A Synopsis of the ARISE Bangladesh Organized Training on CBPR and PAR

BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University
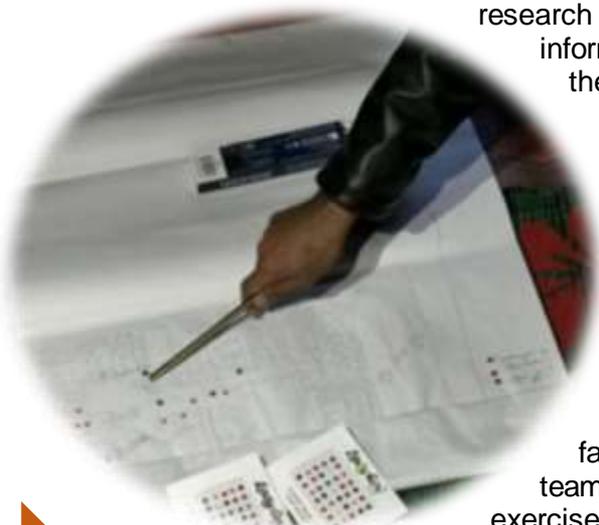
11 – 16 January 2020

A six-day training was organized by ARISE Bangladesh team – BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health (JPGSPH), BREAC University for its research team from the 11th to 16th January 2020 on CBPR methods and participatory action research. The training was jointly facilitated by two in-country qualitative experts - Mohammed Awlad and Shamim Hossain, in-house facilitator Bachera Aktar and ARISE Bangladesh country support team member from LSTM Dr. Kim Ozano. ARISE Bangladesh research at JPGSPH participated in the training. It was a combination of formal classroom training and pilot testing of methods in the slum setting for getting hands-on practical experience.

Topics covered in this training included:
- ✓ Basics of qualitative research
- ✓ Concepts of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)
- ✓ Building rapport and trust with communities
- ✓ Note taking in field work
- ✓ Common qualitative research techniques
    - o Observation
    - o Informal discussions
    - o In-depth interviews
    - o Focus group discussions
    - o Key informant interviews
- ✓ Participatory action research methods and tools
    - o Transect walk and GIS mapping
    - o Community mapping
    - o Community timeline
    - o Participatory wealth ranking
    - o Participatory wellbeing analysis
    - o Problem and solution tree analysis

Formal classroom training: The key concepts, principles and methods of CBPR, PAR and research ethics were discussed applying three pedagogies – formal **PowerPoint presentations** on key concepts followed by **facilitated discussions** on research values and ethics, the principles of community participation, and the core values and position of ARISE project in the application of CBPR and PAR approaches. This was followed by **roleplay exercise** within the research team, where some played the role of facilitators and others played the role of community members. The roleplay exercise for each method helped the research team the individual strengths and weaknesses, the challenges they might face during fieldwork and how those can be overcome. The importance of considering participants' power dynamics within a group and how to create safe spaces for discussions especially with marginalized groups, use of appropriate language, and issues around safeguarding were also discussed during facilitated discussion and role play exercises. Discussions were generated around co-development of knowledge and power dynamics within a group as well as between researchers, co-researchers and participants.

Pilot testing: After classroom discussions and role play exercises, the team **piloted** some of the methods in Korail slum, the largest and one of the oldest slums in Dhaka city. The pilot testing helped research team to get practical experience of applying and executing PAR methods in the actual community setting, and thus helped them in understanding community dynamics, power relations, informal governance structures, and community's own definition of poverty, poor and vulnerable groups. The research team took help from BRAC Health, Nutrition and Population Program and BRAC Urban development program's staff working in Korail slum for inviting community people to participate in **community mapping**, **community timeline** and **participatory wealth ranking**. Each method was pilot t ested twice to allow all team members participate in all the methods. The research team divided into two sub-groups – one group piloted **transect walk** and **GIS mapping**, and another group piloted community timeline, community mapping and wealth ranking methods. In the next day of pilot testing, the sub- groups swapped methods. During pilot testing those methods, the research team learnt from the community about the informal governance structure and power dynamics, the interactions between formal and informal governance actors and their daily life struggles, perspectives about life and informal governance system. In the community timeline session, the participants also shared their experiences with the changes happened in that slums. The participato ry wealth ranking pilot test explored the emic perspectives of locally defined wealth categorization and characteristics of each category. The research team also learnt crowd management, group dynamics management, facilitation and probing technics. The research team also conducted a **participatory wellbeing** exercise with the support staff of JPGSPH, which initiated discussions around how wellbeing is understood by different people, the language used to explain and describe wellbeing.

Session on debriefing and methods contextualization: After every field visit, the researcher team shared their experience and feedback on the research tools, and suggested modifications. Dr. Kim introduced the concept of reflexive diaries and shared the importance of considering researchers positionality and reflexivity, and how that could also be considered as primary data to be included in the research. The team also developed a debriefing template to be used for documenting process, context and reflexivity, and to monitor the level of participation and partnerships established between researchers and co-researchers over time.

Session on co-researcher and co-analysis: Dr. Kim shared her experience of working with co-researchers, and the team discussed the potential of involving co-researchers in the different methods. Two other members of ARISE LSTM team joined remotely and discussed about their experience of co-analysis of data with co-researchers. The discussions helped JPGSPH team to get a better understanding about co-researchers involvement and management as well as the process of co-analysis.

Utilization of internal resources: One of the uniqueness of this training was the utilization of internal recourses. The training participants also conducted some sessions under the guidance of the core facilitators. This was helpful for the capacity strengthening of the research team. The core facilitators gave feedbacks and helped them in course-correction. Four participants who learnt problem tree analysis in their MPH program conducted the session on problem tree analysis. One participant, who has prior training on GIS mapping conducted the session on GIS mapping and did practical demonstration.

Training on safeguarding in research: The safeguarding session was conducted in Tele-conferencing room of JPGSPH and was attended by 38 staff from the university. This was an online session facilitated by Phillipa Tubb and Dr. Sally Theobald from LSTM. The session started with the historical background of '***Safeguarding***'. After the introductory session, safeguarding during research was discussed through three case studies exercises where the participants were divided into three groups and each group was given one scenario. Each group analyzed the scenario and came-up with safeguarding issues discussed in the scenario and possible solutions to address those issues from research perspectives. Then each group presented their findings and solutions flowed by interactive discussions.

Key Lessons learnt from the training:
- It is important to consider community as equal partners, use of appropriate language and create safe space for discussions with marginalized communities.
- Leveraging strengths of research team and drawing on existing skills in the training enabled the team to learn from each other.
- A wellbeing analysis pilot highlighted the need of defining wellbeing in easy language with examples easily understandable to the community.
- During the piloting in Korail slum, the feedback of the community participants put emphasis on the essentiality of a two-way accountability in PAR.