



KLAHAAN ORGANIZATION

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) Toolkit

An Introduction to (FPAR) Research
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 **HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG**
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TABLE OF CONTENT

1. What is FPAR?
2. Intersectionality? What does that mean?
3. Learning Exchange
4. Capacity Building
5. Post-FPAR Action
6. Step 1: Formulate Topic
7. Step 2: Sketch a Timeline
8. Step 3: Recruit Action Researchers
9. Step 4: Induction Training on FPAR & Feminism
10. Step 5: Conduct Literature Review
11. Step 6: Design the Research Instruments
12. Step 7: Conduct the Fieldwork
13. Step 8: Transcription
14. Step 9: Coding
15. Step 10: Skeleton Outline
16. Step 11: Write-up
17. Step 12: Validation, Revision & Launch

For more info or support on conducting FPAR, you can reach out to us at Info@klahaan.org or via our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/klahaan.kh).

We would also be happy to share more detailed training modules, and can meet with you to discuss how these can be tailored for your own FPAR research project needs.

WHAT IS FPAR?

Feminist Participatory Action Research, or 'FPAR', pronounced 'effpar' for short, is a way of doing research that involves stakeholders in the process, not just as 'data collectors' but also in co-designing and developing the research at all stages.

There is no single correct formula for conducting FPAR. This guide shows some basic building blocks based on Klahan's own research experience in Cambodia. The steps and methods are flexible; what is essential are the core principles of **intersectionality** and **meaningful participation**.



INTERSECTIONALITY? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?



Intersectional feminism means that we actively recognise that barriers to gender equality increase or decrease depending on other aspects of someone's identity. This can include their race, age, class, sexual orientation or religion.

Being intersectional as feminists means addressing a diverse spectrum of women's issues, and is explicitly inclusive of transgender, intersex and non-binary people.

LEARNING EXCHANGE

As feminists, we believe everyone should have a role in creating new knowledge. It shouldn't just be academics or NGO staff and so on.

We believe that we have as much to learn from communities being researched, as they do from us! So this is a process of learning exchange.

The process is explicitly and deliberately feminist. We try to ensure this by conducting ethical, social justice-oriented research with a strong intersectional gender analysis.



CAPACITY BUILDING

In FPAR, capacity building is a part of an important part of the research process. Training sessions on relevant technical¹ and thematic² aspects of the research, as well as on feminist principles and values can ensure everyone is up to speed and able to work on the project with ease and confidence.

As the APWLD³ have explained, it is important to remember that all researchers are part of collective capacity building: Any professional researchers also develop capacity through the process by learning from the community researchers and participants.



¹ By 'technical aspects,' we refer to ethical data collection, research design, data analysis and coding, and so on.

² By 'thematic' aspects, we refer to training on the relevant topic covered in the research. For instance, a training on sexual and reproductive health rights would be appropriate, for a study looking at sexual consent.

³ Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, <https://apwld.org/feminist-participatory-action-research-fpar/>

POST-FPAR ACTION

FPAR "is a way for researchers and everyday people to join in solidarity to take collective action, both short and long term, for social change. Locally determined and controlled action is a planned consequence of inquiry."⁴

This means that we should conduct our research with the intention using it in order to try and create some sort of improvement in society.



⁴ Maguire, P. (1987) Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach, University of Massachusetts: The Center for International Education

STEP 1: FORMULATE TOPIC

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EXPLORE?



- Find a topic that is specific enough to be able to recruit Action Researchers (ARs).

E.g: 'Gender research' is a bit too broad for ARs to know if they would be interested to get involved.

- The topic should also be loose enough so that your ARs can shape it and reshape it based on their own interests and knowledge of the subject.

E.g: 'What proportion of married women aged between 20 and 25 in Boeung Tumpun II commune are taking the pill?' is too narrow for ARs to take part in meaningful co-creation of the topic.

STEP 2: SKETCH A TIMELINE

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EXPLORE?



- So that you can inform your ARs how much time they will need to co-create the research, and over what timeframe, your team should sketch out a rough research timeline.
(see **Annexe A** for an example)

STEP 3: RECRUIT ACTION RESEARCHERS

POSSIBLE METHODS OF RECRUITING ACTION RESEARCHERS:



- **Flyers** at a university, or after presenting your research idea during a guest lecture, you could ask students to sign up if they are interested.
- Through your existing **networks** (community members, sporting teams, meditation or yoga groups, unions etc).
- Using a sign up **form** online where interested applicants can fill in the form via social media (**Annexe B** attached).

STEP 4: INDUCTION TRAINING ON FPAR & FEMINISM

Research design workshop, Battambang City, Aug 2020



STEP 4: INDUCTION TRAINING ON FPAR & FEMINISM

Welcome your Action Researchers and bring them up to speed!

We recommend a session of about 3 - 4 hours to meet with your ARs and get to know one another. We've included some ice-breaker exercises in **Annexe C**, but of course you can design your own.

Some potential sessions for the day could include the following (more detail on next page):

What is FPAR?

Feminism 101

Ethical research principles

Brainstorm on the topic together,
design research questions

Agree on ways of working
and next steps

STEP 4: INDUCTION TRAINING ON FPAR & FEMINISM

Welcome your Action Researchers and bring them up to speed!

1. WHAT IS FPAR?

Bring your ARs up to speed by explaining why the organisation wants to know more about a certain topic, and how the participatory process means they will be engaged as co-researchers, not just as data collectors.

2. FEMINISM 101:

Many of your ARs will be familiar with or interested in feminism, but they won't necessarily have a deep knowledge of feminist concepts and why we are applying this lens to the research. An 'intro to feminism' helps everyone feel more confident in conducting feminist research.

3. ETHICAL RESEARCH PRINCIPLES:

A quick run-through of the core principles of how to conduct ethical research on sensitive topics can help everyone understand the importance of informed consent and other considerations (for an example presentation, feel free to write to us at info@klahaan.org).

STEP 4: INDUCTION TRAINING ON FPAR & FEMINISM

Welcome your Action Researchers and bring them up to speed!

4. BRAINSTORM ON THE TOPIC TOGETHER:

ARs are encouraged to share (in a supportive space) why they are interested in being involved in research on the topic. This guided discussion then moves to explore what the research **questions** and **objectives** should be.

5. DESIGN NEXT STEPS:

- Establish communication channels and ways of working - Telegram? Facebook group? etc.
- Establish a commonly agreed time commitment for the research - (can people spare one hour per week? Or do they prefer one or two half days per month? Weekdays or weekends? How can we factor in childcare provision? etc).
- Draw up a rough timeline of next steps, including when the field data collection will take place.

STEP 5: CONDUCT LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EXPLORE?



- The literature review is one labour-intensive part of the research, where you will need to decide and negotiate how active you would like your ARs to be in this process.
- It's important to remember that while your ARs are co-creators of the research, they are not paid interns. They have their own busy lives and schedules, and asking them to complete lengthy reviews of academic literature risks being extractive and therefore unethical.
- One way around this dilemma might be to ask anyone who is interested and has the time, to review one article and send the summary through to the group chat. Or to find a few media articles and send through the links. If any ARs are keen to be part of the full process in order to have hands on experience in reviewing literature, they should be made welcome to do so but should be supported through the process so they are not taking on large quantities of substantive work.

STEP 6: DESIGN THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

DESIGNING SURVEYS AND/OR INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

- This can be done during a face to face session at a coffee shop over lunch (ARs fully catered for of course), or it could possibly be done during an online call.

- Ideally, if time and resources permit, this session should be incorporated into a wider 1-2 day training to enhance ARs' practical research design skills. (For an agenda or training materials you can use, reach out to our team).

- At the start of the meeting (or training), there should be a brief refresher presentation on the agreed research questions, research objectives and the parameters of the topic, so that everyone is on the same page about what we are trying to discover.

- Participants can then be split into two or even three small groups, with one person from the organisation to help facilitate the discussion and answer any clarifying questions. .

- The groups can be split according to research instrument, for instance one group designing household surveys, another an online survey and another for long-form interview questionnaires.

- There should be a session in plenary afterwards, to share ideas and streamline the different instruments if necessary to ensure they're all complementary to one another.

- Everyone should then be reminded about fieldwork dates, and these should be amended if needed (it's all about flexibility!)

STEP 6: DESIGN THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

DESIGNING SURVEYS AND/OR INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

Action Research Team meeting, Battambang, City Sep 2020



STEP 7: CONDUCT THE FIELDWORK

GO FORTH AND RESEARCH!

- This can involve whatever methods your team and the Action Researchers have decided will be the best and most appropriate way to gather the data you need in order to conduct your research.

For example:

- Household surveys
 - Student surveys
 - Online surveys (e.g: designed together but launched by a staff member on Facebook page)
 - Key informant interviews or focus group discussions that have been arranged in advance with support of staff members
- Remember to obtain informed consent, distribute participant information statements and follow other ethical research principles.
- Everyone who is involved in the data collection can also spend 10 - 15 minutes filling in a reflection diary at the end of each day of fieldwork, noting down their initial observations and interesting findings.



STEP 7: CONDUCT THE FIELDWORK

GO FORTH AND RESEARCH!



Data collection by Action Researchers, Battambang Province Sep 2020

STEP 8: TRANSCRIPTION

GO FORTH AND RESEARCH!

- Transcription is one of those lengthy, labour intensive processes that will not necessarily give Action Researchers enhanced research capacity, but may instead prove to be a drain on their time.
- For this reason, and to avoid using unpaid labour for substantive but relatively menial work, we recommend conducting the transcription either in-house by paid team members, or hiring an external transcription service.



STEP 9: CODING

DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING

- Data analysis, (unlike transcription), is one area where we think that Action Researchers can really benefit from receiving training and taking a hands-on, practical approach. Many young researchers do not have access to this type of training, and so for many it is a brand new learning curve.
- In our FPAR project, we found that the intensive training on how to code qualitative data was one of the most engaging sessions, and some ARs reported at the end of the project that it was their favourite research 'step.'
- In addition, engaging ARs in data analysis improves the research output. After all, findings don't just 'emerge' from the data, rather they are constructed (by the researcher, from the data) during the analysis process. This is why input from ARs is important at this stage: both to enhance the legitimacy of the research, and to ensure they have a clear voice in the final report.
- To access a presentation on how to conduct Thematic Data Analysis according to Braun & Clarke's (2006) method, feel free to reach out to us at Info@klahaan.org

STEP 9: CODING

DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING



Coding, Phnom Penh, Oct 2020



STEP 10: SKELETON OUTLINE

SKETCH OUT THE DIFFERENT HEADINGS AND SUB-HEADINGS AND GET AGREEMENT OR FEEDBACK ON THESE FROM ARS

- After all team members and ARs have completed their section/s of coding, and have submitted their coded data via the group chat or email, a team member (alone, with team members, and/or with ARs who are interested in participating in this step) can sit and analyse all of the newly coded datasets and draw from the key identified themes in order to formulate a skeleton (topline) outline of the report.
- This will look something like a contents page.
- This skeleton outline should be shared with all researchers and agreed upon before write-up commences.



STEP 10: SKELETON OUTLINE

SKETCH OUT THE DIFFERENT HEADINGS AND SUB-HEADINGS AND GET AGREEMENT OR FEEDBACK ON THESE FROM ARS

- Now comes the time to write up the report!
- We recommend including the findings from the literature review at the start of the report, in order to contextualise and situate the research – to 'set the scene.' This can be followed by the empirical findings gathered in the field by the team. But any structure is generally fine, according to your team's needs.
- In terms of the report write-up, this involves another process of negotiation with your staff team and the ARs. If any ARs are very keen to write up some of the report, this should be supported. However, you may wish to consider a daily paid rate for this aspect of the work, given its substantive and time-intensive nature. If the report is to be just written up by the in-house staff, bear in mind that the ARs' research design and coding work must feed directly into the report.



STEP 12: VALIDATION, REVISION & LAUNCH

YOU'VE MADE IT TO THE END!

- Now it's time to ensure the research reflects what your ARs want to say about the topic through the data that they gathered.
- Any changes suggested by ARs should be considered and reflected in the final report.
- A gift such as a Kindle e-reader, as well as a framed certificate, can be presented to each AR at this validation workshop session.
- Covid-permitting, a research report launch can be organised to share the findings with participants and the wider community, and ARs should be invited to speak at such an event.



Validation workshop, Phnom Penh, Dec 2020

STEP 12: VALIDATION, REVISION & LAUNCH

YOU'VE MADE IT TO THE END!



Validation workshop, Phnom Penh, Dec 2020



ANNEXE A: EXAMPLE TIMELINE

1 JUN	Develop initial research framework
15 - 30 JUN	Advertise and recruit for the AR Team positions
11 JUL	Orientation session and 'get to know you', plus FPAR and feminism training
24 JUL	Full day session: Training on data collection & co-design of questionnaires with AR Team
26 JUL	Create consent forms & participant info sheets
LATE JUL	Support AR team to recruit their participants
7, 8, 14, 15 AUG	Field data collection
MID-END AUG	Transcribing and translating interviews (<i>paid service</i>)
28 AUG	Full day training on thematic data analysis
1 - 10 SEP	Doing thematic analysis: Data is coded, themes generated & structure developed
10 SEP-8 OCT	Write up the report
9 OCT	Review of first draft: Sharing/ reflection/ validation' session with co-researchers
23 OCT	Validation workshop to present final report, make last edits, propose next steps
EARLY NOV	Report launch with ARs as co-presenters

ANNEXE B: EXAMPLE RECRUITMENT FORM

Volunteer Action Research Team Application

We are accepting applications to join a research team project that will look at understandings of virginity and sex before marriage in Cambodian society.

Background: We are looking for 3 young men and 3 young women (18 - 26) to join us as volunteer Action Researchers! This will involve a series of trainings to sharpen your skills in research design, data analysis and field interviewing, as well as hands-on, practical experience in a professional setting.

Deadline to apply: 5pm, Thu 24 June

Time commitment: 1-2 hours per week, and 1-2 full days per month for training and fieldwork, from June until late October 2021.

Who we are looking for: Enthusiastic, motivated young people who are interested in gender equality and in conducting research for social change purposes.

What's in it for you?: A chance to receive training on and hands-on experience conducting research from start to finish. We will provide you with a certificate, gift and written reference letter upon completion of the research.

Interviews will be conducted in late June for this volunteer opportunity. We hope you can join us!

Name

Short-answer text

Email address and phone contact

Short-answer text

Age

Short-answer text

Current status (employed, studying full time etc)

Short-answer text

Do you have any prior research or volunteer experience? If yes, please describe in one sentence. If no, that's okay!

Long-answer text

Why do you want to join our Action Research team? Please let us know in one to two sentences.

Long-answer text

ANNEXE C: EXAMPLE ICE-BREAKER EXERCISES

Wall Race

Materials: None, but you will need a long wall with no furniture against it

Instructions:

- Stand in a group close to the wall. When the organiser yells "go", everyone should quickly run and line up according to their birthday – Those born near Jan 1st on the left, and those born at the end of the year on the right, trying not to be the last one in place.
- When the organiser yells "go" again, everyone should quickly line up according to height order – shortest on the left, tallest on the right.

Helium Stick

Materials: Long and light-weight pole

Instructions:

- Get your team members to stand in two equal lines, facing each other.
- Each person needs to place a hand in front of them with their index finger pointed out.
- Place a pole on top of all the index fingers so that it is resting evenly.
- Get everyone to lower the pole to the ground without anyone losing touch with it at any stage (make sure you're carefully watching to spot any cheats!).



Klahaan is an independent, intersectional feminist organization working for a more equitable and just future where all Cambodian women can fulfil their potential.

www.klahaan.org