ICLD Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy

2023 | Toolbox

Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR)

A guide to leadership for the Sustainable Development Goals

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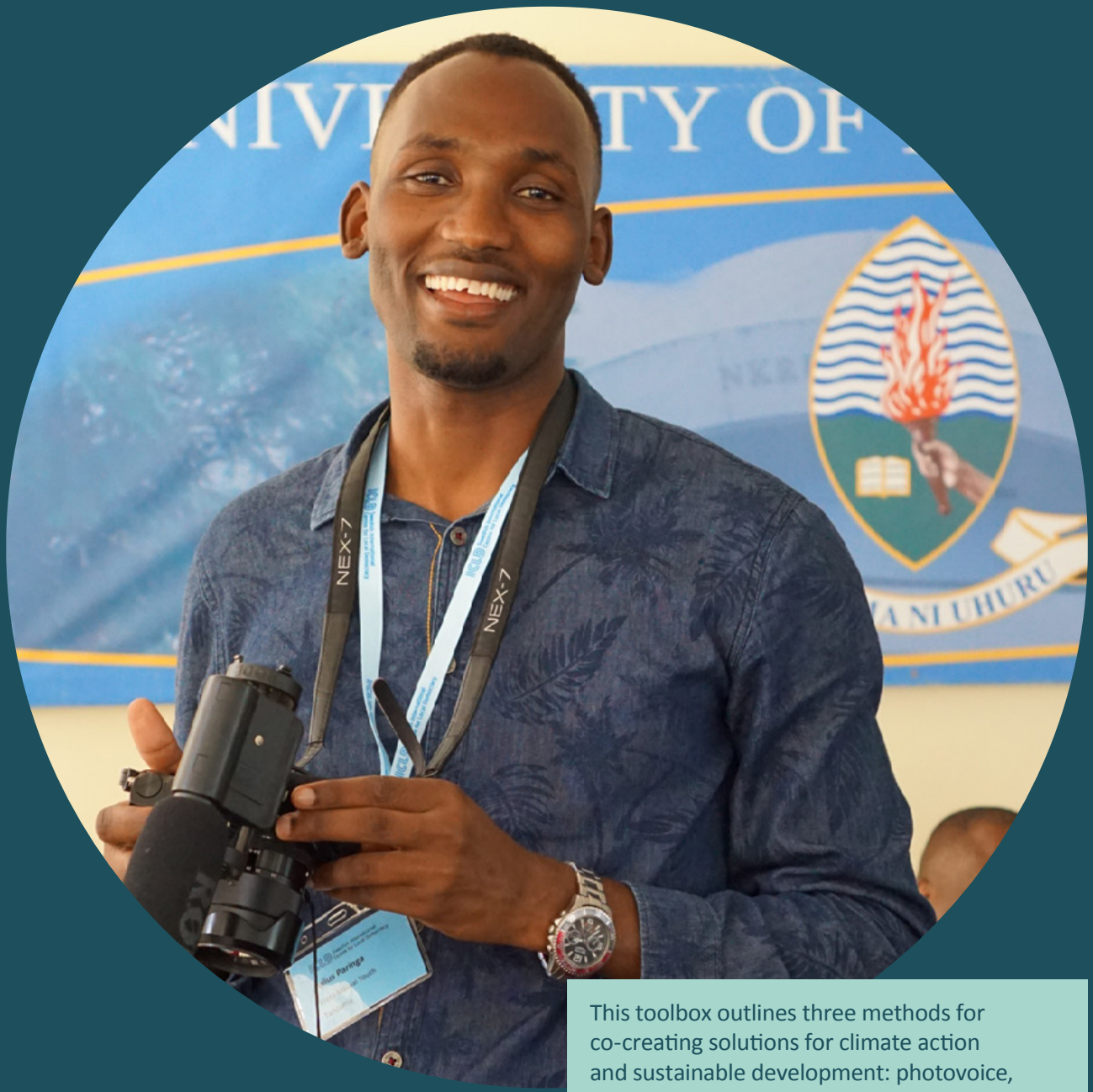


Julius Daniel during a participatory video exercise during the training in CBPR organized by ICLD, CIFAL Victoria and University of Dar es Salaam in November 2022.

Photo: Ida Edvinsson

This toolbox outlines three methods for co-creating solutions for climate action and sustainable development: photovoice, community asset mapping and participatory video. It is especially relevant to bridge the gap between policy, academia and communities.

What is Community-based Participatory Research?

Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) is distinguished by its community-driven, participatory, and action-oriented approach to research with the intention to make a positive impact on communities that is relevant and meaningful.

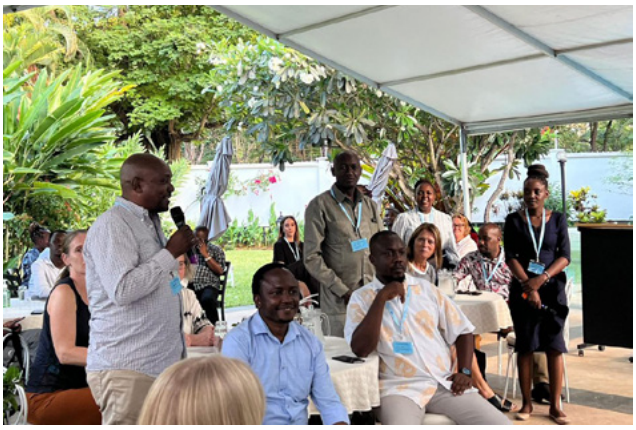
Community-based participatory research involves active participation of those whose lives are most affected by the issues being studied in all phases of research, for the purpose of producing useful results to make positive change. CBPR is used to promote citizen involvement and empowerment of community members. In this approach, both the researcher and participants are actively involved in developing the goals and methods for data collection and analysis, as well as implementation of the results that will promote change and increase awareness of the issue under study, generally to improve the lives of those involved.

The purpose of using CBPR approach is to better understand the perspectives, ideas and aspirations of a community on a given issue.

Why CBPR for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals?

The challenges facing people and the planet today require new ways of understanding and working together. Using a CBPR approach to better understand the local experiences and realities that individuals and communities are facing in our increasingly complex and challenging world - such as climate change and the myriad ways this impacts lives and livelihoods – researchers, governments and local leaders are better equipped to respond in meaningful and appropriate ways. Through participatory and asset-based approaches, community members are more empowered to engage and bring their creativity, networks and knowledge to find solutions. The climate crisis – and growing uncertainty and vulnerability of all systems supporting life on earth – requires a localized approach, drawing on local community knowledge, lived experience and strong leadership in local governments.

Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) is particularly well suited as an inclusive and asset-based approach to addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation, by ensuring solutions are co-created, relevant and owned by communities involved. The 17 Global Goals, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for present and future generations. The Goals are interconnected, recognizing that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. CBPR – as a locally contextualized approach to knowledge co-creation and action– responds to such challenges in innovative ways with a focus on building relationships, empathy and trust.



Researchers and local government representatives from Kenya, Tanzania and Sweden presenting their participatory video during a CBPR training in Dar es-Salaam in November 2022

Photo credit: Ida Edvinsson

Ethical considerations in CBPR

All research raises questions about ethics: about the rigour, responsibility and respect of the practices of researchers. As a result, there are strict systems in place to encourage and enforce ethical practice. However, CBPR creates specific challenges which may not be adequately addressed by institutional frameworks for ethical conduct in research. Where the boundaries between researchers and 'research subjects' begin to blur, always consider ethical concerns related to aspects of power, ownership and dissemination of research findings, anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.
See the NCCPE overview of ethical principles.

Recommended readings

Wilson E, Kenny A, Dickson-Swift V. (2018). Ethical Challenges in Community-Based Participatory Research: A Scoping Review. Qualitative Health Research. 28(2):189-199. doi:10.1177/1049732317690721

Wood, L. (2017). The Ethical Implications of Community-Based Research: A Call to Rethink Current Review Board Requirements. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917748276

Brydon-Miller, M., Wood, L. (2022). Rethinking Ethical Processes for Community-Based Research with Vulnerable Populations: Lessons from Practice. In: Wood, L. (eds) Community-based Research with Vulnerable Populations. Palgrave Studies in Education Research Methods. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-86402-6_2

Method 1: Photovoice

Amplifying voices through photography

Photovoice is a process by which people identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hand of people to enable them to act as recorders and potential catalysts for change (Wang & Burris, 1997).

This arts-based research approach uses the medium of photographs to share narratives and create dialogues (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Participants are given a question/statement related to the research topic, take photographs based on the topic, and discuss the narrative of their photos with other participants (Sutton-Brown, 2014). This allows themes to emerge, based in the perceptions, needs and ideas of community members.

You may wish to use photovoice in a focus group session, to better understand the perspectives and priorities of the community members on a particular topic. Photographs and other artistic methods can help participants more easily convey their ideas. This is an accessible, and easy to use method that can be applied in a variety of community engagement settings and for various purposes.

Process

Each participant will capture an image (or several) in response to the question/statement they are provided. Participants will then gather to share their photo(s), to dialogue and develop themes. It is important to ensure participants have cameras for the first stage (photography) and allow an hour for the second stage (group conversation about participant photos).

Optimal time for group conversation: 60-90 minutes depending on number of participants.
Group size: 3-15 (although this can be scaled to include large numbers of participants).
Total time: 1 day-2 weeks, depending on the topic.

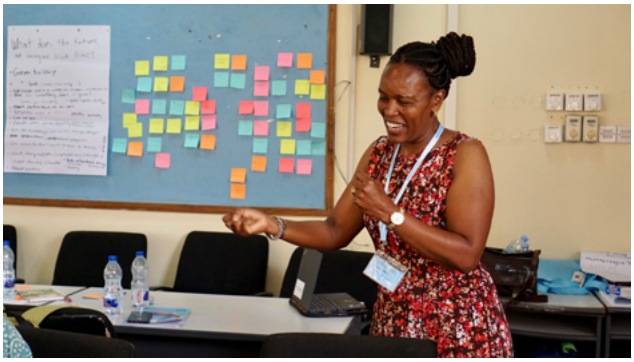
Stages
1) recruitment and scheduling
2) orientation (may be combined with no. 1)
3) photography
4) debriefing, categorization, and prioritization; — Data Theming (audio record)
5) report back to community and decision-makers — Your Final Report

Planning

- Create one guiding statement or question that is based on your inquiry topic (mainly open, guided by key and sub questions) for participants to submit a photo using the question as their guide and create questions (maximum three) for the conversation session
- Decide group size, select and invite participants, confirm (time, date, directions to conversation venue)
- Prepare instruction guide for participants, pilot test
- Prepare consent forms required (if applicable):
  1) consent to participate in the inquiry, and if applicable
  2) consent from participant in the photo,
- Check venue for conversation session (sufficient size, comfortable, layout, safe, accessible)
- Check recording system (plus written notes?), flipchart paper etc.
- Note taker as well as facilitator? Clarify roles.

Facilitation

- Send instruction guide to those participants that accepted your invitation to participate. Include consent forms they may need
- Conversation session: Intro – confirm consent (incl. audio or video, issues of confidentiality, inability to withdraw individual comments); place images on wall or flipchart(s); set room up in a circle seating arrangement
- Begin session with a reminder of topic, purpose; encourage participants to freely respond to the questions posed; ask they retrieve their photos and refer to it when answering the questions; engage participants to identify themes
- Employ strong listening and inclusion skills, non-judging
- Finalize with summary statement and thank participants
- Report back with final research results and ask their feedback



Patricia Nzioka reflecting on images representing "what's the future you imagine?"

Photo credit: Ida Edvinsson

Advantages/Disadvantages

Conversation can occur virtually, people have cameras, enabling a large group of people to be involved/engaged in the inquiry topic, and participants develop themes during the conversation session. Potential technology challenges could play a role; lack of control over the conversation session; can be time consuming.

Example: WASH in Usoma, Kenya

A research team used photovoice to facilitate social action around Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) issues in a rural community in Kenya.[1] After a conversation around hygiene practices, 8 women took photographs that represented facilities, attitudes and behaviors around them. Doing this, they noticed unsanitary behaviours, inadequate facilities and how alternative solutions were used and perceived. In groups, participants then discussed their experiences with and (re)action to the photographs. From the group discussion, three major themes emerged: awareness, immediate (re)actions, and planned actions. Realisations during the photography process combined with insights from the group discussion raised awareness and motivated community members to act.

Following the project, community leaders reported that there was better cooperation among various groups in the community, completion of a water and sanitation block, and increased participation in the activities of the Usoma Water and Sanitation (UWASH) Committee. This illustrates how photovoice can help understand WASH behaviours and perceptions, and empower people, through their photographs and narratives, to generate community-led interventions.

Recommended resources

Bendell, K., & Sylvestre, J. (2016). How different approaches to taking pictures influences participation in a photovoice project. Action Research. doi:10.1177/1476750316653812

Castleden, H., Garvin, T., & Huu-ay-aht First Nation. (2008). Modifying Photovoice for community-based participatory Indigenous research. Social science & medicine, 66(6), 1393-1405.

Hall, B. (2014). International Participatory Research Network. In D. Coghlan & M. Brydon- Miller (Eds.). The SAGE encyclopedia of action research. (Vol. 9, pp. 454-456). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi:http://dx.doi.org.ezpoxy.royalroads.ca/10.1425/9781446294406.n163

Huang, Y., & Hsu, Y. C. (2018). Applying photovoice to explore a community's environmental health issues. International journal of environmental research and public health, 15(7), 1471.

In J. Hughes (Ed.), SAGE visual methods. (Vol 8, v4-221-v4-239). London: Sage Publications Ltd. Retrieved from: http://srmo.sageput.com/ezproxy.royalroads.ca/view/sage-visual-methods/SAGE.xml

Sutton-Brown, C. A. (2014). Photovoice: A methodological guide. Photography and Culture. 7(2), 169-185.

1 Bisung et. al. (2015). Using Photovoice as a Community Based ParticipatoryResearch Tool for Changing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Behaviours in Usoma, Kenya, BioMed Research International. http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2015/903025

Method 2: Community Asset Mapping

Building on community strengths

Community asset mapping is a strength-based approach to community development, sometimes known as 'asset-based mapping'. It's a process by which communities can discover and document their local assets and mobilize their strengths to build more sustainable communities.

The 'Mapping our Common Ground' handbook (2018) describes asset-based mapping with three characteristics: (1) it starts with what is present, not what is absent; (2) it is internally focused to stress the importance of local definitions, visions, means and ownership of development; and (3) it is relationship-driven. This process often begins with mapping individual capacities and strengths and then extending to specific sectors and themes, and aims to affirm the intrinsic capability and innovations of communities to find solutions to the challenges they face.

Community-based mapping enables people to capture and better understand the multifaceted assets and uniqueness of a community and place. This approach is used worldwide as a hands-on, engaging, knowledge-building tool for participatory and sustainable community development, research and activism. People of all ages can be involved in mapping the communities' narratives, stories, knowledge and resources in the broadest sense. The process of mapping – whether spatial, mental or aspirational - can help support advocacy for resistance and change—literally changing the story by changing the map. Community Mapping is an excellent engagement tool in identifying and building on community assets and innovations often used for planning and advocacy.

"Community mapping is as much about process as it is about getting the map done. As a participatory and creative educational tool, mapping relies on the active engagement of participants to think together graphically and not just verbally. The process of map- making can bring together diverse perspectives and people to affirm different experiences and worldviews, to create dialogue and common understanding" (Mapping our Common Ground, 2018).

Process

The Common Ground Handbook (2018) provide an overview of the learning and facilitation process and also the Mapping Tools section (pp. 28 - 34) offers workshop and design examples and outlines for you to use or adapt.

1. Welcome your guests. A set-up where you provide groupings of tables, each with five or six chairs is ideal. If you are outside, use what you can. Remember that community mapping does not require sophisticated technology or tools, you can use materials found outside, and be creative with what you have. Participants should be welcomed and have informal time to meet one another through friendly introductions, warm-up activities and refreshment breaks. Having food is always a good idea.

2. Have skilled facilitators. Facilitators should feel comfortable speaking to a large group and guiding the small group (3-6 people) mapping process. Designate small group leaders to facilitate group listening and/or to record what is being said.

3. Focus on participation, fun, and inclusion. Everyone's voice should be included and all ideas celebrated, and the more diversity in the group, the better. The process of mapping allows different forms of expression and dialogue and aims to create space for diverse views to be expressed in an inclusive and safe environment.

4. Focus on storytelling. Our lives are full of stories and Community mapmaking is about storytelling and creating a sense of place. The process does not require skilled artists or technicians, and a variety of tools can be used to record stories, aspirations and hopes.

Case example: Mapping community assets for violence prevention

In the SCRATCHMAP Project, conducted in South Africa and USA, community asset mapping was used to map out "safe" and "unsafe" areas, in order to identify and leverage on the assets that support safety and peace.2 These assets were both tangible and intangible, including capabilities, skills, values, resources, links, associations, organisations and institutions.

The asset perspective served to reconceptualize or reframe communities as being resourceful and resilient rather than contexts of problems, and the results helped community developers and members to focus their efforts on leveraging the positive and targeting the negative.

Workshop example: Personal Journey Mapping

Group size: 1-10
Time: 1.5 hours
Objective: to connect people to place, to build group trust, to share worldviews and stories. This example is a great way to prepare for other collective work, including other CBPR projects. Consider using this method at the beginning of a Participatory video or photovoice project to help identify personal assets before moving into collective storytelling.
Materials: large sheets of paper, colored pencils, crayons, or markers, sticky notes

Introduction – 15 minutes. Invite participants to sit in a circle and introduce themselves. The facilitator describes a personal journey map, noting that each person's map is full of rich stories, with significant turning points, ups and downs, and particular places and people that have affected them (facilitators can give examples from their own lives).

Guiding questions:

- What are the significant events, people, and places in your life?
- What are the major turning points? What have been the key insights or learnings?

The facilitator encourages participants to draw or map their journeys however they may wish, using physical features or temporal timelines – there is no right or wrong way to share your story. Participants will be asked to share their personal journeys with the larger group when ready.

Individual Mapping – 30-45 minutes. Participants take time to draw their personal stories on their own.

Group Presentations – 10-20 minutes per person. Participants and facilitator come back together and each person is asked to share their personal journey map. Encourage everyone to share for 10-15 minutes.

Closing – 10 minutes. To close the session, invite each person to share a key insight, or something they have learned through the process. Thank everyone for their time and engagement.

Variations on personal journey mapping. This approach or tool can be applied using different themes, or groups (i.e. youth, elders) and can be used in combination with other methods.

Recommended resources:

Community Mapping Game (UVic Map Shop): https://mapping.uvic.ca/section/community-mapping-game

Mapping our Common Ground: A community and green mapping resource guide: https://mapping.uvic.ca/sites/mapping.uvic.ca/files/Mapping%20Our%20Common%20Ground%202018%20low%20res.pdf

McAllister, R. R., & Zwickle, A. (2021). Participatory mapping for sustainable development: Insights from the development of a global mapping toolkit. Journal of Environmental Management, 289, 112452.

2 Cutts, Teresa F. et. al (2016). Community asset mapping for violence prevention: A comparison of views in Erijaville, South Africa and Memphis, USA. African Safety Promotion Journal. 14. 1-25.

Method 3: Participatory Video

Storytelling for collective action

Participatory Video (PV), also known as community-based video, is a collaborative approach to filmmaking that involves members of a community in the production of a video. The process aims to give community members a platform to share their own stories and ideas. This method can be used for a variety of purposes, including advocacy for a particular cause, education, building communication skills and capacity and for social change.

In the context of using participatory video for research, participants and researchers are actively involved in all phases of the process, including setting the agenda and research questions, facilitating the interviews, editing and post-production as well as dissemination of the video and other ways to engage intended actors on the topics of interest. This approach has been shown to enable new dialogical spaces, new forms of communication and an effective way of engaging community members in meaningful and creative ways.

Process

The process of PV typically involves several steps that can be modified based on the time and resources available. These steps include:

1. Training in basic video production skills, such as how to operate a camera and how to conduct interviews

2. Members of the community work together to identify a topic or issue that they want to address through the video. They may want to conduct research, gather footage (b-roll) and conduct interviews with members of the community and various actors to gather the necessary information and perspectives.

3. Community members review footage and through a collaborative process, the video is edited together.

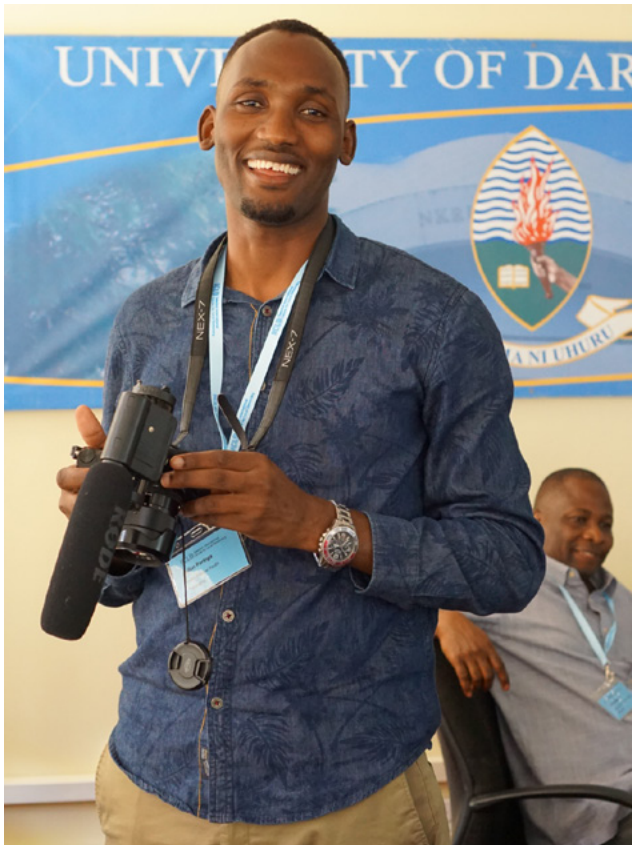
4. The completed video is then often screened for the community and may be shared more widely to raise awareness about the issue or to promote social change. Similar to any knowledge output from CBPR, the community ultimately decides how and in which ways their stories will be shared.

Resources

The resources needed to undertake a PV project will depend on a variety of factors, including the size of the community involved and the scope of the project. Some considerations might include:

- Training materials or workshops to teach basic video production and communications skills
- Video equipment, such as cameras, external microphones, tripod and lighting
- Editing software and a computer for editing the footage. Some Ipads and androids have editing software built in.
- A space for community members to get together and collaborate on the project
- Funding to support honorariums, food and other expenses

It is important to also have the support and involvement of community leaders and organizations, as well as other relevant actors that might help support implementation of any research outcomes, and or can advocate for long-term social change. This can help ensure that the project is successful and that the final video accurately reflects the experiences and perspectives of the community.



Julius Daniel during a participatory video exercise during the training in CBPR organized by ICLD, CIFAL Victoria and University of Dar es Salaam in November 2022.

Photo credit: Ida Edvinsson

Advantages/Disadvantages

Visual output makes result widely available; capacity-building process; deep collaborations; giving communities voice. However, resource intense; requires technical equipment, software and understanding. Time consuming.

Example

In a PV project, researchers worked with young women working in a cotton mill in Tamil Nadu to collect workers' stories in a film.3 They then analyzed them and produced a comprehensive systemic analysis of their situation of being dependent on money lenders and bonded labor. This led to the creation of action research groups, mapping of the village's household expenses and exploring why they were so dependent. This in turn gave insight that made the villagers renegotiate practices with expensive weddings and temple donations, close down liquor stores and keep moneylenders out of their homes, to ensure a bigger proportion of their marginal income to be available for basic needs such as food and clothing. The project sparked 8 other research groups and a number of NGO's to work in the area, which shows the power of participatory research and the spread it has potential for.

Recommended resources:

Roque, A., Wutich, A., Quimby, B., Porter, S., Zheng, M., Hossain, M. J., & Brewis, A. (2022). Participatory approaches in water research: A review. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water, 9(2), e1577. https://doi.org/10.1002/wat2.1577

Tremblay, C., & Jayme, B. de O. (2015). Community knowledge co-creation through participatory video. Action Research, 13(3), 298–314. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750315572158

Wheeler, J. (2012). Using Participatory Video to Engage in Policy Processes: Representation, Power and Knowledge in Public Screenings. In E. J. Milne, C. Mitchell, & N. de Lange (Eds.), Handbook of Participatory Video (pp. 365–379). AltaMira Press.

3 Burns, D., Howard, J., & Ospina, S. (2021) Sage Handbook for Participatory Research. Example explained here: https://www.participatorymethods.org/resource/video-example-participatory-research-action

Turning Knowledge into Action

The co-creation of knowledge in principle conveys the promise of significant social impacts. Translating research into action and impact is therefore a critical feature of CBPR. It is why we do action-oriented and participatory research!

By thinking about and planning for the intended outcomes of our research (i.e 'theory of change") we are better equipped to have long-lasting and far-reaching impact. Engaging community partners in the meaning making process also furthers our efforts towards knowledge justice and rigour, by validating the interpretation of the research, and how this knowledge will be disseminated and used.

In CBPR, knowledge bridging occurs throughout the entire research process and varies widely across regions and by researcher and communities. Ultimately, there is no checklist of specific actions to ensure impactful knowledge bridging, nor would such a list be desirable given the need to tailor this to specific contexts. There are however some key principles of effective knowledge bridging including 1) respect, 2) mutual understanding, and 3) researcher responsibility.

> Knowledge mobilization is a broad term that refers to a range of activities pertaining to the production and use of research for impact. Knowledge mobilization aims to co-produce the **right information** that can be widely shared in the **right format** to the **right knowledge** users at the **right time** to maximize the impact of research. (Research Impact Canada)

Research Impact Canada[4] has produced a helpful framework and reflective questions for thinking about and guiding our efforts towards a 'co-produced pathway to impact' including the following:

Research	What research questions will help advance the impact of your work?
Dissemination	Who are your knowledge user(s)? How can you share knowledge in a way that will achieve impact?
Uptake	How would you like this information to be used? How can you facilitate a more accessible uptake of information among your target audience?
Implementation	How can knowledge help you create opportunities and overcome challenges in implementing policies, practices, and/or services?
Impact	What is the impact that you would like to see for the communities that you are working with?

Recommended resources:

Hall, B. L., & Tandon, R. (2017). Decolonization of knowledge, epistemicide, participatory research and higher education. The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Theory. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 729-751.

Cargo, M., Harris, J., Pantoja, T., & Boothroyd, R. (2017). Pathways to impact for community-based participatory research projects. Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action, 11(1), 37-46.

A guide to setting your knowledge mobilization goals – Research Impact Canada.

4 https://researchimpact.ca/wp-content/uploads/KMb-Goal-Setting.pdf

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The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is part of the Swedish development cooperation. The mandate of the organization is to contribute to poverty alleviation by strengthening local governments.

THE GLOBAL GOALS

For Sustainable Development

ICLD Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy