

Participatory Research that Generates Numbers: Guidelines and a Code of Conduct

Produced by the “Parti-numbers” Network

1. Introduction

1. The purpose of these Guidelines and Code of Conduct is to increase obligation and accountability amongst secondary stakeholders¹ involved in participatory research that generates numbers. The Code of Conduct has been developed from two beliefs: that “parti-numbers” research is an effective way of stimulating learning and action and of improving policy; and that those engaged in the research process have an obligation to respect core principles of participatory research.
2. The Code of Conduct and Guidelines are the result of continuing discussion during the past year between participants in the “Parti-Numbers” network of practitioners and academics.²

2. Preamble

3. Participatory research has for a long time now been associated with qualitative data and analysis. Where participatory research has generated numerical data, these have often been, or at least have been perceived to be, unreliable and/or non-generalisable. This has often left participatory researchers either communicating with each other or trying to create “pseudo-scientific” credibility in the face of sceptical external audiences. At the same time, participatory researchers have long held the view that empiricist research can be reductionist at best and dangerous at worst, particularly when the “data’s lousy”. There is now, however, a growing recognition that participatory research can generate numbers that are reliable, valid and empowering.
4. Practitioners and audiences alike also increasingly understand that for many areas of research participatory methods have comparative advantages over traditional survey-based approaches to generating numerical data and that they can be used powerfully in combination with conventional research instruments. People count, estimate, value and compare using numbers during participatory research, often producing empirical insights that are very difficult to capture through conventional methods. Participatory methods are often quick and efficient, producing data in a timely fashion of evidence-based analysis and action. Most importantly, participatory research is effective because it can be empowering for different groups of stakeholders.
5. Statisticians who are embracing participatory research methods point out that through the careful application of sampling protocols, participatory research can generate representative data, and with some standardisation in the application of

¹ Secondary stakeholders are people that have an interest and role in the research process without being the subjects of the research.

² The “Parti-Numbers” network of southern and northern practitioners and academics was established by members of the Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex), the Centre for Development Studies (University of Wales Swansea), the Statistical Services Centre and Integrated Rural Development Department (University of Reading), the Overseas Development Institute and International HIV/AIDS Alliance .

research methods, the data generated can be shown to be comparable with data sets produced elsewhere with the same methods.

6. If we are to promote the comparative advantage of participatory numbers in these areas and encourage their generation, we must flag the real and potentially dangerous ethical issues raised. We must also consider the methodological implications of addressing ethical challenges.
7. These ethical alarm bells must also refocus our attention on the continuing challenges to participatory research more generally. These include the nature of power relations, within communities and between “insiders” and “outsiders”, and the importance of “process” goals of personal and institutional transformation.
8. These Guidelines discuss how the design and implementation of “Parti-Numbers” research can address these ethical issues. They are designed to be read alongside the working Code of Conduct that is presented at the end of this paper. We hope that this document will serve as the basis for wider dialogue over a code of conduct that all parties involved in parti-numbers research – including donors, government agencies, practitioners, trainers and researchers - can sign up to.

3. Principles of Participatory research

9. Participatory research, sometimes labelled Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) or Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), has come to be associated with a set of core principles. These are documented in more detail elsewhere³ but we summarise them briefly here in order to establish the ethical and methodological context for the discussion below. PRA/PLA adheres to the following principles:
 - *a reversal of learning*: to learn from people, directly, on the site, and face-to-face, gaining insight from their local physical, technical and social knowledge;
 - *handing over the stick* (or pen or chalk): facilitating investigation, analysis, presentation and learning by local people themselves, so that they generate and own the outcomes, and also learn. This principle is linked to that of *empowerment* of those that are institutionally excluded and marginalised;
 - *self-critical awareness*: facilitators continuously and critically examine their own behaviour. This includes embracing error, facing failure positively, correcting dominant behaviour (including the need to ensure *informed consent* among local participants in the research process) and being critically aware of what is seen and not seen, shown and not shown, said and not said, and how what is shared and learnt is shaped and selected by the context and the social process of interaction;
 - *personal responsibility* (“Use your own best judgement at all times”): PRA practitioners tend to take personal responsibility for what is done rather than relying on the authority of manuals or on rigid rules;
 - *sharing*: of information and ideas between local people, between them and outsider facilitators, and between different facilitators. This principle is linked to that of *transparency* on the part of participatory practitioners in relation to motives and intentions in the research process.
10. A number of additional principles have been identified that relate more directly to the effective application of participatory research methods. They include:

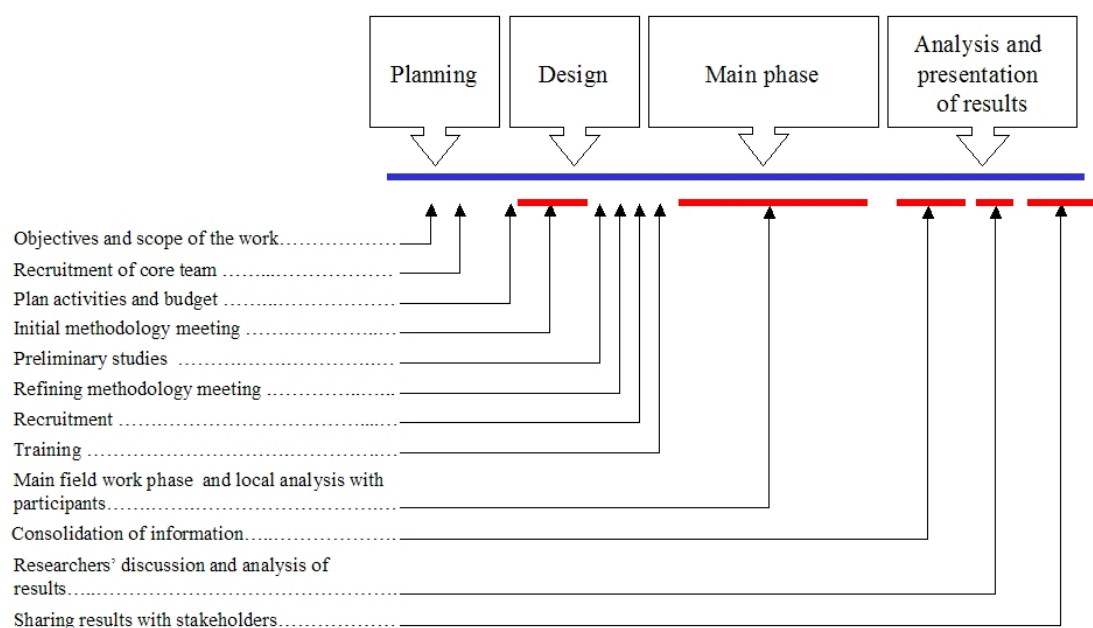
³ For a fuller discussion see Chambers R, 1997. *Whose reality Counts? Putting the first last*, London It Publications, pp 156-158.

- *learning rapidly and progressively*: with conscious exploration, flexible use of methods, opportunism, improvisation, iteration, and cross-checking, not following a blueprint programme but being adaptable in a learning process;
- *offsetting biases*: by relaxing not rushing, listening not lecturing, probing instead of passing on, being unimposing instead of important, and seeking out those who are being marginalised;
- *optimising trade-offs*: relating to the costs of learning to usefulness, with trade-offs between quantity, relevance, accuracy and timeliness. This includes the principles of optimal ignorance – not learning more than necessary, and of appropriate imprecision – not measuring what need not be measured, or more accurately than needed;
- *triangulating*: meaning learning from several, quite often three, methods, disciplines, individuals or groups, locations, types of information, items and/or points in a distribution, to cross-check, compare, gain insights and *successively approximate*;
- *complexity and diversity*: seeking and enabling the expression and analysis of complex and diverse information and judgements; seeking variability rather than averages; maximising the diversity and richness of information.

4. From sound principles to good practice

11. With these principles in mind, the discussion in this section links principles with practice and “talks to” the working Code of Conduct presented in Annex 1. In keeping with the principles detailed above, this discussion and the Code of Conduct are structured in a way that emphasises the central issue of power as it relates to different sets of institutional relations in the research process. The Code of Conduct additionally maps out some steps that should be taken chronologically in the research process that directly respond to the ethical and methodological issues raised. The discussion uses Barahona and Levy’s (2002) diagrammatic representation (see Figure 1) for reference to different stages of the research process.

Figure 1. Research stages and activities



4.1. External-internal power relations

12. Many ethical issues are raised by the important distinction between outsiders/secondary stakeholders and insiders/primary stakeholders in the research process. The discussion in this sub-section flags dangers that stem from external-internal imbalances of power and how outsiders might address these through the research process.

4.1.1. When introducing externally-driven research questions, do so transparently, making sure that these do not impinge on the broader participatory research process

13. Much development research, particularly that which belongs to the deductive tradition, seeks to confirm or refute gaps in outsiders' knowledge. Participatory research uses more open-ended and inductive methods. It is based on the principle that local people should define and acquire a level of ownership of the research agenda.
14. The statement: "When introducing externally-driven research questions, do so transparently, making sure that these do not impinge on the broader participatory research process" reflects a huge normative leap for many of us. It says that external agendas *can* be pursued as part of a process of participatory research, *if* participatory researchers, acting according to the principle of personal responsibility, believe that those external agendas will improve outcomes for local people. This position acknowledges the power and political agency of outside researchers. It also recognises that participatory research is not a neutral process and that in practice researchers do influence the agenda.
15. But this is not to say that we should disempower local people – albeit transparently (see Section 4.1.6) – in order to bring about good change *for* them. We must commit ourselves to creating space and time for local analysis and action. This means that alongside our own information needs, we must acknowledge the principle that local participants should define, count and analyse according to what they decide counts as knowledge. We are being realistic about power while stating normatively that power should be shared.
16. However, we do not intend to create parallel processes, one to meet our information needs and the other encouraging of local process. The participatory principle of learning reversal means a more iterative, incremental and inductive approach to identifying information needs. In practice, this means that we must continually question our working assumptions about what is "good change", what to ask and how to ask it. New dilemmas prompt new questions. When these questions are particular and contextual, researchers should allow space and time for them to be pursued. When they have more universal application, researchers should revisit their own assumptions, questions and methods.
17. We should avoid "ghettoising" local people in a research process that we have detached from our own. We must provide feedback and share our interpretation and analysis in a way that is accessible to participants. We must explain as far as possible the methods that we have used to analyse numerical data. And we should try to build local capacity to engage with "normal" methodological discourses. This should build alliances and enable local people to prevent numbers and other information being used *against* their interests. In this way we start to move forward from an *elicitive* position in which people provide us with information we think we

need, to a *process* position in which all stakeholders share information and create mutual learning and engagement.

18. The implication of this is that process and empowerment, so central to participatory approaches, cannot be viewed as a “bolt-on” component of an elicitive research module. Rather, the research “module” is part of a more fundamental participatory process of learning, action and transformation. What does this mean in practical terms? It means that participatory researchers must build time, space and ownership for participatory process. The Code of Conduct lists specific steps that they can take to do so.
19. An important contribution to empowerment may be made in the form of local data analysis or feedback of processed numerical data. Where the data is not too complex, additional time on site should be scheduled for local analysis. Where vulnerable or disempowered groups have been identified, a particular effort should be made to enable them to understand the findings, even where numeracy is limited. Where the data is too complex to analyse on site during the study, follow-up visits to provide feedback to participants should be organised once the data has been analysed. This will imply budgeting extra resources – either for local analysis during the study or for follow-up visits. Consider *not* doing the research if there are insufficient resources for local analysis or follow-up activity.

4.1.2. When seeking representativeness, minimise the trade-offs that disempower

20. A concern with space and time for process and empowerment is heightened further when engaging with a research methodology that often prioritises coverage over depth. Participatory research emphasises local ownership of the research process. Research is often in-depth and highly contextual, aiming to stimulate empowerment and transformation from the “bottom up”. However, research studies that use participatory methods to generate numerical data with the aim of influencing policy at regional or national level need to work in a relatively large number of sites. This is important so that the research team can make generalised inferences that are representative of the (larger) population of interest, taking into account the likely variability within that population.
21. One alternative, when working in a relatively large number of sites, would be to convert the participatory approaches used into shallow, elicitive processes to obtain the required information in the shortest possible time. This *must* be avoided, as it seriously undermines the principles of participation. Instead, researchers and those commissioning research should recognise that if a study seeking representative findings is to combine participatory principles and methods with the collection of numerical data, then more resources will normally be required than is commonly the case for participatory studies.
22. Studies that combine participatory principles and methods with the collection of numerical data also require careful structuring and organisation, including the investment of time and resources in planning, in a preliminary design phase and in the analysis of numerical results. Some technical advice may be required on sampling, design of research tools, data management and analysis. All these aspects have resource implications. The resource requirements of such studies are similar to those of a region- or nation-wide survey. However the extra resources required should be possible to justify if the outcome of such studies will combine an in-depth understanding of issues with representative quantitative findings.

23. If sites are selected purposively the results obtained may be biased by the judgement used in making the site selection. This method of selection opens the door to accusations of bias and lack of representation – a serious problem if one aims to make general recommendations. It is up to the researcher to demonstrate that the selection process is not biased, e.g. by comparing the key information from selected sites with information from the area about which generalisations are to be made and thus demonstrating that the selected sites are not different from the point of view of the key characteristics.
24. An alternative is to use a method of selection that allows a chance of selection to all sites: probability-based selection (randomisation). The advantage is that the researcher is able to claim that his/her judgement has not been used for the selection. In cases when the number of selected sites is sufficient, the researcher will have a good chance of inclusion of a representative set of sites and hence will have an idea of the diversity of circumstances in the area of interest.
25. Demands for representativeness *within* sampled communities create an additional set of ethical challenges. Probability-based (random) sampling seeks to offset biases introduced by self-selection by groups and individuals. The participatory research process within communities actively seeks difference and seeks to include marginalised groups in the research process. Participatory research also adheres to democratic notions of including those that wish to be included. This gives rise to self selection.
26. These two objectives and approaches are not mutually exclusive. There are practical steps that can be taken to minimise this trade-off. Key informants (individual or group) can be asked to provide reliable information about the community or a specific, well-defined group within it. For instance, data on *all households in the community* may come from a group of volunteers involved in a mapping process. In this case, the volunteers play the same role in relation to the community that a household head interviewed for a survey plays in relation to his/her household: they are assumed to provide reliable information about the whole. On the other hand, if voluntary participants are asked to provide information about themselves or their households and this is taken as being 'typical of' the whole, there is likely to be a problem of bias; in such cases, participants should be selected using probability-based methods.

4.1.3. When seeking to standardise, minimise the trade-offs that disempower

27. A similar set of concerns with participatory principles is raised when parti-numbers are generated under the guiding influence of external research agendas that demand standard, aggregated data outputs. This might threaten the PRA principles of flexible and locally generated variables, categories and methods of measurement.
28. In these situations, researchers can consider an iterative design process in which locally-generated indicators, categories and local innovations in methods for generating numbers and prompting analysis, in particular those identified during piloting, are built into standard segments of the main research phase.
29. Demands for standardised segments should be transparently introduced and not allowed to derail good practice in participatory research. This means that in addition to this commitment closer iteration in research design, researchers must seek to maintain flexibility and local ownership wherever possible during the research process outside of the minimum external requirements for standardisation. It means

also that even when analysis begins with standard methods and outputs, researchers should encourage a shift to locally-controlled numerical and qualitative analysis.

4.1.4. When research has an elicitive element, ensure that the impact of the community generated data on external audiences is maximised

30. As discussed earlier in these Guidelines, much of the ethical acceptability for elicitive research stems from the personal responsibility among secondary stakeholders to confirm that external control and direction are justified on the grounds of likely policy or developmental impact.
31. Given this premise, it is essential for those secondary stakeholders to do everything in their power, within the constraints imposed by available time and resources, to maximise the impact of locally-generated data and analysis on external audiences.
32. Researchers should seek to build in early and sustained participation by secondary stakeholders to increase levels of engagement and ownership of the research and its outputs. Hence, formerly passive clients and audiences become actively engaged in agreeing research questions, identifying field sites, designing methods, interpreting and debating initial findings and participating in final dissemination. Impact can be enhanced further by encouraging the participation of primary stakeholders in the dissemination of data and analysis. Through this process of engagement and “active learning”, those stakeholders are motivated to internalise and act on the research outputs and recommendations.
33. Acting on this statement means accepting that the fieldwork component combined with a client’s contract is not sufficient as a minimum requirement for participatory research. This process of institutional engagement adds time and resources to any research process. Researchers and their clients should identify the minimum level of resources sufficient for an ethically acceptable level of engagement with external audiences.

4.1.5. Ensure a transparent and locally approved research agenda which does not raise expectations but which also minimises bias in responses

34. When a participatory research team meets with local people for the first time, it is often the case that many will welcome them because they expect that material benefits may arise from their cooperation with the team. It is critical that the team explain clearly why they have come to the community. They should be as specific as possible about what they hope to achieve and get out of it for themselves. They should also be very clear about what the community can and cannot expect from the research process, both in tangible and intangible benefits. It is necessary for the entire community, including the different social groups within the community, to understand fully what the process involves. Once this understanding has been gained, the community should be given the option to accept or reject the standardised parts of the research agenda, or to negotiate the terms of reference for the broader work.
35. Expectations will also affect the quality of information and analysis by local participants. Many have observed, for example, that local participants tend to “ventriloquise” in accordance with perceived benefits. This kind of bias not only undermines the research process but also perpetuates an internal-external relationship based on dependency and hierarchy.

36. Being transparent will not automatically remove the problem of bias in local analysis, although it is likely to make it easier for researchers to recognise and respond to bias during the research process. One way to remove bias, as in much scientific enquiry, is to remove the influence of the researcher. Once external practitioners have acknowledged their agency and their agenda, however, then the content of research outputs will inevitably be affected by their presence. This is a “problem” that is familiar to participatory research and to much anthropological and ethnographic enquiry.
37. One way to help reduce bias is to use a ‘contract system’. A contract is established between facilitators and participants whereby participants agree to ‘play the game’ first, with some elements unexplained, and facilitators agree to ‘reveal all’ at the end. Initially, this allows the facilitators to hold back any information that might bias responses. When this information is revealed, participants may want to ‘correct’ some of the responses given. They should be allowed to do so, and both initial and final positions should be recorded.⁴

4.1.7. Do not make assumptions about people’s approval of personal exposure or their willingness to share data through the research process

38. Once participatory research has embraced the principle of local ownership then researchers must think through carefully the implications of taking information and analysis away from communities. We have established that this elicitive element of participatory research can be justified but there are important ethical considerations along the way that should influence good practice.
39. Most areas of research have guidelines with respect to the treatment of confidentiality and the requirement for consent from the individuals who provide information or about whom information is collected. In many countries there is legislation dealing with the collection, storage and use of personal information that applies to research independently of the method used for collecting the information.
40. When using parti-numbers research with elicitive elements, researchers should remember that:
- Researchers using participatory methods are bound by the same ethical considerations that apply to other researchers. They should consult the ethical guidelines that are relevant to their area of work.
 - National legislation about collecting and storing personal information also applies to research that uses participatory methods.
 - Participants must be made aware of:
 - the research objectives;
 - the information the researcher intends to use to make generalisations;
 - the measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity; and
 - instances when the researcher seeks authorisation to refer to a person or group of people by name.
 - Participants must give their consent for the collection and use of the information by the researcher. This consent is valid only when the participants understand what the researcher intends to do with the information and when it is given prior to information collection.

⁴ See Barahona C and S Levy: “How to generate statistics and influence policy using participatory methods in research”, Statistical Services Centre Working Paper, The University of Reading, November 2002.

- The trust given by the participants to the researchers must be respected and takes priority over research objectives. This includes the issue of the right to confidentiality and anonymity.

4.1.8. Minimise exploitation by optimising trade-offs between the generation of useful and reliable information and the investment of time and energy by local people in the research process

41. Participatory research is open-ended, inductive and in-depth and is embedded in a longer term process of change, which can place huge demands on the time and energy of local participants. People should decide for themselves whether they want to engage in this process. Researchers should explain to local people the amount of time they expect to spend in the community, and the time they would like community members to spend with them directly on the process. With informed choice and consent, participation is based less on exploitation by outsiders and more by a joint effort between outsiders and local people.
42. We might expect that “wealthier” individuals, in other words those that do not suffer from “time poverty”, to volunteer themselves for group-based analysis, as their opportunity costs are likely to be lower. There are practical steps that researchers can take to reduce opportunity costs and time demands and ensure inclusion of “poorer” social groups. These include: being sensitive to the daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal demands placed on individuals and specific social groups; and actively responding to different levels of accessibility (in terms of distance and transport) to forums for group-based analysis.
43. If concerns remain amongst researchers that self selection is skewed towards “wealthier” individuals, there are two practical steps that can be taken:
 - identify accessible and “low opportunity cost” forums to enable participation of excluded social groups or individuals; and
 - if necessary (i.e. to test the external validity of data generated through purposive sampling), collect some core profiling data on participants to compare with the profile of the “target” population.
44. External researchers in their role as facilitators of participatory research should seek to balance their concern with trustworthiness with a focus on relevance.⁵ Trustworthiness stems from high quality *interaction* between outsiders and local people. This is time consuming and involves pursuing “successive approximation” iteratively with different social groups, extending opportunities and contact time for observation and “group-visual synergy”, and expanding time for reflective judgement based on triangulation of sources, methods, data and facilitators. Participatory researchers, however, should seek to justify their engagement on the grounds of the relevance of the information and analysis being generated. This means adhering to the twin principles of *optimal ignorance* (generating information on a “need to know” basis) and *appropriate imprecision* (generating precision on a “need to be precise” basis).

4.2. Internal power relations

45. In responding to critiques of participatory research as mythologising and consensus-based in its view of the “community”, it is important that participatory researchers are active in recognising and responding to internal dynamics of “communities within

⁵ For a fuller discussion see Chambers R, op cit, pp 158-161.

communities”, the playing out of power relations between social actors, and the institutionalised exclusion of specific social groups.

4.2.1. Be aware of and sensitive to inequalities and power relations and consider fully the implications for the research process. Ensure as far as possible that existing internal power relations not entrenched by the research process.

46. We have established that participatory research stresses the importance of enabling participants to lead analysis and actions to change their circumstances. This principle must apply particularly to individuals or groups within communities -- often women, children, the elderly, the very poor and particular ethnic or caste groups -- that are excluded from participation. It is essential therefore that researchers learn about community and social “faultlines”, through secondary literature review, key informant discussions and early participatory social analysis, and build this information into their sampling design and information collection tools. Researchers should always include the most marginalised social groups.
47. Within group settings, there are important research principles that should be applied to allow for less powerful voices to be heard. These include identifying individuals that dominate and distort group-based discussion and employing tactics to divert these individuals away from the group and into another form of analysis. As discussed earlier, observation and triangulation are important techniques for identifying dominant voices and reducing the biases that they tend to introduce.

4.2.2. Ensure as far as possible that people are not left exposed to risk and threats

48. In principle, all information should be shared between local people, between them and outsider facilitators, and between different facilitators. However, the researchers should ensure as far as possible that people are not left exposed to danger or threats. There is a risk of this in cases of conflict, extreme tension between social or ethnic groups, illicit activities, or social/sexual behaviour that is not generally accepted within communities. The risks may be greater if:
- The researchers will not be able to provide a continuous presence in the community after the study ends and there is no person or organisation present that would be capable of mediating potentially dangerous situations.
 - People or groups that have no recourse to mechanisms for conflict mediation are resentful about their treatment by others, and are likely to perceive the research as providing them with ‘hard data’ that proves their case.
 - Children are participants. Children often cannot judge who they can trust and may share information that could get themselves, or their families and friends, into trouble.
49. Researchers should be sensitive to any such problems. They should assess risk early on and remain vigilant throughout the research process. They should limit the information shared within the community if there are concerns that it may exacerbate serious existing problems or endanger lives. In such cases, it is important to limit the sensitive information to *all* groups within the community. It would not be acceptable to limit information to a disempowered group of people (on the grounds that it may provoke them to use violence against the powerful) while sharing it with the powerful group (which may be the cause of the problem). In sensitive or risky situations, if it is not possible to manage information flows to avoid endangering people, the facilitator should stop the research process.

50. The information that is shared with communities should also be restricted when such information is very personal and sensitive (e.g. numbers of sexual partners). Researchers must observe confidentiality and anonymity rules in such cases. This includes making sure that peoples' names are not used without their consent and that it is impossible to identify them from any data presented to the community.

4.3. External methodological learning

51. In this section we discuss briefly the importance of encouraging the design and implementation of parti-numbers research methodologies to be as far as possible evolving and responsive to learning from the field.

4.3.1. Do not create closed methodological approaches to participatory research

52. Empiricist research favours standardised research methods that produce reliable and externally valid data sets. Participatory research, on the other hand, stresses flexible, iterative and non-linear learning. With parti-numbers research there is a responsibility amongst researchers to ensure that participatory principles for learning are applied additionally to the process of methodological learning. Researchers should seek to persuade their clients to apply these principles by raising awareness of their importance through information sharing and increasing exposure to the research process.
53. The policy, programme and project context in which much research is conducted militates against open and flexible methodological approaches. Projects in particular are linear input-output focussed processes enslaved by logframes or similar planning tools. All secondary stakeholders should uphold a commitment to greater process elements in policy, programme and project cycles. By acknowledging the unpredictable and non-linear nature of a process approach, and by recognising its empowering potential, development practitioners will be in a stronger position to apply these principles to their methodologies for learning.

4.4. External institutional learning

54. This final section discusses the importance of institutions – defined as rule-bound social networks – learning from the participatory research process. Participatory research should aim to challenge and transform institutions in favour of the poor and the marginalised. We argue here that there are important practical steps that can be taken in the research process to maximise institutional learning.

4.4.1 Challenge the traditional supplier-client relationship in research-to-policy process. Ensure commitment by those commissioning research to listen, to discuss results and to feed back information to those providing information and analysis, especially to the most disempowered.

55. Usually research objectives – including those of research studies that use participatory methods – are established 'from above'. They respond to concerns of government bodies, donors or NGOs. These organisations hope to obtain evidence that will help them to make decisions likely to affect the lives of those who provide the information. To justify the amount of time spent by local people taking part in research exercises that use participatory methods (particularly where time is a valuable resource), the stakeholders must be committed to taking on board the research findings and using them to make positive changes. There should be *prior commitment* to this effect by the relevant stakeholders.

56. When setting up a research study that will use participatory methods to generate conclusions of policy relevance, the researcher team should:

1. Ensure that there is a commitment by as many stakeholders as possible to the study objectives. This may mean organising a meeting of stakeholders to make sure that the study addresses the concerns of all involved and to promote joint 'ownership' of the study such that the findings are not thought of as responding to the agenda of one organisation only. If there is insufficient prior commitment to the study by the key stakeholders, the researchers should suspend the study. It is unethical to ask participants to spend time providing information to the study team if the team is aware that it will not be used.
2. Develop, through consultation, transparent sampling protocols to gain both insights and a stamp of approval from key technical and decision-making stakeholders for the research and its outputs.
3. Identify the most appropriate internal mechanisms for feeding back research findings into policy within the relevant government bodies, donor agencies and NGOs. If these do not exist, the researcher should recommend setting up such mechanisms either as part of the study or as a parallel initiative.
4. Get an explicit commitment on the part of stakeholders to discuss the findings and act on them where feasible. An end-of-study workshop, with prior commitment to attend by key decision-makers, may help to achieve this. Wherever possible, the research team should maximise the potential for secondary stakeholder participation earlier in the research process itself, e.g. through mid-research workshops or by encouraging bureaucratic staff and members of the policy directorate to train and engage in the research, if this can be achieved without increasing bias in the field.

5. Conclusion: Next steps

57. These Guidelines and Code of Conduct should form the basis for discussion and agreement on best practice in parti-numbers research. In presenting this Code of Conduct some of these principles/practices are non-negotiable in any research context while others will be subject to negotiation and trade-offs in different contexts. What must happen now is that all interested parties, including funding agencies, research and practitioner groups should move towards agreement and commitment to a finalised Code of Conduct.

Annex 1. A Working Code of Conduct for “Parti-Numbers” Research (Participatory Research that Generates Numbers)

Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When introducing externally-driven research questions do so transparently, making sure that these do not impinge on the broader participatory research process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment Learning reversal Handing over the stick Local ownership Transparency Sharing information 	<p>In the design phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build in an ethical review of the design by community participants <p>In the research phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the research segments that are externally driven and standardised, including the questions, data requirements and the need for standard methods Outside of the standard research segments, do not make methodological decisions on behalf of local participants. Introduce PRA methods sensitively and flexibly. Continue to respect locally-driven methods and outputs. While not compromising the standard segments of the research programme, create time and space in the main phase of research for local agenda setting, data generation and analysis. In particular, maximise space in the process for local analysis. Remember, it is this analysis, as much as the raw data, which can then be synthesised to inform poverty reduction efforts Share your reports with communities and individuals in a way that is accessible to them Leave data, maps, reports with the community. Facilitate the systematisation and archiving of research outputs for later analysis (e.g. as a baseline for later M&E). Be creative in suggesting how numbers can be used by community members Try to demystify the technical aspects of the research and build capacity for numerical analysis Build in a commitment to information sharing (e.g. about policy processes, rights and entitlements) in order to enable participants to act on their analysis Build in opportunities for feedback and follow up activity. Consider not doing the research if there is no opportunity for follow up

Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When seeking representativeness, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment 	In the planning phase:

minimise the trade-offs that disempower		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure sufficient resources are built into the research so that the trade-off between depth (for local analysis and internalisation) and coverage (for increase precision of inference) is minimised in the early stages of multi-stage sampling
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Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When seeking to standardise, minimise the trade-offs that disempower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment 	<p>In the design phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design the methodology iteratively. In the design phase of research, consider how locally-generated indicators, categories and local innovations in methods for generating numbers and prompting analysis might be built into standard segments of the main phase Base standardised segments of the main phase on consultation within communities during the design phase When standardising tools, maintain flexibility in their application wherever possible. When adapting PRA methods for standard numerical outputs, identify those aspects that require researcher control while retaining as much of the flexibility of the methods as possible.
Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When research has an elicitive element, ensure that the impact of the community-generated data on external audiences is maximised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment 	<p>In the design phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stretch the design to get participation from secondary stakeholders in the definition of 'what' data is required and how data will be used <p>In the learning and dissemination phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise primary stakeholder participation in the dissemination of data and analysis to external audiences.
Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a transparent and locally approved research agenda which does not raise expectations but which also minimises bias in responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency Sharing information 	<p>During the main phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be honest with participants about motives, use of information, likely benefits and risks Find ways for communities to judge for themselves what is useful to engage in/with In cases of sensitive information and bias, use a "contract" system in which some information is held back initially but all information is revealed finally

Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not make assumptions about people's acceptance of a research agenda, their approval of personal exposure or their willingness to share data through the research process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit, informed consent Confidentiality Anonymity Personal responsibility Handing over the stick 	<p>During the main phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find ways for communities to judge for themselves what is useful to engage in/with Explain that participatory research likes to acknowledge ownership but explain about wider audience access to reports, maps and data and clarify whether this acceptable Ensure that names not used without consent Seek permission to use information.

Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise exploitation by optimising trade-offs between the generation of useful and reliable information and the investment of time and energy by local people in the research process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimal ignorance Appropriate imprecision Successive approximation Triangulation Seeking diversity Personal responsibility 	<p>During the main phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask participants how to ensure that everyone gains from the research process Be aware of daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal timings and when is most convenient for community members to participate and take account of the distance and transport constraints of different groups Employ key informants to gather information that can be collected reliably by this method. This reduces the research burden on other members of the community.

Code of Conduct statement	Underlying principle	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of and sensitive to inequalities and power relations and consider fully the implications for the research process. Ensure as far as possible that existing internal power relations not entrenched by the research process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment Seeking diversity Personal responsibility 	<p>During the main phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about community and social "faultlines" through secondary literature review, key informant discussions and early participatory social analysis. Build this learning into sampling design and information collection tools. Always include the most marginalised social groups Employ techniques to divert "dominators" away from group-based analysis Use observation and triangulation to reduce the bias introduced by dominating voices.

Code of Conduct statement	Underpinning principles	Steps in the research process
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure as far as possible that people are not left exposed to internal risk and threats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal responsibility 	<p>During the main phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify sensitive situations with potential for conflict situations. Actively manage information feedback in order to reduce the risk of conflict in a research context that is not designed to respond to conflict or mitigate its impact.
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Code of Conduct statement	Underlying principle	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid closed methodological approaches to participatory research. Instead promote flexible, iterative and non-linear learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning reversal Learning rapidly and progressively Successive approximation 	<p>During dissemination and learning phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go back, find out what happened, then reflect and learn lessons for future participatory research designs Use the process of the research to support/catalyse methodological innovation and change in sponsoring organisations (CSOs/NGOs etc)
Code of Conduct statement	Underlying principle	Steps in the research process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge the traditional supplier-client relationship in research-to-policy process. Ensure commitment by those commissioning research to listen, to discuss results and to feed back information to those providing information and analysis, especially to the most disempowered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning reversal Information sharing 	<p>During the planning and design stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all stakeholders and get an explicit commitment on the part of as many stakeholders as possible to discuss the findings and act on them where feasible <p>During design stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build policy audiences into the research methodology Develop through consultation transparent and highly consultative sampling protocols in order to gain both insights and “stamps of approval” from secondary stakeholders Identify the most appropriate internal mechanisms for feeding back research findings into policy processes

Annex 2. Glossary of Definitions

Parti-Numbers.

Stakeholders

Standard segments

Random (probability-based) sampling

Purposive sampling

Hierarchical (multi-stage) sampling

Absolute values

Relative (conditional) values

External validity

Internal validity

Reliability

Representativeness

Target population

Research unit

Annex 3. Codes of Conduct and Minimum Standards: Internet sources and contacts⁶

On how to develop a Code of Conduct -

<http://courses.cs.vt.edu/~cs3604/lib/WorldCodes/WorldCodes.html#recommendations>

CoCs of various interest groups for comparison

<http://www.codesofconduct.org/interest.htm>

NGO CoCs <http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/ncafe-ks.html>

Social Auditing of CoCs <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/global/pdfs/ProjectFlier1.pdf>

Guidelines and CoCs for research with local and indigenous peoples

<http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/socio-eco/traditional/instruments.asp>

SPHERE Guidelines on Minimum Standards (good practical layout for operationalisation of Code of Conduct's)

http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook_index.htm

Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines: [http://www.the-](http://www.the-sra.org.uk/index2.htm)

[sra.org.uk/index2.htm](http://www.the-sra.org.uk/index2.htm)

Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth Ethical Guidelines:

<http://les1.man.ac.uk/asa/Ethics/ethics.htm>

⁶ With thanks to Josh Levene for providing this information.

Annex 4. Ethical Guidelines for Participatory Research with Sex Workers

The principles listed below reflect the voices of debt-bonded sex workers in different countries in Asia. They begin with the premise that all projects adopt trust and equity as their core values.

OWNERSHIP: *"Its our life, right?"*

Research projects must be committed to the principle that ownership and control of the project rests with sex workers.

RESPECT FOR SELF-IDENTIFICATION: *"Let us tell you who we are."*

Research must address sex workers as they see themselves not as others see them

CONSULTATION: *"We know many things you do not know. You know many things we do not know. Lets share together."*

Projects should be conducted through a consultative process, giving respect to the opinions and choices of sex workers.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: *"Today, many decisions are made for us. We want to be able to decide for ourselves."*

In sex work situations, women may be subtly coerced or unduly influenced to engage in research. Sex workers should be able to enter into research voluntarily and with adequate information.

CONFIDENTIALITY: *"Many people want to harm us with their looks and their words, their laws and their policies. We need to be careful, we need to be private."*

Researchers should inform sex workers about plans for confidentiality for each stage of the research.

TRANSPARENCY: *"Tell us again who are you are and what you are doing, again and again."*

All aspects of the research process should be open to scrutiny and criticism (e.g. which information is being gathered and why, what roles different members of staff play).

ACCOUNTABILITY: *"How can we ever really know what you are doing? You live in another world from us."*

Build bridges to ensure accountability (e.g. translate materials, report back continually, allow sex workers to choose a monitoring committee).

Developed by Jackie Pollack, a Horizons consultant on the Svay Pak study. She is associated with EMPOWER, an organisation of sex workers in Thailand.