**Table 2 Recruitment, involvement and training of community researchers**

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| Lead author (Country) | Where and how community researchers were recruited? | Involvement of the community researchers | Research methods used by community researchers | Training elements |
| Bhattacharyya 2024 (India) (40) | Elected by peers from street-connected children’s groups | Training, recruitment, research tool development, data collection, analysis through consultations, dissemination.  | Rapid surveys; peer-led FGDs | Training on evidence collection tools, research activities such as data collection to analysis and the development of recommendations. Other training topics included Child Rights, leadership, and communication. |
| Brear 2018a, b; 2020; 2023 (Swaziland) (13, 23, 24, 39)  | Through community announcements in local networks; purposive sampling for diversity in age and gender. | Training (co-learning workshops), research tool development, data collection, data analysis (member checking: interpretation and reflection) | Unstructured participant observations; quantitative data collection (demographic and health data), interviews and FGDs. | Participatory workshops: debates, role plays, group discussion, co-design, and reflection on practice. Co-researchers prepared for workshops through short readings and activities. |
| Burke 2017; Burke 2019 (Senegal) (35, 36) | Through networks of disability associations and student disability associations. Requirement: speak Wolof and French, be computer-literate and if possible, have data collection experience. | Training, transcribing, data collection, collaborative partial analysis | FGDs; interviews, reflexive journaling | 4-day training on qualitative research using the EXPLORE toolkit, covering sexuality, SRH rights, research ethics, informed consent, and qualitative techniques. Included practice in FGDs and interviews with feedback. Followed by a 1-day workshop on manual thematic analysis. |
| Chappell 2014 (South Africa) (41) | Purposive: age, type of disability (visual and physical), interpersonal skills, and geographic location | Training, data collection, and data analysis (theme identification and coding). | FGDs; interviews, reflexive journaling | 1-week training on confidentiality, informed consent, questioning techniques, communication skills, research ethics, and practical use of tape recorders |
| Collumbien 2009 (Pakistan) (42) | Through a local NGO with involvement of trusted community members | Training, development of interview probes, data collection, debriefing (supervision meetings), and participatory analysis workshops | Interviews | Two 4-day workshops (one for each group) covering research themes, adapted to community researchers’ perspectives. Included role-play practice for interview probes, interactive discussions, and emphasis on ethics (anonymity, consent). Community researchers were trained to ask questions in the third person and avoid personal identifiers. |
| Coudel 2023 (Brazil) (43) | Recruited by farmer unions based on prior involvement; selected as young leaders from three municipalities. | Training, setting research questions, data collection (KoboToolbox app), collective analysis and dissemination (posters). | FGDs, household and community surveys  | 1-week capacity building: research postures, ethical considerations, presentation of the questionnaires and reformulation, how to apply surveys, and discovery of the KoboCollect smartphone app. Training included activities such as team motivation exercises, and theatre and cultural presentations. |
| Elmusharaf 2017 (South Sudan) (44) | Through nomination from local leaders and stakeholders; criteria: woman of reproductive age, married with ≥2 children, willingness, community representativeness, language spoken, permission of family to participate, illiteracy was accepted.  | Training, tool design, data collection, debriefing, insider interpretation, and dissemination (dramas, stories) | FGDs and in-depth interviews. |  4-day training workshop: introducing the concept of the PEER approach and general research principles and discussions and identification of important maternal health issues in their communities. Practiced interviewing.  |
| Francis 2008ab, 2009,2010,2011 (South Africa) (25-29) | Via community contacts, voluntary participation; four from each research site | Training, data collection, transcribed and translated data, and involvement in analysis discussions. | Semi-structured interviews | Training sessions covered confidentiality, privacy, ethics, time management, recorder use, research concepts, qualitative methods, and interview techniques. Included guidance on approaching respondents, handling sensitive situations, and managing emotional distress. Role-plays and mock interviews were used for practice. |
| Garnett 2009 (Australia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya) (45) | Zimbabwe: Through community partnerships and local networks; based on interest, trust, and positionality within the community. Ethiopia and Kenya: Recruited from local villages based on tribal/language affiliation and trust. | Zimbabwe: Training, data collection, participate in discussions, read project documents, and evaluate options promoted. Ethiopia and Kenya: training, data collection, translation, engaged in discussions | Zimbabwe: Not reportedEthiopia and Kenya: individual interviews, including semi structured questionnaires and a choice experiment. | Not described |
| Kana 2022 (Democratic Republic of Congo) (46) | Through NGOs for vulnerable children | Training, participant recruitment, data collection, supporting adaptations to the interview guide | Semi-structured interviews | 3-day training: study aims, interviews, ethics, note-taking, and recording. |
| Keygnaert 2014 (Morocco) (47) | Through community networks and migrant organizations, purposive sampling based on communication skills, potential research skills, empathic attitude, social engagement, and leadership capacities | Training, tool development, data collection, interpretation | In-depth interviews | 30-hour training on migration, human rights, SRH, gender, types of violence, psychosocial education, and intercultural communication. Included study framework, epistemology, and practical exercises on conducting empathic, ethical in-depth interview |
| Kombo 2023 (Kenya) (48) | Through LGBTQ+ organizations and networks; Recruitment criteria: identifying as a men who have sex with men residing in a neighbourhood within the study site and being familiar with community members there, ability to take detailed field notes in either English or Kiswahili, and holding at least a high school certificate. | Training, recruitment, framing interview questions and data tools, data collection, data analysis with support of coordinators. | Interviews | Week-long training: qualitative research methods and ethics, role-play sessions |
| Mosavel 2011, Simon 2010 (South Africa) (37, 38) | Word of mouth | Training, involved in development and piloting research instrument data collection | Semi-structured interviews and journaling | 2 weeks training: informed consent, fieldwork challenges, and interview techniques. Additional weekly group and individual training sessions were provided during the project, by the research coordinator. |
| Moyo 2017 (South Africa) (49) | Local recruitment with leader input | Training, data collection, community engagement | Survey data and biological samples | Trained to collect data on childhood illnesses, vaccination history, feeding habits; and to collect biospecimens such as stool and urine, following standard protocols governing the eight field sites of the study network |
| Mudaly 2012 (South Africa) (50) | School-based recruitment | Training, co-development of interview schedule, data collection, agreed on venue and time of interviews | Interviews | Training in interview techniques |
| Ngarachu 2015 (Kenya) (51) | Through school administrators and teachers and the student research club. | Training, data collection, reflection on own experience | FGDs | No clear training. Co-researchers were introduced to the research topic and process through a conversation with the researcher with the aid of a brief that touched on the social research process, methods of data collection, necessary skills, and ethical issues. |
| Paganini 2021 (South Africa) (52) | Not reported | Data collection, data analysis | Photovoice; survey; interviews | Not clearly described. (Podcast training) |
| Page 2023 (Netherlands and Indonesia) (10) | Recruitment not clear. Indonesia: Community researchers were employed full-time by Universitas Gadjah Mada. Netherlands: voluntary participation as part of final-year school project. | Training, CRs were engaged in all stages of the research including design, data collection, analysis, write up and dissemination. | Indonesia: Interviews and FGDs. Netherlands: interviews, FGs and photovoice | Indonesia: 1-week residential training using the Explore toolkit, followed by a mid-project residential session on analysis and report writing. Ongoing support was provided by an on-site researcher, plus additional guidance via email, text, and calls.Netherlands: Similar content but delivered as a 2-week residential training |
| Palfreyman 2022 (Sri Lanka) (53) | Conscious recruitment through popular local employment platforms; professional, activist, youth (parliament), community-based and educational networks; and social media. Requirement: successful completion of the PEER training programme. | Training, all stages of the parent research cycle from topic selection through dissemination through interactive exercises. | In-depth interviews, auto photography and creative writing | PEER training program: role play scenario, thematic analysis |
| Porter 2008, 2010, 2016; Robson 2009; Hampshire 2012 (South Africa, Malawi, Ghana) (30-34) | School-based recruitment. Children interested in participating with parents’ consent. | Training, data collection, data analysis and write up findings, follow-up reflection interviews | Field notes, one-to-one interviews, travel diaries, photographic journals, FGDs | 1-week workshops: introduction to project, relevant research methods (field tests, analytic techniques) |
| Porter 2016 (Tanzania) (31) | Not reported | Training, data collection, dissemination | In depth interviews, Mobile interviews | 1 week training: research methods and qualitative research, interviewing and mapping techniques. |
| Price 2002 (Zambia) (54) | Recruited among youth educators | Training, co-developed, piloted, and refined tools, data collection, participated as key informants for data analysis and conducted their own data analysis.  | In-depth and unstructured interviews | No detail on training but included normative discourses of community researchers regarding young people’s sexual and reproductive behaviour |
| Rink 2025 (South Africa and England) (55) | Through community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, and leaders within the communities. | Training, data collection, development of research instruments | Interviews, mobility diaries, mapping | 5-day workshops in each city to plan and visualize the research process. Covered goals and expectations, ground rules, tool development, interview practice, and ethics procedures. |
| Schatz 2015 (South Africa) (56) | Conversations project: Selected from a pool of staff Gogo project: advertisements and word of mouth with support of administrative staffCWSC project: From recommendations from project staff and interviews with primary investigators.  | Conversations project observation, trainingGogo project: data collection CWSC project: Data collection  | Conversations project: Field notes from observation Gogo project: interviewsCWSC project: Interviews | Trained in qualitative data collection |
| Shaw 2022 (Kenya) (57) | Not reported | Training, recruitment, facilitated participatory exercises, conducted interviews, recorded videos, supported data interpretation | Interviews and FGDs, participatory video | 3-week training on interviewing, FGDs, participatory video, mapping, and ethnographic activities, as well as protocols for ethics and data storage security. |
| Spuerck 2023 (India, Pakistan, Turkey, Kenya, South Africa, Brazil, Portugal, UK) (12) | Purposefully selected to represent the socioeconomic spectrum | Contributions varied among community researchers. Involvement included: engagement of participants, communication, data collection. Two community researchers participated in research proposal and design.  | FGDs | No training described.  |
| Yilmaz 2024 (Brazil, Kenya, South Africa, Pakistan, and Turkey) (58) | Through local networks | Data collection | Semi-structured interviews, fieldnotes with impressions of interviews | No training described |

***Abbreviations:*** *Focus group discussions (FGDs); Sexual and Reproductive Health rights (SRH), Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER), Children’s Wellbeing and Social Connections (CWSC).*