



empatika

people-centred research and training

A SMALL CONSULTANCY DEDICATED TO PEOPLE-CENTERED RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS



Members of the Empatika core team along with some of our research associates and other Reality Check Approach practitioners during our 2016 international conference

Empatika is an international people-centred research and training organisation committed to providing high quality, innovative, and adaptive qualitative and mixed methods studies and bespoke capacity building to bring policy making closer to the reality of people.

Though Empatika was established in 2018, our team has years of experience working together in conducting both large and small-scale participatory studies and community engagement. This includes studies using immersion research (the Reality Check Approach) and other participatory methods such as digital storytelling and human-centered design, covering topics including: urban and child poverty, migration, governance, frontline service provision, skills and unemployment, education, nutrition, rural infrastructure, social protection, market development and justice. Empatika is a registered company in Indonesia with members located in Indonesia, the UK, The Netherlands, Nepal, and South Africa.

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number of countries across Asia, Africa and the Middle East where the Empatika team has conducted studies

**Keeping
in-touch and
up-to-date
with local level
realities.**



The Empatika team started working together initially as an Australian-funded project, and later on, a unit, underneath The Palladium Group's Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Practice group from 2014 until 2017. Empatika has adapted many of the procedures from this period for our operational management, child protection, safety, security and risk management guidelines which produced some of the successful collaborations noted below. Now as an independent organisation, we also have the flexibility to develop our processes in more tailored and efficient ways according to the needs of particular Clients and/or projects.

Empatika's roots lie with the development of the Reality Check Approach, a qualitative method first used in Bangladesh in 2007 whereby researchers live in people's homes and join in their everyday lives over several days and nights. Globally, Empatika team members have conducted more than 55 RCA immersion, mixed methods, and participatory studies over the last 13 years in over eight countries, including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, and Uganda for a range of commissioners including UNICEF, the World Bank, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), British Council, and the European Union.

Empatika recognised early in the development of RCA immersions that this approach is especially appropriate for studies where participants might find it difficult or less inviting to engage in more formal processes such as Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups (due to access limitations, perceived formality, pre-occupation with other work/activities, short times for engagement and fatigue). Empatika's researchers are specially trained to enable them to interact informally and empathetically with study participants, especially on studies focusing on sensitive issues or related to people's behaviours.

Empatika also has extensive multi-country experience of using immersion research to track longitudinal change resulting from interventions and programmes. Core members of the team have taken lead roles in immersion studies in Uganda, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Ghana, and Lebanon.



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senior researchers who
have led or co-led studies
in Asia and Africa

***'Big problems
rarely have a
single cause.'***

Empatika continues to specialise in this experiential approach to research, and over the past few years we have added experience and expertise in facilitating training, human-centred design, and video-based projects/workshops. We have also extended our expertise beyond immersion research by using participatory processes to enhance traditional qualitative tools like focus group discussions and interviews to provide people-centred research, bringing our skills in participatory processes to each. Wherever possible Empatika tries to bring quantitative and qualitative approaches together using mixed methods to generate in-depth insights. Empatika has also helped programmes to develop 'people's indicators of change' to supplement a programme's own performance indicators. These indicators emerge from careful analysis of insights from participatory qualitative studies, providing relevant and reliable indicators of *'change that matters to people'*, thereby contributing to putting people at the centre of their own development.

Empatika currently has 13 Senior Researchers who have led or co-led immersion research and other qualitative studies in Asia and Africa and more than 75 fully trained RCA immersion field researchers in seven countries.



OUR VISION

Keeping programmers and policymakers up-to-date and in-touch through quality field research.

OUR MISSION

We are an international group of researchers and trainers who deliver high quality complexity-aware research and customised training which always puts people at the centre. Our research and training inspires you to think differently about development solutions and social change processes and is based on building trust, giving voice and listening to those people for whom development interventions are intended.

OUR CORE VALUES

1. Empatika works with ethically like-minded partners including funders and commissioners to adopt a people-centred approach that is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As an independent research entity, our work is geared towards facilitating learning as opposed to promoting a specific agenda. All our products and publications aim to take the position of people by amplifying their voices and perceptions without distortion.

2. Empatika values reflexive learning processes that provide avenues for continuous and creative learning. We embrace complexity, understanding that 'big problems rarely have a single cause' and value multiple voices and perspectives.

3. The name Empatika comes from the word 'empathy.' Empathy is a key part of the people-centred approach that we always try to bring and promote, from our research activities to the way that we conduct ourselves and interact with others day-to-day.

4. We recognize that qualitative research involves unique ethical considerations which each piece of research needs to take into account. With appropriate standards in place, we believe research can empower study participants through people-centred and participatory processes. Empatika is also committed to valuing, respecting and listening to children by maintaining strong child protection systems and procedures.

5. Empatika recognises that we have a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements. We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and continually improving our environmental performance as an integral part of how we operate. We will encourage customers, suppliers and other stakeholders to do the same.

Our environment and child protection policies can be requested by emailing Deborah Tobing at:
deborah Tobing@empatika.org.

RESEARCH

We specialise in immersion studies whereby researchers stay in people's homes and join in their everyday lives. In addition, we facilitate video projects, workshops, and other qualitative research such as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, bringing our skills in participatory processes to each.



IMMERSION RESEARCH

Immersion research using the Reality Check Approach (RCA) is a qualitative research approach involving trained researchers living with people in their own homes and sharing in their everyday lives. This relaxed approach of informally 'hanging out' with families and other community members enables easy and open conversations as well as first-hand experience and observation of daily life, providing unique insights into how context shapes the processes, motivations, behaviours and attitudes of people. Empatika's former technical advisor was involved in the very first RCA study, conducted in Bangladesh in 2006 and since that time members of the Empatika team have conducted over 35 RCA immersion studies in nine countries across a wide range of topics including education, governance, health, infrastructure, market linkages, post disaster recovery, poverty, security and social protection.

Learn more about the background of RCA at:
www.reality-check-approach.com

HUMAN-CENTRED / PEOPLE-DRIVEN DESIGN

Like our immersion research, human-centered design (HCD), revolves around the concept of putting people at the center of ideas, services and products, ensuring that these solutions speak to the needs, priorities and circumstances of the intended end user. More recently, we have used the term People-Driven Design (PDD) to make explicit that people

themselves are directly engaged throughout the process. Empatika has developed approaches to link insights from immersion research to HCD/PDD processes, providing a strong basis for developing highly contextualised, practical solutions. These approaches improve the quality of design of policy and programming and help ensure they are not only 'evidence-based' but also 'people-based.'

VIDEO PROJECTS AND WORKSHOPS

Digital storytelling (DST) processes encourage people to share first-hand experiences and analyse their own situations. These stories provide powerful insights into people's reality, their personal experience of change and can provide useful windows on processes from the perspectives of beneficiaries and frontline service providers. These may provide in-depth insights to complement findings from other qualitative research approaches or may be analysed as primary research.

OTHER QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

We also facilitate focus group discussions and undertake in-depth interviews but bring to these our special skills in participatory processes and experience in using empathy and informality to ensure people are enthusiastic to engage and share openly.

We also support communities and people to develop their own indicators of change which reflect the direction and pace of change they want to see. These may be regularly monitored by them or reviewed by other externally supported means periodically.

To date, we have undertaken research in over eight countries, including as part of mixed methods evaluations where we work hard to ensure that the qualitative research approaches are customised and fully integrated to provide the best possible research outcomes.



TRAINING

We approach training in the same way as we do our research, with an emphasis on participation, informality, and connecting with participants. Our training is also grounded in real experiences, drawing on our learning and reflections from research and training in a range of contexts.

IMMERSION RESEARCH (6 DAYS)

- » Learning immersion research techniques (for use as a practitioner or commissioner), including core qualitative research skills and respectful ways of undertaking research with people. The training consists of two days of in-class exercises, a one-day child protection training, a two-night pilot immersion, and a final day of reflection.

GOOD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PRACTICES (2-3 DAYS)

- » Focusing on the design and implementation of relevant and high quality research including using research tools effectively, rigour, ethics, along with the attitudes and behaviours critical for successful research outcomes.





MIXED METHODS RESEARCH (3 DAYS)

- » Using real life cases using mixed methods, the course covers research design, implementation, analysis and documentation of truly integrated mixed methods. Facilitated in cooperation with quantitative research partners.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING (4 DAYS)

- » Intensive workshops where participants create short multimedia videos using mixed media including drawings, photography, and first-person narration as part of sharing aspects of their life story or something that has been significant in their lives. Workshops are organised around a theme, can be used as part of action research, as a complement to other research, or as part of a team/group reflection process.

We also offer training for facilitating DST workshops.

CHILD PROTECTION FOR FIELD RESEARCH (1 DAY)

- » Along with building awareness, this training uses a series of simulations based on real situations that Empatika team members have faced where participants must consider the decisions which should be taken in undertaking research with children and young people. Includes developing protocols for dealing with issues in the field.

RCA within mixed methods

To identify and interpret quantitative findings

- Identify weak, ambiguous, tentative and subtle direct units of measurement
- Mid-low RCA will inform the mid-low quantitative survey
- Other examples: Success and Justice in the Firm



FINANCIAL / MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

In developing our financial and management systems, Empatika aims to be transparent, practical, and efficient with the goal of ensuring that our systems and standard operating procedures best serve the type of work that we do. We have also used our previous experiences working as a project funded by Australian DFAT (2014-2017) and as part of The Palladium Group to help develop many of these processes and guidelines. Empatika adopts a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and has systems in place for managing internal grievances. We have recently revamped our accounting systems to improve efficiency, ensure compliance with Indonesian accounting standards, and as part of undergoing our first external audit in early 2021. Empatika undertakes risk assessments for all studies to mitigate any risks to staff, delivery or sound financial management. All staff are trained in child safeguarding procedures and we have developed a full module on Child Protection as part of our Immersion Research Level 1 training which all Empatika researchers undergo prior to joining fieldwork.

Empatika's management team includes an Indonesia-based Director, an International Director, along with our Director of Operations. This team is supported by an Operations Coordinator, Finance Coordinator and Finance Assistant who oversee all financial, logistical and administrative support for studies. Empatika has also developed customised standard operational guidance notes that outline the quality standards for conducting field work, financial procedures, logistical arrangements, security and risk mitigation in the often challenging contexts encountered while conducting participatory studies. We review our operational standards during our yearly company gathering and as part of our six-month management reviews to ensure they remain relevant and as part of identifying areas where we can improve.





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hello@empatika.org