

Community Participation in Research - What it is and what it isn't

Josh Levene
International
HIV/AIDS Alliance

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Community Participation in Research - What it is and what it isn't

- What is participatory research?
- Why do we do it?
- How, where and when do we do it?
- What it is and what it isn't
- With whom?
- The challenge of community participation in research

Whose perceptions count?



Therefore...

- Whose reality counts? Ours? Theirs, as we would like it to be? Or theirs as they freely express it? (Chambers 1997)

Participatory research - the theoretical bit

- The construction of knowledge is a result of social processes
- That different actors exercise different levels of control over the outcome e.g. gender
- Key difference is that outside researcher tries not to predetermine the constructs by which deprivation is assessed, analysed and measured.

A bit more theory...

- Professionals seek deprivation measures which are...
 - Simplified
 - Universal
 - Standardised
 - Quantified
 - Income/consumption based
- Poor people experience deprivation as...
 - Complex
 - Locally specific
 - Group specific
 - Multi-dimensional
 - Holistic
 - Dynamic

What is participatory community research?

- *PR may defined as a process by which local people research & analyse their own lives and conditions, according to their own priorities and criteria; so to enhance their understanding of it and ability to plan and act in order to have an active and influential hand in shaping the decisions which affect their lives.*

Participatory and conventional research: a comparison of process

	PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH	CONVENTIONAL RESEARCH
What is the research for?	Action	Understanding with perhaps action later
Who is the research for?	Local people	Institutional , personal and professional intersets
Whose knowledge counts?	Local peoples	Scientists
Topic choice influenced by?	Local priorities	Funding priorities, instiutional agendas, profedssional intersets
Methodology chosen for?	Empowerment, mutual learning	Disciplinary conventions, 'objectivity' and 'truth'

Why encourage participation?

- As a MEANS to greater:
 - Efficiency
 - Effectiveness
 - Sustainability
 - Accountability

Why encourage participation?

- As an END in itself for:
 - Empowerment
 - Ownership
 - Control
 - Trust
 - Human Rights

Sex workers hired as researchers, India

Participation research for what?

- For implementing HIV/AIDS projects/programmes
- For HIV/AIDS policy setting, relevance, budgeting, monitoring etc...
- For evaluating HIV/AIDS service delivery
- For strengthening civil society
- For promoting Human Rights

Where is Participatory research occurring?

- Everywhere! Urban & rural, North and South.
- In every sector: from HIV/AIDS to conflict resolution, schools to ministerial meetings
- Began in S. America in 60's, developed in Africa and India in 80's
- Now international policy of UN and World Bank
- Also policy for UK councils in developing Community Strategies in Regional Regeneration

With whom?

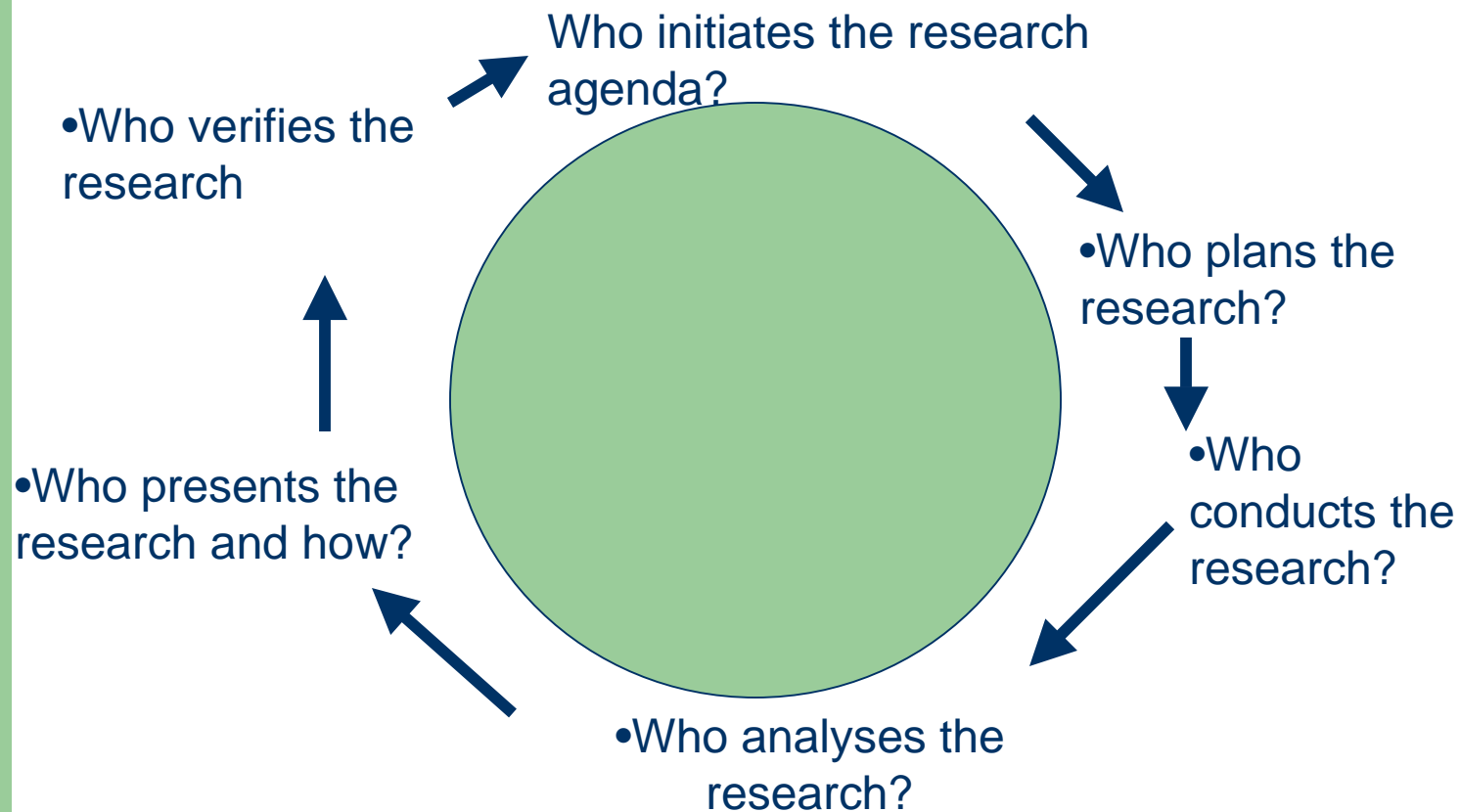
- Everyone who has a stake in the issue, process, or outcome should be able to
- Especially those most often marginalised, excluded and vulnerable WRT the issue
- E.g. PLHAs, MSM, IDUs, Sex workers, children

Who takes part in the research process?

	Participatory research	Conventional research
Problem identification, collection and analysis	Local people	Researcher
Interpretation	Local concepts and frameworks	Disciplinary concepts and frameworks
Presenatation of findings	Locally accesible and useful	By researcher to other academics or funding body
Action on findings	Integral to process	Separate and may not happen
Who takes action?	Local people with or withoiut external support	External agenceies
Who owns the results?	Shared	The researcher
What is emphasised?	Process	Outcomes

When should participation occur?

It should be considered at every stage of the research



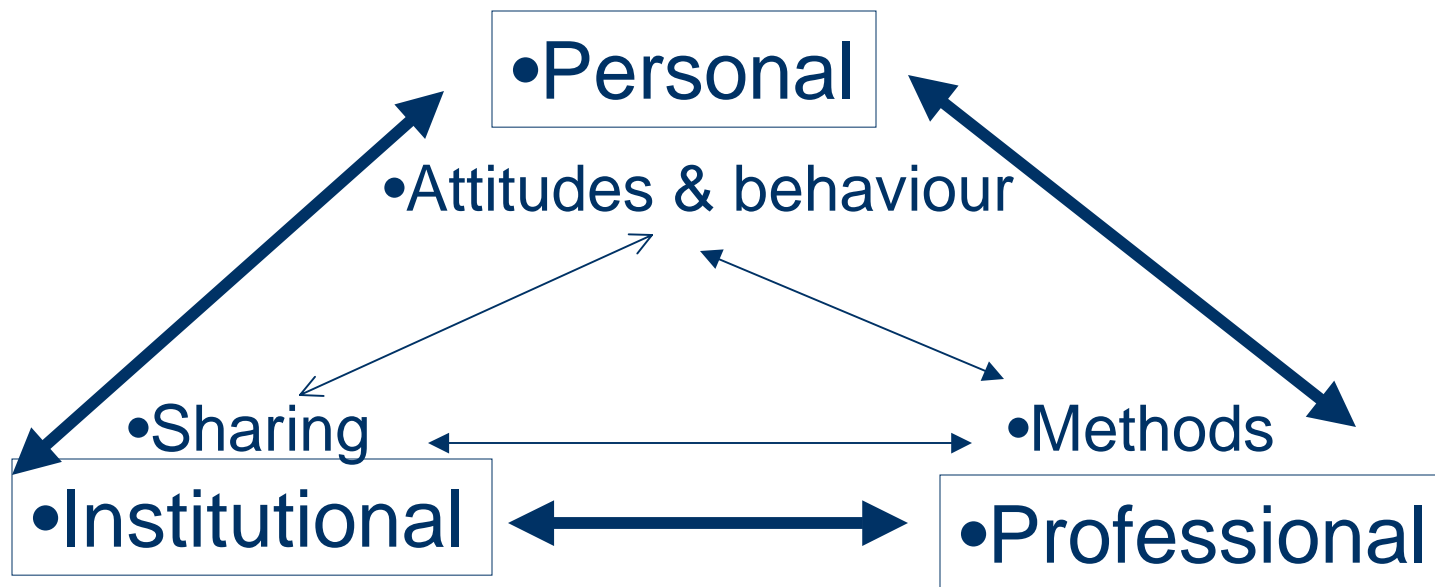
How? Methods of Participatory Research

- A plethora of methods exist: PAR, PSA
- Visual vs. verbal
- Group analysis
- Actively seeking the ‘unheard’ voice
- Talking *with* people vs. ‘to’ or ‘for’ people

Verbal vs. Visual Methods compared

Mode	<i>Verbal</i>	<i>Visual</i>
Outsiders mode and role	<i>Probing investigator</i>	<i>Facilitating initiator and catalyst</i>
Investigative style	<i>Extractive</i>	<i>Performative</i>
Detail influenced by...	<i>Etic categories</i>	<i>Emic categories</i>
Initiative for cross checking	<i>Outsider</i>	<i>Insider</i>
Information flow	<i>Sequential</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>
Utility for complex analysis	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>

Dimensions of Change for Participation to occur



The Professional challenge: methods

- Develop new methods and approaches which:
- Allow people to express their reality in their terms
- Enable people to participate as they would like to participate
- Are inclusive
- Are flexible and adaptable

The Institutional Challenge: enabling environment

- Share: information, time,
- Be transparent
- Codes of conduct, Minimum standards
- Whose priorities count? Yours? Theirs as you think they are? Or theirs as they freely express them?
- So... who plans? Who analyses? Who acts? Who monitors? Who evaluates? Why?

The Personal Challenge: attitude and behaviour change

- Whose reality counts? Ours? Theirs... as we think it is? Or theirs as they freely express it?
- Trust in people: that they can do it!
- Trust is a VERB!
- Don't stand, talk and lecture... sit listen and learn – work *with* people, not for people.
- Better still... BE with people.

What participatory research is and what it isn't...

- **It is not...**

- Data collecting
- Methods only

- An event
- Learned in the classroom

- **It is...**

- Empowering
- Attitude and behaviour change is most important
- A process
- Learned in the field

Conventional vs. Participatory research

	Traditional	Participatory
Objectives	<i>Data collection</i>	<i>Empowerment</i>
Longer-term outcomes	<i>Plans, projects, publications</i>	<i>Sustainable local actions & institutions</i>
Outsiders role	<i>Investigator</i>	<i>Facilitator</i>
Main actors	<i>Outsiders</i>	<i>Local people</i>
Who owns the information?	<i>Outsiders</i>	<i>Local people</i>
Methodology	<i>Verbal</i>	<i>Visual</i>