

Engaging Communities: Our Collaborative Journey

Recognising Berlin and NRW as two of the regions with the highest number of first-time asylum applications and forced migrant populations in Germany, we initiated our engagement there. Our collaboration with key agencies ensured our research remained relevant, connecting us directly with young women who would later become the backbone of our research as peer researchers.

I. Consultation Sessions - Pivotal Moments of Collaboration:

Consultation Sessions with Train of Hope Dortmund e.V., NRW - Feb 4 and 28, 2023:

In a partnership with Train of Hope Dortmund e.V., we facilitated two profound sessions in Dortmund, NRW, immersing ourselves in the intricate life experiences of young women from forced migration backgrounds, notably from Afghanistan. These consultations were thoughtfully crafted to uncover the intertwined challenges and needs they confront, spanning both their countries of origin and their new home in Germany.

In these sessions, education emerged as a focal point, revealing the pressing necessity for comprehensive learning to tackle issues like forced marriages and gender-based violence prevalent in their home countries. The discussions also laid bare deeply ingrained gender biases and societal norms within Afghanistan and Germany. The theme of acceptance resonated strongly, spotlighting the yearning for inclusivity and open-mindedness. As we delved into their experiences in Germany, concerns about economic stability and the recognition of qualifications came to the forefront. The struggle to preserve cultural and religious practices while integrating into a new society was also explored. The stark realities faced in Afghanistan were bravely shared, shedding light on themes of child labour, gender discrimination, forced marriages, and limited educational opportunities.

Consultation Sessions with MPower e.V., Berlin - March 5, 2023

Charting a new path of collaboration, we extended our outreach to MPower e.V., embarking on an exciting partnership journey and fresh exploration of the diverse experiences and perspectives of forced migration. The result was a captivating tapestry of experiences, offering profound insights into sustainability from the vantage point of young women with varied forced migration backgrounds. With the active participation of four girls, this orientation and workshop uncovered core themes that echo the intricacies of these women's journeys.

The themes encompass the weight of societal expectations, traversing religious norms and beauty standards while delving into power dynamics and discrimination. Their fight for rights and freedoms, intertwined with aspirations in a new land, underscored the tenacity that defines their narratives. These themes also illuminated biases embedded within the educational system, alongside an ardent desire for spaces that embrace understanding and empathy. Together, these themes coalesce into a mosaic that paints the challenges, aspirations, and intricacies that shape the lives of these young women as they navigate the juncture between their past and present realities.

II. Catalysts for Empowerment: The Emergence of Peer Researchers

Our commitment to genuine representation and diverse perspectives materialised through our partnership with organisations. This collaborative effort led us to identify four dedicated peer researchers from M Power e.V. These engaged co-collaborators have become pivotal in steering our research trajectory, providing invaluable insights that influence the research direction. Their authentic voices, stemming from personal experiences, mark a milestone in our project. Transitioning from participants to active contributors underscores our commitment to amplifying diverse voices and co-creating impactful solutions for the multifaceted challenges young women from forced migration backgrounds face.

Partnership with Mpower e.V.:

Our formal partnership with Mpower e.V. became crucial to our collaborative research journey. We set the foundation with an official project orientation and consultation meeting on March 5, 2023, and solidified our partnership through a comprehensive memorandum of agreement. This document explicitly outlined our shared roles, responsibilities, and collaborative activities.

Peer Research Training - April 2023 (ongoing)

To effectively harness the depth of insights, skills, and strengths of our peer researchers from Mpower e.V., we launched the Peer Research Training in April 2023. This training is meticulously crafted to introduce research fundamentals, spotlighting participatory methodologies. Its prime objective is to furnish participants with pivotal research concepts, thereby bolstering their ability to conduct participatory research adeptly.

Core Facets of Our Training Encompass:

- Understanding essential concepts and viewpoints that are crucial in the field of research.
- Exploring the importance of research ethics, which includes implementing measures to protect participants.
- Creating meaningful research inquiries, selecting suitable research techniques, collaborating on data analysis, and disseminating results.
- Harnessing insights from the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) to include topics that address participants' specific training needs and goals.

Our Specific Training Goals Include:

- Introduce participants to the research process while refining their skills in participatory research.
- Sharing knowledge and tools essential for formulating research questions, selecting the right research methods, gathering and analysing data, and disseminating results.
- Enriching understanding regarding the paramount importance of research ethics.
- Encouraging a robust comprehension of salient concepts related to sustainability and inclusive participation.

As a result of this intensive training, significant milestones were achieved:

- Finalisation of the research focus.
- Calibration of participant selection criteria.
- Creation of precise research questions.
- Design of critical research tools, like consent forms and guiding questions.

III. Data Collection

Our dedicated peer researchers have led the way in conducting 27 (as of the current date) semi-structured interviews, conducted in both Deutsch and Arabic, to accommodate participants' language preferences. Upholding stringent ethical standards, we ensure privacy by employing online consent forms. Before each interview, participants are provided with a PDF copy of the consent form sent after the interview for their records. These interviews are thoughtfully arranged in discreet locations like schools and masjids/mosques, fostering an environment of security for open and candid discussions. Spanning between 15 to 45 minutes, these sessions are focused on building trust and rapport with participants. Our commitment to collaboration shines through regular meetings and discussions with our peer researchers, forming the essence of our cohesive research approach.

Our Participants Align with the Following Criteria:

- Female
- Aged 14 to 26
- Forced Migration Experience
- Residing in Berlin, Mitte
- Currently or previously attended welcome classes or language courses
- Open and willing to participate, sharing their unique experiences
- Representing diverse backgrounds, including various nationalities, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, and educational backgrounds

Through this comprehensive approach, we are dedicated to capturing a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences that authentically represent the diversity within the community we are studying.

IV. Data Analysis

As of August 2023, we are reviewing the collected interviews and transcripts, thanks to the valuable partnership with MPower e.V. We are dedicated to conducting a careful and comprehensive analysis to honour the participants' voices and experiences. We eagerly anticipate gaining insights to deepen our understanding of these young women's integration journeys. Stay tuned for updates as we progress with this vital research phase.