



**GIRLS NOT BRIDES**

The Global Partnership  
to End Child Marriage

# 10 STEP GUIDE TO CONDUCTING YOUTH-LED RESEARCH

OCTOBER 2024



# Introduction

**This 10-step guide provides a structured 10-step approach to effectively conduct youth-led research, focusing on supporting youth researchers and navigating power dynamics within research processes.**

This guide not only provides a practical framework for conducting youth-led research but also emphasises the importance of ethical considerations, power dynamics, and the legitimacy of youth voices in research and advocacy processes. By following these steps, organisations, youth researchers and other key stakeholders can collaboratively work towards impactful and meaningful research outcomes.



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## 5 reasons why should you use this toolkit?

### 1. Inclusion of Youth Voices and Perspectives:

This guide is specifically designed to enable young people to lead and shape research initiatives that directly impact their lives and communities. It prioritises the inclusion of youth perspectives, ensuring that their voices are heard and valued in the research processes. Using this guide will ensure that your research project is relevant and directly meets the needs of girls and young people.

### 2. Structured and Comprehensive Approach:

This guide is intended to support in navigating the complexities of conducting research, from preparation to dissemination. It provides a systematic approach that covers all critical aspects, including ethics, data collection, analysis, and advocacy.

### 3. Ethics and Safeguarding:

The guide places a strong emphasis on developing a robust ethics and safeguarding framework. This ensures the protection of youth researchers and participants, fostering a safe and respectful research environment.

### 4. Building Legitimacy and Credibility:

By focusing on building the legitimacy of youth researchers, the guide addresses power dynamics within research settings. It supports the development of youth credibility, ensuring their contributions are recognised and respected by various stakeholders and audiences.

### 5. Adaptable and Flexible:

While providing a structured approach, the guide remains adaptable to different contexts and needs. It allows users to modify and tailor the steps based on the specific goals and circumstances and context of their research projects.

# THE 10 STEP GUIDE

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1

**Assess and prepare for youth engagement in research and advocacy processes**

2

**Select youth researchers and develop an ethics and safeguarding framework**

3

**Define the research scope and objectives**

4

**Provide comprehensive and tailor-made training and resources**

5

**Design and plan the research**

6

**Carry out data collection**

7

**Be well prepared to analyse the data**

8

**Write and review research report**

9

**Develop and implement an advocacy and dissemination plan**

10

**Build legitimacy of youth researchers (continuous)**

# Assess and Prepare for Youth Engagement in Research and Advocacy Processes

# 1

## Create a solid foundation with balanced power dynamics and strong youth engagement:

As a first step, it is important to start by identifying an existing platform of youth researchers or creating one before evaluating how engaged young people are in research and advocacy, paying special attention to power dynamics. Explore the potential for supporting the positioning of young people as agents of change in all processes: identify how their contributions can shape and be integrated into planning, design implementation, and evaluation of research.

## Create a culture of collaboration and youth leadership:

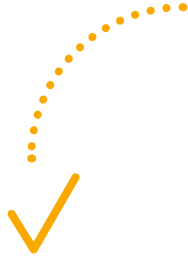
Ensure that the platform of youth researchers works in collaboration with a wider group of established key stakeholders including a funding organisation, civil society organisations and supervising research institutes. The wider established group should agree on principles that rule out any form of negative discrimination based on age, gender, culture, ethnicity or any other relevant criterion. Preferred approaches would focus on intergenerational peer to peer learning and co-creation, rethinking power dynamics and hierarchical authority, as well as recognising and nurturing young people's leadership and decision-making capabilities.

## Plan appropriately and manage expectations:

Carefully plan and budget for the participation of young researchers at all stages of the project. Prior to the start of the research project, clearly outline the conditions under which youth researchers will work, including the time allocated to the research project, the type of compensation or remuneration they will receive and all reimbursement costs (e.g. transport and communication). Assess and create conditions that are fair and supportive.



**Do you have existing platforms or networks of youth researchers are currently available in your community or organisation?**



**YES**

**If yes there is a platform, how engaged are young people currently in research and advocacy processes within your organisation or community?**

- What barriers to engagement exist, and how can they be addressed?
- What strategies can be employed to increase youth engagement in research and advocacy?
- How can these strategies be tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of young people?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that youth researchers have a meaningful role in the research process?
- How can these mechanisms be strengthened or improved?



**NO**

**If there are no existing platforms, what steps can be taken to create one that is inclusive and accessible to diverse groups of young people?**

- What resources and support are needed to establish this platform?
- How can youth researchers be identified and recruited to participate in the platform?
- What criteria will be used to ensure a diverse and representative group of youth researchers?
- How can the platform of youth researchers be sustained and grown over time?
- What strategies can be used to maintain engagement and encourage new participation?

# Select Youth Researchers and Develop an Ethics and Safeguarding Framework

## 2

### ✓ **Select a supervising research institute:**

Recruit a locally based supervising research institute with the technical expertise to deliver research training for youth researchers and a research portfolio aligned with your research scope and themes. It is imperative that the institute has the capacity and the ability to provide quality mentoring throughout the entire research process.

### ✓ **Identify and select youth researchers:**

Partner with national civil society organisations and youth-led organisations to identify youth researchers. Prioritise equal opportunity measures and emphasise diversity, cultural, and community anchorage in the recruitment process. Look beyond formal training and focus on candidates who show engagement, a willingness to learn, and the potential to bring positive change in their communities.

#### **Guiding questions:**

- What criteria will be used to identify and select youth researchers?
- How will partnerships with national civil society organisations and youth-led organisations be leveraged to identify potential youth researchers?
- How will the selection process account for different community contexts and backgrounds?
- What alternative indicators will be used to identify promising candidates beyond formal training and qualifications?
- How will selected youth researchers be supported and prepared for their roles in the research process?
- What initial training and resources will be available or will be provided to ensure they are equipped to contribute effectively?

### ✓ **Build a solid ethics and safeguarding framework:**

Highlight the importance of research ethics and safeguarding principles throughout the research process. Implement measures to protect youth researchers and participants/respondents from potential harm. Appoint a safeguarding focal person to support the youth-led research, ensure adherence to an organisational Code of Conduct and address any issues or concerns that arise promptly.

### Guiding questions

- What specific research ethics and safeguarding principles will be emphasised throughout the research process?
- What measures will be implemented to protect youth researchers and participants/respondents from potential harm? How will risks be identified and mitigated in advance?
- Who will be appointed as the safeguarding focal person, and what qualifications and experience do they bring to the role? How will they support youth-led research and ensure adherence to the Code of Conduct?
- What protocols and reporting mechanisms are in place to address any issues or concerns related to ethics and safeguarding that arise during the research process? How will these protocols and reporting mechanisms ensure timely and effective responses to any incidents or complaints?
- How will the organisation ensure that all youth researchers and participants are aware of and understand the ethics and safeguarding framework? What training and resources will be provided to support this understanding?
- What mechanisms will be established to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the ethics and safeguarding framework? How will feedback from youth researchers and participants be used to improve the framework over time?



## Define the Research Scope and Objectives

# 3

### ✓ Co-design and collaborative formulation:

Work closely with youth researchers to pinpoint key research questions that focus on your chosen thematic area. Ensure that they can explore research topics that are meaningful to their communities, work or personal experience while aligning with the overarching goals of the project.

### Guiding questions:

- How can youth researchers be involved in co-designing and formulating the research questions?
- How will you ensure that these questions are meaningful to the youth researchers' communities, work, or personal experiences while also aligning with the project's goals?



### ✓ **Fill knowledge gaps:**

Define a scope that addresses knowledge gaps in existing research and programmes by exploring emerging areas of interest. The youth-led research should prioritise the generation and dissemination of contextual knowledge, suggesting new paradigms and a more nuanced understanding of key stakeholders' perspectives based on their lived experiences.

#### **Guiding questions:**

- What knowledge gaps in existing research and programs will this research address?
- How will the research scope be defined to explore emerging areas of interest and generate new paradigms based on youth researchers' lived experiences?
- How will the research scope ensure the generation and dissemination of contextual knowledge?

### ✓ **Plan for research uptake and support advocacy efforts:**

Ensure the research results are aimed at supporting CSOs, youth-led organisations, and decision-makers in their advocacy efforts; institutional efforts – budgetary, policy, or legislative and community efforts. A mapping of key stakeholders such as local actors and both national and regional institutions must be considered as target audiences for advocacy.

#### **Guiding questions:**

- How will the research results support advocacy efforts of CSOs, youth-led organisations, and decision-makers? Who are the key stakeholders that need to be mapped and considered as target audiences for advocacy?
- What are the specific goals for influencing budgetary, policy, legislative, and community efforts through this research?
- How will you engage local actors, national, and regional institutions in the research process and dissemination of findings?
- What mechanisms will be put in place to ensure the uptake of research findings by stakeholders?





# Provide Comprehensive and Tailor-Made Training and Resources

# 4

## ✓ **Assess training needs:**

Evaluate the training needs of youth researchers, considering their levels of formal and informal education, access to technology, digital literacy and their understanding of the thematic topic.

### **Guiding questions:**

- What are the specific training needs of the youth researchers based on their formal and informal education levels?
- How will you assess their current knowledge and skills related to the thematic topic and research methodologies?
- How will these factors influence the design and delivery of the training programme?

## ✓ **Create adapted training materials:**

Under the lead of the partnering supervising research institute, develop training materials that are tailored to the diverse backgrounds of youth researchers, ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness. Offer training on qualitative research and advocacy skills but also thematic issues. Provide initial and continuous capacity reinforcement. Offer one-on-one mentoring sessions for each researcher depending on specific needs.

### **Guiding questions:**

- How can training materials be adapted to suit the diverse backgrounds of youth researchers?
- What strategies will ensure these materials are accessible and inclusive for all participants?
- What key areas should the training cover, including technical research skills, advocacy skills, and thematic issues?
- How will you provide both initial training and ongoing capacity reinforcement?
- How will one-on-one mentoring sessions be tailored to address the specific needs of each youth researcher? What criteria will be used to determine these specific needs and match them with appropriate mentors?

# 4

## ✓ **Consider context and promote innovative tools:**

Go beyond traditional methods of data collection and encourage the use of innovative and inclusive data collection tools like storytelling, life stories, and photovoice.

### **Guiding questions:**

- What innovative and inclusive data collection tools can be incorporated into the training to enhance research methods?
- How will you promote and integrate tools like storytelling, life stories, and photovoice into the training program?



# Design and Plan the Research

# 5

## ✓ **Collaborative design:**

Work with youth researchers, the supervising research institute and funding organisation to design and plan the research.

### **Guiding questions:**

- How will you facilitate collaboration among youth researchers, the supervising research institute, and the funding organisation to design and plan the research?
- What roles and responsibilities will each party assume in the research design process?
- What mechanisms will be used to ensure that the input and perspectives of youth researchers and other collaborators are incorporated into the research design?



## ✓ **Promote Leadership:**

Empower youth researchers to lead by using innovative tools and leveraging their understanding of local languages, cultural codes, and etiquette together with technology and social media to enhance data collection and engagement.

# 5

## Guiding questions:

- What innovative tools and methods can be introduced to support youth researchers in their leadership roles and improve research outcomes?
- How will you ensure that these tools are accessible and relevant to their needs?

## ✓ Initial steps:

Conduct a comprehensive stakeholder analysis using the stakeholder mapping (from step 3), draft a literature review, and develop research questions, hypotheses, and indicators.

## Guiding questions:

- How will stakeholder mapping from previous steps be utilised to inform this analysis?
- How will you draft a literature review that is relevant to the research scope and objectives?
- What criteria will guide the selection and synthesis of literature and the development of research questions, hypotheses, and indicators?
- How will you ensure that these elements are well-defined and aligned with the research objectives?

# Carry out data collection

# 6

## ✓ Prioritise storytelling:

Focus on using storytelling as a primary method for data collection. Encourage respondents to share their experiences and narratives, providing a richer, more personal understanding of the thematic topic being researched.

## Guiding questions:

- How will storytelling be integrated as a primary method for data collection?
- What guidelines will be provided to ensure that the storytelling process captures a rich and authentic understanding of the thematic topic?
- How will you support respondents in articulating their stories in a meaningful and accurate way?

## ✓ **Data collection phase:**

Conduct data collection over a defined period using qualitative methods. Give ample room for qualitative methods such as life stories and semi-structured interviews. Ensure informed consent is obtained from all participants and data confidentiality and anonymity are maintained.

### **Guiding questions:**

- What qualitative methods, such as life stories and semi-structured interviews, will be utilised during the data collection phase?
- What steps will be taken to obtain informed consent from all participants?
- How will you ensure that data confidentiality and anonymity are maintained throughout the research process?
- What procedures will be in place to monitor and evaluate the data collection process to ensure its integrity and effectiveness?
- How will you address any challenges or issues that arise during data collection?

## ✓ **Diverse respondents:**

Engage with a variety of respondents, including schoolgirls, out-of-school girls, married girls, parents, teachers, and community leaders, ensuring that all methods are inclusive and youth-friendly. Ensure that all methods are inclusive, child or youth-friendly, and prioritise the safety and well-being of all participants. Implement safeguarding measures throughout the engagement process to protect vulnerable groups, particularly young and marginalised respondents in accordance with your safeguarding framework.

### **Guiding questions:**

- What methods will be used to ensure that all data collection methods are inclusive, youth-friendly, and culturally sensitive?
- What measures will be implemented to prioritise the safety and well-being of all participants, particularly young and marginalised respondents?
- How will you incorporate safeguarding measures into the engagement process in accordance with your safeguarding framework?
- What adjustments will be made to accommodate varying needs and ensure effective participation?



# Be well prepared to analyse the Data

# 7

## ✓ **Data analysis training:**

Provide training in data analysis techniques such as triangulation and coding.

### **Guiding questions:**

- What methods will be used to deliver the training effectively, considering the diverse backgrounds and learning styles of the youth researchers? How will the training be tailored to different levels of prior knowledge and experience?
- How will you assess the effectiveness of the data analysis training and the capacity of youth researchers in applying these techniques?
- What resources or support will be provided to address any challenges they encounter during the analysis phase?

## ✓ **Comprehensive insights and comparative analysis:**

Compare and contrast data from different sources, ensuring the analysis is guided by feminist and decolonial methods. Seize opportunities for comparative analysis between case studies, themes, and countries (if applicable).

### **Guiding questions:**

- How will you ensure a thorough comparison and contrast of data from different sources?
- What opportunities will be seized for comparative analysis between case studies, themes, and countries (if applicable)?
- How will these comparisons contribute to a deeper understanding of the research findings?
- How will you ensure that the insights derived from the analysis are comprehensive and accurately reflect the data collected?
- What strategies will be used to synthesize and integrate findings from various sources effectively?



## ✓ **Theoretical grounding:**

Ground empirical evidence generated by youth researchers in theoretical frameworks to provide structure and ensure the validity of data.

### **Guiding questions:**

- ▶ What theoretical frameworks will be used to ground the empirical evidence generated by youth researchers?
- ▶ How will these frameworks provide structure and ensure the validity of the data?
- ▶ How will you ensure that the theoretical grounding is integrated into the analysis process and contributes to the overall validity of the research findings?
- ▶ What methods will be used to align empirical evidence with theoretical concepts?

# Write and Review Research Report

# 8

## ✓ **Support and review:**

Support youth researchers to write research proposals and case studies. Ensure mentors and consultants dedicate enough time to review and validate these documents.

### **Guiding questions:**

- ▶ What support will be provided to youth researchers in writing research proposals and case studies?
- ▶ How will you ensure that they have access to resources, guidance, and tools needed for effective writing?
- ▶ How will mentors and consultants be involved in the review and validation of research proposals and case studies?
- ▶ What processes will be implemented to provide constructive feedback and revisions for research proposals and case studies?
- ▶ How will you track and manage the review process to ensure timely and thorough support?

## ✓ **Final compilation:**

Compile individual case studies into a comprehensive research report

### **Guiding questions:**

- What approach will be used to compile individual case studies into a comprehensive research report?
- What steps will be taken to ensure that the final compilation accurately reflects the individual contributions, overall research objectives and effectively integrates the findings?
- How will you address any inconsistencies or gaps in the compilation process?

## ✓ **Peer-Review and validation at the community level:**

Implement a peer-review process where research findings and reports are evaluated by fellow researchers to ensure accuracy, credibility, and comprehensiveness. In addition, incorporate validation at the community level by engaging local stakeholders, including community leaders and members, to review and confirm the relevance and authenticity of the findings in their specific context.

### **Guiding questions:**

- How will the peer-review process be structured to evaluate the accuracy, credibility, and comprehensiveness of the research findings?
- What criteria will be used by fellow researchers to assess the reports, and how will you facilitate effective peer feedback?
- What mechanisms will be used to engage local stakeholders, including community leaders and members, in validating the research findings?
- How will you ensure their feedback is incorporated to confirm the relevance and authenticity of the findings in their specific context? What steps will be taken to revise and improve the research findings based on this feedback?



# Develop and Implement an Advocacy and Dissemination Plan

# 9

## ✓ **Draft plan:**

Collaborate with research managers and supervising institutes to draft a dissemination and communication plan.

### **Guiding questions:**

- What key components should be included in the dissemination and communication plan?
- How will you collaborate with research managers and supervising institutes to identify these components?
- How will the dissemination and communication plan align with the goals of the research project and target audiences?
- What strategies will you use to ensure that the plan effectively reaches and engages the intended audiences?
- What timelines and milestones will be established for the dissemination and communication activities?
- How will you track progress and make adjustments as needed to ensure timely and effective dissemination?

## ✓ **Stakeholder engagement:**

Share findings and recommendations with key stakeholders at local, regional, and international levels

### **Guiding questions:**

- Who are the key stakeholders that should be engaged in sharing the research findings and recommendations?
- What methods will be used to effectively share research findings and recommendations with these stakeholders?
- How will you tailor communication strategies to the specific needs and interests of different stakeholder groups?
- How will you facilitate ongoing engagement and dialogue with stakeholders following the dissemination of findings?
- What mechanisms will be in place to gather feedback and ensure that stakeholder perspectives are considered?



## ✓ Innovative Tools:

Use digital and inclusive tools to maximise the impact of dissemination efforts.

### Guiding questions:

- What digital and inclusive tools can be utilised to maximise the impact of dissemination efforts?
- How will you incorporate tools such as social media, interactive platforms, and multimedia to enhance reach and engagement?
- How will you ensure that the innovative tools used for dissemination are accessible and effective for diverse audiences?
- What methods will be employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the dissemination and communication efforts?



# Build Legitimacy of Youth Researchers (continuous)

# 10

## ✓ Engagement tools:

Equip youth researchers with the tools to engage with key advocacy targets and be heard. Support researchers to position themselves as knowledge brokers and champions in their communities.

### Guiding questions:

- What specific tools and resources will be provided to youth researchers to effectively engage with key advocacy targets?
- How will you support youth researchers in developing skills to position themselves as champions in their communities?
- What strategies will be used to ensure that youth researchers can effectively use these engagement tools to make their voices heard?



## ✓ Transformative process:

Recognise the research as a transformative process that strengthens young leaders, reinforcing their legitimacy.

**Guiding questions:**

- What steps will be taken to reinforce the legitimacy of youth researchers in their communities through their involvement in the research?
- How will you highlight and celebrate their contributions and successes?
- How can the research process be structured to maximise its potential as a tool for personal and community transformation?

**✓ Empowerment focus:**

Advance girls' and women's empowerment through female-led research and an emphasis on girls' education.

**Guiding questions:**

- How will female-led research and an emphasis on girls' education be integrated into the research objectives and activities?
- What measures will be taken to ensure that girls' and women's perspectives and needs are prioritised?
- What strategies will be used to ensure that the findings and outcomes of the research contribute to broader efforts in advancing gender equality and education?



## Key Considerations

### Capacity building:

Provide ongoing support and capacity enhancement for youth researchers, including financial and technical support.

### Collaboration:

Foster collaboration with regional research institutions and advocacy coalitions to strengthen evidence and advocacy efforts.

### Flexibility:

Adapt research methods and tools to local specificities and emerging areas of interest, such as the impact of crises on girls' education and child marriage.

### Inclusion:

Ensure the research team is inclusive and as gender balanced as possible, providing a safe space for the researchers to express their views and concerns.

## Power Dynamics in Research and Advocacy

### Social and cultural considerations:

Acknowledge the impact of social and cultural factors on research (including data collection and analysis) and advocacy. Consider how religion, culture, race, age, socio-economic background, ethnicity, and gender influence advocacy efforts.

### Leadership and decision-making:

Centralise youth leadership and decision-making power in the research process.

### Skills and attitude development:

Ensure young people acquire the necessary skills and attitudes for effective decision-making.

### Intergenerational collaboration:

Recognise that both young people and older adults have strengths to contribute, fostering a collaborative environment.

### Validate, credit and recognise youth researchers' contributions:

Validate and recognise the contributions of youth researchers to the body of knowledge and the advancement of advocacy efforts. Acknowledgement not only motivates but also reinforces their self-perception and perception from key stakeholders that they can be agents of change

### Continuous consultation:

Maintain a continuous consultation process to ensure youth leadership is upheld throughout all stages of the research and advocacy processes.

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***Girls Not Brides* is a global partnership of over 1,400 civil society organisations from more than 100 countries committed to ending child marriage and ensuring girls can fulfil their potential.**



The Global Partnership  
to End Child Marriage



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