Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit
Tool 19: Participation in Research Checklist

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The Participation in Research Checklist is a framework for systematically planning, and/or assessing, which members of a partnership participate in which stages and activities in the research process. It draws attention to the range of activities involved in a research project and who will do what at each stage.

Why use the Participation in Research Checklist tool?

Examining who does what is an important step in determining equity in a research partnership. Different activities involve different burdens and lead to different rewards. Participating in 'academic activities' such as defining the research question, designing research methodologies, and analysing data, typically leads to the reward of co-authorship of research outputs such as journal articles. This is an important form of recognition for researchers, whose ability to advance their career and access research funding depends heavily on their track record as authors. Participating in emotionally and/or labour-intensive activities such as recruiting research participants, collecting and translating data, and/or engaging community members or policy makers, are important for ensuring research is rigorous and equitable. However, participating in these activities is typically poorly recognised by academic institutions and research funders.

This tool addresses equity by:

1. Making explicit what stages and activities different members of a partnership participate in, and the nature of their participation.

2. Enabling assessment of the equity of each partner's pattern of participation.

3. Producing results that might be used to:
   a. Facilitate critical thinking about equity of participation.
   b. Plan more equitable participation.
   c. Support claims regarding equitable participation, including in funding applications.

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When to use the Participation in Research Checklist tool?

Phase	Rating	Descriptions
Planning	•••	The checklist is intended to be used for **planning** which aspects and activities of the research process each member of a partnership will participate in.
Implementing	••	During the **design and implementation** stage of research, the checklist can be used to monitor what people actually do.
Dissemination	••	The checklist includes some **dissemination and impact** activities.
Sustaining	•••	The checklist is intended to be used for evaluating and reflecting on what activities different members participated in, in different stages of the research project. This type of evaluation can contribute to learning from experience and planning future participation in the sustaining stage of a research partnership.

Ratings
••• Designed for this stage | •• Can be used as is in this stage | •Can be adapted for use in this stage

How long does it take to use the Participation in Research Checklist tool?

Rapid implementation

Completing the participation checklist will take 20-30 minutes per member. Asking individuals to complete the checklist as a self-reflection exercise might be useful if resources are scarce.

Intensive implementation

When resources are available, a group meeting could be convened to discuss checklists completed by or for different partners, and the equity of each member's participation. This more intensive approach might require a group meeting of one to two hours. In addition, each member of the partnership would need to spend 20-30 minutes completing the checklist, as per the rapid approach.

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What other resources do you need to use the Participation in Research Checklist tool?

- Electronic or paper copies of the Participation in Research Checklist template
- Space for face-to-face or virtual meeting (intensive approach)
- An electronic device that can be used to project (or screen share) the checklist.
- For reflective discussions, additional stationery such as poster paper and marker pens may be required.

How to use the Participation in Research Checklist

1. The checklist assumes there are three possible 'levels' of participation, no participation (score = 0), tokenistic participation (score = 1) and meaningful participation (score = 2). Discuss the meaning of different 'levels' of participation.
   a. No participation might mean being completely excluded.
   b. Tokenistic participation might include signing off on decisions made by other members of the partnership or participating in a labour-intensive activity such as data collection for a short time.
   c. Meaningful participation might involve being involved in discussions, making decisions, or dedicating significant time to participating in the activity.

2. Enter research partners' names in the column headers. If there are more than five partners, copy and paste the columns for additional members to complete.

3. Distribute the checklist to partners and ask them each to complete the checklist based on how they expect to participate in the research process (for use in the planning stage). In the sustaining phase, the checklist would be completed based on actual participation.
   a. You could complete a checklist for each institution involved in the research partnership or for each researcher.

4. Instruct each research partner to select and complete the cells for 'Any'' and 'Level' of participation, based on what they expect to do (or what they have done):
   a. In the 'Any' cell, enter:
      1. 0 if the partner is not participating in the activity; and
      2. 1 if the partner is participating in the activity.

b. In the 'Type' cell, enter:
1. 0 if the partner is not participating in the activity.
2. 1 if the partner is participating in the activity in a tokenistic way.
3. 2 if the partner is participating in the activity in a meaningful way.

5. Scores for total participation and participation in academic and non-academic activities will calculate automatically:
   a. Academic activities are written in blue text and are activities that are typically recognised and rewarded by academic institutions and research funders.
   b. Non-academic activities are written in black text and typically receive limited recognition, despite being important for research rigour and/or equity.

6. Convene a meeting of all partners who have completed the checklist, to discuss the equity of planned or actual participation. See below for questions that could be discussed.

7. Make a list of actions that could be taken to address any inequities in participation. Decide on actions that will be taken to increase equity.

Suggested questions to explore when using the Participation in Research Checklist

For individuals

- Are there any additional activities which you (or other partners) would like to or should participate in?
  - Which activities?
  - Why do you want to participate in this activity?
  - Why are you not participating in this activity?
  - What could be done to enable you to participate in this activity?

- Are there any planned activities which you (or other partners) would not like to or should not participate in?
  - Which activities?
  - Why do you not want to participate in this activity?
  - Why are you participating in this activity?
  - Who else could participate in this activity so that your time can be freed up?

- Compared to the activities that you think/know other members are participating in, do you feel that your participation in the research will be equitable?

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For groups

- Is participation in any stage or activity of the research process dominated by members from the Global North or South?
    - Why or why not?
    - Is this equitable?

- Are there any activities in which participation of Globally Southern based partners could be planned to enable research capacity strengthening?

- Are there any activities in which participation of Globally Southern based members could be planned to enable equitable recognition, for example in authorship of research outputs?

Tips for using the Participation in Research Checklist

- In your research funding proposal, use the results of participation planning to support claims about equity in the partnership.
- Provide all members of the partnership with an opportunity to use the tool to identify activities in which they would like to participate.
- It may be easier and less confrontational to discuss inequity in a hypothetical partnership. Before applying the checklist to your own partnership, discuss the completed example as a reflection activity.

Completed example of the Participation in Research Checklist

The Participation in Research Checklist completed example is based on a hypothetical partnership, involving members from Uganda, Vietnam and the United Kingdom (UK). The partners have agreed to use the following definitions for levels of participation:

> 0 = No participation in this activity.
> 1 = Tokenistic participation means signing off on decisions made by other members of the partnership or participating for a short time.
> 2 = Meaningful participation involving deliberating, making decisions or dedicating significant time to participating in the activity.

The results show that the project was conceptualised by the UK partner, with input from the Vietnamese partner. The Ugandan partner was only invited to participate after the project had been designed. Although the overall participation scores are similar for the Ugandan and United Kingdom partners, the academic and non-academic participation scores show considerable inequity. The Ugandan partner was excluded from most of the academic

activities. Although the Vietnamese partner participated in more academic activities than the Ugandan partner, their participation in academic activities was more often tokenistic, compared to the UK partner's participation, which was meaningful.

References and further reading for the Participation in Research Checklist

The checklist is adapted to the context of academic research partnership from the Comprehensive Community Participation in Research Framework presented in Brear, M. R., Hammarberg, K., & Fisher, J. (2018). Community participation in research from resource-constrained countries: A scoping review. *Health Promotion International, 33*(4), 723-733.