



empatika

people-centred insights and solutions



A SMALL CONSULTANCY DEDICATED TO PEOPLE-CENTERED INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS



The Empatika core team at our team retreat in 2023.

Empatika is an Indonesia-based, internationally-oriented organization specializing in people-centered approaches to research, training, and development solutions. We provide innovative and adaptive qualitative and mixed methods approaches, along with custom capacity building to bring policies and programs closer to people's everyday realities..

Though Empatika was formally 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 and other participatory methods such as digital storytelling and people-driven design, covering topics including: urban and child poverty, migration, governance, frontline service provision, skills and unemployment, education, health and nutrition, rural infrastructure, social protection, market development and justice. Empatika is a registered company in Indonesia with members located in Indonesia, Nepal, and South Africa.

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 has conducted more than 65 immersion, mixed methods, and participatory studies

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

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



over the last six years in over eight countries, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malawi, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines for a range of commissioners including UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Save the Children, United Kingdom Department for International Development, UN Women, and UNDP.

Empatika recognised early in the development of immersion research 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 interviews and focus groups (due to perceived formality and its associated biases, access limitations, preoccupation 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 related to people's behaviors or focusing on sensitive issues.

Empatika also has extensive multi-country experience of using immersion research to track longitudinal change resulting from interventions and programmes.

Empatika continues to specialize in this experiential approach to research, while adding experience and expertise in facilitating training, people-driven design, and video-based projects. In addition, we have expanded into private sector research, which has included studies on customer experience for music streaming platforms and on farmers who collect resins for fragrance and flavor companies.

We have also begun to extend our expertise beyond research and training, using our experiences with people-driven design for solutions development and programming.

Within our research activities, Empatika has also used participatory processes to enhance traditional qualitative tools like focus group discussions and interviews, as well as provide more grounded and sensitive approaches to quantitative surveys. Wherever possible Empatika tries to bring quantitative and qualitative approaches together using mixed methods, with integrated tools which complement each other and joint analysis that further enhances insights. Empatika has also helped develop 'people's indicators of



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senior researchers who
have led or co-led studies
in the Middle East, Asia
and Africa

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

change' to supplement (sometimes supplant) a programme's own performance indicators. These can provide relevant indicators of 'change that matters to people', thereby contributing to putting people at the center of their own development.

Empatika has 12 Senior Researchers who have led or co-led qualitative studies in Asia and Africa. We also have active networks of trained local researchers in many of the countries where we have worked, such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Pakistan, Nepal and Uganda.

The Empatika team started working together initially as an Australian-funded project, and later on, as a unit, underneath The Palladium Group's Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Practice group from 2014 until 2017. Empatika has adapted procedures from this period for our operational management, child protection, safety, security and risk management guidelines which have produced some of the successful collaborations noted above. As an independent organization, 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.



OUR VISION

Keeping programmers and policymakers in-touch with people's lived realities through grounded, people-centred research, training and programs.

OUR MISSION

We are an international group of researchers and trainers who deliver and implement complexity-aware research, customized training, and programs which always put people at the center. Our work inspires people 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 programs and interventions are intended.

OUR CORE VALUES

1. **Empathy** – The name Empatika comes from the word ‘empathy’ and we try to carry and promote this value from our research activities to our day-to-day interactions. Our empathetic approach helps us understand development challenges in context and from the standpoint of those they affect. This perspective grounds our research and solutions, providing a true understanding of people’s priorities and supporting meaningful change.

2. **Embracing Complexity** – Our flexible approach to research and programs embraces complexity, understanding that ‘big problems rarely have a single cause’ and embracing multiple voices and perspectives.

3. **People-Driven** – People are at the center of everything we do. Our immersive and participatory approaches aim to empower people to develop solutions and drive change that is important to them through supportive, participatory, and

reflexive processes that provide avenues for continuous and creative learning.

4. **Equity and Inclusion** – We prioritize equity and inclusion in everything we do and believe that our diversity enhances our creativity and effectiveness as researchers and problem solvers. This is reflected in our approaches, which are designed to elevate the views of those typically excluded from research and development.

5. **Ethically-minded** – We recognize that qualitative research in particular 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-centered and participatory processes. Empatika is also committed to valuing, respecting and listening to children by maintaining strong child safeguarding systems and procedures.

Our environment and child safeguarding policies can be requested by emailing : debrahtobing@empatika.org.

RESEARCH

Our research uses people-centered and participatory approaches which involve, as much as possible, positioning study participants as the 'experts' and our researchers as learners. We believe it is vital that people themselves also shape the research process and findings. All of our research is guided by the principles of immersion research, such as informality, interacting in ordinary daily life, first-hand experience, taking an iterative approach, and constantly reflecting on our positionality as researchers.



IMMERSION RESEARCH

Immersion research 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, behaviors and attitudes of people. Immersion research is flexible and opportunistic in its interactions and often employs the use of creative and participatory methods such as visuals and photography. The approach also draws on extensive opportunities for triangulation as researchers use multiple methods (conversation, observation, experience, visuals) over multiple days and nights, interact with a range of people at different locations, and work in small teams but with different host families.

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.

PEOPLE-DRIVEN DESIGN

Like our immersion research, people-driven design (PDD) 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. Empatika takes the concept of human-centered design or Co-Design a step further to make explicit that people (the users) are engaged directly in identifying their own challenges, setting goals and developing their own ideas to facilitate positive change in their communities. As part of this process, we link insights from immersion and other qualitative research to co-design processes at the local level with community members, providing a strong basis for developing highly contextualized, practical solutions that can support positive change.

VIDEO PROJECTS AND WORKSHOPS

Transformative Digital Storytelling processes encourage people to share first-hand experiences and analyze their own situations through the creation of mixed media stories. 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 insights to complement findings from other research or can be used and analyzed as primary research.



TRAINING

Our training courses are grounded in our experiences as researchers and emphasize participation, informality, and connecting with participants. Developed by Empatika researchers and trainers, all of our courses draw on international participatory practices as well as our own learning and reflections. Empatika's training courses range from the foundations of qualitative research to more advanced and specialized research skills and approaches.

While we always adjust each training depending on the participants and their specific needs, we also design customized training which can be fully tailored for your organization's unique needs. Please contact us to discuss.

Our training suite consists of the following:

PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES FOR BETTER ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

This training series provides an introduction to key qualitative principles and techniques, combined with in-depth dives on effective communication, listening, and facilitation techniques, and engaging visual exercises. Designed for qualitative researchers, field officers, program designers and officers, students or fresh graduates.





The series includes the following topics in a combined 3-day-training:

» **Empathetic Engagement**

An introduction to some of Empatika's key qualitative principles and how we use them for engagement with participants and community members.

» **Better communication in research and engagement**

Exploring skills in listening, conversation, observation, along with effective facilitation techniques.

» **Using Interactive Tools for Research and Engagement**

On the principles of participatory and added value of visuals and other interactive approaches, including examples and practicum.

We also provide a condensed, **one-day version** of this training which introduces participants to basic principles of qualitative research and engagement, builds practical and participatory skills, and helps participants develop creative approaches to enhance engagement with community members.

We are developing an online training which will cover participatory practices and skills, using examples from the field to support participants to develop creative approaches to engage with and listen to people more effectively and empathetically.

EMPATHETIC RESEARCH APPROACHES

This suite includes options on engaging children and adolescents in research, as well as practical insights for conducting research in sensitive contexts. Contact us for more information.

METHODOLOGY TRAINING

This suite includes our multi-day training on Immersion Research and Transformative Digital Storytelling. Both of these training courses are available offline or online.

» **Immersion Research**

Our Immersion Research Level 1 training has formed the foundation that we have used to train field researchers in over six countries. The training is for anyone with an interest



in immersion research techniques (as a practitioner or commissioner), with a comprehensive set of modules that explore the principles, approaches, and tools that allow researchers to become reflexive, experiential learners and build informal relationships with community members. The training includes four days of classroom/workshop sessions, combined with field practicum.

» **Transformative Digital Storytelling**

This training is for anyone who wants to develop an understanding of participatory storytelling approaches and concrete skills to apply them. The training uses storytelling tools and techniques to create complex personal stories that can complement research to provide a powerful and transformative personal element. Participants build these skills by carrying out this process themselves using a range of creative techniques, including drawings, photography, and first-person narration they develop into short multimedia videos.

Empatika also offers training on Transformative Storytelling for facilitators.

PEOPLE-CENTERED RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

- » This three-day training aims to enable professionals to develop people-centered approaches to qualitative research design, data collection, and analysis as part of improving program relevance for beneficiaries. Designed for development and humanitarian organizations and professionals involved in program monitoring and research.

Mixed Methods Research - For those looking to better understand and employ fully mixed methods research designs, Empatika has previously organized customized mixed methods training in collaboration with international quantitative research experts with whom we have refined these approaches.



RCA within mixed methods

To identify and interpret quantitative findings

- Identify links: Examiner behaviour and attitude
directly - units of measurement
- Mid-low RCA will inform the mid-low quantitative
survey
- Other examples: Success and Justice in the Firm



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 operating principles best serve the type of work that we do. We have also used our team's previous experiences working as a project funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and managed as part of The Palladium Group (2014-2017) 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. In 2020 we revamped our accounting systems to improve efficiency, ensure compliance with Indonesian accounting standards, and as part of undergoing our first external audit. Empatika undertakes risk assessments for all studies to mitigate any risks to staff or project delivery. All staff are trained in child safeguarding 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.

Our core team includes 4 fixed term staff and 12 long-term consultants. Empatika's management team consists of an Indonesia-based Executive Director supported by departmental directors for Operations, Research, Training, and Programs. Our operations team also includes a Finance Coordinator, Finance Assistant, and Communications Officer. Empatika has developed customized standard operational guidance notes that outline the quality standards for conducting field work, financial procedures, logistical arrangements, and security and risk mitigation in the often challenging contexts encountered while conducting participatory studies. We review our operational standards during our yearly company gathering to ensure they remain relevant and as part of identifying areas where we can improve.

Empatika is an Indonesian company and 50% women-owned. In 2022, Empatika established a foundation in Indonesia as a sister organization to allow us more flexibility in pursuing projects and programs.





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