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The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on community-based participatory research: Reflections from a study in an informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya.

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Background & Objective

- Involvement of lay researchers vital to participatory research
- COVID-19 pandemic disrupted (participatory) research
- Limitations of participatory digital research methods



Photo credit: "Korogocho from above" by Hewlett Foundation

Objective: To reflect on COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on community-based participatory research (CBPR) and community co-researchers in an informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Korogocho ALIV[H]E study

Community-based participatory study on the prevention of HIV and intimate partner violence in informal settlements

- Initially halted the study (March 2020)
- Emerging reports of pandemic-related increases in domestic violence
- Protocol amended and study resumed (August 2020)
- Research team: 4 researchers & 11 community co-researchers
- Data collection: 11 focus groups & 8 key informant interviews

Domestic violence

Lockdowns around the world bring rise in domestic violence

Activists say pattern of increasing abuse is repeated in countries from Brazil to Germany, China to Greece

- [Coronavirus - latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

Emma Graham-Harrison, Angela Giuffrida in Rome, Helena Smith in Athens & Liz Ford

Sat 28 Mar 2020 05:00 GMT

Kenya Edition ▾

Coronavirus: African women bear bigger brunt of the pandemic

By Tofe Ayeni
Posted on Wednesday, 3 June 2020 17:07

Nairobi, Kisumu GBV hotspots, report reveals

Monday, July 06, 2020



Mitigating risk of infection during study

- Amendment of research activities
- Consistent information on COVID-19
- Body temperature checks
- Hand sanitisers and face masks
- Non-handshake greetings
- Physical distancing
- Excluding sick participants
- Regular review of protocol



Navigating inequalities – amplified by COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic amplified inequalities between informal and formal settlements, and within informal settlements

- Weekly visits to the study site (August 2020–July 2021)
- Regular debriefing, incl. observations & reflections among researchers – as outsider from formal settlements
- Discussions with co-researchers on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the study and community



Implementing infection control protocols

- Operating in an informal settlement where observing general pandemic control measures is challenging
- Study protocols acceptable to co-researchers and participants
- Clarified misconceptions about COVID-19



Substantial differences in concerns about own children's future

- All parents – researchers & co-researchers – concerned about children's future
- Worries of co-researchers more substantial than those of researchers
- Re-opening of schools – relief for researchers, stress for co-researchers



Study protocols put to the test

- COVID-19 cases in the community and study team
- 2nd Nairobi lockdown interrupted data analysis
- Overcoming interruption through virtually-connected remote meetings
- Co-researchers continue with data analysis with minimal support

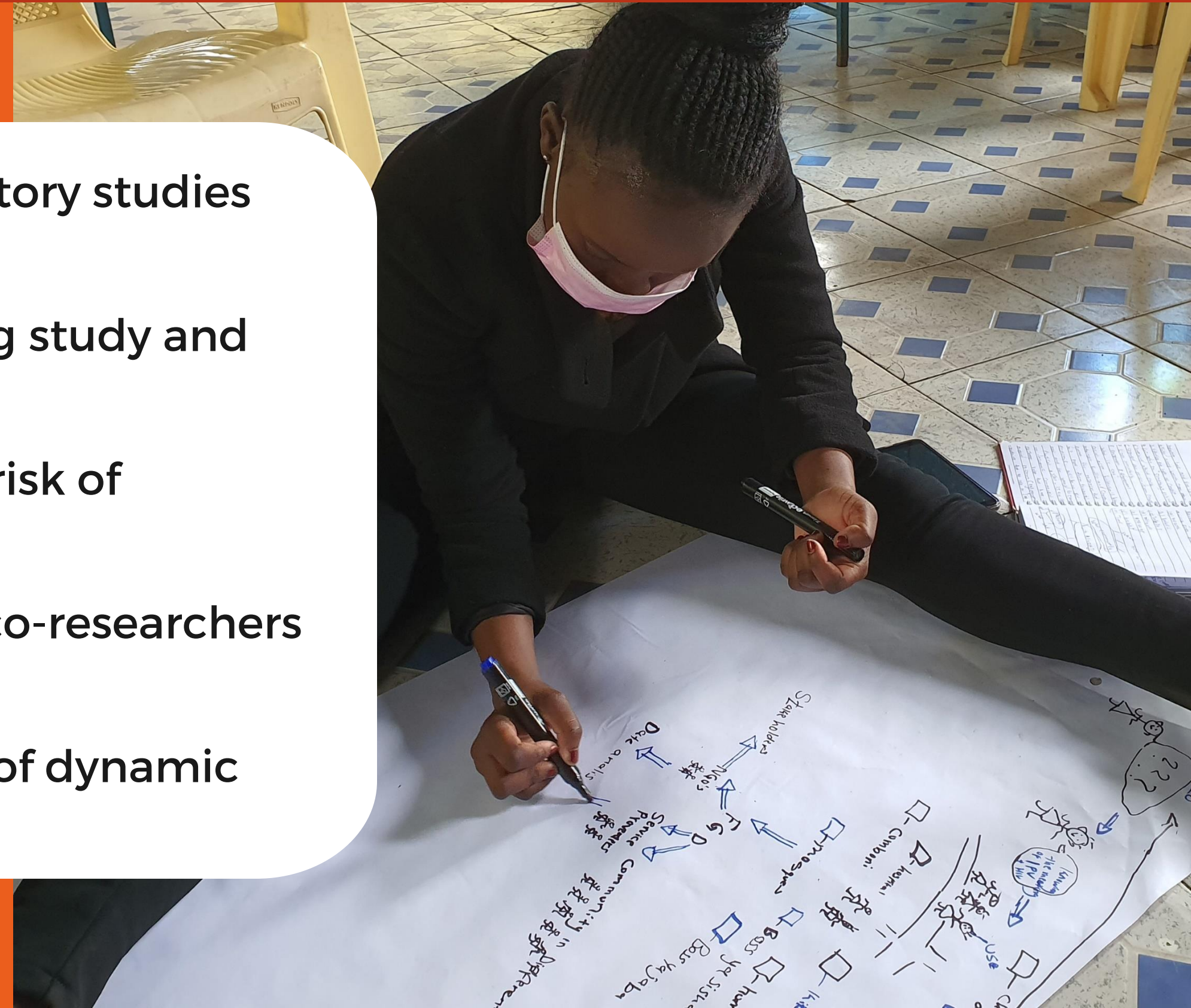
Recording...



Conclusions

During pandemics, community-based participatory studies should...

- consider risk of conducting or not-conducting study and risk of infection
- adopt evidence-based measures to mitigate risk of infection
- consider circumstances and social power of co-researchers and researchers to mitigate harm
- regularly review and adapt protocols in view of dynamic situation.



Asante sana. Thank you.

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Contact & Links

View our ICH2021 poster
“Slum dwellers are at
increased risk of intimate
partner violence and HIV
as they cope with the
COVID-19 pandemic and
its effects”.



For additional
information about the
methods of and
lessons from the
study, scan the QR
code and watch our
presentation online.

LINKS

ARISE Hub: <https://www.ariseconsortium.org/>

Community Health: <https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/community-health-systems-group>

LSTM: <https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/>

LVCT Health: <https://lvcthealth.org/>

ALIV[H]E: <https://salamandertrust.net/resources/alivhe-framework/>



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