

SUMMARY

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) Training Exchange was held at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at University of Rwanda (UR) 28-29th April 2023. The overall purpose was to build understanding of and skills in PAR and to explore adapting and progressing PAR as part of two research programmes: (1) a trial of a school-based mindfulness intervention (SBMI) in Ethiopia and Rwanda funded by the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), and (2) a programme researching early childhood development (ECD) and women's unpaid care work in Rwanda, funded by the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

We were joined by colleagues from the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) Rwanda, the Colleges of Education, and Medicine and Health Sciences at UR, and from Addis Ababa University (participants listing is contained overleaf). We spent the 2 days orienting to PAR theory and method, covering content on PAR theory, concepts, on issues related to practical applications and operations, and explored the ethical considerations through critical debate and exchange.

The sessions were further informed with talks and briefings from lead investigators Dr Kibur Engdawork from Addis Ababa University (AAU), and Professor Laetitia Nyirazinyoye (UR). Prof. Nyirazinyoye and Dr Engdawork discussed application across diverse contexts for the NIHR SBMI programme, in which PAR will be progressed in a deprived neighbourhood in Addis Ababa (Addis Ketema), and in Rwanda, in a rural area in Butaro district in Northern Province. Finally, Ali Kaleeba Bakali (UR) oriented the group to mindfulness, its origins, practices and benefits. These talks greatly enriched the programme.

Throughout, we engaged in interactive sessions, drawing on colleagues' perspectives and experiences to build familiarity with and skills in key PAR processes. Content was consolidated through plenary review and exchange. We also worked on field plans in group work and break out spaces. We also engaged in a 'mindfulness dose', and took some time through a short guided exercise to breathe and practice connecting with an awareness of our feelings and sensations, in the moment, free of reaction or judgement. Finally, the group agreed to continue the exchange, and to continue to connect in future through web-platforms and in person where possible, to continue dialogue and cross-context learning on the application of PAR.

The organisers extend warm thanks to participants for engaging and sharing during the 2 days. We look forward to continuing the conversation! We also look forward to receiving your feedback, which we will seek through a separate evaluation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Describe participation in health as a concept
2. Appreciate how contexts influence (constrain or enable) participation
3. Relate case examples building participation into local practice
4. Develop practical insights into PAR methods and tools including ethical considerations
5. Translate key PAR processes for application in context

LEARNING PRINCIPLES The learning is values-based and supports equitable research partnerships

- a. We have a 'safe to fail' learning environment, promoting peer-learning and exchange
- b. We prioritise synergies between research teams working across diverse contexts
- c. We promote and advance South-South learning and exchange
- d. We foster equitable partnerships in global health research

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Professor Pamela Abbott
29th April 2023, Kigali, Rwanda



Appraising participant selection and recruitment, including ethical considerations



Critical discussion on data collection and analysis, including ethical considerations



Learning about mindfulness



Role playing feedback (problem tree on ECD)