‘10 Best’ resources for community engagement in implementation research

Douglas Glandon
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
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Introduction

- Importance of stakeholder engagement for research in general, and for implementation research (IR) in particular

- Ample guidance on stakeholder engagement at the national or institutional level (e.g., stakeholder analysis and mapping, various planning resources)

- Gap in guidance on how to engage community-level stakeholders in IR

- Not just an intellectual exercise; has implications for both the ethics and validity of IR
Purpose

● ‘10 best’ format of Health Policy and Planning: “a series of articles that identify and outline the 10 most useful resources from a range of sources to help facilitate a better understanding of a particular issue in global health”

● Purpose of the paper is to:
  o Highlight the need for greater consideration and application of community engagement approaches by IR teams
  o Offer some useful, practical tools and resources for doing so
What is community engagement?

- **Community**: “a group of people who live in the same local geographical area or who have some other non-spatial element of shared social identity, such as a similar trade or group membership” (1,2)

- **Community engagement (in IR)**: “the meaningful, respectful, and fit-for-purpose involvement of community members (in one or more aspects of an IR project)”
  - **Meaningful and respectful**: involving a mode of engagement consistent with the top three rungs of Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation” - partnership, delegated power, citizens’ control (3)
  - **Fit-for-purpose**: involving a level of power sharing and inclusiveness that matches the purpose, scope, and implications of the IR project, emphasizing inclusion of those affected

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(2) George AS, Mehra V, Scott K, Sriram V. 2015. Community participation in health systems research: a systematic review assessing the state of research, the nature of interventions involved and the features of engagement with communities. *PLoS ONE* 10: e0141091
Methodology

- Resources identified through peer-reviewed and grey literature; crowd-sourcing from SHAPES working group of Health Systems Global

- Two rounds of review based on:
  - Relevance
  - Conceptual framework
  - Comprehensiveness of guidance
  - Ease of application
  - Evidence of successful application in LMIC or relevant context
  - Balance of resource type & purpose

59 resources identified for review

23 resources retained after 1st round review

15 resources retained after search for literature on application

‘10 best’ resources retained after 2nd round review

36 resources excluded as less relevant to community engagement in IR

8 resources excluded due to lack of published literature regarding their use
Community engagement in the IR cycle

**Problem identification**
- E.g., clarifying key problems; understanding context; identifying stakeholder groups

**Design & planning**
- E.g., shaping research aims, data collection methods

**Implementation**
- E.g., generating local ownership; participation as data collectors or respondents

**Analysis & interpretation**
- E.g., discussing findings & implications; adding contextual depth/nuance

**Knowledge translation**
- E.g., creating local meaning, issue prioritization, action planning

**Iteration & adaptation**
- E.g., establishing ongoing M&E, social accountability mechanisms

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# Example 1: Principles of Community Engagement

**Purpose**

To provide public health professionals, health care providers, researchers, and community-based leaders and organizations with both a science base and practical guidance for engaging partners in projects that may affect them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Standards/Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illustrative application</strong></td>
<td>Consider a range of conceptual, ethical and practical issues relevant to community engagement in an IR project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case example</strong></td>
<td>US (Lake County, Chicago): study team formed community advisory committee to create a shared mission statement and adapted study design to meet community needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Example 2: Systems Concepts in Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Purpose</strong></th>
<th>To help the reader understand, analyze, manage, learn, change, and evaluate complex and complicated situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td>Primer with case examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illustrative application</strong></td>
<td>Apply systems thinking methods and tools to understand and analyze complex systems dynamics and relationships associated with the intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case example</strong></td>
<td>West African nation: evaluation of a micro-loan scheme for sex workers linked to an HIV/ AIDS prevention program in a mining area involved creation of a causal loop diagram and stock-flow diagram to understand fluctuations in scheme popularity. Community stakeholders were engaged in a participatory model building process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation of community engagement activities. Specific purpose ranges substantially depending on which of the 68 “tools” are used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Inventory with user notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative applications</td>
<td>Review a broad array of specific approaches and techniques for community engagement and select or adapt those most suitable for a given IR project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Going forward

● Ongoing need for guidance on community engagement in implementation research:
  o Identifying/navigating key ethical, strategic and pragmatic considerations
  o Gauging appropriate level and form of power-sharing and inclusiveness
  o Determining whether, how, and when to apply specific approaches
  o Resource, time, and competency requirements/implications of each approach
  o Common challenges, barriers, success factors and contextual considerations

● Also points to the need for:
  o Broader and more comprehensive empirical documentation of community engagement approaches
  o Potential value-add of a consolidated, coherent, curated, open access resource
10 Best resources for community engagement in implementation research

Douglas Glandon*, Ligia Paina, Olakunle Alonge, David H. Peters and Sara Bennett

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Schiffer 615 North Wolfe Street, Baltimore, MD 21205, USA

*Corresponding author. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Department of International Health, 615 North Wolfe Street, Baltimore, MD 21205, USA. E-mail: dmglandon@jhu.edu

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