Decolonising knowledge production to support equitable community research partnerships:
Participatory approaches with the ARISE consortium

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Introduction
Co-production requires dismantling existing power hierarchies. As such, it can support decolonising knowledge generation and fostering inclusive and equitable relationships with diverse (and at times) marginalised actors participating in health governance, research and decision-making. Decolonising knowledge production recognises that expertise lies with those communities directly affected by health inequities and challenges as well as other key actors.

The Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity (ARISE) consortium aims to enhance accountability and improve the health and wellbeing of marginalised populations living and/or working in informal urban settlements in Bangladesh, India, Kenya and Sierra Leone.

ARISE uses community based participatory research (CBPR) to build the capacities of urban marginalised people to generate contextually grounded evidence to incite action and strengthen relationships with governance actors. Here we demonstrate a range of participatory methods used.

Ripple Effect Mapping in Kenya
Ripple effect mapping (REM) is a participatory monitoring and evaluation method that visually maps the impacts of research activities on an individual, community and wider level. The tool has been used by co-researchers and researchers to monitor and shape ARISE activities.

“The ripple effect mapping has helped us Mathare residents in identifying our areas of strengths and weakness when it comes to developments in our settlements. Through REM, we were able to identify and appreciate our positive stories and gain skills such as data collection. Mapping also helped some of us secure employment as co-researchers.”

Co-researcher and youth leader, Muungano wa Wanavijiji

Photovoice in Bangladesh
Community researchers took photographs on issues related to housing or WASH in their communities. They recorded short voice notes to discuss challenges and community adaptation measures to cope with the situation.

“IT’s great that our community situation is being represented on a global platform through photovoice. It also helped us to better understand and critically analyse our own problems and situations.”

Co-researcher from Shatkhira, Bangladesh

Performing Arts in India
The community and artists collaborated to create twelve songs and a street play that aimed to emphasise health rights, education, the power of collective action, and strategies for holding individuals and institutions accountable.

Conclusion and Recommendations
In ARISE, we used a range of participatory qualitative, quantitative and arts based methods with urban marginalised people and researchers. CBPR can be an effective means to work towards decolonising knowledge production and promote accountability. Working in true partnership with community researchers also requires navigating tensions and challenges that arise. Fostering equitable research partnerships requires an openness to learn from communities, and a foundation of humility, trust and respect.