



Guidelines for Co-produced Research with Refugees and Other People with Lived Experience of Displacement

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Key Terms

What is co-produced research?

Co-produced research generally refers to research where researchers and those impacted

usually involves a commitment among researchers (including those with and without lived

Safety

Refugees and other displaced people can face serious repercussions to their own safety due to their involvement in research. This can

range from stigmatisation and threats of violence to physical harm and death. This risk is particularly high for those who are involved in research that is sensitive to their own government or to the international community.

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Co-produced Research in Practice

In each stage of the process, there are many ethical questions and issues that arise when undertaking co-produced research with refugees and other displaced people. The questions

issues. However, they are not intended to represent all the issues that may arise.

Is co-produced research the right approach?

for both the generation of knowledge and the various stakeholders involved in and impacted by the research. However, co-produced research may not be the best research approach to take in situations where:

- to engage with communities meaningfully and ethically
- undertake co-produced research
- of the risks of harm caused by the research outweigh the benefits. For example, student researchers may be restricted in the extent to which they can co-author with other researchers.

Setting the research agenda

A central foundation for authentic co-produced research is co-design. This is where all people involved jointly make decisions about the aims and focus of the research, and how these aims are to be achieved. ³³ Some aspects of co-design include collectively determining which research questions to examine, how to gather data, and how to assign roles and responsibilities. It is at this stage of the project that applications for funding are also often sought.

Although the idea of co-design is relatively simple, its implementation in practice is rarely straightforward. At the time of agenda setting, relationships of trust have often not been established and power asymmetries among prospective researchers and other stakeholders are

In situations where co-produced research is considered not to be a suitable approach, researchers should consider what steps they may be able to take to overcome these barriers to co-production, and what alternative participatory approaches to research they could nevertheless undertake. Engaging refugees and other people with lived experience of displacement is not an all-or-nothing endeavour.

For example, researchers and other stakeholders should consider refugee-led research as another viable option. ³² They should also consider how research ideas and objectives initiated by organisations led by refugees and other displaced people can be best supported.



Undertaking ethics review

Institutional ethics approval is an increasingly common requirement for research projects involving

ethics committees when research projects involve academic or student researchers. However,

NGOs, governments, and other stakeholders.

the social and cultural implications of their work and to develop risk-management strategies prior

to commencing research involving human participants. Yet, this does not mean that institutional

ethics review processes guarantee ethical research.

Research has shown that institutional ethics review processes, particularly those conducted by

universities, are not always familiar with research methods grounded in co-production and are not

always well suited to undertake this review. ³⁵ Ethics committees may, for example, lack relevant

expertise to properly consider community interests and may make inaccurate assumptions

about the vulnerability or capacity of research team members and other research participants.

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responsive and adaptable to shifting circumstances as they arise.

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Reporting and disseminating the research

As co-produced research seeks in many cases to inform social change and contribute to more democratic forms of knowledge production, it is necessary that research teams consider how

• to ensure that research findings are accessible and understandable to a wide range of stakeholders, including those who are often excluded from traditional academic discourse. This involves using plain language and avoiding jargon where possible. It also means considering the format and medium of dissemination, such as using podcasts or videos for those who may not have access to written text.

While academic research has traditionally been shared in books, journal articles and at

• conferences and seminars, it is important to consider alternative ways of sharing research, such as through social media, blogs, or community events. This can help to reach a wider audience and engage with those who are most affected by the research.

or to researchers who are refugees or otherwise displaced. Instead (or in addition), it may be

• possible to use digital platforms and social media to share research findings and engage with a global audience. This can be particularly useful for researchers who are displaced and may not have access to traditional academic channels.

blogs, podcasts, explainer videos, reports, media releases or interactive workshops with relevant

stakeholders.⁴⁰ To the fullest extent possible, researchers with lived experience of displacement

should be included in the research dissemination process.

Evaluating research impact

One of the biggest risks of undertaking co-produced research with refugees and other displaced people is that the research does not accomplish what it said it would achieve. This is particularly

• true when the research is not grounded in the lived experiences and needs of the community it is intended to serve. This can lead to a lack of trust and engagement, and ultimately a failure to achieve the intended impact.

it is also relevant to funding bodies, co-researchers, and other stakeholders. In all cases, this risk must be clearly set out before the research bid is made and then again before the actual research is undertaken. As discussed previously, setting expectations from the outset of the project is important in this regard.

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¹⁵ Iva Strnadová, Leanne Dowse and Chloe Watfern, 'Doing Research Inclusively: Guidelines for Co-Producing Research with People with Disability' (DIU UNSW Sydney, 2020); also, Ann Dadich, Loretta Moore and Valsamma Eapen, 'What does it mean to conduct participatory research with Indigenous peoples? A lexical review' (2019) 19(1) BMC Public Health 1388, 2.

¹⁶ Ann Dadich, Loretta Moore and Valsamma Eapen, 'What does it mean to conduct participatory research with Indigenous peoples? A lexical review' (2019) 19(1) BMC Public Health 1388, 2.

¹⁷ Gary Hickey et al, 'Guidance on co-producing a research project' (INVOLVE, 2018) 8; also, Tristan Harley, Najeeba Wazefadost and Suyeon Lee, 'Not just a seat at the table: Refugee participation and the importance of listening' (2022) 70 Forced Migration Review 25.

¹⁸ Eileen Pittaway, Linda Bartomolei and Richard Hugman, '“Stop Stealing Our Stories”: The Ethics of Research with Vulnerable Groups' (2010) 2(2) Journal of Human Rights Practice 229, 234.

¹⁹ Matthew Flinders, Matthew Wood and Malaika Cunningham, 'The Politics of Co-production: Risks, Limits and Pollution' (2016) 12(2) Evidence & Policy 261, 266.

²⁰ See International Association for the Study of Forced Migration, 'Research Ethics in Situations of Forced Migration' (IASFM, 2018) 2.

²¹ Christina Clark-Kazak, '“Why Care Now” in Forced Migration Research? Imagining a Radical Feminist Ethics of Care' (2023) ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies (forthcoming).

²² Caroline Lenette, 'Participatory Action Research, Ethics and Decolonization' (Oxford University Press, 2022) 80.

²³ Pearl Fernandes, Niels Buur & Fau Rhodes, 'Vicarious Imprints of Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers: An Integrative Review' (2022) Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies (forthcoming).

²⁴ Karen Jacobsen and Loren B Landau, 'The Dual Imperative in Refugee Research: Some Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research on Forced Migration' (2003) 27(3) Disasters 185, 193.

²⁵ Roth et al, 'When “We Know Nothing”: Recommendations for Ethical Research and Learning with and for LGBTQI People in Humanitarian Settings' (New York: International Rescue Committee, 2021) 12-13.

²⁶ Refugee Studies Centre, 'Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice' (2007) 26(3) Refugee Survey Quarterly 162, 164.

²⁷ Kate Pincock and William Bakunzi, 'Power, Participation, and ‘peer researchers’: Addressing Gaps in Refugee Research Ethics Guidance' (2021) 34(2) Journal of Refugee Studies 2333, 2343.

²⁸ Professional Geographer 80; also, Caroline Lenette, 'Cultural Safety in Participatory Arts-Based Research: How Can We Do Better?' (2022) 3(1) Journal of Participatory Research Methods 1, 6.

²⁹ Caroline Lenette, 'Cultural Safety in Participatory Arts-Based Research: How Can We Do Better?' (2022) 3(1) Journal of Participatory Research Methods 1, 4. See also, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'Recentring the South in Studies of Migration' (2020) 3(1)

