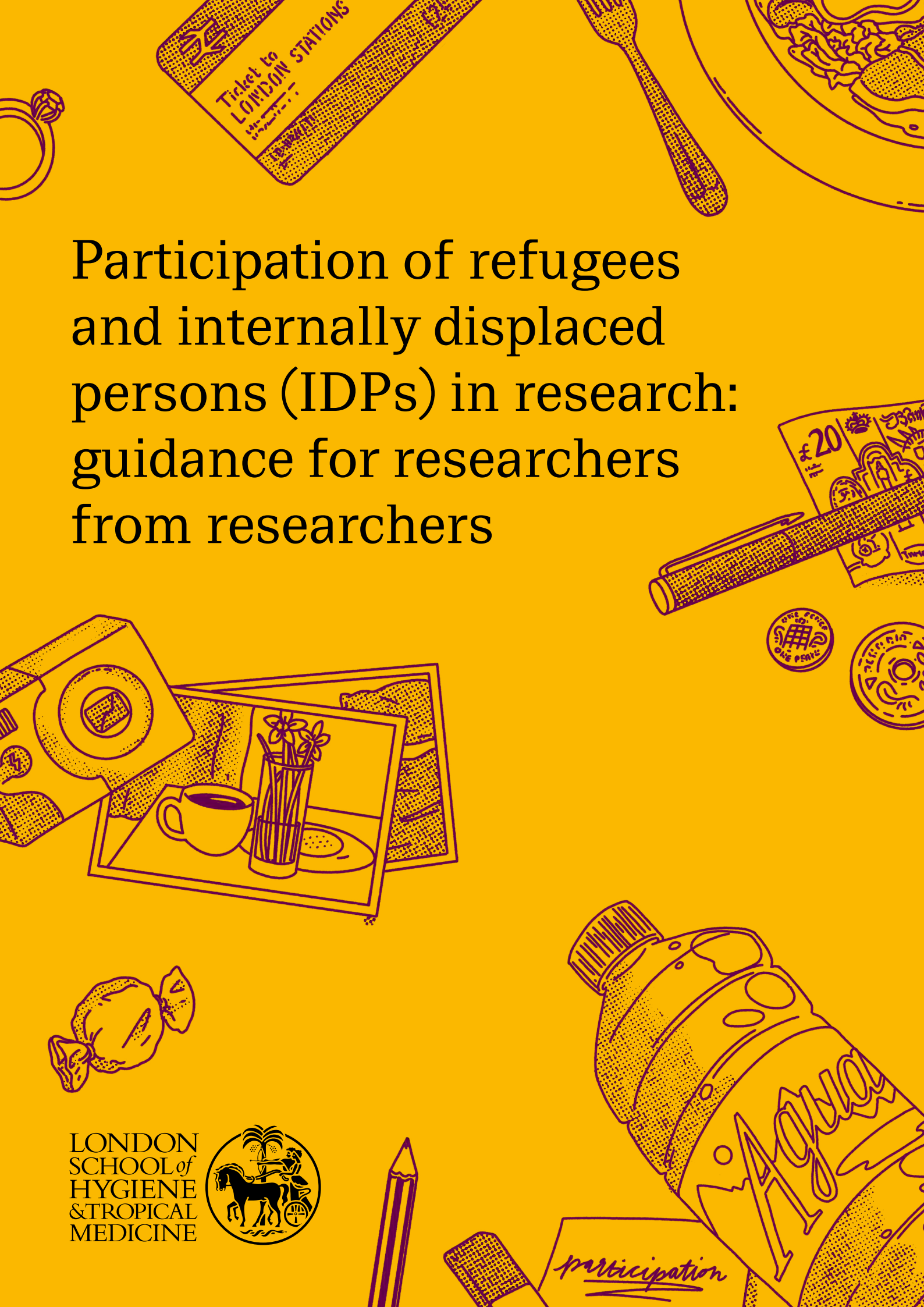
Participation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in research: guidance for researchers from researchers



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ACRONYMS

E, NA, A - Europe, North America and Australia
CBO – Community-based organisation
FGD – Focus group discussion
GBV – Gender-based violence
IDP – Internally Displaced Person
MENA – Middle East & North Africa
NGO – Non-governmental organisation

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Contents

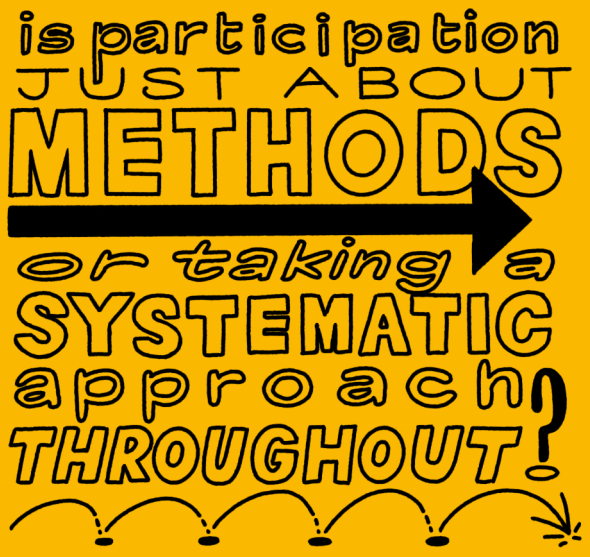
INTRODUCTION

This guide is for researchers (including humanitarian practitioners) who are seeking guidance on how to promote the participation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the research process. It is based on a qualitative study exploring how humanitarian practitioners and academics operationalise participation in their research with these populations, with a particular focus on experiences conducting research on gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV). It is also informed by a scoping review on refugee and IDP participation, a review of literature on participation in research, and the collective experiences of the authors of this guide. The guide is intended *for* researchers, *from* researchers.

Humanitarian actors, including international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN actors and local NGOs, and academics, affirm that refugees and IDPs should participate in decision-making on research related to them. Existing humanitarian guidelines also link participation with humanitarian accountability towards people affected by crises (CHS Alliance, 2013).

However, humanitarian and academic actors have often been criticised for tokenistic efforts to enhance participation within research, for example asking refugees to be part of advisory groups but not listening to their feedback (Women's Refugee Commission, 2021). In some cases, efforts to be participatory may result in exploitative engagement with refugees (Pincock & Bakunzi, 2021; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2019). Refugees have expressed frustration with being convened for "consultations" when humanitarian actors have already determined the needs and interventions (Anderson, 2019). Participation may also reinforce the perspectives of power-holders, especially men, neglecting the gendered dimensions of participation (Lokot, 2021; Cornwall, 2003). There is a consistent gap between policy and practice on what it means for research to reflect "refugee voices" and bottom-up approaches (Dona, 2007).

These critiques are not new. Rather, they are an extension of broader debates about what participation means even outside of research, for example within participatory development (Cooke & Kothari, 2001) or as part of attempts to ensure more participatory humanitarian governance (Janmyr, 2022). Within research, participation may be equated to using certain participatory methods, such as PhotoVoice, however the "glorification of methods" has also been criticised for hiding underlying power dynamics between researchers and participants (Ozkul, 2020). Scholars urge the need to carefully reflect on what participation actually means, distinguishing between using specific participatory methods and taking a broader "holistic" approach to participation throughout the research (Lenette et al., 2019).
Thinking about participation more systematically throughout the research process has also been encouraged in existing literature, as opposed to focusing solely on methods labelled as "participatory" (Ozkul, 2020). We have reflected on this need to think about the research process more broadly rather than fixating on methods alone in this guide.



This guide is informed by the fact that despite rhetoric about refugee and IDP participation, practical guidance on how researchers promote participation in research is often lacking. Additionally, there is limited practical guidance for researchers on how to use participatory approaches in exploring topics like GBV (University of Birmingham, 2020) despite the recognition that participatory research may be particularly aligned with research seeking to respond to these issues (Lenette et al., 2019). As such, this guide particularly draws on experiences conducting research focused on gender equality and GBV. We draw on the experiences of practitioners and academics working with refugees and IDPs to explore how they understand participation, their motivations for taking participatory approaches, the challenges associated with being participatory, strategies they have implemented, impacts (both positive and negative) of being participatory and advice they offer to other researchers who seek to promote refugee and IDP participation in research. The following sections outline the methods and findings of this study.

METHODS

In total, 17 interviews were conducted with practitioners and academics from August to November 2022. Interviewees were purposively selected based on their experience conducting research with refugees and IDPs using participatory approaches. Interviewees were identified by ML based on her existing networks, as well as from a separate scoping review conducted by this team, and through online Facebook groups for humanitarian practitioners.

While the intention was to only speak to interviewees who conduct gender equality and GBV research, due to challenges in identifying interviewees, in the end two participants did not specifically focus on gender equality or GBV but reflected more broadly on human rights and health issues for refugees and IDPs.

Overall, six interviewees identified as practitioners, six were academics, and five described themselves as practitioner-academics.

In total, 10 interviewees were based in humanitarian settings, and seven were not. By region, five interviewees were based in Africa, three were based in Asia, two were based in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the remaining seven were based outside of humanitarian settings, specifically in countries in Europe, North America and Australia (E, NA, A).

All interviewees identified as women or non-binary, except one who identified as a man. Three of the interviewees disclosed that they had lived experience of being a refugee or IDP. Table 1 outlines the characteristics of interviewees by geography and type of interviewees.

Type of Participant	Africa	Asia-Pacific	Middle East and North Africa	Europe, North America and Australia
Practitioner	2	3	1	
Academic	1		1	4
Practitioner - Academic	2			3
Total	**5**	**3**	**2**	**7**

Interviews were conducted by ML using Zoom. In total, 12 interviews were transcribed by a transcription company and the remaining five were transcribed using the automated transcription function in Zoom. Data was analysed thematically by ML through inductive and deductive coding, using Nvivo.

Interviewees were invited to share feedback on the findings during a workshop at the end of January 2023, which six of the interviewees chose to join. All interviewees were sent slides from the feedback workshop for review, and two provided input on the draft version of this guide. Ethical approval to conduct interviews was received from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

In this practice guide, we attribute the contributions of interviewees using the regional location in which they are based. We recognise this terminology is sometimes contested and does not always fully represent the multiple overlapping identities people hold.

We have not attributed content by gender or type of interviewee to avoid identifying individuals. Importantly, due to funding and resource limitations, we did not conduct interviews with refugees and IDPs. However, a few interviewees had lived experience of being a refugee/IDP, which also informs their perspectives as researchers.

FINDINGS

Refugee and IDP participation: ambiguities in definitions

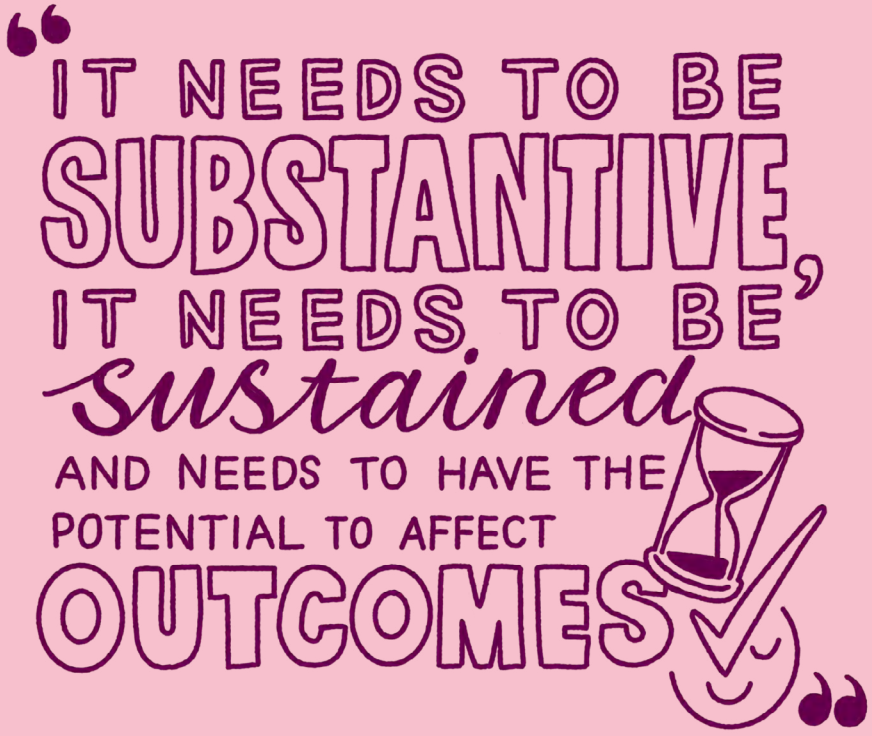
"Participation" is difficult to define

Across interviews, there was general recognition that refugee and IDP "participation" in research is difficult to define and that this lack of clarity perpetuates the ambiguity and misuse of the concept. One interviewee commented, "people will say we stand for refugee participation, or we encourage refugee participation. But when it comes to what this means in practicality, it's not very clear" (interview 16; Africa). Others referred to a "disconnect between what we assume is participatory" and what participation actually means (interview 6; MENA).

There was a sense from a few interviewees that participation has "lost its meaning" (interview 16; Africa), and has "become so sexy that it gets used in the wrong way" (interview 1; E, NA, A), in that it "disguise[s] non-participatory practices" (interview 3; E, NA, A) or "legitimis[es] work that isn't necessarily participatory" (interview 1; E, NA, A).

For some interviewees, defining participation was also about describing what participation is not. One interviewee described participation as "more than just being consulted" (interview 2; E, NA, A). Merely including refugees and IDPs in research was seen as different to participation (interview 10; Africa). Another interviewee reflected on how merely having refugees present or even listening was not enough unless they were part of decisions:

> "it wouldn't be enough to invite a refugee to a meeting, ask them to tell their story and then get to the business of making decisions after they leave. For participation of refugees to be meaningful, it needs to be substantive, it needs to be sustained, and it needs to have the potential to affect outcomes…" (interview 4; MENA).



Focus group discussions (FGDs) were discussed by a few interviewees as being a method that was labelled as participatory simply because of being more interactive:

> "I feel a little harsh, but maybe I would just say, **if your idea of participation is focus groups** (…) I don't want to use the word 'alarm', but **it's like a call to really stop and explore what participation is.** Because a focus group, if done well, it can be a good conversation, but a lot of them aren't even done well. But often it is **largely so one-way, and one-off**, and not really engaging people in (…) talking together about (…) what is the problem and how do they want to address it, and what actions do they want to take to resolve it" (interview 7; E, NA, A).

The reflections about FGDs are particularly important because of how this method is often assumed to be participatory, while in reality FGDs vary in how they are facilitated. On similar lines, "creative" research was also critiqued by a few interviewees as not automatically being participatory.

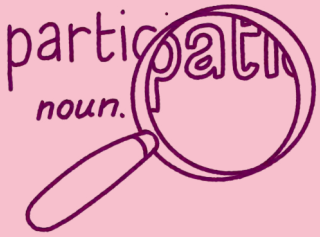
These reflections suggest something more than interaction or a visual output is needed for a method to be considered participatory. In the feedback workshop, interviewees also reflected on the difference between using a participatory "method" and a more systematic participatory "approach" throughout the research. One interviewee reflected on this question: "[A]re you just coming in doing some methods to get to data, or are you really taking the time to really do the whole process?" (interview 5; Africa). The distinction here between method and approach is critical, and is also reflected in the literature discussed in the Introduction.

Blurred lines: is it really participatory?

However, in other cases, it was not straightforward whether research could be classified as participatory.

A few interviewees listed examples that might generally be considered to constitute general good research practice rather than being necessarily participatory, for example, holding separate group discussions with people with disabilities or young adults, or having group feedback sessions.

One interviewee described training a local actor to collect data remotely and facilitate a co-analysis and co-writing process as participatory, while also acknowledging the challenges of a researcher being outside a setting and directing the actions of a local actor (interview 14; E, NA, A).



The lack of clarity about whether particular actions count as being participatory reflects the problem of the term being used casually without clear definition.

Ideal participation or pragmatic participation?

Reflecting on challenges related to the lack of a clear definition and varying degrees of participation, interviewees discussed the difference between participation as an aspiration or "ideal", and "the practicable version" (interview 17; E, NA, A).

They reflected on pragmatic choices researchers have to make because of limited funding, time, institutional support, access or other challenges. One interviewee suggested that to assume that being participatory is a "democratic process" may be "stretching the reality", suggesting instead thinking about participation as a framework or worldview for bringing about reciprocity (interview 8; Africa).

As outlined later in this guide, research with refugees and IDPs is infused with power dynamics which are difficult to fully unravel, which means choices have to be made about what is most practical in the circumstances.

Rationale for refugee/IDP participation

Multiple interviewees discussed how the rationale or motivation for promoting refugee and IDP participation matters:

"I think we really need to question why we want to do participation, why we value participation at all" (interview 3; E, NA, A).

These motivations may influence the extent to which participation is tokenistic or meaningful. In the feedback workshop, one interviewee explored this question about whether participation is always needed or whether it should be the outcome:

> "When is participation what we're after? And when is it rather to have a respectful relationship with research participants, for example, to allow them to hear back and to learn about what the outcomes were? But maybe that's what they want. **Maybe participation isn't the key thing** (…). They may be happy to participate, and they might want to hear back about the results, but they have their own work to do. They might not want to get involved as some kind of research assistants in our projects (…). I think this question is really important to **not take for granted that participation is always the goal, that more participation is always better.**"

This quote illustrates that the rationale for participation matters, and it suggests that participation may not necessarily be appropriate in certain situations.

The main motivation or rationale for using participatory approaches discussed by interviewees relate to power dynamics, research relevance, the topic of research being about GBV or gender equality, and responding to the negative impacts of a lack of participation, as outlined below.

One interviewee also reflected on the role of general shifts in the humanitarian sector to find new ways of engaging with refugees and IDPs in recent years (interview 17; E, NA, A). This broader context and momentum around discussing inequity may also influence the motivations below.

Power dynamics

Interviewees emphasised how promoting refugee and IDP participation helps to address power dynamics present within research: "It's kind of centred around this conversation of power and trying not to exploit (…) individuals that we're collecting information from" (interview 8; Africa). Promoting the participation of women and girls was particularly mentioned as a vehicle to address unequal power dynamics that may be present within refugee and IDP populations, as well as in research processes.

Research relevance

Conducting research that is relevant to the needs of refugees and IDPs was also a rationale often mentioned among interviewees: "They are going through the situation, not us. They are staying in camps, we are not staying in camps, so we don't know. We can feel what's going on, but we are not in their shoes… we must make sure their voices are there" (interview 11; Asia). Interviewees reflected on the importance of ensuring that research was relevant to refugees and IDPs, and that space was being created for them to contribute to shaping research agendas.

Topic of research related to GBV or gender equality

Interviewees also discussed how studying topics like gender equality and GBV might lend themselves to using participatory approaches. One interviewee reflected:

> "[M]aybe certain topics… call for different types of relationships or research ethics. **You can't say that I'm doing feminist research on sexual violence and then just treat people as data sources in a very extractive, top-down way.** That would be like a contradiction, but from a different research perspective, maybe, it wouldn't be" (interview 2; E, NA, A).

Others challenged this perception, suggesting that we can't assume that because research is about GBV, it means it is participatory or ethical (interview 3; E, NA, A). Interviewees reflected on the idea of promoting participation for the sake of efficiency or achieving particular humanitarian outcomes, critiquing this as a rationale for promoting refugee and IDP participation.

Responding to negative impacts of lack of participation

Witnessing the negative impacts of the lack of refugee and IDP participation in action was also a motivating factor for being more participatory.

Interviewees shared examples of inappropriate food being provided to displaced populations because they were not asked by the organisation about what food they wanted (interview 11; Asia), or providing information to refugees at times when women were unavailable because they failed to understand their schedules (interview 5; Africa).

For these interviewees, examples of where humanitarian assistance has not been appropriate demonstrated the need for refugee and IDP participation.

One interviewee reflected on the need to make "extra effort" to be participatory to prevent humanitarian actors from "all regurgitating each other's findings" (interview 6; MENA). In this example, being participatory was described as something that may reduce duplication of research.

Challenges and tensions to conducting participatory research

Structural, institutional and bureaucratic barriers

Many interviewees discussed how the funding structures within research and within the humanitarian sector are a barrier to having refugees and IDPs participate throughout the research process. A fundamental challenge raised by many interviewees was the short timeframes for submitting funding applications, which precluded a participatory approach to research.

Interviewees discussed challenges in revising research questions after funding had been received: “If you've had to kind of build up a whole project around the set idea, it's hard to then be like, well I need to maybe let go of this at some point if other people have different ideas…” (interview 17; E, NA, A), which suggests that the research scope is often defined before funding is received. While refugees might be invited to share perspectives after a proposal has already been created, in reality, “that is too late” (interview 4; MENA); decisions may be harder to change after this stage.

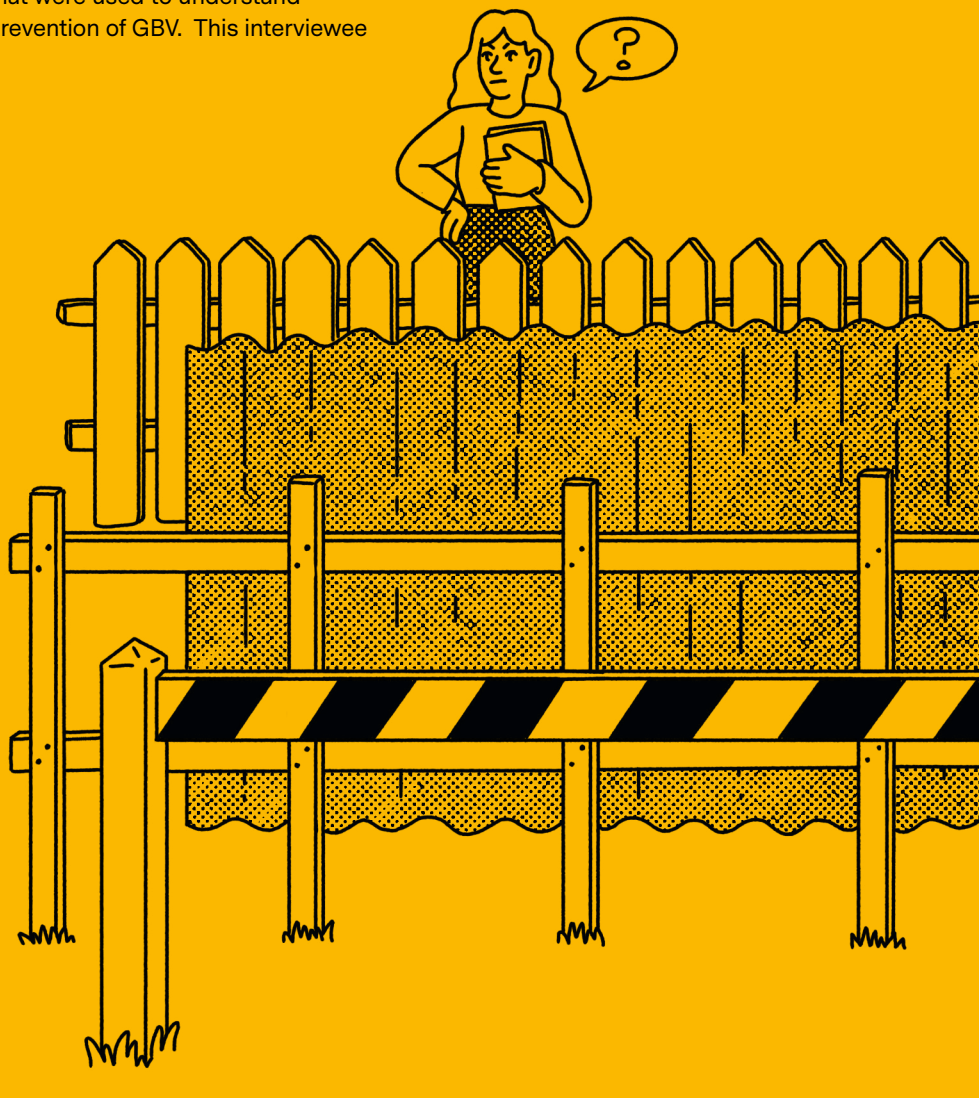
Institutional barriers and ways of working, including power hierarchies within academia may also complicate efforts to be participatory. One interviewee discussed how being an early career researcher particularly limited their ability to set the terms for refugee and IDP participation due to established structures for who makes decisions about research (interview 1; E, NA, A). In the feedback workshop, another interviewee commented that “money matters” and reflected that as an early career researcher, it was challenging to compensate refugees and IDPs for their contributions prior to funding submission.

Bureaucracy within the humanitarian system also affects the extent to which research can be participatory. In some camp settings, approval is needed from authorities to gather refugees and share findings. Security challenges might also prevent refugees from moving to a different location to participate in dissemination activities. These structural constraints might mean that it is difficult to implement participatory research or to go beyond just talking to participants once (interview 7; E, NA, A), further illustrating the point in the first section about researchers needing to make pragmatic decisions in response to these kinds of constraints.

Lack of respect for participatory research

Interviewees also described resistance they faced from funders and humanitarian actors when conducting participatory research. This included pushback against slower and more interpretive ways of working (interview 14; E, NA, A, interview 17; E, NA, A) and questions about how such research can be generalised (interview 14; E, NA, A).

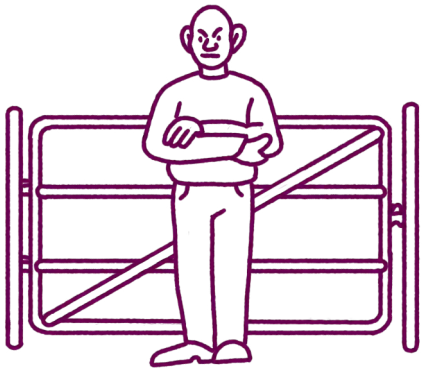
One interviewee discussed lack of respect from a funder about participatory methods used in an evaluation. The funder questioned the storytelling and mapping approaches that were used to understand prevention of GBV. This interviewee described the engagement with the funder as a “wake-up call to how little respect there is for those methods”, which are often seen as not providing useful data, and for being “fuzzy” or “almost like a made-up methodology” (interview 7; E, NA, A). These reflections about resistance towards participatory research may also be an indication that more work needs to be done to communicate the scope and benefits of participatory research. In the feedback workshop, one interviewee also suggested that some funders may be more willing to recognise the benefits of these methods, reflecting on a trend that methods like semi-structured qualitative interviews are now seen as “not very innovative” and “kind of boring” which suggests “some reasons for hope”.



Questions of representation

Many interviewees raised critical questions about how refugees and IDPs are represented, who represents them, and how power dynamics affect these representations.

A few interviewees critiqued the idea of a "gatekeeper" who enables researchers to access refugees and IDPs: "he will choose who will speak" (interview 12; Asia) – an example also illustrating that it is usually a man who acts as gatekeeper.



Interviewees discussed the importance of capturing diverse perspectives and not just the perspectives of those in power, emphasising that we shouldn't "fall into the trap of thinking that one group of refugees will speak on behalf of all refugees" because of different power hierarchies among refugees (interview 4; MENA).

These reflections highlight the particular complications in engaging with specific individuals who are "gatekeepers" because this is needed to enable access or buy-in, but also recognising that their viewpoints are informed by their power and an intentional effort should be made to ensure others can also participate.

Working with refugee researchers or giving them a role as "broker" may also be viewed as a simple solution to lack of refugee participation, however this can "obscure wider power dynamics" (interview 17; E, NA, A). These power hierarchies may, at times, be underestimated by researchers who are outside of the setting being studied:

> "[W]hen you bring people into spaces and multiple people from different backgrounds into spaces, and try to create a kind of democratic space, or flattening the power peak (…) it's actually not, because **there are dynamics that are happening within that group** (…) We're automatically in a position of privilege. And so there are things that happen in that process that are often not spoken for, and can be easily ignored…" (interview 8; Africa).

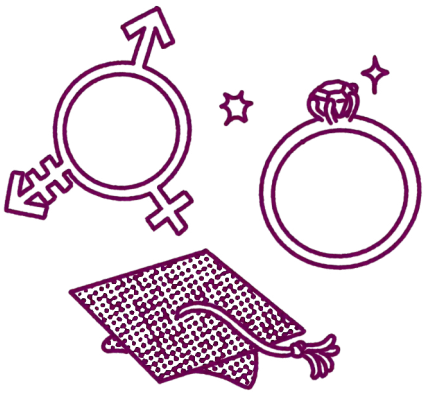
The quote above highlights that participatory approaches and ways of working may be less effective than is assumed by researchers because of unseen power dynamics.

However, refugees and IDPs who are invited to participate understand these dynamics: "[T]hey know where the power is, and they don't want to upset people who might have some kind of control over what they've got access to and what their families have got access to" (interview 7; E, NA, A).

Power dynamics between humanitarian actors - who refugees and IDPs rely on - may also affect how refugees and IDPs represent themselves and "whether they are able to, in fact, speak freely in that context when they are reliant on the other entity" (interview 4; MENA).

Refugees and IDPs may self-censor even within spaces that are apparently "democratic" because of these dynamics, creating challenges for how researchers describe the nature and impacts of their participatory efforts, and potentially limiting the extent to which input reflects the true perspectives of refugees and IDPs.

Interviewees also discussed how intersecting power hierarchies and identities complicate how refugees and IDPs are categorised: "Are they one group? (…) they are not homogenous" (interview 10; Africa).



Education, age and gender may intersect to give young male refugees power within camp spaces, while young women and others may be left out - with consequences for research participation (interview 10; Africa). Refugees who speak English or are known to NGOs may end up being the ones with a voice and influence within participatory research projects (interview 17; E, NA, A). As one interviewee observed, refugees and IDPs who are more outspoken, or who may find it more culturally acceptable to be outspoken, might also be given more space to participate, but participation may be more challenging for LGBTQ refugees (interview 4; MENA) or people identifying as a "third gender" (interview 12; Asia).

Location can also determine participation:

> "[R]esearchers always try to get the data from the place which is like very accessible. A lot of time, researchers go to the **people who can speak better**, which a lot of times causes bias in the research (…) the camp is very huge and **they always bring the people who are near to the centre**. So most of the time the people who are far away from the centre (…) they are like most of the time are ignored" (interview 12; Asia).

The discussion of intersecting power hierarchies above illustrates how humanitarian actors might unintentionally perpetuate power dynamics already present among refugees and IDPs. For research on GBV, this has particular implications for who may receive services: "there are many dynamics of who gets to speak to the researchers because we are seen as outsiders with a potential for people to benefit, so it's possible that women who are undergoing violence or have ideas of how we could prevent violence in these areas could share with us but then you cannot reach them" (interview 10; Africa).

Another implication for GBV research was victim blaming that may happen even within a group of refugee researchers: "There is a lot of victim-blaming, that can happen anywhere (…) we did have members that would share responses that were really victim-blaming or difficult, and I think that can be difficult to navigate…" (interview 7; E, NA, A).

The quote above highlights the complexities of assembling a group of refugee researchers in an effort to be participatory, and assuming their beliefs about GBV and their responses to GBV survivors will always be appropriate. All researchers, whether refugees and IDPs or not, are informed by their own positionality and power, making it challenging to research sensitive topics like GBV and gender equality, which can be sensitive.

Working with peer researchers also heightens the question of who is able to represent others: "[H]ow do you place yourself within the community? (…) you're part of the community. It's very easy for everyone to want to speak to you, but at the same time, it's also very easy for a particular people just want to speak to you, or you feel that they're entitled because you're part of the community (…) That creates tension in itself" (interview 16; Africa).

Simply being selected as a peer researcher may not mean that you see issues the way other refugees and IDPs see them. One interviewee observed how the local researcher she worked with shared his positionality and experiences with the refugees he was conducting research with, but the refugees "rejected" his comments and felt he didn't understand their everyday realities (interview 14; E, NA, A). This raises questions about who selects peer researchers and the extent to which their position enables them to be accepted by their peers.

Interviewees also reflected on their own role as practitioners and/or academics in making decisions about how refugees' and IDPs' lives are represented: "Many times, our data presentation is from what we have analysed that information to mean, rather than what the voices of the research participants actually say…" (interview 5; Africa).

One interviewee discussed how to balance recognition that a population is vulnerable to exploitation with "an overall paternalistic approach" to refugee and IDP research that assumes they lack agency. They discussed that although facing "structural inequalities", it doesn't mean refugees "don't have the capacity to put themselves forward to participate in our research, but we really do need to do it carefully" (interview 15; E, NA, A).

In the feedback workshop, one interviewee also reflected on the challenges in sharing research findings about GBV or gender inequality that "aren't so nice to hear" because this may cause tension among participants. These comments demonstrate the autonomy researchers exercise when interpreting and presenting data.

As outlined above, this role is shaped by the positionality and power of researchers.

Research Fatigue

Multiple interviewees discussed research fatigue as a barrier to making more requests of refugees and IDPs to join participatory research processes: “I think when you're just the subject of a research, and you're asked questions over and over again by different actors, different entities, that can become very overwhelming” (interview 4; MENA); “they're also sick and tired of just being asked to come and share their story… ‘We want to do more than just share our personal experiences, our experiences of trauma’” (interview 3; E, NA, A). One interviewee described how IDPs were “completely fed up” because of continually being part of exercises without any impacts being realised: “They were like, ‘we don’t want to draw any more timelines, community maps…’” (interview 1; E, NA, A). Another interviewee gave the example of how at the start of the Syria Crisis, refugees were keen to participate in research because they believed the research would impact policy; however, now Syrian refugees are less willing to participate “because they've seen no results tangibly from all these studies that they've participated in, or they can't connect the dots of how this has really impacted them”, and because funding to the crisis has decreased (interview 6; MENA). She described an experience with a research participant like this:

> “I ended up interviewing the same woman twice for two different studies, and she recognized me immediately… ‘Oh, look! It’s you! You’re back!’ And I said, ‘Yes’, and she goes, ‘Okay, let’s start. Give me your speech and I go.’ ‘What do you mean?’. She goes, **‘Give me your speech about how you’re here to hear our voices, and how you want my input in your study and all of that’**. And I realized that I even had a similar script to the script that I had the first time, because our organisation has a standard script that it would read before we would conduct this research, and she goes, ‘You know what I would have appreciated… if you told me what the outcomes of that last study were.
>
> I mean you came in. **You interviewed me for like an hour**, and then I never saw you again. Did you publish that study?’ And I said, ‘Yes, I did’. She said, ‘I mean I’m sure that’s great for you. But I mean what happened with the study? What were the recommendations? What did you talk about? What did you discuss?’ And it really resonated with me for the longest time that yeah, I mean, **I come and I interview her, and I tell her, her voice matters, and then I take all of this, and I go, and I produce the study where I write a paper, and I get promoted, and this person doesn’t know what happened with the input she gave me”** (Interview 6; MENA).

This quote demonstrates how research participants may be frustrated by the lack of feedback and follow-up after research. The other reflections in this section also emphasise the importance of research relevance as well as the challenges conducting research among refugees and IDPs who are affected by protracted crises.

While thinking about impact is vital, interviewees also

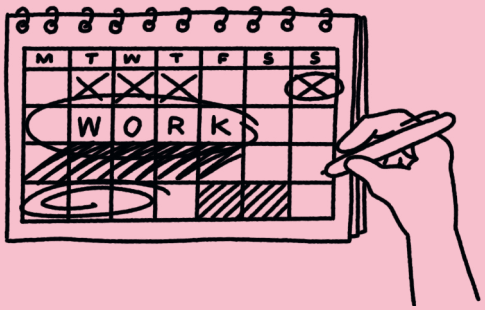
recommended being careful not to over-promise about the impacts of research (interview 8; Africa), urging more critical reflection on whether research brings actual benefits (interview 10; Africa). One interviewee reflected, “I think ethically it sounds like a really good idea to co-produce knowledge with those that are most vulnerable (…) what would it mean to really do that? And will it necessarily lead to knowledge, better knowledge that will be more helpful?” (interview 2; E, NA, A). These comments highlight that impact does not simply happen automatically because research is participatory.

Inadequate framing of what participation will mean for refugees and IDPs – especially the time burden

Interviewees discussed the challenges created by properly defining what will be required for the participation of refugees and IDPs. The analysis phase of research was identified as being potentially more challenging for refugees and IDPs to participate. One interviewee reflected that this was a challenging phase because they were not clear about what analysis actually meant. She reflected that explanations may not result in participation: "[U]sually, co-researchers will tell me, 'We trust you. You can do whatever you want'" (interview 3; E, NA, A). Other interviewees also discussed how their efforts to involve refugees at later stages of the research process might result in refugees and IDPs declining to be involved. These comments raise important questions about whether participation in all stages of the research is something that only researchers may want, instead of specifically being desired by refugees and IDPs.

A reluctance to be involved in participatory research may be linked to the time required for such participation. Interviewees discussed the burden placed on refugees and IDPs by participatory research, recognising "this also shouldn't be something that engages displaced people to do work for free and burdens them" (interview 2; E, NA,A).

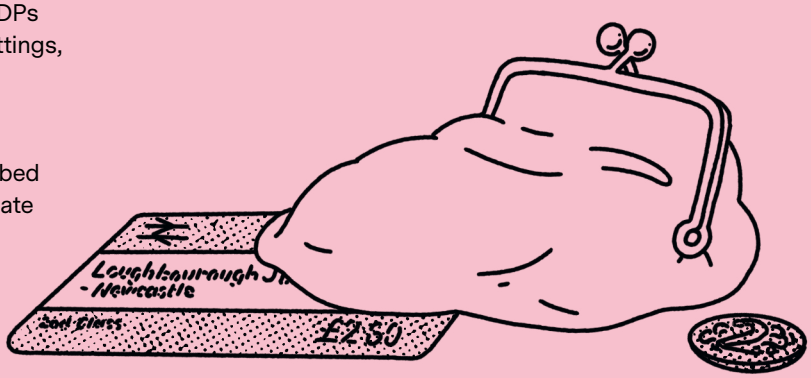
Encouraging refugees and IDPs to participate might be useful for the research but might ignore the fact that refugees don't have time for this level of involvement (interview 8; Africa). Interviewees reflected on the "tension between us saying, 'You need to be involved', versus them not wanting to be involved" (interview 17; E, NA, A). These reflections also raise questions about the burden on refugees and IDPs to participate in order to correct unequal power hierarchies present in research. In the feedback workshop, the challenge of how much time it takes to conduct participatory research was also discussed.



Debates about providing compensation to refugee and IDPs

Across almost all the interviews, the issue of financially compensating refugees and IDPs for their involvement in participatory research was discussed. Interviewees criticised the fact that refugees and IDPs were "overburdened, underpaid, often not paid at all" (interview 4; MENA). While there was some recognition of the tensions between buying data and compensating people for their time (interview 2; E, NA, A), the general consensus was that refugees and IDPs should be financially compensated for being involved in participatory research because of the time required for this kind of research.

Interviewees linked the importance of compensation to the fact that refugees and IDPs participate in many studies and are frustrated by the lack of impact, which makes it even more important for them to be compensated (interview 6; MENA). The challenges to compensating refugees and IDPs fairly were often bureaucratic or institutional. In some settings, there are legal rules around financially compensating refugees (interview 17; E, NA, A), while in other settings paying them over a certain threshold might impact their benefits (interview 15; E, NA, A). One interviewee described how the NGO she worked with did not want to compensate participants for their time, even for transport, because this would set up an expectation that other NGOs in that setting should also compensate participants (interview 14; E, NA, A). These debates are not necessarily new within research, but interviewees suggested that because refugees and IDPs face particular challenges, and because participatory research requires greater time, refugees and IDPs who are part of such research processes should be compensated.



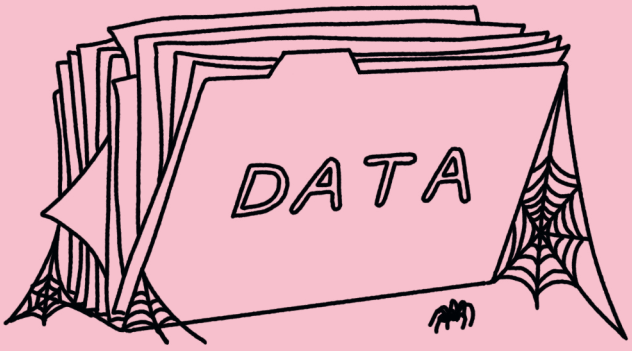
Ethical Tensions

Interviewees discussed several ethical tensions that may be created by participatory research. Some of these tensions, however, are also present in any kind of research.

Questions about whether participatory research is always ethical and whether researchers do what they say they will do in ethics applications were discussed in interviews. One interviewee suggested that the increasing funder emphasis on being participatory seems to assume that participatory research is "automatically ethical", which was described as a "dangerous" assumption that increases the risk of participation being exploited (interview 8; Africa).

Other interviewees similarly discussed the lack of accountability to follow through on being participatory beyond what is submitted to institutional review boards for ethics approval (interview 6; MENA). This suggests there may be a mismatch between what is described as participatory research for the purposes of ethics, and what occurs in practice – a challenge not necessarily unique to participatory research.

Refugees and IDPs might feel pressured to be involved in participatory research because of power dynamics associated with humanitarian aid: "[A] lot of times the researchers who ask the questions are the same people who provide the services. A lot of time refugees, they think that, 'Okay, if I don't participate, then maybe my service will be affected'" (interview 12; Asia). This challenge is not unique to participatory research, but is a specific challenge in humanitarian settings where power hierarchies underlie interactions between those delivering aid and receiving aid. Given the time burden required for participatory research, asking refugees and IDPs to participate may have greater implications.



Interviewees reflected on the ethics of collecting data that is not used – also a challenge that is not unique to participatory research: "[A]ctually, we have a lot of data, we don't need to keep asking all of the same questions, we can actually focus on just better using what we have in many cases" (interview 7; E, NA, A). Reflections about how data is used reflects broader concerns interviewees raised about whether research is relevant or duplicative.

Ethical challenges may arise about how to help or support refugees and IDPs. Interviewees reflected on how participatory approaches enable "close-up work" and "incredible insights"; however, they also generated questions: "what happens if (…) this person needs something and what do I do?" (interview 8; Africa).

Another interviewee reflected on the need to ensure the care of refugees and IDPs: "[D]o we think about the care of the people we spoke to? (…) Apart from the displacement they face, they also go through other forms of violence or indignity, so maybe there's always that question of 'can you help me reach out?'" (interview 10; Africa).

While humanitarian practitioners are generally dissuaded from responding to individual requests for assistance (e.g. requests for money or material support), in a research setting there may be greater opportunities to respond to need, such as referring GBV survivors for access to support services. Whether researchers support refugees and IDPs in obtaining specific information or other help may depend, however, on the individual researcher's decisions.

Interviewees reflected on the challenges they faced navigating ethical decisions, such as when refugees and IDPs want their names to be known and not anonymised in more activist research (interview 1; E, NA, A). In other cases, interviewees had to make difficult decisions, for example, not allowing a research participant to choose a particular photo to be displayed in order to protect another person's safety: "I still have an ethics of care that I need to think about, not just my participant, but the community that they live in…." (interview 8; Africa). One interviewee also reflected on questions of representation and whether videos made by refugees and IDPs reinforced stereotypes:

> "[T]hose videos (…) showed really terrible poverty (…) **I haven't really used those videos for anything because I really felt like this was really stigmatising.** So I guess there's also a thought to be had about what sort of images do you want people to take and (…) Is there a way of looking at somehow more positive images or not only these very stereotype-confirming images?" (interview 1; E, NA, A)

In these examples, researchers made decisions to ensure safety and avoid stigmatising the population, but simultaneously ended up curating the outputs which were produced. This suggests that even within methods that are described as participatory, executive decisions may need to be made that contradict refugees' and IDPs' preferences.

Participatory strategies used during the research process

This section outlines practical strategies used by participants to promote refugee/IDP participation. It is structured based on key stages of the research process, with one overarching section covering general strategies that participants described as occurring throughout the project.

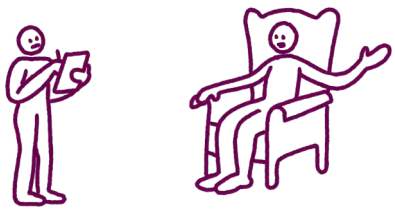
Throughout the research process

Consider which refugees and IDPs you are working with and the power hierarchies they occupy:

"So I think trying to find ways to kind of **work with refugees who are not the sort of the usual suspects** who are known to NGOs (…) I think there's a kind of a lean of research towards those people because of the accessibility, their familiarity…" (interview 17; E, NA, A).

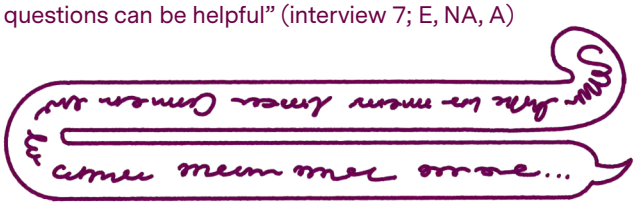
"I don't think that using (…) gatekeepers in the refugee camps and using their leaders to share ideas with us is meaningful, [we need] proper entry points into communities (…) **getting the ideas of the local people**, their people who are women and girls and older men and older women who are living in refugee camps…" (interview 10; Africa).

"[There were some] elderly women that did hold a lot of power in the community in general. And I'm sure there are ways that they exert that power, and so trying to mitigate that and trying to think about, **how do we make sure we don't just assume that everybody's completely on the same page and supportive of our survivors, because it might not be**" (interview 7; E, NA, A).



Have ongoing (rather than once-off) conversations about what participation and power-sharing look like:

"[W]e've been able to, I think, have that conversation, and at least with our partners and some of the direct agencies we work with, in the countries where we work, to try to just chip away at that, again, that idea of what's participation and what's power sharing. It doesn't just mean that you have a refugee that you talk to, it's, well **how often do you talk to them and what decisions do they actually get to make, and what's the roles that you've had to set out for each other, and does each party get to amend those roles?** Those kinds of questions can be helpful" (interview 7; E, NA, A)



"Taking participants through their own experiences of power, and also coming back to reflect [with refugees] (…) **How did you feel you exercised your power through this process?** (feedback workshop)

Reflect on positionality:

"**[U]nderstand your positionality,** because that's something that comes into play, where you're part of the community that is being researched, and you're the one who is researching it. So how do you work around some dynamics that come with it?" (interview 16; Africa)

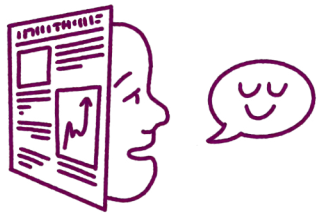
"Understanding (…) when they have power and when they don't have power, and what that exactly means in exploring potential power imbalances that could happen between researchers and research participants. I think that was, for me, really powerful, that (…) **data collectors are aware of their own power and they are being very careful not to impose, not to take decisions, not to pressure, or push research participants**, but that research participants also felt **that they have the power to decide, to stop, to change this** and, I mean, to make decisions when they want it" (interview 5; Africa).

Take time to build relationships:

"[R]eally cultivate relationships, like at least some of those relationships, over time, because when there is consistency, and some form of trust is building" (interview 7; E, NA, A)

Consider the impact of the participation on refugees and IDPs:

"[M]y accountability has to be to the participants, because they're the people that are experiencing the issues that I want to understand and so their well-being or my integrity in that process is of the principal importance. So if somebody writes a paper and it doesn't sound like it's participatory, I don't care. I actually am more curious about: **did the participants feel okay in this research project?"** (interview 8; Africa)

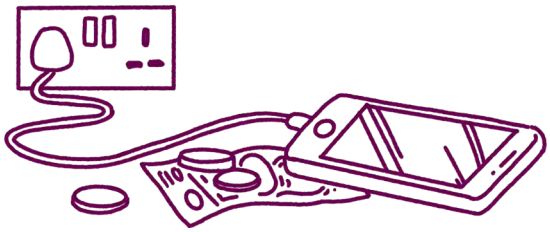


Ensure you value the time of refugees and IDPs through financial and in-kind compensation

"[I]t sounds really good that well, we had this refugee women's organisation involved in the design and the data collection and then discussing the findings. That sounds really good and I'm sure it's good for the study, but then is **it necessarily good ethical practice to do that unless you can pay them for it?"** (interview 2; E, NA, A)

"So a lot of the refugees are daily workers. They get paid for odd jobs. They get paid by the hour, et cetera. And if **we're going to take their time, we recharge their phones. We pay for their transportation, and we replace whatever they were going to make that day. We pay them their daily rate**. We're also, of course, you know, paying them a lot more than they would otherwise make, just for the mere fact that we're inconveniencing them, and a lot of the times also, because it's a bit of a security threat for them to cross checkpoints…" (interview 6; MENA)

"[B]eyond pecuniary [financial] benefits, what kind of training or development, mentorship, opportunities, what else could you offer if you can't, for whatever reason, offer a compensation for their time? What other benefit could be derived? (…) So **it's about knowing who the group is, what their needs are, and then thinking about very intentionally, what can I offer back?**" (interview 4; MENA)



Scoping/funding application phase

Include refugees and IDPs from the inception/brainstorming stage of the research:

"[In] our work, we've recently submitted a research proposal and partnership with a number of different academic bodies and got refugee researchers as part of the proposal. **So they're not just the subjects of these research topics**, but rather involved in a meaningful way and able to contribute **more than just answering research questions…**" (interview 4; MENA)

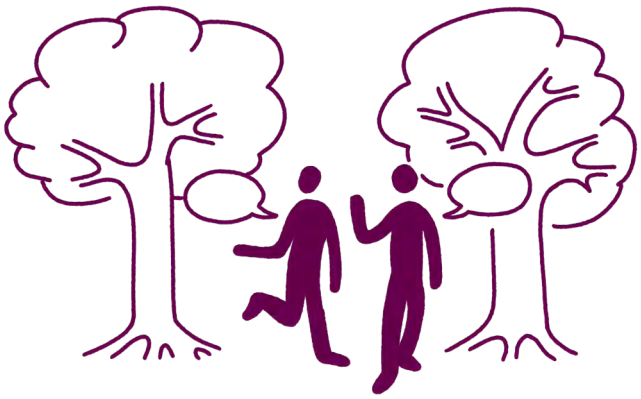
Understand who is in the community in an intersectional way before you start:

"[The] first one is from the onset, grouping, like, **listing the different types of people** that we must talk to. This is not a game of chance. So, one of the best practices I have seen is, deliberately mapping out the different groups, ensuring that we understand the area first before we even set to talk about who the target group is, like, having this **intersectional way** in which we think about the target people that we'll be talking to…" (interview 10; Africa).

Design phase

Use methods that might help you to be more participatory:

"I quite like walking interviews (…) because it challenges that model of question asking, and it's really about, let's take a walk together and then have the chat, rather than, these are my list of questions and you've got to answer them. And so, when I used it in a research project, we made sure that the walk was led by the women, that they decided where they wanted to go in their neighbourhood(…) So anything that's **unstructured and that doesn't ask someone to develop specific skills to be able to be part of the project is more amenable to be participatory**" (interview 3; E, NA, A).



Be mindful of multiple power hierarchies (outside of only gender) when considering the use of any method:

"[I]nstead of segregating just by age, **we tried to segregate people in different groups** and I thought that it was really interesting because everyone, kind of, had different, but interesting and complementary responses. So, I think that is actually a very good way to make sure that you hear voices from everyone and don't miss out on a lot of them" (interview 13; Asia).

"[T]alk to women and tactfully ensur[e] that it's **not also the vocal women that we're only talking to**" (interview 10; Africa).

Aim for research participants to be more heavily weighted towards refugee and IDP participants rather than "key informants" or experts:

"At the moment **we heavily interview the community, we heavily place the insights of the community** (…) It's no longer we interview twenty experts and have one focus group with refugees. Now the balance has been tipped…" (interview 6; MENA).

Data collection phase

Think critically about whether a method is being implemented in a way that is participatory:

"I think unless you're consciously aware of sharing the power or ceding space, ceding control to co-researchers or participants, then it's not participatory. **It's very easy to use any good methods, any ethical methods in non-participatory ways"** (interview 3; E, NA, A).

Ensure safeguarding measures are taken:

"[T]hinking about safeguarding (…) that **we have identified all the potential risks** and mapped out all the (…) we've generated all the risk management, or mitigation measures and that once we go out to involve our participants (…) [They] have an opportunity and feel that they are safe with us, that **we are not just another group of people walking in to ask them questions and walk out"** (interview 5; Africa).

Ensure research participants understand what is needed from them, what the risks are, especially for GBV survivors:

"**How do you prepare your research participants? What kinds of conversations do you have?** Their issues around consent, availability, choice, that you can withdraw at any time if you feel that you do not have the availability, it's causing you violence at home, because that's also important now that you talk about time. If participating in this research is putting your life at risk, or maybe intimate partner violence, or timing. Like, all those are things that are **laid out clearly right from the beginning, so that the participant is at will to say, I think I can go with this, or no, I think this is too heavy on me…**" (interview 5; Africa).

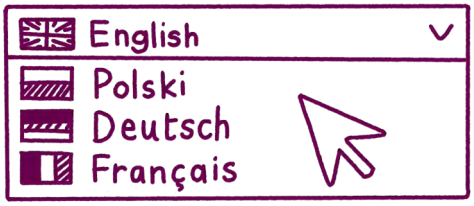
"When you schedule meetings, **you're checking in with your participants to see if they have felt any form of safety concerns** as a result of this participation (…) If they feel that they're getting back home in time, what is the most appropriate time? And then, also **scheduling timing** in a way that allows for the participant time to do, to run personal errands, or run personal activities (…) many times actually, participants may require services after we engage with them, so remaining respectful towards their stories, their dignity and mindful of the fact that topics may be heavy and that they require available services. So, **letting participants know that these topics can be triggering and that there are services available and where they are.** So, having services available in place and that participants know and are comfortable with…" (interview 5; Africa).

Ensure refugees and IDPs aren't inconvenienced by going to them and letting them choose the time for their involvement:

"We also go to the regions where they are. We go to the informal tented settlements. We go to the camps. We make sure that **we inconvenience them as little as possible**, and that if they need to take any time off from their work that they are compensated for that" (interview 6; MENA).

Let refugees and IDPs choose the language and dialect they prefer:

"If we do not understand the languages that the women speak, or if they have different dialects, for instance. The language may be one, but there may be different dialects. Women having to **choose which dialect** actually would be more applicable in that whole process" (interview 5; Africa).



Analysis phase

Provide feedback to research participants about the findings and create space for them to improve interpretation:

"[I]t's us sitting, **stepping back and listening and listening** to what women are saying and allowing them to also find solutions for those issues that they're raising **without us dictating or changing it** to what we want to see (…) the research should bear more of the voices of the participants, rather than the opinions of the researcher (…) **"Feedback, having feedback loops, that even when we conduct this research, there's still an opportunity to feedback and make meaning**" (interview 5; Africa).

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Provide opportunities for refugees and IDPs to be involved in analysis:

> **"[Analysis] shouldn't slip off because that's not fair.** In my experience co-researchers could do a really brilliant job of undertaking the analysis, because **they often are the ones who have been at least part of or actually generating the data in the first place.** They have some sense of ownership over it, an understanding, and they visualise and recall the responses and that dialogue. So, I think it's not to be under-estimated at all, and then the writing up of that and the dissemination in different forms" (interview 15; E, NA, A).

> "I shared my findings (…) I asked them whatever, if everything that they said was already on the report or not and also if, like, if I was missing something or if **I was interpreting something, you know, in the wrong manner**, so I checked with them" (interview 13; Asia).

> "I think sort of treating the kind of the collection of data as a sort of iterative process that your peer researchers have some control over. So something we did in one of the field sites… we kind of handed over exploration of different topics to them (…) **and we'll kind of Whatsapp and send a lot of voice notes back and forth (…) and sort of share reflections on the kind of things that were coming up**. And I, you know, tried not to be too one directive about that in terms of kind of not saying, 'Oh, this is how I would interpret this' (…) And sort of iteration that way their research questions, and **trying to remove my own agenda of what I thought was the most interesting thing**, and encourage them to kind of pursue lines of lines of thoughts that you know that they thought it was significantly… learning deep, deep knowledge of the context" (interview 17; E, NA, A).

Be clear about what "analysis" actually involves:

> "So if I said to someone, 'Do you want to co-analyse with me?', that really doesn't mean anything. So I've become a bit better to **explain the stages and what would be expected, how much time it would take…**" (interview 3; E, NA, A).

Position the writing process in terms of degrees of involvement, depending on what refugees and IDPs are comfortable with:

> "Co-writing is a bit more interesting for them, especially the young people who are studying at university or who want to have a career where they want to put things on their CV (…) I've had both experiences, one where they said, 'We know you, we know you're gonna represent (…) you write'. And then I send a final copy of the draft, and I don't know if they read it, but they say, 'Yeah, sure, submit. Sure, publish'. But I've also had the experience when I've said, 'I want you to contribute an actual paragraph and what do you think you want to write about', and they write. And where I've used their responses from interviews and I say, **'Are you happy with this extract? What do you want me to change?'"** (interview 3; E, NA, A)

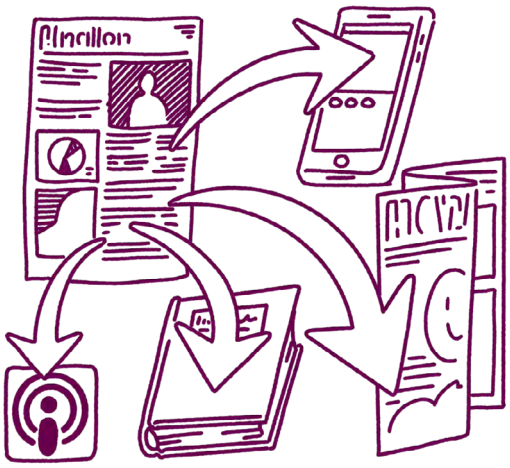
Ensure research feeds into improving interventions:

> "[H]ow do we even make sure that the data we collect is being **useful,** is being **relevant**, is being **informative** to different practitioners on how they can transform the different interventions?" (interview 5; Africa)

Dissemination/sharing phase

Find ways to diversify the way the research is presented:

> "Are you thinking about **ways that your research might benefit the communities** that you're working with in a way that's more practical for them, not as high level as an academic journal or talking at a conference? (…) It really opens up the space for thinking about research in a more holistic way (…) So is there an Op. Ed piece that I can co-write with a participant? (…) maybe we can do a little something here, and we can create a pamphlet, or we could create an output that our community can use" (interview 8; Africa).



Positive impacts of refugee and IDP participation

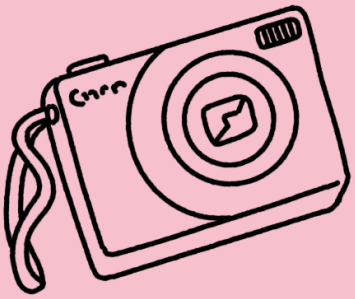
Interviewees discussed the positive impacts they had observed in projects where they used participatory approaches with refugees and IDPs. The most commonly stated positive impact was having a better understanding of people's lives. Interviewees described how doing participatory research "naturally brings people in a little bit closer" (interview 8; Africa), enabling greater understanding of the issues they face.

A few interviewees also shared specific examples where an improved understanding impacted the activities being implemented by humanitarian actors. This included a case where a water point was being set up to reduce the time women would have to walk to collect water, but that during a participatory research process, women expressed different perspectives: "It was really surprising that the women thought, or the women wanted to go further, because for them walking further away to collect water was an opportunity for them to connect with friends, to have time to think, to just get away from that…"

This interviewee said that women found walking to collect water an opportunity for "freedom" and socialisation, including being away from violent situations in their homes (interview 5; Africa). Interestingly, this interviewee also observed that this participatory project resulted in women becoming more aware of issues in the camp and starting to take action: "[I] n their community or camp location areas and some of them were selected as leaders and it was really thrilling to see them attribute this to their participation in the research process" (interview 5; Africa). These examples suggest that taking a more participatory approach may result in new or different ways of understanding refugees and IDPs.

Taking a participatory approach might result in more trust between researchers and refugees and IDPs: "And many times, I think, for me, the timeframe, that the participatory action research takes and the opportunity that it gives for participants to be able to exhaustively express themselves is unique from walking into someone's household, and then, asking them questions and walking away" (interview 5; Africa).

Another interviewee reflected that trust may take time to build (interview 7; E, NA, A). While the amount of time for more participatory research has been discussed earlier in this document as a challenge, these comments suggest that the time required for participatory research enables greater trust, helping refugees and IDPs to feel more comfortable sharing their perspectives.



At times, the method itself might offer more significant opportunities for participation. Walking interviews were discussed as an example of a method that may enable greater scope for participants to share their perspectives. Photography approaches including PhotoVoice were also mentioned by a few interviewees. One interviewee who used photography reflected, "I think definitely it was a way of engaging women who (…) otherwise, would have felt like, oh, I won't do an interview. Let my husband do it, whereas the actual taking pictures was a way of engaging them" (interview 1; E, NA, A).

This interviewee described how the interviews she also conducted with women were not successful because women felt nervous sharing their views, however "through the participatory, creative visual methods, they were literally documenting their own lives and then felt more freely to speak about their own life, so it was really like a way of engaging them much more by showing their own life, worlds and experiences".

Photography was "enjoyable" for this group of women but also held deeper meaning: "They used to have some photos of the time before they were displaced, but a lot of them also lost those photos. So for them also taking images or taking photographs was a means of making new memories in a way". In this project, the researcher printed out photos taken by participants, which were also "a way of giving back something" (interview 1; E, NA, A).

In the feedback workshop, one interviewee reflected on the fact that certain methods may also be helpful in avoiding retraumatisation of participants because it gives refugees and IDPs "more control of what they want to talk about or not", but they also observed that this depends on how the methods are used. Earlier sections of this document emphasise that methods may not be participatory by default, but the extent to which a method is participatory depends on how it is implemented. The accounts in this paragraph provide examples of how certain methods may increase the possibility of research being implemented in a way that is participatory. Interestingly, nearly all interviewees reflected exclusively on qualitative methods when discussing examples of participatory research, however this does not mean quantitative methods cannot be participatory.

Participatory research may also enable refugees and IDPs to receive information. One interviewee described how through the referral process used in the research, participants found out about GBV services they didn't know about:

> "[W]e prepared a list of our referral services and hotlines (…) and one of the feedback I got was (…) many people **did not know that those services existed there.** So, regardless of whether the refugees called or those people have benefited, I thought, at least, **the mere fact that people knew something else that they had not known**, so this is the point about information sharing as well" (interview 10; Africa).

Lastly, a practical impact might merely be refugees and IDPs feeling happy that they were able to contribute to the research:

> "I went back to them and, you know, they were, like, really happy that I have succeeded and got (…) everything they say, and some of them were telling me that we are [happy] because you recorded everything, so you actually didn't miss out on a lot. So, **they were actually very happy that we went back and talked to them.** And **some of them actually also asked for the report when it's done**" (interview 13; Asia).

Unintended or negative impacts of participatory research

During interviews, interviewees also discussed unintended or negative impacts that might result from participatory research. These impacts could be grouped into five main categories: impacts on the research scope/direction, gendered impacts, risks such as retraumatisation (including for survivors), pushback from host populations, and impacts on the researcher.

Researchers uncomfortable with changes to research scope/direction

Participatory research might result in a change to the research scope or direction, which researchers may not necessarily want. One interviewee discussed how they deleted a question from a survey about family conflict because the refugees said not to ask about this: "We actually had to let that question go and we had to make it into something broader that didn't really get as the data we were looking for" (interview 13; Asia). While this represents a positive example of being responsive to refugee feedback, interestingly, this interviewee framed the decision as refugees being "over-protective" of their group, rather than necessarily a valid decision.

Research reinforcing existing power hierarchies

Shifting power to refugees and IDPs within participatory research might perpetuate power hierarchies, resulting in men or people from certain ethnic groups, for example, being given more space or voice: "I think it can empower dominant groups in the refugee population (…) and then there's going to be a bunch of male leaders from the dominant ethnic group or whatever. So I think that in many situations this can be the case…" (interview 2; E, NA, A). This quote suggests that researchers need to be aware of who is involved in making decisions within participatory research, and that they need to understand the context of the refugee and IDP populations ahead of time.

Increased risk for refugees and IDPs

Participatory research might increase multiple risks for refugees and IDPs, including the risk of retraumatisation: "[O]ur research can be highly exploitative if we're not careful with it, and we can very, very unwittingly, I would say in most instances, contribute to people's sense of marginalisation or retraumatisation in our expectations of them" (interview 15; E, NA, A).

This interviewee discussed an example of a refugee and IDP with lived experience of GBV sharing their personal experiences with the research team, but this resulted in another team member who was also a GBV survivor being triggered and reacting negatively, resulting in the first person feeling "shut down and silenced".

The fact that both team members were survivors of GBV meant that care had to be taken: "[T]hey were both left traumatised and that's a big responsibility for somebody who is leading the project" (interview 15; E, NA, A).

Even building in practical strategies like referring GBV survivors to other support services may carry risk of retraumatisation, because researchers do not have control over how the service providers will respond to the GBV survivors (interview 10; Africa).

Unintended impact of this nature is not necessarily unique to participatory research, however the level of ongoing engagement that may be required throughout a participatory research process may increase risk of retraumatisation for refugees and IDPs who are survivors of GBV.

Peer researchers specifically face the risk of having to deal with gossip, rumours and safety risks because of their involvement in participatory research:

> "[P]lacing responsibility as well as agency for the kind of research projects process onto refugee peer researchers has led to them having to kind of deal with a lot of **suspicion and questioning from others** (…) it sort of had a couple of negative outcomes (…) rumour mongering, I think, especially in refugee camps…" (interview 17; E, NA, A).

This example suggests that efforts to share power with refugee peer researchers may have longer-term impacts for how peer researchers are viewed.

Just as peer researchers may experience negative impacts where they live, they may also experience negative consequences when brought into academic or humanitarian spaces, such as conferences, to share about the research. This means researchers need to think about whether this level of participation is best for refugees and IDPs:

"[W]henever we bring people with lived experiences into the spaces under the guise of participation or co-dissemination, that we also have to be aware that **we are exposing people with lived experiences to a level of critique or vulnerability that's kind of beyond our control.**

So it's important to question why we do it. So I've moved from a space of we have to do it, we have to include funding in proposals to ensure that co-researchers can go to **conferences and workshop presentations,** et cetera, because it's their stories, et cetera.

But now I'm much more careful about this position. I'm much more like, **is this something they even want?** And again, when I ask, they might say yes because I'm asking, but do I even know that the space I'm taking them in (…)

When I'm inviting someone, I'm taking them into a space that's unfamiliar, not always friendly, sometimes harmful. And what's the purpose of doing that? Why?" (interview 3; E, NA, A).

Interviewees described how other efforts to share power such as disclosing names of refugee and IDP researchers on websites, could have negative impacts on refugees and IDPs (interview 15; E, NA, A).

Additionally, refugees and IDPs may agree to share sensitive information through a participatory method within a group setting, but then later may be concerned that others who were in the group activity now know personal information about their lives (interview 8; Africa).

This interviewee described how group activities might be spaces for healing, but may also create risk, requiring researchers to have specific skills in managing group work.

Pushback from host populations

Participatory research may result in conflict or pushback from host populations who may "feel like they are always being ignored" (interview 9; Africa).

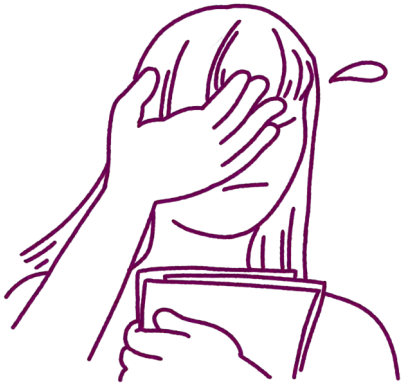
This interviewee commented that it is "very sensitive to involve refugees in any activity because anything you do with the refugees is seen as you are favouring them…" She also recommended not "involving a refugee in an activity and ignoring the host community in the next house" (interview 9; Africa).

While this may also have resonance for any type of research, neglecting host populations may have more potential for negative impact when the research has built-in opportunities for bringing benefits to participants. Such additional benefits may be perceived more positively by host populations than more traditional research.

Impacts on the researcher

Lastly, researchers themselves may experience an impact on their well-being due to the nature of proximity and "close-up work" with refugees and IDPs "that inevitably brings a responsibility, or at least an awareness of people's lives and circumstances in a way that might not affect or weigh on you as a researcher if you were using other methods" (interview 8; Africa).

This kind of impact may be different to that in other kinds of research which may not have as much engagement with refugees and IDPs over time. For research on topics like GBV and gender equality, this proximity may lead to an even greater and more varied impact on the well-being of the researcher.



Do's and Don'ts of refugee and IDP participation

At the end of the interviews, participants were asked to share advice to others who might be interested in promoting refugee and IDP participation in research. They shared some "do's" and "don'ts" below:

Do...

Think about *why* you want to promote refugee and IDP participation in research:

"I think the first question ought to be what is the intended outcome? **Why am I trying to involve refugees?** (…) I would actually say they need to be involved when there's a tangible (…) there's a good reason to do so, otherwise, it becomes tokenistic. So what is the objective for including refugees? And it can't be just because. **What are you trying to achieve? What do you hope will be the enhanced benefit and your reasons for doing so?** And I think by having that really intentional conversation with yourself or with your team, about why it is that you want to involve refugees, then you'll come up with a better outcome and process. Because too often we're seeing organisations reach out to us and say, 'Look, we've heard about this meaningful refugee participation that's a hot topic right now. How do we do it?' And already **that sets it up for, I think, failure for tokenistic and symbolic attempts at participation** when they don't even know why they're doing it. They're just doing it because everyone else is doing it" (interview 4; MENA).

Decide realistic parameters for participation of refugees and IDPs from the beginning:

"[D]raw up some very, very clear parameters with those co-researchers really, really early on about what this means (…) so that you're not setting co-researchers up to feel that they're going to make changes that are unrealistic (…) And then other, kind of, parameters around conduct and safety and anonymity or confidentiality is another important one, and respect basically…" (interview 15; E, NA, A).

"And sometimes that means that **balance between the expectations of co-researchers and community partners and what the institution wants us to do** and what funders want us to do. Sometimes it means that we have to let one of those relationships down. And I'd like to think that I would let down the institution or the funding body, but that's not always possible" (interview 3; E, NA, A).

Think about participation systematically - from the beginning until the end of the project:

"[P]articipatory approaches cannot be isolated. **It's not a box that you tick,** and it's not something that you just insert into a study to say that you did it. If we're really doing this ethically and properly, I think it needs to happen again **from the beginning all the way to the end, and not just in that isolated period"** (interview 6; MENA).

Stay open to feedback that may take research in new/ different directions:

"I think being **open to hearing feedback** when people are willing to give feedback, even though we might disagree with it, even though we might have different ideas of where the project might go, even though we think we might know better…" (interview 3; E, NA, A).

Continually consider positionality:

"I think the importance of **positionality**, I can't emphasize **that enough because I think that's really crucial to a lot of things that can go right and a lot of things that can go wrong,** and that helps recognizing when we've made mistakes, which we will" (interview 3; E, NA, A).

Be realistic of the time and availability of refugees and IDPs:

"We're so intellectually driven that at times we get, we get focused on that more so than actually what's happening on the ground, right? So we're like, you know, **almost demanding something from participants or interest from participants, or our CBOs [community-based organisations] that they just don't have**, or don't have the time for" (interview 8; Africa).

Establish ongoing practices for self-reflection:

"I think having **practices for self-reflection** (…) is really important. And whatever it is, just something that you are actually saying, 'This is our process for taking time to reflect ourselves or as a group', that's definitely a do" (interview 7; E, NA, A).

Don't...

Force it:

"I would say **don't force it** though. **Don't squeeze it.** So, there may be certain reasons or certain context where, you know, where it just doesn't seem to be the most practical way, because one has to bear in mind the practicalities" (interview 15; E, NA, A)

'[I]t's okay to pull the plug (…) We won't meet expectations, but **it's not worth pushing through a relationship or a model that you just know is not working.** And there's a lot to learn from that. But I think also you earn respect when you are able to say very openly, 'This is not working well, or I can see that you just don't have time to participate and it's not really the way that things would work, so let's stop or let's try again at another time. Let's try to work together in a different project.' So listening to what's happening and not trying to force things, I think is my key message" (interview 3; E, NA, A).

Make assumptions about refugees and IDPs:

"Don't assume that they are refugees and **they don't know what they need because they know exactly what they need and what they would want"** (interview 9; Africa)

Treat them as victims:

"I know that it is easier to think of populations in conflict, in difficult situations as victims (…) I would encourage all of us working in this research with the refugees and IDPs to **pay attention that these are people who have agency, their lived experiences counts** (…) Maybe there's a chance for us to showcase positive stories from research in these areas, so we can bring light into the discussion and also on the knowledge, the **lived experience of a refugee rather than seeing them as victims"** (interview 10; Africa).

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