



Participatory research with young people: a toolkit

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AGIP is a global, intergenerational, feminist coalition of 17 member organizations, co-chaired by Plan International and Akili Dada. AGIP members collaborate to drive political commitment and evidence-informed investments to shift outcomes for adolescent girls, and advocate for the meaningful engagement, resourcing, and co-leadership of adolescent girls.

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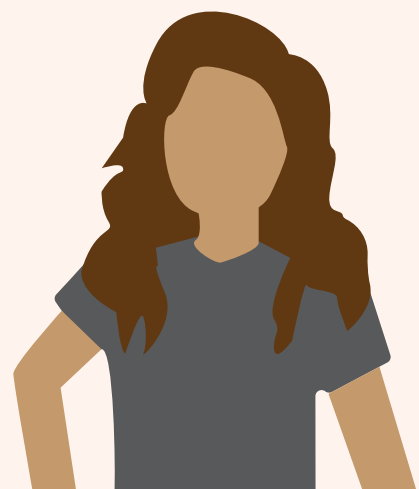
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Introduction by Sana Othman, youth researcher

Since 2019, my journey with GAGE participatory research has been transformative. Coming from a conservative community in Baalbek, Lebanon, I began as a hesitant participant, wary of expressing my views. But GAGE provided a safe space that encouraged me to voice my thoughts, confront Lebanon's socio-economic challenges, and even question the political sectarianism ingrained in my upbringing. This experience sparked a shift in my identity, allowing me to challenge traditional gender expectations and pursue my educational and career aspirations in Beirut despite societal pressures.

Through GAGE, I explored taboo topics like sexuality, fostering a deeper acceptance of diverse identities and empowering me to stand up for my rights and those of women in my community. This journey has not only made me a confident advocate but also ignited my passion to inspire change in others.

A toolkit to guide young researchers in participatory research is crucial for fostering inclusivity, clarity, and empowerment throughout the research process. It equips participants with essential tools to engage actively and confidently, creating a space where their perspectives are authentically represented. By outlining research aims, methods, and participant rights, the toolkit builds a shared understanding of participatory principles, enabling respondents to contribute more meaningfully, shaping research outcomes that are both robust and genuinely reflective of their lived experiences.

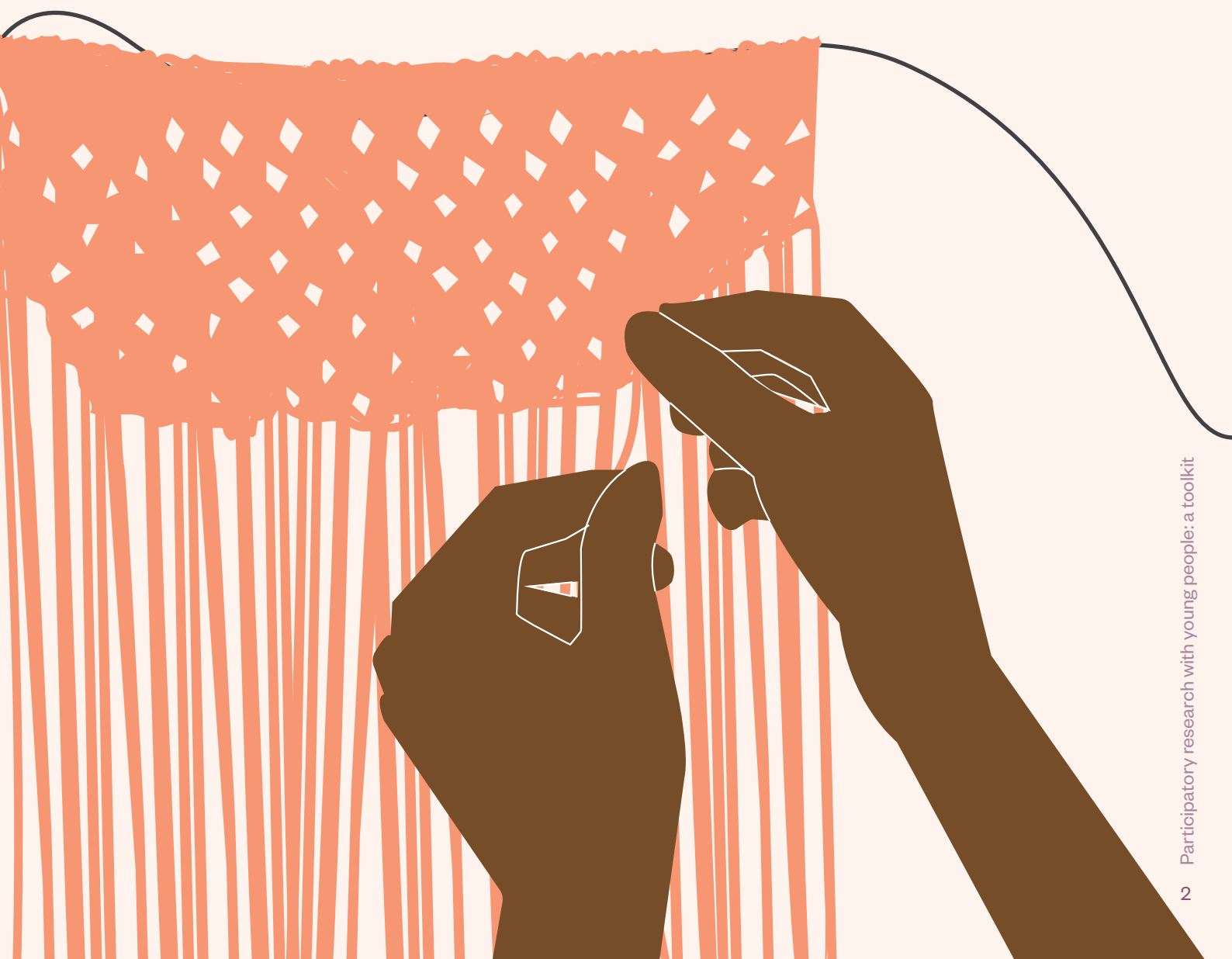


About this toolkit

Research plays a critical role in informing and shaping policy-making decisions and programme interventions which can make valuable contributions to people's lives. By providing rigorous, evidence-based insights, research contributes to effective solutions that help address complex challenges. For both younger and more experienced researchers, the knowledge research generates informs the way that we understand the world around us and contextualises our relationship with it.

As participatory research has become a popular approach in recent years, efforts to include

young people as active research participants and as co-leaders in the research process, have driven youth-focused and youth-led research agendas. This toolkit provides an overview of what participatory research is, and how to use it. We've included some examples of best and promising practices that can help both more experienced researchers working with young people as participatory researchers as well as young people themselves get the best results to advance young people's wellbeing.



What is participatory research?

Participatory research is best considered as an **approach to research**, rather than a research method. It is done **with** or **by** the people who participate, rather than **on, about** or **to** them.

Grounded in the rights-based approach of ‘**nothing about us, without us**’, participatory action research (PAR) aims to **disrupt power imbalances**. This means it is especially useful when researching with **young people who are marginalised** within their communities, such as young people living in poverty, young people who married as children, adolescent mothers, out-of-school children and youth – and any other groups who may be vulnerable, and often left on the margins of research endeavours. When used effectively, participatory research can support youth agency and activism by promoting inclusion as well as help to unearth key themes affecting young people or solutions to help them thrive, which would have otherwise remained hidden.

There are many different types of ways young people can be involved in participatory action research initiatives: there are approaches where young people are research leaders, others in which young people are co-leaders, and others still where young people are overall advisors to a research project. This toolkit will cover a variety of these approaches and will always consider less experienced researchers as working with more experienced researchers – rather than less experienced researchers conducting research projects entirely on their own. As such, there are scaffolding elements whereby experienced researchers are able to train, safeguard and mentor others in all stages of the research process. This toolkit covers approaches where more experienced researchers (who are often older adults!) may provide supervision, offer capacity strengthening opportunities and conduct light-touch oversight, while other approaches see experienced researchers working side-by-side with youth researchers all along the way.

This toolkit answers two **key questions**:

How can
you deliver effective
and empowering
participatory
research with and
for young people?

What
do good
practice
examples look
like?

Participatory action research (PAR) aims to create a **positive feedback loop that drives social change** while **enhancing young people's ability to perform their own research and advocate for themselves**.

As PAR continues to evolve, research and social development practitioners are paying more attention to its approach to gender justice and intersectionality. Feminist PAR is one evolving approach that centres women's and girls' experiences (see **Example 1**). PAR is also a useful tool in gender studies research.



'Participatory action research with young people... is an approach to scientific inquiry and social change grounded in principles of equity that engages young people in identifying problems relevant to their own lives, conducting research to understand the problems, and advocating for changes based on research evidence.'

(Source: Emily Ozer, 'Youth-Led Participatory Action Research: Developmental and Equity Perspectives' *Advances in Child Development and Behavior* 2016; 50:189–207)

Example 1: Participatory action research prevents gender-based violence in rural Central American schools

In rural communities in Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, a PAR project on gender equality and tackling gender-based violence has successfully identified, prevented and addressed gender-based violence in schools and the wider community.

Researchers worked with educators, community leaders, teachers, parents and students to identify situations that contribute to gender-based violence, including social norms that perpetuate it.

Young people shared research findings with policy-makers and successfully advocated for significant changes informed by their evidence including: improved (safer) infrastructure for school bathrooms; adolescent pregnancy prevention campaigns; and long-term cooperation with the Ministry of Education in each country.

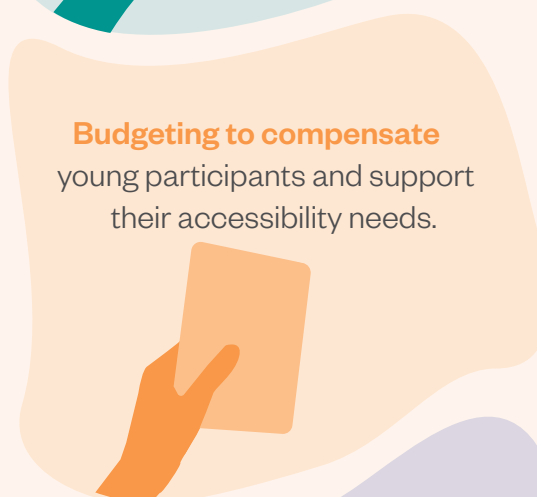
(Source: Arrunategui, G. and Lizarazo, N. (2024) Participatory Action Research Prevents Gender-Based Violence in Rural Central American Schools. Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPEKIX))

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Core principles

Cutting across all 6 key stages in the PAR process (these 6 stages form the backbone of this toolkit and we'll get to them shortly), all stakeholders involved in participatory research studies with young people, should strive to 'live' a set of core principles. Successfully embodied, the core principles below ensure the meaningful and intentional participation of young people in research.



Research is only fully participatory when young people are involved in every stage of the process – from conceptualisation to dissemination, monitoring and evaluation. The following identifies the 6 key stages to ensuring meaningful participatory research with young people.

Doing participatory research: 6 key stages

**With support from more experienced researchers/
mentors, young people:**



STAGE

1

Define the research issues and questions

Overview

Young people can play a key role as co-researchers in **shaping the objectives and themes** of participatory research, as well as in ensuring that research is shaped by an overarching framework of decoloniality and indigeneity. It is key to engage young people in identifying the issues that matter to them so as to ensure that the research is relevant. Consulting young people at the outset of your participatory action research can improve adult researchers' understanding of the issues at hand, and help to validate the research methodology and outcomes of the issues at hand, and lend validity to the research methodology and outcomes.

Adult researchers should be thoughtful in determining which young people to include (**see Example 2**). It's important to avoid bias – for example, favouring young people with more advanced education and English language skills. Make strategic efforts to include vulnerable young people – those who may be marginalised due to poverty, disability, gender, ethnicity, or other intersectional barriers – through financial and non-financial support to ensure that their experiences directly inform the research objectives and agenda-setting process.

Example 2: Including vulnerable and marginalised young people in participatory research: the GAGE example

The Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research programme is grounded in the Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to 'leave no one behind', which informs GAGE's proactive approach to doing research with vulnerable adolescents. GAGE researchers carried out initial country evidence reviews prior to selecting participants for the study, to identify gaps in support for young people in each research setting, which affect adolescents with disabilities, adolescent mothers, refugees and internally displaced adolescents, and adolescents who lack access to educational and employment opportunities. The programme's scope also recognises the divides that occur as a result of gendered norms that take shape during adolescence. GAGE aims to elevate the voices of girls in the Global South – voices that are frequently unheard compared with the voices of their male peers.

Strategies that help young researchers to identify research issues are often open-ended – for example, by defining what a young person considers to be their ‘community’, and identifying some positive aspects they would like to reinforce as well as negative aspects they’d like to change (see **Example 3 & 4**). Depending on the age and experience of the researchers, this process can be quite general (for example, identifying and discussing researchers’ impressions of their community) or quite focused and intensive (for example, identifying and interviewing stakeholders or conducting a community survey).



Key Steps

- 1 Co-Identify** risks, problems, vulnerabilities and deprivations that young people encounter in their everyday lives.
- 2 Prioritise** these issues in order of severity or significance to the co-researchers.
- 3 Answer** these basic questions with young researchers: ‘What’, ‘why’, ‘who’ and ‘how’.

WHY?

Why will a certain line of research be useful in contributing to change in our community?

WHAT?

What are the changes we ultimately want to achieve?
What are the broad questions we want to answer?
What information do we need to understand the issues at hand?

WHO?

Who has power to support these changes?
Who are allies on this issue?

HOW?

How will the information we obtain be used?

Promising practices

Example 3:

Guatemala: Voces y Manos – Empowering youth to advance the health and wellbeing of their communities

A youth development organisation in Rabinal, Guatemala, works with secondary school students to implement community projects ranging from child nutrition to deforestation and sustainable agriculture. Young researchers helped to identify the main issues affecting their peers. They conducted focus group discussions with other students to discuss their problems, identifying lack of trust in teachers, economic hardship, and inadequate sanitary facilities in schools as the biggest issues (which were then validated by the larger student body). The researchers then designed survey questions to rank those issues in order of importance, before developing a proposal on how to research possible solutions to each problem.



Guatemala © UNFPA

Example 4:

Brazil: Viramundo – Changing social, health, and environmental attitudes

Viramundo is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Rio de Janeiro. It uses participatory social technology – photovoice and participatory video – to identify the biggest problems facing adolescents and young people in Rio's slums. Participants have documented their daily lives and shared photos, videos, and recordings of stories with their peers. In this way, they spotlight the challenges that most residents have in common, and try to engage their community to develop crowdsourced solutions.

Checklist

Before moving on to the next stage, check that you have:

☐ ☐

Used an inclusive and intersectional approach to involving youth researchers, using familiar and accessible technologies and materials.

☐ ☐

Used an inclusive approach to identifying the research goals.

☐ ☐

Developed and finalised clear research questions.

☐ ☐

Set out a well-defined purpose underlying the research questions – clearly stating why the particular approach you're taking is necessary.

☐ ☐

Made sure that none of the participants' ideas or inputs were overlooked.

☐ ☐

Clarified that the discussion is intended to guide the next steps of the research project.

☐ Adult researcher ☐ Youth researcher

Other useful resources

We can only cover the basics in this short guide, but we will point you to other resources that explain PAR in more depth (although not always focusing on young people), so that you can get the right level of information you need:



CLICK
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Timeline of a participatory action research project

A toolkit for participatory action research





STAGE 2

Devise a research plan and design the research tools

Overview

Participatory action research demands that young people are included meaningfully in the research design process, for this reason, adult facilitators need to ensure that their younger co-researchers have the context and vocabulary to shape that design, alongside their more experienced collaborators. Adult researchers should begin this stage by carrying out a needs assessment to find out what their younger co-researchers know (if anything) about research approaches. They can then identify their co-researchers' strengths, and identify where they

may need support to develop their knowledge of collaborative research approaches.

When we develop the research tools, we need to keep in mind both young participants and a young audience. Adults should consult with their co-researchers about themes and tools that are accessible to young people who haven't had any formal training in research design. Approaches can be wide-ranging, but typically involving a mix of audio and visual tools such as mapping exercises, focus groups, observations and small-scale surveys.



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Key steps

1

Decide what kind of data you need: is there already some useful data that the team can analyse together? Or do the researchers need to generate their own new data?



2

Identify interviewees:

Who should we talk to
and why?

Where and when will the
research take place?
Why?

3

Choose a research method:

What types of
information or
insights are needed?

What are the
constraints we need to be
aware of (for example,
budget, timeframe,
cultural sensitivities,
political sensitivities)?

What sorts of research
methods can help us to
generate that information or those
insights (for example, perceptions or
prevalence statistics, or trends over
time)?

4

Discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of potential research methods.



Promising practices

Tools and exercises should serve as entry points for facilitating young people's discussion and communication

Example 5: Photovoice in action

Photovoice (example below) trains participants as co-researchers and photographers. It covers holding debriefing sessions, selecting illustrative images, and drafting captions or explanations.



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Photovoice gives young researchers a chance to think about and express their priorities within the context of a participatory action research project. By using audio-visual technology they are already familiar with, young co-researchers can help children and adults to see the world through their eyes, in a way that many participants feel is more familiar than traditional media. Photovoice has the added advantage of making participatory research more accessible for young people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities, for whom more traditional research methods are often a barrier to self-expression.

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Example 5 (continued): Photovoice in action

Photovoice has become increasingly popular in recent years as its technology has become more accessible. It can also be used in a variety of ways, to document daily life, or take photographs that represent the issues that are important to young people. To give just two brief examples, young people from marginalised Indigenous groups have used photovoice to document their perceptions of marginalisation; and students with physical disabilities on college campuses have used

photovoice to capture representations of barriers to access that may not be obvious to their peers and co-researchers.

GAGE uses photovoice in its research with young people. Participants develop captions for their photographs to explain the context to their audience and peers. And young researchers have the opportunity to present and receive feedback from other participants in the study.

Using online research tools allows participants to take part according to their own situation, and any time and space constraints they face (see Example 6). Popular online tools include:



Example 6: Online research tools in action

Adolescent girls involved in GAGE's participatory workstream took part in online group discussions in 2020 and 2021 about young people's experiences during pandemic-related lockdowns, spanning Gaza, Jordan and Lebanon. With the benefit of a common language, Arabic, participants shared the challenges they were facing in terms of greater domestic work burdens, reduced privacy, difficulties in accessing online education opportunities compared to their brothers (who enjoyed less restrictive online access due to conservative gender norms) and social isolation from peers. The feedback from the girls involved was that the opportunity to share their experiences with others and identify similarities was empowering, especially as they were able to exchange ideas on how to cope with the new lockdown reality.

(While the case studies from Lebanon and Gaza included in this research focus on the COVID-19 period (2020 and 2021), we recognize that the current realities in both contexts have become increasingly complex and challenging. We nevertheless want to share the important work that was done with and by young people in these countries.)

Other examples of research tools geared toward young people include:



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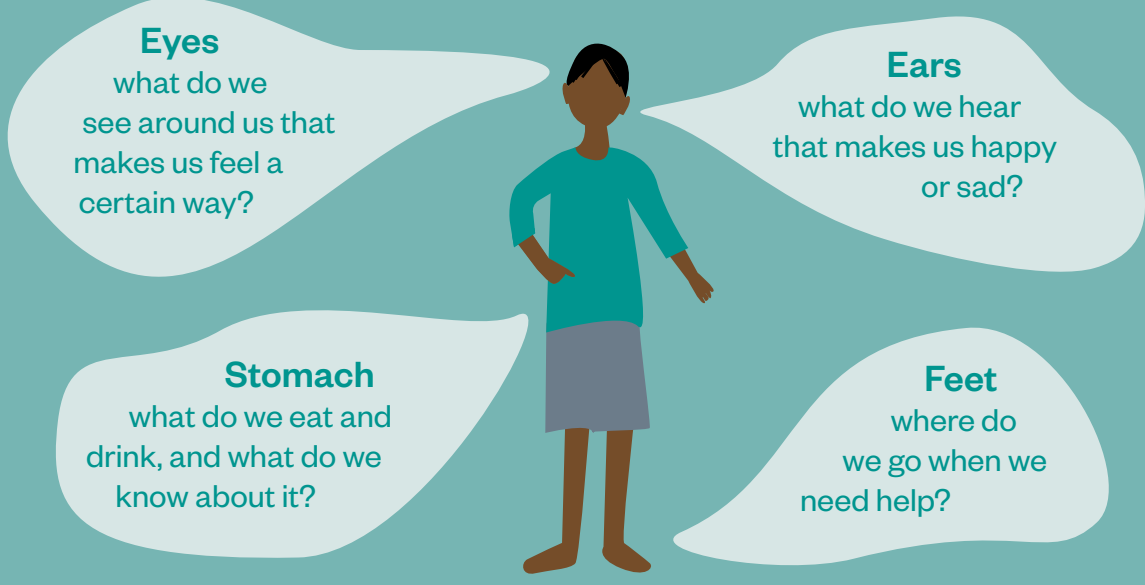
Community mapping: this helps young people to demonstrate their understanding of their own physical environment and how it impacts their day-to-day life.

Participants build a map of their community, highlighting places that stand out (to them) or are associated with particular feelings or ideas (happy, sad, helpful, or dangerous).

Body mapping: this uses a familiar visual to explore in more detail how young people perceive the world around them, centring their sensory experiences.

Participants gather around a large drawing of a boy or girl representative of their community, and identify associations with different body parts.

For example:



Social network mapping: this helps by probing the relative importance to young people of different individuals in different domains, and offers insights into how they perceive their community network and their role within it.

Participants visualise their network by drawing it, giving details about particular entries - what associations do we have with family members, teachers, community leaders, and friends?



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Timeline/ life-course mapping:

this provides insights into how young people understand their own development – how their life experiences change as they age, as well as what events have shaped their trajectory.

Participants illustrate a timeline of their life, using either years, school grades, or life stages as benchmarks. What do we remember from early childhood? How did we feel when we graduated primary school?

Checklist

Before moving on to the next stage, check that you have:	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Identified useful types of data.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Considered whether relevant data already exists or whether researchers need to generate new data.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Developed tools and exercises to make the research aims clear for co-researchers.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Gathered feedback from all participatory researchers to identify strengths and weaknesses of each potential approach.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Ensured that all researchers understand and are comfortable with the scope and content of subject matter being investigated on an ongoing basis

☐ Adult researcher ☐ Youth researcher

Other useful resources



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The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods for Social-Ecological Systems: Participatory data collection

A Guide to Selecting Participatory Research Methods Based on Project and Partnership Goals



STAGE 3

Collect the data

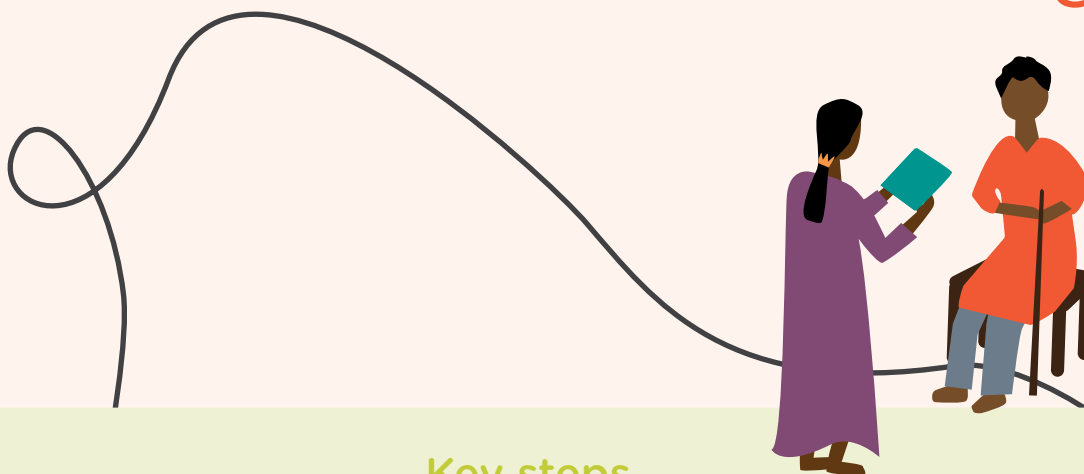
Overview

After you have co-created the research design and methodology with young researchers, the data collection process can begin. Again, you should enable young people to lead during this stage. Peer-to-peer interviewing, a qualitative participatory method where youth researchers design, collect, and report on interviews held with other young people, is one approach that allows us to do this, and allows us to get to the heart of issues young people face. It puts young people centre stage in collecting primary data, but also makes the most of their unique access to their own communities (see Example 7). Peer interviews are a valuable tool for accessing 'hidden' populations – young people who may

be harder to reach, and less responsive to adult researchers' questions.

Young researchers also have unique access to other hard-to-reach or overlooked community members, including parents and grandparents. This means they can produce intergenerational data, with older family members doubling up as key informants, and can identify and interview longer-established members of a community. Youth researchers who lack access to these groups can also review secondary sources including local news and social media, providing a perspective that may not be available to adult researchers or researchers who may not be a part of the community.





Key steps

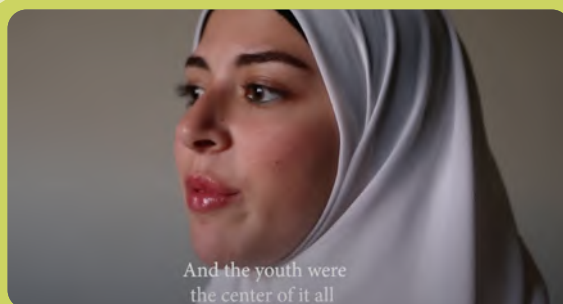
- 1** **Try to involve** all research participants equally. Not all young researchers may be comfortable using the same methods, so use a variety of tools to make sure you include all participants' perspectives.
- 2** **Be aware** of potential power imbalances between researchers and participants, and proactively encourage young people to share their ideas and priorities for the research and data collection methods.
- 3** **Safeguard** the young people who are conducting research in their community. Young researchers may be vulnerable because of their social identities, and face unique risks, and so it is important to draw up a plan on how to ensure young people are kept safe during the process, including identifying appropriate referral services.
- 4** **Take advantage** of young researchers' access to and knowledge of their own communities by promoting peer-to-peer and intergenerational interviews to yield rich data.



Promising practices

Example 7: UNICEF Syria Case Study #2 – Participatory Action Research (PAR) with young people (April 2019)

In 2015, a UNICEF project brought together 121 vulnerable young people from Jordan, Lebanon and Syria to generate evidence on the barriers preventing them achieving their aspirations in life. Participants conducted interviews and focus group discussions, and used a cascade approach whereby every participant reached out to 11 vulnerable peers. They identified common themes that emerged from all these conversations, including young people's aspirations to set up their own business, ways to avoid distress migration, re-valuing religious institutions based on the social and emotional support they provide rather than only seeing religious values as barriers for young people.



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Participatory Researcher in Lebanon part of
GAGE Programme

Developing photo collages, digital storytelling and near-peer interviewing are other interactive approaches that can be effective with young people:

Taking photos and developing story narratives from images can create a more accessible entry point for young researchers to share their everyday experiences with others.



Methods can vary: researchers can present photos to participants, participants can take their own photos to discuss with researchers, or participants and researchers can together collect existing photos from (for example) the internet or family archives.



Images can provide a starting point for peer-to-peer interviews when all participants can see the photographic material.



CLICK FOR
MORE



Checklist

Before moving on to the next stage, check that you have:

☐ ☐

Made sure that all participants were involved equally, as far as possible, even if their roles and responsibilities differed.

☐ ☐

Incorporated capacity strengthening into the data collection process, enabling young researchers to develop discrete skills which will be useful to collect the best data possible.

☐ ☐

Used a variety of methods to collect data, taking advantage of the different strengths of all research participants.

☐ ☐

Ensured co-researchers are aware of reflexivity.

☐ Adult researcher ☐ Youth researcher

Other useful resources

European Commission: data collection tools (participatory tools)

European Commission: participatory leadership guide

Participatory methodologies with children and youth

Child-led data collection: a guide for young people to learn how to do research and create positive change

Photo collages and near-peer interviewing: scaffolding data collection in youth participatory action research projects with children



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STAGE 4

Analyse and interpret the data

Overview

To do participatory research well, participants should be involved in and/or lead in analysing and interpreting the data collected. Data analysis and interpretation is a critical stage, as it helps to ensure that research findings accurately reflect participants' perspectives. Once data has been collected, analysis and interpretation can be a lengthy process that presents an imposition on young people's daily lives and responsibilities, and so this needs to be carefully negotiated and planned, including options for more or less in-depth involvement of youth researchers from the outset. Young researchers' capacities are also a factor in their ability to participate in data

analysis and interpretation – or at least in adult researchers' decision to include them. This should ideally be addressed during the capacity-strengthening element of the research design stage. Adult and young researchers should collaborate, at the project's inception, to develop a system for data analysis and interpretation that is accessible to all participants involved in and leading the overall research project. While young peoples' outside obligations may constrain them from participating in the authorship process, more established researchers should encourage and mentor co-researchers to take on an authorship role whenever possible (**see Examples 8 & 9**).





Key steps

- 1 **Negotiate** from the outset how and to what extent young people want to be involved in the data analysis and interpretation process.
- 2 **Agree** a systematic way to arrange the material gathered, including transcripts, photographs, observational notes or additional non-textual data.
- 3 **Develop** a search methodology to apply to data collection – this can be a collaborative approach that is uniformly applied to all materials.
- 4 **Categorise** the data drawn from the search methodology. Coding data by assigning them into subcategories can help to identify emerging themes.
- 5 **Develop** visual models of how these subcategories relate to each other, as this can make it somewhat easier to disentangle large and complex data sets.
- 6 **Ensure** validation of analysis.



Promising practices

Example 8: Engaging youth in rural Uganda in articulating health priorities through Photovoice - Daniel Esau, Pak To Ho, Geoffrey K. Blair, Damian Duffy, Nathan N. O'Hara, Videsh Kapoor and Margaret Ajiko, 2016

Adolescents used cameras and notebooks to document the factors that impact their health, then reviewed their photographs with adult researchers during semi-structured interviews. Adolescent researchers then undertook secondary analysis by selecting one or two of their favourite photos by other participants for detailed consideration. This shared data analysis process yielded health priorities for the area, as determined by the adolescent researchers: hygiene, nutrition and cleanliness.



Jordan © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2024

Example 9: Study on children's mobility and access to services in Malawi, Ghana and South Africa - Gina Porter, 2016

Seventy adolescents carried out their own independent studies, with support from collaborators and research assistants from their country. By interviewing their peers one-on-one, adolescents were more comfortable raising issues that were often avoided in front of adult researchers, because participants believed they would be taken more seriously by their peers. Data analysis conducted by adolescents revealed young people's priorities, which included (for example) fear of dogs en route to school classes, and severe punishments by teachers and parents alike.

Checklist

Before moving on to the next stage, check that you have:

☐ ☐

Collated and organised all data sources, whether text- or image-based.

☐ ☐

Used a consistent methodology to categorise data points.

☐ ☐

Developed a model, visual or otherwise, to display emerging themes.

☐ ☐

Considered how data will be stored and managed safely.

☐ Adult researcher ☐ Youth researcher

Other useful resources



CLICK
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→

Data analysis in qualitative research: a brief guide to using Nvivo

Research for development: a practical guide

The SAGE handbook of participatory research and inquiry

Participatory research methods – choice points in the research process

Using research to engage: participatory data analysis





STAGE 5

Share the findings in youth-friendly ways

Overview

Although much of the literature on participatory research emphasises that young people should play a central role in sharing the research findings, relatively few do this well (ActionAid, 2022). Keeping young people closely involved at this stage is really valuable because it maximises the **benefit of the research to young people** and **promotes their ownership** not just over the process, but the outcomes (see Example 10).

Sharing findings and continuing to engage young people in the dissemination of findings

is one of the most resource-intensive stages of participatory action research, and may be out of reach of most research projects and participants – particularly those in very marginalised communities. Often, including young people in this stage requires practical support, including chaperoning in the case of minors, and adequate resourcing on safeguarding young people's engagement and participation in the design and delivery of events. (see Examples 11 & 12).

Example 10: GAGE's approach to participatory action research in Gaza: enabling young people to lead in sharing research findings

In Gaza, 35 adolescents took part in a GAGE participatory project in 2016 to explore markers of gendered experiences of adolescence, and to evaluate the impact of interventions on adolescents' lives and the community more broadly.

Participants used peer-to-peer interviews, participatory photography and photovoice to document challenges and opportunities in their daily lives. Then, the young researchers played a key role in organising an event to share the findings with others in their community. They invited mentors and community leaders to a dedicated event that aimed to help community stakeholders gain insights into young people's priorities, and potential pathways for action to change things for the better.

Key steps

1

Share research findings to encourage others to engage with those findings, and centre issues on local, national or international agendas:

Produce materials that are translated into the language(s) used by participants, so that they can use those resources in their own work within their communities.

Make findings more accessible to young people by providing summaries, alongside visuals that can be readily showcased and replicated.

Use moving images/mp4s that are conducive to social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

Co-create event agendas together with young people and take special note on how these events can help leverage young people-led advocacy efforts.

Make sure to have safeguarding procedures in place for young people to feel safe and represented in both online and in-person events.



2

Take action and follow up on findings to advocate for change:

Identify practical steps that youth can take in order to follow up on the outcomes of their research, for example, following up with relevant authorities after six months on any changes implemented or writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine to reflect on positive change or to champion the need for further action.

Remember that the process itself is also worthwhile – that is, engaging young researchers in the development of plans for follow-up and engagement is a net positive result of their participation in research.

Promising practices

Example 11: Community-based participatory video: exploring and advocating for girls' resilience in South Africa - Linda C. Theron & Tamlynn C. Jefferis, 2015

In a study in South Africa that aimed to identify risks and opportunities for girls to develop more resilience, adolescent girls who had participated in the study created their own videos. These were screened before an audience of parents/caregivers, and in their communities.



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Jordan © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2024

Example 12: Participatory research with young people with special educational needs and disabilities in the UK- Lesley Sharpe, Janine Coates & Carolynne Mason, 2022

Adolescent co-researchers living with disabilities co-constructed data sets with adult researchers to identify challenges and triumphs in mainstream educational settings. Their work culminated in a youth-led showcase of vlogs, before an audience of influential community members.

Checklist

Before moving on to the next stage, check that you have:

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Identified the change young people want to see, and used this to develop strategies for disseminating research findings
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Collaborated with co-researchers so that they have been able to develop ownership over how and where they share the research findings.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Facilitated co-researchers to engage directly with the target audiences of the research.

☐ Adult researcher ☐ Youth researcher

Other useful resources

Community members:

Dissemination as dialogue: building trust and sharing research findings through community engagement

Dissemination in community-engaged research: guidelines for practice

Dissemination of results in community-based participatory research

Dissemination: strategies for doing it right in community-based participatory research

Communicating results of community-based participatory research

Best practice safeguarding practices compiled by the Adolescent Girls Investment Plan

Media:

Using community-based participatory research to disseminate a mass media campaign into rural communities

The use of social media for dissemination of research evidence to health and social care practitioners: protocol for a systematic review

Policy actors:

Participatory research dissemination: using innovative visual methods to strengthen community engagement on NTDs in Liberia

AmeriCorps: Participatory research: an equitable approach to community engagement

A community-based participatory research guided model for dissemination of evidence-based interventions

CLICK
HERE





STAGE 6

Monitor and evaluate the research activities

Overview

Young people's involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process achieves two purposes: it develops their research competencies further, and lends validity to the relevance and legitimacy of the research findings. But it can be difficult to retain young people's participation at this final stage. This is partly due to the (often lengthy) timespan of participatory action research projects, but also the many other demands on young people's time. So adult co-researchers

should strive to maintain the connections already built within the project and continue to engage with their young co-researchers.

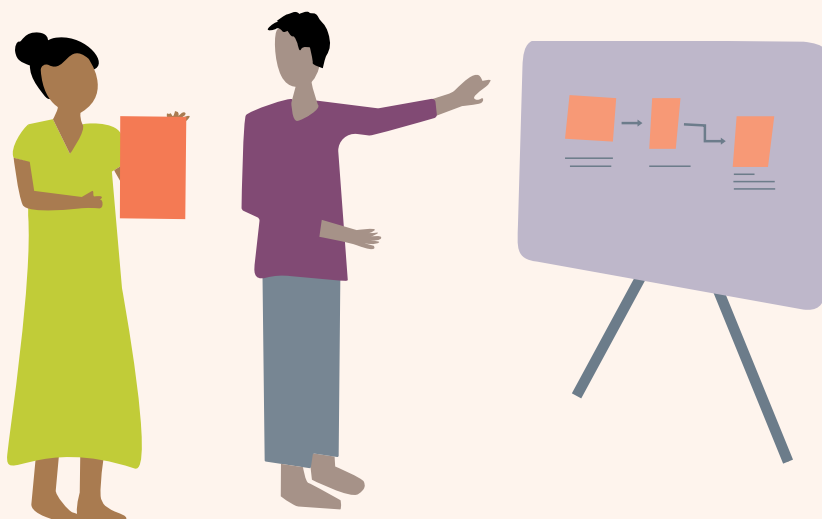
Monitoring and evaluation can take many forms. It can involve sharing updates with the participatory action research cohort or inviting participants to share their observations about changes and any actions taken within their communities in furtherance of their research goals.





Key steps

- 1 **Develop** a clear sense of the project's goals and objectives.
- 2 **Maintain** a consistent understanding of the project's target population.
- 3 **Develop** an impact pathway whereby researchers involve community members and stakeholders in identifying pathways for creating positive change.
- 4 **Re-evaluate** the relevance of the research project objectives from time to time, using the lens of the chosen impact pathway model.
- 5 **Focus** on a balance of outcome impacts and sustainability.
- 6 **Brainstorm** about potential actions to improve any weaknesses or shortcomings.



Promising practices

Social norms that discriminate against children with disabilities

Interventions designed to challenge discriminatory attitudes and norms surrounding children with disabilities in Europe and Central Asia used vignettes (a brief, evocative story) to make it easier for participants without experience of interacting with children with disabilities. The vignettes about children with physical or developmental disabilities prompted adult participants to examine their own feelings about institutionalisation and inclusive education, to explore prevailing norms that stigmatise disability. Participants found that positive social norms were more associated with physical than developmental disabilities, prompting a re-evaluation of interventions targeting discriminatory attitudes.



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Community visits:

Allow participants to directly observe the community context.

Facilitate learning about the progress of interventions.

Encourage co-researchers to develop their own tools for documenting their in-person observations.

Participatory impact pathways analysis:

This approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation highlights the development of models for understanding causal mechanisms and pathways for change.



An outcomes logic model identifies the changes that a project intends to achieve, with clear timelines, targets and milestones.



An impact logic model identifies how outcomes can be scaled up and out, in order to produce impacts at social, economic or environmental levels.



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Checklist

To ensure that you can effectively monitor and evaluate your participatory research project, check that you've:

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained participatory networks established in earlier stages of the project.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Created a clear and coherent impact pathway model that sets out how outcomes occur.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Developed and finalised clear research questions.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Developed a template and process to regularly record project developments.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Recorded and shared updates on project developments and contributions to change with the participant cohort and other stakeholders.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Debriefed with participants on the project process and outcomes and brainstormed to generate lessons learned.

☐ Adult researcher ☐ Youth researcher

Other useful resources

UNICEF guidance note: Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation



The case for greater youth participation in monitoring and evaluation in international development

Participatory impact pathways analysis: a practical method for project planning and evaluation



Final checklist

This is not exhaustive, but a good place to start:

Stage 1: Define the research issues and questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Used an inclusive and intersectional approach to involving youth researchers, using familiar and accessible technologies and materials.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Used an inclusive approach to identifying the research goals.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Developed and finalised clear research questions.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Set out a well-defined purpose underlying the research questions – clearly stating why the particular approach you're taking is necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Made sure that none of the participants' ideas or inputs were overlooked.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Clarified that the discussion is intended to guide the next steps of the research project.

Stage 2: Devise a research plan and design the research tools	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Identified useful types of data.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Considered whether relevant data already exists or whether researchers need to generate new data.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Developed tools and exercises to make the research aims clear for co-researchers.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Gathered feedback from all participatory researchers to identify strengths and weaknesses of each potential approach.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Ensured that all researchers understand and are comfortable with the scope and content of subject matter being investigated on an ongoing basis.

Stage 3: Collect the data



Made sure that all participants were involved equally, as far as possible, even if their roles and responsibilities differed.



Incorporated capacity strengthening into the data collection process, enabling young researchers to develop discrete skills which will be useful to collect the best data possible.



Used a variety of methods to collect data, taking advantage of the different strengths of all research participants.



Ensured co-researchers are aware of reflexivity.

Stage 4: Analyse and interpret the data



Collated and organised all data sources, whether text- or image-based.



Used a consistent methodology to categorise data points.



Developed a model, visual or otherwise, to display emerging themes.



Considered how data will be stored and managed safely.

Stage 5: Share the findings in youth-friendly ways

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Identified the change young people want to see, and used this to developing strategies for disseminating research findings
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Collaborated with co-researchers so that they have been able to develop ownership over how and where they share the research findings.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Facilitated co-researchers to engage directly with the target audiences of the research.

Stage 6: Monitor and evaluate the research activities

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained participatory networks established in earlier stages of the project.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Created a clear and coherent impact pathway model that sets out how outcomes occur.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Developed and finalised clear research questions.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Developed a template and process to regularly record project developments.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Recorded and shared updates on project developments and contributions to change with the participant cohort and other stakeholders.
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Debriefed with participants on the project process and outcomes and brainstormed to generate lessons learned.

Key resources

ActionAid (2022). Building power together: A girl-led research project.

<https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/building-power-together-girl-led-research-project>

AmeriCorps: Participatory Research: An Equitable Approach to Community Engagement

<https://www.americorps.gov/blogs/2021-07-26/participatory-research-equitable-approach-community-engagement>

Arrunategui, G. and Lizarazo, N. (2024) Participatory Action Research Prevents Gender-Based Violence in Rural Central American Schools. Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPEKIX))

<https://www.gpekix.org/blog/participatory-action-research-prevents-gender-based-violence-rural-central-american-schools>

Childfund: Child- And Youth-Friendly Participatory Action Research Toolkit

<https://resources.peopleinneed.net/documents/1154-child--and-youth-friendly-participatory-action-research-toolkit.pdf>

Eckhoff, 2019: Participation Takes Many Forms: Exploring the Frameworks Surrounding Children's Engagement in Participatory Research

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-19365-2_1

JPRM: Online Intergenerational Participatory Research: Ingredients for Meaningful Relationships and Participation

<https://jprm.scholasticahq.com/article/38764-online-intergenerational-participatory-research-ingredients-for-meaningful-relationships-and-participation>

Lenette, 2022: What of Gender Equality? Feminist Participatory Action Research and Gender Diversity

<https://academic.oup.com/book/41920/chapter-abstract/354817141?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

Luguetti et al., 2022

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2023.2226082>

NIH: Data Analysis in Qualitative Research: A Brief Guide to Using Nvivo

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4267019/>

Oxfam: Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis: a practical method for project planning and evaluation

<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/participatory-impact-pathways-analysis-a-practical-method-for-project-planning-131147/>

Oxfam – Youth-Led Participatory Action Research Guides

<https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621385/gd-action-research-guide-220622-en.pdf;jsessionid=6CA729373F9ED143A1F1FFA0989CC120?sequence=1>

Purdue et al., 2018: The case for greater youth participation in monitoring and evaluation in international development

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1035719X18804401>

Research for Organizing: Timeline Of A Participatory Action Research Project

<https://www.researchfororganizing.org/timeline-of-a-par-project/>

TNI: A Toolkit for Participatory Action Research

https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/a_toolkit_for_participatory_action_research.pdf

UNICEF Syria Case Study #2 – Participatory Action Research (PAR) with young people - April 2019

<https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/4951/file/MENA-PAR-ADAP-April2019.pdf.pdf>

UNICEF: Participatory research toolkit for social norms measurement

<https://www.unicef.org/media/90816/file/FGM-Research-toolkit.pdf>

UNICEF GUIDANCE NOTE: Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation

<https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/media/2746/file/UNICEF%20ADAP%20guidance%20note-final.pdf>

UNICEF: Adolescent Participation in Research: Innovation, rationale and next steps

https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/IRB_2017_07_AdoI05.pdf

Youth Futures Foundation: Youth Participatory Research: A Review of Reviews and Practice Guidance

<https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Youth-Participatory-Approach-Report-Peer-Review-Final.pdf>



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About GAGE

Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) is a decade-long (2016-2026) longitudinal research programme generating evidence on what works to transform the lives of adolescent girls in the Global South. Visit www.gage.odi.org.uk for more information.

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**Adolescent Girls
Investment Plan**

