as well.

## Campaign strategies

There are a diverse range of Y/actions that can be used to achieve Z/justice. Be mindful of the security risks and harm that could potentially arise with different strategies. Choose actions that will successfully win.

## Social media

One of the most powerful tools for digital and social organising is using social media. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter build wide campaigns that can reach people all across the country and the world. Co-researchers can create groups and pages of their campaigns and share resources, information, FPAR report, etc to build more interest and raise awareness and support from across the country and beyond.

The Black Lives Matter movement began following the George Floyd incident and reached all parts of the world through the power of social media. The major news outlets picked this story and shared it for weeks leading to the perpetrators being sentenced, having laws reformed and greater scrutiny of police powers not only in the United States but across the world. The most enduring legacy of this campaign is the awareness of how discriminated black people are and how colonialism in our socio-economic and political systems must be addressed.

## Lobbying and influencing

Lobbying and influencing are powerful tools that build allies and raise awareness across different groups of stakeholders. This can be as micro as having meetings with local leaders, other community groups, farmers, youth, media, getting signatures on a petition or at the macro level with high level officials, in national, regional and international spaces to demand justice. A number of these high level convening spaces such as ASEAN, UN events and other development, womens, environment, climate and labour forums have a parallel forums for civil society or allows access to civil society to speak. Accessing these spaces provides a powerful platform to share your demands, build solidarity and support and seek justice from the State.

## Protest, demonstrations and direct action

A movement can be organised from the local level and build up momentum before being picked up by the media or catching the attention of the government or given the power of technology spread rapidly across borders. If it's an issue that affects thousands or more, it is readily shared and can turn into a nation-wide campaign. In Thailand, the 2020 student protests demonstrated the power of young people standing in defiance of the military and the monarchy to demand a democratic, transparent and accountable system of governance from their leaders. This then spilled over as the The Milk Tea Alliance from India to Hong Kong to Taiwan, which saw millions of students protesting using symbols of teen pop culture to connect with each other across the region to demand self determination, democracy and freedom from repression.

The women's rights movements, the labour rights movements, Indigenous peoples' movements and other social movements all lobbied and influenced both women and men, irrespective of sex, gender, religion, ethnic origin and class to build campaigns from the ground up and across different countries to secure fundamental human rights. Historically, without advanced technology these movements were shaped by direct protest actions, demonstrations, civic action, public campaigning from streets to government buildings. In the times of COVID-19, but also countries with severe repression these direct actions were very risky or were temporarily suspended; however, despite these challenges direct actions remain some of the most powerful ways of getting the government to make sweeping changes that work for the people. In Myanmar and Indonesia despite the threat of armed retaliation by the State and COVID-19 many organisers mobilised citizens to join the protests to demand justice. Farmers in India spent months protesting against laws that would have forced them into greater debt, poorer working conditions and left to the vices of unregulated profit for the elites.

## Building movements through FPAR

All these movements, and the people involved shape historic changes in the social fabric of their society to demand justice. At great risk, sacrificing their work, family and life, the people who face the most violations are left with little option but to join the fight for resistance. The success of any campaigns is to connect the issues to the values of what people believe in, for them to feel very strongly that in order for change to happen it not only secures their lives but also those of others who are also suffering. The community behind movements is what provides the campaign with the fuel to launch but also the solidarity and support it needs to survive.

FPAR is how grassroots communities become aware of how injustices drive the social-economic insecurities they face in their lives. Direct actions and different forms of campaigning is not necessarily the domain of modern, educated, city-dwellers but for all people to become informed about how systems of injustices and oppression work to keep them deliberately stuck in cycles of poverty, inequality, violence and hardships. The more information through stories is shared among people whether they live in rural remote regions to the cities, the more awareness is developed on how common and connected their struggles are and why it is important for them to unite in solidarity to demand justice from those in power. Knowledge, shared beliefs and a common goal creates the most enabling environment for people to organise and mobilise. Our greatest achievements in humanity have been shaped entirely by social movements tackling power and oppression.

### Other resources

For more information about feminist campaigns see Oxfam's guide to feminist influencing
https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620723/gd-oxfam-guide-feminist-influencing-070319-en.pdf?sequence=5

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Image: Local women along Sesan River in Rattanakiri province, Cambodia (Photo: Oxfam).

## HOW TO COLLABORATE WITH US?

**WE ARE PLEASED TO WORK WITH YOU, SHARING OUR KNOWLEDGE, RESOURCES AND NETWORKS.**


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info.MRWGP@oxfam.org

AND VISIT US

https://asia.oxfam.org/what-we-do/mekong-water-governance

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