Community Participation in Transitional Justice: A Role for Participatory Research

Jim Wormington, American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative
What is Participatory Research?

- **Reflects Two Values:**
  - Decisions should be made on evidence;
  - People should have influence over the creation and conduct of policies designed to change their lives.

- **Participatory research refers to:**
  - Efforts by people to collect and analyze information about their community and so find ways to respond to the challenges their community faces.
Participatory Research and Transitional Justice

Efforts by people to collect and analyze information about their community and so find ways to respond to the challenges their community faces.

Efforts by communities affected by conflict to collect and analyze information about their communities’ experience of human rights violations to find ways to respond to the impacts of human rights violations.
Form Community Research Committee
• Representative group of community members (e.g. Guinea).
• Leads community’s inquiry into past and how to address it.
• Trained and supported by outsiders.

Collect Information (Data)
• Organize activities for community members to discuss experience of conflict and how to respond to its impact (e.g. Rivers of Life).
• Can include learning about and analyzing existing government-led TJ efforts (e.g. outreach) or lessons from other transitions.

Analyze Information Collected
• Analysis by small group.
• Feedback to larger groups – involving wider community in analysis.
What can participatory research do?

MOBILIZATION
What can participatory research do?

ADVOCACY
What can participatory research do?
Potential Uses

• **Mali:**
  • CSOs and communities in northern Mali investigate how to integrate local reconciliation and peacebuilding practices into the work of the new Commission on Truth, Justice and Reconciliation.

• **Libya:**
  • Communities identify advocacy priorities for delegates to the country’s National Dialogue.

• **DRC:**
  • Communities in the Kivus find ways to provide “reparations” to victims of sexual violence.

**Participatory research creates lasting capacity within communities to address these challenges.**
Not as easy at it sounds....

- How do you form representative community research committees to lead the research?
- How does the committee make decisions?
- How do you ensure the involvement of marginalized groups?
- What training do you need to provide to the community members leading the research?
- What kinds of activities will help people to discuss their experience of human rights violations in a safe environment?
- How can poorly educated community members analyze large amounts of information?
- How do other community members give feedback on their analysis?
• USAID-supported methodology for conducting participatory research on transitional justice.
• Aimed at CSOs, international and national, assisting communities to conduct participatory research.
• Product of expertise built up in other development sectors, as well as examples from conflict environments.
• Contribution to emerging field; further learning at conference in West Africa in September 2014.
Technical Guide Highlights

• Participatory research process and values.
• When and where to do it.
• Forming and training Community Research Committees.
• Collecting information.
  • Facilitation techniques.
  • Ensuring participants are not harmed.
• Analysis with communities with low education.
• Actions that result:
  • Mobilization.
  • Advocacy.
  • Participation – Local Level Transitional Justice.
• Includes examples from pilot program in Guinea, as well as from other organizations’ work.
Q and A