



**Participatory Evaluation Methods: An innovative approach to indicators in a participatory action research project with young war-affected mothers**

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**Introduction to the Study**

Girl Mothers in Armed Forces and Groups and Their Children in Northern Uganda, Liberia and Sierra Leone:

Participatory Action Research to Assess and Improve their Situations

Website: [www.pargirlmothers.com](http://www.pargirlmothers.com)



**Funding**

- The Rockefeller Foundation (NYC/ Italy), Oak Foundation and Pro Victimis Foundation (Geneva), UNICEF West Africa, & Compton Foundation (CA/USA)




**Why do this PAR?**

- Girl mothers and their children have been discriminated against/marginalized/made invisible within DDR processes & their rights disregarded.
- Reintegration has been constructed according to adult ideas without including girls' voices.
- What agencies have been doing with respect to girl mothers and their children is not working.
- The PAR finds ways to create safe spaces for girl mothers' participation within communities and to garner community support for sustainability.



**What is Participatory Action Research?**



“An approach to research that aims at promoting change; that occurs through a cyclic process of planning, data collection, and analysis... and in which members of the group being studied participate as partners in all phases of the research, including design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination.”

(American Journal of Public Health, 2008)



**Who are the PAR members?**

<p><b>Liberia:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Save the Children, UK in Liberia</li> <li>■ THINK</li> </ul> <p><b>Sierra Leone:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Christian Brothers</li> <li>■ Christian Children's Fund</li> <li>■ Council of Churches in Sierra Leone</li> <li>■ National Network for Psychosocial Care</li> </ul>	<p><b>Northern Uganda:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Caritas, Gulu Archdiocese</li> <li>■ Concerned Parents Association</li> <li>■ Transcultural Psychosocial Organization</li> <li>■ World Vision</li> </ul> <p>Plus academic partners in each country.</p>
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### Demographics of Participants

<p><b>How many participants?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Liberia = 111, average age 20</li> <li>■ Sierra Leone = 266, average age 22</li> <li>■ Uganda = 281, average age 18</li> </ul>	<p><b>How many participants formerly associated?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 33% vulnerable community girls</li> <li>■ 67% formerly associated</li> </ul>
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### Demographics of Participants

<p><b>Who do the participants live with?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 273 (41%) live with boyfriends or husbands</li> <li>■ 234 (36%) live with parents or guardians</li> <li>■ 36 (5%) live alone</li> </ul>	<p><b>How many children did they have at the start?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 93 had only 1 child</li> <li>■ 191 had 2 children</li> <li>■ 107 had 3 children</li> <li>■ 38 had 4 children or more</li> </ul>
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### Do No Harm

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Code of Conduct</li> <li>■ No research without action</li> <li>■ Manage expectations</li> <li>■ Confidentiality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Informed consent</li> <li>■ Avoid excessive targeting</li> <li>■ Ethical interviewing</li> <li>■ U. Wyoming IRB and local consultation</li> </ul>
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### The PAR Process

<p><b>Community Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identify communities with strong need.</li> <li>■ Meet with community leaders to solicit interest.</li> <li>■ Hold community meetings to describe project.</li> <li>■ Work with TBAs and leaders to identify girls</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outreach to Girl Mothers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Follow up initial recommendations with home visits.</li> <li>■ Hold group meetings to describe project.</li> <li>■ Ask girl mothers to invite others for inclusion in the project.</li> </ul>
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### PAR Process (continued)

<p><b>“Train” girl mothers to gather data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Participants used focus group discussions, individual interviews, role-play and songs.</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Girl Mothers Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Girl mothers conduct research</li> <li>■ Girl mothers learn to analyze data</li> <li>■ Data sharing and problem identification</li> </ul>
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### PAR Process (continued)

<p><b>Social Action Implementation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Girl mothers, community advisory people, and NGO staff decide what projects they can implement within their community to address the problem identified.</li> </ul>	
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## Social Action Initiatives

- Discussion and Support Groups
- Micro-Credit and Micro-Grant for Individual Business
- Group Business
- Agriculture Projects
- Dramas and Songs



## Role of the Community

- Monitoring and supporting girls
- Reaching out to parents and encouraging family reintegration
- Advising other community members on how to interact with girls
- Giving emotional support
- Issuing proclamations protecting the girls
- Donating land and material support to the projects



## Ownership of Data and Dissemination Rights

- Shared ownership: The girl mothers are free to disseminate on their own their experiences, products, and learning.
- Girl mothers select publicly shareable material and identify key messages to be brought forward.
- Use of raw data from the girl mothers (e.g., poems, videos, dramas) by project stakeholders can occur only in consultation with the girls and/or representatives of the girls and with their agreement and consent.

## Evaluation Methods

- Process Indicators
- Participatory Outcome Indicators – survey of all participants
- Regular country-wide girls' meetings where participants synthesize findings
- Ethnographic fieldwork
- Thematic analysis of monthly reports

## Process Indicators

### Definition

- Indicators developed by organizers, project staff, community members, and participants to help us understand how successful the *process* of the project was.
- These indicators yield qualitative information that cannot be summarized by a number, but offer richness about the experiences of participants.

### Purpose

- To capture information about the process of the project.
- To understand the level and types of participation.
- To learn about how the project is going during the time that participants are setting their own objectives

## Process Indicators

- **Examples**
  - How many young mothers are regularly attending meetings?
  - How many different people speak or share in a meeting?
  - Do participants say they find the project useful?
  - When asked, what do participants say they are getting out of the project?

## Participatory Outcome Indicators

### Definition

- Indicators developed by participants in a participatory manner, facilitated by agency staff and academic partners.
- These indicators yielded qualitative and quantitative information.

### Purpose

- To capture information about the outcome of the project.
- To understand how successful the project was at achieving the outcomes the participants determined were important.
- To systematically evaluate the project.

## Participatory Outcome Indicators

### Process

- Participants compiled lists of important indicators of successful reintegration (in each community and in country-wide girls' meetings)
- Academic and agency partners used information from the young mothers to suggest additional indicators
- Organizers compiled and ranked indicators by frequency.
  - 47 items, representing 20 categories were identified, staying as close to participants' language as possible.

## Participatory Outcome Indicators

### Process (cont.)

- Items were presented to groups of participants in each country to test for face validity and rank importance.
- Adjustments were made for coherence and local cultural understandings.
- A pilot survey of 19 items, each with qualitative probes, was developed and implemented in at least two field sites per country.
- The final survey included 20 questions, each with a specific probe.

## Participatory Outcome Indicators

### Process (cont.)

- Academic partners implemented surveys.
  - To ensure the survey process was similar in each country/community, a narrative survey guide was developed and close contact was maintained with the organizers.
- Surveyors visited each field site and surveyed each participant in private, usually in her home.
- Data were entered locally and sent to organizers for cleaning and analysis.

## Participatory Outcome Indicators

### Examples

- Involvement in the project has made me and my children more liked or loved by my family.
  - Please explain why you chose the answer you gave.
- Through participating in the group, I can now speak in public more easily.
  - When do you speak in public? What do you speak about?
- I can take better care of my child than I could before I joined the group.
  - What were you thinking of when you chose the answer you gave?

## Country-Wide Girls' Meetings

### Definition

- A gathering of participants within each country facilitated by local academics and agency staff.
- Typically two participants from each field site were elected by the group to represent them at the meeting. Meetings were hosted by each field site in turn, so participants from other field sites had a chance to visit other groups.

### Purpose

- To contribute data from each field site and to collectively analyze these data.
- To share information between field sites.
- To develop leadership skills.
- To give participants a chance to learn from each other.

## Ethnographic Fieldwork

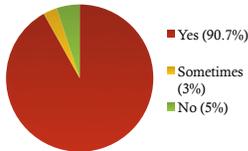
- Organizers regularly visited field sites in each country, taking detailed notes, photos and video recordings.
- Six months after the end of the field operations of the project, organizers visited three field sites per country, speaking with participants, community advisors, community members, and non-participant young mothers.

## Thematic Analysis

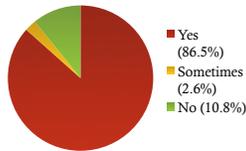
- Data Sources**
  - Monthly reports from field sites (sometimes written by participants themselves)
  - Verbatim transcripts of annual meetings in Kampala
  - Regular reports from in-country academics
  - Site visit reports by PAR organizers
  - Participant data shared through photos, videos, and notes

## Findings: Survey Results

I feel involved with what the group is doing.

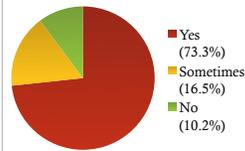


Involvement in the project has made me and my children more liked or loved by my family.

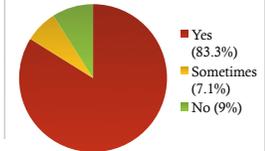


## Findings: Survey Results

I feel I am able to be supportive to my family by buying basic necessities.

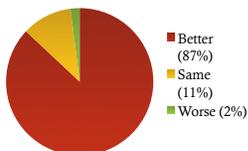


I can take better care of my child than I could before I joined the group.

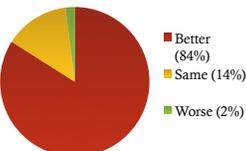


## Findings: Survey Results

Has your health changed since you joined the project?

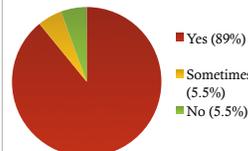


How has the health of your child or children changed since you joined the project?

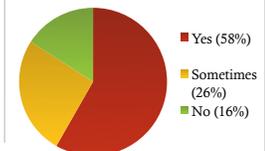


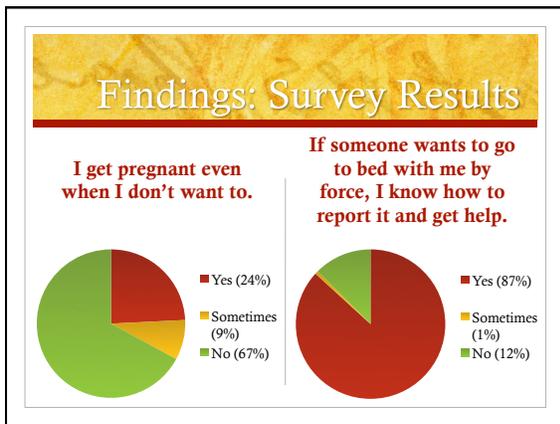
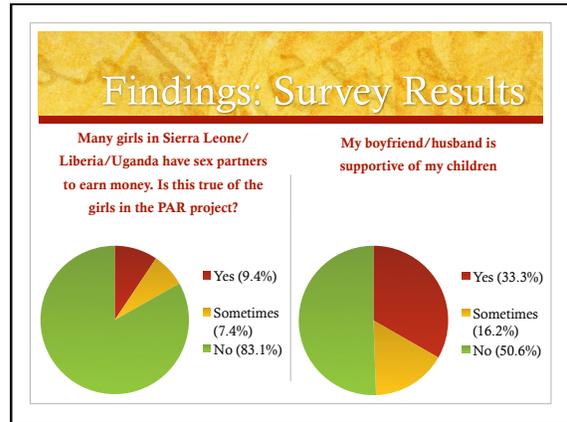
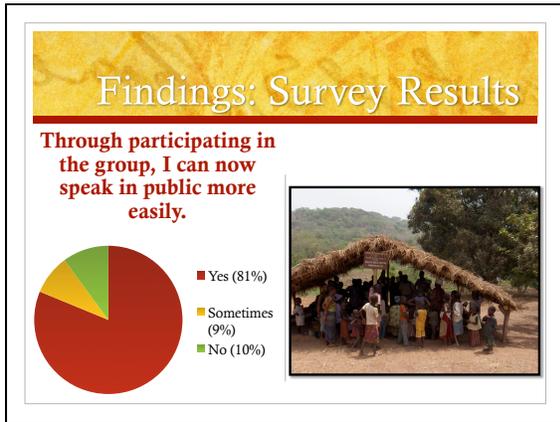
## Findings: Survey Results

I feel more respected and supported by my community.



Through the group, I help other people in the community.





- ### Overall Findings
- The meaning of social (re)integration for young mothers is that they and their children are accepted, respected, and included as contributing family and community members.
  - To facilitate social reintegration that is community based and highly participatory, communities should be involved from the outset and should take ownership of the process.
  - Peer groups for young mothers are instrumental in providing psychosocial support for positive coping and social reintegration.

- ### Overall Findings
- Young mothers' peer groups are fostered by organizing, structuring, and expert facilitation by agency staff, whose ongoing aim is to shift decision making to the young mothers.
  - Young mothers' group work facilitates their reintegration through increasing their strength and improving their capacity to be seen and heard in communities.
  - Economic livelihood supports are instrumental in improving young mothers' family and community status and relationships. Sustainability is strongly related to flexibility and diversification in income generating activities.

- ### Overall Findings
- Family relationships are significantly improved through young mothers' participation in the PAR project.
  - Young mothers show improved physical & psychological well being.
  - Unwanted pregnancies remain a challenging issue for many young mothers.
  - Children of young mothers show improved well being, which facilitates their social reintegration.

## Overall Findings

- Gender relations are complex. While some young mothers report supportive relationships, the majority say they do not experience their boyfriends/husbands as supportive of them or their children.
- Young mothers developed tools to address sexual exploitation and violence, often with the support of group members. However, shame is still a barrier to seeking help.
- Participation in sex work decreases as young mothers gain confidence and self respect and develop alternative livelihood strategies.

## Recommendations for Practitioners

- Enable meaningful participation, building reintegration supports around young mothers' own understandings and agency.
- Facilitate group support among the girls.
- Encourage effective mentoring and advocacy by respected community members.
- Take a longer, slower approach to integration that builds a sense of ownership by the communities and the young mothers.
- Build staff capacities for taking a more flexible, facilitative, young mother-centered approach.

## Recommendations for Donors and Policy Makers

- Programming for the integration of CAAFAG should include specific attention to young women and their children without targeting them excessively.
- Economic reintegration is key for the successful integration of young mothers, including former CAAFAG.
- Provide long-term, flexible, inclusive funding for the integration of formerly recruited young mothers.
- Support young mothers' and women's rights as part of post-conflict transformation for development and peace.

## Conclusion

- Participatory action research is a highly effective programming strategy to facilitate girl mother's reintegration.
- We thank all the participants in this project.

