

YOUTH VOICES



Save the Children



Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
معهد عصام فارس للسياسات العامة والشؤون الدولية

**Participatory action research
with adolescents affected
by the Syria crisis
in Egypt and Lebanon**

LESSONS LEARNED REPORT AND 'HOW TO' GUIDE

YOUTH VOICES

**Participatory action research with
adolescents affected by the Syria crisis
in Egypt and Lebanon**

**LESSONS LEARNED REPORT
AND 'HOW TO' GUIDE**

Every child has the right to a future. Save the Children works around the world to give children a healthy start in life, and the chance to learn and to be safe. We do whatever it takes to get children the things they need – every day and in times of crisis.

The Youth Voices project was funded by the Save the Children Syria Pool Fund

For additional information about the project, please contact: Natalia Tapies, Regional Senior Adviser Adolescents & Youth, Save the Children Middle East and Eastern Europe Regional Office. Email: natalia.tapies@savethechildren.org

Published by Save the Children
savethechildren.net

First published 2018

© Save the Children 2018

This publication may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full.

Typeset by GrasshopperDesign.net

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms	v
Glossary of key terms	vi
Introduction	viii
Section 1 What is participatory action research?	1
1.1 What is participatory action research (PAR)?	1
1.2 Why use PAR with adolescents and youth?	1
1.3 Why implement adolescent- and youth-led PAR in a humanitarian context?	2
1.4 Youth Voices: project structure and phases	2
Section 2 Youth Voices in Egypt and Lebanon: lessons learned and recommendations	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Lessons learned workshop	6
2.3 Lessons learned in each project phase	9
Management/governance	37
Working with adolescent girls	39
Sustainability	40
Section 3 ‘How to’ guide	42
Introduction	42
3.1 Planning	43
3.2 Outreach and engagement	47
3.3 Capacity strengthening/training	48
3.4 Selecting a research topic	51
3.5 Conducting the research	53
3.6 Analysing the findings	54
3.7 Adolescent- and youth-led initiatives	55
3.8 Documentation	57
3.9 Working with adolescent girls	58
3.10 Implementation – key questions to consider	59
Conclusion	60

Annexes	61
Annex 1: PAR research tools	61
Annex 2: PAR data analysis tools	63
Annex 3: Principles of research ethics	65
Annex 4: Sample planning meeting agenda	66
Annex 5: Sample documentation plan – recommended content and structure	69
Annex 6: Sample media release form	75

Abbreviations and acronyms

AUB	American University of Beirut
CBO	Community-based organisation
CO	Country Office
FGD	Focus group discussion
IFI	Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
MEEE	Middle East and Eastern Europe
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
PAR	Participatory action research

Glossary of key terms

Adolescents: Save the Children in the region defines adolescents as children who are beginning the developmental transition from childhood to adulthood. Although Save the Children chooses not to define a fixed age range, due to contextual differences and the tremendous amount of diversity within this developmental period, an indicative range is 10 to 19 years old.¹

Documentation plan: The documentation plan was designed to guide project participants and project teams to systematically capture each step of the project and any lessons learned.

Participatory action research (PAR)

Participatory: This means that the people who want or need changes made in their surroundings or situations take part in making those changes.² Participatory tools are people-based and evidence-based, mobilising and bringing together perspectives through dialogue, critical reflection and action.³

Action: This is the part that really makes PAR different from other types of research. It means that at the end of the research and discussions, something happens. The information is not only recorded, but also moves people to some sort of activity.⁴

Research: This is a systematic, careful investigation or exploration of a topic of interest in order to determine facts or knowledge about it.⁵ PAR researchers use both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, and the research methods used can vary significantly with each PAR project.

Qualitative research: Examples of qualitative techniques used in Youth Voices include interviews, observation and focus group discussions.

Quantitative research: Examples of quantitative techniques used in Youth Voices include surveys and questionnaires.

Reference Group: The Reference Group for Youth Voices was established to share lessons learned between countries and field sites. The Reference Group meets monthly with the participation of Save the Children staff in different sectors in Egypt and Lebanon, in the Regional Office and from the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI).

¹ Save the Children Middle East and Eurasia. (2015). *Vision, Focus and Framework for Adolescents and Youth: 2015–2020*. p. 2

² UNICEF. (2004). *PAR Guide: Promoting the Participation, Learning and Action of Young People*. p. 8

³ Chevalier, J. M. and Buckles, D. J. (2013). *Handbook for participatory action research, planning and evaluation. SAS2 Dialogue*. Retrieved from www.participatoryactionresearch.net

⁴ UNICEF Jamaica. (2004). *PAR Guide: Promoting the Participation, Learning and Action of Young People*. p. 8

⁵ Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. (2015). *Training Manual on Participatory Action Research Tools: A Guide for Youth Facilitators' and Research Partner's Training*. p. 7

Research ethics: These are the principles and rules that guide the way people should be treated when they are participants in a research process or project.⁶ See Annex 3 for more information about research ethics and PAR.

Research partners: In Youth Voices, research partners were adolescents aged between 12 and 18 years old, from both refugee and host communities. Equipped with research and project planning skills, this group took the lead on identifying key issues facing adolescents in their communities by utilising a range of research techniques, and through own analysis of their findings, generating practical ideas to respond to those issues.

Stakeholder: A stakeholder is a person or group that has an investment, share, or interest in an entity, such as a business, community or organisation.⁷ Within Youth Voices, for example, this included parents and caregivers, other adolescents and young people in the community, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community leaders, etc.

Young people: This term refers to both adolescents and youth.

Youth: As with the definition of adolescents, Save the Children's definition of 'youth' varies, depending on context. But broadly speaking, it is understood to refer to people between the ages of 15 and 24, as per the UNICEF definition.

Youth Facilitators: In Youth Voices, Youth Facilitators were young people aged between 18 and 22 years old from both refugee and host communities. Along with the project staff, they were trained by the professional research team from the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) to deliver training and provide support and coaching for the adolescent research partners in the design of a research project using PAR tools.

⁶ Advancement Project – Healthy City Community Research Lab. (2011). *A Short Guide to Community Based Participatory Action Research*. p. 17

⁷ *ibid.*

Introduction

Save the Children, in partnership with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), implemented a project using participatory action research with adolescents affected by the Syria crisis in Egypt and Lebanon. The project built on the work initiated through youth consultations in Lebanon in late 2014, and with the piloting of the 'I'm Here' approach⁸ with Syrian adolescent girls in Egypt in early 2015. The project started in September 2015, and was implemented in four locations in Lebanon and Egypt over a period of 16 months.

The project had the following objectives:

- to generate credible evidence and critical learning on the situation of Syrian and host community adolescent girls and boys, through their own eyes and their self-identified responses, to inform programming
- to facilitate opportunities for adolescents to voice their priority concerns and shape responses
- to assess whether participatory action research (PAR) is an appropriate tool to work with adolescents in humanitarian contexts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Learning from this project has benefits at many levels

Learning from this project has benefits at many levels: Lebanon and Egypt Country Offices are utilising the lessons from this pilot project to strengthen existing programming and to pilot new programming with adolescents within existing initiatives. At regional level, the pilot project has contributed to learning on effective approaches to working with adolescents and youth in humanitarian crises, which is a priority for Save the Children in the MENA region. It is also contributing to regional learning on engaging adolescent girls in emergencies, contributing to Save the Children's regional agenda on gender equality.

This report is divided into three sections:

- The first section provides an overview of participatory action research – what it is and how it can be applied in work with adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts.
- The second section summarises Youth Voices, identifies the lessons that have been learned from it, and highlights key recommendations for each phase of the project.
- The third section is a 'how to' guide that draws on experiences from the Egyptian and Lebanese contexts in the pilot project to provide practical, user-friendly guidance for anyone considering introducing the PAR approach to their work with adolescents and youth in a humanitarian context.

In the annexes, a range of tools and resources developed during Youth Voices has been made available for use and adaptation.

⁸ The 'I'm Here' toolkit is available at <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/images/zdocs/I-m-Here-report-FINAL.pdf>

SECTION 1

What is participatory action research?

1.1 What is participatory action research (PAR)?⁹

PAR is collaborative research, education and action used to gather information to use for change on social or environmental issues. It involves people who are concerned about or affected by an issue taking a leading role in producing and using knowledge about it.

PAR is an *approach* to research, not a research method. It is a set of principles and practices for originating, designing, conducting, analysing and acting on a piece of research. Within PAR projects, many different methods can be used, including, for example, group discussions, interviews, diagramming, video, photography, art, surveys and mapping.

1.2 Why use PAR with adolescents and youth?

With youth-led participatory action research, you can:¹⁰

- **Redefine** who has the expertise to produce knowledge in our world – in other words, it is not only professional adult researchers but young people who are living the issues they are studying. As Ozer explains, “Key expertise is viewed as residing within marginalised youth and others who directly experience the research ‘topics’ in their lives but have historically been the objects rather than subjects of research.” Young people are identified as the experts who ‘can create knowledge leading to empowerment and social justice’.¹¹
- **Provide** skills in inquiry, evidence and presentation that are important to young people’s development as agents of positive change in their communities.
- **Generate** findings that provide insights into issues faced by young people that they themselves experience, as well as the resources that matter in helping solve those issues.
- **Promote** young people’s socio-political development and psychological empowerment, so that they understand the roots of problems facing their communities, and have the skills and motivation to take action.
- **Evaluate** programmes, policies and practices that affect young people.

⁹ Pain, R., Whitman, G., Milledge, D. and Lune Rivers Trust. (2011). *An Introduction to Using PAR as an Approach to Learning, Research and Action*. Durham, UK: The University of Durham. <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/beacon/PARtoolkit.pdf>

¹⁰ YPAR Hub. University of California, Berkeley, and San Francisco Peer Resources, USA. <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/>

¹¹ Ozer, E. J. (2016). *Youth-Led Participatory Action Research*. University of California-Berkeley School of Public Health. In: L. A. Jason and D. S. Glenwick (Eds.). *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch.26.

1.3 Why implement adolescent- and youth-led PAR in a humanitarian context?

PAR is grounded in a rights-based approach with children’s participation being a key principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).¹² Furthermore, a General Comment made in 2009 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on a child’s right to be heard includes a specific section on emergencies: “Children affected by emergencies should be encouraged and enabled to participate in analyzing their situation and prospects. Children’s participation helps them to regain control over their lives, contributes to rehabilitation, develops organisational skills and strengthens a sense of identity.”¹³

As well as the transformative outcomes of participation for children, youth and their communities that can result from the fulfilment of their rights, participation can also have instrumental value for the implementing organisation by improving programme results. For example, as one of the project team reflected in the lessons learned workshop:¹⁴ “PAR has the potential to inform humanitarian programming and help NGOs to do our job better.” In a fast-paced humanitarian context, where resources are often overstretched, this can be crucial for some organisations and donors “to justify staff time and financial resources.”¹⁵

“PAR has the potential to inform humanitarian programming and help NGOs to do our job better”

1.4 Youth Voices: project structure and phases

Core project phases

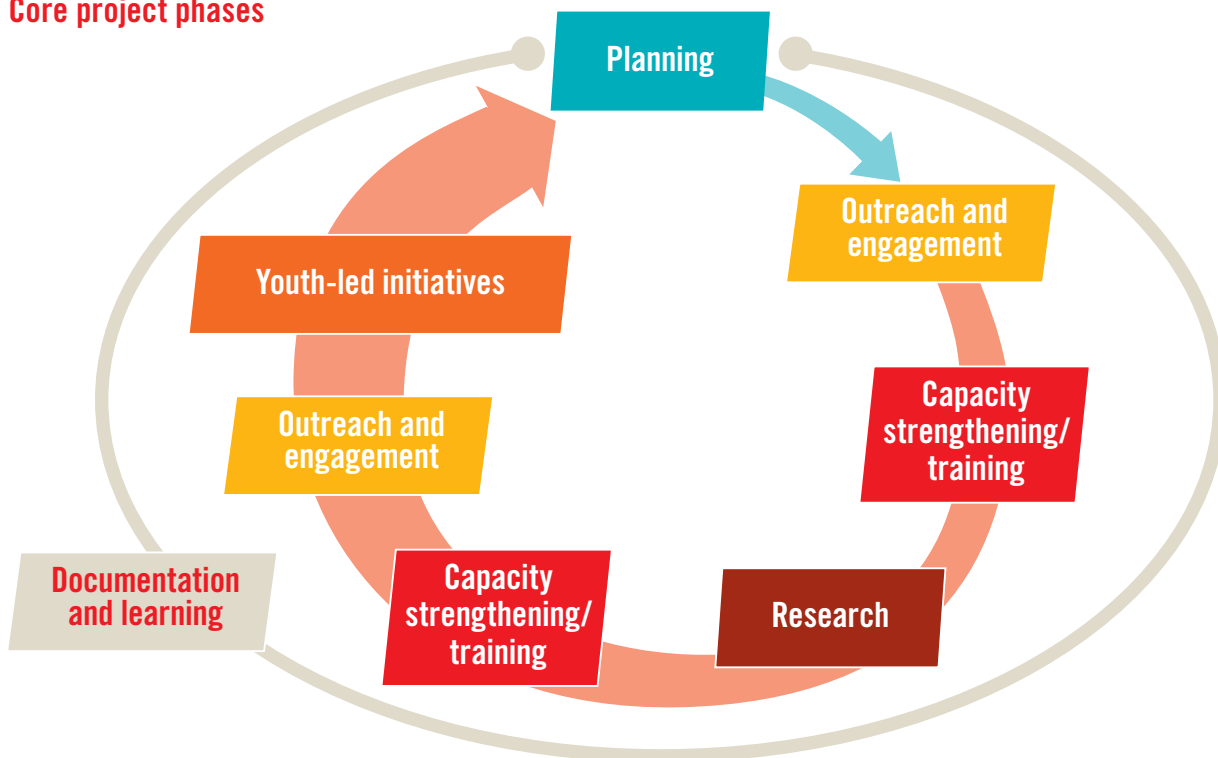


Figure 1: Core project phases

¹² “State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” UNCRC Article 12. <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

¹³ O’Kane, C. (2013). *Guidelines for Children’s Participation in Humanitarian Programming*. London, UK: The Save the Children Fund, p. 11.

¹⁴ Please refer to Section 2 for more details on the lessons learned workshop.

¹⁵ Family Health International. (2008). *Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning and Implementation*. USA: FHI.

Brief summary of each phase

Please refer to Section 3: 'How to' guide for more details on each phase.

Planning

The planning phase of a PAR project is crucial to the success of the entire approach, and includes a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. For example, internally, the Operations Team, other sectors and the Senior Management Team are all familiarised with PAR and with cross-sector/ team working. Externally, adolescents and youth, along with key community stakeholders and leaders, are involved in order to support the sustainability of the project in the long term and also to demonstrate the adolescent- and youth-led approach and community focus which is at the heart of the PAR methodology.

It is at the planning stage that key decisions are made, for example: selection of target groups and locations; identification of key stakeholders and partners; scheduling of initial activities; allocation of resources; management and coordination arrangements; and staff recruitment. The external research partner is also identified to design and deliver training and support on the methodology.

Outreach and engagement

Once the planning phase is complete, outreach and engagement begin in the selected communities. As well as seeking to recruit adolescents and youth for the central research partner and Youth Facilitator roles, the project continues its outreach and sensitisation activities and broadens its engagement with the wider community which it initiated in the planning phase. The wider community includes key stakeholders who might contribute to the PAR project and, of course, 'gatekeepers' such as parents and caregivers whose support is often critical for the engagement and retention of adolescents as research partners.

Capacity strengthening/training

Capacity strengthening in the form of training and coaching takes place throughout a PAR project to ensure that staff, adolescents and youth have an understanding of skills that might be new or unfamiliar to them. Training involves a range of technical PAR topics, including research and analysis tools, research ethics, reflection and evaluation techniques, engaging with stakeholders and project planning. It also involves broader 'life' skills including teamwork, active listening, facilitation, timekeeping and scheduling, negotiation, presentation skills, etc. To ensure an adolescent- and youth-led approach to PAR, staff take on the role of coaches, guides and observers, while Youth Facilitators are trained and supported to facilitate the adolescent research partners to be leaders in the PAR process.

Research

Throughout the research and action phases, adolescents take a *leadership* role, with Youth Facilitators and adult project staff taking on a support role by providing training and coaching. For example, adolescent research partners define the problem or topic to be addressed, select the research methods and tools, conduct the data analysis and interpretation, and decide on the activities that will form the basis of the next phase – ie, the youth-led initiatives.

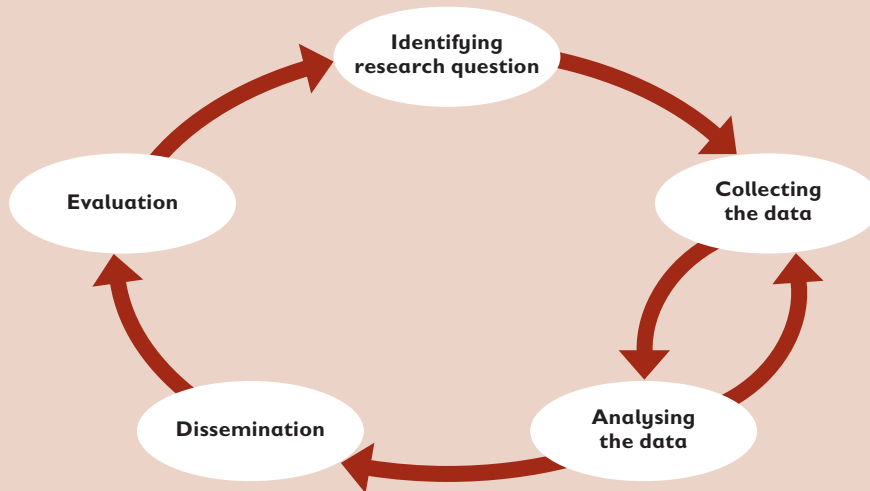


Figure 2: The PAR research phases

The timing of this phase must be flexible, as these skills take time to learn and practise, and the process of data collection and analysis needs to be fluid to allow for follow-up and new data collection if gaps are identified or new issues revealed.

Youth-led initiatives

Based on an analysis of findings from the research phase, the research partners review and prioritise the issues they have identified. They determine the action they wish to take in their community to tackle the issue and consider its feasibility based on resources, time and other contextual factors. Training on project planning is provided and the process of planning, implementation and evaluation begins, where possible with the involvement of key stakeholders in the community.

Documentation and learning

In partnership with the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) team, a documentation plan is developed in the planning phase to structure and guide the systematic capture of data, information and learning throughout the project. This is an ongoing process that requires coordination and commitment, and which strives to place adolescents and youth in the lead as they document their journey through PAR and support the design of tools and systems.

SECTION 2

Youth Voices in Egypt and Lebanon: lessons learned and recommendations

2.1 Introduction

Below is an overview of the Save the Children MENA Participatory Action Research project that was implemented in Egypt and Lebanon with adolescents and youth affected by the Syria crisis.

Youth Voices: facts at a glance

Locations: Egypt – Nasr City and 6th October in Greater Cairo

Lebanon – Mankoubeen (Tripoli); Qab Elias and Majd el Anjar (Bekaa)

Timing: September 2015 – December 2016, with follow-up activities January to June 2017

Participants: Total number of adolescent and youth direct participants was 112:
76 girls and 36 boys

Egypt	Girls	Boys	Nationality
12–17 years old	36	3	Syrian ¹⁶
18–21 years old	21 ¹⁷	0	Syrian and Egyptian

Lebanon	Girls	Boys	Nationality
15–18 years old (Tripoli)	2	16	16 Lebanese, 2 Syrian
14–21 years old (Bekaa)	16	13	5 Lebanese, 24 Syrian
Youth facilitators (21+)	1	4	2 Lebanese, 1 Syrian, 1 Palestinian, 1 unknown

The project was managed and implemented differently in Egypt and in Lebanon.

In Egypt:

- The project decided to focus only on girls, and started with a core team of 18–21-year-old girls who became both facilitators for younger adolescents and research partners themselves.
- A full-time project manager was recruited and appointed to the project, with responsibility for supporting the process, the girls and the documentation requirements.

In Lebanon:

- Both boys and girls were targeted, and four youth aged 21+ took on the role of Youth Facilitators but were not research partners themselves.
- The work was split between various Save the Children teams, with no staff member fully dedicated to the project.

Section 2.3 includes learning from both approaches.

¹⁶ It had been planned to engage Egyptian adolescent research partners in the activities, but only one Egyptian adolescent applied, and she dropped out after one session. As the group had already started to bond, it was decided not to re-open recruitment.

¹⁷ In Egypt, Youth Facilitators were also research partners, providing coaching and support for younger adolescents.

2.2 Lessons learned workshop

A PAR lessons learned workshop was held in Beirut, Lebanon, in November 2016, one month before the closing of Youth Voices. In attendance were the core group that had been working on this project, including youth representatives, staff from Save the Children in Lebanon, Egypt and the Regional Office, IFI and other partners. The workshop was organised so that the wide range of staff and young people involved in the project could identify key lessons from the project.

The objectives of this event were to:

- learn about what worked well and what challenges were faced during planning and implementation
- share experiences and encourage learning between Country Offices and teams
- identify key lessons learned and assess whether participatory action research is an appropriate tool to work with adolescents in a humanitarian context in MENA.

This section is based on the outcomes of this workshop, project reports and interviews with staff. The section is divided into two parts. The first section is a brief summary of some key lessons learned. The second outlines all the identified lessons learned in relation to each project phase, along with recommendations for replication.

Summary of key lessons learned

Suitability of PAR for use with adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts

Learning from this pilot suggests that PAR is an appropriate and beneficial methodology to use with adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts:

- The methodology has many benefits, for example: the findings have greater validity, as they come from young people themselves; knowledge and skills are transferred to young people; young people gain a closer connection to their communities and to each other; young people have a greater sense of self-worth.
- Although the research had limitations in terms of scope and depth, the methodology allowed for reflection and prioritisation of issues by young people – issues that now need to be addressed with programming and follow-up by Save the Children and other actors, thus ensuring the connection between research and programming.
- Engagement with PAR had positive effects on adolescents and youth, as reported by young people. Some of the positive changes they identified include the following:
 - The girls reported that the activities and the project served as an outlet for their creativity and their voices. They also felt the project facilitated integration between the Egyptians and the Syrians, and helped them realise that they are all the same. The project also helped them work together better as a team, and improved collaboration and cooperation between them.
 - Young people appreciated finding someone to listen to them, and to help them solve their problems.
 - One of the adolescent research partners said the project was “like a school”, giving them the opportunity to think and expand their thoughts, and helping them think about how they could solve their own problems.
 - Young people enjoyed the fact that they were contributing to their communities, that community members were responsive and made them feel welcome, and that they had made new friends within their communities.

■ The importance of flexibility

PAR is not static or rigid. Flexibility is key, and continuously assessing progress and the needs of adolescents is crucial for success. For example:

- Capacity-strengthening needs were evolving and it was important to respond to emerging needs.
- Outreach was carried out initially, and then again for community projects to include more adolescents and youth and increase the diversity of the groups.
- It is crucial that staff and partners understand the flexible nature of PAR, which is different from more traditional research methods.
- It is essential that proper training and induction of staff is carried out before the outreach phase is started.
- Flexible funding, if possible with no pre-set outcomes, is highly desirable to allow the PAR project to evolve organically.

■ The importance of good planning and preparation

- Investing in an early planning meeting with relevant stakeholders is essential.
- Although it would be beneficial, staff members do not need previous research experience. Rather, they need to be inducted into the principles and processes of PAR and guided by a qualitative research specialist.
- It is particularly important that the core management and implementation teams have a clear understanding of the objectives and structure of the project at the planning stage.
- It is important that a dedicated staff member(s), with the relevant skills, is exclusively assigned to the project. In a humanitarian context, it is very likely there will be staff changes, and therefore plans need to be in place to reduce the negative effects of staff turnover on the project, youth and other staff. Building trust with adolescents/youth is essential, and this requires consistency in staffing.
- Before initiating a PAR project in any community/country, a **risk assessment** must be conducted by the Country Office to ensure that participation will not lead to harm for participants or staff. It is important to revisit this assessment during the implementation phase of a PAR project to identify and respond to any changes in the situation.

■ Engaging and retaining adolescents and youth

- The provision of financial incentives proved essential to ensure youth attendance and continued engagement, to enable the participation of young people who are expected to contribute to family income, and to cover young people's travel costs.
- Involving young people as partners in the recruitment phase proved to be very effective, as they had a unique understanding of their communities.
- The foundation of a PAR project should be an assets/strengths-based approach, with a focus on the resources and capacities that young people bring to the project, rather than exclusively focusing on the challenges they face and the needs not being met. A **resource mapping exercise** to identify resources that could support the PAR project should be undertaken by the adolescents themselves – including those from the surrounding community, the Youth Facilitators and the research partners.
- Successful scheduling of activities with adolescents and youth requires flexibility and a comprehensive understanding of their personal schedules and obligations.
- Parents/guardians or other key family members should be kept informed and involved in the planning and implementation phases.
- Managing expectations is crucial, especially with groups that may not be used to having control over a process or having a voice.

■ PAR requires ongoing and adaptable training and capacity building

- In Bekaa, it proved beneficial to identify adolescents who had received training from Save the Children, because they already had a foundational skill set to complement the PAR project schedules and priorities.
- Flexible skills training and team-building activities should be staggered through the timeline of the project, allowing enough time for young people to internalise the learning.
- Training and ongoing coaching needs to provide participants with the skills and support they require to discuss sensitive topics, ask probing questions, set realistic expectations and manage challenging conversations.
- If budget and time allows, additional training and coaching should be provided on budgeting and financial literacy to give more responsibility to youth as they plan and implement their project and to teach skills that will contribute to sustainability after the project ends.

■ Adolescent- and youth-led approaches require time and patience

- Sufficient time is needed for young people to build consensus on the research methods and tools. The process cannot be rushed, as appropriate selection will dictate the success of the rest of the project.
- The community mapping exercise was found to be important to consolidate and record participants' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, their communities. It is crucial that staff and Youth Facilitators do not influence the process, as it serves to inform staff of participants' priorities and helps participants choose their research tools and topics.
- Sufficient time is needed for participants to complete the analysis stage and consolidate their learning before they move on to the design of youth-led initiatives.
- The opportunity to apply learning and make a tangible difference in the community was identified as an empowering process for young people, developing existing capacities, expanding networks and challenging negative stereotypes about adolescents and youth.
- A practical application phase should be a standard part of PAR programming as well as any programming with youth. No youth-led research should be undertaken without the possibility of follow-up action.

■ Documentation and learning

- A documentation plan needs to be developed that is realistic in the context and regularly monitored so that any difficulties can be addressed. In a humanitarian context, the plan should be adaptable and feedback from participants should be actively encouraged. The MEAL team should be involved in designing the plan and related tools, in order to provide ongoing support. See Annex 5 for a sample documentation plan.

2.3 Lessons learned in each project phase

Although the project was organised by phases that were planned to be consecutive, it is important to highlight that in reality, the project went back and forth between phases, particularly between the outreach, capacity strengthening and research phases. Maintaining flexibility was important in order to appropriately respond to needs as they arose.

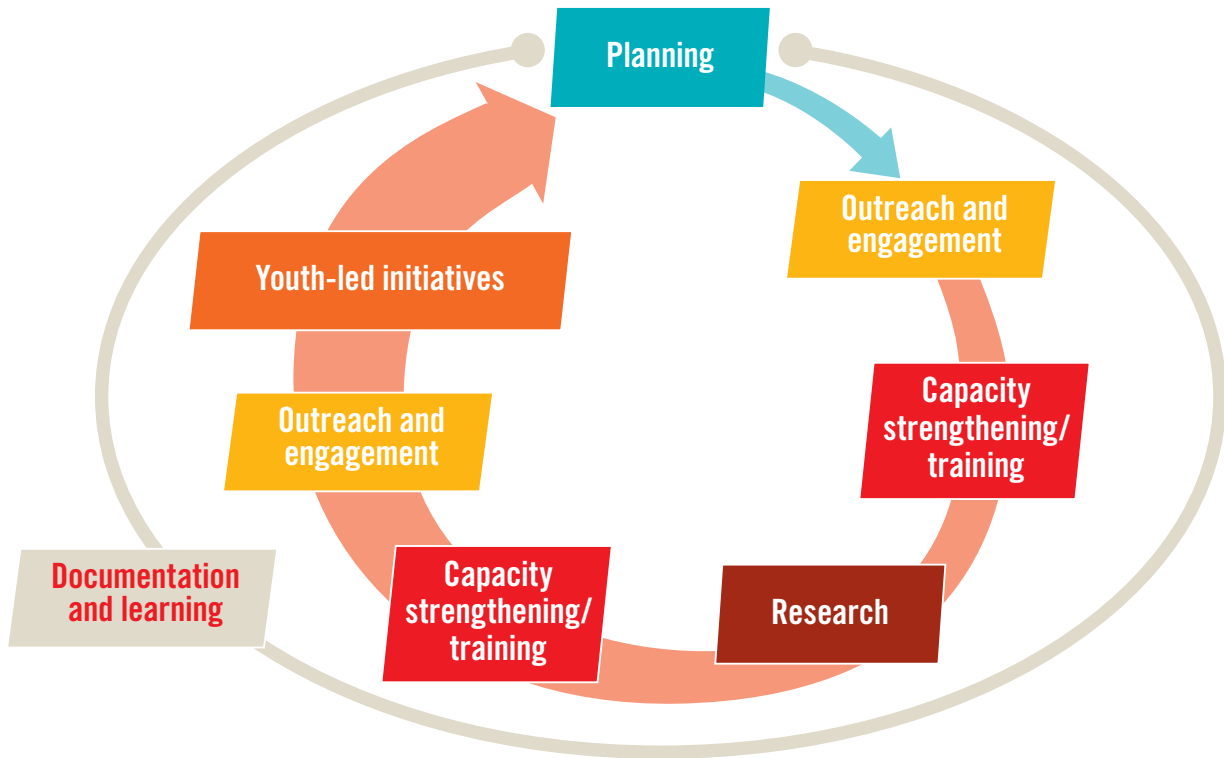


Figure 3: The project phases of PAR

Planning

The planning phase included the following activities:

- planning workshop – outcomes, selection of target groups and sites
- management and coordination arrangements and staff engagement – including resource allocation
- own internal Save the Children staff learning – understanding PAR and the process
- development of documentation plan – process, outcomes.

Lessons learned

- The importance of investing in an early planning meeting with relevant stakeholders was apparent throughout the project. Bringing together different sectors, teams and partners led to efficient decision making – for example, with regard to location selection and allocation of resources. However, the numbers of people involved at the start of the project declined



A project team
planning meeting
in Lebanon

during the project as other work commitments took priority and immediate input was not required, which suggests that engagement needs to be more actively nurtured for it to be maintained throughout the project.

- An integrated approach with other teams started in Bekaa at the community projects stage when specific procurement needs emerged, but the team reflected afterwards that this would have been useful earlier in the project, at the research stage.
- The team in Cairo experienced some isolation in the Country Office, especially in the early stages. However, the value of integration with other teams was acknowledged and actively pursued once it was clear that technical support was required from early on.
- It is crucial to ensure that the core management and implementation teams have a clear understanding of the objectives and structure of the project at the planning stage to reduce confusion and delays during implementation. For example, in Bekaa, there was a long gap between the outreach activities and the first PAR meeting with adolescents and youth, which led to drop-outs.
- The terminology chosen to describe PAR needs to be contextualised to each location. For example, in Cairo, the term ‘research’ was too sensitive for the context. Consequently, the importance of choosing suitable descriptive terms became clear. For example, when the team tried to creatively describe the content of the project without an emphasis on ‘research’, there was confusion among the participants – when they used the term ‘activities’ to explain what the youth would be doing, that proved to be too vague for participants to understand.
- A comprehensive documentation plan was created in the planning phase and it was a useful tool to help structure ways in which key information could be captured at field level. However, the plan was not consistently followed, resulting in documentation gaps. This was particularly problematic in Lebanon, as there were no staff exclusively assigned to the project and follow-up was inconsistent.
- In Cairo, project locations were selected in areas where the Country Office already had established operations, which supported the efficient setting up of PAR and was very important for its success.

- In Lebanon, a dedicated venue for youth in Tripoli to meet was not identified during the planning phase. This led to a number of logistical challenges during implementation. For example, materials had to be transferred to different venues for each meeting, and the youth felt they lacked a safe space of which they could take ownership. It is very important that young people feel safe and comfortable when and where they meet, so that they feel comfortable and at ease to share thoughts and feelings, and express their views and concerns.
- In Cairo, during the planning phase, a 13–21 age range was decided upon, but it became clear during implementation that the range was too broad to create one group. This was due to different developmental stages and life experiences within that range. As a result, the team divided the group into three, consisting of 12–14, 15–16, and 18–21-year-old girls. The older age group took on the role of Youth Facilitators who helped in training and leadership, and the two younger age groups took on the role of research partners who received the training, conducted the research and implemented the youth-led projects.

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- The Country Office assess whether the field team/s are ready and able to implement PAR, and if it is an appropriate time for the community/communities that have been selected. This is crucial in unstable and changeable humanitarian contexts where the delivery of an in-depth project lasting for several months is more challenging than in a development context.
- A PAR project is always initiated with a programmatic planning meeting, bringing together different sectors, teams and partners to facilitate ‘buy in’ and efficient decision making.
- A mid-term review/update is scheduled from the start for the senior leadership team, to provide a forum to share information, identify gaps in resources and potential links between teams, inform the development of future proposals, and maintain interest in the learning value of PAR.
- A dedicated staff member(s), with the relevant skills and knowledge, is exclusively assigned to the project. Specific skills and knowledge that were identified as important include:
 - experience working with young people, with strong motivational skills, participatory approaches, and team-building skills
 - social work and child protection background – this was particularly important in the context of Youth Voices
 - ability to manage expectations
 - understanding of gender equality and conflict management/ conflict sensitivity
 - familiarity with context and local dynamics
 - critical analysis
 - documentation
 - research methods.

The delivery of an in-depth project lasting for several months is more challenging in unstable and changeable humanitarian contexts than in a development context

- Context-specific meaningful opportunities for young people to have a voice in the planning phase are identified and carried out.
- The planning phase is completed before the implementation team meets with research partners, to ensure that the staff team and Youth Facilitators are fully informed and prepared, and to avoid long waiting periods for the adolescents.
- A communications strategy/approach is developed in the planning phase to avoid raising unrealistic expectations or creating confusion. A transparent approach is crucial for accountability, to build trust with the participants and set realistic expectations:
 - This strategy/approach should include youth, community members, and other staff.
 - Language and terminology should be discussed and decided upon at this stage to ensure clarity and reduce the potential for harm.
- Before initiating a PAR project in any community/country, a **risk assessment** must be conducted by the Country Office to ensure that participation will not lead to harm for participants or staff. For example, in a context where research is not permitted and should not be openly discussed, the Office should identify ways in which young people could safely engage in the research activities that are central to PAR.
- A 'resource mapping' exercise should be undertaken by the young people themselves, ie, the Youth Facilitators and research partners, to identify relevant resources within their community that could assist the PAR project. These might include, for example, facilities, materials, skills, knowledge, experience or networks.¹⁸
- Community members should be engaged in early planning meetings to encourage dialogue and sustained engagement in the project.
- Where possible, PAR projects should first be implemented in areas familiar to the organisation or where it already operates, to streamline the process and avoid issues arising from lack of contextual awareness or lack of logistics or infrastructure support.
- A single meeting site should be identified and designated, for example, a youth or community centre.
- Segmented age groups within the broader age range should be determined before outreach and recruitment, to ensure clear communication of roles and responsibilities for each group, appropriate approaches and realistic expectations.

¹⁸ Resource mapping can be a simple extension of a community mapping session. It promotes the 'strength-based approach' in our work with young people, as it avoids simply focusing on the challenges and problems that young people face in their communities. Many resources are available online to support this process, for example, the FHI 360 guide 'Community Youth Mapping', available at <http://www.seepnetwork.org/community-youth-mapping-resources-1119.php>

Outreach and engagement

The outreach and engagement phase included the following activities:

- selection of Youth Facilitators
- outreach and selection of adolescent research partners
- community sensitisation – building community support.

Lessons learned:

- The provision of financial incentives proved essential to ensuring young people's attendance and continued engagement, by enabling the inclusion of participants with some responsibility to contribute to family income and to cover travel costs.
- Advertising PAR as a simple 'volunteering' opportunity was not appealing to vulnerable youth, as they have many competing priorities and prefer to use their time for structured activities with tangible outcomes. In Cairo, the term 'volunteer' was identified as negatively affecting attendance.
- Raising unrealistic expectations or providing limited or vague information about the objectives of the project has the potential to cause harm to the participants. At the very least, it can create confusion and discontent among the participants, their families and/or their communities. Clear communication regarding the structure of the project at the start would help mitigate confusion.
 - For example, in Cairo, some of the mothers at one point resisted the project as they felt their economic needs were not being recognised or addressed through PAR. The project team learned that openly acknowledging that concern while also explaining the realistic scope of the project, focusing on the development of their children's capacities, was critical to gaining the mothers' trust.
- The inclusion of a written 'Participation' or 'Volunteer' Agreement¹⁹ helped to engage youth who wanted to be involved with a professional and structured opportunity.
- Understanding and working with participants' families was identified as crucial in all locations, for initial engagement and retention throughout the project.
- Determining which family members should be involved according to their status as gatekeepers/decision makers depends on the specific context, and can have a direct impact on the success of the project. Therefore, it was important that project staff understood the local context. For example, while it was critical to engage with mothers in urban Cairo, brothers were the main gatekeepers in Tripoli. Meanwhile, in Bekaa there was a more common experience of indifference among the parents of participants, and thus, they had minimal impact on attendance rates.
- Involving young people as partners in the recruitment phase proved to be very effective, as they had a unique understanding of their communities (including who key decision makers and gatekeepers were), they had

Raising unrealistic expectations or providing limited or vague information about the objectives of the project has the potential to cause harm to the participants

¹⁹ Save the Children staff can find a sample Volunteer/Participation agreement on Save the Children OneNet in the following extension: Where We Work > Middle East & Eastern Europe > MEERegionalThematicCoordination > Adolescent and Youth Initiatives > PAR

networks, and they could identify and access adolescents and other youth who are often 'hidden'. In Cairo, it proved hard initially to engage and retain younger girls in the project, but two strategies were used that worked well:

- Given their knowledge of the context and the age group, the Youth Facilitators in the urban context suggested that the girls' parents should be contacted to discuss their attendance and to understand the circumstances that might prevent the girls' attendance. Consequently, a workshop was organised with a group of mothers to answer questions, address fears and solve problems. It was found that some mothers were concerned that the project would distract the girls from their studies, and there was a fear that girls would listen to staff and Youth Facilitators more than their own parents.
- One of the refugee Youth Facilitators used Facebook to reach out to younger adolescents, which proved very effective as the project was able to reach girls who were not engaged in any Save the Children programming.
- Successful scheduling of activities with adolescents and youth requires flexibility and a comprehensive understanding of their schedules and priorities. Within this project, such flexibility had a very positive effect on participant retention. For example, in Cairo, the flexible approach allowed the team to accommodate the girls' needs when they themselves set meeting times and dates, which improved attendance rates.
- In Tripoli, the implementation team noted that they attracted more young people by providing physical activities as a complement to the core project. The provision of these more familiar activities was especially important given that PAR was a very new concept for the youth.
- A profile of target adolescents was agreed in the planning workshop, and certain criteria were used to select project locations.

Social media

As well as engaging participants and maintaining links and dialogue between them, social media was also identified as an effective tool to maintain positive relations with family members and therefore to retain participants.

Youth Voices participants overview

Lebanon

- **Tripoli:** 14–17-year-old boys and girls in Mankoubeen. Lebanese (majority), Syrian, Palestinian. Key issues experienced by adolescents in this area include: illegal housing; overcrowding; high unemployment/unskilled jobs/unsafe work; engagement with armed groups; early marriage; sexual abuse; domestic violence; drug and substance abuse; no services; out of school; lack of documentation
- **Bekaa:** 14–18-year-old boys and girls in Majdal Anjar village and area. Lebanese and Syrian. Key issues experienced by adolescents in this area include: limited access to services; isolated area, near the border; exposure to violence; in conflict with the law; out of school; unemployed

Egypt

- **Nasr City (Cairo):** 12–20-year-old girls. Syrian and Egyptian. Key issues experienced by adolescent girls in this area include: being housebound and isolated; sexual harassment; limited access to services; domestic violence; intergenerational conflict; public safety concerns; fear of kidnapping; racial discrimination; lack of self-confidence
- **6th October (Cairo):** 12–20-year-old girls. Syrian and Egyptian. Key issues experienced by adolescent girls in this area include: being housebound and isolated; unsafe communities; abuse in school and community; sexual harassment; poor-quality educational institutions; intergenerational conflict; lack of self-confidence

- In Tripoli and in Cairo, adolescent participants were particularly deprived and marginalised, as they had very limited access to services and were socially isolated. In Bekaa, while participants were also marginalised, their areas were better covered, though nevertheless insufficiently, by humanitarian agencies. A lesson learned is that PAR is a good tool to use with particularly marginalised groups, as it allows for flexibility and time investment:



Youth Facilitators gathering for a meeting in Egypt

- In Cairo, the project team sought to engage adolescent girls who would typically be housebound and accessed them through the Youth Facilitators and by engaging with their families to build trust.
- In Tripoli, the area selected has no services and is very neglected by the government and humanitarian actors. It proved challenging to engage adolescents at first, but with time and group work, the adolescents were very engaged and felt much more connected with their community.
- One challenge was that the selection criteria were quite broad, which was intended to avoid the project being exclusive. This resulted in the engagement of some youth who were not yet ready for PAR. There is a common assumption that all young people of a certain age group enter our projects as a homogenous group who have all reached identical developmental milestones. This is too often not the case, especially in contexts of displacement and protracted emergency. This was particularly noticeable in Bekaa, where expectations were not sufficiently managed, and some youth (mainly refugees) became frustrated as they wanted to see quicker solutions to their problems. More consideration of individual needs and abilities during the selection process would have helped to avoid this situation.
- It proved beneficial to identify adolescents who had received training from Save the Children in Bekaa, because they already had a foundational life skill set which complemented the PAR project. This approach also demonstrated a long-term investment in youth, the lack of which is a common failure of youth programming in humanitarian contexts.
- Initially, bringing together a mixed group of host community and refugee youth in Bekaa was challenging due to tensions between the Lebanese and Syrians, but in fact became very beneficial to the project, as it contributed to social cohesion and improved relationships and dynamics between the two groups, and increased acceptance of the 'other'. The two groups also discovered they were identifying similar issues, which had a unifying effect, particularly during the research phase and group discussions. This was also observed in Cairo between the Syrian and Egyptian girls.
- In Cairo, it was noted with hindsight that the selection process could have focused much more on diversity. For example:
 - The project team felt that more religions and nationalities should have been included, as this would have brought different viewpoints into the project and created more opportunities for participants to expand their understanding of their communities. For example, only Muslims

participated in the activity, and the team felt that it would have been beneficial if Christians had also participated. Also, no African refugees were included in the initial recruitment, and yet their interest was clear. Some refugee youth from African countries attended the performances as the reputation of PAR grew in the surrounding communities. Participants also said that they wished other refugee groups had been included from the start of the project.

- The project team also pointed out, that although it can make selection easier, it is important to avoid recruiting friends, siblings and close neighbours if possible in order to promote more diversity of opinions in the group and expand networks. Also, people in a close-knit group can influence each other in terms of attendance, especially if parents decide to intervene or if a powerful member of the friendship group/family loses interest.

Clear selection criteria must be determined in advance to guide and support the teams in their recruitment and outreach planning and activities, and must be well communicated and understood by field teams

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Financial incentives/stipends should be a standard feature of budgets for adolescent/youth programming in humanitarian contexts, to facilitate attendance and continued engagement.
 - The internal mechanism for issuing the stipends should be agreed upon and set up before recruitment to mitigate against problems with delayed payment during the project which could lead to drop-out.
 - A stipend should also be combined with a written/signed 'participation agreement' to create a structured and professional relationship between staff and participants.
- Parents/guardians or other key family members should be kept informed and involved in the planning and implementation phases. The recruitment process and youth retention will be supported by identifying and understanding the key 'enablers' and 'blockers' in each community (eg, mothers, brothers, fathers) in the early planning stages.
- A diverse range of recruitment channels should be identified to reach a broad range of young people, including, for example: community leaders, community-based organisations (CBOs), former youth participants and social media forums. This will be particularly beneficial in new locations and to engage more vulnerable/deprived and 'hard-to-reach' young people.
- Clear selection criteria must be determined in advance to guide and support the teams in their recruitment and outreach planning and activities, and must be well communicated and understood by field teams.
 - This will increase diversity in the application and selection process. It is also critical if the goal is to ensure that the PAR project is open to, and inclusive of, marginalised/vulnerable adolescents and youth, and those who have not previously been engaged with activities.
 - It also enables transparency with young people about why they were or were not included, which is crucial for accountability and maintaining trust in the project.
 - In humanitarian contexts where the population is transient, it is important during selection to consider whether the adolescents are likely to be able to commit to the full timeframe of the PAR. The consequences of excluding such adolescents should be weighed up against the consequences of drop-outs for the project, the group and the individual participants themselves.

- Reviewing the selection criteria and planning an outreach strategy during the planning phase creates space for the team to identify specific areas in which they need more training and awareness raising to enable them to be more inclusive. For example, they may need training in how to engage and work with disabled young people.
- It is important to maintain flexibility and revise the criteria as the project evolves, and include new groups if necessary.
- If there is a plan to engage acutely vulnerable young people in a PAR project, it is imperative that skilled staff are available to provide tailored support for them. Furthermore, for the protection of all participating youth, all team members must have received training in the available referral mechanisms.
- There should be clear and consistent communication about PAR during outreach, with consideration of context and age-appropriate terminology.
- If setting up a pilot PAR project in an area where adolescents have previously participated in training opportunities, it is important to consider if it would be beneficial to engage those young people again to build on their foundational skills.
- If considered suitable in the context, having completed a risk assessment, PAR can be utilised as an opportunity for refugee and host country young people to meet and work together towards a common goal. Such opportunities to improve social cohesion are particularly important in a humanitarian context where tensions between host and refugee communities are common.

Capacity strengthening/training

The capacity strengthening/training phase included the following activities:

- team building and life skills for facilitators and research partners
- ongoing training for Save the Children staff on PAR and approaches
- training on PAR tools selected by adolescents.

Lessons learned:

- Capacity strengthening for PAR should be viewed as an ongoing process, responsive to the learning and experience gained through application and reflection. A one-off training session at the start of the project is not an effective method for embedding learning or adapting PAR to the context and specific needs of participants, target groups or staff.
- Learning in the project was identified to be most effective when it was experiential, ie, a blend of training and coaching with the time and space for young people to apply the new skills and knowledge and reflect on the impact of that application.

Staff

- There was a lack of technical skills, knowledge and experience of research techniques among the Lebanon staff team. Consequently, external technical research support was needed to guide the field teams in each location, given the distance between the different locations.

- The project teams reflected that in some locations there was not enough training and support built into PAR about how to guide adolescents and youth when a project choice or theme was too risky or sensitive to pursue, or when it could not be addressed immediately due to limited resources.
- As well as identifying the need for these skills, staff also identified a gap in their knowledge of how to follow up with participating young people so that the young people knew they had been heard, even if their priority topic could not be pursued.
- Both country teams identified the significant value added to PAR through collaboration between different technical sectors (eg, WASH, shelter, child protection, livelihoods), who could provide training and information for participants on a range of technical subjects based on practical, contextual experience. They also pointed out that, as well as technical skills, guest speakers and trainers needed to demonstrate attitude and approaches compatible with PAR principles – eg, participatory, reflective and inclusive practices.

Adolescents and youth

- It was felt that a focus in the early sessions on the problems and challenges that participants face, rather than on their strengths and capacities, led to some negative effects on well-being and reinforced a dependent relationship with outside organisations.
 - For example, in Bekaa, it was evident from staff and young people’s feedback that some participants felt frustrated about the purpose and goals of PAR. One youth asked, in the closing stages of the project: “What can you give us or do for us?” Some of the project team felt that an unclear explanation of the project and/or too much focus on problems and issues from the start may have exacerbated these feelings and disempowered members of the group.
 - Although applied in some of the project locations, an assets/strength-based approach was not consistently adopted.
- It was noted that scheduling sufficient time to tailor the PAR training methodology and content to each group, considering participants’ backgrounds and context, is crucial to ensure effective learning and to engage the group, which in turn affects the success of the subsequent



A training session in Lebanon

research and youth-led initiatives phases. For example, in Tripoli, preparation was not thorough, and the training had to be substantially changed after the first session.

- The initial training period allocated was two days per location, but this was found to be too short to cover the material that would usually feature in a PAR introductory training. The limited timeframe to deliver a significant amount of information also affected the quality of the training, as some topics had to be omitted or rushed.
 - In Cairo, the group felt it would have been helpful to include at least an introductory section on the community projects phase in the initial training period, to help participants understand their final goal.
- All project teams identified a need for a more phased approach, balancing technical and relevant ‘life’ skills training for the successful implementation of PAR. Preparing a comprehensive but adaptable training plan in the planning phase would have helped them to identify gaps and plan for extra training as needed. For example:
 - Given the sensitive nature of the topics being discussed, participants in Cairo asked for more training about emotional awareness and providing psychological support, to increase their confidence.
 - From their practical experience, the Cairo Youth Facilitators also identified a further range of topics for training that would have benefitted the project, for example, conflict sensitivity, working with parents and elders, project management, monitoring and evaluation, report writing and more comprehensive child safeguarding training.
- From the perspective of the Cairo team, it would have made sense to invest more time into team-building activities before starting the research phase, as many of the adolescents and youth did not know how to work as a team. If that had been done from the start, one team member suggested, “I think they would have come up with much better work ... The dynamics would have improved, and it would have been more of a team rather than a group of individuals.”
- As a result, the project team introduced ‘team work meetings’ during the project, which provided an opportunity for individual goal sharing, refresher discussions about the purpose of PAR, and a review of the Youth Facilitators’ role. These meetings highlighted the importance of developing positive relationships and basic rules between Youth Facilitators before implementation commences, to ensure the most effective initiatives.
- From the training team’s perspective, practical exercises during the training proved more effective than a lecture style to present the tools, and it was important to include examples in the training which young people could relate to. This was confirmed in Cairo, where many of the girls expressed the view that their workshops, training and meetings would be enhanced by being more participatory and practical, and with more varied approaches.



A group activity during the participants’ training in Lebanon



Participants sharing stories of participation in Egypt

- The team in Cairo discovered that creating space for Youth Facilitators to take on leadership roles during the project created practical learning opportunities, and increased the learning potential within PAR. It also had the effect of enhancing the youth-led aspect of PAR. It was necessary to create tools to encourage participatory working and make youth understand why participation is important.
- Without ongoing coaching and guidance from staff, it can be challenging for Youth Facilitators to step back and allow younger Research Partners to take the lead. It was important to continuously remind Youth Facilitators to ask themselves whether they were allowing enough space for younger adolescents to make decisions, which inevitably added to the workload of the project staff.

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- A preliminary community assessment is conducted of the proposed study area to collect data on youth socio-demographics, including number of youth, their education and their occupations.
 - Create a detailed profile of the youth recruited for the project, which should be shared with the training team to ensure that appropriate tools and approaches are selected for each training workshop.²⁰
- Training for staff and participants must include referral mechanisms to ensure there is an understanding of who to contact if protection issues are identified.
- From a protection and do-no-harm perspective, psychosocial content should be embedded in the PAR training curriculum for staff and young people to support them to safely and effectively manage protection concerns, conflict, expressions of emotion and/or distress, and other sensitive issues that might be raised.

For staff:

- Staff should be trained and must understand all the phases of PAR before engaging in outreach and recruitment of young people.
- All project team members who will be working directly in the field should attend all the training sessions and workshops as active participants, to ensure they can provide support and recommendations to young people during the implementation phase of the project.

²⁰ This profile should include, for example, participants' ages, gender, literacy levels, nationalities and whether or not they have received any form of training related to research, or otherwise, prior to this training.

- Capacity building for staff should include coaching and mentoring skills for the provision of ongoing support.
- Technical staff selected to share their practical skills and knowledge with participants should also demonstrate attitudes and approaches that are compatible with the participatory and inclusive nature of PAR.

For adolescents and youth:

- The foundation of a PAR project should be an assets/strengths-based approach, with a focus on the resources and capacities that participants bring to the project, rather than exclusively focusing on the challenges they face and the needs not being met. This is crucial for promoting well-being, and fostering sustainable outcomes and more self-sufficient adolescents and youth. The goal of the research is to identify strengths as well as areas of need from the adolescents' perspectives.
- Sufficient time should be allocated to the introductory training workshops to ensure that all foundational content can be covered effectively, including an explanation of what each phase of PAR entails.
- Two separate training sessions should be held, one for the Youth Facilitators using a 'Training of Trainers' setup, and one for younger research partners led by the Youth Facilitators with the support of project staff. This will enable training to be tailored to specific age groups (eg, under and over 18) and Youth Facilitators can be more independent as they guide young people during the implementation phase of the project.
- Flexible skills training and team-building activities should be staggered through the timeline of the project, allowing enough time for participants to internalise the learning. This is particularly important for the more complex skills and concepts within PAR such as research, analysis of findings, evaluation and project design.
- The training provided should be as youth-friendly as possible and varied in approach to ensure that it suits a range of learning styles.
- In the Youth Facilitators' training there must be a focus on the skills and attitudes required to facilitate the active engagement and participation of younger research partners to avoid 'dominating' them. A participation agreement is a useful tool to clarify these expectations.
- Project staff should discuss with Youth Facilitators what training they need to support them and better involve them as decision makers and leaders within PAR.
- The PAR tool training workshop should include activities on prioritisation and ranking, so that all groups adopt a systematic approach to selecting their research topics and tools.²¹ This will also help to ensure that research partners are not influenced or coerced by the Youth Facilitators.
- Organise exchanges with other youth participating in PAR – either in person or over Skype – to learn from each other, to offer support and to create a network that will contribute to sustainability after the close of the project. Alternatively, utilise 'graduates' from the pilot stage of PAR to inform and support future application of the PAR methodology.

Sufficient time should be allocated to the introductory training workshops to ensure that all foundational content can be covered effectively, including an explanation of what each phase of PAR entails

²¹ See 'How to' guide for more information on participatory ranking methodology.

The research phase included the following activities:

- selection of PAR tools
- reflection sessions with adolescents using the selected PAR tools
- selection of topics to research
- development of research plans
- refresher training on selected PAR tools
- implementation of research and group discussions
- analysis of findings by adolescents themselves.

Examples of research and analysis tools used in Youth Voices

Egypt

Topics selected by research partners: No topics were preselected in Egypt as the girls wanted to look broadly at issues affecting adolescent girls.

*PAR tools selected by research partners:*²² community walks, Photovoice²³ and community mapping

Analysis tools selected by research partners: SHOWED (see below)

Case study

Research: Photovoice was chosen as a tool to examine daily life at domestic level. After being introduced to the basics of photography by a professional trainer, the research partners were asked to document one thing they like and one thing they dislike in their daily life for a week.

Analysis: After presenting the photos they had taken over one week, the group analysed their work, using the 'SHOWED' approach to consider: what do we **See**; what is really **Happening**; how is that related to **Our** life; **Why** does this situation **Exist**; what should we **Do** with it.

Lebanon

Topics selected by research partners: education, infrastructure, public safety, employment, health, shelter and hobbies

PAR tools selected by research partners: interviews, exploration, observation and FGDs

*Analysis tools selected by research partners:*²⁴ thematic analysis

Case study

Research: One group chose education as their topic and focused specifically on school drop-out rates. As their study sample they selected interviews as their tool and selected adolescents aged 10 to 18, and parents of adolescents who were not in school.

Analysis: The group decided that after every wave of data collection, there should be a 'thematic analysis' session so they could analyse the information they gathered from the field and monitor the quality of the data. This form of analysis helped participants to systematically condense a large amount of information into a set of important themes.

²² See Annex 1 for more information about the PAR research tools.

²³ 'Photovoice is a participatory action research strategy which can contribute to youth mobilization for community change'. http://www.marissabellino.com/uploads/7/6/6/1/7661682/wang_2006.pdf

²⁴ See Annex 2 for more information about the PAR analysis tools.

Lessons learned

Selecting the research tools

- Introducing participants to research tools that are inappropriate or potentially risky in their context was identified as frustrating and potentially harmful. It would have been more effective for a range of relevant tools to be selected by Save the Children and IFI in advance for participants to choose from in the workshops.
 - For example, due to privacy and security concerns, it was noted that Photovoice was not appropriate for use in public in Bekaa and Cairo.
- Sufficient time is needed for participants to build consensus on methods and tools, and it cannot be rushed as appropriate selection will dictate the success of the rest of the project. It was noted that when the decision-making process was rushed, less experienced staff or Youth Facilitators felt compelled to tell the group what to do, rather than giving them the space they needed to lead their own project.
- It is very important to provide adolescents with the appropriate introduction to different tools so that they can choose which ones they want to use. In Cairo, tools were selected by the girls even though, for example, Photovoice was challenging given the context. In Lebanon, adolescents chose interviews, and it was clear that Save the Children staff were more comfortable with this tool as it was more familiar, even though it was very difficult to implement. It is important to strike a balance between what adolescents want and what is realistic. Ultimately, facilitators must give enough space for adolescents to make informed choices.
- Enabling participants to practise using their tools before implementation was very effective. For example, in Bekaa, Youth Facilitators conducted mock interviews for the Research Partners, which increased the confidence of the Research Partners and highlighted areas for improvement in a safe and supportive environment.
- As well as learning from the findings of the research itself, the project team could also learn from the tools selected by the participants, and what those choices revealed about the group and the context. For example, girls in Cairo chose tools that were introspective and did not involve talking to



Participants in Cairo discussing the PAR research tool Photovoice



Participants in Egypt discussing research questions

others outside of the group, whereas in Lebanon, participants chose tools that were outward facing and involved interacting with their community.

- The community mapping exercise was important to consolidate and record participants' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, their communities. It is crucial that staff and Youth Facilitators do not influence the process, as it serves to inform the staff team of participants' priorities, and allows participants to choose their research tools and topics.

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Staff and trainers should decide in advance what approach for tool selection fits their context and which tools would be appropriate and feasible. From a protection and do-no-harm perspective, there cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach, especially in fragile contexts of displacement and humanitarian crisis.
- Research tools should only be introduced if the resources they require are available and affordable, eg, Smartphones or cameras and photography training for the Photovoice tool.
- If a PAR project is to be truly youth-led, create space for young people to make their own decisions, and keep staff suggestions to a minimum, except for guidance and support. Assuming this facilitating role was challenging for Save the Children staff.
- Questionnaires, or any other research tool that participants select, should be piloted prior to application to ensure they are appropriate and fit for purpose, and to establish whether participants have the necessary skills, understanding and resources to apply them.
- Opportunities must be made available for participants to practise using their tools prior to implementation.
- A youth-led community assessment or mapping should be undertaken prior to the selection of research tools, and should be conducted without influence from staff or Youth Facilitators.



Participants preparing community maps in Lebanon

Participants in Lebanon are trained on how to draft questions for the research phase



Conducting the research

- It is important to clarify at the start of the project whether the intent is to consider and address issues that affect the whole community or issues that affect young people specifically. This is to be decided by the adolescents themselves. In Lebanon, youth selected topics that affected their entire community because they wanted to help as many people as possible. In Cairo, the group used the tools to focus on projects that would affect girls directly and not the whole community. In Cairo, adolescents needed to give attention to themselves, as they had little opportunities to do so and PAR was the space where they discussed their own ambitions and skills.
- Research techniques such as interviews and home visits can and did raise expectations among community members in Lebanon, and it should not be assumed that participants have the skills or experience to manage those expectations. Stronger guidance from Save the Children facilitators was important to manage expectations.
- Where the research tools chosen by participants were not piloted, there were several negative consequences that affected the quality of the research and analysis, and the confidence of the adolescents. For example:
 - In Bekaa, many of the community interviewees were uncomfortable with the questions, or they found them too difficult to answer, which affected the analysis process as the findings were incomplete. Also, due to a lack of confidence and/or experience, research partners often failed to ask probing questions during the interviews, and the result was a lack of depth in the collected data.
 - In Tripoli, it was realised that the interview guides, which had been developed with the research partners, were not producing the quality and depth of data needed for this study. This conclusion was mainly based on interviewee responses, but also on Youth Facilitators' comments on their experience with research partners in the field. As such, the group was unable to use the interview responses for training on their chosen analysis tool, 'thematic analysis'.²⁵ Therefore, the first batch of interviews was

²⁵ See Annex 2 for more information on PAR data analysis tools.

considered to be the pilot testing of the questionnaires, and the guides were adjusted accordingly.

These are good examples of the need to pilot test all tools prior to use in the community.

- The target group of the research tools was not always considered during the selection process, which impacted negatively on the data collection. For example, a team of research partners in Tripoli was predominantly male, and this made the interview tool unsuitable for interviewing young girls.
- Until participants had developed trust and rapport with the team and each other, it was unlikely they would focus on the most sensitive issues they faced, which inevitably influenced their selection of issues to address. This was noted as a justification for planning for two rounds of PAR in the future, so that participants would have grown in confidence by the second round.
- Timing proved to be a challenge for all the groups, as Ramadan started at the same time as the implementation phase of the project for all three sites. Consequently, attendance decreased and scheduling of meetings became more difficult as the availability of Youth Facilitators and staff availability did not always align with participants' preferences during their period of fasting. This highlighted the importance of considering the timeline of a PAR project in the planning phase.

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Training and ongoing coaching provide participants with the skills and support they need to discuss sensitive topics, ask probing questions, set realistic expectations and manage challenging conversations.
- Time is allowed for all tools to be pilot tested before being used in the community.
- Standard, simple consent forms are signed by parents/guardians for the participation of under-18s as research subjects, to ensure they are protected in the process.
- Young people are provided with all the materials required for tool implementation, and where needed, technological support for their selected PAR tools.

Analysing the findings

- In the research phase, more involvement of other technical sectors would have been useful for improved analysis and interpretation of the data; for example, the MEAL team could have provided ongoing coaching in these skills. This highlighted a need for consultation with other teams rather than just informing them about the project.
- In Cairo, more support was requested by Youth Facilitators to help them understand how to analyse their findings and how to apply the analysis to their decision making about which projects to take forward. They had received theoretical training on the analysis tools in the introductory training conducted by IFI, but by the time of the analysis phase, they found it difficult to actively apply the tools. Without support available from IFI,

the Cairo team organised simulations for the Youth Facilitators to apply the tools on themselves, before they introduced them to the adolescent research partners – this included, for example, ‘problem tree’ analysis and the ‘Why’ method.²⁶

- It was important to make a stronger connection for the young people between the research and the community projects, accompanied by training.
- Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data was unfamiliar for many of the field staff and the adolescents and therefore more comprehensive support was required. This emphasised the value of engaging staff who have practical research experience.
- Even though they are important and relevant, there are some topics that the young people consider taboo and therefore will not select for research or a project, eg, early marriage, eloping, etc.
 - In Cairo, girls considered the topic of sex education to be taboo and that there was a need for mothers to talk to their daughters openly about it. One of the community project days in Nasr City focused on breaking this taboo, with extensive training and coaching from a psychologist and a Syrian facilitator who had held awareness-raising sessions in many schools. The experience was positive.
- There are also some topics that young people feel helpless to do anything about, eg, in Tripoli it was smoking and drug abuse, or pressing for the army to leave the only local school that they had occupied. One reflection was that with good facilitation and managing of expectations, adolescents could explore what they could change, even if only in a small way. For example, in Bekaa, they could not resolve the housing problem, but suggested a communal tent where those with housing problems could shelter temporarily.

Young people must have enough time to discuss the findings after data collection, and adjust the data collection tools accordingly

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Analysis is a fluid process, and is continuous. Young people must have enough time to discuss the findings after data collection, and adjust the data collection tools accordingly. In Cairo, this was possible as the dedicated project manager was able to identify when an issue needed more space to be discussed/analysed.
- Staff with the right skill set and experience are assigned to/recruited for PAR projects to help participants to analyse their findings effectively and identify the root causes of their issues.
- Sufficient time must be allocated for participants to complete the analysis stage and to consolidate their learning, before they move on to project design.
- The analysis skills training sessions should be conducted after data collection has commenced, when there are real-life examples to use during the practical sections of the training.
- Even though some topics may appear difficult, with the right coaching and support, they can be discussed and tackled.

²⁶ See Annex 2 for more information on PAR data analysis tools.

Adolescent/youth-led initiatives

The adolescent/youth-led project phase included the following activities:

- discussion and suggestions of community projects by research partners
- final selection of projects based on feasibility (depending on resources, timing, etc)
- implementation of the projects.

Lessons learned

- The opportunity to apply learning and make a tangible difference in the community was seen to be an empowering process for adolescents and youth. It develops existing capacities, expands networks and challenges negative stereotypes about adolescents and youth.
 - In Cairo, project staff identified a wide range of skills that participants learned or developed by taking the lead in community projects. These skills included developing project plans and agendas, creating and managing budgets, handling conflict, team building, solving problems, and decision making – all of which are important transferable skills.
- It is crucial that all staff members, participants, and their parents and caregivers understand from the start that PAR entails the application of learning from the research phase to the design and implementation of youth-led Initiatives. This understanding clarifies the purpose of the research phase and creates a sense of momentum.
 - In Cairo, this lack of clarity and the gap between the research and community projects phases led to some drop-outs, which could have been avoided if the information had been clearer.
 - In Lebanon, the field teams were unaware that youth-led initiatives were part of Youth Voices and that youth wanted to implement the initiatives. This was due to internal miscommunication. This was initially frustrating for the participants, who felt that the research, without action, had served no purpose. This was corrected, but the initial misunderstanding created confusion.
- Brief training on project planning may not be enough for Youth Facilitators to be able to confidently train and coach research partners.
 - In Tripoli, it was felt that there were not enough Youth Facilitators to absorb all the information needed, and as a result, staff had to assist with the training of research partners.
- The involvement of parents in the community projects phase in Cairo was critical to gaining approval for their daughters to participate, and in 6th October specifically to share with mothers and fathers the messages that the performances sought to convey.

“I have gained a lot [in this project]. I have become closer to people. I shared their pain and understood their needs, met them and felt as if I was living with them. I learned how to listen to children like me. We tried to highlight the vulnerability of children and (young people) in particular. We wanted to raise their voice and improve their condition. It is important to understand people’s suffering and feel for them. If youths like us aimed to solve these issues, we could.”

Lebanese female, aged 16, based in Lebanon

- The importance of networking and resource mobilisation was evident throughout PAR, particularly during preparations for the initiatives.
 - In Cairo, Youth Facilitators were motivated to network with different entities, stakeholders in their neighbourhoods and different service providers who could help them to implement their initiatives. Contacts were developed with other initiatives outside of Save the Children, and with trainers inside and outside of Save the Children. This allowed the Youth Facilitators to develop their networking skills and provided them with evidence of their resources, which helped them to think about ‘what is next’.
 - Also in Cairo, some Syrian CBOs were invited to attend performances organised by the 6th October participants, and consequently one of the CBOs expressed an interest in partnership to support and promote such performances in the future. This demonstrates the importance of coordination and partnership for sustainability.
 - In Bekaa, two groups decided to focus their efforts on advocating with the local municipality about the issues they face as young refugees. They expressed pride in having achieved this, given the challenges they usually face in being heard. They also developed a video, which they presented to different stakeholders. Young people felt this was a tangible outcome of the project and their efforts.
- Where possible, participants should be guided in selecting their own topics and projects in a youth-led and participatory way. Such guidance is also needed because some of their topics and project ideas might not be feasible to implement, leading to frustration. This should not be viewed as



Participant preparing for a community performance during the initiatives phase in Egypt

Community performance during the initiatives phase in Egypt



contradicting the youth-led nature of PAR, as it still enables choice, but with guidance informed by 'do no harm' principles.

- In Lebanon, participants had many relevant ideas for their community projects, based on their research, but they were unable to select them due to the limited resources allocated for this stage of the PAR process. For example, due to poor infrastructure in some communities, especially in Mankoubeen, Tripoli, and in the tented settlements, it was difficult for participants to select long-term, sustainable solutions for implementation.
- This was also a challenge in Cairo and staff realised the importance of emphasising the need for small-scale, realistic project ideas from early in the process, ie, "what they can impact, what they can control".
- In Cairo, the project team found that encouraging participants to look outwards in their selection of projects was challenging. Having said that, the girls did say that, if possible, they would seek to improve their parents' financial situation.
- During the community initiatives phase, the relationship between Youth Facilitators and younger research partners needs to be supported and carefully monitored.
 - In Cairo, it was observed that the Youth Facilitators often dominated the conversations and did not demonstrate an understanding of participatory working. In this context, it was noted as being important for staff to understand the principles of participation and peer-to-peer support to provide appropriate support and guidance.
- In Cairo, it became important for Youth Voices to provide space for the inclusion of boys in the youth-led initiatives, to introduce different viewpoints and to provide an opportunity for gender stereotypes to be challenged.
- Although there were many common priorities among the adolescents and youth within all the groups, each context was unique. Furthermore, adolescent refugees faced issues that were not faced by host community adolescents, while girls faced issues not faced by boys. These nuances need to be considered to avoid frustration or feelings of exclusion when research topics and initiatives are chosen that perhaps affect just one group, eg, girls but not boys, or refugees but not host community.

No youth-led research should be undertaken without the possibility of action

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- A practical application phase should be a standard part of PAR programming, and any programming with young people. No youth-led research should be undertaken without the possibility of action.
- Internal or external staff with experience of PAR should be available at this stage to guide participants as they make their selections and begin project planning.
- Staff must take responsibility for deciding if a project idea is potentially harmful or impractical, and if so, help young people to identify an alternative project plan using participatory approaches. There also needs to be an emphasis on projects that are realistic in the context and timeframe.
- Resources are dedicated for community projects early in the planning. Although it is not possible to know early on what the community projects are going to be, this should be taken into consideration when developing the budget or dedicating funds to a PAR project and should be clearly communicated with participants to avoid disappointment.

- Community members and other relevant stakeholders with decision-making power are included early in the planning phase of the project. For sustainability, and when funds are limited, their involvement can help push the project's agenda forward, and may facilitate action. Long-term, sustainable solutions should also be shared with relevant stakeholders during the dissemination phase of the PAR project, in the form of press conferences, panel discussions, or email communications.



- The process of PAR, especially the capacity-building aspects, should provide participants with the confidence to design their initiatives for the benefit of their wider communities. But if the group is lacking in confidence or if they are more introspective, they may require further coaching and support at this stage.
- Aside from the need for parental approval in some locations, the involvement of parents and caregivers at the community projects phase should be facilitated to ensure they understand their children's ideas and activities.
- As well as thorough training in project planning skills, training and coaching should also be provided for Youth Facilitators in participatory working and facilitation skills to ensure the voices of the younger research partners are heard and they are encouraged to take on leadership roles.
- Differing priorities within a group of adolescents and youth must be assumed, for example, differences between girls and boys or refugee and host community, and staff must be prepared to help the group negotiate these differences to avoid frustration.
- If budget and time allows, additional training and coaching should be provided on budgeting and financial literacy, to give more responsibility to youth as they plan and implement their project.

Above and below:
Participants in Egypt
leading their initiative –
an awareness-raising day
about sex education



Lessons learned

- The documentation plan created for this project was useful, and a lot of effort was put into developing it jointly with all project staff. However, the plan was not followed consistently during the project, which created gaps in understanding the project's and the participants' progress.
- Having several layers of formal documentation is an administrative burden for field staff working on multiple projects. As one of the PAR team reflected, "The documentation plan was very ambitious", which suggests that a simpler version may be more practical in a humanitarian context. In Cairo, having a dedicated manager to oversee all PAR activities, including documentation, proved to be very efficient.
- It was crucial to have an adaptable documentation plan during the pilot project in order to respond to the reality of each context. For example:
 - Reflective journals for Youth Facilitators were introduced into the PAR project in Cairo when it became clear that the IFI (research) team would not be able to observe or follow up with the youth closely. The purpose of these journals was to enrich understanding of young people's perspectives on the PAR process. They also provided an opportunity to understand young people's feelings and experiences, as well as certain aspects of their lives or community, throughout the PAR project.
- The Cairo team noted that there were no formal 'pre' and 'post' tools to measure changes in the participants during PAR, and therefore introduced a new tool to the process – 'River of Life'²⁷ – which they adapted for their purposes and which proved to be very effective. As well as enabling participants to speak about themselves as individuals and helping the group to open up to each other, it also provided a tool to assist in measuring change at the beginning and end of the project.
 - Building on this iterative approach to developing MEAL tools, the Cairo team created two more tools²⁸ to assess the impact of the community projects on participants. At the end of the PAR project, they ran focus group discussions (FGDs) with the Youth Facilitators and research partners, but noted, with hindsight, that FGDs should also be organised for all stakeholders involved with PAR, eg, parents/caregivers and trainers.
- The absence of a documentation officer in Lebanon until six months into the project created a challenge for the delivery team, who did not have the time or experience to collect data and feedback in a consistent and rigorous manner.
 - The need for trust and rapport with young people is critical to the process of documentation, and introducing a new person midway through the process can change the dynamics of the group. Other staff changes in Tripoli also made building trust even more challenging.

The need for trust and rapport with young people is critical to the process of documentation

²⁷ <http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/files/doc/A3/CLW%20pp%2011%20River%20of%20Life.pdf>

²⁸ These tools were created by the Youth Facilitators with the support of an assessment and evaluation intern from the Community Psychology Department of the American University of Cairo – 'Stones in a Pond' in Nasr City and the 'Ladder of Character Building' in 6th October.

Participants in Egypt take part in a 'River of Life' activity to express their priorities and experiences in Youth Voices



- In Cairo, building trust was crucial, as the adolescents were sharing their ideas and experiences on sensitive topics. Having a dedicated staff member greatly helped in building that trust.
- In Cairo, staff members assigned solely to manage the PAR project found they were in the best place to manage the documentation process as they had a strong relationship with the participants and were present at all sessions.
- In Lebanon, it was noted that a training or briefing session on 'how to document' would have been useful, to ensure that the correct information was collected and recorded.
- It is important to clearly separate the documentation of content and of process to be sure that both aspects are covered thoroughly and not conflated.
- It should not be assumed that participants accept or understand the documentation process, and for the Cairo team, a clear briefing at the start of the project was very important.
 - In Cairo, the adolescents signed a form acknowledging that they understood what was being recorded and that it would be shared in a final report; parents signed for participants under 18 years of age.
- When young people are expected to document their learning or findings, it should not be assumed that they are literate or confident with the methods chosen by the adults. Therefore, innovative ways to document must be explored with participants. For example, in Lebanon, WhatsApp was introduced as a tool to record and share voice messages.
- In Cairo, Youth Facilitators were given the space to adapt the documentation tools when they felt they were not suitable for their purposes. They made changes to the templates and this became an empowering experience for them. As one of the team explained, "This is the power of PAR... Documentation should not be standalone. It should be part of what is happening."
- From the Cairo perspective, Save the Children staff and Youth Facilitators tended to underestimate the energy and level of commitment that adolescents can give to a process like PAR. This meant there were missed opportunities to give adolescents responsibility for specific tasks.

"This is the power of PAR... Documentation should not be standalone. It should be part of what is happening"

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- A documentation plan is created that is realistic in the context and monitored so that any difficulties can be addressed. In a humanitarian context, the plan should be adaptable and feedback from participants should be actively encouraged.
- The MEAL team is involved in the design of the plan and the tools, in order to provide ongoing support.
- Suitable and flexible²⁹ 'pre' and 'post' tools are developed to measure the changes experienced by participants, to understand the impact of PAR, to support evaluation, and to contribute to future proposals.
- A minimum requirement for documentation is set, so that field teams are clear what is optional, what is obligatory and what they can tailor to context.
- Age-sensitive tools are developed to ensure that they suit the different age groups involved. They should also be adaptable to the education and literacy levels of the participants.
- A documentation officer or someone equivalent to a lead researcher is identified at the beginning of the project to ensure that all relevant information for the project is captured in a timely and systematic manner. The officer should have experience working with young people.
- Staff responsible for documentation understand their role and responsibilities to ensure consistent and complete documentation.
- Participants receive a formal induction in the documentation process, and their consent, or the consent of parents/guardians for under-18s, is obtained.
- Regular reflection sessions are maintained during the implementation of PAR, even when time is limited. Reflective journals are an example of a tool for structured reflection time.



A visual summary of the initiatives phase created by participants in Egypt

²⁹ Youth Voices did not want to anticipate specific changes in participants, nor to influence the young people in what they were 'supposed to' learn or change with their participation.

Impact on the adolescents

- The PAR project was ambitious and intended to measure impact on participants. But as this project was a pilot requiring substantial investment in developing and trialling new approaches with adolescents, measuring changes at individual level was difficult to achieve and was only partially achieved in Cairo.³⁰ More participation of MEAL teams during design, planning and implementation phases would have been very beneficial to support the design and integration of mechanisms to measure these changes. Adolescents and youth reported that they gained the following opportunities, skills and knowledge through participating in the project:
 - Many reported feeling more confident because of the project and its activities, while others described themselves as more courageous.
 - In Cairo, the main impact of the community project phase was reported by participants as personal growth and a boost of self-esteem.
 - In Nasr City in Cairo, participants reported gaining a change of perspective and described the PAR process as an “eye opening experience”. For example, some said that they previously did not know Cairo and had a continuous fear of the outside world, and that changed due to PAR.
 - Some said the project helped them realise that many people from their community face similar problems to them, and they felt they could better relate to their communities. For some, this resulted in a positive attitude change and more tolerance of diversity.
 - In Cairo, the girls felt that the project helped them gain a voice, and they were better able to express themselves.

“I’m really benefiting from the training in my studies and in my life. There are things that I didn’t know before or stuff that are adding to what I already know.”

- The girls also reported that they learned to respect each other’s views and to communicate with each other better.
- The Youth Facilitators described the research partners in Mankoubeen, Tripoli, as having gained a greater sense of responsibility.
- In Cairo, this feeling of responsibility was shared: “this is our project, we are responsible for it”. This resulted in participants working on their projects in their own time, and this ability to manage time and commitments was demonstrated when project work continued even during exam time.
- In Bekaa, participants said that although there was tension between Syrians and Lebanese during the first phase of the project, eventually they all became one team.
- Many mentioned joining the project, and appreciating it, because they would be taking a lead:

“When I attended the [introductory] meeting [the project manager] told us that this project is different than the other

“This is our project, we are responsible for it”

“I’m really benefiting from the training in my studies and in my life”

³⁰ As noted in the ‘Documentation and Learning’ lessons learned summary in Section 2 of this report.

projects as we will make everything instead of working according to a plan and that we will put the work plan together, and that's the point which I liked the most.”

- Many Youth Facilitators in Cairo wanted to gain professional skills, including planning, working with stakeholders and role delegation.
- Participating enabled the adolescents and youth to break free from their daily routines:

“an opportunity to go out and see the world”

Syrian female adolescent based in Cairo

- Participating helped adolescents and youth meet new people, expanding their networks within and beyond their communities
- Participants reported an improvement in their communication skills in all locations.

“Save the Children has succeeded in bringing together this group of youth, who work together and communicate to create a new atmosphere. These youth, like myself, are acquiring essential life skills here. We go out and meet new people.

“We feel we are doing something great. We feel we are putting a positive spin on the conditions of so many people. We were Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian – all united to help each other and help the community.”

Syrian male, aged 20, based in Lebanon

“We feel we are doing something great. We feel we are putting a positive spin on the conditions of so many people”

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- MEAL tools to measure change at an individual level over the course of a PAR project are tailored to context and capacity, and ideally should involve adolescents and youth in the development process.
- The skills and knowledge that PAR aims to develop are identified to support the creation of MEAL tools, but there should also be space for other basic skills and knowledge development which cannot be predicted.



A participant in Egypt using art in the initiatives phase to develop self-awareness, presentation and communication skills

Management/governance

Staffing

Lessons learned

- Employing a dedicated skilled staff member for this complex project in Cairo reduced confusion regarding decision making and chain of command, ensured a consistent focus on the project without the distraction of competing projects, and facilitated long-term thinking and more quality outcomes overall.
- In Lebanon, a decision was made that various staff members would share work time spent on the project. Heavy workloads resulted in competing priorities, as the field staff were not working only on the PAR project. Youth Facilitators were critical to adding capacity to the process, but they needed more support and guidance than they received.
- When made without consultation, management decisions regarding staffing have the potential to negatively affect the delivery team and participants. This is especially true when time has been spent building trust and rapport, and when a specific technical skill set or experience is required.
 - For example, in Tripoli, staff turnover was high, and one dedicated staff was allocated to another project in the middle of Youth Voices. This was very problematic and frustrating both for staff and the adolescents. In a project like PAR, it is particularly important to assess the impact of management decisions on the adolescents themselves, as PAR requires staff continuity and rapport to be built with the young people.
- There was resistance from some of the participants in Bekaa when a Youth Facilitator was brought in from another area, as there was a lack of trust and a fear that he would not accept them. Transparency, communication and understanding of context is very important when bringing in a new staff member or Youth Facilitator.
- All teams agreed that in order to effectively support and guide participants, it is important that facilitators and implementation team members working on a PAR project should have research skills and experience as a minimum, and ideally should also have experience of PAR in action. For example, they should be able to provide support in developing interview question guides, observation checklists and other research tools as needed.
- Providing a safe space for young people to voice their opinions and concerns requires experienced and competent staff who can support the process of prioritising concerns/issues – balancing protection and ‘do no harm’ principles with the youth-led approach at the core of PAR.



Participants in Lebanon developing their research skills through a community mapping exercise

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Team members commit to the project from beginning to end; they must be designated solely for this project.
- In a humanitarian context, staff changes, which are highly likely, are planned for, to reduce the negative effects of turnover on the project, youth and other staff.

- Project staff are open and transparent with participants regarding staff changes. Ideally, participants should be included in contingency planning, as they could be a key resource in inducting a new staff member, which would give them ownership in the process.
- Team members should have experience of working with adolescents and youth, an understanding of participatory approaches and facilitation, and familiarity with the context and local dynamics.

Internal communications

Lessons learned

- Without the establishment of clear communication channels between IFI and field teams during the planning phase, field staff and Youth Facilitators in some locations felt isolated and did not receive all the support and information they needed. Instead, information tended to disappear into the layers of staff between IFI and the direct delivery teams. However, once the problem was identified, a WhatsApp group was created to facilitate two-way information sharing, and by utilising a familiar tool, communication was rapidly improved.

It is important to consider the realistic scope of a project before overstressing the implementation team

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Clear communication channels are established in the planning phase to ensure that support is readily available and that the information flow is not interrupted once implementation is underway.
- Communication mechanisms are chosen that can be easily utilised by all levels, including Youth Facilitators, field teams, documentation officer/s and management.

Piloting a new programme/approach

Lessons learned

- It is important to consider the realistic scope of a project before overstressing the implementation team.
 - For example, for a pilot programme, it was challenging for the Lebanon team to coordinate two areas, but even more so because the manager was not exclusively assigned to the PAR project. As one of the team emphasised, “This project needs follow-up of 100% ... We need a team that is not dividing its attention between other projects.”
- A flexible timeframe is essential to ensure space for learning, reflection and adaptation.
 - Having the time to allow the young people to make their own decisions at their own pace worked well, as the flexible approach of the project allowed for tailoring to the needs of the group. As one of the participants in Cairo noted, “PAR was my first experience of this happening!”
- A ‘reference group’ was created with the participation of technical advisers, managers, field teams and IFI at the initial project planning meeting to provide a forum for people from different teams to share information, seek support or guidance, and provide updates. The group met regularly, but was not used as initially envisioned, as a reference group to support field teams.

If better used, the reference group may have been able to better respond to the challenges that the Lebanon team faced, such as structural issues and heavy workloads with competing priorities. A particular challenge was that due to poor internet connectivity, field teams stopped participating in calls, and therefore that direct contact was lost.

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- A project involving multiple stakeholders, and especially young people, is designed to be adaptable to circumstances and challenges as they change or arise. Therefore, a PAR project requires a strong relationship with a donor who is open to adaptation and ongoing learning.
- The implementation plan for a pilot PAR project is clear and focused. Ideally, it should focus on just one or two locations.
- Two rounds of PAR are implemented, to allow participants to learn about the process in the first round, develop their new skills and knowledge, and boost their confidence.
- The use of technology is considered, dependent on context and budget, in all stages of the PAR project, eg, in outreach and recruitment, research, monitoring, etc.
- If a 'reference' or support group is considered useful to the project, a realistic and relevant format is decided upon/employed to ensure it is most effectively used and that all project staff can participate.

Working with adolescent girls

- In Cairo, having a single-sex group helped female participants to be more open and enabled them to discuss sensitive issues freely. As one staff member reported, "It made them open up more, especially in the Syrian community." This was evident when male trainers were introduced early in the project and the dynamic of the group noticeably changed as the girls became more closed off.
- By introducing boys at the community projects stage in Cairo, the girls were more able to adapt as they were more settled and confident within the PAR project by that point. For example, in one of the groups, three boys joined the group of 15 girls, and it was a pivotal moment for the girls. They reported gaining a new understanding of boys and what their relationship with boys could be, ie, that boys could be friends rather than potential husbands. On a practical note, the boys were also able to assist by taking on male roles in the plays the girls had devised.
 - An important lesson learned for the Cairo team was the need for clear rules and guidelines to be put in place to support and



Participants in Bekaa, Lebanon, spoke of the many skills they gained through the research and said they now feel more confident when encouraging children to speak up about their problems

protect participating girls and boys at this stage, with an awareness of cultural norms and parental expectations. These guidelines and rules were also applied to male staff supporting the project to ensure that a safe and culturally acceptable space was maintained.

- In Lebanon, recruiting girls was challenging due to the context and culture.
 - In Tripoli, this was due to the nature of the Mankoubeen community. Young men were engaged in armed conflict or drug use, which meant that parents were hesitant to allow their daughters to leave their homes or participate in activities.
- The Cairo team learned from Youth Voices that if boys cannot be mixed with girls in a PAR project, separate groups should be organised for boys to participate in PAR. This will create a more inclusive project that supports young men to gain the same skills that the girls have access to, and provides a space for young men to think about their roles in society as men and in relation to women.

Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Discussions are held and decisions are made in the planning phase as to whether mixed groups would lead to the exclusion of girls. If so, consider creative ways to include boys at a later point in the project once trust has been built with the girls and their families.
- If mixing is not possible, funding should allow for single-sex groups of girls and boys so both can participate in PAR.
- When the participation or retention of girls presents a challenge, PAR project teams should consider ways to work with the community, and specifically with ‘gatekeepers’, to enable and increase girls’ participation.

Sustainability

Sustainability has been mentioned under many headings in this report, and links closely to selection and capacity building. The Cairo team had several reflections on this topic from their experiences:

- Staff thought that in the future they would “dig deeper” into individual motivations during the selection process to identify those young people more likely to continue their work after the official completion of PAR. They also explained that they would work harder to incorporate capacity building beyond the basics of PAR, to include broader concepts such as volunteering, impact, leadership, and evaluating the impact of your work.
- They pointed out that it is important for the organisation to consider how staff will maintain links with participants after PAR. If they do not intend to, that should be a clear part of the ‘next steps’ discussions with participants to avoid disappointment.
- WhatsApp proved to be a useful tool to maintain contact in a relatively low-maintenance way.
- The team identified a series of challenges to the young people sustaining the work after the official conclusion of PAR – for example, a lack of leadership among the group prevented them from moving forward. Where possible, project staff should step back, as they saw that the group still viewed

It is important for the organisation to consider how staff will maintain links with participants after PAR

them as ‘natural group leaders’. Leadership was also an issue for research partners, as the project team felt they had not facilitated a ‘transfer of power’ from the young people to the adolescents at the end of the project, and the consequences have been evident by lack of action among the adolescents to date.

One group of girls successfully secured funding from another non-governmental organisation to implement a project with adolescents from PAR, and contacted Save the Children staff to support them to develop new skills such as budgeting. This interaction is a good example of a positive ongoing relationship between participants and Save the Children staff, but also highlights a potential gap in PAR’s capacity-building portfolio.



Based on the lessons learned, it is recommended that:

- Individual motivations are discussed and assessed during the selection process to identify those young people who are more likely to continue their work after the official completion of PAR.
- Projects incorporate capacity building beyond the basics of PAR, to include broader concepts and transferable skills such as volunteering, impact, leadership, and evaluating the impact of your work.
- Staff plan in advance how they will maintain links with participants after PAR, and if they do not intend to, that should be a clear part of the ‘next steps’ discussions with participants. This requires a realistic review of staff time and capacity.



A PAR participant facilitating at a policy event in Lebanon to share the learning from Youth Voices

SECTION 3

'How to' guide

Introduction

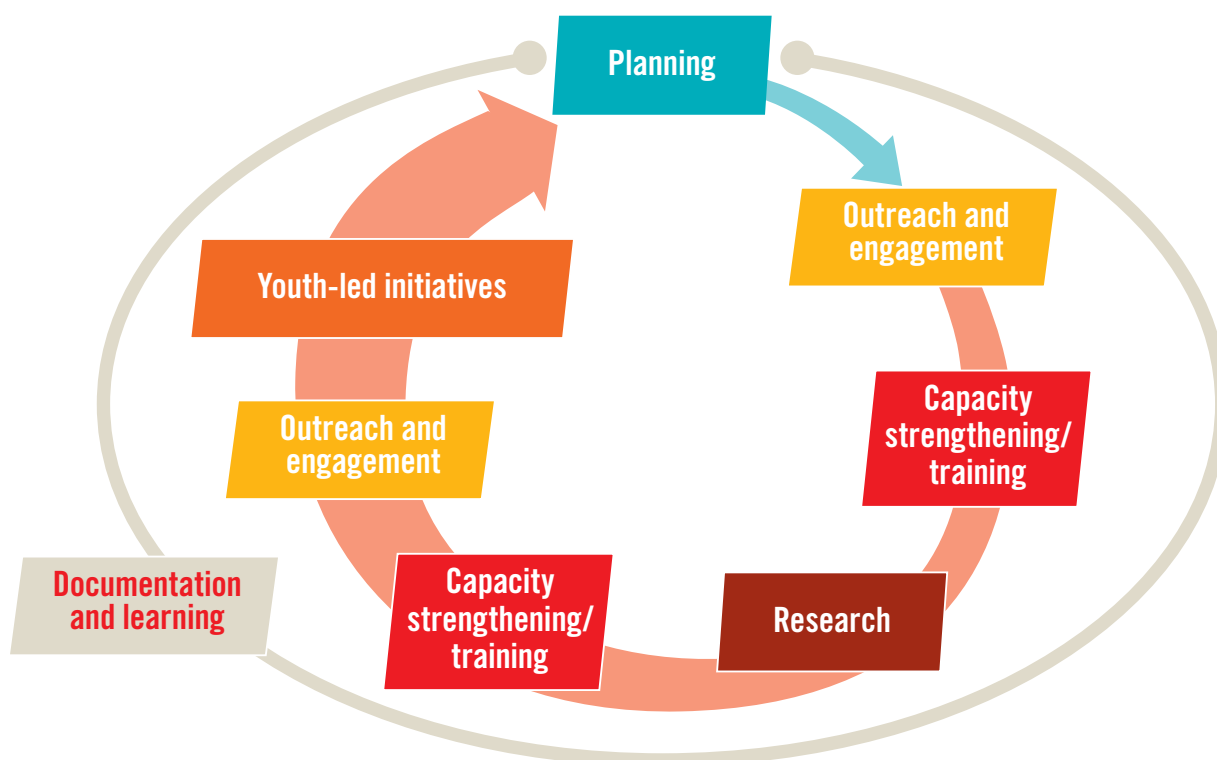
This section draws upon the learning gained through practical experience in Youth Voices in Lebanon and Cairo. It builds on the recommendations shared in Section 2 by providing practical advice that is relevant for anyone considering introducing the PAR approach to their work with adolescents and youth in a humanitarian context.

It has been organised according to the key phases of a PAR project, with checklists and important considerations for each phase to support project design, planning, implementation and evaluation. For more context regarding any of the tasks outlined in each project phase, you can refer to the lessons learned summaries in Section 2 of this document.

Finally, some key questions are raised for you to consider about whether the PAR approach is appropriate for work with adolescents and youth in your context.

This section is directly linked to the annexes, which describe a range of tools and resources developed during this pilot project and which have been made available for use and adaptation to suit project objectives and context.

Core PAR project phases



3.1 Planning

Identifying funding sources

- When identifying the funding sources for a PAR project, it is important to consider the need for flexibility and adaptability to be able to create a successful project that is genuinely adolescent- and youth-led. Therefore, this should be clearly communicated in the funding bids and the philosophy of any donor should complement the approach and principles of PAR.

Knowing your context

- Before initiating a PAR project in any community or country, a risk assessment must be conducted by the Country Office to identify and mitigate any risk of harm for participants, staff and the organisation.³¹

CASE STUDY



For example, in Lebanon and Egypt, specific PAR tools such as Photovoice³² were identified as unsuitable for use in public due to security and privacy concerns. Having assessed the situation in Cairo, it was decided that Photovoice could be used but only in domestic settings.

- The implementation plan for a pilot PAR project should be clear and focused. Ideally, it should focus on just one or two locations to make it more manageable.

Who should be involved?

- The project team should hold a planning workshop to determine outcomes, select target groups and identify locations. See Annex 4 for a sample agenda.

Age group selection



- The age groups within the broad age range of the project should be determined before outreach and recruitment commences to ensure clear communication of roles and responsibilities for each group and to set clear expectations.

CASE STUDY



In Cairo, it became clear that the initial age range of 13–21 was too broad to create one group, given the different developmental stages and life experiences within that range. Consequently, the team decided to divide the group into three, consisting of 12–14, 15–16, and 18–21-year-olds. The older age group took on the role of Youth Facilitators who helped in training and leadership, and the two younger age groups took on the role of research partners who received the training, conducted the research and implemented the youth-led projects.

³¹ O’Kane, C. (2013). *Guidelines for Children’s Participation in Humanitarian Programming*. London: The Save the Children Fund. See pp. 16–18 for an example of a risk assessment tool to support safe participation. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Children_Participation_Humanitarian_Guidelines.pdf

³² ‘Photovoice is a participatory action research strategy which can contribute to youth mobilization for community change’. http://www.marissabellino.com/uploads/7/6/6/1/7661682/wang_2006.pdf

Location selection



- Where possible, PAR should be implemented in areas where the organisation already operates or is familiar with the context, to simplify set-up and implementation, and to avoid issues arising from a lack of local knowledge.
- An initial mapping exercise should focus on the surrounding community,³³ and the adolescents and youth themselves, to identify relevant resources that could assist the PAR project.³⁴
- A mapping exercise can identify facilities, materials, skills, knowledge, experience or networks.

To introduce PAR as a methodology and to encourage integrated working and facilitate more efficient decision making, a PAR project should be initiated with planning meetings for the Programme Development and Quality team's Technical Advisers and the Operations team. The Advocacy and MEAL teams should also take part if feasible. See Annex 4 for sample agendas.

CASE STUDY



Despite a successful kick-off meeting in Lebanon, the number of people engaged with the project decreased over time as other work commitments took priority and immediate input was not required. This indicates that more integrated cross-sector working requires active nurturing and maintenance throughout the project cycle.

- At this stage, at least one follow-up review meeting should be scheduled with the Senior Management Team and, if possible, other sectors. Whether quarterly or mid-term, this will provide a forum/s to share information, identify gaps in resources and potential links between teams, and inform the development of future proposals.
- Management and coordination arrangements should be decided upon in this phase, and relevant staff engaged or recruited. Resources should be allocated, and cross-sector/team support needs identified.

³³ As well as identifying practical resources, from a conflict-sensitivity perspective, it is also “critical to recognise and understand the various divisions and relationships in a community and how this affects access to, and distribution of, resources”. Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. (2012). *How to guide to Conflict Sensitivity*. UKaid, p. 18.

³⁴ Resource mapping can be a simple extension of a community mapping session and promotes the ‘strength-based approach’ in our work with young people as it avoids simply focusing on the challenges and problems that young people face in their communities. Many resources are available online to support this process, for example, the FHI 360 guide to ‘Community Youth Mapping’. <http://www.seepnetwork.org/community-youth-mapping-resources-1119.php>

- Young people and representatives of the local community should be included in the planning phase to encourage dialogue and sustained engagement in the project.
 - Selection criteria should be determined in consultation with representatives of the local community, to guide and support the project team in their recruitment and outreach activities.³⁵
 - Feedback and accountability mechanisms should be established, or utilised if already in place, to facilitate an open relationship with the community throughout the project.
- Establishing a ‘reference group’ of professionals (internal and external) with relevant skills and experience can provide valuable support and guidance for a pilot PAR project. But it is crucial that a realistic and relevant format is decided upon and employed to ensure that the group is fully utilised by those staff who most need it.

Recruitment and staff engagement

- A dedicated staff member(s) with the relevant skills and knowledge should be exclusively assigned to the project.

CASE STUDY



For a pilot programme, it was challenging for the Lebanon team to coordinate two areas, but even more so because the coordinator was not exclusively assigned to the PAR project. As one of the team noted, “This project needs follow up of 100% ... We need a team that is not dividing its attention between other projects.”

- In a humanitarian context, staff changes are highly likely, and therefore need to be planned for to reduce the negative effects of turnover on the project, young people and other staff.

CASE STUDY



In Lebanon, there was high staff turnover in one location, which created frustration for participants, who needed time to build trust and rapport with each member of staff. As the new staff had not received the PAR induction training, there were also knowledge gaps. This diminished the quality and accuracy of the support and guidance that staff could provide to participants.

- Job and role descriptions for key project staff, including Youth Facilitators, should be prepared, and Human Resources briefed on the requirements.

³⁵ Engaging the community in this way is crucial for accountability, transparency and positive community relations. It will also increase diversity in the application and selection process.

Through the lessons learned workshop, specific skills and knowledge were identified as important for staff and therefore should be prioritised during recruitment and when planning capacity-strengthening activities. The specific skills and knowledge identified included:

- experience working with young people, with strong motivational skills, participatory approaches, and team-building skills
- social work and child protection background was particularly important in the context of Youth Voices
- ability to manage expectations
- understanding of gender equality and conflict management/ conflict sensitivity
- familiarity with context and local dynamics
- critical analysis skills
- documentation skills
- research methods.

If PAR and/or action research expertise is not available internally, a local professional research organisation with PAR experience, and experience of working with adolescents and youth, should be identified and engaged to develop the methodology and materials, deliver training and provide ongoing coaching and support. Key roles identified include:

- support in the design of the participatory action research framework/ guidance document with suggested steps and tools
- support analysis of data collected from the participatory action research: guidance on process tools and coaching for the team on data analysis
- provide training on participatory action research methodologies to adolescent participants and Save the Children staff
- contribute to the drafting of the project documentation plan and development of documentation tools
- be a member of country-level and regional-level reference groups
- provide ongoing mentoring support to the project
- partner on policy-level actions that may derive from the project, as relevant and appropriate, such as drafting advocacy or policy notes
- participate and contribute to the regional learning event.

Communications

Clear communication channels must be established in the planning phase to ensure that support is readily available, and that the information flow is not interrupted.


Communication mechanisms should be chosen that can be easily utilised by all levels, including Youth Facilitators, field teams, documentation officer/s and management.

Sustainability

Preparing for the close of the project and planning for sustainability should begin in the planning phase, and should be considered at every stage of the project.

3.2 Outreach and engagement

Community engagement


-  In coordination with your communications team, a communications strategy should be prepared before any community engagement commences, utilising the findings of the risk assessment and any context or conflict analysis.
 - Community sensitisation: Using the communications strategy, create awareness of the PAR project and build community support.
 - Use the knowledge of Youth Facilitators and local staff for community outreach.
 - Engage parents/caregivers, along with other key family members, and familiarise them with the PAR principles and approach to support engagement and retention of youth and adolescents.³⁶
 - These identified ‘gatekeepers’ or decision makers should be kept informed and involved in the planning and implementation phases of a PAR project.

CASE STUDY



In Cairo, social media was identified as an effective tool to maintain positive relations with family members, which would help to retain participants. Consequently, a WhatsApp group was created to keep parents updated on the proceedings of the project and to provide them with a mechanism to ask questions, share opinions and raise concerns.

Engaging adolescents and youth

-  In a humanitarian context, stipends for participants should be included in a PAR budget, to enable the most vulnerable adolescents and youth to participate in the project.
 - The amount of the stipend must be determined based on each individual project context and in consultation with other sectors.
 - A stipend should be combined with a written and signed ‘Volunteer’ or ‘Participation’ agreement to create a structured and professional relationship between staff and participants.³⁷

³⁶ Engaging and retaining adolescents and youth on a PAR project will be supported by identifying and understanding the key ‘gatekeepers’ or decision makers in each community, ie, those who have the authority to enable or block attendance. This might include mothers, fathers, brothers or other key community members.

³⁷ Save the Children staff can find a sample Volunteer/Participation agreement on Save the Children OneNet in the following extension: Where We Work > Middle East & Eastern Europe > MEERegionalThematicCoordination > Adolescent and Youth Initiatives > PAR

CASE STUDY



In Lebanon, some participants had to turn down work opportunities to attend the PAR sessions, and therefore their attendance and ongoing commitment was dependent on a financial incentive. Also, in Cairo, the term 'volunteer' was found to be negatively affecting attendance of vulnerable young people who have many competing priorities and prefer to use their time for structured activities with tangible outcomes.

- Identify and select Youth Facilitators from the community based on the target groups and profiles identified in the planning phase.
- Select adolescent research partners based on the target groups and profiles identified in the planning phase.
- Ensure diverse recruitment channels. In new locations, and to engage more vulnerable/hard-to-reach adolescents and youth, a range of recruitment channels should be utilised – for example, social media platforms or forums, former adolescent or youth participants and their networks, community leaders and CBOs.

3.3 Capacity strengthening/training

- To inform the training component of PAR, a preliminary community assessment of the proposed study area should include data collection on adolescent and youth socio-demographics, including numbers of youth, their education and their occupations.
- A comprehensive profile of the adolescents and youth recruited for the project must be reviewed by the training team to ensure that appropriate tools and approaches are designed/selected for each training workshop.
- Within a PAR project, learning should always be viewed as an ongoing process, and therefore training and coaching should be designed to flow through a PAR project. It is not simply a task to be completed in the early stages.
- The time needed to cover PAR principles, approaches and tools may vary between groups and individuals and therefore flexibility and a tailored training approach is crucial.
- For Youth Facilitators and project staff, it is as important for them to understand the concept of facilitation, participation and coaching as it is for them to understand how PAR works.

Protection and safeguarding

- All external trainers and research professionals must receive training in child safeguarding before they have any contact with participants aged under 18 years.

- Training for staff and participants must include referral mechanisms to ensure there is an understanding of who to contact if protection issues are identified.
- From a protection and ‘do-no-harm’ perspective, psychosocial content should be embedded in the PAR training curriculum for staff and participants. This is essential to support them to safely and effectively manage protection concerns, conflict, expressions of emotion, and other sensitive issues that might be raised.

Staff

- Staff and consultants should be inducted to understand all the phases of PAR before engaging in outreach and recruitment of adolescents and youth.
- Training should be organised for Youth Facilitators and project staff on the PAR tools and processes.³⁸
 - All project team members who will be working directly in the field should attend all the training sessions and workshops as active participants, to ensure they can provide support and recommendations to the youth during the implementation phase of the project.
- Capacity building for staff should include coaching and mentoring skills for the provision of ongoing support throughout the PAR project.
- Ongoing training and coaching opportunities for internal staff on PAR principles and approaches should be planned and made available throughout the project based on specific needs and capacities.
 - Tracking and responding to these needs should be incorporated within the documentation plan and monitored closely.

Youth Facilitators

- Within the Youth Facilitators’ training, there must be a focus on the skills and attitudes required to facilitate the active engagement and participation of younger research partners, to avoid Youth Facilitators dominating the younger participants.
- Project staff should discuss with Youth Facilitators what training they need to support them and better involve them as decision makers and leaders within PAR.

Adolescents and youth

- PAR training and meetings should take a strengths-based approach, with a focus on participants’ resources and capacities rather than just the challenges they face and needs not being met.
 - This is crucial for promoting well-being and fostering sustainable outcomes and more self-sufficient adolescents and youth.³⁹

³⁸ Save the Children staff can find a comprehensive training manual on Save the Children OneNet in the following extension: Where We Work > Middle East & Eastern Europe > MEERegionalThematicCoordination > Adolescent and Youth Initiatives > PAR

³⁹ “Many youth development programs recognize that problem-based approaches to young people do not work. These programs are refocusing on assets, strengths, and competencies of young people rather than their problems. Participation is a key mechanism to achieving successful youth development.” Family Health International. (2008). *Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning and Implementation*. USA: FHI. Conceptual Overview, Section 1, p. 1.

- The dates and times of training sessions and meetings should be discussed with participants and scheduled around their availability.⁴⁰
- Team-building activities and life skills training should be organised for Youth Facilitators and research partners prior to receiving technical training in the PAR methodology and tools. This will contribute to creating a more cohesive group who are more confident in their participation and more able to absorb the large amount of new information.
- Sufficient time should be allocated to the introductory training workshops to ensure that all foundational content can be covered effectively.
- Training for research partners on PAR methodology and tools should be led by Youth Facilitators with the support of project staff.
- Further skills training and team-building activities should be spread throughout the timeline of the project, with the flexibility to respond to the group's needs and requests.
 - For participants to be able to internalise their learning and practise their new skills, it is crucial that all the PAR training is not given only at the start of the project.
- Organising discussions or exchanges with other adolescents and youth participating in PAR, in the same country or region, can greatly benefit implementation.
 - In person or over Skype, adolescents and youth can learn from each other, offer support and create a network that will contribute to sustainability after the close of the project.

Top tips for running sessions with young people



- Use games and 'energiser' activities to keep energy levels high and to create some space for fun.
- Introduce ground rules or a group contract to create a safe and comfortable space, which adolescents and youth should shape for themselves.
- Make space for social and informal time so that participants can get to know each other, eg, over shared food or cultural activities.
- Where possible, a range of facilitation methods should be used to keep the sessions interesting and dynamic and to support different educational levels and learning and expression styles. For example, use large and small group discussions, music, art and drama, as well as more traditional written or discussion-based activities.
- Remember that the principles of PAR must be applied in all phases of PAR, including during training, so seek opportunities for adolescents and youth to take the lead as much as possible.
- Rather than focusing only on what skills or knowledge young people lack/need to gain, be sure to identify and showcase the skills, talents and knowledge they already have.⁴¹

⁴⁰ In a complex humanitarian context, maintaining attendance can be challenging, but implementing this youth-led approach to scheduling should have a positive effect on attendance.

⁴¹ As well as being conducive to the adolescent- and youth-led PAR principles of adolescents and youth as the experts, the 'strength-based approach' is also a core component of Save the Children MEEE's core approaches to working with adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts. From a protection and 'do-no-harm' perspective, it cannot be 'one size fits all', especially in fragile contexts of displacement and humanitarian crisis.

3.4 Selecting a research topic

- For research partners to select their research topics, it must be clarified at the start of the project whether the intent is to consider and address issues that affect the whole community or issues that affect adolescents and youth specifically. This is to be decided by the adolescents themselves.
- As an organisation, you need to decide in advance if you are initiating a PAR project to focus a specific topic or sector, eg, education or livelihoods, or whether you are open to the participants selecting the topic or sector according to their own priorities.

Identifying a research question and geographical focus: key questions to consider⁴²

- What is the specific problem/issue?
- What are the research questions you would like to answer?
- What do you want to know? What hypothesis do you want to test? What do you want to highlight or draw attention to that is not already known, or if known, not sufficiently demonstrated?
- What can you feasibly act upon?
- What are the rough geographic boundaries where you would like to take action?

- Community mapping is a recommended tool in the process of identifying research topics⁴³ as it is an effective, visual way to consolidate and record participants' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, their communities.

- Regardless of who selects the question, project teams should have a specific research question for every research topic they select so that their study is focused on clear objectives.

- Remember! This question will form the basis of the participants' research plan.

- Different methods can be used to help participants select their topics, but ranking methodologies are recommended – for example, diamond ranking or participatory ranking methodology.



Participants preparing community maps in Egypt

Diamond ranking



- An interactive tool that can be utilised with children and adults to facilitate the collective prioritisation of an issue.⁴⁴

⁴² <https://www.labor.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/A-Short-Guide-to-Community-Based-Participatory-Action-Research.pdf>

⁴³ See Annex 1 for more information about community mapping.

⁴⁴ A facilitation plan for diamond ranking is available from the Save the Children online Resource Centre: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/arc-modf4-4-e7-2009.pdf>

Participatory ranking methodology



- “A ‘mixed methods’ approach to data collection, in which the participants are guided in generating responses to a specific question or set of questions... This methodology promotes an engaged and participatory process, which rapidly highlights key findings while providing the opportunity for deeper analysis as resources permit. Collected in a structured manner, results can be swiftly consolidated and used to develop action plans addressing identified priorities.”⁴⁵

Selecting research tools

- Staff and trainers should decide in advance what approach for tool selection suits the context, and which tools would be appropriate and feasible.⁴⁶

‘It is important to note that the concept of young people having power over key decisions and processes in youth-led PAR does not mean in practice that all ideas, methods, or data interpretations generated by the youth researchers should be supported uncritically by the adult facilitators or peers’.⁴⁷



For example, adult staff and Youth Facilitators must be mindful of deadlines, conflicts, protection concerns and the principles of ‘do no harm’.⁴⁸

- Research tools should only be introduced as an option if the resources they require are available and affordable, eg, Smartphones or cameras and photography training for the Photovoice tool.
- Staff, Youth Facilitators and research partners must have a good understanding of research ethics. As well as featuring in the training on research, this will need to be monitored as the project progresses.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ager, A., Stark, L., Potts, A. (2010). *Participative Ranking Methodology: A Brief Guide*. Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York, USA. Available from the CPC Learning Network website: <http://www.cpcnetwork.org/resource/prm-a-brief-guide/>

⁴⁶ See Annex 1 for examples of PAR research tools.

⁴⁷ Ozer, E. J. (2016). *Youth-Led Participatory Action Research*. University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health. In: L. A. Jason and D. S. Glenwick (Eds.). *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ch. 26, p. 4

⁴⁸ “The Do No Harm ‘Analytical Framework’ was developed from the programming experience of many assistance workers. It provides a tool for mapping the interactions of assistance and conflict and can be used to plan, monitor and evaluate both humanitarian and development assistance programmes.” http://www.donoharm.info/downloads/level000/Seven_Steps_English.pdf

⁴⁹ Research ethics are the principles and rules that guide how people should be treated when they are participants in a research process or project. See Annex 3 for an overview of PAR research ethics.

- The selection of PAR tools by research partners is critical to this phase of the project and it is important to allow enough time for a truly youth-led process, with space for young people to make their own decisions.
 - For the selection of research topics and tools, the suggestions of staff and Youth Facilitators should be kept to a minimum, except for guidance and support.
 - Support the development of a simple research plan – ie, including the group, topic, tool, location and study sample/target group.

CASE STUDY

In Egypt and Lebanon, due to their limited experience, Youth Facilitators were often unable to withhold their opinions during the community mapping exercises. This had an impact on the reliability of the findings, as they may have influenced the participants.

CASE STUDY

The following research and analysis tools were selected for use in Egypt and Lebanon:

Location	Research tools used	Analysis tools used
Egypt	Community walks, Photovoice, community mapping	SHOWED, reflective learning journals
Lebanon	Interviews, observation, exploration, FGDs	Thematic analysis

3.5 Conducting the research

- Provide refresher training, if needed, on the selected PAR tools.
- Ideally, the analysis skills training sessions should be conducted after data collection has commenced, when there are real-life examples to use during the practical sections of the training.
- Staff with the right skill set and experience must be assigned to/recruited for PAR projects to help the participants analyse their findings effectively and identify the root causes of their issues.
- As well as ensuring an understanding of the PAR tools, training and ongoing coaching provides participants with the skills and support they need to discuss sensitive topics, ask probing questions, set realistic expectations and manage challenging conversations.
- Ensure that research partners have access to all the necessary materials required for tool implementation, eg, stationery, templates or copies of key forms, and technology such as a camera or phone, etc.

- Allow time for all tools to be pilot tested before being used in the community.

CASE STUDY



In Lebanon, participants often struggled to explain the scope of their PAR projects to community members during interviews, which put them in a vulnerable position. This emphasised the importance of practice and thorough preparation before using the research tools in the community.

- If the research is targeting under-18s, introduce standard simple consent forms to be signed by parents/guardians agreeing to the participation of under-18s as research subjects.⁵⁰
- Monitor progress as the research is conducted to ensure that the data collected is suitable for analysis.
- Staff or Youth Facilitators should facilitate reflection sessions with research partners, for example through discussions or with a learning journal.⁵¹
 - In PAR, every step of the research involves “some type of planning, action, and evaluation”.⁵² All data collected is reflected upon. Even the research questions serve as a springboard for additional questions that serve to ‘inform’ the research process.⁵³

3.6 Analysing the findings

- Analysis and interpretation of the information gathered is directly linked back to the research question, and should be led by the adolescent research partners.
- Provide coaching or refresher training, if needed, on the selected PAR analysis tools.⁵⁴
- At this stage, adolescent researchers may benefit from bringing together an advisory board of key stakeholders, such as policymakers and/or community leaders to share their findings, get feedback and create relationships that could support the sustainability of their initiatives.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Save the Children staff can find a sample consent form on Save the Children OneNet in the following extension: Where We Work > Middle East & Eastern Europe > MEERegionalThematicCoordination > Adolescent and Youth Initiatives > PAR

⁵¹ See Annex 1 for more information on reflective learning journals.


⁵² Berg, B. L. and Lune, H. (2004). Action research. In B. L. Berg (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (Vol. 5). Boston, MA: Pearson

⁵³ McIntyre, A. (2007). *Participatory action research* (Vol. 52). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

⁵⁴ See Annex 2 for more information on PAR analysis tools.

⁵⁵ Wang, C. C. (2006). Youth participation in Photovoice as a strategy for community change. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14(1–2), 147–161

3.7 Adolescent- and youth-led initiatives

 In analysing the findings, research partners must consider potential 'solutions' to the questions and problems raised through their research,⁵⁶ which is the way in which PAR leads to actions that are appropriate for the community being studied.

- The youth-led initiatives phase of PAR is critical for participants and their communities to see the tangible outcomes of their training and research. No youth-led research should be undertaken without the possibility of utilising the findings through action.⁵⁷

Managing expectations

- As in the research phase, it is essential to be realistic with participants about the scope and potential outcomes of PAR initiatives from the start, especially given the complexity of humanitarian contexts.
- Small and meaningful changes are possible and should be acknowledged and valued.

Capacity building

- With the support of staff, Youth Facilitators need to be prepared to train and coach research partners in project planning skills in this phase. Therefore, they will need a technical understanding of how to run a PAR initiative and also a refresher in facilitation skills.
- Research partners will need to receive their practical training in project planning in order to start designing their initiatives.
- If budget and time allow, additional training and coaching should be provided on budgeting and financial literacy.⁵⁸

Project planning

- Internal or external staff with experience of PAR should be available to guide participants as they make their selections and begin project planning.
- Community members and other relevant stakeholders with decision-making power should continue their involvement at this stage, to ensure initiatives are suitable in the context and can be sustained beyond the life of the PAR project.
- Through discussion, prioritisation and ranking, research partners should review the outcomes of their research and analysis and decide on the focus of their initiative.

The final selection of projects must be based on feasibility, ie, dependent on resources, timing and potential conflict in the community, etc.

⁵⁶ Berg, B. L. and Lune, H. (2004). Action research. In B. L. Berg (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (Vol. 5). Boston, MA: Pearson

⁵⁷ "As the name 'Participatory Action Research' suggests, taking action as a result of the learning in the Research phase is crucial to PAR. This is the part that really makes PAR different from other types of research. It means that as a result of the adolescents' exploring, researching and discussing, 'the information is not just recorded', but rather something actually happens, and they are responsible for that." UNICEF Jamaica. (2004). *PAR Guide: Promoting the Participation, Learning and Action of Young People*. p. 8

⁵⁸ This is necessary to give more responsibility to young people as they plan and implement their project and to provide skills that will contribute to sustainability after the end of the PAR project.

- Topics selected for youth-led initiatives during the pilot PAR project:

Egypt



Sexual harassment in Cairo, personal safety, parent–child disempowering communication, adapting to the Cairoian context, awareness raising about knowing and exploring one’s self

Lebanon

School, infrastructure, environment, shelter, hygiene, education.

Project implementation

- The following are examples of youth-led initiatives.

Egypt



The group in 6th October designed an intervention to address the problem of ‘low self-confidence’ which Youth Facilitators and research partners had identified as an issue they could work on and change in order to change ‘bigger problems’. Two of the main ‘bigger problems’ identified were sexual harassment and home-related issues such as forced marriage and early marriage. The initiative contained 16–20 practical sessions including interactive theatre, singing, writing and different forms of art to create a performance to express the challenges faced by youth and adolescents. This performance took place in front of parents, Syrian community leaders and Cairoian neighbours.

Lebanon

A group in Tripoli, focused on public safety, chose to run an awareness campaign for people to take care of their environment.

A group in Qab Elias, focused on education, chose to give educational sessions to illiterate young people in the camps and provide them with stationery. Furthermore, they spoke with the education department in Save the Children to lobby for the provision of experienced teachers to teach the Lebanese curriculum for the Syrian refugees.

Evaluation

- In accordance with the documentation plan, participants should be supported to evaluate their projects in terms of outputs, outcomes and impact.

3.8 Documentation

- Information capture needs to be ongoing throughout a PAR project, and should be led by young people as much as possible.
- Refer to Annex 5 for a sample documentation plan to guide the creation of a context-specific plan.

Preparation

- A documentation plan, to systematically capture each step of the project in terms of **content** and **process**, should be created that is realistic in the context and monitored so that any difficulties can be addressed:
 - In a humanitarian context, the plan should be adaptable and feedback from participants should be actively encouraged.
 - A minimum requirement for documentation should be determined, so that the field teams are clear what is optional, what is obligatory, and what they can tailor to their context.
- The MEAL team should be involved in designing the plan and the tools, so as to provide ongoing support.
- Age-sensitive tools should be developed to ensure that they suit the different age groups involved. They should also be adaptable to the education and literacy levels of the participants.
- Selecting indicators that are SMART⁵⁹ is crucial to demonstrating the efficacy and viability of PAR, and similar participatory methods.
- Suitable 'pre' and 'post' tools should be developed with participating adolescents and youth.⁶⁰

Coordination

- A documentation officer, or someone equivalent to a lead researcher, should be recruited at the beginning of the project to ensure that all relevant information for the project is captured in a timely and systematic manner.
 - The officer should have experience of working with adolescents and youth.

Induction

- All staff responsible for documentation must be thoroughly inducted to understand their role and responsibilities to ensure consistent and complete documentation.
- Youth Facilitators and research partners should receive a formal induction in the documentation process, and their consent/the consent of parents/guardians for under-18s should be obtained.

⁵⁹ SMART = Specific, Measurable, Accepted, Relevant and Time bound

⁶⁰ To measure the changes experienced by participants, to understand the impact of PAR, to support evaluation, and to contribute to future proposals

Reflection

- Regular reflection sessions must be maintained during the implementation of PAR, even when time is limited. Reflective journals are an example of tools for structured reflection time.

It is not enough to just plan and carry out the activities within PAR



“Somebody (or several ‘somebodies’) must take notes, make observations, and keep track of what is going on. If you do not make this a part of the PAR activity, you may lose a lot of the important information. PAR really needs to be a team activity, with observers playing as important a role as the facilitators. These observations need to be recorded in some way. They can be written, audio-recorded, video-taped, or they can be in the form of photographs. However you record them, take the time to review them after the activity is finished so that all the information can be studied and put to good use. Whatever action takes place from PAR, you will find it helpful to have this back-up material to refer to.”⁶¹

3.9 Working with adolescent girls

- It should be discussed and decided in the planning phase whether mixed groups would lead to the exclusion of girls.

CASE STUDY



In Cairo, it was determined that girls needed to work in single-sex groups for most of the PAR project activities. But a few boys were introduced at the community projects stage as it was considered that the girls were more able to adapt as they were settled and confident within PAR and their group. This was identified as a pivotal moment for the girls, as they gained a new understanding of boys and what their relationship with them could be, ie, boys could be friends rather than only potential spouses.

- If mixing is not possible, ensure that funding allows for single-sex groups of girls and boys so both groups can participate in PAR.
- When the participation or retention of girls presents a challenge, PAR project teams should consider ways to work with the community, and specifically with ‘gatekeepers’, to enable and increase girls’ participation.⁶²

⁶¹ UNICEF Jamaica. (2004). *PAR Guide: Promoting the Participation, Learning and Action of Young People*. p. 16

⁶² Many resources are available that provide useful tips about engaging parents and caregivers, for example, https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/9923/pdf/facilitator_handbook_parents_and_caregivers_meetings_may_2016_web.pdf and <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/populations/adolescent-girls/research-and-resources/1538-engaging-male-caregivers-to-end-early-marriage-in-lebanon>

3.10 Implementation – key questions to consider

- What is the current level of young people’s participation in the organisation?
- Is the organisation ready and willing to explore new models of working?
- Is PAR a realistic and safe option in the context, for example, from a security and cultural perspective?
- Is enough time available to implement a PAR project?⁶³
- Are staff available for the duration of the project and with the appropriate skill set to manage and deliver PAR?
- In a context of displacement, can the adolescents and youth commit to the project over an extended period?
- Can a PAR project be sustainable in the context? That is, are there systems or networks in place that would facilitate participants continuing their work and developing their ideas further after the life of the project?

When children’s participation may not be appropriate in humanitarian programming



“While we seek to apply the principle of children’s participation to enable children’s voices to be heard and to influence decisions that affect them, other child rights and humanitarian principles, including the principle of the child’s best interests and the principle of ‘do no harm’, may override the principle of children’s participation in some contexts. Every context is unique. Thus, a good understanding of the local context (socio-political, cultural, religious, geographic situation, etc) and risk assessments and risk mitigation in relation to different types of children’s participation is required in order to inform decision-making about when and how children’s participation may or may not be appropriate.”⁶⁴

⁶³ From the experience of the pilot PAR project, it is recommended that a minimum of six months is needed and that the optimum time would be a minimum of one year.

⁶⁴ O’Kane, C. (2013). *Guidelines for Children’s Participation in Humanitarian Programming*. London: The Save the Children Fund, p. 7.

Conclusion

When adolescents and youth were given the space to take risks and to practise what they had learned, and when they were provided with the necessary support (ie, tools, information and opportunities to experiment) and guidance to reflect, an environment was created for:

Growth and development

- promotion of critical thinking among young people
- young people were empowered to make decisions
- young people felt more empathy with their communities.

Building relationships

- there was greater cohesion between young people of different ages and backgrounds, which led to a visible shift in group dynamics
- greater connections were formed with their communities.

Civic engagement and feeling of greater responsibility

- there was a shift from young people feeling helpless and disillusioned to demonstrating commitment and great hope for their project
- young people demonstrated increased commitment as the project progressed
- learning in the research phase made young people want to make a difference in their communities.

Annexes

Annex 1: PAR research tools

The following table outlines a sample of PAR tools introduced by IFI in the pilot project.⁶⁵

Tool	Outline
<p>Community mapping</p>	<p>As the target population of their research, participants engage in creating participatory and collective community maps of a particular location in groups of seven participants maximum. They are given the freedom to draw what they want by giving just a simple instruction, eg, 'draw everything you can think of, and always from your own perspective'. After the groups share their maps, they are given time to add anything they would like, and then they respond to a series of questions which help them to create a more nuanced map, for example, with details related to safety, spare time, work, resources, the different experiences of boys and girls, or refugees and host community, etc.</p>
<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews are considered one of the most important tools for PAR. In contrast to group discussions, interviews allow us to obtain a personal opinion from the participant. An interview is very likely to reveal conflicts within the community because responders may feel that they are able to speak more freely than if they were in the presence of their colleagues.</p> <p>It is important that an appropriate sample of participants, who are able to give input about the chosen topic of interest, is selected for interviewing. A range of participants should be included to obtain a variety of opinions and trends, and it is important to avoid biasing the answers. Questions are asked about participants' own opinions and behaviours and not about their opinions on the behaviours of other.</p> <p>Key stakeholders should be included who may be involved in or who know about the topic of interest. For personal information about a subject, establishing rapport and building trust are crucial.</p> <p>The interview is recorded, if permission is obtained from the participant, or notes must be taken. Interviews are analysed by coding the resulting notes or transcripts, all the while looking for themes. Try and include a range of people, such as from other communities, and not only people who are directly concerned with the topic of interest, because they may be at the same level of importance as key stakeholders, and can have valuable input about your community and the community members.</p>
<p>Focus group discussions</p>	<p>Focus groups are used to collect information on the level of groups and society in a guided manner. They are led by a facilitator, and if conducted correctly, may have many positive results, including that they allow us to obtain large amounts of information. Focus groups also allow direct confirmation of information, as data will be gathered from other people in the group.</p>

⁶⁵ Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. (2015). *Training Manual on Participatory Action Research Tools: A Guide for Youth Facilitators' and Research Partner's Training*. pp. 18–43

Tool	Outline
Exploration (community walks)	<p>'Exploration' as a PAR tool is collecting information and data related to a topic from the direct environment or context.</p> <p>There are multiple ways in which this activity can be conducted, but in all ways, the research partners are divided into groups, and each group takes charge to discover an aspect of the community, including the environment, the physical structure, the people, etc. By people here, we mean diverse members of the community, or the location being explored. Young people can interview members of the host community as well as refugees. They may also interview shop owners and shop employees. In short, they must interview everyone whose opinion they deem important when trying to answer their research question. As for the environment and physical structure of the community, it must be explored using all senses, ie, young people must listen, look, smell, touch, etc. What they look for in the environment and in the physical structure of their community will also depend on the research question. If, for instance, they are interested in public safety (as part of the environment and physical structure of the community), then they may look for items such as defective street lights, rubbish dumps or damaged electrical wires, etc.</p>
Direct observation	<p>In PAR, the researcher is especially prone to believing misleading information based on false beliefs. These beliefs may be based on what they hear, rumours, and gossip. People usually believe in values and activities that are incompatible with real life, and it is common to be told about a certain habit, then realise after checking, that this habit has disappeared or has perhaps not been exercised at all. As a result, there must be direct observation of important indicators within the community to support the researcher's findings. These indicators can be used in the preparation of immediate questions to be asked to members of the community without having to process and prepare a survey form.</p> <p>A direct observation, or what a research partner chooses to observe, is dependent on the research question they have chosen.</p>
Photovoice	<p>Photovoice is a PAR tool that allows research partners to capture, either through photography or video, different aspects of their community and their everyday lives. Photovoice uses the power of photographs to help people identify, represent, and analyse issues within their communities, and thus we can understand a community's strengths and weaknesses, and identify its issues.</p> <p>We get to understand different aspects of a community through the participant's eyes, because each photograph is accompanied by a story shared by the photographer.</p>
Reflective journals	<p>Journal entries may be used as a PAR tool, to reflect on lived experiences within the community, or as a means to reflect on other PAR tools such as semi-structured interviews, FGDs, observation and exploration.</p> <p>If journal entries are used as a PAR tool in their own right, it is crucial that questions are prepared to help guide the adolescents and youth as they write in their journals. The question can be related to the overall research objectives of the project, and it must be as comprehensive as possible, for example, covering both positive and negative aspects, both strengths and weaknesses.</p>

Annex 2: PAR data analysis tools

The following table outlines a sample of PAR tools that were introduced by IFI in the pilot project.⁶⁶

Tool	Outline
Comparative analysis table of motives, aspirations, expectations and fears	After having collected the data (regardless of the method used to collect the data), team members meet to classify their findings in a table. For example, if their research topic was 'girls not attending school', the group would consider and write down the motives, aspirations, expectations and fears connected to that situation.
Problem tree	A visual tool that facilitates exploration of root causes (the roots of the tree). Starting with the main problem or issue, the group would brainstorm the main causes of the problem or issue, and then consider the secondary causes of the main causes in order to understand them better and to identify further areas for research. This tool can also be used to identify the effects of a problem or issue (the branches and leaves of the tree).
Identifying the themes: table for organising the data	After discussing each topic separately, the group can organise the data related to each theme in a table or grid under these three aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the financial concerns behind this issue • control over the decision regarding this issue • prevailing values and beliefs related to this issue. This way of categorising data can improve participants' critical thinking and awareness, which will help them realise that the issues are related and that finances influence values, politics, etc. This will lead to a change in the way participants look at the issues at hand. Their initial perspective of considering these issues as unrelated will shift: they will see them as interdependent and interrelated.
The 'Why?' method	The 'Why?' method is useful for identifying the root causes of a problem. It helps in defining problems within the context of a project. The facilitator guides the participants in changing the problem or issue into a 'Why?' question. The facilitator then guides the group as they brainstorm together and come up with five potential answers (or causes) to the question. It is very important that these answers are based on critical reflection, and on the lived experiences of the participants within the greater context of the project and their community. The most probable answer is then selected from these and then turned into a 'Why?' question. This cycle is repeated five times, or until the root cause of the problem has been identified.

⁶⁶ Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. (2015). *Training Manual on Participatory Action Research Tools: A Guide for Youth Facilitators' and Research Partner's Training*. pp. 48–59

Tool	Outline
Thematic analysis ⁶⁷	<p>Thematic analysis is a way to systematically condense a large amount of information into a set of important themes, helping the research team describe the phenomenon under study. Thematic analysis involves looking at the data and creating codes that reflect the data, recognising recurring patterns (or themes) among the codes, and then using those themes as categories for further analysis of the data, resulting in detailed, rich descriptions.</p> <p>There are six phases or steps to thematic analysis: (1) familiarisation with data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) identifying themes that reflect collections of codes; (4) reviewing data to understand and explain the meaning and dynamics of themes; (5) maintaining rigour through inter-coder agreement; and (6) producing the final report.</p> <p>Themes provide an understanding of the ‘big picture’. They are patterns seen across data sets that help describe a phenomenon, or answer a research question.</p> <p>Codes are ways of organising data. They can best be thought of as labels or identifiers attached to the segments of data they represent. Understanding the connections between codes helps us to develop themes.</p>

⁶⁷ Liebenberg, L., Jamal, A. and Ikeda, J. *Analysing Data with Youth: A Guide to Conducting Thematic Analysis*. Spaces and Places, Dalhousie University, Canada. pp.5–6 <http://youthspacesandplaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Spaces-and-Places-Data-Analysis-Manual.pdf>

Annex 3: Principles of research ethics

During the pilot project, IFI shared the following information with participants.⁶⁸ As with all concepts and principles, it is critical that they are adapted to the target group, bearing in mind the age, experience, education level, etc of members of that group.

Research ethics

Ethics are moral principles or values that guide our lives, and in research involving people, it is crucial that we let ethics guide us. There are some basic ethical principles that must guide our research, as follows:

Care

We must care for individuals and focus on maintaining a healthy relationship with them and within our community.

Respect for people

We must respect individuals and their autonomy (self-governance). Individuals are autonomous agents, and those who have diminished autonomy (ie, those who cannot make decisions on their own, such as young children) should be protected. Obtaining oral or written *consent* from participants is one way of ensuring that their autonomy is respected. Participants must be able to choose whether they want to be part of a study or not, and they must be given this choice. It is crucial that information is presented to participants in a way that they can understand it, so that they can make an *informed* decision. It is unethical to force anyone to take part in a study.

Beneficence/non-maleficence

An obligation to do no harm to participants (non-maleficence), and to maximise benefits, or do good-beneficence for them. To achieve this, it is important to assess the risks and benefits of the research being undertaken – in all cases, the benefits must outweigh the risks.

Justice

There must be a fair distribution of people who receive the benefits of the research and those who bear its burdens. This principle of justice is important when selecting participants for the study – they must be chosen equitably. In other words, when recruiting, one must consider why one particular participant or group of participants was chosen over another. Special consideration must be given to vulnerable populations, who include prisoners and refugees.

Privacy and confidentiality

Organisations must ensure that the privacy of participants is protected; this is known as maintaining the participant's *confidentiality*. This includes protecting their personal information and the data they share with you. Protecting data is key to reducing the harm and risks that may befall a participant. Confidentiality is key to 'respect for people' and 'beneficence'.

⁶⁸ Belmont report: US Department of Health and Human Services. (1978). *The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*. Bethesda, Md.: The Commission and Chowning, J. and Fraser, P. (2005). *An ethics primer: Lesson ideas and ethics background*. Seattle, WA: Northwest Association for Biomedical Research. Retrieved from www.nwabr.org/education/primer. Retrieved from: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. (2015). *Training Manual on Participatory Action Research Tools: A Guide for Youth Facilitators' and Research Partner's Training*. p. 16

Annex 4: Sample planning meeting agenda

This sample two-day agenda, based on planning meetings conducted during the PAR pilot, provides an overview of content and suggested timings, to be adapted to your schedule and specific contextual requirements.

Attendees: As well as the core project team, it is crucial to involve partners, technical advisers and the operations team.

Planning meeting objectives

- recap/review previous and current work with adolescents in the Country Office and the wider region, including research
- recap the objectives of the action research project
- define key approaches and methodologies, and familiarise the team with PAR
- set the parameters for the project, eg, locations and target groups
- determine project timings and allocate key roles and responsibilities
- plan next steps and set deadlines

Day 1: Context and PAR Introduction

Time	Session	Content
9:30 – 10.30	Session 1: Background	Overview of MEEE Adolescents and Youth Framework and core approaches (30 mins)
		Overview and objectives of the PAR project (30 mins)
10:30 – 10.45	Break	
10:45 – 12.45	Session 2: Country Office experience with adolescents and research	<p>Country Office current programming (60 mins total):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map where we are contributing to the different levels of the MEEE Adolescents and Youth Framework (30 mins) • Exercise: work in pairs, and review current programming, write key components on sticky notes, and place under each level of the framework (on flipchart paper on walls) (15 mins) • Review what we do and do not have in place in terms of our programming with young people – Where are our strengths? Where are our gaps? (15 mins)
		<p>Evidence (60 mins total):</p> <p>What are key issues we are facing in our adolescent programming? What evidence do we have? What would we like to know more about?</p> <p>Break into groups by location to consider the following points (20 mins):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach • Relevance of programmes: Are they attractive to young people? Do they respond to adolescents' needs? • Do we see an outcome to what we do? • Gaps in our information, approaches <p>Back to plenary and share key points. Discussion linked to the Adolescents and Youth Framework (20 mins)</p> <p>Gaps – What would we like to know? Based on current programming and evidence gaps, list initial ideas for action research focus (20 mins)</p>
12:45 – 1.30	Lunch break	
1.30 – 4:00 (including break)	Session 3: Action research	<p>Ensuring shared understanding of PAR approach/ methodology – tools and structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder of the objectives of the project: inform our programming, collect evidence for future programming • How can we use this project to help us fill some of the gaps? • Action research. What is it? Key components and some methodologies we can use • Examples of tools and case studies from pilot

Day 2: Detailed planning

Time	Session	Content
9:30 – 4:00	Session 1: Parameters	Identify locations, key stakeholders, target groups, potential challenges in the context * Prior to this meeting, it is crucial that potential locations are identified and researched, so that the evidence can be reviewed together at the meeting.
	Session 2: Project strategies	Top-line decisions, project phasing, roles and responsibilities
	Session 3: Work plan	Detailed planning
	Session 4: Budget	Top-line budget

Annex 5: Sample documentation plan – recommended content and structure

Design your plan with the MEAL and project teams to be sure that the opportunity for learning is fully utilised and donor requirements are met.

The introduction to your plan should include:

- background to the PAR project
- purpose of the documentation plan
- scope of the documentation plan.

Background

This section should include a brief:

- description of how PAR has been used in Save the Children MEEE previously
- summary of the target groups and location of the project
- explanation of the aims of the project, the learning it is seeking and how it will contribute to learning at national and regional level.

Purpose of the documentation plan

Example:

This documentation plan will guide project participants and teams to systematically capture each step of the project and any lessons learned.

The purpose is to capture:

- any change in the adolescent participants (agency, relations)
- any change in their community
- issues facing adolescents
- good practice in working with adolescents affected by a humanitarian crisis.

Scope of the documentation plan

Example:

The documentation plan will provide guidance and tools to systematically capture:

What	Why
<p>Process: how the project is set up, how it is being implemented, how adolescents were selected, how groups were established, who was involved, how research topic(s) were selected by participants, how community projects were selected, etc</p>	<p>As PAR is quite a new approach for Save the Children in the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to learn what did and did not work for future interventions • to identify good practice in working with adolescents • to inform the design of youth-led interventions that address the needs of adolescents affected by the Syria crisis
<p>Content: Key issues adolescents discussed, information collected in their communities, analysis of the information by the adolescents themselves, etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to support adolescents in reflecting on their own issues • to gain a better understanding of the issues facing adolescents through their own eyes, to improve our current and future programming with adolescents in Egypt and Lebanon • to collect credible evidence on the issues facing adolescents affected by the Syria crisis
<p>Impact/changes in the participants and their community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify how/if a PAR project has any positive impact on adolescents and their communities, for future replication • to gain credible evidence on how/if participatory approaches have a positive impact on participants

Details to be included:

- Target audience
- Existing documentation – eg, any desk reviews or reports that were considered
- Description of the ‘documents’ to be collected – Emphasise that they will be diverse in purpose and format, depending on what they plan to capture and on what participants decide

Examples may include:

- Work plans
- Short description of a process and the lessons learned
- Agendas and meeting notes
- Photos linked to stories
- Sound bites and quotes
- Reflective journals or excerpts from journals
- Maps
- Data analysis
- Diagrams

Schedule and process / Outputs

Identify the appropriate milestones, the planned documentation deliverables for each milestone, and who is responsible for collecting the documentation.

A table like this could be useful and tailored to your project.

Milestone	Planned documentation deliverables	Responsible
ONE: Setup process	Planning workshop agenda, minutes and outcomes eg, why specific target groups and sites were selected	
	Management and coordination arrangements and staff engagement, including resource allocation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGD with CO staff • Notes from FGD and key lessons learned • Effectiveness and efficiency review • How teams worked together – coordination across sectors and units • End of project, during review/ learning event • Develop harmonised guiding questions 	
	Internal Save the Children staff learning – understanding PAR and the process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team learning • Include perspectives of external research organisation if engaging external trainers/coaches • Include perspectives of staff from other sectors who were present at the initial planning meeting and any methodology training. Explain their role in the project 	
	Community sensitisation – building community support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How facilitators were selected • Agenda/plan and notes from meeting with stakeholders in the community • Community resource mapping – diagrams and notes • What information, if any, was gathered from the community before approaching it? • Meeting notes – was there one standardised format? What different approaches were tried? What worked? How were meetings organised? 	
	Selection of facilitators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe different approaches taken to select the facilitators • What were the selection criteria – eg, age, sex, nationality, previous experience, etc? • Who was involved in the selection process and why? • How was the project presented to potential facilitators? What was their reaction? Did they raise any concerns? • What were their expectations? • Any work with parents / families? 	
	Development of documentation plan – process and outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was involved? • What was the process? • Include workshop notes 	

Milestone	Planned documentation deliverables	Responsible
TWO: Initial work with facilitators and research partners	Key definitions eg, research partners, Youth Facilitators, PAR, etc	
	Selection of adolescent research partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the selection criteria – eg, age, sex, nationality, previous experience, etc? • How were they selected? • Who from the project team was involved in the selection process and why? • How was the project presented to the adolescent research partners? What was their reaction – eg, did they raise any concerns? • Did we capture their expectations? • Any work with parents and/or families? • Which advertising techniques were used – eg, flyers, social media, word of mouth, etc? 	
	Team building and life skills for Youth Facilitators and adolescent research partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What topics were selected and why? • What tools/curricula were used and why? • Who facilitated the sessions? • Issues raised by participants, requests made by participants • ‘Pre’ and ‘post’ tests and results 	
THREE: PAR part one – process	Research methodology Process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it designed and who was involved? • Include methodology meeting minutes and presentations Methodology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory methodology document (from methodology meeting) • Training curriculum/programme • Sessions’ curricula/guidance • Training report • Record reflections on the methodology at 3 levels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Facilitators – using transcripts from analysis meetings and observation notes ii. Research partners – using transcripts from analysis meetings and observation notes iii. Research team – as part of mid-term review/reflection 	

Milestone	Planned documentation deliverables	Responsible
PAR part one – process <i>continued</i>	Reflection sessions with research partners and Youth Facilitators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each research partner group will decide how they will report on and document the process and the content (eg, video, written notes) • Draw up a list of questions for each group to answer when they report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ How topics are decided (eg, participatory ranking mechanism methodology) ◦ Process description – How were issues/findings identified? How were priorities for action chosen? ◦ Tools used, and how they worked ◦ Documentation methods used by staff and facilitators 	
	PAR process: research plans How will the group research the topic – including meeting notes or facilitators’ transcripts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with the community – How? With whom? What is their feedback? Who facilitates? Include meeting transcripts that capture how young people are reacting, participating and engaging throughout the process/project 	
PAR part two – content	Content of discussions (regardless of what platforms or methods of engagement have been used) Synthesise findings and outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session notes • Issues and priorities • List of priorities and actions to be taken • Process documentation: sharing findings and interacting with community • Solutions and way forward – eg, were any projects identified, how do they want to move forward? • Adolescents and youth personal diaries 	
FOUR: Youth-led initiatives	Youth-led initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of how they are decided • Participants • Roles • Documenting projects by adolescents, reactions by community 	
FIVE: Changes in adolescent participants	Monitoring changes in the adolescents – pre- and post-participation in the PAR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal level • Relational level (families, community) • Changes in the families/community (post) 	

Milestone	Planned documentation deliverables	Responsible
SIX: Learning	Learning 1. Documentation output – final report 2. Process of synthesising the adolescents' discussions and decisions 3. Reference group: a. participants b. discussion notes 4. Mid-term review – management and coordination, process, methodology, findings to date 5. Regional learning (if applicable) 6. Partnership with external research organisation 7. Life skills training – was it useful for participants? End of project review 8. MEAL review 9. Methodology report: tools selected, guidance for the tools (at end of project)	
	Data analysis How data will be analysed – Who by? How often? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial compilation of data collected • Continuous process: collect data, discuss/analyse, collect more data • Compare locations, approaches and issues • Mid-term review • Reference group – include agenda item on content 	
SEVEN: Dissemination	Dissemination Decide how you will share the project's learning and outcomes – eg, a report, a policy brief, an advocacy tool?	

Annex 6: Sample media release form

This media release form was created by the Egypt team during the PAR pilot, and can be adapted to your specific contextual requirements, always in consultation with the child protection and communications teams. Make sure that the person signing the media release form fully understands it and its implications. Translate it if necessary and read it aloud if the person cannot read.

Photo consent and media release

In support of Save the Children's mission to achieve immediate and lasting change in children's lives, I hereby give my consent:

- (a) to Save the Children, and its affiliates and their agents to film, photograph, tape or otherwise make a video reproduction of me and/or my child/children and/or record our voice(s); and,
- (b) to Save the Children to use my name or my child/children's name and such film, photography or reproduction of us and/or recording of our voice(s), in part or in whole, in newspapers, magazines and other print media, on television, radio and electronic media (including the internet), in theatrical media and/or in mailings for educational and awareness-raising campaigns by Save the Children, in connection with the promotion of Save the Children products and/or to help raise funds for Save the Children.

Consent to such use is given in perpetuity, and does not require prior approval by me. I further disclaim any right to receive compensation or economic benefit that has or could have become due in connection with the use of the film, photograph, tape or reproduction of me, my child/children and/or the recording of our voice(s).

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

The below-signed parent or legal guardian of the above-named child hereby consents to and gives permission to the above on behalf of such child.

Signature of parent or legal guardian: _____

Print name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

The following is required if the consent and release form has to be read to the individual or parent/legal guardian of a minor:

I certify that I have read this consent form in full to the individual or parent/legal guardian whose signature appears above.

Translator/Reader _____

YOUTH VOICES

Participatory action research with adolescents affected by the Syria crisis in Egypt and Lebanon

LESSONS LEARNED REPORT AND 'HOW TO' GUIDE

This publication is the outcome of a participatory action research (PAR) project to provide evidence on the situation of Syrian and host community adolescent girls and boys in Egypt and Lebanon by enabling them to voice their concerns. The project was also used to assess whether PAR is an appropriate tool when working with adolescents in humanitarian contexts.

The publication is divided into three sections: Section 1 explains what PAR is and how it can be applied with adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts. Section 2 summarises the Youth Voices project, identifies lessons learned and highlights key recommendations. Section 3 is a 'how to' guide for anyone considering introducing the PAR approach with adolescents and youth in other humanitarian contexts. Practical tools and resources, which can be adapted for use in other projects, are provided in the annexes.

“I have gained a lot [in this project]. I have become closer to people. I shared their pain and understood their needs... I learned how to listen”

Sixteen-year-old Lebanese young woman