



# **Voices of Refugee Youth**

A Participatory Research Toolkit

## About this document

This toolkit offers a guide to conducting effective participatory research with youth. It outlines the benefits of participation and provides practical steps for research practitioners to consider when striving to ensure rigour and equity.

Other outputs from the initiative can be found on the Voices of Refugee Youth [website](#). These include: the research report; youth advocacy reports from Rwanda and Pakistan; and a policy brief.

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## VOICES OF REFUGEE YOUTH

“Voices of refugee youth: impact of post-primary refugee education” is a research initiative conducted in partnership between Jigsaw, Refugee Education UK and UNHCR. Read more [here](#).

## JIGSAW

Jigsaw is a social enterprise that exists to build evidence for education in low-income countries. Read more [here](#).

### Refugee Education UK

Refugee Education UK (REUK) is a charity which equips young refugees to build positive futures by thriving in education. Read more [here](#).



UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. Read more [here](#).



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# Initiative overview

The Voices of Refugee Youth initiative was led by Jigsaw and Refugee Education UK, in partnership with UNHCR, and funded by Dubai Cares. It ran from September 2018 to December 2022.

The initiative had two core aims: to build the evidence base for post-primary refugee education; and to increase young refugees' access to and representation within education research.

The first aim was achieved through a longitudinal panel study of 1126 refugee students in secondary and higher education. This consisted of three data collection points (known as DP1, DP2, and DP3). The second aim was achieved through the involvement of 31 youth researchers (15 in Pakistan and 16 in Rwanda) who worked as core contributors to the research study and, at the same time, received training in applied research methods, gaining a graduate-level accreditation. The study itself explored the educational experiences and aspirations of secondary school and higher education refugee students living in Pakistan and Rwanda.

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# The purpose of the toolkit

This toolkit is for anyone seeking to conduct effective participatory research involving refugee youth, as well as research involving youth more broadly.

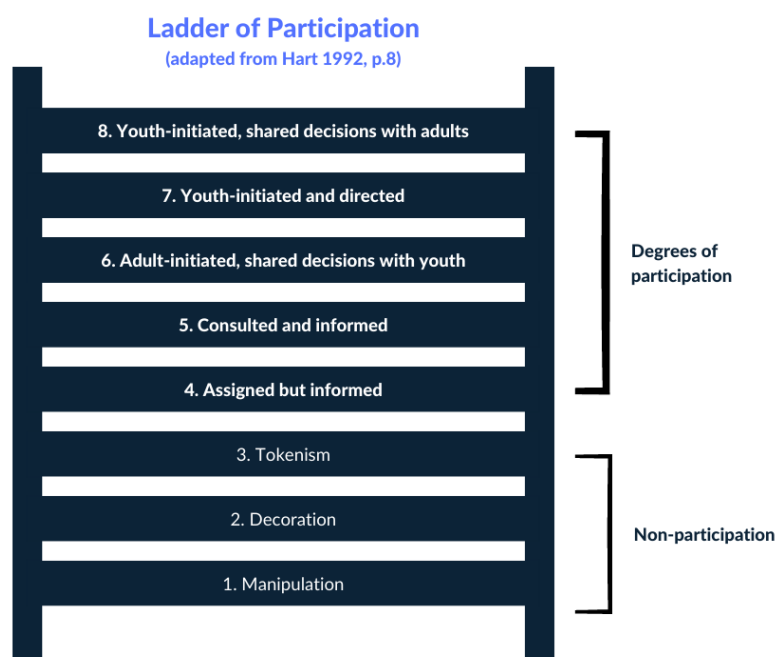
It outlines the benefits of adopting a youth-centred, participatory approach to research, and then highlights important steps that should be taken to ensure that this approach is implemented both rigorously and equitably. The toolkit is based on the experience of conducting a four-year participatory education research study with refugee youth based in Pakistan and Rwanda. It is offered as a guide that research practitioners can consult during the design stage of their study, but also which they can refer back to as they progress through subsequent research phases.

## Why participatory research?

Adopting participatory approaches allows for young people to play a more central role within research that has the potential to impact their lives. This is in direct alignment with the 2021 UN Common Agenda, which advocates for the promotion of solidarity with young people through providing avenues for participation, quality education and stable employment. It supports the call of the Transforming Education Summit's Youth Declaration (United Nations, 2022), which demands the meaningful engagement of young people as full-fledged partners in education policy and decision-making. It also aligns with leading voices within the education sector who envision a future in which local education researchers are equipped to conduct quality education research and promote its uptake (Goyal & Hassan, 2022).

Participatory approaches to research are diverse, but all include the central feature of involving research stakeholders in decision-making processes, whether through setting the research agenda, acting as consultants, or conducting research alongside researchers (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Haile et al, 2020). Hart (1992)'s seminal 'ladder of participation' provides a framework for gauging the various levels of involvement youth can have in research.

There are numerous instrumental and ethical



benefits to adopting participatory approaches to research involving youth, especially given the particular vulnerabilities and exclusions faced by young refugees. These approaches can:

- lead to more robust and honest responses in data collection, as respondents may prefer to discuss sensitive issues with their peers (Clark, 2004)
- enable ‘insider’ youth researchers to offer different perspectives on which questions will be most relevant to ask their peers, and identify context-based research issues that other researchers may miss (Kirby, 2004; Kaldor Centre, 2023)
- promote participant awareness and agency (Gilhooly & Lee, 2016)
- facilitate the development of tangible skills and knowledge (Kaldor Centre, 2023), including research methodologies (Porter, 2016)
- avoid damaging “helicopter research” practices (Haelewaters et al., 2021).
- improve the accessibility and usefulness of research findings for the communities with whom the research was conducted (Kennan & Dolan, 2017; Kaldor Centre, 2023)
- ensure that participants are recognised for their contributions (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015)

## Participatory research processes

The toolkit’s eight ‘tools’ are presented and discussed below. For each one, details are given regarding: the specific activities carried out within Voices of Refugee Youth (alongside the associated Participation Ladder level, where relevant); participation-related lessons and recommendations; important questions to consider when designing and implementing similar projects; and reflections from youth researchers regarding their involvement. The tools largely reflect the research process and consist of eight steps.



It is important to note at the outset that the participatory approach adopted for the study that led to the development of these tools included a high degree of flexibility. This allowed for levels of participation to be adjusted according to the level of knowledge and skills of the youth researchers involved at each research stage, as well as the practical realities associated with each stage. To use the definitions laid out in Hart (1992)’s Ladder of Participation, it was anticipated that youth researcher involvement would vary from Level 4 (assigned but informed) to Level 6 (adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth).

# 1 Project design

Participation is crucial from the outset of the research process to enable a study design which is accessible to and reflects the priorities of all participants. This includes the scoping of the research context and development of research questions with young refugees.

## Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Members of the research team did scoping and consultation visits to both Rwanda and Pakistan. With facilitation from the UNHCR, these team members met with a group of young refugees (some of whom went on to be involved as youth researchers) and consulted with them regarding the scope, focus and feasibility of the study. Young refugees’ own experiences of education were used as a basis for the research questions. They were also asked questions around training structure and content, how to align activities with typical availability, what the study’s geographical focus should be, and their views on reasonable remuneration.



Participation level:  
**Informed & consulted**

Participants were provided with snacks and drinks as a small incentive for their participation. It was also clearly explained how the information they gave would ultimately help to shape a project that would benefit their communities through evidence building.

## Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

Be prepared to invest sufficient time in discussing the project approach and structure with young refugees themselves. This enables them to be involved from the outset, giving them greater understanding and a sense of ownership of the project, while also allowing the research team to gain a thorough understanding of the implementation context. It also ensures that the approach is appropriate for youth researchers, and therefore mitigates the risk of youth researcher attrition as far as possible. This approach should be replicated throughout the project; youth researchers’ feedback should be sought at each stage of involvement as their experiences can provide important guidance around how to conduct project activities effectively.

It may be appropriate to offer incentives for participation at this stage. These could consist of motivating them through explanations of how the information they give will ultimately benefit their communities, providing food and drink, offering to cover travel expenses, or a combination thereof. In all cases, incentives should be “such that the level of incentive does not impinge on the free decision to participate” (BERA 2018, p19).

## Youth Researcher reflections

“I think it is a very good idea to get consensus from refugees. These are very important decisions which can impact the quality of their data collection, participation and ultimately the whole research.”

## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

1. What are young refugees likely to know about their contexts that may not be immediately obvious or easy to find out for researchers who are not working in these contexts?
2. How should interactions with young people be planned to ensure that they feel confident to freely share their perspectives? What kind of information should they have in advance?
3. How could participation in scoping activities be incentivised appropriately?

## 2 Recruitment

This is the point at which young refugees from the relevant communities are selected to join the research team as researchers. A rigorous process to select youth researchers who have the knowledge, skills, dedication and time required will help to ensure the rigour and equity of the study as a whole.

### Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Having spoken with a number of groups of young refugees in both contexts, the research team drew together a Terms of Reference for the Youth Researcher role. This established the application process, expectations for the role, and the skills, experience and competencies required.



Participation level:  
Informed & consulted

This was then sent to all refugee higher education students with whom UNHCR had contact (those who had received scholarships through various providers), some of whom then passed it on to their friends.

Those interested sent their CV and cover letter (responding to questions posed within the ToR) to a Jigsaw email address by a given date. Jigsaw and REUK longlisted and then shortlisted using pre-established criteria.

Those short-listed were invited to attend the first week of training, during which time researchers gathered evidence of candidates' skills, knowledge and motivation, as well as conducting interviews.

### Youth Researcher reflections

“We have applied for the training and after being trained for the first week, the evaluation was done and the final selection was made. It means that the recruitment was very fair.”

“I am satisfied with the recruitment process. At each step of recruitment, objective criteria on which the selection was based were communicated.”



## Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

The youth researcher recruitment process should be rigorous and equitable. This could involve developing a document that clearly details the requirements, expectations, and application process for the role and ensuring that this is shared as widely as possible within the refugee community. Researchers should consider how much time may be needed to allow all potential candidates to submit the applications, bearing in mind contextual challenges such as unreliable internet access.

Applications should be judged according to the requirements set out during the call for applications. This should include considerations such as evidence of existing skills and knowledge, motivation and enthusiasm, language level, and availability.

It is advisable to make final recruitment decisions based on a combination of interviews and observation during several days of introductory training. Combining these approaches enables researchers to gauge candidates' eligibility much more thoroughly than through a one-time interview alone. It also ensures that unsuccessful candidates are still able to gain a greater level of experience than they would usually gain through a standard interview process, thereby increasing the equity of the approach.

## Youth Researcher reflections

Youth Researchers were asked “to what extent do you feel that the recruitment process was fair?” Of the 29 who responded:



25 felt that the recruitment process was “very fair”;



3 felt that the recruitment process was “somewhat fair”;



and 1 responded that they were “neutral”.

## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

How can refugees - other than those who achieved higher education scholarships - be given the opportunity to participate?

## 3

# Remuneration

It is ethically important that youth researchers receive payment that they consider to be fair and appropriate to the level of time and effort that they are required to give. Not only this, but failure to ensure this could result in demotivation and compromise the quality of the research.

## Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Fair rates of pay were discussed with young refugees during the scoping and consultation visit, and again before final decisions were made.

A number of different payments were made throughout the project, with rates always agreed with youth researchers in advance. These included:

1. Payments for attending training (including compensation for days of other work missed in order to attend);
2. Payments for days worked during data collection;
3. Communication and transportation expenses (particularly when doing remote data collection over the phone or travelling to in-person data collection).



Participation level:  
**Informed & consulted**

## Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

Paying youth researchers fairly for their participation is crucial to ensuring the ethical validity of the research, as well as ensuring that youth researchers feel valued and able to meet their financial obligations while participating. Thorough research, including national benchmarking and consultation with youth researchers themselves, should be done to determine appropriate rates in each context. Given the potential disparity between these amounts and those that might be paid in higher income contexts, it is also worth considering whether you are able to increase remuneration beyond standard rates in the interests of increased equity. The cost of living in youth researchers' contexts should also be taken into account to ensure that what is being paid is enough to sustain them for the participation period. Provisional decisions regarding remuneration should be discussed with youth researchers before being finalised. Expectations that must be met in order to receive payment must also be clarified to avoid complaints later on. Finally, payment for additional tasks must be agreed upon as soon as these tasks arise.

## Youth Researcher reflections

“We were paid for 10 days during the data collection, but the work could go beyond this length of time.”

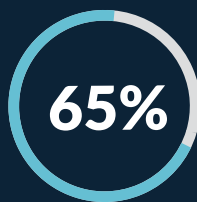
“The amount that we received was equivalent to the job that we did.”

## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

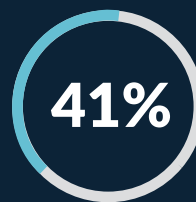
How can payment be negotiated fairly when the research study spans contexts of varying average incomes?

### Youth Researcher reflections

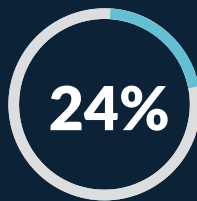
Youth Researchers were asked “to what extent do you feel that you were paid a fair amount for your work as a youth researcher?” Of the 29 who responded:



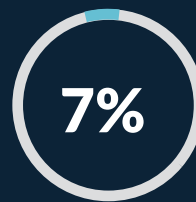
19 felt that the rate of remuneration was “somewhat fair”;



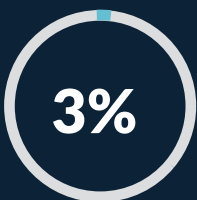
12 felt that the rate of remuneration was “very fair”;



7 responded that they were “neutral”;



2 felt that the rate of remuneration was “somewhat unfair”;



and 1 responded that the rate of remuneration was “very unfair”.

## 4 Training

Training is the core component upon which participatory approaches depend. Comprehensive preparation gives youth researchers the tools and confidence to successfully contribute to the research process, but also to develop as individuals and increase their

### Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Training was designed in collaboration with John Carroll University (JCU) and Centreity, and was accredited by JCU. It consisted of four units loosely reflecting the research cycle (conceptualising research; data collection; data analysis; presentation of findings).



Participation level: **NA**

The intention was for all training to be conducted in person. However, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated a move to online delivery. Given that youth researchers reported some benefits to accessing asynchronous content online (in this case via the Rise platform), the decision was made to deliver the final unit in a blended format, with in-person delivery supported by online preparatory components.

Each unit was delivered over approximately a week, with following weeks dedicated to the completion of graded assignments. Youth researchers also completed a journal during the training period, which contributed to their grade but which also facilitated reflection on their progress.

Youth researchers were supported by Jigsaw and REUK throughout the assessment process, with online support sessions and a flexible approach to deadlines often essential when contextual challenges, such as connectivity issues and political upheaval, arose.

## Youth Researcher reflections

“I found the course very enjoyable because instructors were good and had selected methods that made it easy to learn and could not allow boredom in the room.”

“I was able to deeply understand research, in all strategies we used during practice and am able to conceptualise research, conduct my own research and implement advocacy policy using the research outputs.”

## Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

Applied research methods training is a vital component of the initiative as a whole, as it is the primary means of ensuring that youth researchers are equipped to participate. Several measures can be taken to ensure that training successfully prepares participants for their involvement:

**Delivery mode.** The recommended delivery mode is blended. In-person components allow for a greater level of relationship building and therefore understanding between facilitators and youth researchers than is possible online, especially given the unreliability of internet connections in some contexts. In parallel, asynchronous online components delivered through an interactive platform can provide youth researchers with a basis for learning which they can follow at times that are convenient for them and refer back to previous content.

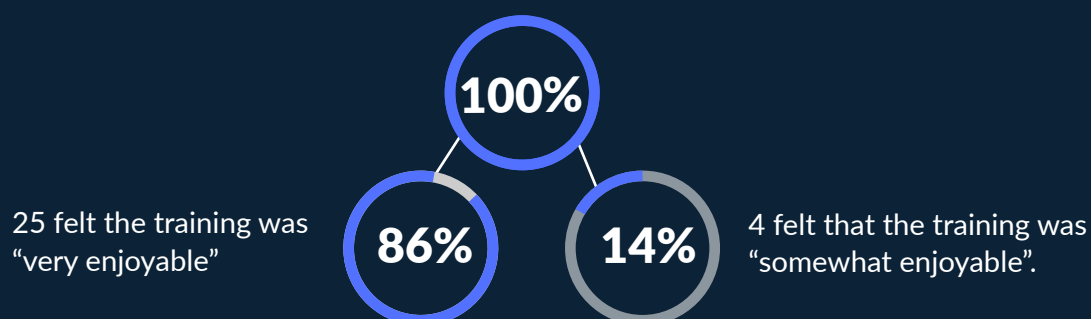
**Pedagogical approach.** A practical, task-based, student-centred approach is recommended. This involves minimal use of lecture-style elements and maximal use of guided discovery of new concepts through peer discussion. These strategies enable youth researchers to take ownership of their learning, enhance engagement, develop a greater sense of cooperation and, crucially, allow them to shape the course through their discussions, thereby increasing the participatory approach to the initiative as a whole. Presentation of all content, whether online or in person, should be followed by opportunities for practical application of that information; it is therefore advisable that training mirrors the research cycle. Finally, for both

online and in-person elements, multimodal presentation of content is recommended to ensure that the training is conversant with a diverse range of learning preferences.

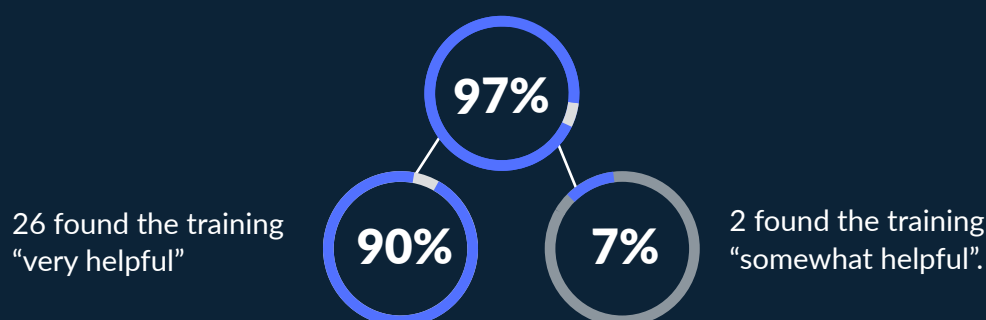
**Accreditation and assessment.** It is recommended that a reputable accreditation partner, whether academic or professional, be sought for the training programme. Not only is the prospect of receiving an accredited qualification motivating for youth researchers, but accreditation also provides them with a tangible asset which can increase their employment prospects beyond their involvement in the initiative. In this sense, accreditation contributes to the equity of the initiative as a whole.

## Youth Researcher reflections

100% of the 29 Youth Researcher survey respondents found the training course enjoyable:



28 of the 29 Youth Researcher survey respondents found the training course helpful:



## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

How can training maximise opportunities for practical application, such as providing an apprenticeship component?

## 5 Tool design

The aim of the tool design stage is to develop instruments (such as surveys or interview templates) that are going to capture the most relevant and high quality data, whilst remaining appropriate and accessible to study participants.

### Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Tool design was carried out by Jigsaw and REUK researchers in consultation with youth researchers. Survey and interview templates were designed to address the research questions and overarching objectives.



Participation level:  
**Informed & consulted**

Survey and interview instruments were adapted at each of the study's three data points based on changing circumstances (such as the arrival of Covid-19). This was done in collaboration with youth researchers, who provided feedback regarding participant responses and common issues arising during previous data collection activities. Tools were also translated into participants' preferred languages by youth researchers in groups.

### Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

Tool design should be carried out in constant consultation with youth researchers, who are able to offer vital contextual insights into which instruments, approaches and questions will work best within their communities.

Youth researchers' participation in tool design may also include translating tools into the languages spoken by research participants. It is important to try to gain a thorough understanding of youth researchers' translation competency before such a task is assigned, bearing in mind that linguistic proficiency and translation proficiency are not the same thing. Peer quality assessment may help to ensure a greater level of equivalence between languages.

If there is a desire for youth researchers to play a more central role in template design, it is recommended that researchers dedicate direct coworking time to achieving this. As with various tasks across the research cycle, youth researchers are likely to require significant guidance in addition to what they have learnt at this stage in their training, and care must always be taken to ensure that they are properly equipped and confident enough to perform the tasks that are asked of them.

### Youth Researcher reflections

“[Learning] methods of transcription and interpretation would have helped me to become a good researcher especially when I am working in an environment with participants who are not able to use the language in which the research is designed.”

## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

How can youth researchers' translation skills be assessed and supported, when members of the coordinating research team do not have proficient linguistic skills in all relevant languages?

## 6 Data collection

Collecting data from study participants represents one of the best opportunities for youth participation. Provided that they are made aware of their positionality as researchers and community members, youth researchers are especially well placed to conduct these activities.

### Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Youth researchers received data collection preparation through Unit 2 of the training course. Jigsaw then coordinated initial logistics, including assigning youth researchers to the most logistically feasible data collection locations.

Youth researchers identified eligible participants according to selection criteria provided by Jigsaw. Sampling strategies required a lot of explanation and clarification, but were also greatly aided by youth researchers' community knowledge.

Youth researchers then arranged sessions with their participants in which to administer surveys and conduct interviews and focus groups. These were done in person when circumstances allowed, and online during the Covid-19 lockdown period. All data collection was carried out in the chosen language of the participants. Responses were recorded in Kobo, and later translated into English by youth researchers.

Youth researchers were provided with a digital device for data collection. They were also encouraged to create WhatsApp groups to help foster relationships between the team, support each other and communicate with Jigsaw/REUK.



Participation level:  
**Adult-initiated;**  
**shared decisions with youth**

### Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

Youth researchers should lead on data collection; their language skills and knowledge of their context enable them to implement this stage of the research process almost autonomously, provided that they have been given the appropriate training. This should include clear guidance on ethical procedures such as obtaining informed consent, and good practice when conducting interviews.

It is important to spend sufficient time navigating the complexities of sampling strategies with youth researchers; it may be necessary to clarify more than once exactly which

participants should be contacted, both verbally and in writing. In parallel, youth researchers' knowledge of their communities is also a valuable source of information that should be incorporated into sampling strategies to ensure that data collection is done effectively.

It is also vital that youth researchers are made aware of their positionality as both researchers and community members; particular attention must be paid to training their ability to separate what they already know and feel about their community from what they are encountering and learning as objective researchers.

It may sometimes be necessary to obtain official documentation (e.g. from the relevant education authority) for youth researchers to present to authority figures such as school leaders when conducting data collection. This will help to ensure that youth researchers are not undermined or dismissed, and are able to assert themselves in situations where authority figures are uncooperative. Similarly to the previous point on translation, youth researchers may translate transcripts into English following data collection to ensure ease of analysis.

However, care must be taken to assure the quality of translations, especially considering that youth researchers' spoken and written proficiency in English may differ, and the fact that translation into an additional language is much more difficult than translation into a first language. While assessing quality is not easy without knowledge of the source language, researchers with first-language English can sense-check the translated versions and clarify ambiguities with youth researchers wherever necessary.

## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

1. How can quality assurance of translated tools and data be done successfully when no members of the coordinating research team share the linguistic knowledge and skills of youth researchers?
2. How can youth researchers be best trained to be objective researchers who are equipped to separate their contextual knowledge from the evidence that participants present?

## Youth Researcher reflections

"It was easy for us to deal with Afghan refugee students while accessing and collecting the data. There was no language barrier as I can speak Dari, Pashto, and Urdu."

"I am sure I used research ethics skills I acquired to produce reliable research deliverables."

"Some schools (principals) were not willing for us to gather data in their school."



Facilitating refugee participation in the analysis of data can help to ensure that findings are interpreted in a way that aligns with participant community perspectives.

## Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Due to time constraints and the impracticalities of having 31 youth researchers involved in this stage at the same time, the majority of data analysis was conducted by the Jigsaw and REUK team. However, youth researchers were consulted during the interpretation stages of analysis, as they were able to offer contextual perspectives and knowledge that helped to explain the findings.



Participation level:  
**Informed & consulted**

Youth researchers' main point of involvement in analysis came during the initial development of the advocacy report deliverable, for which they used some of the study's key findings to identify issues as a basis for advocacy.

## Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

Provided that they have received the required training, youth researchers should be able to successfully clean and anonymise the data that they have individually collected, though this may need to be quality assured.

However, organising and analysing the data comes with limitations for youth researcher involvement. Firstly, and specifically in projects involving large numbers of youth researchers, it is simply impractical to share analysis tasks between multiple researchers, and attempting to do so may easily lead to inconsistencies and compromises in quality. It is possible that only small numbers of youth researchers might be chosen for these tasks, although this might raise questions of fairness and equal treatment across the cohort.

Even if small numbers of youth researchers are chosen to conduct analysis, it is unlikely that they will have had enough time and input to develop the level of skill and confidence to do this independently at this stage, unless significant practice and support time is available between data points. For both of the above reasons, it is arguably more realistic for analysis to be conducted by small numbers of more experienced researchers.

However, youth researchers should take a more active role in the interpretation stage of analysis, using their contextual knowledge and conducting literature searches where necessary to explain patterns and themes emerging from the data.

## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

1. How can the logistical challenges of sharing data analysis among multiple researchers be mitigated to enable youth researchers to take a central role in this research stage?
2. How time be dedicated to provide youth researchers with a strong foundation in both soft analysis (eg. critical thinking, data interpretation) and hard analysis skills (eg. analysis software, statistical analysis) through training?

## Youth Researcher reflections

“I think more practice in quantitative and qualitative analysis would have helped me to grow as a researcher.”

“It was not my first time to be involved in a research project [...] I was familiar with some steps such as data collection, data entry and data cleaning. Other parts of the research were new and complex. Mostly there is still much to learn and to practise in order to feel comfortable with data analysis.”

## 8 Presentation of findings

Research projects often have a range of outputs. Within this range lie a number of opportunities to amplify young refugee voices; it is at this stage that youth researchers can play a key role in deciding how findings are presented.

## Activities carried out within “Voices of Refugee Youth”

Youth researchers were involved to different degrees in various project deliverables. The primary focus for the whole cohort was the development of the youth advocacy report. This was a key deliverable resulting from the merging of all youth researchers’ final assessments within their training programme, which saw groups of youth researchers write advocacy reports based on different thematic areas of the research findings.



Participation level:  
**Informed & consulted/  
Adult-initiated;  
shared decisions with youth**

Smaller sub-groups of youth researchers were assigned specific responsibilities across other research deliverables. One group of youth researchers co-authored an academic article alongside Jigsaw and REUK researchers (following an internal application process). Other groups were involved in reviewing different deliverables, offering feedback and suggested edits.

Many youth researchers also wrote blogs and helped to record vlogs, which were published on the project website. Furthermore, in certain instances, individual youth researchers were

given the opportunity to take responsibility for specific tasks in cases where they had additional professional skills to offer - such as in the graphic design of this toolkit.

Finally, the findings of a youth researcher 'feedback survey' - in which youth researchers reflected on their overall experience in the project - were fed into various deliverables as a way to spotlight their personal reflections and recommendations.

## Lessons learned and participatory recommendations

Youth researchers' role in the presentation of findings may vary depending upon the deliverable. There may be some deliverables (such as a youth advocacy report) which can be led by youth researchers with the appropriate facilitation, while for other deliverables, a more consultative role may be more appropriate. While this could include contributing separate written sections to a piece, it is recommended that youth researchers and other team members work together in collaborative cowriting sessions. Based on the premise that 'authorship' need not solely take the written form, these help to ensure that youth researcher voices are equitably represented, while also lending them technical support and helping them to explore their ideas in more analytical depth.

As in previous stages, it is likely that any written deliverables led by youth researchers will need to be quality assured by other team members. Significant direction from more experienced researchers may be required for deliverables such as academic articles, which require more familiarity with academic writing styles and exacting submission requirements.

Finally, opportunities for youth researchers to present their findings at conferences or in other live formats should be sought by all researchers, including the youth researchers themselves, and time should be allocated to supporting youth researchers to prepare for

## Questions for researchers to consider when designing and implementing a study

1. How can research teams ensure that youth researchers' voices are fairly and accurately represented when some presentation formats (such as academic articles) require standards and styles of writing which are less accessible for those with limited prior exposure to these formats?
2. What skills do youth researchers possess in addition to their developing research skills, that could be brought into the development of deliverables (e.g. graphic design)?

## Youth Researcher reflections

"Research deliverables need writing skills, you need to go through many research projects before writing your own. But it was fun to be part of it, and I learned a lot."

# Concluding thoughts

There is no single approach to participatory research. Not only are the benefits of participation maximised when the approach is made relevant to the research context, but the level of participation should be expected to vary at different stages of the research depending on the time and money available to invest in training and support.

Participatory approaches are enhanced when the research upholds core values of communication and transparency. While it is an ideal that youth researchers can participate to the same level as other researchers on the project (i.e. accessing the upper levels of the Participation Ladder associated with initiating decisions), it is nonetheless important to ensure that the levels of participation are always in line with the training that they have received. Care should be taken not to put undue pressure on youth researchers, who may prefer to define the extent of their role and request additional support at times when they feel that they still lack experience.

It appears that the key aim of increasing youth participation while ensuring that participants are sufficiently prepared for this has largely been achieved within the Voices of Refugee Youth project. Youth researcher survey results show that 79% of youth researchers felt able to contribute to decision-making during the project, and 93% felt that the tasks in which they were involved were always appropriate to their experience level. While these results are encouraging, the experience has also provided important learnings, some of which have been explored in this toolkit, while others will shape future deliverables and practice.

Alongside these learnings, using this participatory design has provided valuable proof of the many opportunities afforded by participatory, youth-centred research. It is hoped that this toolkit can offer encouragement and practical guidance for other such initiatives, and can act as a catalyst for greater diversity and inclusion of voices, perspectives and leadership in the broader research sector. The authors welcome readers' reflections on the guidance provided by this toolkit; please contact us at [info@jigsawconsult.com](mailto:info@jigsawconsult.com).

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