# Capacity strengthening for Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) BULLETIN

*Key Updates and Good Practical Examples*

**ARISE**
ACCOUNTABILITY IN URBAN HEALTH

## Introduction

The CBPR Capacity Strengthening Group recently formed to take forward work package 4.4: 'Capacity strengthening learning research'. We are a multidisciplinary group with a common interest in understanding how to support capacity strengthening at the community level for meaningful participation of all actors. We are Bachera Aktar, Haja Wurie, John Smith, Nelly Muturi, Prasanna Saligram, Sharmila Gimonkar, Eliud Kibuchi, Varun Sai, Wafa Alam, Kim Ozano, Jessica Amegee and Kate Hawkins. In addition, we will have the valuable input from the Centre for Capacity Research at LSTM. Our aim is to understand and strengthen the capacity of co-researchers in each setting to achieve an effective CBPR partnership. The group will also support partners to document capacity strengthening progress and to reflect on CBPR principles and values and share key learnings. Our main research questions are:

1. What is needed to strengthen the **capacities of people and organisations** living and working in informal urban spaces to meaningfully participate in CBPR across different spaces and contexts?

2. What **factors** support/hinder the development of **equitable research partnerships** for effective participation of all actors (researchers, policy makers, implementers, informal dwellers)?

**Terminology eye:** Various terminologies are used within participatory research however; all approaches aim to conduct research that will benefit communities either through direct intervention or by using the results to inform action for change. CBPR and Participatory Action Research (PAR) are two such terms; both encompass a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR specifically begins with a research topic of importance to the community and has the aim of combining community and academic knowledge with action to achieve social change. To understand these and other terms read Abma et al 2017 and Cordeiro et al 2016.

## Country updates: CBPR approaches and engagement of co-researchers

**Bangladesh** In January 2020, a week-long training on PAR and CBPR methods was conducted in Dhaka. Key highlights include:

- Discussions on theoretical and practical aspects of these methods;
- Discussions on co-development of knowledge and power dynamics between researchers, co-researchers and participants;
- Adaptation of GIS mapping and transect walk methods;
- Pilot testing of the methods in slums which increased the research teams understanding of the context and strategies;
- A wellbeing analysis pilot which highlighted the need to define wellbeing in an easy language with clear examples, understandable to the community;
- A visit of Korail slum where participants insisted on the essentiality of a two-way accountability in PAR;
- Creation of a debrief/reflexivity template to capture process, context, and monitor the level of participation and partnerships established over time.



*Session conducted by participants*

**India** TGI (The George Institute for Global Health), DBRC (Dalit Bahujan Resource Centre) and SPARC (Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centre) held a joint learning event on PAR in Chiguru, in Andhra Pradesh. The objective was to explore and reflect on PAR concepts and techniques. The ARISE team and representatives from DBRC learned together using non-traditional and non-classroom style activities like mapping exercises.

The team created a photo essay with key highlights accessible [here](#).


*Mapping process explanation to the participants*

**Kenya** The team is organizing the selection of co-researchers as well as their training including ethics, safeguarding and Photovoice, with the aim of starting participatory activities in August. Due to Covid-19, the team experienced delays, especially because the participant selection required (i) feedback from community stakeholders through community meetings and (ii) tidying mapping activity findings through focus group discussions at the community level. The group of co-researchers will include but are not limited to be; people with disability, adolescent girls and young women, elderly, immigrants etc.

**Sierra Leone** The ARISE team has identified, recruited and trained co-researchers in a week-long CBPR training held by the Sierra Leone team with the support of LSTM and IDS. After going through the CBPR process and activities on participatory methods, co-researchers identified the needs to strengthen or refresh their skills in:

*Mapping exercise with co-researchers*

- Holding discussions on CBPR principles with peers and researchers;
- Leadership (e.g. community engagement);
- Monitoring and evaluation (e.g. tracking progress);
- Building transparency and accountability networks in communities.



A short video recaps the training [here](#) and co-researchers reflected on their experience in a blog accessible [here](#).

**UK** Five online participatory research workshops were conducted to understand how PHR projects, from a variety of contexts globally, understand the dimensions of power, power sharing and empowerment and how these are measured, monitored and communicated in terms of impact. Many ARISE members contributed to the discussion alongside 60 researchers from 24 countries. These findings will help us to  understand different ways to document and track changes in power within our partnerships and the role capacity strengthening has in this process.

## Next steps

- Conduct a literature review for CBPR 'partnership readiness' to map how other projects strengthen capacities of community co-researchers.
- Produce a visual animated representation of CBPR principles and processes for new partners.
- The Group is calling for visual resources! Do you have any video, animation or other resources visualizing CBPR process for the general audience ? If so please contact one of our team to share ☺