

# Module 5: Approaches and Methods for CEI

In this module, you will get an overview of a range of approaches and methods for community engagement and involvement (CEI). These approaches, some of which you will have seen in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI, are flexible and adaptable, and individuals are encouraged to work collaboratively with their research team, communities and other stakeholders to decide on the most appropriate approach and method.

## INTRODUCTION

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### Introduction

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### Selecting an appropriate CEI approach or method

### CEI approaches and methods – options and case studies

### Online CEI

### CEI approaches and methods - challenges

SUMMARY

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 Summary

# Introduction

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In this module, you will get an overview of a range of approaches and methods for community engagement and involvement (CEI). These approaches, some of which you will have seen in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI, are flexible and adaptable, and individuals are encouraged to work collaboratively with their research team, communities and other stakeholders to decide on the most appropriate approach and method.

## **Aim**

To learn and understand a range of CEI approaches and methods, and the ability to assess which are most appropriate for each project (based on several factors).

## **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Describe a range of CEI methods and approaches that can be used for meaningful engagement and involvement of communities and stakeholders.
- Describe considerations that need to be made when selecting CEI methods or approaches.
- Identify appropriate online engagement methods and demonstrate understanding of ethical considerations.
- Identify common challenges when carrying out different engagement methods or approaches.

## **A note on terms**

First, let's understand the key terms used in this module.

*Select each of the tabs from left to right to learn more.*

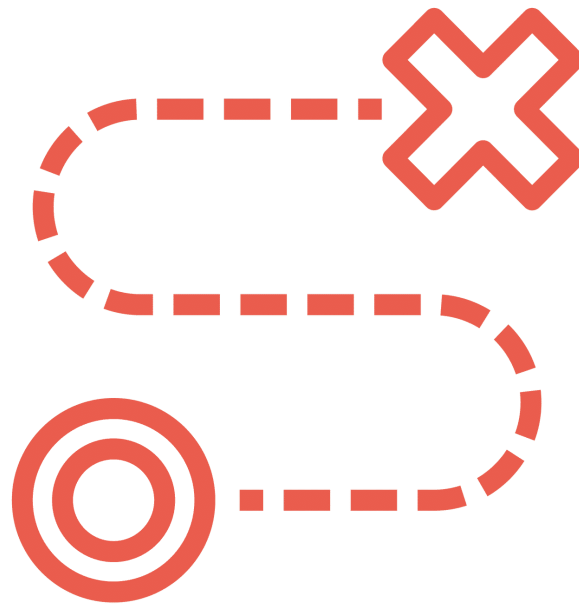
**APPROACH**

**METHOD**

**THEORIES,  
PRINCIPLES,  
CONCEPTS, MODELS**

**CO-PRODUCTION**

An **approach** is an overall way of planning, doing and evaluating. It has a set of common assumptions about a topic, in this case what community engagement and involvement is (see Module 1: Understanding CEI in Health Research). The agreed approach can lead towards the decision to use particular methods.



**APPROACH**

**METHOD**

**THEORIES,  
PRINCIPLES,  
CONCEPTS, MODELS**

**CO-PRODUCTION**

A **method** is the practical application of that approach, in this case, the steps or process taken to complete the community engagement and involvement. The way a method is executed can be important in ensuring that the agreed approach is not undermined.



APPROACH	METHOD	THEORIES, PRINCIPLES, CONCEPTS, MODELS	CO-PRODUCTION
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**Theories, principles, concepts** and **models** provide the foundation for our approach to CEI, which, in turn influences the methods we use to undertake CEI (see also Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI).



APPROACH	METHOD	THEORIES, PRINCIPLES, CONCEPTS, MODELS	CO-PRODUCTION
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**Co-production** is an approach in which researchers, practitioners and members of the community work together, sharing power and responsibility from the start to the end of the project, including the generation of knowledge. The assumption is that those affected by research are best placed to design and deliver it and have skills and knowledge of equal importance to those of the researchers.



In this course, CEI is understood to mean:

An active involvement of the community throughout the research process, using participatory approaches and working in partnership with all key stakeholders.



CEI includes a range of activities which involve interactions between researchers, community members and stakeholders,



aimed at improving the relevance, value and conduct of health research.

Below is a glossary of common terms you can use to help guide your CEI journey. We have also hyperlinked some of the key terms as they appear throughout the module to this glossary.

*Select the grey box to download the glossary.*

 **Glossary.pdf**  
1 MB 

**CONTINUE**

# Selecting an appropriate CEI approach or method

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In this section, we will look at the steps required to select an appropriate CEI approach or method, giving examples.

Below are the steps you should use to select an appropriate CEI approach or method:

- 1 Consider the aims of the research.
- 2 Consider the aims of the CEI.
- 3 Gain a full understanding of the context in which the research is to be carried out.
- 4 Seek to identify and understand community groups and power dynamics.
- 5 Co-produce the CEI approach and method.

We will now look at each of these in turn.

## **Step 1. Consider the aims of the research**

The research **design, aims and location** will influence the type of CEI approach you use.

For example:

- Basic research in a laboratory might require a public engagement approach aimed at illustrating the value of science in society.
- Recruiting volunteers to participate in a trial, however, might require engagement through a community advisory board to ensure community views are included and integrated into the research design and implementation.



CONTINUE

## Step 2. Consider the aims of the CEI

It is important to identify early on what the CEI activities aim to achieve. Developing **objectives** can help to determine what approaches and methods are best suited. As seen in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI, examples of objectives could be to:

- Build understanding of project/institution activities.
- Collect views about planned or ongoing research.
- Promote an interest in science and its value in society.
- Ensure the ethical conduct of research.



Different objectives often require **different methods**, such as:

- Discussions with a community advisory board could help researchers decide whether a research procedure is ethically acceptable to the community.
- Conducting science competitions with school students can promote an interest in science.

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### Identifying appropriate CEI aims

Below are some examples of CEI aims. Some are appropriate, whilst others are less appropriate.

Read through each, then select the ones you think are the **least** appropriate. Select 'submit' when you are ready.

Build understanding among stakeholders on research project processes and procedures	Collect views from community members and stakeholders about planned research project design, processes and procedures	Tell community members that they are required to participate in an upcoming research project
Build an interest in science among school going children	Share research project information through publications, websites and social media handles	Help researchers to understand the local culture, traditions and societal norms
<a href="#">undo selection</a>		<a href="#">submit</a>

It is important to ensure the development of your CEI aim and activity involves **two-way communication** and interaction.

In this activity, 'informing' community members or stakeholders about a planned research project would be **one-way communication**.

In addition, technology such as websites and social media handles, while important for sharing information, may not provide an interactive form of engagement. The use of social

media spaces such as X (Twitter), however, may allow limited 'space' for some discussion about research.

**CONTINUE**

### **Step 3. Gain a full understanding of the context**

It is important to gain a full understanding of the context you want to conduct CEI activities in.

*Select each picture to flip for information.*



You must define your 'community' or the 'audience' with whom you want to engage. You may have multiple communities or audiences.





Take time to develop understanding of the cultural (including religious), socio-economic, political and geographical context in which the research will take place before developing CEI plans.



A mapping of all community groups will help to identify vulnerable populations who should not be left out (see Module 2: Justifying CEI, Considering Stakeholders and Engaging Policymakers to explore stakeholder mapping and analysis).



It is important to understand local population demographics such as education/literacy levels, religion, common types of

**CONTINUE**

#### **Step 4. Seek to identify and understand community groups and power dynamics**

- Communities are **not homogenous** (all the same): one CEI approach might not necessarily work well for all groups in a particular site, location or area.
- It is important to **gain an understanding** of different groups within a community and apply appropriate CEI methods for each.
- Efforts must be made to **include all** community groups to ensure that vulnerable or marginalised

populations are not left out. CEI methods need to be sensitive to vulnerabilities, such as people who are disabled or stigmatised.



Sometimes there could be opportunities for mixing different groups, while in others it might be better to engage specific groups on their own. For example, it might be challenging to get politicians to attend a community meeting for research, but they could participate in a breakfast meeting in a hotel. The important thing is to **understand the characteristics** of stakeholders, communities or leaders, and to know what approach works best for a specific group.

Community members and local leaders can help with understanding the power dynamics in a setting. **Co-producing stakeholder maps** with communities and stakeholders can help to decide on the most appropriate CEI methods that will address different social and cultural dynamics, including imbalances in power.

Power balances and dynamics are explored in Module 3: Ethical CEI.



## **Step 5. Co-produce the CEI approach and method**

*Select the 'start' button followed by the right arrow to navigate through the slides.*



The people who are likely to know most about the community are the community members themselves. In order to make sure that CEI methods are appropriate it makes sense to involve community members in the process of designing them.



**Co-production** through CEI is likely to ensure mutual benefit for community members and researchers, guarantee that chosen approaches are acceptable, and foster community ownership of the research and the health challenge that it seeks to address.



A '**learning by doing**' approach to identifying engagement methods can be used, where community/stakeholder groups help to identify appropriate methods and approaches.



The 'learning by doing' approach allows you to plan, implement and evaluate engagement approaches jointly with all relevant stakeholders. Time is set aside throughout the process of identifying and implementing CEI methods to allow for reflection at each stage.





The CEI methods, including how often the activities are done, and resources required, need to be carefully **discussed and agreed** upon to ensure they are not burdensome, especially to community members

(Standard 7 - Informed Design, UNICEF (2020))

### **Case study: KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWTRP)**

Watch the video below which gives an example of how the CEI approach and method was co-produced for a project in Kenya (Marsh *et al.*, 2008).

*Select the play symbol below. Closed captions are available by selecting 'CC'. The transcript can be viewed underneath by selecting the '+' symbol.*

## **Video Transcript** —

[Formative research](#), to explore and describe the local context for the research area, revealed poor understanding of research among community members, a range of rumours, and a keen interest in interaction between the community and research institution. Findings from a community survey were shared in a community workshop which included community members, researchers and local ministry of health staff.

Discussion among these workshop participants led to the co-production of a communication strategy. This strategy outlined communication and engagement methods that were acceptable and could be used for engagement between the local communities and stakeholders and KWTRP researchers.

## CONTINUE

### Summary of steps in choosing a CEI approach and method

- Ask yourself "**Who** are the stakeholders (including the community members or audiences)?"
- Spend time exploring, mapping and understanding the context. To promote ownership of the research and the topic it addresses, **co-produce** the approach and method with the targeted communities and stakeholders. Ensure that the methods are appropriate for the culture and societal norms of the population. (See Module 2: Justifying CEI, Considering Stakeholders and Engaging Policymakers for more on stakeholder mapping).
- Take into consideration the **aims** of the CEI and the research.
- Seek to **identify community groups** and understand the power dynamics within and

between them.

- Choose methods and approaches that **foster mutual respect**, and have **benefits** for all stakeholders (including community members and researchers).

The CEI methods and approaches described in the next lesson are not exhaustive.

For a wide range of CEI approaches and methods in different contexts, visit the online community engagement platform, Mesh.

*Select the red button to view the resource.*

### **Mesh**

An online community engagement platform with examples of a wide range of CEI approaches and methods in different contexts.

**MESH**

Further resources can be found in Lesson 10: Summary.

**CONTINUE**

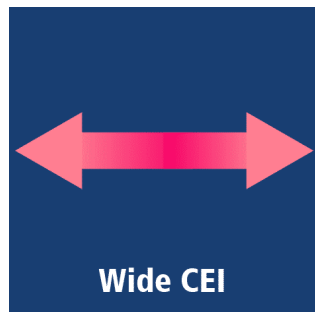
# CEI approaches and methods – options and case studies

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In this section, we will look at examples of deep and wide CEI approaches and methods. These include Community Advisory Boards, Young Persons' Advisory Groups, community meetings, open days, Participatory Action Research, digital storytelling, social science methods, and deliberative and participatory CEI methods.

## A deep or wide CEI approach?

As seen in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI, engagement approaches can be classified into two types:



Wide CEI activities aim at reaching large audiences, usually for relatively short periods of time, and are often aimed at raising community awareness or understanding of research.

Deep CEI involves spending a longer amount of time over several meetings (longer time period) with individuals or smaller groups of people.

### **Deep CEI approaches**


Deep CEI activities can directly support research through:

- helping to shape research agendas and questions;
- responding to community concerns about research studies;
- involving communities from the planning of research to the implementation and sharing of results;
- incorporating community views into engagement activities and documents, such as informed consent forms;
- promoting valuable and respectful relationships between scientists, communities and institutions.

### **Thinking about CEI methods – Community Advisory Boards**

Community Advisory Boards or Groups (CAB or CAG) are often used as a method of 'deep' CEI.

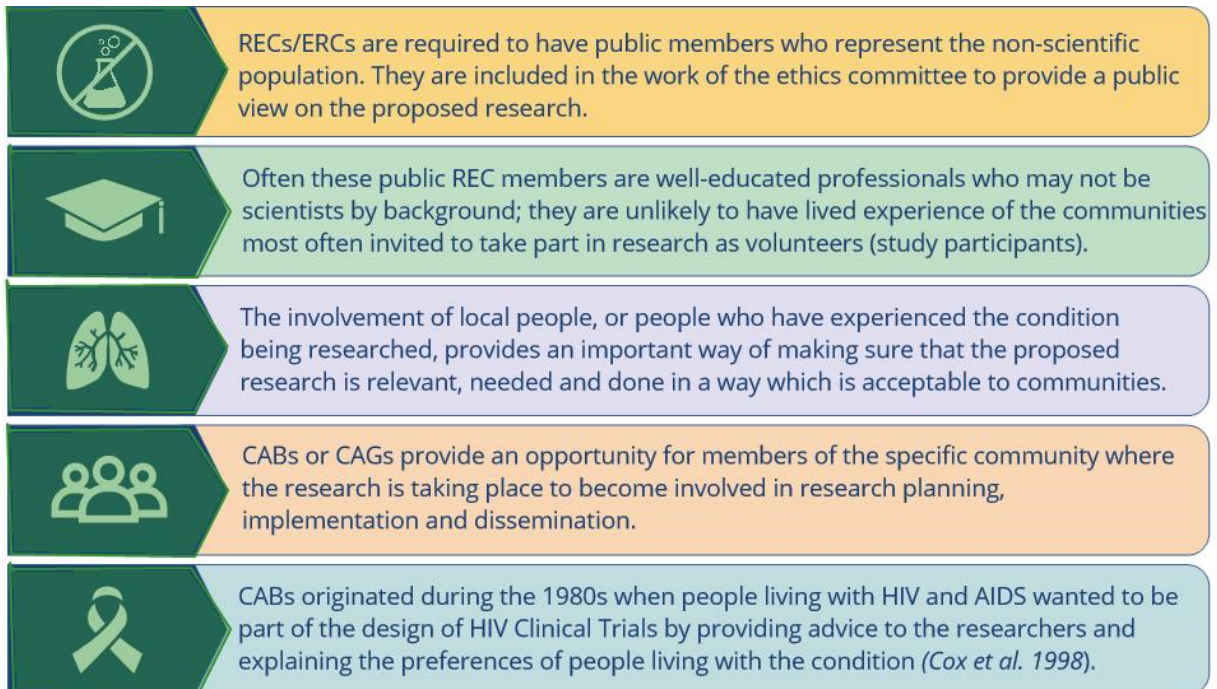
What comes to mind when you begin to think about the term 'Community Advisory Board'? Consider what you would add to the list below.

 Thumbnail



CABs can be used to support Research Ethics Committees (REC), also known as Ethics Review Committees (ERC).

*Select each of the icons below to reveal more information.*



RECs/ERCs are required to have public members who represent the non-scientific population. They are included in the work of the ethics committee to provide a public view on the proposed research.

Often these public REC members are well-educated professionals who may not be scientists by background; they are unlikely to have lived experience of the communities most often invited to take part in research as volunteers (study participants).

The involvement of local people, or people who have experienced the condition being researched, provides an important way of making sure that the proposed research is relevant, needed and done in a way which is acceptable to communities.

CABs or CAGs provide an opportunity for members of the specific community where the research is taking place to become involved in research planning, implementation and dissemination.

CABs originated during the 1980s when people living with HIV and AIDS wanted to be part of the design of HIV Clinical Trials by providing advice to the researchers and explaining the preferences of people living with the condition (Cox *et al.* 1998).



CAB members should ideally be:

- people living in a certain geographical location where research is conducted.
- people living with an illness or condition (either a patient or caregiver of someone living with - for example - HIV or sickle cell disease) or situation (such as poor

sanitation) that is being investigated by the study.

Using their own lived experience, they advise researchers on planned and ongoing research.

### **Case Study: Tak Province Community Ethics and Advisory Board (T-CAB) - Thailand**

Watch the video below which describes how the Shoklo Malaria Research Unit in Thailand formed its T-CAB and the role of the members (Cheah *et al.*, 2010).

*Select the play symbol below. Closed captions are available by selecting 'CC'. The transcript can be viewed underneath by selecting the '+' symbol.*

## Video Transcript —

Potential T-CAB members were contacted by staff of the Shoklo Malaria Research Unit (SMRU) in Tak Province, Thailand. Those interested were asked to attend meetings and training.

- Fourteen people, six women and eight men, aged between 21 and 57 years, with various levels of education, most of whom were community leaders or people with jobs seen as important or respected (for example, village chairman, pastor, teacher, social worker) became members of the CAB.
- The T-CAB terms of reference (a document with a clear description of the members' roles and the researchers' obligations) was developed and translated into Burmese, Thai, and Karen.
- T-CAB members were involved in a range of discussions and decision-making on topics including:
  - research risks and safety,
  - benefits of research to study volunteers (participants) and to communities as a whole,
  - confidentiality, and
  - choosing research procedures.

## Thinking about CEI methods - Young Persons' Advisory Groups



Using Young Persons' Advisory Groups (YPAGs) in research is a method that aims to bring the voices of **children, adolescents and young adults** into research planning and implementation.

In South Africa, these groups are referred to as Teen Advisory Groups (TAG).

YPAGs meet regularly with researchers and engagement staff for activities like workshops, mentorship, counseling sessions and fun activities.



TAGs/YPAGs have contributed to the development of HIV studies and Human Infection studies in South Africa and Kenya respectively (Cluver, 2021). They have answered questions such as:

- Would such a study be acceptable in this community/group?
- Are there any factors that might make this group of potential research participants vulnerable in any way, and, if so, what are they?

- What are your thoughts on study procedures?

**CONTINUE**

As we have seen in this lesson and in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI, deep CEI methods often involve meeting regularly with members of the community through CABs or YPAGs for extended periods of time.

As it might be hard to reach much larger groups of people using deep approaches, engagement practitioners may engage with larger groups in shorter and sometimes one-off meetings. These types of activities are sometimes described as 'wide engagement approaches'.

Bear in mind that most engagement activities sit on a line somewhere between deep and wide engagement (see Lesson 5: Deep and wide CEI in Module 4).

 Thumbnail

Adapted from Davies *et al.* (2019).

## **Wide CEI approaches**

Now we will describe community and town hall meetings and open days, which are a much wider form of engagement than CABs and YPAGs. We will also describe examples of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and digital storytelling.

### **Thinking about CEI methods - Community meetings**



### **Case Study: Malaria Research - Mali**

- Community meetings or town hall events can be held in villages and towns. In these meetings, people **living in the area come together** to have a dialogue about issues affecting them. In settings like this case study, they are often moderated by a local Chief or other individual in a leadership or respected position.
- In Mali, prior to organising a community meeting, the local Ministry of Public Health officials were informed about the specific research and the plans to engage the local community. Permissions to talk to community members were sought from local leaders and Chiefs (gatekeepers).
- A local Chief encouraged community members to meet the researchers and the study team attended the meeting where they presented the research and responded to questions from attendees.
- A translator was available to assist with translating the study team's talk into the local language (Nyika *et al.*, 2010).





## Thinking about CEI methods - Open Days

### Case Study: KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme - Kenya

This approach has been used in Kilifi, Kenya, by the KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWTRP). The approach works well for long-standing research institutions with facilities such as laboratories, and includes workshops, tours of research facilities, and talks from research teams.

**KEMRI** | Wellcome Trust

The approach was developed to **respond to community concerns and rumours** around the drawing blood, as well as the storage and use of drawn blood, for research purposes. A widespread rumour in the area - where KWTRP has conducted research for over 3 decades - was that blood drawn from community members was used for devil worship and fed to a snake. A snake became part of the rumour because the [institutional logo has a red snake](#).

The Open Day activity was implemented to enable community members to come into the institution and see the laboratories and other research facilities. This approach helped to dispel the misunderstandings about the work of the KWTRP researchers.

This approach has been very successful in reducing rumours around blood use and increasing public understanding of research.



### **A specific CEI approach and method - Participatory Action Research**

Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI introduced Participatory Action Research (PAR) as one approach for CEI. Here, we give an example of how PAR has been used to plan and implement a CEI programme.

### **Case Study: School Engagement Programme - Kenya**

The School Engagement Programme is a set of activities where school students in Kenya engage with health researchers.

*Select each picture below to reveal the aims of the CEI activities.*



Raise student awareness of locally conducted research.



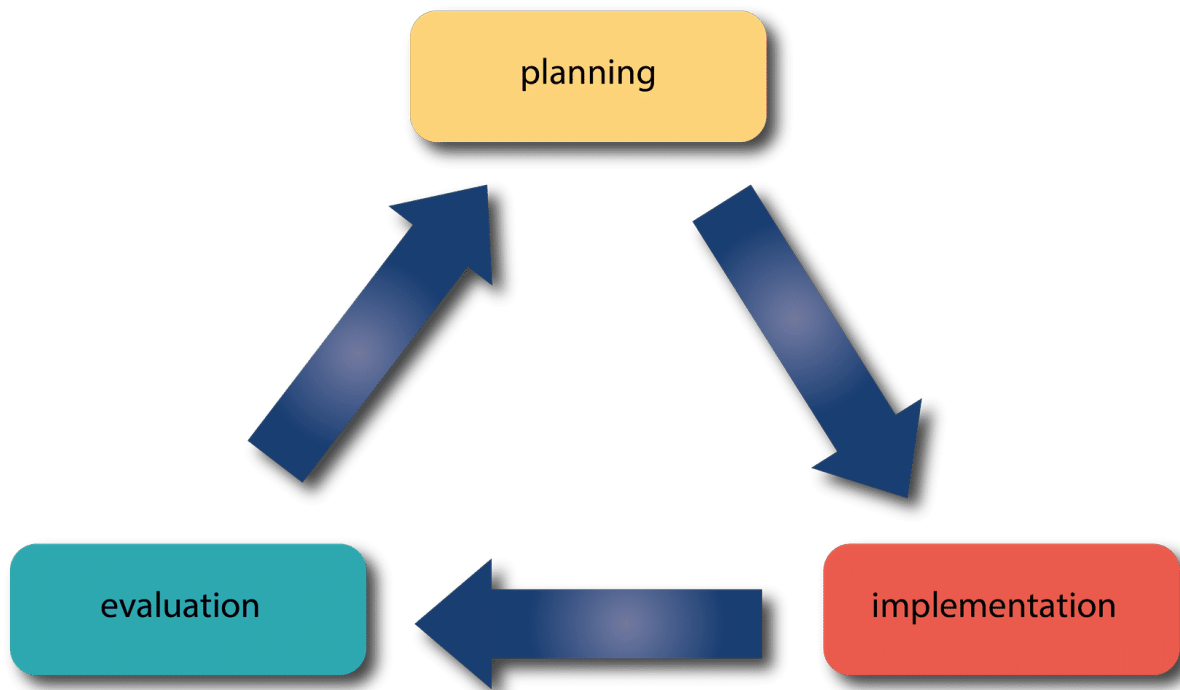
Incorporate youth insights into research.



Promote positive attitudes towards science and careers in science.



Give researchers an opportunity to learn about the communities in which they work.



This School Engagement Programme was developed through three cycles of PAR (planning, implementing and evaluating) between 2009 and 2017 in a process which involved teachers, parents, students and researchers.

***2009-2010***

The first PAR cycle developed and piloted activities in three schools.

***2011-2012***

The second cycle further developed and expanded the activities.

***2013-2017***

The third cycle expanded the activities to over 50 educational institutions in Kenya.



Engagement activities co-produced through PAR included laboratory tours, debates, inter-school competitions, online engagement, YPAGs and an “attachment scheme”, where students could gain experience of work at a research institute.

Engagement with students from 50 schools might be seen as "wide" engagement; however, the YPAG component within the schools' programme is an example of "deep" engagement.

### **Thinking about CEI methods - Digital Storytelling**

#### **Case Study: Digital Storytelling - Viet Nam**



Watch the video below which gives an example of how the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU) in Viet Nam has used digital storytelling to engage community members about the health challenges which arise because of agricultural practices and living close to animals.

*Select the play symbol below. Closed captions are available by selecting 'CC'. The transcript can be viewed underneath by selecting the '+' symbol.*

## **Video Transcript** —

Science and research can be perceived as difficult and sometimes boring topics of discussion to non-scientists. These attitudes can be addressed through using innovative ways of making science exciting to talk about in communities.

In Viet Nam, at the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU), digital storytelling has been used to engage community members about the health challenges which arise because of agricultural practices and living close to animals. These health challenges are often described as zoonotic infections. Zoonotic diseases (also known as zoonoses/zoonosis) are diseases or infections that are naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans.

Local farmers were trained to use simple cameras and tasked to take photographs of their interactions with their livestock and domestic animals.

Each farmer selected 30 photos, placed them in a sequence and recorded a voice narration to accompany them in a short film. These short films enabled discussions with researchers from the Vietnam Initiatives on Zoonotic Infections (VIZIONS).

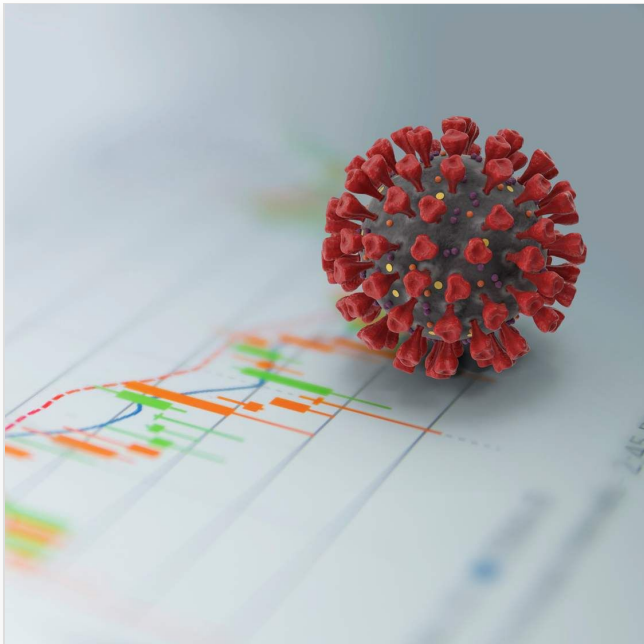
Community members sharing their lived experiences in this way has helped to improve Viet Nam Initiatives on Zoonotic Infections (VIZIONS) researchers' understanding of their research community. The discussions have enabled researchers to develop research questions and have improved the relationship between researchers and the local population (Chambers, 2016).

**CONTINUE**

**Using social science methods for CEI: focus group discussions and surveys**

As described in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI, social science methods such as focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth surveys have been used to enable researchers to understand community views and practices and inform research. Here are some examples:

*Select each picture to turn the card over.*



**Survey** - During the COVID-19 pandemic, an online public survey was used to gather public preferences in the UK on the acceptability of using data collected during COVID-19 testing to contact people to invite them to take part in a clinical trial. The survey showed



**FGDs** - Community-based participatory researchers in South Africa used informal discussions and 27 focus groups to understand the range of views about community priorities for research. The discussions helped to decide on appropriate research

**CONTINUE**

**From informing to decision-making: deliberative and participatory CEI methods**



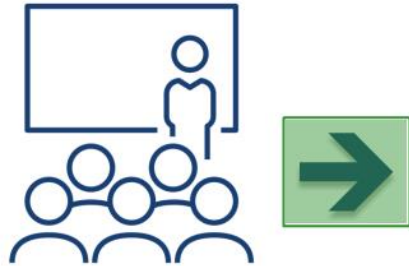
While some CEI methods can provide researchers with useful information which can guide research, they may not offer community members or stakeholders an opportunity to directly influence decision-making or be involved in the design and implementation of research.

As described in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI, [deliberative](#) and participatory methods have been used to **directly involve community members in aspects of decision-making** about research.

In Kenya, researchers have conducted a range of workshops and discussions with researchers and community members

towards developing several outputs.

*Select the arrows to progress through the below process.*



Workshop where participants learn about a specific research study or issue

Given that these workshops are likely to be carried out over several days, deliberative methods can be considered 'deep' engagement as described in Module 4: Principles and Models for CEI.

### **Examples of deliberative CEI methods**

At the KEMRI - Wellcome Trust Research Programme (KWTRP) in Kilifi, Kenya, a deliberative CEI method has been used to guide:

- The development of institutional policy regarding benefits and reimbursements to study participants and communities (Jao *et al.*, 2015, Molyneux *et al.*, 2012, Njue *et al.*, 2015).
- Decisions on whether and how to provide the results of a genetic test to individual participants in a study (Marsh *et al.*, 2013).
- The type of language and content which should be included in informed consent forms (Boga *et al.*, 2011).

To find out more about KWTRP, see Further resources in Lesson 6: Summary.

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### Choosing CEI methods

*Use the appropriate terms from the list to fill in the blank spaces in the following sentences.*

1.  is a method used to enable community members to share aspects of their lives using pictures.
2. In a  researchers meet regularly with a group of adolescents to gather their views on research involving children.
3. A  would be used to find out whether a large proportion of the public support door-to-door HIV testing as a research procedure.
4. In a  community members are able to learn about a research procedure from a range of sources, individuals and discussions. Based on this learning they are able to share their views on specific research plans.

young persons' advisory group

survey

digital storytelling

deliberative approach

submit

## Summary of CEI methods and approaches

- There are many different methods that can be used in CEI.
- Deep engagement approaches use methods that allow for thorough discussion on a topic. They are time consuming but more appropriate for meaningful input into decision-making on research design, implementation and dissemination.



- Wide engagement methods have fewer opportunities for interactivity but are also important for building up a culture of science literacy among broader audiences.
- Examples of approaches and methods include Community Advisory Boards, Young Persons' Advisory Groups, community meetings, open days, participatory action research, digital storytelling, social science techniques (surveys and focus groups) and deliberative methods.
- However, it must be noted that these examples are not exhaustive and many more can be explored. One of which we turn to now, and that is online CEI methods.

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# Online CEI

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In this section, we will look at how to choose an online platform for CEI and what to consider when running a CEI event online. We will also discuss the ethical considerations for online engagement.

## Online engagement methods - The COVID-19 effect

- Until the COVID-19 pandemic, CEI methods and approaches mainly involved face-to-face interactions. This required engagement staff, researchers, and community members to meet in person, sometimes in very large numbers.
- Pandemic-related lockdowns and restrictions on movement and personal contact changed this. All over the world, governments **restricted public meetings** to very small groups (if they were allowed at all). Where small group meetings were permitted, people were required to distance themselves from each other. They also needed to wear protective items such as face masks.

- While there had been minimal online engagement in many parts of the world before the pandemic, its repercussions made engagement practitioners think differently.
- The challenge was to devise and learn new skills for engagement in the digital arena.



## Choosing an online platform for CEI

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCPPE) in the UK (2020) put together guidelines to support researchers and public engagement practitioners to make the shift towards engaging virtually.

*Select each of the '+' symbols below to learn more about the advice included.*

**Aims and purpose** —

What do you want to achieve by the end of the engagement?

**Audience** —

Who is your audience? Do they have secure and easy access to virtual platforms? What is their level of experience using virtual platforms?

**Groundwork** —

Consider doing an initial survey, perhaps through phone calls or email, to determine the suitability of an online platform, before selecting one.

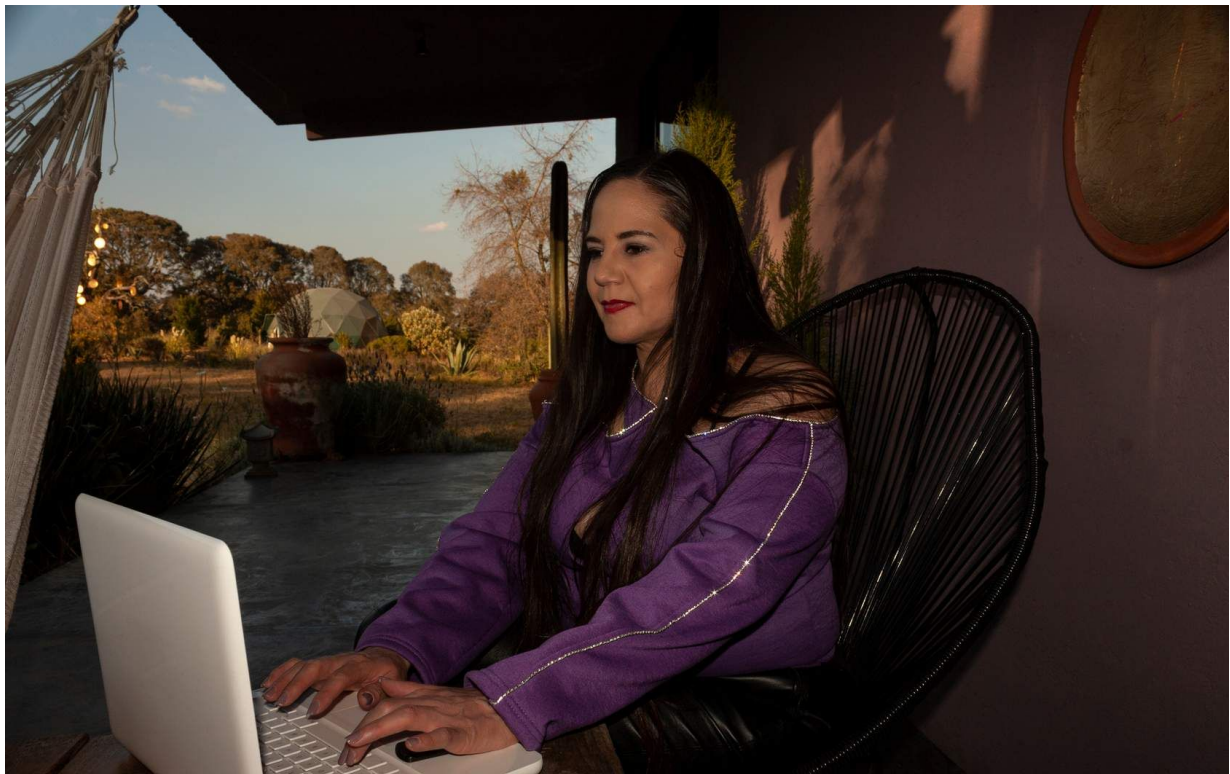
**Technical Support** —

Identify people with technical knowledge to support you before and during the online meeting or event. Conducting virtual meetings can be severely impacted by technical hitches, which could leave your engagement ineffective. If not resolved quickly, participants may not be able to access the event or will drop out.



A **challenge** for online engagement is that not everyone has access to it, and therefore using online approaches alone can exclude certain groups of people from engagement.

**CONTINUE**



**Running a CEI online event – advance planning**

**Identify platform**

Start by identifying an online platform that allows interactivity.

### **Invitations**

Find an appropriate way of contacting and inviting people to join in. For example, this could be through email, SMS, a phone call or another method.

### **Check connectivity**

If there are documents to be shared or videos to be played, join the meeting/event early to ensure that everything is working well. Note that the best laid plans can sometimes fail. When reliable electricity cannot be guaranteed, ensure that you charge your devices (for example, laptop) well before the event. You can also consider having alternative hosts in place in case of internet connectivity issues.

### **Plan engagement**

As participants join, engage them through interesting exercises; for example, asking participants to introduce themselves on the [chat function](#).

### **Instructions**

Provide instructions and agreed ways of working online before and during the meeting, and as the host, ensure that participants observe [online etiquette](#) (rules of behaviour for communicating using internet technology).

### **Breakout sessions**

Where [breakout sessions](#) are planned, ensure the distribution of the meeting participants and session facilitators into groups has been pre-organised. Provide participants and/or facilitators with instructions for what the task is once they are in the breakout

sessions, especially as the host will be unable to attend all breakout sessions.

## **Running a CEI online event - interactivity**

*Select the 'start' button followed by the right arrows to navigate through the slides.*







Use **online polls** to keep engagement as interactive as possible. Polls are an excellent way of gaining immediate feedback on topics and the proceedings of the meeting/event.



It is important to have a **team supporting** the online event to help manage activities, such as polling and breakouts, whilst others focus on the agenda and raise hand or chat functions.



Outside the breakout sessions, hosts can ensure everyone has the chance to contribute by inviting individuals to speak who have not yet had the opportunity.



Ultimately, try and make the meeting or event as much fun as possible using the available online tools for meetings, to reduce online fatigue.



Allow time for people to have breaks.

**Other factors to consider**



### **Functionality**

In selecting an online platform to work with, consider the meeting activities. For instance, will you be streaming videos, or use only simple PowerPoint presentations? Online platforms have a range of different functions, therefore doing a little research to get the correct one for the needs of your meeting will help in ensuring you have a smooth online (virtual) experience.

### **Prior information about technology requirements for participants**

Most tools work on a computer, smart phone or tablet. It is important to send information to participants early in case there are settings on their computers, or other technology, that they need to change in order

to take part in the online meeting. For example, to be able to join an online meeting, participants may need to ensure a specific app is installed on the device they are using to attend the meeting. However, many online platforms also allow participants to join using an URL (website) via their internet browser.







### **Limitations of free versions**

Most tools have a corporate (paid for) or a free version. The free versions have fewer capabilities or functionalities and have time limits on the length of the online meeting sessions (which may not be long enough for your intended meeting period).

### **Potential online platforms for CEI events**

- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams
- Blackboard Collaborate
- Google Meet

Versions of these are available free or, to access advanced features, a monthly subscription. We recommend that you explore these platforms (and maybe others) to decide which one best suits your needs.

## **Social media platforms for CEI**



Social media platforms such as Facebook (FB), Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp and X (Twitter), have capabilities for hosting interactive sessions with other users.

**FB**, as it is commonly referred to, allows for live streaming of events, where audiences can interact with event organisers through chat and

messaging functions.

**X** has recently started 'Spaces', a function that enables organisers to host discussion sessions. Social media influencers, brands, government institutions such as Ministries of Health, and international bodies such as WHO, have all used 'Spaces' to interact with audiences to discuss pertinent matters, such as the case of COVID-19 in the recent past.

A guide to using social media for engagement can be found in Further resources in Lesson 10: Summary.

**CONTINUE**

## **Ethical considerations for online engagement**

- **Protection of personal data:** The main area of ethical consideration for online engagement is protection of personal data. In order to participate in online meetings and events, there needs to be some form of identification. This usually means that individuals are required to provide registration information including a name (or nickname).

- **Misuse of personal data:** There are concerns that some online applications collect personal information and use this for sales and marketing/advertising/promotions.
- **Lack of anonymity:** Controlling participant behaviour and confidentiality in an online event is challenging. While participants might be given ground rules for such events, there is no guarantee that those rules are fully followed. For example, participants could take [screenshots](#) and share these images elsewhere online, without consent, thereby revealing information about other attendees without their permission.
- **Unwanted attendees:** Links to meetings can easily be shared and so access to meetings can be challenging to control and unwanted intruders could join in.
- **Access and exclusion:** As there are groups that are unable to access online events, CEI activities and research that rely solely on online engagement risk 'locking out the voices' of the most vulnerable from health research discourse. This can lead to further marginalisation of community groups whose voices have not been heard. Due to these groups being unable to access online engagement for CEI, the

researchers may choose to use research practices which could potentially put such groups at risk of harm or increase their vulnerability.



### **Case example - Kenya**

During the COVID-19 (partial) lockdowns in Kenya, a research institution opted to use WhatsApp as a platform for engaging with their Community Advisory Board (CAB). However, in a group of about 225 CAB members, only about a quarter had smartphones with WhatsApp capabilities, preventing most of the CAB members from participating in

discussions. Consequently, a decision was made to revert to in-person meetings, while observing COVID-19 prevention measures.

**CONTINUE**

## **Summary of online CEI**

- The COVID-19 pandemic showed that people can still interact effectively via online platforms.
- Before an event, you need to learn about the available online platforms and determine which one will be best for the type of event and invited participants.
- Whilst using online platforms, care must be taken to ensure that such activities do not further marginalise the most vulnerable who may not have such facilities readily available.

**CONTINUE**

# CEI approaches and methods - challenges

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In this section, we will discuss the challenges you may face when implementing CEI approaches and methods, and how to address them.

## **Challenges and ways to address them**

In this module, we have seen that different approaches and methods can be used to address different objectives in engagement. While some 'wide' engagement methods are more appropriate for raising public awareness of research, 'deeper' approaches may be more suited for incorporating community views into the way research is planned or implemented. As you encountered in Module 1: Understanding CEI in Health Research, CEI has challenges, and no approach or method is perfect.

Some challenges and ways to address them are presented below.

*Select the 'start' button, followed by the right arrow to navigate through the slides.*

## **Varying expectations**

**CEI can raise varying expectations among community members.**

Researchers and engagement teams should communicate very clearly about what the work/project can and can't deliver. This includes stating very clearly - from the first meeting - what the benefits will and will not be.

One approach might be to collect expectations from participants at every engagement meeting, and ensure that you go over them one by one, stating which ones can be tackled, and which ones cannot. For those that cannot be tackled, provide further information, for instance referrals to appropriate organisations.

For example: a participant in a CEI event says they expect to get free medical aid for entire family if one of them joins a clinical trial. CEI team/Researcher should explain clearly why this may not be possible.



## Misrepresentation

**CEI may lead to misrepresentation of community views. For example, a Community Advisory Board (CAB) may not represent the views of all minority groups involved.**

It is important to acknowledge that CAB members may not adequately represent views of other community members/groups. As many groups should be involved in CEI activities as possible to try to capture varying opinions. If this is not possible, the views shared by CAB members, or one group, should be taken as the views of just those individuals, rather than a representation of an entire community.

## 'Depth or 'width' of engagement

### **How can CEI practitioners know when they have engaged 'wide' or 'deep' enough?**

Ideally, a community engagement strategy will combine wide engagement, such as raising awareness of research, with deep engagement, such as regular CAB meetings to develop consent forms or understand community concerns. Appropriate activities with suitable audiences or groups must be selected or designed to balance these goals. Changes can be made to the approaches to ensure that they meet the goals.

## Tensions

**Tensions can arise from CEI activities when community members or stakeholders decide that a research study cannot go ahead in their local area.**

Managing tensions and power dynamics requires skilled facilitation. At times, CEI practitioners need to draw on others to manage tensions. It is important to identify where tensions are coming from, and try and resolve these with support from other gatekeepers. Tensions could arise from:

- previous unpleasant experiences with research;
- previous inappropriate research staff behaviour;
- perceptions of imposing 'foreigners' (research staff not drawn from local community) in the community.

Identifying and resolving underlying concerns can help minimise tensions.

Where a community refuses outright to have a research project implemented in their population, it is usually advisable, where feasible, to respect these wishes.

## Short-term engagement

**Short-term CEI, limited to the start of a research project, can leave community members disappointed or feeling neglected. The same is true when researchers fail to engage community members with their research findings.**

Planning engagement activities throughout a research project - from planning to implementation and dissemination - might minimise the risk of community members being ignored at different research stages.

Setting up systems (e.g. Study engagement support committees) can help ensure there are regular meetings held to discuss engagement gaps. CEI teams can set up periodic (e.g. twice a year) events where scientists get to share study findings with communities and stakeholders.

## Power dynamics

**Power dynamics within engagement activities can prevent some people from expressing their views.**

Skilled engagement facilitators use a range of ways to minimise the impact of power dynamics:

- Before any activities or meetings, CEI practitioners should try to anticipate who in the meeting is likely to be a 'powerful' participant, and who is likely to have less power. This can be done through drawing a power/interest matrix when undertaking stakeholder mapping (see Lesson 3: Whom to engage and involve in Module 2).
- Setting ground rules in engagement events (for example, everyone has the right to speak and be listened to).
- Skilled facilitators can encourage 'loud' participants to give opportunities for 'quieter' participants to share their views.
- Sometimes it can help to split large groups into separate smaller groups to allow free sharing of views.

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## Community misrepresentation

Read the statements below. Which would you avoid doing to make sure that your CAB consultation does not misrepresent the

community?

*Select all you think are correct and when ready, select 'submit'.*

Try to ensure that your CAB has a diverse mix of members to represent as many groups in the community as possible

Make sure that everyone has a chance to share their views during meetings – this may mean asking some members to allow others to speak

Your CAB should only have community leaders who are women

Have additional meetings with community members who are not CAB members

undo selection

submit

**CONTINUE**

**How will you identify any CEI challenges?**

Select each of the tabs from left to right to learn more.

REVIEW AND REFLECT

USE EXPERTISE

DOCUMENT AND EVALUATE

**Making to time to review and reflect** - How can we tell when our CEI approach or method is working or not? This is a common challenge in CEI activity implementation. With your team, take time to reflect on the objectives for your engagement activity. If you feel that you are not achieving your objectives, discuss with your team how you can modify and improve activities.



REVIEW AND REFLECT

USE EXPERTISE

DOCUMENT AND EVALUATE

**Bringing in expertise** - Where possible, engagement teams can link up with social scientists who can provide support with ensuring that there is a continuous loop of implementing, learning, evaluating and making changes where appropriate. (Mumba *et al.*, 2022)



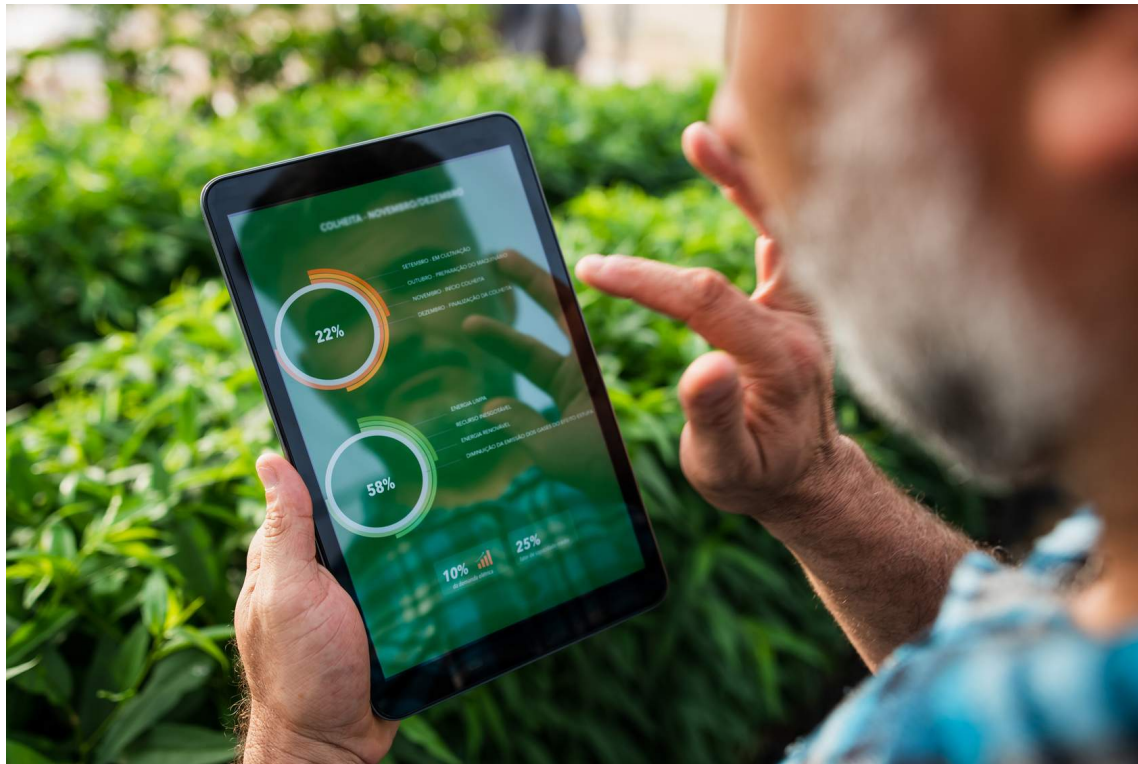
REVIEW AND REFLECT

USE EXPERTISE

DOCUMENT AND EVALUATE

**Carefully document and evaluate your engagement** - Module 7:  
Evaluation of CEI explores the evaluation of CEI in detail.





## Summary of key challenges

Some important challenges to keep in mind include:

- Managing power dynamics between researchers and communities, within research teams (such as between engagement staff and principle investigators), or even among community members themselves.
- CEI is context specific and requires careful analysis of stakeholders, cultures and socio-economic considerations to ensure that engagement approaches are effective.

- Setting appropriate engagement objectives is important to promote effective and outcome-based engagement activities.
- Contexts are not static: they change, sometimes unexpectedly. CEI therefore needs to be iterative and flexible.

**CONTINUE**

# Summary

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In this module, we have:

- Explored different CEI approaches and methods and looked at what to consider when making a choice.

- Established that it is important to think about your specific context, to identify the CEI aims, and to think carefully about power dynamics between local communities, researchers and CEI teams.
- Shared case studies of actual engagement approaches currently in use, such as working with community advisory boards/groups and engaging school students.
- Discussed other CEI methods, including Participatory Action Research, open days, and deliberative consultations.
- Looked at online engagement approaches, which gained significant use during the COVID-19 pandemic where physical meetings or events became restricted.
- Considered the ethical issues that arise when using online events platforms, such as protecting attendees personal data, including options for anonymity where necessary, and ensuring that the most vulnerable are not further marginalised through lack of access.

**CONTINUE**

## Further Resources

### CEI approaches and methods

#### Journal article

Brunton, G. et al. (2017) 'Narratives of community engagement: a systematic review-derived conceptual framework for public health interventions', *BMC Public Health*, 17(1), 944.

**BRUNTON ET AL. 20...**

#### Handbook

CE4AMR: The One Health Approach (2021) *The Handbook of Community Engagement for Antimicrobial Resistance*. Leeds: University of Leeds.

**CE4AMR 2021**

#### Web page

KEMRI-Wellcome Trust (2022) *Schools Engagement Programme (SEP)*.

**KEMRI 2022**

#### Journal article

Marsh, V. et al. (2008) 'Beginning community engagement at a busy biomedical research programme: Experiences from the KEMRI CGMRC-Wellcome Trust Research Programme, Kilifi, Kenya', *Social Science & Medicine*, 67(5), pp. 721–733.

MARSH ET AL. 2008

### Resource guide

Nelson, E. (2019) *A Resource Guide for Community Engagement and Involvement in Global Health Research*. NIHR.

NELSON 2019

## Online CEI

### Resource guide

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) (2018) *What Works guide: Engaging the public through social media*. Bristol: NCCPE.

NCCPE 2018

### Resource guide

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) (2020) *Online Engagement: A guide to creating and running virtual meetings and events*.

NCCPE 2020

## References

All references for the module are available to download below.

*Select the grey box to download.*

 **Reference list\_Module 5.pdf**  
947.4 KB 

**CONTINUE**

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all who have been involved in creating the module content, its design and its testing. Thank you also to those who have kindly supplied images for use in this module and throughout the course.

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**CONTINUE**

## **Congratulations!**

You have now completed this module. Please select the link below to be taken to the end of module quiz.

[Module 5 Quiz: Approaches and Methods for CEI](#)