

# **Data collection for Health Care Decision making: can the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) add value?**

Orest Sebastian Masue<sup>1</sup>, Mackfallen G. Anasel<sup>2</sup> & Idda Lyatonga Swai<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Public Administration and Management, Department of Public Service and Human Resource Management –Mzumbe University, Morogoro, Tanzania*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Public Administration and Management, Department of Health Systems Management – Mzumbe University, Morogoro, Tanzania*

<sup>3</sup>*School of Public Administration and Management, Department of Local Government Management – Mzumbe University, Morogoro, Tanzania*

## **ABSTRACT**

Planning for health care services requires collection of valid and reliable data which can be organized in meaningful form (information) upon which decisions about healthcare service provision can be made. The validity and reliability of data can be judged on the basis of quality expressed in terms of accuracy, timeliness and accessibility by users. The quest for health care data quality has in recent years become an important issue not only because of its importance in enhancing high standards of health care services, but also because of its implications for the governments' decisions on budget allocation for health care services. Drawing on the PAR literature, social science research methodology and health care planning, this paper addresses three things: First, it reviews literature on the importance of data to healthcare decision making by showing the link between data and information for decision making; second, it makes a comparison between the traditional methods of collecting data and the PAR methods; and third demonstrating the comparative advantage of the latter in the collection of data for healthcare decision making. Research should create knowledge that is useful and meaningful to the people it is meant for. That is, it should recognize that knowledge is the meaning that people attribute to their experiences. Evidence from the literature has demonstrated adequacy of PAR methodology in ensuring that the affected parties get opportunity to analyze their own situation and develop appropriate solutions to the challenges that they face. The paper thus concludes that PAR can add value to health care planning by enhancing the sense of ownership and commitment by local community members.

**Key words:** PAR, health care, planning, decision making