

# Participatory Research

The role of stakeholder engagement  
in applied sciences

# Outline

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- Definition of Participatory Research (PR)
- Rationale
- Principles
- History
- Adapting PR



# Definition

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- PR is a collaborative **approach** to research
- that combines **methods** of inquiry with
- partners **capacity-building** strategies to
- bridge the gap between **scientific** knowledge and
- **experiential** knowledge
- to bring positive **social change**.

# Rationale for PR

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- Complex social problems ill-suited to “outside expert” research
- Disappointing results in conventional research
- Increasing recognition of importance of local and cultural context
- Increasing interest in use of evidence-based research
- Research findings can be applied directly to develop interventions specific for stakeholders
- PR goal is to influence change in community wellbeing, norms, systems, programs, policies.

# Values and Principles of PR

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- Builds on strengths and resources
- Facilitates stakeholders involvement in all research phases
- Promotes co-learning and capacity building
- Seeks balance between research and action
- Disseminates findings and knowledge to all
- Involves long-term process and commitment

Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, Guzman, "Critical Issues in developing and following PR principles," Community-Based Participatory Research in Health, Minkler and Wallerstein, Jossey Bass, 2000.

# History

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- 1970s – Empowerment Model (Paulo Freire)
  - Before community members address particular social change goals introduced from the outside, they must first be organized and empowered to address their own concerns and goals



# History

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- ***Field research on farming systems:*** the small scale poor farmer as a rational being
- interacting with a complex system not just doing farming but experimenting & innovating new ways to cope with risks & challenges
- The farmer as a researcher with knowledge & wealth of experience – innovators through ITK

# History

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- ***Applied Anthropology***: useful approach in its ability to help development professionals to appreciate better the richness & validity of rural/local knowledge.
- Its contribution has been aspects of unhurried **participant observation** and conversations and the importance of building rapport, attitudes and behaviour towards the communities.

# Shared Power



University Control

Community Control

PR

# PR – Summary

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- stakeholders as partners
- Validity of local knowledge
- Power sharing & co-learning
- Research results lead to action
- Actions to bring positive social change
  - Improved wellbeing

# Implications for NASA IDS Project

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- Climate research - to gain insights into users' information priorities and decision-making processes.
- Essential
  - To developing relevant application tools
  - To sustaining viable communication flows
  - To ground-truthing research outputs

# PR and Knowledge-Action Cycle



