

# Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) Toolkit

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*Klahaan* 2024



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This is an updated version of our 2021 FPAR toolkit , made possible through the generous support of RFSU.

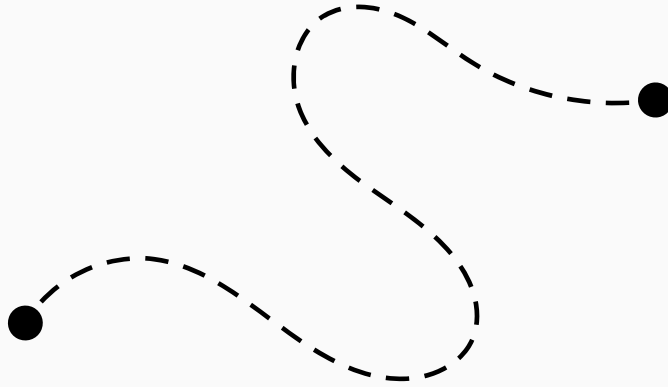


For more info or support on conducting FPAR, you can reach out to us at [info@klahaan.org](mailto:info@klahaan.org) or via our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/klahaan.kh](https://www.facebook.com/klahaan.kh)).

We would also be happy to share more detailed training modules, and can meet with you to discuss how these can be tailored for your own FPAR research project needs.

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# How to use this toolkit?



Klahaan was inspired by the Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) method developed by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and sought to adapt it to the Cambodian context. Over the past five years, Klahaan has conducted FPAR projects and reflected on its journey, good practices, and challenges in a case study titled *Intersectional Participatory Research as Epistemic Justice Work: Reflecting on Five Years of FPAR in Cambodia (2024)*. These reflections have informed updates to its toolkit, incorporating lessons learned along the way.

The toolkit provides guidance, ideas, and suggestions on conducting FPAR research. However, it should not be applied or replicated in another context without careful reflection on localization and adaptation to the local environment. Each FPAR project is unique, varying based on the topic and, most importantly, the Action Researchers (ARs), who shape the dynamics and energy they bring to the process. Additional steps may be included, and some omitted, depending on various factors such as available resources and opportunities. Klahaan is also available to offer further guidance on the process.

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# What is FPAR?

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Feminist Participatory Action Research, or 'FPAR', pronounced 'effpar' for short, is a way of doing research that involves stakeholders in the process, not just as 'data collectors' but also in co-designing and developing the research at all stages.

There is no single correct formula for conducting FPAR. This guide shows some basic building blocks based on Klahan's own research experience in Cambodia. The steps and methods are flexible; what is essential are the core principles of **intersectionality** and **meaningful participation**.

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# Intersectionality? What does that mean?

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Intersectional feminism means that we actively recognise that barriers to gender equality increase or decrease depending on other aspects of someone's identity. This can include ones' race, age, class, sexual orientation or religion.

Being intersectional as feminists means addressing a diverse spectrum of women's issues, and is explicitly inclusive of transgender, intersex and non-binary people.



Image adapted from: FYS 101: Intersectional Self, Syracuse University Libraries, available (online) [here](#)

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# Intersectionality in practice

In practice, applying intersectionality as a foundational principle in FPAR doesn't follow a one-size-fits-all formula. Instead, it requires **intentionality** and a **commitment** to constantly question power structures, ensuring inclusivity, and actively listening to the co-designers of the research (the action researchers, whom we call the "ARs").

Thus, there is no single, correct method for incorporating intersectionality in FPAR. The steps and methods used should be **flexible** and adapted to the unique context and needs of the ARs as well as the specific topic being studied.



At times, **practical constraints** can impact the depth of intersectionality in our research, requiring us to make adjustments. For instance, in our study on divorce, the strong social taboo surrounding the topic made it challenging to recruit Action Researchers (ARs) with personal experience of divorce. As a result, we focused primarily on working with children of divorcees living in the capital.

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# Learning Exchange

As feminists, we believe everyone should have a role in creating new knowledge. It shouldn't just be academics or NGO staff and so on.



We believe that we have as much to learn from communities being researched, as they do from us! So this is a process of learning exchange.

The process is explicitly and deliberately feminist. We try to ensure this by conducting ethical, social justice-oriented research with a strong intersectional gender analysis.

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# Capacity Building

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In FPAR, capacity building is an important part of the research process. Training sessions on relevant technical <sup>1</sup> and thematic <sup>2</sup> aspects of the research, as well as on feminist principles and values can ensure everyone is up to speed and able to work on the project with ease and confidence.

As the APWLD<sup>3</sup> have explained, it is important to remember that all researchers are part of collective capacity building: Any professional researchers also develop capacity through the process by learning from the community researchers and participants.



- 1** By 'technical aspects,' we refer to ethical data collection, research design, data analysis and coding, and so on.
- 2** By 'thematic' aspects, we refer to training on the relevant topic covered in the research. For instance, a training on sexual and reproductive health rights would be appropriate, for a study looking at sexual consent.
- 3** Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, <https://apwld.org/feminist-participatory-action-research-fpar/>

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# Post-FPAR Action

FPAR "is a way for researchers and everyday people<sup>4</sup> to join in solidarity to take collective action, both short and long term, for social change. Locally determined and controlled action is a planned consequence of inquiry."<sup>5</sup>

This means that we should conduct our research with the intention using it in order to try and create some sort of improvement in society.



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**4** People from all walks of life, that are not strictly trained researchers

**5** Maguire, P. (1987) Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach, University of Massachusetts: The Center for International Education

# FPAR in 12 steps

- 07 Step 1: Formulate Topic
- 08 Step 2: Sketch a Timeline
- 09 Step 3: Recruit Action Researchers
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# Step 1: Formulate Topic

## What do you want to explore?

07

- Find a topic that is **specific enough** to be able to recruit Action Researchers (ARs).

E.g: 'Gender research' is a bit too broad for ARs to know if they would be interested to get involved.

- The topic should also be **loose enough** so that your ARs can shape it and reshape it based on their own interests and knowledge of the subject.

E.g: 'What proportion of married women aged between 20 and 25 in Boeung Tumpun II commune are taking the pill?' is too narrow for ARs to take part in meaningful co-creation of the topic.





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# Step 2: Sketch a timeline

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So that you can inform your ARs how much time they will need to co-create the research, and over what timeframe, your team should sketch out a rough research timeline (see **Annexe A** for an example).

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# Step 3: recruit action researchers

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## Possible methods of recruiting Action Researchers

- **Flyers** at a university, or after presenting your research idea during a guest lecture, you could ask students to sign up if they are interested.
- Through your existing **networks** (community members, sporting teams, meditation or yoga groups, unions etc).
- Using a sign-up **form** online where interested applicants can fill in the form via social media (see **Annexe B**).



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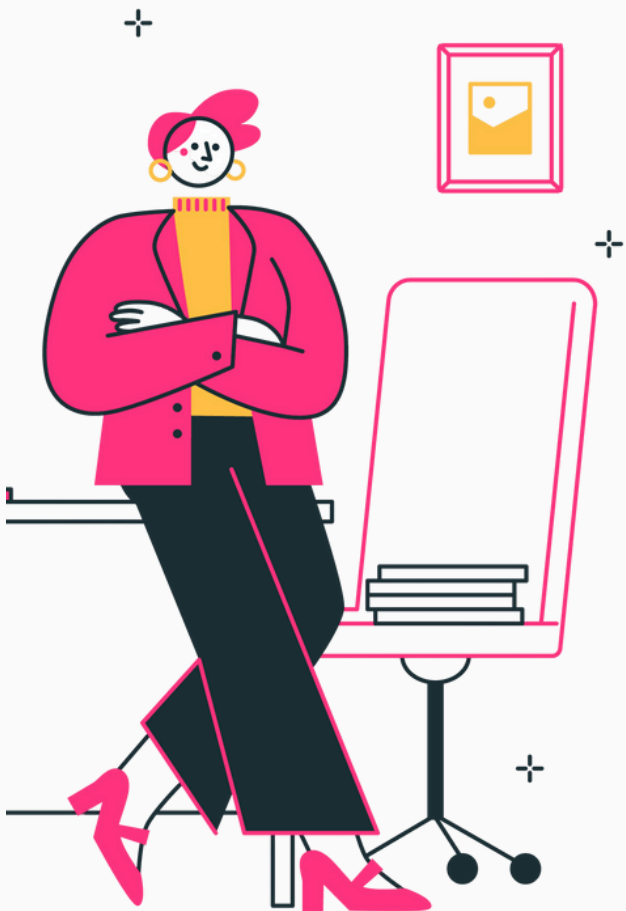
# Step 4: induction training on FPAR & feminism

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Welcome your Action Researchers and bring them up to speed!

We recommend a full-day session to meet with your ARs and get to know one another. We've included some ice-breaker exercises in **Annexe C**, but of course you can design your own.

Some potential sessions for the day could include the following (more detail on next page):



What is FPAR?

Feminism 101

Ethical research principles

Brainstorm on the topic together,  
design research questions

Agree on ways of working  
and next steps

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# Step 4: induction training on FPAR & feminism

Welcome your Action Researchers and bring them up to speed!

## 1. WHAT IS FPAR?

Bring your ARs up to speed by explaining why the organisation wants to know more about a certain topic, and how the participatory process means they will be engaged as co-researchers, not just as data collectors.

## 2. FEMINISM 101

Many of your ARs will be familiar with or interested in feminism, but they won't necessarily have a deep knowledge of feminist concepts and why we are applying this lens to the research. An 'intro to feminism' helps everyone feel more confident in conducting feminist research.

## 3. ETHICAL RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

A quick run-through of the core principles of how to conduct ethical research on sensitive topics can help everyone understand the importance of informed consent and other considerations (for an example presentation, feel free to reach out to us or to follow our free online course available on our [website](#))

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# Step 4: induction training on FPAR & feminism

Welcome your Action Researchers and bring them up to speed!

## 4. BRAINSTORM ON THE TOPIC TOGETHER

ARs are encouraged to share (in a supportive space) why they are interested in being involved in research on the topic. This guided discussion then moves to explore what the research **questions** and **objectives** should be.

## 5. DESIGN NEXT STEPS

- Establish **communication channels** and **ways of working** - Telegram? Facebook group? etc.
  - Establish a **commonly agreed time commitment** for the research - (can people spare one hour per week? Or do they prefer one or two half days per month? Weekdays or weekends? How can we factor in childcare provision? etc).
  - Draw up a rough **timeline of next steps**, including when the field data collection will take place.
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# Step 4: induction training on FPAR & feminism



Induction training on FPAR & Feminism, Battambang City, Aug 2020  
Topic: Water & Oil? A Study of Buddhism & Feminism in Cambodia

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# Step 5: conduct literature review

## What do you want to explore?

- The literature review is one labour-intensive part of the research, where you will need to decide and negotiate how active you would like your ARs to be in this process.
- It's important to remember that while your ARs are co-creators of the research, they are not paid interns. They have their own busy lives and schedules, and asking them to complete lengthy reviews of academic literature risks being extractive and therefore unethical.
- One way around this dilemma might be to ask anyone who is interested and has the time, to review one to three articles and send the summaries through to the group chat. Or to find a few media articles and send through the links. If any ARs are keen to be part of the full process in order to have hands on experience in reviewing literature, they should be made welcome to do so but should be supported through the process so they are not taking on large quantities of substantive work.





# Step 6: design the research method

## Designing research questions and instruments

- This should be a full-day session held at a coffee shop or restaurant, with full catering provided for the ARs. The venue should offer a comfortable space for both the training and meal services, creating an inviting environment for collaboration and discussion.
- Ideally, if time and resources permit, this session should be incorporated into a wider 1-2-day training to enhance ARs' practical research design skills and give enough time for instrument designs. (For an agenda or training materials you can use, reach out to our team).
- At the start of the the training, there should be a brief refresher presentation on research design then proceed to discuss and agree on research questions, objectives and the parameters of the topic, so that everyone is on the same page about what we are trying to discover.
- ARs can then be split into two or even three small groups, with one person from the organisation to help facilitate the discussion and answer any clarifying questions. .
- The groups can be split according to research instrument, for instance one group designing household surveys, another an online survey and another for long-form interview questionnaires.
- There should be a session in plenary afterwards, to share ideas and streamline the different instruments if necessary to ensure they're all complementary to one another.
- Everyone should then be reminded about fieldwork dates, and these should be amended if needed (it's all about flexibility!)

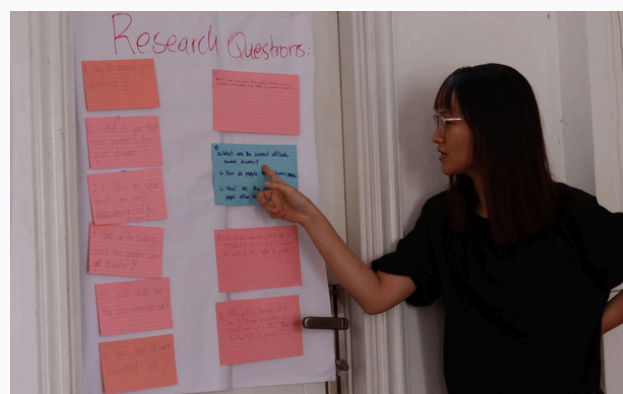


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# Step 6: design the research method

## Designing research instruments

Designing the research method is typically an open discussion and negotiation between the ARs and CSO staff, requiring active listening, constructive feedback, and technical support. We also use democratic methods, such as voting, to make certain decisions collaboratively.



Research Design training, Phnom Penh, April 2023

Topic: Separate Ways: A study of attitudes towards separation, divorce and women's rights in Cambodia.

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# Step 7: conduct the fieldwork

## Go forth and research!

Choose the methods that your team and the Action Researchers have agreed are best suited for collecting the data necessary for your research.

For example:

HOUSEHOLD  
SURVEYS

STUDENT  
SURVEYS

ONLINE  
SURVEYS

KEY INFORMANT  
INTERVIEWS OR  
FOCUS GROUP  
DISCUSSIONS

e.g. designed together  
but launched by a staff  
member on Facebook  
page

arranged in advance  
with support of staff  
members

### NOTE:

Remember to obtain informed consent, distribute participant information statements and follow other ethical research principles.

Everyone who is involved in the data collection can also spend 10 - 15 minutes filling in a reflection diary at the end of each day of fieldwork, noting down their initial observations and interesting findings.

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# Step 7: conduct the fieldwork

## Go forth and research!

Before fieldwork, it can be helpful to organize an online meeting to provide guidance on effectively using the research tools, reaching out to participants, communicating with them, and addressing logistics and potential challenges. This also gives ARs an opportunity to actively engage with the research tools, become familiar with them, ask questions, practice their use while receiving valuable feedback.



Data collection by Action Researchers, Kompong Chhnag Province, July 2022



Topic: Housework: Whosework? An exploration of gender roles, unpaid care work and the mental load in Cambodia

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# Step 8: transcription

## Go forth and research!

Transcription is one of those lengthy, labour intensive processes that will not necessarily give Action Researchers enhanced research capacity, but may instead prove to be a drain on their time.

For this reason, and to avoid using unpaid labour for substantive but relatively menial work, we recommend conducting the transcription either in-house by paid team members, or hiring an external transcription service.



# Step 9: Coding

## Data Analysis & Coding

- Data analysis, (unlike transcription), is one area where we think that Action Researchers can really benefit from receiving training and taking a hands-on, practical approach. Many young researchers do not have access to this type of training, and so for many it is a brand new learning curve.
- In our FPAR project, we found that the intensive training on how to code qualitative data was one of the most engaging sessions, and some ARs reported at the end of the project that it was their favourite research 'step.'
- In addition, engaging ARs in data analysis improves the research output. After all, findings don't just 'emerge' from the data, rather they are constructed (by the researcher, from the data) during the analysis process. This is why input from ARs is important at this stage: both to enhance the legitimacy of the research, and to ensure they have a clear voice in the final report.
- To access a presentation on how to conduct Thematic Data Analysis according to Braun & Clarke's (2006) method, feel free to reach out to us at [info@klahaan.org](mailto:info@klahaan.org)



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# Step 9: Coding

## Data Analysis & Coding



Thematic coding workshop, Phnom Penh, 27 Jul 2024  
Topic: Attitudes towards sexual consent in Cambodia

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# Step 10: skeleton outline

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**CONTENTS**

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION**
- 2.0 METHODOLOGY**
  - 2.1 METHODS, CODING
  - 2.1 ETHICS, LIMITATIONS
- 3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**
- 4.0 EXPECTATIONS**
  - 4.1 CULTURAL
  - 4.2 SOCIETAL
  - 4.3 FAMILIAL
- 5.0 CONSEQUENCES**
  - 5.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL
  - 5.2 PHYSICAL
  - 5.3 MARITAL
- 6.0 LGBTQ EXPERIENCES**
- 7.0 CHANGING TIMES?**
- 8.0 CONCLUSION**

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- 1. Introduction**
  - 1.1 Summary of findings
- 2. Methodology**
- 3. To divorce, or not to divorce: Barriers & drivers**
  - 3.1 Reasons women pursue divorce
  - 3.2 Reasons women fail to access divorce
- 4. Navigating divorce: Patriarchal processes**
  - 4.1 Formal marriages
  - 4.2 Informal/customary marriages
  - 4.3 Demographic variations
  - 4.4 Life post-divorce
- 5. Changing Times... Perceived shifts in attitudes towards divorce**
- 6. Conclusion**



This will resemble a table of contents



This skeleton outline should be shared with all researchers and agreed upon before writing begins.

**Draft the headings and sub-headings, then seek feedback and approval from the Action Researchers (ARs)!**

Once all team members and Action Researchers (ARs) have finished their coding sections and submitted their coded data via group chat or email, a designated team member (or a group) should analyze the newly coded datasets. This analysis will help in identifying key themes and drafting a preliminary outline of the report.

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# Step 11: Write-up

**Draft the headings and sub-headings, then seek feedback and approval from the Action Researchers (ARs)!**

Now comes the time to write up the report!

- We recommend including the findings from the literature review at the start of the report, in order to contextualise and situate the research – to 'set the scene.' This can be followed by the empirical findings gathered in the field by the team. But any structure is generally fine, according to your team's needs.

- In terms of the report write-up, this involves another process of negotiation with your staff team and the ARs. If any ARs are very keen to write up some of the report, this should be supported. However, you may wish to consider a daily paid rate for this aspect of the work, given its substantive and time-intensive nature. If the report is to be just written up by the in-house staff, bear in mind that the ARs' research design and coding work must feed directly into the report.





# Step 12: validation & revision

You've made it to the end!



## Validation workshop

Phnom Penh, Dec 2021

- Now it's time to ensure the research reflects what your ARs want to say about the topic through the data that they gathered.
- Any changes suggested by ARs should be considered and reflected in the final report.



Topic: A perception study on virginity culture in Cambodia

- This can be an in-person gathering or an online meeting, depending on the availability and preferences of the project staff and Action Researchers (ARs)..
- The draft report should be distributed to all researchers for review at least one week prior to the workshop.

# Step 13: Launch

## You've made it to the end!

A research report launch can be organised to share the findings with participants, the wider community and key stakeholders. ARs should be invited at the event and given the opportunity to speak.

The slide presentation of the key findings should be shared with ARs in advance, followed by a rehearsal session for those who volunteer to give a presentation on the research findings and their experience. This will ensure that each presenter feels confident with their section. A framed certificate and a gift can be offered to ARs as a sign of appreciation for their contribution. For example, we offer Kindle e-readers.

After the launch, research findings can be shared through other means, like video animation, policy briefs, social media messages, media outreach, or integrated into other reports and advocacy efforts.





# Step 13: Launch

You've made it to the end!



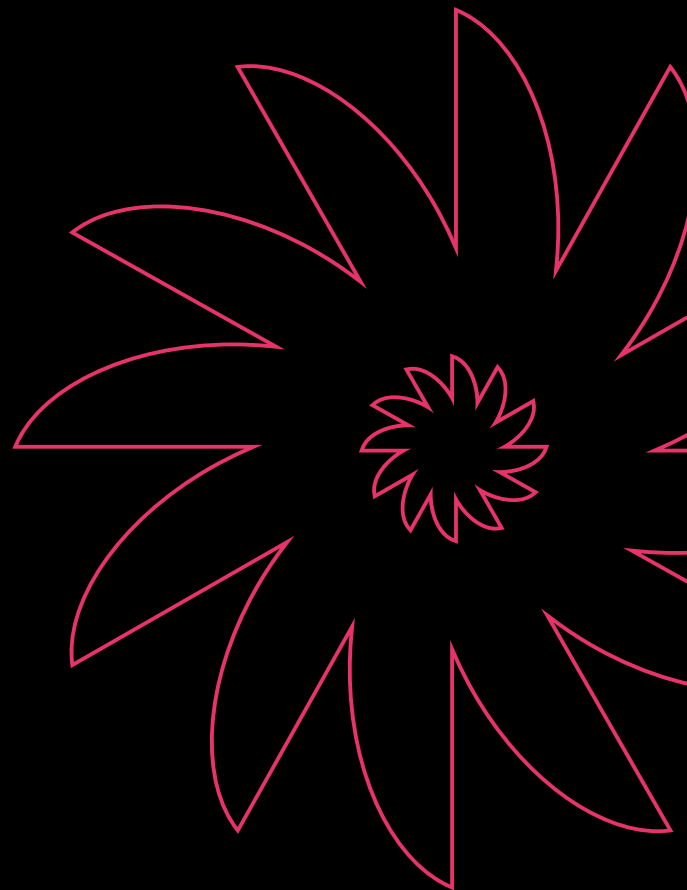
Report Launch, Phnom Penh, Dec 2023

# Annexes

**Annexe A** Example Timeline

**Annexe B** Example Recruitment Form

**Annexe C** Example Ice-Breaker Exercise



# Annexe A

## Example Timeline

A





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# Annexe B

B

## Example Recruitment Form

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### Volunteer Action Research Team Application

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We are accepting applications to join a research team project that will look at understandings of virginity and sex before marriage in Cambodian society.

Background: We are looking for 3 young men and 3 young women (18 - 26) to join us as volunteer Action Researchers! This will involve a series of trainings to sharpen your skills in research design, data analysis and field interviewing, as well as hands-on, practical experience in a professional setting.

Deadline to apply: 5pm, Thu 24 June

Time commitment: 1-2 hours per week, and 1-2 full days per month for training and fieldwork, from June until late October 2021.

Who we are looking for: Enthusiastic, motivated young people who are interested in gender equality and in conducting research for social change purposes.

What's in it for you?: A chance to receive training on and hands-on experience conducting research from start to finish. We will provide you with a certificate, gift and written reference letter upon completion of the research.

Interviews will be conducted in late June for this volunteer opportunity. We hope you can join us!

Name

Short-answer text

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Email address and phone contact

Short-answer text

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Age

Short-answer text

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Current status (employed, studying full time etc)

Short-answer text

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Do you have any prior research or volunteer experience? If yes, please describe in one sentence. If no, that's okay!

Long-answer text

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Why do you want to join our Action Research team? Please let us know in one to two sentences.

Long-answer text

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# Annexe C

C

## Example Ice-Breaker Exercise

### Wall Race

Materials: None, but you will need a long wall with no furniture against it

Instructions:

- Stand in a group close to the wall. When the organiser yells "go", everyone should quickly run and line up according to their birthday – Those born near Jan 1st on the left, and those born at the end of the year on the right, trying not to be the last one in place.
- When the organiser yells "go" again, everyone should quickly line up according to height order – shortest on the left, tallest on the right.

### Helium Stick

Materials: Long and light-weight pole

Instructions:

- Get your team members to stand in two equal lines, facing each other.
- Each person needs to place a hand in front of them with their index finger pointed out.
- Place a pole on top of all the index fingers to that it is resting evenly.
- Get everyone to lower the pole to the ground without anyone losing touch with it at any stage (make sure you're carefully watching to spot any cheats!).

# *Klahaan Organization*



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Klahaan is an independent, intersectional feminist organization working for a more equitable and just future where all Cambodian women can fulfil their potential.

**Contact us:**

Email: [info@klahaan.org](mailto:info@klahaan.org)

Website: [www.klahaan.org](http://www.klahaan.org)