

ACTIONAID FEMINIST RESEARCH GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

Research is one of our strongest tools for advocacy with governments, international institutions and duty bearers; external engagement, tracking impact and learning from our programmes. Research products are key to bringing about shifts in power that will ensure that women, men, non-binary people and young people living in poverty and exclusion secure their rights.¹ The research process in and of itself can be a transformative process; since collaboratively reflecting on power is itself an activist pedagogy.

This guidance note aims to support ActionAid staff and partners and those interested in how ActionAid does, or commissions, research which draws on a feminist approach. It accompanies our ActionAid Research Signature and Strategy and is a set of ideas for conducting research with a feminist approach that is rooted in our principles and mission and supports ActionAid's change objectives.²

This guidance draws on existing feedback and guidelines within the ActionAid federation and from feminist researchers from the global south.³ It was initially put together in response to an analysis of ActionAid's research and has been further developed to respond to affiliates who have made research a strategic priority, and who are specifically keen to work with others to ensure their research process and product has a feminist lens.⁴

The guidelines support research project managers to follow ActionAid's Top Ten **feminist leadership principles**⁵ to ensure our research uses a gender transformative approach at all levels - from the thinking up of research ideas (whether for an exposé or for long term community analysis), to developing partnerships, to managing or conducting research, through to the analysis, the publication(s) and the influencing.

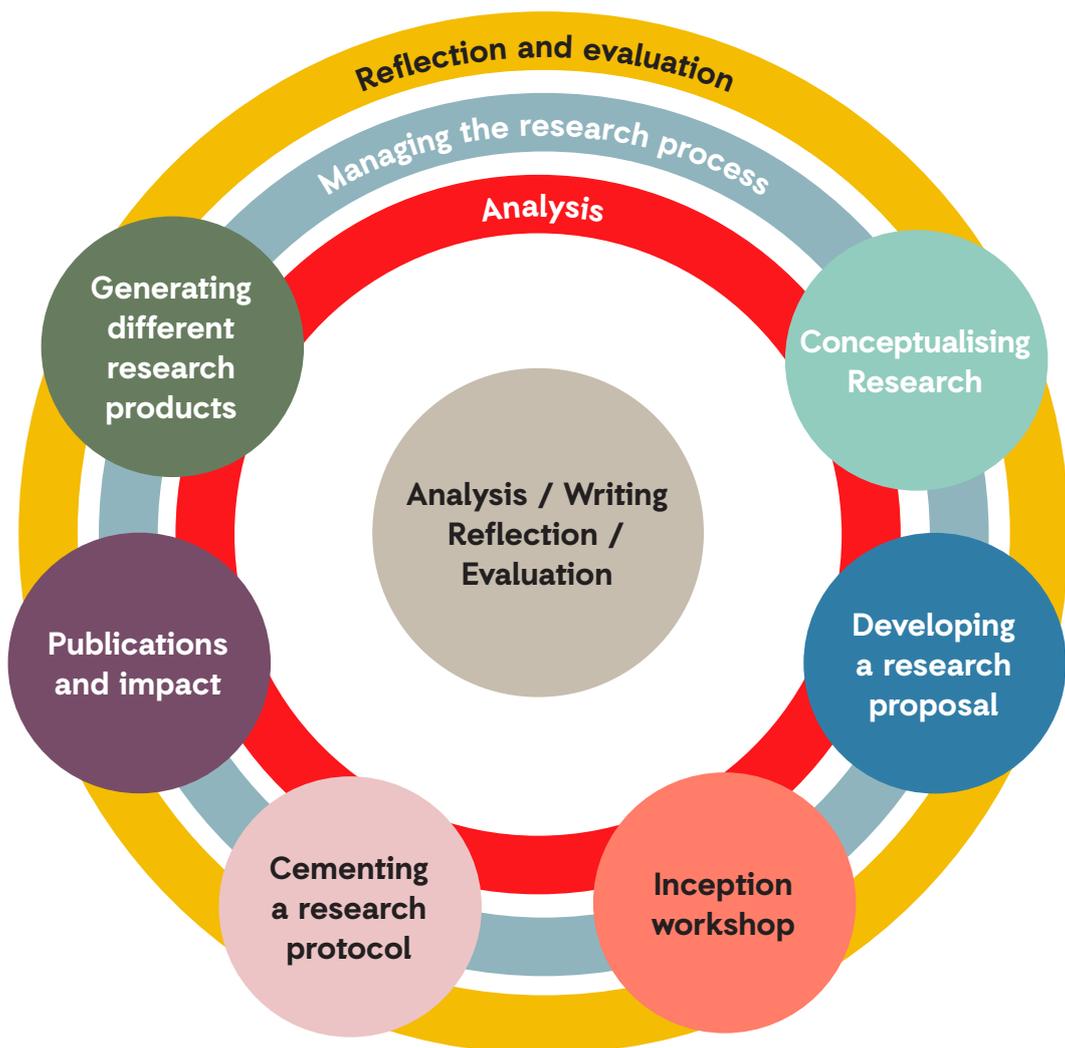
The guidelines are really just that, they outline best practice: every research project is different. For example, quick deadlines, especially around fundraising proposals, may not permit such a thorough analysis of context, and corporate exposés will require specific expertise. In addition, not everything in the note will be relevant for your project, and it doesn't claim to cover every scenario. Nonetheless, to ensure a thorough feminist analysis, quality products, productive partnerships and to adhere to our ideology and HRBA, it is strongly encouraged that research project managers follow the basic steps. Do share your experiences of doing research so we can continue to learn.

If you have any questions on the content, or cannot access the supplementary documents, please contact the Global Secretariat Research Advisor – kate.carroll@actionaid.org

1. Previous publications have spelled womxn with 'x' to avoid the suffix 'men/man' and to show solidarity with and recognition of a diversity of people - LGBTQ+, including trans people and those who choose not to identify themselves by gender. However, language is contested and changing, and we feel that the most inclusive phrase is women, men and non-binary people. Throughout these Guidelines we may also say women and young people.
2. The document complements existing documents that guide ActionAiders when commissioning research. For example, the templates for ActionAid International ToR & project plan, libel guidelines, in-house style guide, etc. which are all available on sharepoint here: <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/Research>
3. Thanks specifically to: Trimita Chakma, Isabella Matambanadzo & Awino Okech
4. Margie Buchanan-Smith; *Making the most of research within ActionAid International*; ActionAid IPD; 2009 & internal discussions, available on request.
5. For more detail, see: https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/GlobalSecretariat/Eesq7Y35X4Nik-60sBOtBsQBqTdCg46C1yHkAlwiZ7_gpw?e=CNiOq3



Sabita Rani discussing and gathering evidence around nutrition with women and children in Bangladesh. PHOTO: TURJOY CHOWDHURY/ACTIONAID



The guidelines set out ActionAid's vision and aims in research and apply a feminist lens to each area of the research process. The table of contents allows the user / research manager to consider adopting the guidance as appropriate for their context.

The writers acknowledge that the chronological lay out of the paper might not follow the notion of research as an ongoing process of reflection and action (see figure above). However, we hope it will be easier to navigate. Note that some sections could appear within several places due to the iterative nature of research. Further materials to support these guidelines are available [here](#).

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Why is a **feminist approach** to research important for ActionAid?

To address the structural causes of poverty and to challenge and defeat patriarchal power, and other interlinking systems of oppression based on race, class, caste, age, geography, sexual orientation, gender identity and people's political views, we need decision makers to shift their views and actions. We need evidence to dismantle bias and to challenge how and where power negatively manifests and reproduces oppression, impacting people differently depending on their intersecting identities.⁶

Currently, in most global and national policy fora, what is deemed 'evidence' is typically produced and funded by white, elite, heteronormative, patriarchal, and neoliberal actors, who are more often than not men.⁷ These individuals and institutions are often located in or connected to the global north and are often unwilling to recognise their power and privileges. Rather than being active agents in their narrative, this research consequently tends to silence research 'subjects', often people of colour – and particularly women and girls who are framed as lacking in agency. This perpetuates unhealthy power dynamics and impacts the analysis, and consequently the policy and practise decisions, that are informed by their research.

ActionAid is committed to challenging and diversifying whose knowledge counts, starting with people's role in shaping the priorities and evidence itself and strengthening these alternative narratives which go some way to challenging how people

see and understand the world. In this sense, the research itself can be the activism as it is where - through *Reflection-Action* cycles - the change starts to happen.⁸

Research and policy analysis, combined with collective action, and ongoing reflection by those involved in the research and activism - is necessary to build evidence-based alternatives to convince and compel decision-makers to change. Our long-term engagement in particular communities, and local territorial struggles, means that we can track issues over time, reflecting and then building evidence of programme learning and methodologies, existing and new, and - together with our allies - bring it to national or international attention.

Drawing on an intersectional feminist framing for our work, we acknowledge gender does not operate alone as a basis for structural inequality. Power and privilege are experienced in different ways by different groups of women at different points in their history and in varying contexts. 'Intersectionality' was coined by a black feminist, Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989,⁹ although its roots go back to postcolonial and African-American feminist histories, as well as Third World Liberation movements.¹⁰ **Intersectional feminism** is an understanding that different forms of structural oppression overlap. For example, Crenshaw found that African-American women faced discrimination from gender, race and class which significantly impacted their access to justice, compared to other women.

Intersectional feminism should be a frame for our work and will strengthen our power analysis. It allows us to understand how different inequalities are constructed and sustained. ActionAid's research should bring to the centre the experiences and rights of those who are most marginalised and

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6. For a glossary of key concepts go to: <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/Research>
 7. For example, see Enloe, C. 2014, *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics*; Chilisa, B. & Ntseane, G., 2010; Resisting dominant discourses: Implications of indigenous, African feminist theory and methods for gender and education research. *Gender and Education*, 22 (6); Heleta, S., 2016, 'Decolonisation of higher education: Dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa', *Transformation in Higher Education* 1(1); Tuhiwal Smith, L., 2019, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous people*. 2nd Edition. Zed Books.; Sultana, F., 2019; *Decolonizing Development Education and the Pursuit of Social Justice*. *Human Geography* (12): 3.
 8. *Reflection-Action* is ActionAid's harmonised participatory methodology. It uses a range of participatory tools to help create an open, democratic environment in which everyone is able to contribute. Participants work together to analyse their situation, identify rights violations and bring about change. <http://www.networkedtoolbox.com/pages/about-reflection-action/> see also: <http://netbox-production.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/resources/5a4dbe0f6b344789810584f8b1b23ea7.pdf>
 9. Crenshaw, K., 1991, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*. *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (6): 1241-1299.
 10. See: Salem, Sara, 2019, <https://gadnetwork.org/gadn-resources/capitalism-postcolonialism-and-gender-complicating-development>

together interrogate why inequalities occur. This helps support programming and practise that breaks down systems and structures that sustain them. Inclusion is a central tenet of the Research Signature. Using feminist analysis, we aim to identify how to break the barriers around participation and promote shared use of power in our research processes. We recognize and support communities to put their skills, values and contributions at the forefront of research processes.

A feminist research approach and the advancing of feminist alternatives can provide a glue to link our local, national and international work. Developing evidence is key to advocating for better programming, as well as for changes at national and international level. Evidence supports us to identify different pathways for change, whether through alternatives, new campaigns or new programme learnings.

ActionAid's Research Strategy

ActionAid's theory of change outlines that our work must be empowering, build collective solidarity,

identify alternatives and achieve campaign and advocacy goals which shift power.

"We believe that an end to poverty and injustice can be achieved through purposeful individual and collective action, led by the active agency of people living in poverty and supported by solidarity, credible rights-based alternatives and campaigns that address the structural causes and consequences of poverty."¹¹

Our nested research theory of change mirrors this. ActionAid research should subvert traditional notions of evidence on questions of international development and economic policy as being produced in the global north or by individuals and institutions connected with the global north 'on' people in the global south, whose lives are often fetishised and whose voices – especially those of women and girls - are often silenced.

ActionAid's research mission is to support ActionAid's overall mission by producing evidence, including at a local, territorial level, that is complemented by analysis and evidence from different places and seeks to shift power at local level - to challenge dominant narratives and false solutions by generating alternative ways of organising economies and societies, of being and doing.

Research - both in process and product should wherever possible:

Be empowering	Research, reflection and enquiry is part of ActionAid's programme cycle and as such should build on participants' 'power within', equipping them with different tools and concepts and enabling collective reflection, analysis and action together as collaborative participants.
Build solidarity	If a research process builds alliances through the varied involvement of different actors (partners, alliances, allies, research institutes), or if the evidence is disseminated widely, then it can build solidarity linkages across different levels to ensure collective action for change (power with).
Shift power	Research, when we communicate findings effectively, is one of our strongest tools for external engagement and impact. Research products can play a role in influencing to bring about changes in power that will ensure that women and young people living in poverty secure their rights by addressing the structural causes of poverty and offering rights based alternatives (power to).

See ['What is feminist research?'](#) for more details.

11. As outlined in ActionAid's strategy; *Action for Global Justice 2028*

ActionAid's Research Signature

Our ActionAid Research Signature outlines our research niche and approach.

Our Research Signature strapline is that: “people-centred evidence gathering with women and young people at the core, collectively analysed with knowledge from in and outside the organisation, can enable multiple power shifts. This brings about changes at local, national, international levels”.

A research ‘signature’ relates to the consistent look and feel of ActionAid’s research. This look and feel is usually achieved through: the consistent use of empowering feminist methodologies, approaches and processes; the application of ActionAid’s brand; and an ideological feminist foundation and analysis.

Key elements of ActionAid Research:

People living in poverty are empowered by our research – both process and product:

1

- a. Involves the participation of people living in poverty and exclusion and their movements directly (wherever possible) at every stage of the research process, including in identifying questions, thorough joint analysis, and by bringing in people’s new knowledge and strategies for change
- b. Active in using the research evidence for influencing change at different levels
- c. Women and young people actively inform and transform the evidence-gathering, and are well represented throughout the research outputs and attribution: voices are amplified through analysis, perspectives, quotes, pictures, and stories
- d. Ownership of analysis and intellectual property is jointly shared with communities.

Strong analysis draws on intersectional feminism:

2

- a. Focuses on unpacking the nature of gender power relations and the social inequalities which root them
- b. Challenges and/or allows us to better understand social and political realities, looking at the roles of various actors linked to a problem and the dimensions of power that characterise their relationship
- c. Recognises and engages the power relations evident in traditional research practice such as the notion of researcher/researched, and seeks to subvert traditional practice
- d. Historically interested in overcoming the invisibility and distortion of women’s experiences by challenging dominant practice and models
- e. Looks at the interconnectedness of structural causes of rights violations from local, national, regional and global perspectives
- f. Understands that changes must take place in laws, policies and resources as well as in culture, beliefs and practices
- g. Is rigorous, comprehensive, accurate, transparent and ethical and fair
- h. Recognizes creativity and non-traditional research processes as authentic tools of resistance and transformation.

3

Builds solidarity by linking our work across levels and adding value as a federation:

- a. Evidence of rights violations at any level provide the basis for changes at other levels (local, national, regional, international)
 - b. Knowledge from different levels supports us to identify pathways for change.
-

4

Builds strong research partnerships:

- a. Through partnership, builds solidarity, power, knowledge and capacity between and within ActionAid and different research actors, communities or organisations involved in research.
-

5

Is innovative and engaging:

- a. Bold in message, audience appropriate and accessible in language, and with a clear change strategy.
 - b. Useful and used in practically influencing change around ActionAid's strategic objectives & timely
 - c. Relevant and applicable at local, national and international levels, as measured by agreed indicators.
-



Women in Bangladesh analyse their risks of flooding and disaster, with a view to reducing risk. PHOTO: TURJOY CHOWDHURY/ACTIONAID

Summary of **checklists**

Have you:

- **Checked** the extent to which your research is done by, with, for and about women? [see introduction]
- **Familiarised** yourself with the Research Signature and ActionAid's Theory of Change and how it applies to research? [see page 8]
- **Used** a feminist lens to consider the format of the research team, ensuring it's not recreating negative power dynamics? [see page 13]
- **Been clear** about your aims ensuring you are taking women, non-binary people and girls as the focus of the analysis, and there is an agenda for social change? [see page 8]
- **Developed** your concept with the research team, involving all partners, so the process feels owned at all levels, with an intersectional lens? [see page 19]
- **Involved** programme staff and partners in the reference group and checked on how information and knowledge flows continue at a country level? [see page 13]
- **Built** in time for a participatory process including participatory research methodologies so local knowledge is valued? [see page 23]
- **Ensured** there is budget for translation? [see page 25]
- **Ensured** there is budget for a set of community materials that can be used for different purposes? [see page 42]
- **Integrated** the issue into a programme, and ensured Reflect Circles continue to take forward discussions? [see page 25]
- **Looked** at ActionAid's guidelines for Focus Group Discussions and check that time has been set aside for these? [see page 44]
- **Ensured** a full ethics check (including with each partner institution) i.e. a risk assessment is complete and continued regularly in case risk changes), permissions and clearances have been granted to the researchers from the country where the research is taking place, and participants to the research are going to be safe when the research is published and their mental and physical health is not at risk as they participate? [see pages 33-40]
- **Written** a Research & Project Plan and uploaded it on the [Research Tracker](#)? [see page 27]
- **Had sign off** on your ToR? [see page 26]
- **Drawn** on an intersectional feminist lens to consider who is invited to, and the structure of your inception meeting? [see pages 29-32]

- **Checked** you have the required protocols in place ahead of your research ie. are all parties aware of the ActionAid Research Signature, SHEA and Safeguarding policies, Distress Protocol, Researcher Wellbeing Guidelines, Data Protection Support and Research Participant Safety and Security Guidelines? [see page 37]
- **Discussed** how you will make sure your research is rigorous; how you will use feminist analysis to challenge unequal structures and how will you contribute to change? [see pages 37 & 48-50]
- **Discussed** intellectual property? [see page 35]
- **Made sure** informed consent is central to your approach? [see page 38]
- **Built** in capacity development required and mitigated negative power dynamics [see page 34]
- **Assessed** your data is rigorous, from a feminist ideology and analysed thoroughly? [see pages 20 & 48]
- **Got informed** consent for any images or videos used? [see page 38]
- **Considered** power dynamics, budget and time, especially the time and care roles of participants when planning any focus groups? [see page 44]
- **Used** appropriate and political language? [see page 43]
- **Checked** your product(s) are communicable, and audience appropriate? [see page 42]
- **Made** your editor and designer aware of the ActionAid style guidelines?
- **Acknowledged** all research participants? [see page 52]
- **Got your product(s) checked** for libel? [see page 51]
- **Got sign off** on your product(s)? [see page 26]
- **Branded** your product(s) appropriately [see page 52]
- **Used** your Research Signature to assess and evaluate your research? [see page 53]
- **Ensured** all research participants have had the opportunity to engage with reflection and action planning around near final product(s), and are confident to share collectively identified findings with decision makers? [see page 53]
- **Shared** the final product(s) internally with a webinar to staff and on the internal communications list? [see page 54]



Fatou Sarr demonstrates the salinity of the soil in Diamniadio Island, Senegal. Evidence of climate impact on women was documented and used to lobby decision makers. PHOTO: CLÉMENT TARDIF/ACTIONAID

STEP ONE: CONCEPTUALISING RESEARCH

Conceptualising research ideas

Often what is defined as a priority for research comes from people with power and privilege and resources; these people define who and what is 'researched' and how. Where possible our research should address this by using participatory methods to engage with rights holders, affiliates and partners regarding what kind of research and evidence they feel is necessary to achieve joint objectives.

There are different methods with which to co-create a research idea in an ActionAid context. Some examples include:

- A strategic webinar, workshop or shared document with all potential project and research participants (including the rights holders whose reality the research is exploring): to discuss evidence needs and brainstorm research ideas in order to strategically target funding together. Where rights holders are involved this would have to centre around a community meeting where there is a good connection to facilitate equitable access.
- Using a federation approach whereby national staff or partners may note where there are external opportunities for advocacy and influencing and bring these to discussion with community groups to develop a strategy for shifting power before, during and after that moment, including through research.

- Developing an idea based on rights holders' lived realities: for example, reflecting with rights holders over a period of time during community meetings and co-creating an idea which can then be packaged for a funding opportunity.

When there are a set of co-created research concepts, teams might look to respond to calls for proposals.

Developing a research team

A feminist, intersectional approach should be used in everything we do, including how we configure a research team and how the team works.

For the **makeup of the team**, consider the following:

- What perspectives and experience are needed to ensure the research is as grounded as possible in the lived experience of rights holders including survivors of abuse and exploitation, and to ensure that the research achieves the impact it requires, safely (i.e. involving people in communications, safeguarding and influencing)?
- Who is proposed as the principal investigator (s) or researcher(s)? Does the person/people have sufficient understanding of feminist research methodologies?¹²
- What power and positionality does each proposed member of the research team have?
- Does the team have sufficient power and expertise to facilitate the work both inside and outside the federation?
- Are there any risks that the composition of the team reproduces power by i) preventing other, more appropriate stakeholders from getting involved in knowledge generation, or ii) in their ways of working more generally?
- What are the class and ethnicity dynamics of the research team? i.e how do the socio-economic

positionalities of the team members impact team and research dynamics?

- What are the age/ generational factors evident in the team?
- Is the team anti-homophobic, anti-sexist and anti-racist?
- What are the language capacities of the team members?
- Is there inclusivity in the team and if there is someone with a disability will accessibility be prioritized?
- If the research is taking place where there is conflict, has a conflict analysis been done and does that show particular dynamics that need to be considered when putting together a research team?
- What (other) steps need to be taken, if any, to ensure this team is sufficiently diverse?

For ways of working, it helps to set a framework of common values and processes that you all agree on. These should reflect ActionAid's values but they may be more specific to the research project. Consider as a group:

Decision-making: How should decisions be taken (democratically; by majority or by the principal investigator(s) and by what formats (e.g. in person, electronically), and with what approaches (e.g. using participatory approaches to interrogate issues).

Informed Consent: To what extent are all research participants engaged in an ongoing process of reflecting on what knowledge and data is used, for what, and where, and the implications of this? Is the informed consent written or oral? Have options for anonymity been discussed? What strategies are in place

12. An essential tool is the survivor - centred attitude scale for staff, partners and volunteers to determine ability and attitudes to undertake research. Whilst the scale is for GBV and PSEA, it is a useful to determine viability to work with GBV and some it could be useful for feminist research. Available [here](#).

to ensure that research participants are comfortable to withdraw consent at any time? [see page 38].

Intellectual property: Have you discussed the intellectual property rights around the knowledge to be generated? There are various options on this, and your final agreement will depend on the nature of the relationship, funding and the different partners. Note however, that as long as intellectual property is not shared between ActionAid and rights holders, then ActionAid risks replicating power over rights holders. [see page 35].

Acknowledgement: Who is acknowledged within the knowledge generation process and how? For example are partners and research participants acknowledged? It is recommended to agree on how publications will acknowledge people in a way that recognises all of the work put in (even if non-written - for instance if you work with a sign language interpreter to enable the research team to speak with young girls who are hearing impaired) [see page 52].

Resources: What knowledge resources are the research team accessing and to what extent are these reproducing power? For example, to what extent is the team relying on international institutional data and analysis rather than looking at the work of feminists, especially feminist movements, activists, networks and academics from the Global South?

Finance: How is the project financed and how might this impact dynamics within and outside the team? For instance, if ActionAid has funding from a bilateral donor that for example supports the IMF austerity agenda, and ActionAid is required to give the donor a copy of the research, how then are the findings of the research safeguarded from manipulation by the funders? In practice, research funding is as equally open to scrutiny as all other project funding under ActionAid's fundraising screening,

but it is important to ask the questions. [see annex].

Reporting back to key stakeholders: How does ActionAid plan to ensure findings are as useful to rights holders as they are to other audiences and what ways can findings best be shared and communicated? [see page 54].

Sexual Harassment and Safeguarding in the research environment: What measures will ActionAid take to ensure independent researchers/research institutions act in full compliance with/adherence to ActionAid's sexual harassment policies and policies on safeguarding, and that researchers are themselves protected and have attended relevant security briefings? [see page 32]. As a crucial part of ActionAid's feminist principles, we promote a culture of zero tolerance towards harm, harassment, abuse and misconduct.

Do no harm: How will ActionAid and partners ensure that, when working in contexts of humanitarian crisis and conflict, research takes place in adherence to the Humanitarian Principles adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, the Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent and the Humanitarian Charter, Protection Principles, Core Humanitarian Standard and Minimum Standards, which are all laid out in the [Sphere Handbook](#)?¹³

Considering research partners

It is often useful to work with research partners - this can be anyone from universities, to multi-lateral organisations, to civil society organisations to informal networks. ActionAid often uses consultants, who, whilst not partners in the strictest sense, should be considered as such for the purpose of

13. Also see conflict related references in the further reading section.

this section. Working with others brings in a different analysis, expertise and perspective. Working with research partners can build joint capacity and can increase solidarity.

All actors involved need to be actively conscious of power inequalities, actual or perceived, between ActionAid and research partners, between the research team as a whole and between the research participants and others engaging with or affected by the research.

It helps to have an open conversation from the very outset, to share ActionAid's [Feminist Leadership Principles](#) and [Research Signature](#), and to understand how potential partners view the content. This can be a helpful way to initiate discussions which might alleviate any challenges in advance.

If there is agreement between ActionAid and partners, it is advised to suggest co-producing an **MoU or contract** which not only outlines the research protocol (budgetary, logistical, conceptual, methodological and ethical considerations) as relevant to each country's laws, but also lays out common values which all partners commit to upholding. Setting out **common values** provides a useful framework to refer back to, should any issues emerge around upholding a feminist way of working. This is vital, especially when mitigating against homophobic, sexist and ageist researchers.

If you are working with one or more potential partners; particularly if they are in different localities such as spread across the UK, Kenya and Malawi, these advance discussions are all the more important since there are more complex discussions needed around power, perspective, point of view (for example on colonialization and racism), sign off, communications and attribution.

ActionAid's [international partnership policy](#) is helpful in that it outlines the principles that ActionAid would expect to be shared.

When exploring a research partnership which promotes a feminist approach, it helps to consider your compatibility on ideology and values.

You don't need to share a completely identical ideology with your research partner(s), but you'll

want to agree on some key ideas as framed within the ActionAid [Research Signature](#). Here are some steps you can take to facilitate an understanding through an open discussion [see page 29 on inception meetings for more detail]:

- In advance of the discussion share ActionAid's [Research Signature](#) and values (from the partnership policy)
- In advance ask potential partners to share any documentation on their approach and values (these should be within their strategy) and also look into their publications to gauge their perspectives on key issues; for example, do they have a position on feminism? If yes, how is their feminism framed? Is there an intersectional framing or does it homogenise women? How do they define key development and humanitarian issues?
- Does the organisation have a SHEA and Safeguarding policy (e.g anti-sexual harassment and bullying, whistleblowing, child safeguarding, PSEA and anti-fraud and corruption)?
- Does the organisation have a safe and confidential complaints mechanism to report SHEA, safeguarding, misconduct and fraud?
- What is the ethical clearance process for the organisation?
- Ask others that have engaged with them, confidentially, for perspectives on the organisation's ways of working. Is there respect for differing opinions? Are the contributions of different participants (men, women, younger and older etc) and geographies given equal value in a process? Is there respect for joint decision making, collaboration, and decentralised planning and design? Do they attribute findings in a way that acknowledges all of the inputs of different stakeholders - especially women and young people from the global south, or women and young people from minority/marginalised/excluded groups?
- Does their organisation have a diverse staff-base, including women and young people, especially women and young people of colour

or from other marginalised groups in leadership positions? If not, consider exploring that concern with them to facilitate an understanding of how ActionAid views shifting power as needing to be internal as well as external.

- In the first meeting, clarify non-negotiable issues such as their approach to feminist ideology and gauge the organisation's views; ask whether the organisation is comfortable with the positions they have seen that you've written.
- Discuss logistics and terms, for example, if research assistants are used, then how are they paid? If there are focus group discussions, then will they take place in hours convenient for women, young and marginalised people to access them?¹⁴
- Emphasize the need for transparency and self-reflection. For example, be transparent about sharing budgets, knowledge and information; about ensuring all decisions are made in a way that shifts agency and power to rights holders, etc. Do not assume that all individuals within an organisation will necessarily espouse the values and ideologies of the organisation
- Be prepared to walk away if the potential partner's values will not ensure, or at least strive to achieve, a feminist approach to working. There are always other potential partners.

Working with academic institutes

While all institutions are inherently patriarchal, some universities make up some of the most patriarchal

and elitist, unaccountable institutions across the world.¹⁵ The way that funding is channelled through universities accentuates their power, the power of academic research, and academics' influence over development ideology. In addition, some are sites of sexual abuse, rape and harassment of students, academic and support staff - see for instance the report by Dr Tamale on Makerere University¹⁶ and the report of #TheTotalShutDown in South Africa about campus rape and date rape.¹⁷ There are strong movements to challenge this. For example, ActionAid Liberia's Safe Cities Campaign focused on reducing sexual harassment of female university students.

It is important to acknowledge these struggles, so that ActionAid is able to manage relationships in a way which upholds our values. Being aware of different institutions' values and histories can ensure relationships remain strong. NGOs must be aware of the academic pressure to publish, funding conditions and academics' audience.

On the other hand, universities must be aware of the variety of knowledge demands on NGOs, the challenges of their organisational structure and their need to move nimbly to get research for advocacy and campaigns done in a short timeframe. The most effective change is created when expertise is brought together from a variety of actors.

ActionAid has positive relationships with several academic research institutes globally and is trying to build partnerships with feminist academics particularly.¹⁸ This brings huge advantages. Not only do NGOs benefit from the in-depth subject knowledge, the experience of research methodologies and the potential to reach different audiences in solidarity. But - with an increased reliance on impact, universities also find a huge

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14. For detailed checklists on how to ensure the logistics of convening people are safe, from an intersectional perspective, please see FRIDA's (2018) report: [How Far Have We Come: A Review of Our International Convenings](#), Chapter 4: Recommendations.
 15. See: Eboiyehi, C., Fayomi, I. & Eboiyehi, F., 201.) [From exclusion to discrimination: Gender inequality in the senior management of Nigerian universities](#). *Issues in Educational Research*, 26(2).; Tickle, L. (2017) [Why Universities Can't See Women as Leaders](#). The Guardian, 8 March.; Brunnsma, D.L., Placier, P. & Brown, E. (2012) [Teaching race at historically White colleges and universities: Identifying and dismantling the walls of Whiteness](#). *Critical Sociology*, 39(5); Hanafi, S. (2011) [University systems in the Arab East: Publish globally and perish locally vs publish locally and perish globally](#). *Current Sociology*, 59 (3).
 16. See: <https://news.mak.ac.ug/sites/default/files/downloads/Makerere-Committee-Investigating-Sexual-Harassment-FINAL-Report-June2018.pdf>
 17. See: <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-08-02-thetotalshutdown-memorandum-of-demands>
 18. Please ask for a spreadsheet of feminist researchers and research institutes. This list is important as it suggests who holds the institutional relationship with individuals and organisations. Contacting through them or copying them ensures we're not overloading any one individual or organisation with requests.

value- add of working with NGOs and their partners - as it often facilitates connection with rightsholders. ActionAid's relationship with the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, was cemented by a 'principles of partnership' document and [log of ongoing work](#). Also, a day-long exploratory workshop, explored questions of power and privilege so we could come to a collective understanding of our perspectives on knowledge production and evidence. This approach has been extremely rewarding and has resulted in ongoing connections and knowledge sharing between funded projects.

ActionAid's collaboration on the Rethinking Research Collaborative highlights some of the challenges and opportunities open to those exploring new partnership: <https://rethinkingresearchcollaborative.com/>.

Choose researchers /consultants/a mentor

If the work is short term and a partnership isn't feasible, consider whether you have internal capacity to do the work or whether you need to get a consultant to support. Whilst a consultant may have a particular desirable expertise or knowledge, and the cost can be resource efficient given ActionAiders' time is pressed, it has not always proved to be the best option. All too often we do not select or support our consultants sufficiently. For example, we choose consultants who reproduce power, particularly colonial power, or who do not have a feminist analysis, or we fail to sufficiently and regularly check in with our consultants to ensure the work is on track. This has the result that their work does not communicate our politics and messages as the project manager had intended. In addition, the knowledge that is gained from doing the work can be lost to the federation as the consultant cannot realistically record all learnings. Finally, a consultant model, even with a brilliant consultant, can perpetrate the division between researchers and participants, as a consultant is another level away from research participants as compared to ActionAid

staff. One model that has worked well is to look for a peer mentor, either a consultant or academic researcher, who supports an internal project manager to support the research project. This means the knowledge stays within the organisation and there may be fewer negative power dynamics.

If you do work with a consultant, be deliberate about your choice, seeking out feminists of colour as a priority. Ensure you involve the team in the hiring process, and follow the HR procedure for procurement and check your hiring process is inclusive, both so all project partners are happy with the consultant and so you are broadening your search of consultants to reach new audiences in the global south. You may find ideas for consultants on the internal [database of research consultants](#). Remember to ensure that you review the consultant's previous work; ask for references and writing samples [some useful guidance is [here](#)]. And ensure that the consultant is aware of the ActionAid Research Signature, feminist ideologies, ActionAid's [Theory of Change](#), ethics and safeguarding protocols. [For more guidance see below page 32]

Local researcher selection

If you are recruiting local researchers, there are several models to follow depending on the type of research methodology and aims. As a non-negotiable, same gender researchers should be used for interviews where possible, and always for interviews with girls. Likewise, wherever possible non-binary researchers will undertake interviews with non-binary persons. For ethnographic research it is recommended in most cases that the researcher is not from the same community (for trust and confidentiality reasons as well as to help the researcher's ability to critically explore participants' responses). However, there may be exceptional cases for working with a researcher from the community. This should be discussed in detail, considering the ethics and power dynamics. It is important to work with researchers who speak the local languages, and who are able to understand, or empathise with, the experiences of participants in

selected communities and who are not involved with conflict that the community may be experiencing.¹⁹

Researchers from more privileged ethnic or class groups may be quick to judge and generalise. This may be especially the case when researching forms of discrimination or violence against women and girls, where beliefs, perspectives and practices may differ. For some participatory research it is extremely useful to work with people from the study community who can be trained in research

methodologies. In whichever case, researchers must be aware of the [ActionAid Research Signature](#), feminist ideologies, ActionAid's Theory of Change, ethics and safeguarding protocols. [For more guidance see page 37]. For ActionAid research, a local partner may be responsible for selecting researchers, this should only take place when there is a really clear joint understanding of the research aims and the ideologies and principles behind the research – so as to avoid reproducing negative power dynamics through the selection process.

Check list for conceptualising research

Have you:

- Familiarised yourself with the Research Signature and ActionAid's Theory of Change and how it applies to research?
- Used a feminist lens to consider the format of the research team and the partnership potential?
- Logged your research fundraising concept onto ActionAid's Contract Management System?

19. For detailed discussion, please see: Sawas, A., Castan-Broto, V., Anwar, N.H. & Rehman, A, 2019, [Intersectional coproduction and infrastructural violence: experiences from Pakistan](#). *Journal of Community Development*, 1-19., & Anwar, N.H. & Viqar, S., 2016 [Research assistants, reflexivity and the politics of fieldwork in urban Pakistan](#). *Area*, 49 (1).



Reflection-Action circles are the basis for identifying community problems and their causes, empowering right-holders and finding solutions. These circles are the entry point for all the initiatives in the community. PHOTO: ACTIONAID NEPAL

STEP TWO: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Defining research aims

It is important to include feminist analysis from the beginning of a research proposal. Consider the following questions.

Is the research trying to:

- Set the agenda/change terms of debate/raise awareness of an issue? i.e. is it challenging patriarchy and power and offering alternatives?
- Highlight impacts of current policies and practice

drawing on intersectional framing?

- Influence the development of new policy ensuring it has a feminist framing?

Be clear how and why your research will support ActionAid's Strategic Priorities, affiliate objectives and those of other stakeholders. Identify if there's a need to modify / expand the research to meet partner objectives. Cross check with ActionAid's theory of change; what shifts in power are planned through the research process and practice?

Take initial soundings internally, and externally (e.g. academics, supporters, policymakers). Explore other options (e.g. not doing research).

Develop a background and context analysis

In order to develop a sound research project, which builds on existing knowledge, is sensitive to existing issues and dynamics (e.g. conflict, protection issues, political context) and upholds ActionAid’s feminist values, a background and context analysis needs to be developed. This analysis needs to draw on an intersectional feminist framing and outline how gender, sexual orientation, race, class, migration status and disability status play a role in society and how history and institutions, locally nationally and globally serve to marginalise certain groups of people, including historically.²⁰

This helps to map out and understand how power circulates in society and the interrelationship between local and global including how power is reproduced in research processes. It will help you to see whose voices need to be included in your research, and how to ensure the research supports them to achieve their objectives towards civil and human rights.

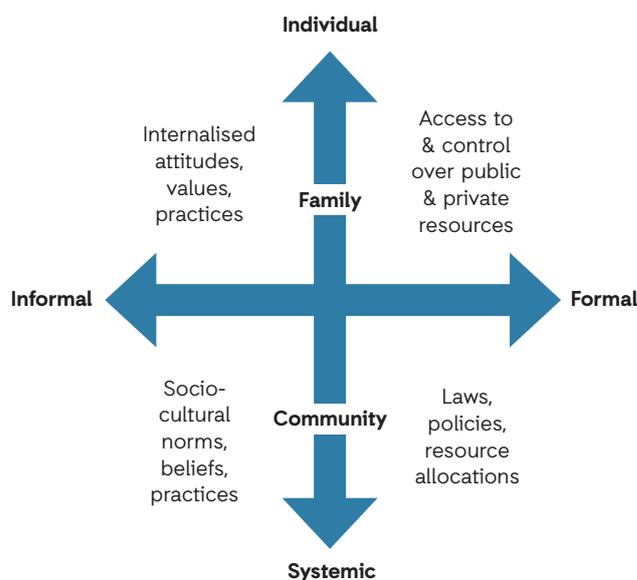
What to include in your context analysis:

- Demographics
- Gender norms
- Socio-Cultural norms (including – how do these norms interact with gender norms and reproduce power hierarchies?)
- Institutional setting including: post-colonial or historical context (i.e. how do those legacies affect stakeholders’ lives, development and security today?); Legal setting (i.e. what are the formal and informal legal frameworks and movements relevant to the issue you want to work on?); Political setting (including how politics

- at the national, regional and local level affects stakeholders’ lives and ambitions)
- Livelihoods
- Environmental context (taking into account how environmental and climate justice issues and shifts impact the lives of stakeholders, and their ambitions, in different ways)
- Conflict analysis, including conflict profile, causes, actors and dynamics and the impact of the conflict on gender
- Safeguarding and SHEA risks, including safeguarding and PSEA risk mitigation.

All sections of your context analysis should draw on an intersectional feminist lens. This means highlighting who has power and influence and when they have that power, how that power is used and its impacts on others. Doing this analysis will give a full picture of the context, which will better inform decision making.

The diagram below, which draws on the Rao and Kelleher model²¹ is important and useful at outlining the different spheres of analysis necessary to interrogate for feminist analysis.



20. For details on what ‘context sensitive analysis looks like, see: Nagarajan, C. and Toogood, K., 2016 *Guidance on Mainstreaming Conflict Sensitivity, Gender and Social Inclusion in Research*. Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme.

21. Aruna Rao and David Kelleher. 2002. “Unravelling Institutionalized Gender Inequality.” *Gender at Work*, <http://www.genderatwork.org> Also see: Batliwala, S & A. Pittman, 2010 *Capturing Change in Women’s Realities A Critical Overview of Current Monitoring & Evaluation Frameworks and Approaches*, AWID, 2010 pg 18. https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/capturing_change_in_womens_realities.pdf

Who to include in your context analysis:

Analysis must consider the dynamic identities that exist within a society and how power and privilege shifts when identities overlap. For example, the power and privilege of a woman differs depending on her other identity markers such as ethnicity, race, class, sexual orientation, migration status, disability status and family position. Women are not a homogenous group. Neither are 'communities', so our analysis must consider power dynamics also exist within households, communities and institutions. We must do this analysis with groups who define themselves as feminist and those who strive to defeat patriarchal power.

To best understand the context in which we want to work, we must engage different stakeholders - prioritising women and young people from marginalised groups - at local and national level in the analysis process using participatory processes that are safe spaces for all and that enable disaggregation. A power mapping or spectrum of allies can be helpful tools to enable this analysis.²²

Be clear about your audience, including media

If the research has advocacy as one of its aims, be very clear who the research is for, and what type of research and outputs are required to influence them. One way to influence policy makers is to shift public opinion through the media.

Consider having multiple outputs; to ensure your report is media friendly:

- make sure the language is simple (could a 14 year old understand it?)
- make sure you're saying something new. New data works brilliantly.
- make sure there's an action attached to your

- news; what do you want people to do/say/act?
- bring in communications people right from the beginning.

Remember though, that the research itself should achieve change through the empowering and solidarity building reflection and action process. Ask: how are research participants seeing and visioning change and taking agency?

See our guide, '[Making Your Evidence Work for the Media](#)'; for more information.

Think about your methodology

As outlined in the introduction, research that takes a feminist approach can be empowering for all participants, and this fits with ActionAid's Theory of Change. Each step of the research process should be participatory. ActionAid reports must foreground affected people's perspectives and must be planned and designed in ways that will strengthen people's organisations in their own efforts to claim their rights. The bigger the project the more important this principle becomes. Some ideas to consider include:

- Involving communities in research planning, gathering and analysing data. This can happen through programme planning, where people living in poverty will be outlining issues key to them; or - if trying to understand questions around Gender Based Violence for example, through ensuring survivors are leading the evidence building. Once an area for discussion is identified, make sure the research questions are flexible, allowing for more specificity to be added by participants in a pilot.
- Run a pilot to test the methodology and research question. This might involve for example, test interviews and test focus groups followed by feedback from all involved, including participants, around whether the questions were clear, the time allocated was sufficient, the setting appropriate and all ethical questions and questions of clarity were dealt with appropriately.

22. For tools see: <http://www.networkedtoolbox.com/workareas/tools/19/> or <https://beautifulrising.org/tool/power-mapping> and <https://beautifulrising.org/tool/spectrum-of-allies>

- Using participatory research methods at every stage of the project, including for data gathering; participatory action-research approaches to gather data can be empowering where they ensure people living in poverty and exclusion play an active role in planning, gathering and analysing data. Consider using participatory video, Photovoice, drama, poetry or talking heads and using the footage as a tool for influencing.²³
- Noting the impact of conflict on research and ensuring that there are safe spaces for marginalised people to discuss and raise issues that emerge from conflict contexts, supporting their ongoing resilience efforts.
- Ensuring conflict sensitivity; bringing an understanding of how different participants to not reinforce or exacerbate existing tensions by unintentionally prioritising majority groups.
- Noting that different methods for collecting data can result in participants sharing SHEA and safeguarding complaints. Facilitators must be skilled to identify concerns and offer support and information to participants where SHEA and safeguarding concerns are expressed, escalating where necessary.
- Working in partnership with allies such as trade unions, social movements, parliamentarians' groups, feminist movements, etc. in the analysis and dissemination of findings
- Organising feedback workshops to discuss findings directly with the communities from whom data and case studies were collected
- Including 'people-friendly' dissemination methods in your advocacy strategy, e.g. community radio broadcasts, drama and 'comic-book' versions of the report, to reach out to the communities involved, and include infographics, tweets and social media posts so wider audiences can participate in the evidence.
- Use a participatory process to engage people living in poverty directly in the research dissemination. Consider using participatory video or talking heads and using the footage as a tool for influencing.
- Plan to capture and document relevant direct quotes, stories and images of women involved in rights issues because these bring to life the evidence by adding a human element that is more relatable to some audiences. Women and young people must be represented fairly and the appropriate permissions must be sought, and can be withdrawn. Follow the case study, video and photography guidance [here](#). Ensure that you are getting permissions when you are taking photos in the line with the Global SHEA and safeguarding policies.²⁴ The consent form is [here](#).

Identify what kind of research is needed to achieve the objectives. Will there be one technique or a mixture of perhaps; desk study, investigative research, academic/ background study, case study, comparative research, technical data modelling etc.²⁵

There are three main types of research: quantitative, qualitative and mixed method. Quantitative is research which will use counting and statistics as a way of understanding a phenomenon. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena using words rather than numbers. Mixed method research uses both qualitative and quantitative indicators.²⁶

Quantitative research elicits broad trends and comparisons and provides data that can easily be used to measure change, to generalise and to inform advocacy/policy work. It is usually assumed that qualitative research is participatory, and quantitative research is not – and that this is reason to avoid quantitative methods. This is too simple a distinction.²⁷

23. Concrete ActionAid projects which use this include: ELBAG, our unpaid care and domestic work, and baselines of safe cities work. ActionAid's Reflection-Action website and Reflect Facebook group are ways to connect with practitioners. [ActionAid's HRBA Women's Rights Training Manual](#) also details some resources.

24. See: the general site here <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/SEC-SHEA-AAISHEAandSafeguardingResources>. The main policy is on this link: https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/w:/r/sites/SEC-SHEA-AAISHEAandSafeguardingResources/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B229C48CB-7505-4009-BDB2-831D7AF9666C%7D&file=AAI%20Protection%20from%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20Policy%20-%20202019.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true

25. See: *Laws, S, 2003 'Research for development: a practical guide', London: Sage.*

26. Adapted from ActionAid, Curtin University, Sydney University, 2014, *Transitional Justice for Women Handbook*

27. For example, the Alternative Statistics section of *Communication and Power*, (ActionAid, 2003) looks at how participatory tools can generate qualitative evidence whilst an extractive and poorly run focus group may generate non-participatory qualitative evidence.

The tool you use for research will depend on your audience and your project aims. It is important to recognise that for participatory tools to be used as evidence, their process must be rigorously and systematically recorded and reported. Community perspectives must be collected in the same way as would hard data so that they are taken seriously and do more than support 'proper' evidence.

Quantitative research is, however, less able to capture the richness of perspectives and experiences of research participants with different intersecting identities; it may struggle to give richness to subjective elements, emotions, opinions, beliefs and individual experiences, and details of the context. It also does not explain how or why change takes place, or the nature of power. Meanwhile, qualitative research elicits fine grained detail about experiences, perceptions and meanings and can help explain the quantitative data. It may be more effective for finding out about sensitive and taboo topics relating to violence and discrimination. Feminist researchers have been at the forefront of challenging reliance on quantitative methods and clarifying the benefits of qualitative techniques for uncovering the lived experiences of women and gender relations.²⁸ A mixture of the both can be effective.

Whilst doing your research it is important to consider your critical citation and references. Who we cite matters in shaping alternative and representational narratives. This means being conscious of the extent to which whether we are referencing northern based cis-male individuals and institutions – framing just one world view.

Participation in an ActionAid context

For research to be empowering and to build solidarity, it is likely to be of a participatory nature. But what level of participation will there be? What does participation really mean? For ActionAid staff, there are challenges as well as opportunities:

- To what extent should research project managers (PMs) involve women and girls in LRPs and programme areas in the methodology design?
- To what extent should PMs involve women in designing questions and in analysing results?
- How do research PMs support women in LRPs to use the results of the research for advocacy?
- What further considerations need to be made where the research is taking place in an area experiencing conflict?
- How can project managers ensure participation is a lived experience rather than being tokenistic, especially where project managers are operating at a distance, or with perceived power, such as in the global north?

Before looking at methodology, the first thing to do is look at the research aims, audience and target. In many cases, the drive for the research is external; such as an event/opportunity to influence. Analysis may show that the best way to influence powerful actors is by using evidence generated by affected people with strong visuals and stories. This evidence can be gathered in a very extractive way (instrumental participation – see table below). For example, by sending a photographer to interview women – identified by ActionAid and partners as involved in a particular work area, without necessarily explaining the purpose of the work with them, analysing together with them or sharing other perspectives. However, where the community members themselves are actors in the drive for change - the momentum for change is more powerful and persuasive. It is important in this case to draw on intersectional feminism to ensure that research does not parcel all 'community members' into the same box but rather acknowledge and avoid reproducing differing dynamics.

It is important to note that participatory research does not have to be 'participatory action research' (PAR). It may use PAR techniques, but ActionAid often has specific donor requirements or time limits for the research which mean that it is not appropriate to have such an open-ended research process. This is fine as long as we are clear about the approach we are taking.

28. See Jenkins, K.; Narayanaswamy, L. & Sweetman, C., 2019 [Introduction: Feminist Values in Research](#). Gender & Development, 27 (3). : Brooks, A., & Hesse-Biber, S.N. () [An Invitation to Feminist Research](#). Sage.

The table below illustrates the different approaches:

Instrumental Participation	Empowering Participation
A project group or consultant design and finalise the project.	Women and young people are involved with shaping the research questions.
The consultant comes in to gather evidence.	Women and young people are involved with gathering evidence.
Analysis is undertaken by a project team in the national office.	Women and young people are involved with analysis.
The communities never see what happened to the research and would not be able to read the research even if they did see it.	Women and young people are involved with dissemination and communication of the research.
Online Facebook and twitter campaigning is very active.	Women and young people are involved with lobbying, advocacy and campaigning to shift power.
The consultant is name checked, and country staff are acknowledged but not the LRP staff, partner staff or community groups or those interviewed.	Everyone involved in the research is appropriately acknowledged.
Once the research is done a report is published and is used at high level lobby meetings outside the country and outside the community.	Links are made between the different actors involved in the research,

Linking our work across levels

The added value of being a federation is that we can link across different levels. A common thread of enquiry will be integrated across the research from local through to national and international level. Influencing should take place at all levels. Consider the following questions:

- Who are the local decision makers and how can we influence them?
- What sort of evidence is needed to influence them and how should this be presented and shared?
- Who do we need to influence at national level and what arguments and evidence can be used to do so?
- How do we influence our international targets?
- How can we best demonstrate and integrate the analysis and evidence emerging at each level?
- What are the dominant narratives that need to be challenged?

This knowledge will inform policy analysis and advocacy for change.

Managing power in the research process

At all stages of the research, all participants must be respected and fairly treated. ActionAid has a responsibility to safeguard participants' welfare, minimize risks and assure that benefits outweigh risks. We will use methods and approaches to minimise power imbalances and help children to express themselves, such as using art or creative methods. We will ensure that less powerful members of communities, including women and those who are not literate or who are living with a disability, participate in interviews. We must also be prepared to manage any trauma that arises, ensuring that a [Distress Protocol](#) is in place as well as strategies for [Researcher Well Being](#). We may manage this through considering what sort of questions might trigger emotional responses and either avoid these or prepare to support research participants with recourse to fully trained follow up counselling support.

ActionAid staff should be alert to their own power and positionality in the research process; whether they are from a European affiliate, the Global Secretariat or a country office, whether they are budget holders, their academic qualifications, race, gender, age, the language(s) they speak and their relationship with the research countries.

Risk

Feminists across the world are at risk when their voices are heard. Human Rights Defenders and organisations that support them must be acutely aware of the deep dangers of being involved in research processes, especially for participants who are marginalised in countries where shrinking political space is leading to backlash from the state, corporations and/or the military. Risks can be greater in conflict situations, due to the proximity of armed conflict. Participants must be aware of the additional risks of being involved and should be safe to pull out of the research at any time. In addition, all researchers should be fully inducted in and have signed onto SHEA, Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policies. [see page 38 for consent forms and for further information about how to ensure that those people who are at risk can see their voices heard in other ways through anonymity]. See the [Safety and Security Guidelines for Research Participants](#), for more detail.

Put together a dissemination strategy

One of the biggest challenges in our work is ensuring that there is good research uptake. This needs to be considered throughout the programme cycle, rather than just at the end and should be framed in a discussion around power and knowledge. Ask; what knowledge will emerge? Who is best to share it? How to ensure that the knowledge can be presented in multiple different ways for different purposes and

to influence different actors? Remember to involve all research participants in sharing and promoting research findings rather than 'speaking for' other people. Remember to include your communications lead (and the Global Secretariat focal person for international publications) from the beginning of the process (sign off section gives more details). [See page 26].

Plan your budget

See below the various aspects that need to be included in your budget when writing your research plan. Most of the costs relates to a project with a defined output. However, research drawing on a feminist approach aims to move beyond this model. Key aspects to budget for also include:

Translation: If you want different audiences to read your output, may need to be translated – as a base, you'll want to ensure that all research participants are able to access the research output (if not in writing, then in some other form). Translation costs around £300/day. Allow 1 day per 2000 words for translation. You will have to build in translation costs for your validation workshops, and to feedback work to the communities you have worked with. You may not want to translate a full report for this audience: think about how best to communicate the work.

(Reflection) Workshops: To ensure a really thorough reflection-action process you'll want to be able to hold meetings. See page 44 for costs associated with community level meetings and focus group discussions (FGDs). Consider participants' workload, unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities, WASH and safety, and ensure they are fed if they're working over mealtimes.

Peer review: As discussed above, in an attempt to move away from a consultancy model, it's encouraged to bring in different perspectives to a research project through peer review. You may need to pay some reviewers for their time. Always ask upfront.

Lawyer: You must have a libel lawyer check your publication prior to sign-off if you are making allegations about companies or individuals. See [libel guidelines](#) for detailed advice.

Copy editors: £125 per ten pages or £300-350 per day

Design of publication: £20-50 per page depending on type of publication, no of pages. Check you have included the cost of the cover design, which is sometimes a separate cost.

Consultants/authors: £250 to £500 per day, excluding travel and expenses.

Photographers: £300 to £400 per day, excluding travel and expenses

Printers: affected by many variables, consider not printing at all, or printing only where a publication will be distributed.

The figures above are 2019 estimates for Europe-based procurement but will vary from country to country.

Be clear about your timeline

Too often research is rushed without consideration given to the mental health of those involved. Produce a timeline and circulate to everyone involved. Be realistic. Build in flexibility. Can

deadlines be moved? Are there alternative hooks that could be used? Account for people's holidays, festival periods and their unpaid care and domestic work. Consider sharing yours and others current workload/responsibilities, field visit schedules, events and other travel so that you know what is possible to do in the given timeline and when people are available.

Check you've got the right people to sign off

Feminist research holds accountability high. The RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed) table in the Research and Publications Project plan is useful so that everyone involved with the work is clear where they fit in and when. Getting sign off sorted from the beginning [your Tor/Research & Publications plan itself must be signed off] means that there are no rushes and panics at the end. This means notifying people well in advance about when to expect the publication and keeping them updated on any shifts to the schedule. Refer to the latest sign off guidelines [Sign off Guidelines Feb 2018](#) for details of how to complete the table below.

Responsible	Project / commissioning manager
Accountable	Person/people giving ultimate sign off
Consulted	The 'consulted' group provides feedback according to their expertise. This falls into two sub-groups 1) core project team who need to comment in detail on the first and penultimate drafts of the report and 2) group for wider consultation – to feedback only on first draft of report. Core project group (convened by project manager) Group for wider consultation (to feedback only on first draft of report)
Informed	Those who may be interested

Formalise your thinking in a clear ToR/Research & Publications Plan

Maintaining the principle of accountability and transparency, use the [Research & Publications Plan template](#). Upload this onto the [research tracker](#) or share it with the Global Secretariat Research advisor, who will then support you. If you are seeking research funding, you may also wish to log

onto the ActionAid Contact Management System.²⁹ Remember that if your publication fits the criteria for 'international research' then the **ToR itself** will need federation sign off as well as the final product.

International Research is defined by Action Aid as either/or:

1. Taking positions on the actions and policies of international or multi-lateral actors;
2. Focuses on more than one country;
3. Coordinated by an international team (AA staff and partners);
4. To be used for significant advocacy and media work in more than one country.

Check list for developing a research proposal

Have you:

- Checked the extent to which your research is done by, with, for and about women?
- Been clear about your aims, ensuring you are taking women, non-binary people and girls as the focus of the analysis, and that there is an agenda for social change?
- Drawn on an intersectional feminist lens for your concept?
- Involved programme staff and partners in the reference group and checked on how information and knowledge flows continue at a country level?
- Built in time for a participatory process so local and territorial knowledge is valued?
- Ensured there is budget for translation?
- Ensured there is budget for a set of community materials that can be used for different purposes?
- Integrated the issue into a programme, and ensure Reflection-Action circle take forward discussions once the specific evidence gathering is complete?
- Looked at ActionAid's guidelines for Focus Group Discussions and check that time has been set aside for these?

29. The Contract Management System (CMS), a system for logging funding proposals so fundraisers can access them and project managers can track progress, is here: <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/cms#/>

- Ensured a full ethics check (including with each partner institution) i.e. a risk assessment is complete, permissions have been granted to the researchers from the country where the research is taking place, and participants to the research are going to be safe when the research is published and their mental and physical health is not at risk as they participate?
- Ensured that risk assessment factor in SHEA and safeguarding including child safeguarding, PSEA and anti-sexual harassment and bullying?
- Ensured that researchers are trained and have the skills to receive complaints relating to SHEA and safeguarding?
- Ensured that all researchers who are recruited for research purposes, undertake mandatory safeguarding background checks?



Bringing together agroecology and resilience project participants from the Gambia and Senegal. PHOTO: CLÉMENT TARDIF/ACTIONAID

STEP THREE: INCEPTION WORKSHOP

Preparing a research inception workshop

For an effective partnership, whether the research is with an academic partner, or with multiple countries as partners, it is recommended to have an inception workshop.

Aim of an inception workshop:

The main aim of an inception workshop is to prepare the team for a new project. This means:

- To ensure that each partner understands the need for and shares the vision of the project, the key ideologies, terms & concepts.
- To ensure that each partner is aware of others' interests, motivations, backgrounds and politics.
- To ensure it is clear what value each partner will

bring and to acknowledge the challenges and opportunities that the partnership brings (e.g. positive power dynamics)

- To confirm that the team have the right research question, and the appropriate methodology to respond to the question.
- To begin to firm up project logistics
- To begin to firm up contracts

Things to think about when planning an inception meeting:

- Consider when you hold the meeting, participants unpaid care and domestic roles, travel schedules, safety plans and their work plans. Respect all participants' other work as you initiate this project. Risk assessment should consider travel plans and if travel is considered safe.
- The pace of the meeting depends on how well you know each other and your history. It is

worth making time to get to know each other at first. For example, start off with sharing a joint understanding of why the research should happen (tool 5), share your motivation for engagement (tool 1), your different ambitions for the research (tool 2), and your different vision for research success (tool 9) (all tools in box).

- Moving straight to logistics and contracts misses out an important 'getting to know you' stage. Disagreement can then take place over small decisions which could be avoided if there was a better understanding of different actors' perspectives. In a two-day meeting, these discussions could wait until the second day.
- If you're proposing new tools in the methodology, you could test these in the inception workshop so that all participants experience the tool.
- Think carefully about who is at the meeting and who is not. For example, which of the 'layers' of staff will you involve (Country Director, Programme Manager, Partner)? What does this mean in terms of their perceived and actual participation in the project? What power dynamics are in the room as a result of participants' roles and intersecting identities? If some participants are unable to attend, how can their absence be mitigated?
- Have discussions around power between the different participants and their organisations (see tools 3 & 4) and how this then affects roles (tool 8)
- Prepare for difficult issues. If there is conflict, then frame the discussion within the parameters of 'things to discuss and things to agree'. You do not have to agree on everything but know your bottom line – for example, ActionAid's Research Signature and Theory of Change.
- The length of an inception workshop will depend on the type of project. Two days is an average length for a single country project with a national advocacy element. Bigger project inceptions may take a week. It is a worthwhile investment.
- Training on ethics, safeguarding and feminist leadership are useful sessions to add to an inception workshop. Training is a way to build team dynamics and explore the project area in a non-confrontational manner (tool 6 is a starting point).
- Use your time together now to develop an advocacy plan (tool 7).

Tools you can use in a research inception meeting:

1. Motivation for engagement

Aim: Find out why different people want to be involved.

Methodology: Ask everyone to write on a post-it note the two reasons they want to be in the project. These are posted and silently clustered. Are there any outliers? Why? Where are the main clusters?

2. Purpose for research

Aim: There are different reasons for research; this exercise clarifies the purpose of the particular research for participants involved.

Methodology: Elicit the different reasons for doing research i.e. monitoring, evaluation, theory building, explanation, innovation, capacity development. Draw a line star with as many lines as reasons. Write the reason at the end of each line. Ask participants to put a dot as to what they think THIS research is for. Observe where there are clusters and outliers.

3. Unpacking the power dynamics between different actors - role play drama

Aim: To understand how it feels to be in someone else's shoes in a research project.

Methodology: Each person is told to swap around roles i.e. the academic partner plays the LRP participants, the LRP participants play the national NGO, the national NGO plays the local community head, the donor plays the audience etc. Give each person prompts of two lines and a scenario. For example, the scenario is the mid-term review, and the prompts say for the NGO; the donor wants more reporting, for the academic; the local researcher has not provided transcripts; the NGO, the academic is writing research that doesn't resonate with any of the policy demands. Ask participants to role play the meeting. Afterwards ask them to observe what happened and why, note down the negative aspects on one column on a

flip chart and then write down principles and how to achieve them on the second column. These should relate to the ActionAid Research Signature. Ask people to give examples based on their own experience.

4. Who has the power?

Aim: Find out the different sources of power in the research core (and extended) group.

Methodology: Ask the participants to move without talking, organising themselves into lines on a spectrum, according to the following questions. 'How much control do you have over the budget?' 'How much can you shape the direction of the project?' 'To what extent will the project be able to go ahead without me' etc...

5. Analysis tools

Aim: To check understanding of the need for the research and ensure a common understanding of the issue by doing an analysis of rights denials, resource and power allocations or actors and institutions.

Methodology: Force field analysis, Venn diagrams, stakeholder mapping, relationship mapping, problem tree, chappati diagram.

See: ActionAid, 2015, *People's Action in Practice* pg 213-216 ([here](#)), ActionAid, 2013 *Communication and Power* ([here](#)) and the *Reflection-Action* website ([here](#)).

6. Women's rights

Aim: To check understanding of the need for the research and ensure a common understanding of the issue of women's rights.

Methodology: You can choose from several tools here. For example, practical and strategic needs, access and control profile, time analysis, problem tree, PPP analysis (personal/private/public & formal/informal dimensions, priority group analysis.

See: ActionAid, 2006, *Power, Inclusion and Rights based Approaches; the ActionAid Gender Equality and RBA Resource Kit* ([here](#)). And the *Reflection-Action* website ([here](#))

7. Advocacy planning

Aim: To develop an advocacy plan.

Methodology: You can choose from several

tools here. For example; Problem tree analysis, critical path analysis, campaign power analysis. See: ActionAid, 2015, *People's Action in Practice*. pg 81 & pg 82. And the *Reflection-Action* website ([here](#)).

8. Roles and relationships

Aim: To jointly identify project deliverables, timelines and interdependencies, agreeing RACI for main deliverables.

Methodology: The facilitator (has already prepared) or elicits the key results and milestones and writes these out on cards and puts on floor or wall as a 'river' or timeline. As a group exercise, participants draw lines (or stick string) between the results and key milestones identifying their interdependence. Each participant then has to list the work they need to do to ensure the different elements happen and their commitment to the group. Each participant reads out their individual commitments and fills in any gaps if other group members have additional requests. [For an extra element, you could adapt the river of life for the research project, which lists then obstacles, fast currents, hazards etc. This may provide good elements of discussion. See the *Reflection-Action* website for more details.

9. Visions of what a success would be?

Aim: To identify a joint vision for success.

Methodology: Participants lie on the floor and the facilitator asks them to close their eyes. The facilitator asks participants to vision the project in five years' time, to think about how they see it, how they describe it to others and how others see it. The facilitator asks participants to imagine having a conversation with friend where they are excited about the project and describe the different steps to get there (only thinking of positives). The facilitator asks the group to allow other thoughts into their mind; are there negative ones? How are these chased away? The facilitator asks participants to imagine their pride and the group wrap up and how that feels. Is anything needed to make that happen? Participants are then asked to share any reflections – these are added to the timeline.

10. SHEA and Safeguarding:

Aim: To ensure that all research activities reduce the incidence and likelihood of Sexual Harassment, exploitation and abuse. To ensure that all research activities increase reporting of SHEA and safeguarding concerns.

Methodology: The participants all receive a briefing on SHEA and Safeguarding, using the mandatory training. The facilitator to make use of interactive methodologies such as agree/disagree/strongly agree/strongly disagree scenarios, role play exercises, scenarios and videos.

Check list for an inception meeting

Have you:

- Used an intersectional feminist lens to consider who is invited to, and the structure of your inception meeting?
- Ensured you are considering how to mitigate any negative power dynamics in your meeting and discuss power openly?
- Ensured you have your protocols ready?
- Developed a risk matrix to mitigate against SHEA and safeguarding?
- Briefed all participants on the complaints mechanisms?



Community Campaigners discussing strategy. PHOTO: BETHANY CLARKE/ACTIONAID

STEP FOUR: CEMENTING A RESEARCH PROTOCOL. SAFEGUARDING & ETHICS

Researcher training

All researchers need to be clear about and familiar with ActionAid's Research Signature, feminist ideologies and ActionAid's Theory of Change. Researchers involved in research on gender discrimination and violence need extra training and support. This should include an orientation on concepts of gender inequalities, violence, gender and children's rights. The training needs to include opportunities for researchers to reflect on both their own prejudices and experiences and consider how these might affect the quality of their work.

Researchers also need a full briefing in this Research Protocol, including research ethics and child protection procedures to be implemented during the research, and any other procedures, including for security situations, should be identified. Researchers need an opportunity to practise with reflection their use of the research instruments. Support mechanisms need to be in place during field research to help researchers manage their safety and wellbeing and to monitor progress and quality of the research. This document is helpful: Social Research Association, '[A Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers](#)':

Capacity development

Research can involve some capacity development of all research partners. Capacity development as a concept can be extremely problematic and infused with power, especially where funding demands it, and where the assumption is northern universities or related academics are building the capacity 'of' researchers in the global south. ActionAid understands that each participant to the research process brings unique knowledge, analysis and experience and that all participants in the process will learn from the one another.

Key questions to ask are:

- Capacity for whom? By whom? Why?
- Does the capacity development element replicate power dynamics?
- What is the aim of the capacity development? Is it an end in itself or does it take place for the purposes of the research only?
- Who is making the decisions about what capacity development is involved and who is involved?

How will the work be collaboratively managed?

Once you have established that you'll bring added value to the work by working together, and have agreed on principles for taking the work forward, and shared goals, you need to decide on the structures that will help you carry out the work to ensure that you remain accountable to each other. The type of relationship and the systems you chose to support it, will depend on the type of partner; whether they are an individual or a research institute (policy centre, think tank, university etc.).

- What project structures will support you to achieve your project goals more effectively?

How can you ensure these structures are transparent, accountable and feel safe for all participants?

- How, and how often will you communicate with each other in an inclusive and accessible manner?
- How will you share and store information and knowledge generated through the work?
- How will you continue to dialogue with each other once the product has been published/ released? Often follow-up (e.g. from media or other civil society organisations) continues beyond the launch date.
- How will you deal with any issues around power, or contentious issues as a group?

You could consider:

A diverse and inclusive steering committee which makes sure the project is on track with the mutually agreed goals. This committee would include members of key stakeholder groups. For example, if the research focus is young people, then ensure there is a representative from a youth movement on the steering committee, someone who has the trust of their network. This would be a global group and would ensure that reflection-action linkages are made between the national and global analysis.

National project teams which would ensure that the research is embedded within the programme cycle, clearly contributing to ActionAid's goals in the federation and country level and ensuring that reflection-action linkages are made between local and national level. These would involve programme staff, women's rights staff, MEL staff and policy colleagues. Make sure the structures are cemented with clear ToRs.³⁰

Collective, collaborative working & peer review

Collective working is a core part of a feminist approach, which acknowledges the potential value

30. The Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania project has some excellent templates for such work.

all actors bring to a reflective knowledge building process, both through their analysis and through their links with other networks. In addition, working with others fits within our theory of change, as it can enable solidarity building and deeper partnerships. Ensure a feminist researcher comments as part of the review team, but all of the team - which might involve between 2-4 people each with a slightly different expertise - should have a feminist perspective on whatever issue is at stake.

When you send out your ToR, consider who will form your peer review panel and involve them right from the beginning. If a peer reviewer only sees the final product and has comments on the structure or nature of the research, it is hard to take on feedback. If they are involved in the design of the project there is scope, and this will result in a better process and product. Give reviewers a heads up in plenty of time before draft is sent team. Get a 'lay-person' to read the research, in particular the summary, to ensure that it is easily communicable. Make sure you acknowledge your peer review team. Consider asking one to write a foreword. Never assume that your peer review team will be able to review without being remunerated. Be upfront about this and ask at the outset whether they would expect to be paid or would be able to do the work as part of their pro bono time, if they have any.

What other issues might arise as you jointly sign a MoU?

Your agreement to work together will be sealed with a MoU. Issues of power come out most strongly when you look at ownership of research data and research attribution. The level of complexity will depend on the funding mechanism. It is useful to have discussions around these particular areas in advance. Ensure that you develop your MoU and any ensuing documents

jointly, so there is buy in and support from all participants. Given that there will be a negotiation between the different partners, it is important you enter into the discussion with your ideal asks, but are clear what your non-negotiables are.

There are different elements within an MoU.³¹ The most controversial elements are outlined below:

Intellectual property

Where organisations do not co-own intellectual property with communities researched then negative power dynamics continue to be perpetrated. This co-owning relationship is the model we need to move towards. Unfortunately, for legal reasons this is not always simple. The following are examples of wording that can be included:

- **Option 1:** you jointly share, with all participants, and are able to use freely all emerging data subject to an agreement around how data is used i.e. you give all parties 30 days advance notice of any new publications etc...
- **Option 2:** you agree that the research lead organisation will own the intellectual property of new data, case studies and video emerging from the project. However, the lead organisation gives other organisations *irrevocable perpetual non-exclusive, royalty free licence to use the work*. Again, this may be according to set guidelines such as a timeframe within which one organisation or group of people must give the other to review any potential emerging publications.

Data storage

A contract with a research institute may stipulate that research (institute) partners should destroy unused data six months after the project to ensure that it was not used in a way which might breach

31. The MoU might include: grant agreement liability i.e. who signs the contract for AA; Indemnity insurance; Health and Safety of personnel; Provision of equipment and admin support for personnel; Intellectual property rights; Copyright; Termination processes; Confidentiality; Dispute resolution process. There are examples on Sharepoint: <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/Research>

intellectual property rights. As per the overarching SHEA and Global Safeguarding policy, ActionAid will ensure that all data collection process are in compliance with local and international data protection laws when gathering, storing, or sharing any data relating to individuals involved in SHEA and Safeguarding incidents, and will follow the guidance on retaining data on incident management that is issued by the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team.³²

Attribution

Have you discussed how you will organise attribution of any separate publications emerging from the joint research? ActionAid does not normally give author bylines, but attributes research to the organisation, i.e. ActionAid, and the dynamics of acknowledgement are on page 52. Branding and co-branding is per the brand guidelines. See section on audience – below.

Delivery

Have you discussed what happens if one of the partners does not deliver? How will you ensure you understand the root causes for this, considering how your own actions and power might have impacted on the project? An open and honest approach should avoid all communications breakdown. However, if there are challenges, consider how will you retrieve existing data: Ensure you write non-delivery into your research protocol.

Other key documents

The following publications are key to the effective working together. Each might be accompanied by further guidance, and where an item is complex, there may be separate documents entirely. The specifics within these documents will depend on whether ActionAid is the lead agency, where the funding is coming from and the requirements of the donor. Some donor funded projects will require other documents. Sample documents can be found [here](#).



Nirmala Mahatara, from Nepal, is a community activist who is central to supporting the reduction of violence against women and girls in her area, through engagement in the Women Rights Forum. PHOTO: ACTIONAID

32. Action Aid International, 2019, SHEA and other safeguarding concerns overarching policy, page 11

What	Why	What will this document contain?
Research protocol	To outline how partners will carry out the research in ways which are high quality, rigorous and ethical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research question(s) - Study approach - Research principles - Methodologies - Timeframe - Budget & Donor requirements - Outputs - Audience - Change desired - Knowledge management - Quality criteria - M&E framework - Ethics and safety (power, confidentiality, consent, safety) - Researcher selection - Project structures and groups - International project accountability team - Roles and responsibilities of partners - Retrieving data - Data protection guidelines - Research Safety and Security guidelines - Distress Protocol
Style Guidelines https://styleguide.actionaid.digital/	To ensure that there is clarity, from the beginning on how joint branding would look on joint publications	This is an ActionAid agreed and signed off set of guidelines providing potential designers with recommendations for how joint branding looks.
ActionAid International Global SHEA, Safeguarding and other concerns overarching policy	To ensure that all partners, programmes, research activities is free from harm, exploitation and abuse. To ensure that risks assessments are in place to mitigate against harm, abuse and exploitation and to increase the likelihood of reporting concerns related to SHEA and safeguarding.	This is a board approved safeguarding policy and forms the overarching safeguarding policy which includes the following: AAI Child Safeguarding Policy 2019 AAI Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy 2019 Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) at work Policy, 2019 AAI SHEA, Safeguarding and other concerns, overarching policy.

How can I ensure my research is rigorous? Sampling and controls

Decision makers and influencers can use their power to undermine and discredit other's evidence. However, by following good research protocol and methodology, as outlined in this document, your research will be rigorous. There is no reason why quantitative and qualitative research, and research involving NGOs cannot be rigorous if it is carefully carried out. Documenting the methodology can be a helpful way to mitigate critique:

Sampling: Sampling refers to the process by which the sample is selected from the population. There are several different methods of sampling that may be used. This is one of the important ways in which a research project's credibility and rigour is judged. The sampling method must be appropriate to the study. Purposive sampling refers to looking for a specific mix of people and is not a random sample. Organisations may use their existing networks to find their sample, or do snowball sampling, where they ask existing contacts to seek others in their own networks. Consider the size of the sample required to convince your audience to act and avoid extrapolating from your sample i.e. Use: 'the majority of women in our sample say' rather than 'the majority of women in Vietnam say'.

Controls: The one thing that we tend not to get involved with however, is control cases (where we compare two situations, one where there is an intervention based on a hypothesis such as that having young people on a school council makes the school a more inclusive environment and the other where there is no intervention). There are methodological and ethical challenges to this. For example, methodologically it is ethically challenging to do research where no intervention takes place and it is challenging to control for programmes that may be implemented by others in control areas. A baseline is recommended with thorough analysis to ascertain project impact.

Informed Consent³³

There are huge risks to research participants as they take part in research processes, both as they meet with research teams and as joint analysis is published. This is exacerbated when negative power dynamics between researchers and the research community result in people's perspectives, words and photos into the public domain without joint analysis. ActionAid will make every reasonable effort to prevent and mitigate risk caused by our own activities, in line with our approach to Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) and Safeguarding. Informed consent is one example of this. It means that all participants, including children, will be given clear information about the project, to be able to choose not to participate, and to withdraw at any time. Written consent for pictures that will be used in project documents must also be obtained by the relevant parties [all those with joint intellectual property, planning to use data – see page 35]. The consent form is [here](#). Action Aid's [Child Safeguarding Policy](#) states that parents should provide consent when any activities are carried out with children. We should be aware that in some cases this could lead to parents telling children how to participate in the research or not consenting to their participation (possibly skewing results if these children may be at more risk of gender discrimination or violence).

Disclosure and safety of participants

Confidentiality and anonymity are key aspects of informed consent and should be maintained throughout the research, including during analysis and reporting. Confidentiality implies non-disclosure of information altogether; a research team might hear others' views but must not publish the views in any circumstances. Anonymity is where a research team hears others' views, and those people give consent for the views to be published as long as their name is not published, by filling in an 'informed consent' form. The researcher may use an alias, if consent is given. In all cases it is good practice try to ensure privacy during interviews so that people feel comfortable to answer questions, particularly questions of a sensitive nature. At the same time, ensure that participants feel safe being in a private space, and ensure participants can ask for support if they feel vulnerable speaking unaccompanied.

Research questions should be shared with local SHEA and Safeguarding focal points and or the Global SHEA and Safeguarding team (safeguarding@actionaid.org). The SHEA and Safeguarding focal point will work with the research team to develop risk assessments (for example, for child protection interviewers and staff must not be alone with a child) to maintain safely for all. Reflecting SHEA and safeguarding policies provisions on data protection: ActionAid will ensure that it complies with local and international data protection laws when gathering, storing, or sharing any data relating to individuals involved in SHEA and Safeguarding incidents, and will follow the guidance on retaining data on incident management. Data will be stored in a way so as not to identify individuals' responses by coding questionnaires / participants and schools/ communities, and by securing data so that only those who need to access the data for the project can do so.^{34, 35}

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33. When we talk about informed consent our protocols require us to ensure this is given freely, without manipulation or coercion, and in advance of evidence collection. However, we do not use the term 'Free, Prior Informed Consent' as the term and principle has its history in indigenous people's struggles for their recognition and rights to land - as enshrined in the ILO convention 169, amongst others. For research, similar protocols are used to ensure that engagement between different people involved in research is meaningful, respectful and ethical. At every stage of a research process, research participants must have a full understanding of how their knowledge, analysis and personal information may be used; and the possible outcomes, risks and benefits being engaged with the research.
34. More information on Data Protection available here: <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/Research>
35. See your safeguarding policies: <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/Safe/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx> and Data Protection Policies, as well as Security and Safety Guidelines, Distress Protocol and Research Well being guidelines. <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/Research>

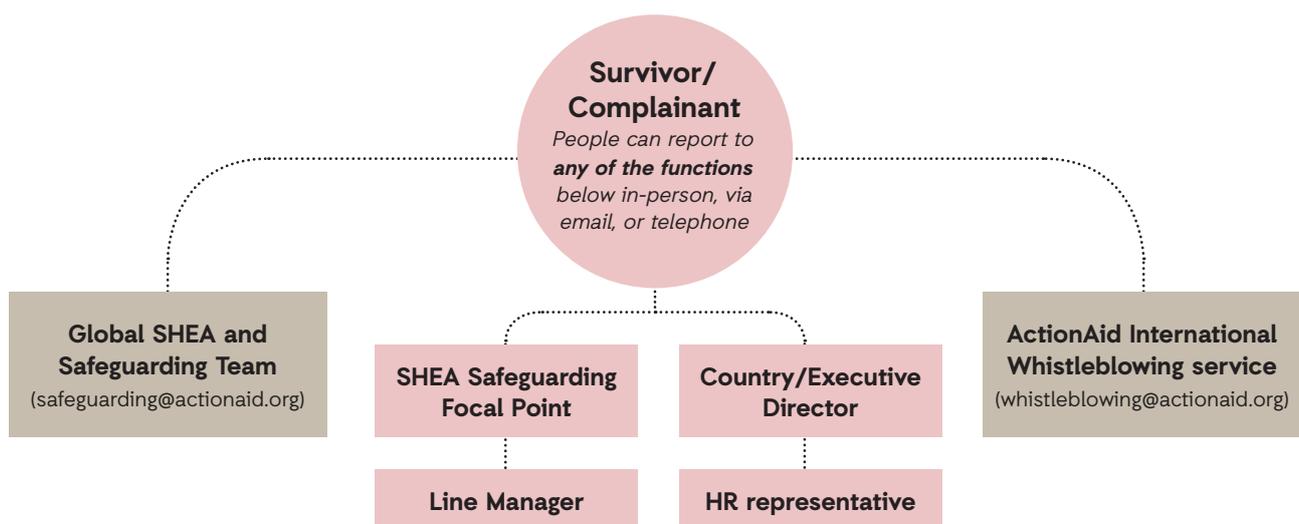
Researchers may find that they are told confidential information, particularly if participants share SHEA and safeguarding concerns. There may be a tension between maintaining confidentiality and passing on information when a researcher considers the individual, particularly a child to be at risk of harm. In line with ActionAid’s SHEA and Safeguarding approach, if an individual reports an experience or suspicion of sexual violence (exploitation or abuse, including child abuse) or suggests that someone’s life is in danger in any way then this must be reported through the appropriate lines (outlined in ActionAid’s SHEA and Safeguarding Overarching Policy and Child Safeguarding Policy). This includes reporting to the local SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point, the Country Director, and/or the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team.³⁶ All efforts must be made to explain to the individual why the information must be reported but that ActionAid will do everything possible to protect the individual and ensure their anonymity. In line with the ActionAid Code of Conduct, and as per the overarching Global and SHEA Safeguarding Policy (2019) if anyone has concerns that any individual has been or is at risk of being abused, exploited, or harmed in any way they must report this immediately in line with the reporting procedures outlined below. **However, in line with ActionAid’s survivor-centred approach, individuals do not have to report their own experience of sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse.**³⁷

As part of our survivor-centred approach, survivors/ complainants can choose if, when, and how to make a report and decide whether they want ActionAid to take formal action. There may be occasions where ActionAid has a duty of care to respond even if the survivor/complainant does not want to take forward action. This will be managed on a case by case basis, following clear risk assessments, and the safety and wellbeing of the survivor/complainant will be paramount throughout.³⁸ If participants elect to share concerns during research activities, facilitators must be trained to facilitate safeguarding conversations and provide support to survivors.

Some researchers have used their position of power for personal gain. In our research we must be constantly vigilant to any practice which is not within ActionAid’s Code of Conduct and informed by ActionAid’s feminist leadership approach as outlined in the core SHEA and Safeguarding policies. Any concerns relating to this can be raised to the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@actionaid.org)

If ActionAid staff, including research partners have SHEA or Whistleblowing related concerns, they can report directly to:

- ActionAid Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@actionaid.org)
- ActionAid Whistleblowing Service (whistleblowing@actionaid.org)



36. See the checklist – Safeguarding and SHEA considerations conducting needs assessments for further details.[link Lois/Marni]

37. Ibid

38. Ibid

All partners, staff and researchers have the following responsibilities:

- A rights holder or community member or participant in a research process alleges that they or another person is experiencing or at risk of experiencing sexual exploitation or abuse - whether carried out by ActionAid staff and representatives, or others, in the research activity.³⁹
- A staff member or other representative suspects that someone connected to ActionAid and its research partner, is or may be about to carry out sexual exploitation and abuse towards

rights holders, community members or others including participants of a research project.⁴⁰

- A staff member or other representative suspects that someone external to ActionAid (e.g. a Community Leader or Researcher) is or may be about to carry out sexual exploitation or abuse towards rights holders, community members, or others.⁴¹

ActionAid should also acknowledge, recognise and take steps to mitigate the deep dangers to partners, beneficiaries, rights holders of doing research in the environments where there is shrinking political space. A thorough risk analysis is key, as is recourse to legal support.

Check list for cementing a research protocol, safeguarding and ethics:

Have you:

- Checked you have the required protocols in place ahead of your research partnership. Are all parties aware of the ActionAid Research Signature, SHEA and Safeguarding policies, Distress Protocol, Researcher Wellbeing Guidelines, Data Protection Support and Research Participant Safety and Security Guidelines?
- Decided how to collaboratively manage your work?
- Discussed how you will make sure your research is rigorous?
- Discussed intellectual property?
- Made sure informed consent is central to your approach?
- Ensured that you have completed a SHEA and Safeguarding risk assessment? Planned to hold risk assessments and monitoring regularly as needed in case risks change? Checked the risk assessment includes a feminist analysis of girls, persons with disabilities, gender non-confirming and non-binary persons who could be exposed in research?

39. Action Aid International, 2019, SHEA and other safeguarding concerns overarching policy, page 6

40. Ibid

41. Ibid

- Checked the risks associated with the location of research activities; are they safe and how will participants travel to research activities? Are there other ways participants could be exposed to harm, abuse and exploitation?
- Built in capacity development required and mitigated negative power dynamics?
- Planned to ensure participants who come into contact with research activities, will not be at risk of abuse, harm and exploitation?
- Put systems in place to report and respond to allegations of abuse, exploitation and harm, in the research process.
- Put rights holders at the centre of the research?
- Ensured your methodology empowers survivors of abuse, violence and exploitation and if research relates to survivors of violence, abuse and exploitation, how are you including survivors in the design and implementation of the research?
- Incorporated the learnings of previous research programmes including research that was focused on women and girls?
- Created safe spaces for women and girls to talk through issues that affect them?
- Ensured your research methodology has a Standard Operating Procedure for collecting data from survivors of abuse, violence and exploitation?⁴²

42. Based on recommendations from the "Gender and Development Network: Safeguarding and Beyond, Recommendations from the Gender and Development Network", May 2018, available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/536c4ee8e4b0b60bc6ca7c74/t/5b02df478a922d27418ba1f9/1526914889870/Safeguarding+and+Beyond+recommendations+May+2018.pdf>



The launch of evidence around women's unpaid care work, climate resilience and agroecology as part of the Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project in Adaklu Waya community in the Volta Region of Ghana. PHOTO: DEBORAH LOMOTEE/ACTIONAID

STEP FIVE: PUBLICATIONS AND IMPACT

Consider a variety of outputs

Traditionally, research is a linear process with evidence gathering leading to a single report. Whilst a report can capture a lot of knowledge, the output is often inappropriate for a variety of audiences. Feminist research will consider different knowledge outputs emerging at different stages of the research process, and accessible to a range of audiences. Involving communications focal people from the beginning can help by bringing in new ideas. Consider what knowledge was generated in the research and how can you reach different audiences and tailor outputs to share that knowledge to reflect, learn and shift power? For example,

- Research should say something new; new data, or a new story or angle or approach. Consider a short press release and accompanying social media.
- A 10-page or less policy document to reach a policy audience (10 pages will take about 30mins to read, anything longer may not be wise).
- A public seminar to share knowledge and jointly reflect and create an action plan.
- A reflection piece which analyses the process of doing the research, highlighting any challenges for project participants.
- A set of talking head videos which can be circulated alongside other material, which shows the audience people's perspectives directly.
- A piece of art or drama to communicate analysis to audiences who are unlikely to read a report.
- A blog piece on a particular aspect of the research.
- Think about whose story you are telling, why, and the ethics of doing so. And always check you have the appropriate permissions.
- A webinar to reflect and share knowledge with allies in and outside the organisation.

Communications checklist

We must remember there are many powerful ways of communicating and we do so through what we see, hear, say, touch and smell. We emphasise the visual and when we use words we write as we speak, (even policy reports can read like a great speech); know our audiences intimately and remember that less is more. In doing so we must remember that our theory of change is embedded in communications. The process and product of any communication should empower, build solidarity and enable campaigning and activism around alternatives. When you're planning and again when you have your draft product, critically evaluate the product against the [communications style guide](#) to check it will reach its audience.

Think about language

The language we use is extremely important as it is how we communicate our politics and show our solidarity with allies. Language and symbols may easily reinforce stereotypes and send different messages to those we intend. Therefore, we can consider:

- Mandatory use of feminist, intersectional and gender sensitive language in all languages used by ActionAid and partners
- When we're writing up our work, we need to use the words and terminology which relates to our allies' politics and strategy. This can be found in our [style guidelines](#) and strategy. Editors should be given a copy.
- Research may be communicated and translated into other languages, it needs to be as clear, concise, focused, jargon free and unambiguous as possible.
- We need to be particularly careful when conducting research on sensitive issues like VAWG, political change, justice and inequality, which may be translated in different ways in indigenous languages.
- Ensure that your language is gender sensitive, refer to these guidelines and the strategy for ways to talk about intersectionality, young people etc.
- Consider that participants may have hearing and visual disabilities and please consider the usage of sign language and braille for documents.
- As you write, consider whose voice is speaking through the research. Be wary of reverting to 'ActionAid thinks' as a way of talking. Consider whose analysis is being communicated at national, regional and global levels? ActionAid's or the research communities?

Check list for managing publications and impact

Have you:

- Checked that the products emerging from your knowledge generation are audience appropriate?
- Used appropriate and political language?
- Checked your product(s) are communicable?



Ninive Loriani Ferreira and her mother walk in the streets of Heliópolis, São Paulo, Brazil, enjoying the new LED lights. Ninive is an activist and member of UNAS, a local NGO and partner of ActionAid, who have gathered evidence, campaigned and successfully ensured a safer neighbourhood. PHOTO: FABIO ERDOS/ACTIONAID

STEP SIX: MANAGING THE RESEARCH PROCESSES

Managing interviews & focus group discussions

Interviews and focus groups can be fraught with negative power dynamics and in their worst iteration they can be extractive, triggering unwelcome emotion without recourse to support. A project manager must consider:

- How to **mitigate the power** or perceived power of the interviewer through careful researcher selection and process. If a focus group, consider asking someone to observe the focus group for

power dynamics as the ethnological observation can lead to useful analysis.

- **Who to involve** i.e. not only the most powerful in the community, but a seeking out the unheard voices amongst women's rights movements, other CSOs, government representatives etc. When seeking out unheard voices from marginalised and vulnerable groups, please ensure that you consider the provisions in the overarching SHEA and Safeguarding policies. Participation should always be safe, sensitive to risk and voluntary.
- **Size** smaller focus groups can lead to more of a routine conversation, with participants deferring to well-known stories or anecdotes, larger (20+) groups can be more chaotic but may

lead to more of an insight into the community dynamics.⁴³

- **Participants' time.** Focus groups take a lot longer to set up than we usually plan for and are much more costly than we budget for. If the questions are intended to take one hour, then the focus group itself may take three hours. Extra to this should be time for lunch and travel. Given the time involved, consider participants' unpaid care and domestic work, other responsibilities, and whether the location is accessible.
- **Participants' safety.** As well as the ethical dynamics of informed consent, consider whether the venue is safe and accessible physically and whether participants' psychological needs are accounted for. If participants bring their children, how are ensuring that the space is safe for them and our staff and representatives are safe to be around children. There can be a risk to participating in research processes, and it's vital to assess this in advance to mitigate any risk.
- **Costs** will include food, travel, the time of a facilitator, partner, translator, stationery, photographer, note taker and any other staff involved.
- **Build the research into the programme cycle.** Ideally, the research will be on an area that the community group have been previously discussing. This ensures continuity with the group and 'adds' to existing strategies of work rather than introducing new ones, which means that advocacy and campaign strategies are more likely to build up over time.
- **Voice.** Consider also that a focus group may not be the best way to solicit minorities' views, as the loudest in the groups are likely to dominate, even where groups have been disaggregated. Individual interviews can usefully accompany groups. To elicit creative responses, it may be important to consider a particularly creative

methodology for the facilitator.

- **Informed consent and data.** Check you've got your consent in place. once it is, then consider how you record interviews and focus groups. Recording the group is essential and apps can be downloaded onto a phone to do this. A transcript may be useful. As a rule of thumb, it takes double the time to transcribe as it does to hold the interview/focus group. For the UK the costs might be from £200 a day.
- **Triggering** some questions may trigger an unwelcome emotional response from participants including retraumatization of participants who are survivors of violence. Aftercare support must be in place before any questions are asked; participants must be made aware of this beforehand, and informed that some questions may be triggering so they can refuse to answer, ask for a break, seek support etc.⁴⁴

Power and subjectivities of people involved in research:

Every person involved in a research process, whatever their role title and whichever organisation (or not) they are from, occupies a place within the socio-economic and political context of the research. Each person's 'subjectivities' (i.e. their beliefs and levels of power) can affect the research process and the others involved. Feminists have been at the forefront of calling on research teams to be self-reflexive about and mitigate these subjectivities throughout the research cycle.⁴⁵

The way these subjectivities can impact the research include:

43. Ruth Kelly, *Qualitative Methodologies and Focus Groups MA Quads Summative Essay*, 2016.
44. See: *WHO Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies*, WHO, 2007 and ActionAid's 'Tips for FGD [link: Lois]. Also; https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Linda_Bartolomei/publication/249295232_%27Stop_Stealing_Our_Stories%27_The_Ethics_of_Research_with_Vulnerable_Groups/links/5643fc1708ae451880a6f1c2.pdf
45. Anwar, N.H. & Viqar, S. 2016, *Research assistants, reflexivity and the politics of fieldwork in urban Pakistan*. *Area*, 49 (1); Bott, E., 2010, *Favourites and others: reflexivity and the shaping of subjectivities and data in qualitative research*. *Qualitative Research*, 10 (2); Sawas, A. Castan-Broto, V., Anwar, N.H. & Rehman, A., 2019, *Intersectional coproduction and infrastructural violence: experiences from Pakistan*. *Community Development Journal*, bsc027. ; Caretta, M.A. () *Situated knowledge in cross-cultural, cross-language research: a collaborative reflexive analysis of researcher, assistant and participant subjectivities*. *Qualitative Research*, 15 (4).

- **Reproducing power dynamics** (for example gender norms, stereotypes about minorities, exacerbating conflict, or emphasising power hierarchies between some of those involved (e.g. by making a distinction between participants and researchers)). This may manifest through the ways in which the group physically interacts (e.g. in focus groups, it is not uncommon to see facilitators sitting in a chair with other participants on the floor – which is a form of symbolic power); the ways in which the questions are framed, and how facilitators respond to answers; and the ways in which the answers are interpreted. This has negative impacts for the quality of the data as well as the wellbeing of all involved.
- **When participants experience a process of this nature**, it may put them at risk of being traumatised by the experience; it may affect how truthful their answers may be, and it may affect their decision to participate in future research.
- **The data ultimately affects the quality of the research**, so it is critical to acknowledge and mitigate power and subjectivities as much as possible during the research process. If this is not practised, there is further potential for harm to rightsholders and the institutions involved by producing analysis that is not reliable and perhaps even perpetuating inaccurate and/or harmful stereotypes about people.

One study from Nepal (ActionAid, 2013), found that male survey interviewers perceived that asking women about their experiences with family planning would be violating the gender norms. They also perceived the act of asking these questions as making sexual advances and feared retribution from participants' husbands. Gender matching is found to be effective in many settings, because it may overcome some power dynamics that can occur (e.g. patriarchal) and may offer a more comfortable environment for women to speak openly and honestly. This

is not guaranteed and is context specific, so in all contexts the research team will need to have a reflexive deliberation about the most ethical approach in that context. This must include reflecting on and confronting gender norms as a part of their intersectional experiences of privilege and oppression.⁴⁶

Largely then, we suggest that:

1. Training in feminist research methods is an essential part of any project. This training can be delivered in multiple ways including through workshops, webinars, scenario exercises or prescribed readings. The selection and level of training of the research participants may depend on: a) the *what* of research (or whether the topic is general [e.g. general attitudes on health] or sensitive in nature [e.g. attitudes on sexual health]); b) who the research participants are (hegemonic or marginalised/vulnerable groups) and; c) the *social, economic and political context* of the research.
2. In some cases, where a facilitator or interviewer is required, it can help to have two of different backgrounds (age, gender, ethnicity). This approach, however, must be properly backed by clarity in the roles and responsibilities of each (i.e. who speaks, who takes notes, whether the second researcher asks supplementary questions or not etc).
3. Finally, trust between all members of the team is key in any research. In some contexts, where a facilitator or interviewer is required, participants may be less comfortable in responding to or engaging with 'one of their own', than with strangers. In other cases, it may be the opposite; where participants view strangers with distrust impacting the quality of participation. The research team should deliberate and reflect on the most appropriate approach, taking into account the context.

46. Lefkowich, M., 2019, *When Women Study Men: Gendered Implications for Qualitative Research*. Journal of Qualitative Research.

Fieldwork notes

Ethnographic research, and particularly the aspect of it known as participant observation, where the researcher takes time to observe what is happening with a group of people and records these observations, can be a key resource. Regardless of your research methodology, it may be useful to have such recordings of the process. This is because they will add a different perspective to your analysis. For example, did a participant look awkward when they responded to a particular question? Did they avert their eyes at any stage? This knowledge might tell us more about what is going on.⁴⁷

Taking photos

Instrumental use of images to persuade and convince decision makers have historically been extremely problematic as – aside from potentially putting the subject at risk - they can perpetrate the narrative that particular people, especially marginalised people from the global south, are victims. It can also prioritise some perspectives over others. In addition, the process of gathering stories can be extremely distressing for individuals concerned (as well as for researchers and research teams). As we've mentioned earlier, there are ethical issues in asking potentially vulnerable marginalised people to revisit their experiences as it may trigger unwelcome thoughts and emotions.

However, there are ways that photos can be taken which is more aligned with a feminist approach.⁴⁸

One way is to use participatory photography. This can be extremely empowering for those involved, but also poses some risks.⁴⁹ Otherwise:

- Commission, where possible, local photographers (prioritising those from more marginalised groups)
- Ensure informed consent. The consent form, and case study, video and photography guidance is [here](#).
- Ideally photos will be taken once trust has been built up between the photographer and the 'photographed', who may play an active part in what the photo looks and feels like – particularly when a digital camera is used
- Take photos on a proper camera rather than a phone where possible as the quality can be much better.
- As per the WHO guidelines, support mechanisms should be in place before the research starts.⁵⁰
- Have a look at the [image guidelines](#) for further advice.
- Ensure that the photography experience is positive for the 'subject' - they should have choice around how they are photographed in a way which shows their strengths and qualities (for example, when writing about VAWG, the subjects should not be shown as victims).

Check list for managing the research process

Have you:

- Got consent for any images used?
- Considered power dynamics, budget and time when planning your focus groups?

47. See: Skodal & Cornish, 2015, *Qualitative Research for Development*, and work on ethnography by Professor Lila Abu Lughoud, which explores the dynamics of doing ethnographic work with women in the global south E.g. (1990). [Can there be a feminist ethnography? Women and Performance](#), 5.; (2016) [Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society](#); (2008) [Writing women's worlds: Bedouin stories](#).

48. See: Photography Ethics Centre, 2018 [Understanding photography ethics in social research](#);

49. Prins, E., 2010, Participatory photography: A tool for empowerment or surveillance? *Action Research*, 8: 426.; Oliveira, E. & Vearey, J., 2015, Images of Place: Visuals from Migrant Women Sex Workers in South Africa. *Medical Anthropology*, 34:4,

50. See: WHO, 2007, *Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies*.

STEP SEVEN: ANALYSIS



Activists march through the streets demanding equality and an end to homophobia and prejudice during the annual Soweto Pride, South Africa. PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Ensuring good quality evidence & statistics

All arguments and claims made in an ActionAid publication must be appropriately supported by solid evidence and careful analysis. Consider where your data is coming from: are you seeking to draw out analysis from feminists from the global south or are you sticking to the same mainstream, northern, white and male data sources? Locate and cite the *original* source for widely quoted statistics and facts. Statistics cannot be taken out of context as it can change their meaning. It is the responsibility of the project manager to ensure that facts, names, mathematical calculations etc. have been double-checked by someone other than the author. Triangulation – the technique of increasing reliability through using more than one way of gathering the same information can increase accuracy. You may consider having regular ‘sense checks’ with project

members, including research assistants who tend to be the ones who spend the most time conducting the research itself.

You can also test validity as an ongoing part of your reflection-action research cycle. Consider including participatory data analysis methods, in a case where analysis is done by individuals – they need to share and validate the findings with the community that has shared the data.

Data analysis

Given we are treating our participatory methodology data collection as evidence, we need to record it in a rigorous way, drawing on a feminist analysis and paying attention to any risks of harm to participants during the research process. This means transcribing and coding interview and focus group data; and grouping, coding, consolidation and data visualisation of other data.

Before beginning the analysis process it is important to assess roles and responsibilities. Who will be part of the analysis? What steps are included in the process? How can the process be made truly participatory and democratic? How will the analysis be presented?

First of all prepare your data, bringing together all relevant information collected in the form of interviews and FGD responses, pictures, videos, quotes and self reflection notes.

It is important to acknowledge, self-reflect on and mitigate potential bias in the analysis and interpretation of data. As mentioned earlier – all people involved in the research have subjectivities which can affect how they understand, process and analyse data. Some of the ways this can manifest

include: people are likely to be selective about what they choose to tell about their experiences - especially of inequalities; and group interviews have a tendency to reproduce societal power dynamics and norms, and emphasise the views of dominant members of the group. Extreme instances that are widely known about in communities may be reported by many individuals, and so may gain prominence in the data though they may be rare. In contrast, some structural inequalities or marginalisations may be taken for granted and thus excluded from the data collection and analysis processes. Therefore, it is important to constantly bring in perspectives from researcher's self-reflection notes or journals where suitable to fill in any data gaps through observational and experiential insights. This would include information such as the socio-political analysis of where the research is conducted, demographic and geographic information, as well as any other relevant background information on the community and participants.

Historically, in many research disciplines, analysis would take place following data collection. While this may have its advantages in terms of efficiency, this is also creating a distance between those 'doing' research and research 'subjects' as well as between the context and the data. Two ways to mitigate for potential bias are by making the analysis **ongoing** and **participatory**. There are many ways to do this, and this depends on what is pragmatic. However, we emphasise that finding time for ongoing and participatory analysis be a priority. For example:

- Having weekly reflection and analysis sessions between the teams involved. These sessions will review the data collected during that week, and all participants will discuss what they interpret this data as meaning. The group will then discuss if this interpretation resonates, or if personal bias may have affected the interpretation. The group come to a decision on analysis and write it up. This then provides ongoing analysis and writing, while the experience of conducting the research itself is fresh in mind.
- Developing procedures for cross-checking between the research team (including implementing partners and communities), for example through a workshop setting.
- Including individual stories and quotes to help demonstrate and shed light on the lived realities of the participant group. All those involved in the research process can be part of selecting those stories that are most significant and should be highlighted in the research i.e those they would like the external audience to read.
- Including a continuous reflection on the existing power dynamics both internally within the research process, but also externally in the community and within lives of respondents. Factoring in a power analysis will help draw deeper insights into the underlying causes of power imbalances and how respondents continue to negotiate with powerholders. This may include questions such as; who takes decisions? does everyone have the space to be involved in the process? how can everyone's perspectives be heard? how were disagreements dealt with?

Ongoing analysis would not replace an overall analysis session when all data is collected.

Like any mode of analysis, there still remains the possibility to over-interpret or to over-generalise on the basis of limited information, or insufficient contextualisation of findings. Many authors choose to acknowledge this in the writing up of the analysis, which also points to possible alternative interpretations of the data, since it is never possible to eradicate all bias.

It is important to keep all analysis in a file for at least 3 years after the project, to comply with GDPR requirements. This is also important in case anyone external chooses to challenge the data and the analysis. See the [Reflection-Action website](#) for more resources on analysis

Researcher well being

Analysis can also be a difficult process for all members of the research team as they try to make sense of the data and listen to stories that bring out harsh realities, especially those where trauma and violence is involved. It may remind researchers of where they may have been subjected to violence and trauma, or trigger negative emotions. It is essential to have mechanisms in place to support all research participants to deal with such circumstances either individually or collectively.⁵¹

Check list for analysis

Have you:

- Assessed how to ensure your data is rigorous, from a feminist ideology and analysed thoroughly?
- Developed a system to ensure ongoing self- and collective- reflexivity of subjectivities that may bias the data analysis and/or the writing up of the results?
- Considered a method of analysis that is ongoing and participatory?
- Acknowledged potential bias and steps taken to mitigate it in the write-ups?
- Developed a secure system to store the data in case the analysis is challenged and an external source requests to view it?

51. See ActionAid's Notes on Researcher Wellbeing, Distress Protocol and SHEA & Safeguarding guidelines. Here: <https://actionaidglobal.sharepoint.com/sites/Research>

STEP EIGHT: GENERATING RESEARCH PRODUCTS



Women engaged in filling time diary collection in Banke, Nepal, hold calendars developed. PHOTO: ACTIONAID

Ideally you will have several different products, each representing your evidence in a different way, to reach different audiences (see page 42). This section deals with traditional reports.

Executive summary

Any report of more than 8 pages should include an executive summary that recaps the main arguments of the paper and lists the key recommendations. It should be compelling and lure the reader into reading the whole report. At most, 10% of the length of the main text is a good guide for length. Consider having a summary document, outlining key learnings and recommendations, as a stand alone piece. This could be translated and is an easy way for readers to access the knowledge.

Recommendations

All reports should include a ‘Recommendations’ section; usually this will form part of the conclusion. This is in addition to the list of recommendations included in the executive summary at the start. Recommendations must say who needs to take what action by when and at what cost.

References

All reports must include a full bibliography listing the author, date and title of all sources cited in the text. See earlier note on Web sources - these should include the date the site was accessed. Please refer to the [ActionAid style guidelines](#).

Libel proofing

If the publication exposes ActionAid to libel risk (for instance if it makes allegations against companies or individuals that could damage their reputation), higher standards of evidence and research must be met, and the final draft must be checked by an experienced libel lawyer. We have some lawyers who are able to provide pro bono support, but otherwise this will often cost £100 per hour and above. Please see the [ActionAid libel checklist](#) and the internal [detailed guidance](#) for advice, and contact the research advisor for pro bono application forms. Note that even if individuals and companies aren’t named, if they can be easily identified, it’s libellous. If there’s any risk, consider asking someone to libel check.

Peer review (see previous entry)

Inclusive acknowledgements & author byline

Remember to acknowledge research participants, partners, editors, designers etc. We do not give author bylines to members of staff; author credit (as well as copyright) goes to ActionAid and research participants, and not to individuals. Individuals' contributions can be recognised in an Acknowledgements section. However, exceptions are made; in some cases, the report would have greater impact on the audience if the lead researchers were named. For example, if there was an academic audience and if the researcher was well known and respected. On such an occasion you may want to add a **management summary** to the report. This would highlight the management response to the evidence and suggestions generated.

Branding

Branding is a challenging issue from a feminist perspective since by putting its name to a publication, ActionAid may be perceived to be taking voice and ownership over the analysis therein, which is jointly developed. Ultimately branding helps with fundraising. And yet ActionAid as a federation can use its legitimate power to influence and shift power. ActionAid does choose to put its brand on publications, alongside partners and acknowledges all research participants within the front cover. ActionAid's branding guidelines are [here](#).

Printing

In most cases, your audiences will read any written output online so printing a long report is a waste

of resources. Remember large PDF files will limit your audience considerably – especially where connections are unreliable. A 4Mb file, for instance, will take someone on a dial-up connection 15 minutes to download and could lead to timeouts. Consider carefully how to ensure that research participants access the end product(s).

Editing

Ensure your copy editor is alerted well in advance and share [ActionAid style guidelines](#) and [branding guidelines](#) with them. Budget for the copy editor to look over the designed copy as mistakes can creep in when it gets to design, especially around footnotes.

Sign off

[See page 26]

Check list for writing different research products

Have you:

- Given your editor and designer the [ActionAid style & branding guidelines](#)?
- Go your report checked for libel?
- Have you got sign off on your report?
- Acknowledged all research participants?
- Applied appropriate branding?



Interviews with Abishyize women's group, Rwanda. PHOTO: JANE LENNON/ACTIONAID

STEP NINE: REFLECTION ON FINDINGS WITH PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER KEY GROUPS OF RIGHTS HOLDERS

Reflection with stakeholders / validation workshop

Participatory and inclusive research should involve reflection-action with all research participants at all stages of the research process. However, most research processes have some sort of 'end point',

where evidence has been gathered and jointly analysed, potentially for some external moment. Before this stage, it's important to hold a validation and reflection workshop with all involved stakeholders where you can discuss analysis, make any tweaks and share any other analysis that might have emerged from other places, such as from other countries, or a cross country statistical analysis. Consider how you are communicating this accessibly to all those involved i.e. through different (translated) content.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be part of your ongoing reflection-action processes. However, it'll be more formalised at the end of the research process. You will have already laid out the evaluation criteria at the beginning of the exercise. At the same time as the final reflection you might wish to have a meeting with research participants to find out whether the

research met its objectives; was there a feminist analysis? Did it draw on intersectionality? Did it meet the principles of the ActionAid Research Signature? What were the challenges? How did you overcome them? Even if it didn't meet its objectives, can the evidence be used, or the process be learnt from in different ways? Document institutional learnings and share these with a webinar to ActionAid staff and partners.

Check list for reflection and evaluation

Have you:

- Used the Research Signature to assess and evaluate your research?
- Given all research participants the opportunity to engage with reflection and action planning around a near final product?
- Shared the final product internally with a webinar to staff and have you emailed internal.comms@actionaid.org for guidance on how to share internally?

Further reading

ActionAid, 2006; *Power, Inclusion and Rights based Approaches, the ActionAid Gender Equality and RBA Resource Kit*. See: www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/gender_equality_resource_kit_-_2006.doc

ActionAid, 2013; *Communication and Power*. See: <http://www.participatorymethods.org/resource/communication-and-power-reflect-practical-resource-materials>

ActionAid, Curtin University & University of Sydney, 2014; *Transitional Justice for Women Handbook series*, 2014. See: <http://www.justiceforwomen.net.au/handbooks.html>

ActionAid, Oxfam & IDS, 2015; *Redistributing care work for gender equality and justice, a training curriculum*. See: http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/redistributing_care_work_final_0.pdf

ActionAid, 2016; *Tax Power campaign, Reflection-Action Toolkit*. See: <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/tax-power-campaign-reflection-action-toolkit>

ActionAid, 2016; *Women's Rights and HRBA Training Curriculum*. See: <https://actionaid.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Womens-Rights-and-HRBA-Training-Curriculum-1.pdf>

Axinn, WG; 1991; *The influence of interviewer sex on responses to sensitive questions in Nepal*. Soc Sci Res. 1991;20:303-18.

Berman, Gabrielle; Hart, Jason; O'Mathúna, Dónal; Mattellone, Erica; Potts, Alina; O'Kane, Clare; Shusterman, Jeremy; Tanner, Thomas., 2016; *What We Know about Ethical Research Involving Children in Humanitarian Settings: An overview of principles, the literature and case studies*, *Innocenti Working Papers* no. 2016_18 , UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence. See: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/849-what-we-know-about-ethical-research-involving-children-in-humanitarian-settings-an.html>

Bauer, Martin W., and George Gaskell, eds., 2000: *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook for social research*. Sage

Chakma, Trimita, .2016: *An effective framework for Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR): An effective framework for empowering grassroots women & strengthening feminist movements in Asia Pacific*. Asian Journal of Women's Studies Asian Journal of Women's Studies Volume 22, Issue 2. Pages 165 -173.

Christian Aid, 2017; *Toolkit for setting up relationships between NGOs/Academics: Rethinking Research Partnerships consortium guide*: https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-10/discussion-guide-ngo-academic-research-oct2017_0.pdf

Kelly, R, 2016; *Qualitative Methodologies and Focus Groups MA Quals Summative Essay*,

Kelly, R , 2019: *Translating rights and articulating alternatives: rights-based approaches in ActionAid's work on unpaid care*, The International Journal of Human Rights, 23:5, 862-879, 2019. See: DOI: 10.1080/13642987.2017.1314646

Kovdal, Morten, & Flora Cornish, 2016; *Qualitative Research for Development*, Practical Action Publishing,

Krueger, Richard A., and Mary Anne Casey, 2014; *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Sage publications, 2014.

Lokot, Michelle, 2019; *The space between us: feminist values and humanitarian power dynamics in research with refugees*, Gender & Development, 27:3, 467-484, See: DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2019.1664046

Mancini & Van Klasen, 2006; *Critical Webs of Power & Change*, ActionAid. See : http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/critical_webs_of_power_and_change_-_summary_booklet.pdf

Nedelec, Joseph L. *A multi-level analysis of the effect of interviewer characteristics on survey respondents' reports of sensitive topics. Personality and Individual Differences* 107 (2017): 96-101

Quay, Isadora., 2019 *Rapid Gender Analysis and its use in crises: from zero to fifty in five years*, Gender & Development, 27:2, 221-236, See: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2019.1615282>

Saferworld, International Alert, Conciliation Resources., 2019; *Doing research in conflict settings: gender mainstreaming and ethics*. See: <http://www.c-r.org/resource/doing-research-conflict-settings>

What Works & the Global Women's Institute, 2019; *Research to Action Toolkit; VAWG in Conflict and Humanitarian Settings*. See: <https://www.whatworks.co.za/resources/reports/item/682-research-to-action-toolkit-vawg-in-conflict-and-humanitarian-settings>

Online:

ActionAid's online portal of methodologies, the *Reflection-Action* website: <http://www.networkedtoolbox.com/> soon to be at <http://www.reflectionaction.org>

The Institute of Development Studies catalogue of resources <https://www.participatorymethods.org/>

Gender analysis in conflict: <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/in-practice/rapid-gender-analysis>

ANNEX: FUNDRAISING FOR ACTIONAID RESEARCH

Fundraising for research

There is funding out there. Money that used to only be available to academics has now opened to NGOs because of an emphasis on 'pathways to impact' (an ActionAid strength). Broadly there are different types of funding:

- Institutions such as EU/DFID. For example, the UK GCRF is £1.5 billion funding mediated through research institutes, over 5 years. It is likely to be repeated and has an emphasis on partnership.
- Foundations [who we can tap for independent research or for research with programmes]
- Individuals

Funding mechanisms may reproduce patriarchy and colonialism; It is important to have feminist analysis on the funding that is available. Some of the sources are patriarchal and perpetrate racism and colonialism and the hierarchy of academic research. ActionAid should screen donors in the same way that fundraising colleagues screen for programmes. The partnership and inception workshop ideas in the guidelines above should help with securing likeminded partners.

There is demand/need for research. Research evidence that we base policy on is very slender (i.e. one study in one region in one country) and this is of concern to policy makers as there are huge aid budgets attached. This absence of research data is a space ActionAid can fill.

Know ActionAid's niche

ActionAid has a strong narrative we can use when we are talking to donors; both for our potential as a research partner and as a funding recipient. We have a unique research niche. A research strategy, ActionAid Research Signature, rootedness in 45 countries, drawing on intersectional feminism, and a history of different research relationships and models to draw from. Amongst other things we are respected for our participatory research (our Reflect methodology is well respected) and for investigative research (our tax research).

Identify funds & write an effective proposal

- **Explore different academic disciplines.** Economics-focused work will go to more specialised organisations and is highly competitive. Arts and humanities tend to be under subscribed and there's an opportunity to do some really interesting research. For example, the Arts and Activism work in ActionAid Uganda and Bangladesh is funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.
- **Overbudget academic time.** There's financial issues around including NGOs in fundraising for academic research calls. Europe-based academics cost projects a huge amount and the indirect costs universities have to take as

overheads are extremely high. This may leave less of the pot to NGOs. There are ways around this. For example, over budget for academic's time: it will be expected that academic costs will be high. The money can then be used for ActionAid and partners' work

- **Say what donors want to hear.** Donors really like pilots and building on pilots so in each bid we have to emphasize the 'new' and 'innovative' even if it is building on an older piece of work.
- **Use the right language.** Tell a good story, get a good idea of what you want to achieve but pitch it in a story-telling way in the light of the donor priorities and language (for example, talking about 'impact', 'global challenges', 'co creation of knowledge' etc)
- **Target the right funds/donors.** Some donors (i.e Leverhulme) are interested in academic research; they want to see a recipient find a gap in the literature. Other funds are different. For example, DFID & GCRF want the silver bullet... solution-based and simple... where the recipient tests an approach and gives an answer. Being aware of the donor mindset is really important. ActionAid is working on complexity yet we need to show we are exploring an astute political solution.
- **Offer in kind funding.** Consider adding staff time and planning time as well as hosting researchers, training activists or staff as researchers.
- **Think research.** Consider adding research to any programming fundraising and consider adding activism to any research funding.
- **Build on M&E funding.** Build in a research funding element to an M&E proposal, which will make the most of the opportunity for shifting power and for learning.
- **Be ready.** Have a research funding proposal ready to go and tailor/tweak it to opportunities.
- **Be persistent.** Most GCRF bids have a success rate of under 10%. Keep applying.
- Use ActionAid's **Contract Management System**. Concepts seeking funding need to be logged on the *Ideas* page of the Contract Management System. It's simple and quick and your local Super User can help you.: CMSSupport@actionaid.org

Working in partnership for effective fundraising

- Understand the pros and cons. There are advantages for research institutes to working with NGOs as it helps to prove the pathways for impact. However, academics can be wary; they may consider NGOs as too removed from grass roots, or as having a predetermined agenda. Academic research should uncover findings rather than be about proving what we already know.
- Be mindful of power. There are advantages for NGOs to working with academics because of the opportunity for funding access, peer review or research rigour, as well as a different audience and reach. However, NGOs have to be mindful of historical and current power dynamics when exploring a relationship. NGOs can play a role to ensure that academic funding is more practical and mindful of power. ActionAid UK is working with others to try to ensure UK funding has a more collaborative approach.
- Carefully consider your academic partners. Some institutions such as IDS have a similar vision to ActionAid's. Otherwise, sometimes it is better to work with one trusted academic rather than a whole research institute.
- Share a political vision with your partners. It's important to be very upfront about the value of research and the vision for research. Have a shared understanding.
- Invest in the partnership take time to build a relationship.
- Understand different motivations. Do they want a partnership or a consultancy contract?

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COVER PHOTO: Zandile Mabaso is a member of the Rainbow Activist Alliance, a youth movement from for young black Lesbian women which is supported by ActionAid South Africa. CREDIT: COLLEN MFAZWE.

ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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