



# Expanding Our Understanding of Evidence for Meaningful Participation

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This report was commissioned by Porticus and produced in partnership with Closer Than You Think Collective. It was co-authored by Trimita Chakma, Georgia Booth, and Ruby Johnson, experienced practitioners and researchers in the field of participatory approaches and social change. The report was conceptualized, developed and written in close collaboration with the Porticus 360 Philanthropy team. To strengthen the framing, the evidence review, the proposed assessment tools, and conclusions and recommendations, the final draft underwent peer review by five independent experts in participatory research, philanthropy, and feminist monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

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# Foreword



Dear reader,

It is my pleasure to present this study looking into the evidence for the effectiveness of meaningful participation. It is a product of our deep conviction that meaningful participation should be at the heart of all philanthropic practices. That is why participatory practices are central to our way of working. We see meaningful participation as the route to creating more impactful programmes; it is inherent to effective philanthropy. As this report states, “By prioritising meaningful participation, funders can transform not only the outcomes of their efforts but the very processes that define the meaning of philanthropy.”

At the same time, our vision demands that we go beyond assuming and examine impact critically, because we are accountable to those we seek to serve. In line with our goal to make proven contributions to positive impact, we base our work on credible and rigorous evidence. Good intentions are not good enough. After all, philanthropy is ultimately about effectively strengthening communities’ resilience so all people have ownership over their futures. Ideally, such evidence is built and used by those with lived experience who are driving their own change.

This report shows strong and convincing evidence that participation makes social interventions and philanthropic practices more effective. At the same time, this meta-analysis appears to be one of the first of its kind. We recognise the need for more research and evaluation, especially longitudinal and independently validated evidence, and are committed to contributing to this much-needed evidence base.

I sincerely hope this report inspires converts and sceptics alike. Those who were already convinced about participation’s effectiveness will now have documented proof to use in their advocacy efforts, calling for more participatory practices in philanthropy and social development interventions. And those who were on the fence will have a solid evidence base to address valid concerns about the need for participation to be effective to reach its transformative potential.

At Porticus, we believe in a continuous learning cycle. By sharing our insights, we hope others will benefit and build on our learnings. I invite you to learn with us by reading this report.

Best wishes,

Melanie Maas Geesteranus  
CEO Porticus

# Glossary

This glossary provides definitions for key terms, concepts, and jargon used throughout the report. The purpose of this glossary is to ensure clarity and a shared understanding of the terminology among readers from diverse backgrounds and levels of familiarity with participatory approaches.

**Effectiveness of participation:** The extent to which participatory approaches succeed in expanding decision-making power, leadership opportunities, and skill development of historically excluded communities to guide policies and interventions affecting them. “Effectiveness” is redefined in relation to lived realities through inclusive processes that elevate participants’ priorities.

**Epistemic Justice:** The fair treatment of individuals and groups in their capacity as knowledge holders, ensuring that they are not disadvantaged due to identity prejudice. It involves challenging dominant notions of credible evidence, valuing diverse forms of knowledge, and addressing the systematic credibility deficits faced by historically excluded communities. Achieving epistemic justice is crucial for creating inclusive spaces where excluded voices are heard, respected, and given due consideration in shaping decisions that affect their lives.

**Evidence:** Quality evidence combines standard research protocols with participatory practices that value diverse ways of knowing. This integration constructs accurate and multidimensional understandings rooted in people’s daily struggles. Quality evidence gathering applies consistent analytical methods while centring excluded voices and questioning biased assumptions. Determining what constitutes quality evidence requires accountability to affected communities along with examining systemic inequities that perpetuate exclusion. Overall, evidence carries the greatest meaning when indicators of progress and effectiveness are defined by the communities directly affected.

**Intersectionality:** A framework that recognises the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, gender, and ability, and how these overlapping identities create unique experiences of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation.

**Meaningful participation:** The proactive involvement of community members, particularly those from historically excluded groups, in guiding decisions, setting agendas, and distributing resources that impact their daily lives. Participation goes beyond mere consultation to ensure that these groups gain significantly more control over the processes and outcomes that affect them.

**Participatory grantmaking:** Funding practices where non-donors and affected stakeholders shape grantmaking strategies, processes, and decisions across the full range of functional areas.

**Participatory philanthropy:** An approach to philanthropy that involves engaging non-donor stakeholders, particularly those from excluded communities, in various aspects of the grantmaking process, such as strategy development, funds distribution, and evaluation. It encompasses a range of activities designed to redistribute power, control, and influence, fostering partnerships and shared decision-making between philanthropic organisations and the communities they serve.

**Practitioners:** Experienced professionals, activists, and partners who continually develop, apply and exchange knowledge on community self-determined methods for collaborative analysis, learning and solutions design in the philanthropic ecosystem.

**Stakeholders:** The full diversity of parties holding a vested interest in philanthropic funding decisions, encompassing grantee partners, community members impacted by programming, donors, and sector colleagues.

**Systemic change:** Fundamental shifts in the structures, policies, practices, and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality and injustice, often requiring sustained, collaborative efforts across multiple sectors and levels of society.



# Executive Summary

This report aims to expand our understanding of evidence in two key ways. First, it explores and consolidates existing evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of participatory approaches in contributing to social change efforts and transforming philanthropic practices. Second, it proposes a new tool for evaluating the quality of evidence in a more inclusive manner.

The report is structured into six key sections:

- 1. Introduction:** We introduce the background, research questions, scope and methods underpinning this inquiry into participation's effectiveness.
- 2. Conceptual Framing:** We discuss why participation matters and examine biases in dominant evidence paradigms, calling for pluralistic conceptions that value community knowledge.
- 3. Review of Current Evidence:** We summarise existing evidence on how participation is enabling social change and making philanthropy more inclusive. We spotlight significant gaps in the evidence that need further investigation over time.
- 4. Evidence Quality Rubric:** We introduce the *Evidence Quality Rubric* – designed to assess the quality of evidence on the effectiveness of participation. The Rubric expands conventional standards of evidence with inclusion standards. Prevailing conceptions have traditionally focused on narrow elite perspectives, which have marginalised community knowledge. Therefore, we argue that expanded notions of evidence quality are imperative. We demonstrate the application of the Rubric by rating sample evidence across contexts of social change efforts and philanthropic practices. This reveals strengths and gaps in the existing evidence base.
- 5. Inclusive Evidence Guidelines:** To address limitations revealed via the Rubric application, we offer *Inclusive Evidence Guidelines* to guide community-grounded research approaches to gathering evidence.
- 6. Conclusion and Recommendations:** We argue for participatory paradigms that recognise community knowledge as expertise. We propose recommendations to reimagine evidence, resource participatory practices and research, and transform internal philanthropic practices.



*While there is a belief in the potential of participatory grantmaking to democratise philanthropy and transform power, the current evidence base needs to be strengthened to make such claims about its effectiveness.*

While participation has a deep history in community development and activism, momentum has grown over the past 15 years to adopt participatory approaches, especially in philanthropy. However, despite burgeoning interest, there has been limited sustained resourcing dedicated to building a robust knowledge base grounded in the expertise and experiences of affected communities themselves. Much existing literature focuses on making the case of why participation is important and documenting practice-based models rather than rigorously investigating the effectiveness of participation.

The research addresses three core questions:

1. Why does meaningful participation matter?
2. What should count as evidence of participation's contribution to transforming philanthropic practices and broader social change?
3. What gaps persist in the current evidence base on the effectiveness of meaningful participation?

To investigate these questions, we employed a mixed-methods approach, including:

- **Literature review:** Surveyed scholarship and theory on participation, inclusive knowledge, and historical exclusion.
- **Case study analysis:** Examined participation's effectiveness using the tool we have developed across 20 cases of social change efforts and philanthropic practices.
- **Internal workshops:** Gathered insights from nine Porticus grantmaking team members.
- **External interviews:** Consulted seven recognised experts/ leaders in participatory philanthropy
- **Community Workshops:** Documented experiences of Porticus partners in participatory processes.
- **Peer review:** Strengthened analysis based on feedback from five experts/ leaders in participatory practice and philanthropy.

Our review revealed a shift towards a values-centred approach in philanthropic practices that recognise the inherent value of participation for involved communities. While there is a belief in the potential of participatory grantmaking to democratise philanthropy and transform power, the current evidence base needs to be strengthened to bolster such claims about its effectiveness. We suggest the need for more research in applications of participatory methods, the formal publication and wider distribution of pilot programs, and evaluations of participatory grantmaking. These are needed to build a stronger evidence base grounded in community realities and advance participatory practices in the field.

The discussion within the report highlights two key aspects of expanding our understanding of evidence:

First, we consolidated existing evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of participatory approaches. We mapped this evidence to identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. While our mapping is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive, and we acknowledge that there may be additional relevant evidence not captured in this report.

Key findings from this mapping exercise revealed the following:

- Evidence strongly demonstrates the multifaceted impacts of participation, such as improved service delivery, policy responsiveness, and community power.
- Case studies highlight the transformative potential of participatory approaches in philanthropy, including shifts in power dynamics, increased community ownership, and more equitable resource distribution.
- However, gaps persist in understanding the long-term, systemic effects of participatory approaches and the specific dynamics of participatory philanthropy. There is a need for more rigorous, longitudinal, and independently validated research on participation's effectiveness.

Second, by proposing a new tool for evaluating evidence in a more inclusive manner, we argue that the conventional standards of what constitutes “quality evidence” often privilege certain forms of knowledge while marginalising others, such as the perspectives and lived experiences of communities most affected by social issues. To address this, we propose an expanded conception of evidence that integrates both conventional research standards and inclusive, community-centred processes. We developed the **Evidence Quality Rubric**, a tool that balances conventional research standards with inclusion factors, such as representation, power analysis, and bias interrogation, which can be applied to assess the quality of existing evidence.

The Evidence Quality Rubric, applied to 20 case studies, reveals that solely using conventional standards of triangulation, methodology, and validation provides an incomplete assessment of evidence quality in participatory practices. These conventional standards exhibit a wide range of quality in the case studies, from limited to excellent. However, relying only on conventional standards neglects elements captured by the inclusion standards, such as representation, power dynamics, and bias. These are essential for evaluating participatory approaches involving excluded communities.

For instance, a blog post by a refugee leader (case study #6) scored low on conventional standards due to a lack of formal methodology, but excelled on inclusion by directly amplifying refugee voices and examining power dynamics. Conversely, even research considered strong by conventional standards, such as a monitoring report on a migration project (case study #13), had limitations in representing stakeholder perspectives and analysing power when assessed through an inclusion lens. Notably, some studies demonstrated high quality across both sets of standards. A meta-synthesis of evaluations of refugee-

led organisations (case study #10) and an evaluation of a youth participatory grantmaking pilot (case study #19) employed rigorous methodologies while also centring marginalised voices and critically examining power and bias. Both examples showcase that the inclusion standards contribute to a more comprehensive, nuanced, and context-sensitive evaluation of the evidence alongside conventional standards. This expanded assessment framework is essential for recognising the unique value and challenges of participatory approaches and ensuring that the experiences and perspectives of excluded communities are adequately considered in the evaluation of evidence quality.

While the Evidence Quality Rubric has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of various case studies in terms of conventional and inclusion standards, it is clear that a more structured approach is necessary to generate inclusive evidence that also meets the basic conventional standards.

In response, we propose the Inclusive Evidence Guidelines to provide practical guidance for participatory evidence gathering that reflects the priorities of affected communities. These guidelines emphasise principles such as centring participant perspectives, co-designing locally relevant methods, conducting systematic analysis, applying intersectional lenses, and ensuring accountability to communities.

Overall, we emphasise the importance of documenting participation not just to meet donor demands but to facilitate learning and promote a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness of participation in contributing to our missions. The aim is to enhance transparency, fairness, and effectiveness in philanthropic practices through documented evidence.

Evidence Quality Rubric	Inclusive Evidence Guidelines
<p>The Rubric offers comprehensive guidance for assessing diverse forms of evidence related to meaningful participation. It balances basic conventional research standards with inclusion factors of representation, power dynamics, and bias interrogation when evaluating evidence.</p>	<p>The Guidelines provides practical guidance to foster just, equitable evidence gathering processes centred on affected communities’ priorities and perspectives.</p> <p>It includes five guiding principles to prompt reflection on voice, power, culture, knowledge forms, and accountability to communities when designing participatory documentation approaches.</p>



# Recommendations for Practitioners and Funders

Based on what we have found and learned during this research process, in this final section we propose recommendations for funders and practitioners who are committed to supporting a flourishing ecosystem of practice, knowledge, and learning on participation and, ultimately, contributing to deeper social change. These recommendations centre around three premises:

## 1. Reimagine evidence

- **Commit to questioning dominant evidence paradigms.** Critically re-examine standards and ingrained biases that dismiss community knowledge as less credible. Narrow conceptions of expertise perpetuate exclusion.
- **Centre excluded community perspectives and ways of knowing.** Listen deeply and amplify the voices of those historically excluded. Fully value lived experience alongside conventional academic research. Compensate community members for their expertise.
- **Foster inclusive collective sensemaking and documentation.** Nurture cross-sectoral collective learning spaces for funders, activists and communities to jointly build an understanding of participatory processes through collaborative analysis.
- **Apply participatory principles in assessments.** Prioritise community-defined indicators of success rather than institutional metrics. Progress requires addressing power imbalances.

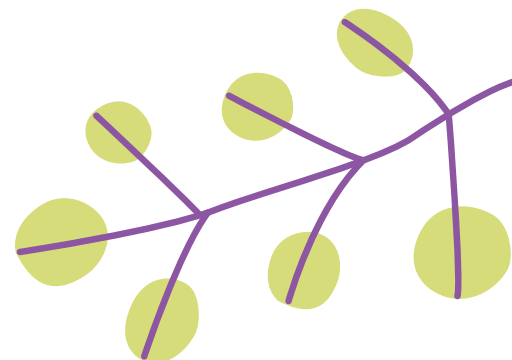
## 2. Resource participatory practices and research

- **Provide flexible, long-term core funding to partners who are already embracing participatory practices or are open to doing so.** Flexible funding enables partner communities to implement change on timelines they determine to be meaningful. Multi-year support recognises that participatory processes move at a community-defined pace requiring sustained backing across years, not pressurised timeframes dictated by institutional metrics. Ensure budgetary space for truly redistributive work rather than sparse project-specific grants.

- **Support participatory research that reshapes knowledge hierarchies.** Support decentralised participatory research using unconventional, collaborative community-designed methods that reframe notions of evidence and rigour. Comprehensively disseminate lessons through cross-institutional and inter-sector collaboration recalibrating deeply ingrained knowledge asymmetries. Promote sustainable infrastructures to reduce community burden.
- **Create the conditions for participatory approaches to thrive.** Expand the adoption of participatory practices sector-wide through exchanges and peer learning. Welcome failures as opportunities for ongoing evolution. Encourage eagerness for community-designed solutions.

## 3. Transform internal philanthropic practices

- **Embed participatory practices within philanthropic institutions** from governance and leadership to grantmaking and operational protocols, using established tools such as Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool ([APPT](#)) or the [Weaving a Collective Tapestry: A Funders' Toolkit](#). Be transparent and realistic about your limitations but clear on your political commitment. Facilitate equitable partnerships, agenda co-design, and shared governance with communities themselves in strategy development, funding decisions, and progress assessment.
- **Connect and learn with networks of peer funders and practitioners who are embracing accountability to communities** through participatory philanthropy and collective movement building for systemic change. Actively engage with existing communities focused on shifting power, such as the Participatory Grantmaking Community of Practice, #ShiftthePower Group, and Trust-Based Philanthropy. Convene funders who are resourcing participation to exchange insights and build shared understanding. Continually refine internal and collective approaches in response to critiques from communities themselves as key partners in equitable collaboration.



# 1. Introduction



# Background

In an era marked by unprecedented global challenges and political, ecological, social, economic crises from Sudan, to Congo, to Myanmar to Palestine, the need for systemic change is apparent. These crises have laid bare the limitations and failures of existing systems to adequately address complex global issues, underscoring the urgency for both reform to the current system and support for recreating alternatives, including innovative approaches to governance, decision-making, and community engagement. It is within this context of global upheaval and the quest for more resilient, accountable and equitable systems that we present this report to make a compelling case for the transformative power of participation. While only offering a thread in a complex weave of responses to the current moment, embracing participatory approaches is part of reimagining and rebuilding the foundational structures of our societies to be more inclusive, responsive, and just.

*Weaving a Collective Tapestry: A Funder's Toolkit on Child and Youth Participation*<sup>1</sup> collated existing literature and practice-based experiences to demonstrate the value of meaningful participation of young people in participatory philanthropy. The toolkit shares concrete examples and guidance to support funders in effectively fostering child and youth engagement in shaping decisions that impact their lives. A key section of the toolkit focused on making the case for why funders should prioritise participatory approaches with children and youth. This included sharing evidence of positive impacts and changes at multiple levels when young people have agency in influencing policies, programs, and resource allocations affecting them. While the Funder's Toolkit synthesised examples of meaningful youth participation, it represented only a portion of participatory approaches that enable communities to shape decisions affecting them.

We understand meaningful participation and proactive involvement of community members, particularly those from historically excluded groups, in guiding decisions, setting agendas, and distributing resources that impact their daily lives and visions for progress. It goes beyond mere consultation to ensure that these groups gain significantly more control over the processes and outcomes that affect them. Meaningful participation is distinguished by its capacity to ensure that previously excluded voices now lead decision-making processes. Standards for quality meaningful participation include centring community narratives, enabling community-led co-design, conducting analysis grounded in marginalisation, applying intersectional lenses, and ensuring accountability to communities.

In examining participatory approaches, we encountered a tension between funders asking for concrete evidence to support and fund participatory methods and the communities questioning traditional concepts of credible evidence, particularly those who have been historically excluded. Funders exhibit diverse attitudes, experiences, and needs regarding participatory practices. Some are deeply committed to participation, others see its value but require evidence to advocate internally, and some remain sceptical. Occasionally, funders may leverage the absence of conventional evidence to discredit participation, favouring approaches that confirm their preconceptions.<sup>2</sup> However, our literature review and discussions with participatory philanthropy practitioners indicate a shift toward a values-centred approach, recognizing the qualitative benefits of participation. Our research underscores the importance of embracing both inclusive qualitative insights and established validation procedures. We aim to expand the sector's understanding of effectiveness by integrating inclusive and evidence-based practices.

1. Booth, Georgia, and Ruby Johnson. 2022. *Weaving a Collective Tapestry*. Elevate Children Funder's Group. <https://elevatechildren.org/publications-cyptoolkit>
2. Hewlett Foundation. 2021. *How Funders Seek and Use Knowledge to Influence Philanthropic Practice*. June 2021. <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Funders-Seek-Knowledge-Report.pdf>

The research aims to explore the reasons why funders should value meaningful participation, determine what constitutes relevant evidence of participation's effectiveness, and identify gaps in understanding. By mapping the literature and insights from facilitators and practitioners of participatory philanthropy,<sup>3</sup> we illuminate the current state of evidence and areas where gaps in understanding persist, rather than offering definitive conclusions on effectiveness.

We intend to foster momentum for participatory practices that prioritise community knowledge and agency, while also addressing the persistent tensions between the demand for proof and the inherent value of participation. Additionally, we propose conceptual tools relevant to the growing field of participatory philanthropy, aimed at integrating meaningful participation across key philanthropic functions to transform institutional culture, practices and resource distributions.

## Scope and Methodology

### Research Questions

This research aimed to investigate the following core questions:

1. Why does participation matter?
2. What should count as evidence of participation's contribution to transforming philanthropic practices and broader social change?
3. What gaps persist in the current evidence base on the effectiveness of meaningful participation?

Additional subsidiary questions were integrated into the research methods and tools, including:

- How do communities and practitioners of participatory philanthropy define, document and track evidence of meaningful participation and its impacts themselves?
- What criteria beyond commonly understood benchmarks are needed to evaluate quality participatory processes (e.g. systems and power analysis)?
- What diverse forms and sources of knowledge should be considered?

### Research Methods

- To explore the core research questions, the research process involved the following:

**Literature Review:** The research began by undertaking an inductive literature review surveying journal articles and grey literature on participation, inclusive evidence, and marginalised knowledge systems as well as theoretical frameworks on decolonising evidence paradigms that exclude historically marginalised worldviews. The literature synthesis revealed the need for new pluralistic frameworks embracing rigorous data gathering within participatory processes that elevate lived realities.

**Case Study Analysis:** From the literature grounding, the next phase involved case study analysis examining a total of 20 case studies on the effectiveness of participation in social change efforts and participatory philanthropy. 14 of the case studies centred on the effectiveness of participation in enabling communities to shape social change decisions. Six of the case studies centred on the effectiveness of participation in philanthropic practices.

The 16 case studies on social change efforts were categorised using Porticus' core priority themes and strategies in areas like service delivery, capacity building, and infrastructure development (full definitions in Annex A). These cases were selected and compiled emphasising diversity of thematics by anchoring in the different Porticus priority themes including - Building Future Generations: whole child development into education systems; Strengthening our Societies: Criminal justice and People on the move; Caring for the earth: Fair transition; and Fostering Vital Faith Communities: Vital catholic thought and building a vital church and Child protection. Furthermore, the cases included varied evidence sources ranging from academic studies to organisational reports.

To build on work across the sector, this research draws on the Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool (AAPPT), developed by Katy Love and Diana Samarasan. The AAPPT outlines a spectrum from no or limited participation, aligning with standards for meaningful participation centred on community knowledge and agency. No participation refers to contexts where impacted groups have no role in decisions concentrated solely within foundations lacking transparency.

3. As suggested in the [Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool \(AAPPT\)](#), we adopt the definition of participatory philanthropy as encompassing "a range of activities, like strategy or evaluation, to engage stakeholders or non-donors across the grantmaking cycle." Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. 2020. "Trust-Based Philanthropy and Participatory Philanthropy." In *The Stanford PACS Guide to Effective Philanthropy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.

Full participation denotes communities directly leading agendas, policymaking, resource allocation and success indicators in equitable partnership with funders, which demonstrates substantially redistributed power. The APPT spectrum provides a rubric for assessing participatory practice depth across functional areas from operations to grantmaking based on the extent of community control and power sharing.

The six philanthropic cases were rated along APPT's participation spectrum. The six case studies on philanthropic practices were categorised by the following functional areas as outlined in the APPT.<sup>4</sup>

1. Governance & Leadership (decision-making and agenda-setting)
2. Operations & staffing (team make-up and culture)
3. Grantmaking (grant strategy and decision-making)
4. Grant administration (eligibility criteria and due diligence)
5. Communications (strategy and practices)
6. Finances (budget and investments)
7. Fundraising (ethics and decision-making)
8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (determination of metrics and reporting procedures)

All 20 case studies across contexts underwent comparative rating on the Evidence Quality Rubric described in the next section—a tool we developed as part of this research for assessing dimensions like methodology rigour, representation, and power dynamics.

**Interviews:** We conducted semi-structured interviews with seven funder and expert practitioners recognised as experienced leaders in designing and operationalising participatory practices across the sector and within their institutions.<sup>5</sup> Interview questions prompted reflections on defining and tracking meaningful participation, thoughts on effectiveness metrics beyond institutional measures, and discussions about observed impacts based on their lived programmatic realities.

Interview transcripts underwent thematic analysis that identified the need to reframe the concept of evidence to capture both informal qualitative insights and traditional validation procedures.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Focus group discussions gathered insights from Porticus team members and grantee partners. Kickoff workshops with nine Porticus staff provided us with an opportunity to discuss goals, approaches, and institutional applications.<sup>6</sup> Separately, two community workshops provided space for Porticus partners and grantees to share experiences of meaningful participation.

**Peer Review:** The final draft report underwent an initial review by the Porticus team followed by peer review by five external experts in participatory research, philanthropy strategy, and feminist monitoring, evaluation and learning. Reviewer feedback strengthened the framing, tools, analysis and recommendations by targeting increased clarity, persuasiveness and actionability.

This combination of literature review, internal engagement, external interviews, and community workshops enabled triangulation of findings across diverse perspectives.

4. We adopted the functional areas from the Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool (APPT). See <https://www.advancingparticipation.com/monitoring-evaluating-learning>

5. The interviewees were: Mary Abdo - CEI (Centre for Evidence and Implementation) Global, Bertha Sanchez - Calala, Paige Andrew - FRIDA | TheYoung Feminist Fund, Katherine Gilmour - Global Fund for Children, Rosa Longhurst - Open Society Foundation and individual practitioners Katy Love and Diana Samarasan.

6. The participants from Porticus were: Dennis Arends, Rodrigo Bustamante, Marat Yu, Nathan Koblinz, Camila Jerico Daminello, Steffen Eikenbusch, Cica Scarpi, Douglas Calixto, Lucie Corman.

# 2. Conceptual Framing



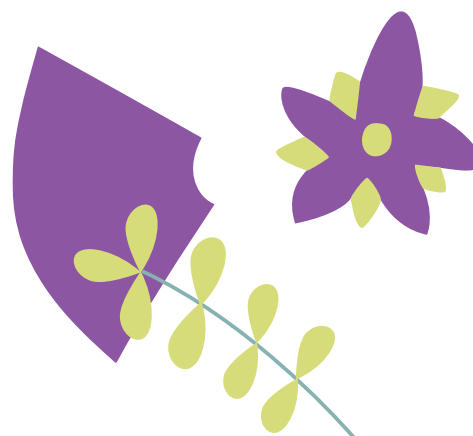
# Why Should We Care About Participation?

The undeniable success of participatory approaches beyond the philanthropy sector underscores the profound impact of collective action and engagement in driving systemic change. Historical social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, and the global women's movement against violence and discrimination have all harnessed the power of participation through social movements to challenge and dismantle entrenched systems of oppression.<sup>7</sup> By self-organising excluded communities to spearhead change, these movements have not only achieved significant legislative and societal reforms but have also reaffirmed the foundational principles of democracy itself. This precedent across sectors demonstrates participation's potential to catalyse systemic change rooted in solidarity.

Across sectors, from community development to public administration, the principle of involving historically excluded individuals in guiding decisions and resource allocations has proven transformative.<sup>8</sup> Despite differing terminologies, common principles across these domains advocate for historically excluded individuals to determine agendas, policies, and resource allocations impacting their lives. This meaningful participation thus transcends token inclusion by redistributing decision-making and leadership influence to affected communities.

Foundational literature on participation provides frameworks for analysing the depth of community engagement and power distribution. Jules Pretty's typology, for instance, provides a spectrum for assessing engagement depth by differentiating levels of participation from manipulative to self-mobilising.<sup>9</sup> Archon Fung's democracy cube model offers indicators for assessing authority and power distribution within participatory governance models.<sup>10</sup> Marisa Choguill's ladder further conceptualises and assesses the degree of community control over project decisions.<sup>11</sup> Recent work in the field expands on these models to argue for a relational assessment of participation based on equitable partnerships that foster solidarity and collective action.<sup>12</sup>

While it is important to gather evidence on the effectiveness of participatory approaches, we must also acknowledge the extensive historical evidence demonstrating that community-centred processes can deliver systemic change through collective power and shared struggle. The need for data-driven evidence should not overshadow the potential benefits of participatory approaches.



7. Htun, Mala, and Francesca R. Jensenius. 2020. "Fighting Violence against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead." *Daedalus* 149 (1): 144–59. [https://doi.org/10.1162/daed\\_a\\_01779](https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01779).
8. Mansuri, Ghazala; Rao, Vijayendra. 2013. *Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?* Policy Research Report. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/11859>.
9. Pretty, Jules N. 1995. "Participatory Learning for Sustainable Agriculture." *World Development* 23 (8): 1247–63. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(95\)00046-F](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(95)00046-F).
10. Fung, Archon. 2006. "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance." *Public Administration Review* 66 (s1): 66–75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00667.x>.
11. Choguill, Marisa B.Guaraldo. 1996. "A Ladder of Community Participation for Underdeveloped Countries." *Habitat International* 20 (3): 431–44. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-3975\(96\)00020-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-3975(96)00020-3).
12. Mansuri, Ghazala, and Vijayendra Rao. 2013. *Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?* Washington, D.C.: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/11859>.



As philanthropy faces calls to democratise, embracing meaningful participation constitutes an ethical mandate, not merely a strategic option.<sup>13</sup> Funders should care about participation because:

- Participation aligns with ideals of equity, justice and democracy to which many foundations aspire but struggle to implement within their own institutions. Participatory practices can help bridge the gap between philanthropic rhetoric and action when it comes to shifting power.<sup>14</sup>
- Participation generates rich insights and learning based on the realities of those affected. Participatory monitoring and evaluation also enhances our understanding of complex change.
- Participation enhances relevance, responsiveness and accountability to affected communities.
- Participation transforms institutions themselves. Inclusive processes change how decisions are made, rather than merely determining which decisions are made. This can profoundly shift organisational culture, practices and relationships with communities.

By prioritising meaningful participation, funders can transform not only the outcomes of their efforts but the very processes that define the meaning of philanthropy.

## What Counts as Evidence?

A nuanced exploration of the concept of evidence is necessary to develop a clear understanding of what qualifies as evidence. Feminist and Indigenous scholars have extensively critiqued how formalised academic research practices and associated conceptions of evidence have traditionally privileged certain forms of evidence while marginalising others, such as local, Indigenous, informal, and experiential knowledge.<sup>15</sup> For example, scholars have critiqued the dominance of positivist paradigms that have marginalised Indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, feminist and Indigenous scholars argue for developing more pluralistic, decolonial, participatory conceptions of evidence and knowledge production. Elaborating on this, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith emphasises that evidence should be grounded in the self-determination and lived experiences of Indigenous communities themselves.<sup>17</sup> Along the same lines, Margaret Kovach, an Indigenous academic from Canada, critiques the way positivism has marginalised Indigenous ways of knowing and advocates a conversational method as a beneficial, culturally-centred research framework.<sup>18</sup> She proposes embracing Indigenous methodologies such as storytelling as vital forms of evidence.<sup>19</sup>

Scholarship on epistemic injustice also provides critical framing for examining dominant notions of credible evidence that perpetuate marginalisation. Epistemic injustice refers to how individuals or groups are wronged in their capacity as knowledge holders, often due to

13. Reich, Rob. 2016. "Repugnant to the Whole Idea of Democracy? On the Role of Foundations in Democratic Societies." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 49 (03): 466–472. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096516000718>; Reich, Rob. 2018. *Just giving: Why philanthropy is failing democracy and how it can do better*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
14. Gibson, Cynthia. 2017. "Participatory Grantmaking: Has Its Time Come?" Ford Foundation. <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/stories/has-the-time-come-for-participatory-grantmaking/>
15. Parkhurst, Justin O. 2017. *The Politics of Evidence: From Evidence-Based Policy to the Good Governance of Evidence*. London: Routledge; Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2018. *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
16. Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Second edition. London: Zed Books; Althaus, Catherine. 2020. "Different Paradigms of Evidence and Knowledge: Recognising, Honouring, and Celebrating Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 79 (2): 187–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12400>; Battiste, M. 2000. "Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in higher education: A critical assessment." *American Indian Quarterly* 24 (3): 456–462; Grasswick, Heidi. "Feminist Social Epistemology." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/feminist-social-epistemology/>.
17. Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Second edition. London: Zed Books.
18. Kovach, Margaret. 2019. "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research." *First Peoples Child & Family Review* 14 (1): 123–36. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1071291ar>.
19. Kovach, Margaret. 2009. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.



identity prejudice. It highlights how historically excluded communities face systematic disadvantages in their ability to share knowledge, be believed, and have their perspectives taken seriously. Miranda Fricker's concept of "testimonial injustice" specifically focuses on the credibility deficits faced by excluded communities due to identity prejudice, whereby their testimonies are disbelieved or given less credibility compared to those from dominant groups.<sup>20</sup> This aligns with calls from feminist and indigenous scholars to recognise diverse ways of knowing and to challenge the traditional, often elitist, notions of "evidence" that contribute to cognitive exclusion.<sup>21</sup>

Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva examined how mainstream research practices, including presumed "neutral" methodologies like randomised control trials, inherit racist assumptions and therefore uphold systemic injustices.<sup>22</sup> Tuck and Yang discuss how standard research paradigms perpetuate systemic harm onto marginalised communities and argue for refusal and resistance.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, Dotson links failures to value marginalised community knowledge with perpetuating epistemic violence.<sup>24</sup> By perpetuating positivist gatekeeping, such traditional validation procedures sustain marginalisation by diminishing the legitimacy of multifaceted lived struggles.

These complementary perspectives from academics offer important conceptual grounding for reimagining what constitutes meaningful evidence in a broader, more inclusive sense. Therefore, there is a critical need for expanded conceptions of evidence that integrate scientific principles with inclusive, community-centred processes. Participatory approaches, which emphasise cognitive

justice and seek to rebalance whose knowledge is valued, disrupt the persistent marginalisation embedded within structures ranging from research practices to resource allocation. Funders bear a significant responsibility in upholding transformed evidence standards that integrate community knowledge, which might otherwise continue to be dismissed.

Building on these conceptual foundations, perspectives shared by participatory philanthropy practitioners across articles and at recent gatherings underscore the need to reframe the prevailing notions of evidence within philanthropy. At the Human Rights Funders Network's Discover Journeys global conference, practitioners of feminist monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) questioned established conceptions of what constitutes success and how it should be measured, highlighting issues of bias, representation and equitable access.<sup>25</sup>

These groups examined issues of whose knowledge counts, what purposes it serves, and how to democratise evidence production. They highlighted the need to reframe conceptions of success or effectiveness grounded in participants' priorities rather than institutional measures.<sup>26</sup>

Core issues explored included:

- what constitutes valued knowledge
- who holds expertise
- why inclusive processes matter
- how to make knowledge creation more equitable and accessible

20. Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Dominant groups refer to social groups that hold more power, privilege, and influence in society due to their identity markers such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, or religion.
21. Gillborn, David, Paul Warmington, and Sean Demack. 2018. "QuantCrit: Education, Policy, 'Big Data' and Principles for a Critical Race Theory of Statistics." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 21 (2): 158–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1377417>.
22. Zuberi, Tukufu, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. 2008. *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield; Gillborn, David, Paul Warmington, and Sean Demack. 2018. "QuantCrit: Education, Policy, 'Big Data' and Principles for a Critical Race Theory of Statistics." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 21 (2): 158–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1377417>.
23. Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. 2014. "R-Words: Refusing Research." In *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, edited by Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn. Sage. 223–247. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544329611>. Dotson, Kristie. 2011. "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing." *Hypatia* 26 (2): 236–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01177.x>
24. Dossa, Shama. 2023. "What Does It Mean to Use Power-Building and Feminist Approaches to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in Philanthropy?" Fenomenal Funds. <https://fenomenalfunds.org/news/decolonizing-mel-in-philanthropy>; Practitioners included: Children's Rights Innovation Fund (CRIF), which supports community-based child rights initiatives, FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund and, focused on youth-led social change Fenomenal Funds, a feminist funder collaborative funding women's funds and Purposeful, funding feminist grassroots groups
25. Dossa, Shama. 2023. "What Does It Mean to Use Power-Building and Feminist Approaches to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in Philanthropy?" Fenomenal Funds. <https://fenomenalfunds.org/news/decolonizing-mel-in-philanthropy>; Practitioners included: Children's Rights Innovation Fund (CRIF), which supports community-based child rights initiatives, FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund and, focused on youth-led social change Fenomenal Funds, a feminist funder collaborative funding women's funds and Purposeful, funding feminist grassroots groups
26. Desalvo, Clara, Shama Dossa, and Boikanyo Modungwa. 2023. "Disrupting Learning and Evaluation Practices in Philanthropy from a Feminist Lens." *Gender & Development* 31 (2–3): 617–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2023.2256580>.



*“It’s not about if it’s gonna work better, or if it’s gonna be more efficient. It’s more like, are we actually solving the crux of the issue here?”*

Paige Andrew, FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund

The convenings provided vital space to rethink notions of evidence, impact and progress through a decolonial feminist lens prioritising marginalised perspectives.

Practitioners emphasise the importance of the participatory process, highlighting how relationship-building and mutual learning are essential for driving change. While these aspects may be challenging to quantify in metrics, they hold tangible value for practitioners involved in these processes, prompting reflection and growth. Additionally, practitioners point out that there is often an overemphasis on outcomes dictated by funders, which may not align with the priorities of practitioners and stakeholders. For instance, the Baring Foundation discusses the need for evaluation approaches suited for participatory grantmaking’s focus on “process and learning” rather than predefined outcomes.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, during the interview with the Calala Women’s Fund, they revealed how adapting their programs based on feedback from partner groups has fostered trust and strengthened relationships.<sup>28</sup>

Across interviews, leading practitioners affirmed that evidence is stronger when it stems from participants’ own sense-making processes or through collective sensemaking, rather than a process that is solely defined and interpreted by people in positions of power. Participatory philanthropy practitioner Diana Samarasan critiqued the tendency to demand definitive proof of outcomes and compared it to questioning the effectiveness of participation during the interview. The

resolution involves embracing participatory frameworks that prioritise experiential perspectives. As Katherine Gilmour from the Global Fund for Children stated in her interview, their approach recognises participation as fundamentally values-alignment over formal metrics: “it has to be meaningful and impactful in ways defined by the communities we are working with. . . part of that initial work is engaging the panel and grantees in articulating what success looks like for them, and building supportive indicators.”

Mary Abdo of the Centre for Evidence and Implementation noted that “there’s not yet been experimental approaches that show that participatory giving achieves better impact for communities”. She explained, “but it’s important to look at outcomes for participants in the process, at their experience, whether they achieved what they wanted.” Rather than focusing on definitive proof, conceptions of effectiveness should foreground whether the involved communities perceive the processes to be empowering, meaningful and impactful based on lived experiences.

Paige Andrew from FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund echoed this priority on centring community self-determination and care. As she shared, “it’s not about if it’s gonna work better, or if it’s gonna be more efficient. It’s more like, are we actually solving the crux of the issue here?” She explains that participatory processes themselves have an impact, through relationship and trust-building.

27. Hutton, Ceri. 2016. *Monitoring and evaluating participatory grantmaking: Discussion paper for the Baring Foundation*. <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Discussion-Paper-ME-for-Participatory-Grantmaking.pdf>; Bokoff, Jen, and Cynthia Gibson. 2018. *Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking*. October 2. New York. <https://learningforfunders.candid.org/content/guides/deciding-together/?platform=hootsuite>.

28. Interview with Calala Fund

Similar reflections were shared by participatory philanthropy practitioners Katy Love and Diana Samarasan. “We’ve seen participation contribute to positive change across levels - from individual agency and capacity building, to strengthening organisations and movements, to policy transformation,” said Love, highlighting the multifaceted effects of participation. Samarasan explained that through inclusive participation, “we’ve gained [a] profound understanding of what community empowerment truly involves. Our notions of success have transformed based on people’s lived experiences.”

In Katy Love’s view, core questions driving conceptions of effectiveness include “do you feel you had an impact? Did you have real decision-making power?” This aligns with Abdo’s perspective to evaluate if people “achieved what they wanted.”

Qualitative anecdotes constitute vital evidence, though academic studies hold value in a current context where formalised research privileging quantitative evidence holds more weight. Reluctance to shift institutionalised power poses bigger obstacles than lack of academic proof, as the interviewees reinforced. As Katy Love reflected in the interview, “Power doesn’t give itself away.” Buffeted by institutional inertia, there persists a tendency to judge informal movements by organisational standards, as Gilmour critiqued during the interview, reducing the understanding of what constitutes evidence. Longhurst highlighted how calls for proof often aim to preserve status quo power dynamics rather than understand what works for the communities actually involved. As she noted in the interview, “there are many examples and evidence that participation has led to positive change e.g. on issues like abortion [and] equal marriage in Ireland. However, lack of evidence is not the core reason participation is not more mainstream.” As practitioners urge, reluctance towards participatory approaches often reflects entrenched power rather than actual evidence. Participation requires ceding decision-making to historically excluded groups—a redistribution many institutions resist.

People with institutional power inside philanthropy, government, organisations and academia grapple with varying realities and challenges as they strive to enhance participatory approaches. These challenges depend on the institutional DNA and the beliefs and mindsets of those in leadership roles. Many are genuinely seeking comprehensive and tangible evidence to support their efforts in advocating internally for making policy and investment approaches more inclusive and ultimately shifting power towards communities.

Ultimately, the discourse necessitates adopting decolonial and feminist lenses to rethink dominant evidence paradigms that exclude marginalised worldviews. It calls for participatory frameworks that prioritise the lived experiences and perspectives of those on the margins to drive progress.

In policymaking contexts, evidence-based approaches aim to improve outcomes by grounding decisions in rigorous data and scientific credibility. However, scholar Justin Parkhurst argues that evidence hierarchy paradigms, which privilege elements such as randomised control trials, risk marginalising urgent social concerns affecting vulnerable communities.<sup>29</sup> Specifically, these positivist evidence criteria prioritise methodological tenets like reproducibility but may exclude vital contextual knowledge and realities of those impacted by the resulting policies. For example, rigorously validated evidence on the health effects of a clean water intervention may fail to account for cultural disruptions that may arise if implemented without community involvement.

Parkhurst thus proposes the concept of “good governance of evidence,” which integrates scientific principles with inclusive processes. This entails ensuring both methodological accuracy and real-world relevance in evidence collection.<sup>30</sup> By involving representative participation, the gathering process incorporates community priorities to inform collective decisions that address real-life challenges. Therefore, balanced evidence governance fosters policies that are firmly grounded in

29. Parkhurst, Justin O. 2017. *The Politics of Evidence: From Evidence-Based Policy to the Good Governance of Evidence*. London: Routledge.

30. Ibid

people's needs. Achieving this requires navigating tensions between credibility concepts prioritising precise technical data and social justice principles centring those excluded from traditional knowledge production. Throughout our research, we have held the tension between evidence and values-based approaches, recognising that while evidence can inform and improve participatory processes, the fundamental value of participation should not be overlooked. Parkhurst's framework provides vital grounding for philanthropy as it explores expanded conceptions of evidence-based practice. Building on this framework, we highlight the need for balancing methodological principles with inclusive participation in evidence processes and decision-making.

We argue that a balanced assessment of evidence therefore integrates conventions of methodology and triangulation with considerations like representation, bias interrogation and centring marginalised voices. This fosters methodological soundness alongside community relevance and inclusion. Integrated approaches that embrace diversity in meaning-making while maintaining quality and critical analysis enable evidence generation that is rigorous, robust, and just.

### Box 1: Key takeaways

- The participatory process is not a means to a predefined end. The process itself is an invaluable outcome. The participatory process contributes to important changes, including at individual, interpersonal and community levels, such as building relationships, boosting confidence and enthusiasm, generating knowledge and learning, and strengthening the fabric of movements and societies. These types of changes go beyond quantifiable metrics. This suggests a need to reframe success and impact.
- Participants in participatory processes are best placed to define value and evidence on the quality of the process itself. Evidence of meaningful participation should be grounded in participants' lived experiences and conceptions of success. With a meaningful and effective participatory process, impact is defined by shifts in power dynamics, equity, and solidarity.
- Scholars from Black, Indigenous, and other structurally excluded communities are challenging the status quo of research practices, offering concrete reframings and employing diverse methods and ways of knowing that broaden our conception of what constitutes evidence.

# 3. Review of Current Evidence



# Evidence on the Effectiveness of Participation in Contributing to Social Change

In table 1 below, we present some selected evidence from the case studies that demonstrates how participation in social interventions catalyses change across policies, laws, programmes, and services, building collective power and

citizen participation. See a full list of case studies in Annex B: Tables of Case Study Analysis.

In various contexts, spanning from criminal justice reform to climate justice, the examples below illustrate that participation has proven instrumental in facilitating the translation of on-the-ground realities into tailored solutions. The participatory process generates invaluable evidence that building relationships through inclusive engagement strengthens movements. When historically excluded groups actively shape decisions that impact them, resulting outcomes more effectively tackle multifaceted challenges. Their firsthand experience with exclusion provides essential insights for shaping responsive policies.

**Table 1: Selected case studies that demonstrate how participation contributes to social change**

Broader social change	Outcome of participation	Case study
Stronger and more inclusive service delivery and interventions <sup>31</sup>	Refugee-led organisations mobilised to provide information, services and advocacy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	<b>Type:</b> Opinion piece (Case study #1) <b>Source:</b> Alio, Mustafa, Shaza Alrihawi, James Milner, Anila Noor, Najeeba Wazefadost, and Pascal Zigashane. 2020. "By Refugees, for Refugees: Refugee Leadership during COVID-19, and beyond." <i>International Journal of Refugee Law</i> 32 (2): 370–373. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeaa021">https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeaa021</a> .
	Refugee-led organisations provided effective case management, outreach, programming and advocacy to respond to community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.	<b>Type:</b> Journal article (Case study #2) <b>Source:</b> Gonzalez Benson, Odessa, Irene Route, Ana Paula Pimentel Walker, Mieko Yoshihama, and Allison Kelly. 2022. "Refugee-Led Organizations' Crisis Response during the COVID-19 Pandemic." <i>Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees</i> 38 (1): 62–77. <a href="https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40879">https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40879</a> .
	The Refugee-led organisations across five regions were found to provide accessible, holistic, culturally sensitive services that provide life-saving support and access to long-term solutions for community members.	<b>Type:</b> External evaluation (Case study #10) <b>Source:</b> Essex-Lettieri, Diana. 2022. <i>Understanding RLO Impact: A metasynthesis of five external impact evaluations covering programs run by Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs)</i> . RRLI. September. <a href="https://www.refugeeslead.org/evidence">https://www.refugeeslead.org/evidence</a> .
	Community organisations partnered with the state to support the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners in Brazil.	<b>Type:</b> Book chapter (Case study # 3) <b>Source:</b> Macaulay, Fiona. 2015. "Whose Prisoners Are These Anyway?' Church, State and Society Partnerships and Co-Production of Offender 'Resocialisation' in Brazil." In <i>Transnational Penal Cultures: New Perspectives on Discipline, Punishment and Desistance</i> . Edited by Vivien Miller. 202-216. New York: Routledge.

31. Corroborated through the participatory workshops with Porticus' grantee partners.

More responsive public policies and more inclusive laws that better reflect the populations they serve <sup>32</sup>	Youth participation impacted policies across diverse areas like police powers, education, children's hearings, violence against women and human rights in Scotland. It influenced specific policy decisions, parliamentary evidence, and organisational practices.	<b>Type:</b> Research report (Case study # 9) <b>Source:</b> Ross, Chris, Elaine Kerridge, and Amy Woodhouse. The Scottish Government. (2018). "The impact of children and young people's participation on policy making." The Scottish Government. <a href="https://sccr-files.s3.amazonaws.com/sites/5384a71b21ba55270a000002/assets/5aaf892aa4aa837bda11a469/The_Impact_of_Children_and_Young_People_s_Participation_on_Policy_Making.pdf">https://sccr-files.s3.amazonaws.com/sites/5384a71b21ba55270a000002/assets/5aaf892aa4aa837bda11a469/The_Impact_of_Children_and_Young_People_s_Participation_on_Policy_Making.pdf</a>
	Children's participation through Neighbourhood Children's Parliaments in Tamil Nadu, India led to tangible improvements in local services and facilities, while youth forums in Wales, UK focused on citizenship development outcomes for the children themselves.	<b>Type:</b> Journal article (Case study # 8) <b>Source:</b> Crowley, Anne. 2015. "Is anyone listening? The impact of children's participation on public policy." The International Journal of Children's Rights, 23(3): 602–621. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02303005">https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02303005</a>
Shifting to more positive social perceptions of excluded groups	An inmate-run newspaper provided a platform for prisoners' voices, perspectives and stories of personal transformation, contributing to changing public narratives about incarceration.	<b>Type:</b> Book (Case study # 7) <b>Source:</b> Drummond, W. J. 2020. Prison Truth: The Story of the San Quentin News. First Edition. Oakland: University of California Press. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqr1bhx">https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqr1bhx</a> .
Stronger and better-networked movements driving social change efforts	Grassroots women used Feminist Participatory Action Research to document their lived experiences, build capacities and movements, and advocate for climate justice and development justice.	<b>Type:</b> Journal article (Case study # 5) <b>Source:</b> Godden, Naomi Joy, Pam Macnish, Trimita Chakma, and Kavita Naidu. 2020. "Feminist Participatory Action Research as a Tool for Climate Justice." Gender & Development 28 (3): 593–615. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1842040">https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1842040</a> .
	The MADE Network strengthened civil society capacity and engagement in migration and development policies and practices at regional and global levels, resulting in expanded civil society participation, strengthened networks, enhanced thematic expertise, and some influence on policies.	<b>Type:</b> External evaluation report (Case study #14) <b>Source:</b> Pugh, Sarah. 2017. Migration and Development Civil Society (MADE) Network: External Evaluation. MADE Network. <a href="https://www.madenetwork.org/made-publications">https://www.madenetwork.org/made-publications</a>
	Intergenerational alliances leveraged respective strengths pursuing unified advocacy that achieved wider gender education reforms	<b>Type:</b> Learning brief (Case study # 12) <b>Source:</b> UNGEI. 2022. Intergenerational Partnerships for Transformative Change: A Learning Brief. <a href="https://www.ungei.org/publication/intergenerational-partnerships-transformative-change">https://www.ungei.org/publication/intergenerational-partnerships-transformative-change</a>

32. Corroborated through the participatory workshops with Porticus' grantee partners



# Evidence of the Effectiveness of Participation in Philanthropy

Participatory philanthropy can be a powerful catalyst for change and transformation at multiple levels. Through conversations with practitioners and funders working in this area, a literature review, and an analysis of 6 case studies, it is evident that participatory philanthropy can strengthen funding practices within institutions, contribute to shifting power and contribute to changes at the individual, organisational, movement and social level.

Through our analysis, and dialogue with practitioners, we are seeing an increased exploration and uptake of participatory practices by philanthropic actors, but efforts to document and build an evidence base on this practice is nascent. A report by the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI) indicates that while participatory grantmaking is gaining traction and is believed to deliver better outcomes and address power imbalances, there is a lack of high-quality research to definitively prove its superiority over traditional methods.<sup>33</sup> Recent studies, such as a report by FRIDA on their Participatory Grantmaking model and a forthcoming book by Cindy Gibson (will add reference) demonstrate strong examples of this. However, such in-depth studies remain rare. While some funders (e.g. FCAM, Disability Rights Fund)<sup>34</sup> have engaged in participatory practices for decades, there has not been sustained funding from the donor community to generate longitudinal research looking at the effectiveness of participatory philanthropy, such as participatory grantmaking.

However, this does not imply that there is no significant and influential participatory work already underway in philanthropy. Indeed, such work is disruptive and political, fostering a counter-current of possibilities. Rather than formal evidence building, the focus of many participatory funders in the last five to ten years has been to build meaningful relationships and downwards accountability with and to communities and movements they serve. An emphasis has been on sparking new approaches, advocating for support, and expanding models to demonstrate proof of concept. There has also been a push for diversifying philanthropy by introducing alternative methodologies, countering its historically hierarchical and top-down nature. Decision-making and power have traditionally been concentrated among the wealthy and those not representing crucial constituencies. While this work may not be considered novel or emerging, the documentation of its long-term impact remains nascent. A 2021 study by researchers at the University of Washington surveyed 148 of the largest private and community foundations in the United States.<sup>35</sup> The study found that while 88% of surveyed foundations that engage stakeholders believe that participation leads to more effective and innovative grantmaking, only about 10% confer decision-making power to external stakeholders. This indicates there is still a long way to go to reach greater power-sharing in philanthropic governance and grantmaking. Comfort levels are high when receiving feedback but less so when it comes to redistributing decision-making. The report also suggests that some foundation leaders view participation as an intrinsic good that may not require measurement. As one foundation leader stated, “the benefit of [stakeholder] insight and diversity is self-evident,” which reflects the perspective that power-sharing through participation is a matter of procedural justice rather than something requiring evaluation.<sup>36</sup>

33. Ang, Chloe, Maryanna Abdo, Vanessa Rose, Renee Lim, and Jo Taylor. 2023. “Participatory Grant-Making: Building the Evidence.” The Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI). <https://www.ceiglobal.org/work-and-insights/report-participatory-grantmaking-building-evidence>.

34. <https://fondocentroamericano.org/en/>.

35. Husted, Kelly, Emily Finchum-Mason, and David Suárez. 2021. “Sharing Power?: The Landscape of Participatory Practices & Grantmaking among Large U.S. Foundations.” Evans School of Public Policy and Governance, University of Washington. 25 August. <https://evans.uw.edu/sharing-power-the-landscape-of-participatory-practices-grantmaking-among-large-u-s-foundations/>.

36. Ibid, p. 31



While there is a belief in the potential of participatory grantmaking and participatory philanthropy more broadly to democratise philanthropy and transform power, there remains an opportunity to strengthen the current evidence base. We suggest more documentation and research in applications of participatory methods, the formal publication and wider distribution of pilot initiatives, and evaluations of participatory grantmaking. These are needed to build a stronger evidence base to advance participatory practices in the field and ultimately deepen accountability to communities.

Despite these gaps, we have gathered several key sources that provide insights into the benefits and challenges of participatory approaches.

The first table provides a range of examples and sources that document tangible changes as a result of participatory philanthropy. We looked at all functional areas in philanthropic institutions from the Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool (APPT), and were able to find examples across two areas in particular: Grantmaking (grant strategy and decision-making) and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. With a broader uptake and application of the APPT, across different functional areas such as operations and staffing, finances and fundraising, we hope it will lead to expanded documentation in this area.

**Table 2: Selected case studies that demonstrate how participation transforms philanthropic practice**

Functional area	Outcome of participation	Case study
Grantmaking (grant strategy and decision-making)	The studies demonstrate that participatory grantmaking leads to support for grassroots organisations and funding decisions more in line with community priorities. There is promising evidence participation can improve this function.	<p><b>Type:</b> Magazine article (Case study #15a)  <b>Source:</b> Glass, Juniper. 2021. “Decisions in Communities Hands: Learning by Grantmakers in Canada.” L’Annee Philanthropique Volume 3. <a href="https://philab.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Etude-de-cas_Glass.pdf">https://philab.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Etude-de-cas_Glass.pdf</a>, 59</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Newspaper article (Case study #15b)  <b>Source:</b> Buhles, Kelley. 2020. “Arctic Indigenous Fund Transforms Philanthropy’s Power Dynamics.” Medium. June 5. <a href="https://medium.com/reimagine-money/arctic-indigenous-fund-transforms-philanthropys-power-dynamics-bcc4619a7b2b">https://medium.com/reimagine-money/arctic-indigenous-fund-transforms-philanthropys-power-dynamics-bcc4619a7b2b</a>.</p>
Grantmaking (grant strategy and decision-making)	Co-design of the grantmaking strategy and process by young feminist activists has strengthened FRIDA’s ability to resource and support young feminist organising and connections. The participatory approach has informed grantmaking practices and shifted power in governance and decision-making.	<p><b>Type:</b> Learning report (Case study #16)  <b>Source:</b> FRIDA   The Young Feminist Fund. 2023. “Reflections on Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice.” <a href="https://youngfeministfund.org/resourcing-connections/">https://youngfeministfund.org/resourcing-connections/</a></p>

	Having young people serve as grantmakers in the Spark Fund has increased youth participation, agency and leadership in grantmaking decisions and governance. The participatory process has shifted power dynamics, though specific outcomes are not evidenced in the article.	<b>Type:</b> Newspaper article (Case study #17) <b>Source:</b> Ali, Sabir, Lusine Kosakyan, Nyasha Yvonne Manungo, Puseletso Mpeisa, Nadia Mutisi, Naznine Nahar, Fer Rocha Castro, Rostyslav Semka, and Khalid Ahmad Tamu. 2023. “For the youth by the youth’: Young grantmakers reflect on their participatory grantmaking.” Alliance Magazine, September 23. <a href="https://www.alliancemagazine.org/analysis/for-the-youth-by-the-youth/">https://www.alliancemagazine.org/analysis/for-the-youth-by-the-youth/</a>
	Young people's involvement as grantmaking panellists has increased youth participation, agency and leadership in grantmaking decisions, governance and MEL. The participatory process has shifted power dynamics and informed grantmaking practices, though long-term outcomes are not yet captured.	<b>Type:</b> External evaluation report <b>Source:</b> IWORDS Global. 2021. Evaluation of Youth Participatory Grant-making Pilot Initiative in Sierra Leone. <a href="https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL_PGM_REPORT_WITHOUT_ANNEXURES.pdf">https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL_PGM_REPORT_WITHOUT_ANNEXURES.pdf</a>
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (determination of metrics and reporting procedures)	Higher levels of girls’ participation in projects and evaluations have enabled more nuanced and contextually relevant MEL metrics, unintended effect analysis, and intersectional programming in grantmaking and grant administration. Girls’ participation has influenced what is measured and how.	<b>Type:</b> Research paper <b>Source:</b> Lewin, T., Cannon, M., Johnson, V., Philip, R., and Raghavan, P. 2023. Participation For, With, and By Girls: Evidencing Impact, REJUVENATE Working Paper 2. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. <a href="https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/participation-for-with-and-by-girls-evidencing-impact/">https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/participation-for-with-and-by-girls-evidencing-impact/</a>
	Co-developing MEL systems and tools with grantees has improved grantee MEL capacity and practices, enhancing their ability to generate relevant evidence for learning and adaptation in grantmaking. Participatory MEL has rebalanced funder-grantee power dynamics and made MEL more useful for grantees.	<b>Type:</b> Learning brief (Case study #20) <b>Source:</b> Colnar, Megan, Andrea Azevedo, Courtney Tolmie, and Hannah Caddick. 2022. “Setting New Standards for Better MEL.” BetterEvaluation, Global Evaluation Initiative. <a href="https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/setting-new-standards-for-better-mel-lessons-for-grantees-funders&lt;sup&gt;37&lt;/sup&gt;">https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/setting-new-standards-for-better-mel-lessons-for-grantees-funders<sup>37</sup></a>

37. This resource is part of BetterEvaluation’s Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) toolkit for grantmakers and grantees by Global Evaluation Initiative.

The second table shows how participatory philanthropy can contribute to change at various levels, ranging from individual and organisational levels to broader movements and society, encompassing a wider philanthropic ecosystem. Viewing these contributions holistically allows

us to recognize the multifaceted benefits and impacts of participatory philanthropy, demonstrating its potential to drive systemic change over time.

**Table 3: Positive Benefits and Changes**

Area	Examples of benefits and changes	Case study / examples
<b>Individual</b>	Increased confidence, empathy, self-esteem, skills in collaboration, and civic education. <sup>38</sup>	Purposeful and Global Fund for Human Rights Tar Kura grantmaking program
<b>Group / organisation</b>  <i>Changes experienced by specific organisations / collectives</i>	More self-determined development by Indigenous groups.	Arctic Indigenous Fund
	Strengthening of groups and organisations who engage in participatory processes and also who receive funding. <sup>39,40</sup>	Mama Cash’s participatory MEL model  Purposeful and Global Fund for Human Rights Tar Kura grantmaking program
	Builds skills and capacities of group members, e.g. new monitoring and evaluation skills when involved in participatory monitoring and evaluation. <sup>41, 42</sup>	Mama Cash’s participatory MEL model
	Increased resources were received by groups and organisations.	Porticus’ youth civic engagement funding  Arctic Indigenous Fund
	Acts as a catalyst for a positive shift in political culture, fostering trust and confidence in grassroots organisations. <sup>43</sup>	Calala Fondo de Mujeres
<b>Societal / community &amp; movement level</b>	Improves the quality of the work of organisations and their relevance to the communities they seek to support. They are more in tune with their community by actively sharing power. <sup>44</sup>	Porticus’ youth civic engagement funding

38. Seller, Sarah. 2018. “From Beneficiary to Active Agent: How Youth-Led Grantmaking Benefits Young People, Their Communities, and the Philanthropic Sector.” Social Justice Funders Opportunity Brief, No. 2. <https://heller.brandeis.edu/sillerman/pdfs/opportunity-briefs/youth-led-grantmaking.pdf>.

39. IWORDS Global. 2021. “Evaluation of Youth Participatory Grant-making Pilot Initiative in Sierra Leone.” [https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL\\_PGM\\_REPORT\\_WITHOUT\\_ANNEXURES.pdf](https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL_PGM_REPORT_WITHOUT_ANNEXURES.pdf)

40. Corroborated through the participatory workshops with Porticus’ grantee partners.

41. Holden, Lydia. 2018. New Perspectives, New Solutions: Funding Organising Led by Girls and Young Women Mama Cash. Candid: Issue Lab. 11 October. <https://search.issuelab.org/resource/new-perspectives-new-solutions-funding-organising-led-by-girls-and-young-women.html>

42. Corroborated through the participatory workshops with Porticus’ grantee partners.

43. Interview with Calala Fondo de Mujeres.

44. Johnson, Ruby, and Leiper O’Malley. 2018. “A young feminist new order: An exploration of why young feminists organise the way they do.” Gender and Development 26 (3): 533-550. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2018.1526370>.

	In crisis settings, participatory processes provide space for shared collective problem solving, community, and solidarity. <sup>45</sup>	Global Resilience Fund, Purposeful
	Strengthens children and young people’s broader commitment to and understanding of democracy by encouraging democratic processes like voting and consensus building. <sup>46</sup>	
	Builds solidarity and room for coalition/ movement building by bringing grantees together. <sup>47</sup>	
<b>Institutional</b>  <i>Changes within specific funding institutions</i>	Transforms data by centring community realities and reshaping what is measured to be more inclusive.	Mama Cash’s participatory MEL model; Porticus’ Mosaic Early Childhood initiative
	Strengthens programmes and interventions by uncovering complex realities, revealing intersectional risks and nuances often overlooked by funders.	Institute of Development Studies girl programming review; Porticus’ Mosaic Early Childhood initiative
	Allows for a more thoughtful and informed decision-making process as well as further investment in institutional learning. <sup>48,49</sup>	Bokoff, Jen, and Cynthia Gibson. 2018. Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking.
	Strengthens trust and credibility between donors and the constituencies with whom they work. <sup>50,51</sup>	Global Fund for Children’s Spark Fund
	Promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion— in both the process and the outcomes. Participatory governance, for example, promotes anti-racist and decolonial perspectives in the board. <sup>52</sup>	Case study example: Porticus’ Mosaic Early Childhood initiative
<b>Systems / ecosystem wide changes</b>	Drives systemic change within philanthropy by causing a ripple effect within institutions and supporting funder advocacy.	
	Creates a ripple effect among funders by building curiosity and intrigue and sparking practice change. <sup>53</sup>	
	Leads to a more just and fair funding ecosystem with more diverse distribution of resources to communities.	Global Fund for Children’s Spark Fund

45. Purposeful. 2023. “Sprouting Our Collective Wisdom: Towards a Politics of Practice for Activist-led Accompaniment: Lessons From the Global Resilience Fund” <https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/sprouting-our-collective-wisdom.pdf>.
46. Seller, Sarah.
47. Booth, Georgia, and Ruby Johnson.
48. Bokoff, Jen, and Cynthia Gibson. 2018. “Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking.” 2 October. <https://learningforfunders.candid.org/content/guides/deciding-together/?platform=hootsuite>
49. Interview with Calala Fund.
50. Corroborated through the participatory workshops with Porticus’ grantee partners.
51. Interview with Calala Fund.
52. Interview with Calala Fund.
53. Booth, Georgia, and Ruby Johnson.

# 4. Evidence Quality Rubric



Building on expanded conceptualisations of evidence and effectiveness, we introduce the Evidence Quality Rubric. The Rubric is an assessment tool designed to assess the quality of evidence on the effectiveness of participation. It aims to balance conventional standards of evidence assessment with inclusivity standards, thereby providing a more expansive view of what constitutes evidence. The tool is intended to be used in policy-making, research, and community engagement, with the goal of achieving accuracy, relevance, and justice.

The Rubric analyses evidence on the effectiveness of participation from two interconnected perspectives as described below:

**1. Conventional standards** - for this, we adopt triangulation, methodology, and validation as key markers of rigour in assessing evidence. These are established scientific criteria for assessing accuracy and reliability.

- **Triangulation** looks for convergence across different data types. Multiple sources confirming the same results instils greater confidence.
- **Methodology** examines research design to ensure systematically applied protocols underpin the evidence. This provides rigour.
- **Validation** through oversight mechanisms such as peer review provides third-party scrutiny to further corroborate accuracy.

This set of criteria aims to gauge precision and analytical soundness relevant to key audiences using mainstream evidence standards.

However, in the course of this research, criticisms of terminology emerged from consultations with practitioners and the two Porticus partner consultations.

Across two workshops, some Porticus partners indicated that terminology like “validation” or “robustness” could be perceived as problematic or limiting, and was more useful in quantitative research rather than to assess qualitative participatory methods. Despite this critique, to ensure this Rubric resonates with a wide variety of audiences, including those in formalised academic spaces of knowledge and research, we have decided to keep more traditional metrics, measuring the quality of evidence to complement our inclusive and qualitative approach. To go beyond the limitations of conventional benchmarks in quantitative analysis, the Rubric uses inclusion standards alongside traditional standards.

**2. Inclusion standards** - this prioritises the inclusion of participant narratives and community perspectives. For inclusion, we specifically employ markers of representation, power, and bias / perspective to centre structurally excluded voices and realities that conventional standards often overlook.

- **Representation** directly examines which voices are included and whose perspectives are centred to ensure diversity. This avoids extraction and tokenism.
- **Power analysis** interrogates underlying root causes and systemic dynamics influencing interventions. It questions whose interests prevail.
- **Interrogating biases** prompts reflection on unarticulated assumptions on what constitutes value and why certain measures dominate evidence hierarchies. This uncovers exclusionary practices.

This set of criteria aims to understand community-defined conceptions of success and equity. It balances technical rigour with cognitive justice.

Conventional Standards	Inclusion Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Triangulation:</b> Convergence of multiple data sources.</li> <li>• <b>Robust methodology:</b> Rigour and reliability in methods.</li> <li>• <b>Validation:</b> Corroboration through oversight and peer review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Representation:</b> Inclusion of diverse voices and realities.</li> <li>• <b>Power analysis:</b> Systems thinking on root causes and dynamics.</li> <li>• <b>Interrogating biases:</b> Questioning who determines value and why.</li> </ul>

The Rubric embraces qualitative richness, interrogates power dynamics, and balances rigour with inclusion. It aligns with calls to examine participatory processes regarding who is involved, why and how. It fosters policy and practice grounded in diverse lived realities.

We propose these initial minimum standards as a starting point and welcome participatory application and expansive community input to collaboratively shape the evolution of these standards over time towards greater cognitive justice.

## Applying the Evidence Quality Rubric

Having established an expanded conception of evidence of participation's effectiveness and proposed the Evidence Quality Rubric in the previous sections, we now turn to applying this tool across two areas:

- Assessing evidence of participation's effectiveness in social change
- Assessing evidence of participation's effectiveness in philanthropic practices

Our analysis serves a dual purpose:

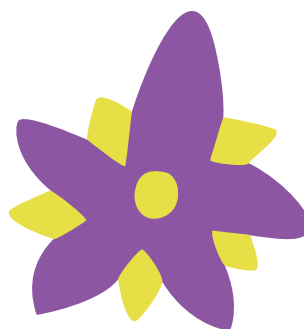
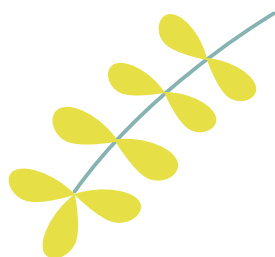
- To illustrate how the *Evidence Quality Rubric* provides a comprehensive assessment of the quality of evidence on the effectiveness of participation.
- To map the current state of documentation on participation's effectiveness, revealing gaps necessitating further investigation.

To systematically map the evidence landscape and demonstrate the application of the Rubric, we gathered two sets of sample evidence:

- 14 cases assessing participation's effectiveness in social change efforts
- Six cases evaluating participation's effectiveness within philanthropic practices

We rated each case on a rating scale from limited (1) to excellent (5) across both Rubric components: conventional standards of triangulation, methodology and validation and inclusion standards of representation and power dynamics. To mitigate subjectivity in applying the Rubric criteria for rating evidence, the research team utilised a collaborative process between two authors to determine scores. This involved structured conversations examining dimensions of methodological rigour, representation, power analysis and additional, case-by-case aspects to align on performance assessments. We aggregated the component ratings to calculate an overall evidence quality rating for each case. This comprehensive rating process revealed strengths, weaknesses and gaps across the cumulative sample set.

One way to make the Rubric more participatory is to engage in structured conversations between funders and community representatives or civil society organisations (CSOs) to discuss and validate the ratings. Directly involving participants in utilising the Rubric has the potential to enhance understanding and validation that is rooted in lived experience.



## Box 2: Steps to apply the Evidence Quality Rubric

The process of applying the Rubric of Evidence Quality to assess the effectiveness of participation involves several steps, which can be aligned with the specific context of participation.

### Step 1: Gather relevant evidence

Collect studies, reports, evaluations etc. documenting community participation processes and outcomes. Seek diversity of sources, including research publications, organisational data, community narratives.

### Step 2: Assess against conventional standards

For each evidence piece, rate against criteria of triangulation, methodology and validation on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Gauge alignment with scientific principles like rigour, oversight, reproducibility.

### Step 3: Assess against inclusion standards

For each evidence piece, rate against criteria of representation, power analysis and bias examination on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Evaluate dimensions like centring community voices, interrogating systemic factors, questioning assumptions.

### Step 4: Calculate overall evidence quality score

Combine conventional and inclusion ratings to calculate an overall evidence quality score for each piece. Higher scores indicate a strong integration of scientific and participatory principles.

As a guide, the 1-5 scale points may be loosely conceptualised through the following illustrative descriptions of potential quality levels:

#### Excellent quality (4.5 - 5.0):

- Meets all conventional standards of rigour and validation
- Exhibits all inclusion factors like representation and bias examination
- Indicates a high level of confidence and certainty

#### Very good quality (3.5 - 4.4):

- Strong methodology with some peer validation or oversight
- Good attention to participant perspectives and unintended consequences
- Reasonable degree of confidence in findings

#### Moderate quality (2.5 - 3.4):

- Adequate methodology though may lack triangulation
- Some consideration of inclusion factors like power and bias
- Provides moderate support but limits certainty

#### Limited quality (1.5 - 2.4):

- Weak methodology without validation mechanisms
- Lacks examination of root causes or experiential realities
- Hard to have confidence in findings

#### Poor quality (0-1.4):

- No methodological rigour or external review
- No inclusion of participant voices or perspectives
- Little to no evidentiary value or confidence

### Step 5: Validate and contextualise

Convene participatory spaces for reflective dialogue with the communities themselves to validate resulting analysis and interpret why certain evidence receives particular ratings. This participatory application of the Rubric provides context for transparently co-analysing what factors shape assessments of evidence quality.



The application of the Evidence Quality Rubric to 20 case studies on participation’s effectiveness in social change and philanthropic practice (full evidence ratings are presented in Annex B) reveals the importance of considering both conventional standards and inclusion standards when assessing the quality of evidence in participatory practices. The following assessment of evidence quality includes examples of participation’s effectiveness on both social change and philanthropic practice.

The range of quality evidence expands with the incorporation of inclusion standards, allowing research that may not rank highly on conventional standards to hold value when considering inclusion criteria. For instance, Joseph Munyambanza’s blog post on AllAfrica (See case study # 6 in box 3) scores low on conventional standards (2 out of 5) due to a lack of formal research

methodology, data triangulation, and external validation. However, the blog post performs significantly better when evaluated against inclusion standards (4.5 out of 5). The blog directly amplifies the voice and experiences of a refugee leader deeply involved in community-based education initiatives and explicitly examines power dynamics. The author’s firsthand experience as a refugee leader lends credibility and depth to the insights shared, despite the absence of a structured research design. The piece openly acknowledges its perspective and bias, using this positionality to advocate for greater recognition and support for refugee leadership and innovation in education. By considering inclusion alongside traditional markers of research quality, this example illustrates how we can develop a more comprehensive understanding of meaningful and impactful evidence in participatory practice.

**Box 3: Example of a case study with a low score in conventional standards and a high score in inclusion standards**

**CASE STUDY #6**

**Type:** Blog post

**Source:** Munyambanza, Joseph. 2020. “Refugee-Led Organizations Can Deliver Education to Refugee Children during COVID-19 and Beyond.” *AllAfrica* (blog). June 19. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006190040.html>.

**Outcome of participation:** Refugee-led organisations provided adaptive education services and community support to refugee children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessment against conventional standards	Assessment against inclusion standards
<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The blog post primarily presents the perspective and experiences of the author, with some reference to the work of other refugee-led organisations. It does not triangulate findings with other external data sources.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> As a blog post, it does not employ a formal research methodology. The author draws on his personal experiences and observations.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> There are no details on any external validation or peer review process.</p> <p><b>Score: 2 out of 5 - Limited</b></p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The post centralises the voice, experiences and knowledge of a refugee leader deeply involved in community-based education initiatives. It provides direct examples from refugee-led organisations.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The post explicitly examines power dynamics, arguing for a shift in power to refugee-led organisations as key partners and “problem-solvers” rather than passive beneficiaries.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The author writes from his perspective as a refugee and leader of a refugee-led organisation. The post openly advocates for greater recognition and support for refugee leadership and innovation.</p> <p><b>Score: 4.5 out of 5 - Excellent</b></p>

**Overall score: (2 + 4.5) / 2 = 3.25 out of 5 - Moderate**

Even in research of very good quality by conventional standards, there can be significant limitations when assessed against inclusion criteria. The ROM report on IMPACS Migration & Development project (Case Study #13 in Box 4) is a prime example. While the report provides a systematic assessment well-grounded in established standards, scoring 4 out of 5 on conventional criteria, it falls short on inclusion standards with a score of 3 out of 5. The report relies on rigid, institutionalised criteria to assess migration and development policies and practices, which limits its ability to capture the nuances and complexities of the issues at hand. For instance, the report fails to adequately represent the perspectives

and experiences of the primary stakeholders – migrants and communities themselves. Although engaging a range of stakeholders, the voices of those most affected are notably absent, which is problematic given the inherent power imbalances in these contexts. Furthermore, while the report analyses how the project helped shift power to CSOs to influence policies and practices, it does not delve deeply into the power dynamics within the CSO sector itself or between CSOs and other actors. This limited power analysis fails to fully capture the complex web of relationships and interests that shape migration and development outcomes.

**Box 4: Example of a case study with a high score in conventional standards and a low score in inclusion standards**

**CASE STUDY #13**

**Type:** Monitoring report

**Source:** MADE Network. 2016. ROM (Results Oriented Monitoring) report on the IMPACS Migration & Development project. <https://www.madenetwork.org/made-publications>

**Outcome of participation:** CSO capacity building and joint advocacy in regional and global fora improved protection and recognition of migrants and their contributions.

Assessment against conventional standards	Assessment against inclusion standards
<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The ROM review collected data from multiple sources, including project documents, and interviews with the project team, partners, and external stakeholders in several countries. This allowed for triangulation of findings from different perspectives.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The ROM review followed a systematic methodology, using the standard ROM criteria and report template. It included a documentation review, development of interview guides, field visits, and qualitative data analysis. The methodology is clearly explained.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The report went through a review process involving the EC services and the lead implementer ICMC, which provided comments and clarifications that were incorporated. This validation process adds credibility to the findings.</p> <p><b>Score: 4 out of 5 - Very good</b></p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The ROM review engaged a range of stakeholders, including CSOs, governments, and international organisations. It captured diverse perspectives from the global and regional levels. However, the voices of migrants and communities themselves are not directly represented, likely because this was not the focus of the project or review.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The report analyses how the project helped shift power to CSOs to influence migration and development policies and practices. It notes the project’s contribution to increasing CSO access, legitimacy and influence in key policy processes like the GFMD. However, the analysis of power dynamics within the CSO sector or between CSOs and other actors is limited.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The review was conducted by external experts, which helps mitigate bias. It provides a balanced perspective noting both strengths and areas for improvement. However, as a ROM review commissioned by the EU as the donor, it is situated within that particular institutional perspective and accountability framework.</p> <p><b>Score: 3 out of 5 - Moderate</b></p>

**Overall score: (4 + 3) / 2 = 3.5 out of 5 - Very good**

Case study #10 in Box 5 is a meta-synthesis of five external impact evaluations of programs run by Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) across different regions. The study triangulates findings from multiple sources, employs a systematic methodology, and undergoes expert validation, resulting in an excellent score of 5 out of 5 for conventional standards. It also excels in inclusion standards, scoring 4.5

out of 5, by centring the perspectives of RLOs, critically examining power dynamics, and acknowledging systemic constraints and researcher positionality. The overall evidence quality score is 4.75 out of 5, indicating that the meta-synthesis generates highly credible evidence on the impact of RLO-led programs, grounded in the experiences of refugee communities.

**Box 5: Example of a case study with a high score in both conventional standards and inclusion standards for participation’s effectiveness in social change**

**CASE STUDY #10**

**Type:** External evaluation report

**Source:** Essex-Lettieri, Diana. 2022. *Understanding RLO Impact: A metasynthesis of five external impact evaluations covering programs run by Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs)*. RRLI. September. <https://www.refugeeslead.org/evidence>.

**Outcome of participation:** The refugee-led organisations across five regions were found to provide accessible, holistic, culturally sensitive services that provide life-saving support and access to long-term solutions for community members.

Assessment against conventional standards	Assessment against inclusion standards
<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The meta-synthesis uses conceptual content analysis to identify impact trends across five external evaluations. It triangulates findings across the evaluations, as well as data from the RLOs themselves and existing literature. This multi-source approach strengthens the credibility of the findings.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The meta-synthesis employed a systematic methodology, using selective reduction to identify positive and negative impact themes. It followed structured processes of literature review, data analysis, and validation with RLOs. The methodology is clearly articulated.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The report was reviewed by several academic experts in forced migration.</p> <p><b>Score: 5 out of 5 - Excellent</b></p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The meta-synthesis centres the perspectives and experiences of five RLOs across diverse regions. It amplifies refugee voices by directly engaging the RLOs in the research process. However, the voices of program participants are presented through the lens of the original evaluations rather than directly.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The meta-synthesis critically examines assumptions around the factors that enable RLO impact. It questions dominant narratives that emphasise RLO capacity building and specific operating environments, instead highlighting the importance of flexible funding, partnerships, community embeddedness and refugee leadership.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The researcher is transparent about her positionality and the limitations of the meta-synthesis. The report openly acknowledges the assumptions and power dynamics within the humanitarian system that constrain RLO impact.</p> <p><b>Score: 4.5 out of 5 - Excellent</b></p>

**Overall score: (5+4.5)/2 = 4.75 out of 5 - Excellent**

Similarly, case study #19 in Box 6 is an external evaluation of a youth participatory grantmaking pilot in Sierra Leone. The evaluation triangulates diverse stakeholder perspectives, employs a participatory methodology suited to the study's objectives, and incorporates participant validation and external review, achieving an excellent score of 5 out of 5 for conventional standards. It also scores 5 out of 5 for inclusion standards by engaging youth as co-evaluators, assessing participant diversity,

examining power dynamics and contextual barriers, and valuing youth participation while acknowledging limitations. The overall evidence quality score of 5 out of 5 suggests that the evaluation generates highly credible and inclusive evidence on the impact of youth participation in grantmaking decisions and processes.

**Box 6: Example of a case study with a high score in both conventional standards and inclusion standards for participation's effectiveness in philanthropic practice**

**CASE STUDY #19**

**Type:** External evaluation report

**Source:** WORDS Global. 2021. Evaluation of Youth Participatory Grant-making Pilot Initiative in Sierra Leone. [https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL\\_PGM\\_REPORT\\_WITHOUT\\_ANNEXURES.pdf](https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL_PGM_REPORT_WITHOUT_ANNEXURES.pdf)

**Depth of participation:** Substantial-Full – Young people serve as grantmaking panellists, designing the process and making funding decisions.

**Outcome of participation:** Young people's involvement as grantmaking panellists has increased youth participation, agency and leadership in grantmaking decisions, governance and MEL. The participatory process has shifted power dynamics and informed grantmaking practices, though long-term outcomes are not yet captured.

Assessment against conventional standards	Assessment against inclusion standards
<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The report triangulates perspectives from participants, grantmakers, and some community members. This enhances the credibility of the findings.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The participatory evaluation methodology examines processes and initial outcomes. The limitations are acknowledged. The methodology is appropriate for assessing the participatory process.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The participant validation of findings enhances credibility. The external evaluator provides objectivity.</p> <p><b>Score: 5 out of 5 - Excellent.</b></p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The youth are engaged as co-evaluators. Assesses diversity of participants. It seeks to centre youth voices.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The report examines shifting power dynamics in grantmaking. Analyses adultism. The analysis considers contextual barriers.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> It clearly values youth participation. Acknowledges challenges and limitations.</p> <p><b>Score: 5 out of 5 - Excellent.</b></p>

**Overall score: (5+5)/2 = 5 out of 5 - Excellent.**

Both examples showcase the potential for generating robust evidence on participatory approaches by combining rigorous methodologies that meet conventional standards along with inclusion standards. This approach helps identify and value evidence that may be overlooked or undervalued when relying solely on conventional standards, promoting a more inclusive

and nuanced understanding of what constitutes good evidence in participatory contexts. This expanded assessment framework is essential for recognising the unique value and challenges of participatory approaches and ensuring that the experiences and perspectives of excluded communities are adequately considered in the evaluation of evidence quality.

# 5. Inclusive Evidence Guidelines



As the findings from this research affirm, to understand if participation is meaningful and effective, the evidence must be grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of participants themselves. Using the Evidence Quality Rubric as an assessment tool to analyse existing evidence reveals the need for more expansive evidence that is multidimensional, inclusive and centred on participant narratives. Higher quality and more inclusive evidence is required to effectively evaluate the effectiveness of participation.

To help people to do this we propose a complementary tool: *Inclusive Evidence Guidelines*. This tool offers practical guidance for participatory evidence gathering. The Guidelines integrate five inclusion principles to foster evidence creation that reflects people’s lived realities.

**Table 3: Inclusive Evidence Guidelines**

Inclusion principles	Description	Application in gathering evidence	Evidence sources
<b>1. Centre participant perspectives</b>	Insights should be grounded in and elevate participant narratives	Elevate lived experiences of participants in creating and analysing data	First-hand accounts of participatory processes
<b>2. Co-design locally relevant methods</b>	Communities should shape plans suited to their contexts	Enable communities to lead designing evaluation approaches	Documentation of community-driven methods
<b>3. Conduct systemic analysis</b>	Analysis should link participation to shifting structural dynamics	Ground analysis in critique of power structures and root causes of marginalisation	Assessment of interconnected vulnerabilities targeted
<b>4. Apply an intersectional lens</b>	Interpretation should analyse interconnections perpetuating marginalisation	Examine how issues connect to compounded barriers across institutions and beliefs	Mapping of reciprocal impacts on interconnected systems
<b>5. Ensure accountability to communities</b>	Findings and interpretations should be co-analysed with participants	Check data interpretations and validate conclusions with participants	Participant oversight ensuring analyses align with realities

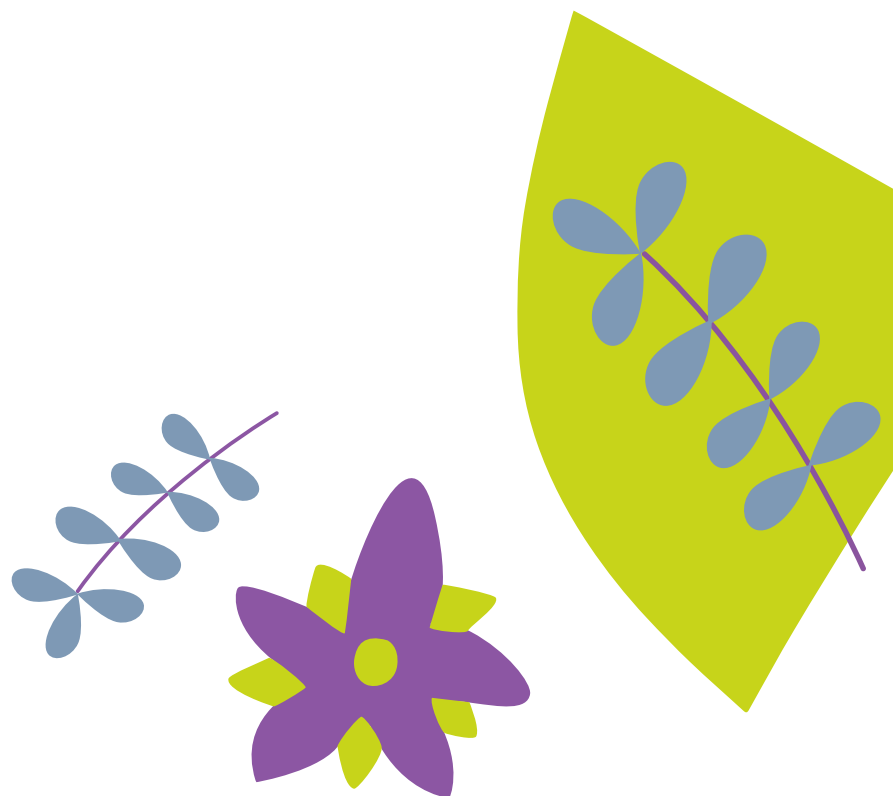
The five inclusion principles collectively contribute to meeting the three inclusion standards for good quality evidence: representation, power analysis, and bias/perspective. For example,

- Centring participant perspectives (Principle 1) and ensuring accountability to communities (Principle 5) directly contribute to meeting the representation standard.
- Conducting systematic analysis (Principle 3) and applying an intersectional lens (Principle 4) help to meet the power analysis standard.
- Co-designing locally relevant methods (Principle 2) and ensuring accountability to communities (Principle 5) help to address potential biases and incorporate diverse perspectives.

While following all five principles is ideal for fully meeting the inclusion standards, applying even a few of these principles can enhance the inclusivity of the evidence to varying degrees.

While the *Inclusive Evidence Guidelines* focuses on fostering participants' inclusion in evidence creation, the *Evidence Quality Rubric* serves as an assessment tool for evaluating the resulting inclusive evidence. Together, they provide guidance for producing and assessing inclusive evidence within participatory approaches to research, monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Evidence Quality Rubric	Inclusive Evidence Guidelines
<p>The Rubric offers comprehensive guidance for assessing diverse forms of evidence related to meaningful participation. It balances basic conventional research standards with inclusion factors of representation, power dynamics, and bias interrogation when evaluating evidence.</p>	<p>The Guidelines provide practical guidance to foster just, equitable evidence gathering processes centred on affected communities' priorities and perspectives.</p> <p>It includes five guiding principles to prompt reflection on voice, power, culture, knowledge forms, and accountability to communities when designing participatory documentation approaches.</p>



# 6. Conclusion and Recommendations





With long roots in community practice, participation continues to offer a viable, concrete method for driving systemic change by shifting power towards historically excluded groups. As this research affirms, participation can contribute to improving practice and transforming relationships of power between funders and communities.

Participatory approaches are rooted in people's lived realities, not abstract ideas. They promote fairness in knowledge by moving beyond impersonal, top-down systems that are misaligned with community priorities. Many ask for proof that participation has value. This shows the need to totally rethink dominant concepts of "evidence" and "progress" that dismiss community perspectives. Achieving real justice means changing knowledge systems to adopt participatory worldviews that recognise communities' power to define the change they need. Broad, democratised evidence focused on people's lived struggles is key for systemic change.

While we found substantive evidence demonstrating participation's multifaceted impacts, gaps persist regarding participatory philanthropy specifically. A number of funders have been engaging in deep practices of participation for many years, but the efforts to document the longitudinal impacts of participatory philanthropy are nascent and emerging. Through this research, we mapped current information and ideas from experts, pointing out areas needing further investigation rather than providing definitive conclusions about participation's effectiveness. However, our intention is also to spur greater resourcing and exploration in this area precisely because evidence across contexts is still emerging, especially regarding participatory philanthropy.

The conceptual tools we present in this report give initial guidance for assessing and generating evidence on participation in a participatory way. We have developed these tools based on extensive experience engaging excluded communities over the years. However, we believe these frameworks must evolve through real-world use, feedback, and critique from communities themselves, not donors alone. Communities should guide adapting the tools to fit local contexts. We encourage more use of these tools so that they progress through on-the-ground application. As communities directly apply

these tools in real participatory initiatives, their firsthand experience can improve the frameworks by integrating local insights. Rather than the tools staying static, their ongoing refinement based on how communities apply them will better incorporate community knowledge. This community-driven enhancement over time can shape more practical tools connected to real life.

## Recommendations for Practitioners and Funders

Based on what we have found and learned during this research process, in this final section we propose recommendations for funders and practitioners who are committed to supporting a flourishing ecosystem of practice, knowledge, and learning on participation and, ultimately, contributing to deeper social change. These recommendations centre around three premises:

### 1. Reimagine evidence

- **Commit to questioning dominant evidence paradigms.** Critically re-examine standards and ingrained biases that dismiss community knowledge as less credible. Narrow conceptions of expertise perpetuate exclusion.
- **Centre excluded community perspectives and ways of knowing.** Listen deeply and amplify the voices of those historically excluded. Fully value lived experience alongside conventional academic research. Compensate community members for their expertise.
- **Foster inclusive collective sensemaking and documentation.** Nurture cross-sectoral collective learning spaces for funders, activists and communities to jointly build an understanding of participatory processes through collaborative analysis.
- **Apply participatory principles in assessments.** Prioritise community-defined indicators of success rather than institutional metrics. Progress requires addressing power imbalances.

## 2. Resource participatory practices and research

- **Provide flexible, long-term core funding to partners who are already embracing participatory practices or are open to doing so.** Flexible funding enables partner communities to implement change on timelines they determine to be meaningful. Multi-year support recognises that participatory processes move at a community-defined pace requiring sustained backing across years, not pressurised timeframes dictated by institutional metrics. Ensure budgetary space for truly redistributive work rather than sparse project-specific grants.
- **Support participatory research that reshapes knowledge hierarchies.** Support decentralised participatory research using unconventional, collaborative community-designed methods that reframe notions of evidence and rigour. Comprehensively disseminate lessons through cross-institutional and inter-sector collaboration recalibrating deeply ingrained knowledge asymmetries. Promote sustainable infrastructures to reduce community burden.
- **Create the conditions for participatory approaches to thrive.** Expand the adoption of participatory practices sector-wide through exchanges and peer learning. Welcome failures as opportunities for ongoing evolution. Encourage eagerness for community-designed solutions.

## 3. Transform internal philanthropic practices

- **Embed participatory practices within philanthropic institutions** from governance and leadership to grantmaking and operational protocols, using established tools such as Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool ([APPT](#)) or the [Weaving a Collective Tapestry: A Funders' Toolkit](#). Be transparent and realistic about your limitations but clear on your political commitment. Facilitate equitable partnerships, agenda co-design, and shared governance with communities themselves in strategy development, funding decisions, and progress assessment.
- **Connect and learn with networks of peer funders and practitioners who are embracing accountability to communities** through participatory philanthropy and collective movement building for systemic change. Actively engage with existing communities focused on shifting power, such as the Participatory Grantmaking Community of Practice, #ShiftthePower Group, and Trust-Based Philanthropy. Convene funders who are resourcing participation to exchange insights and build shared understanding. Continually refine internal and collective approaches in response to critiques from communities themselves as key partners in equitable collaboration.

### Practical guidance for funding participatory research

#### 1. What to fund:

- a. Experimentation, testing, creative documentation, innovative and non-traditional research methods, forms of evidence, and unconventional participation.
- b. Longitudinal research where partners define the needs and scope.

#### 2. How to fund:

- a. Offer diverse ways to access funding:
  - i. Be in dialogue with your current partners on their needs, ideas and dreams in research because they will know what emerging change is happening.
  - ii. Explore open calls for proposals and consider language justice, to make proposals accessible and inclusive to diverse and under-resourced researchers and organisations.
  - iii. Be open to working with fiscal sponsors and universities as intermediaries.
- b. Collaborate with other like-minded funders, streamlining proposal processes and pooling resources. This is a concrete way to reduce the burden for communities, break down silos and build a more comprehensive body of knowledge across the sector.

#### 3. Who to fund:

- a. Prioritise majority world/ global South-led organisations and researchers.
- b. Researchers, storytellers, artists and people building narrative power.

# Acknowledgements

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In collaboration with the Porticus team: Camila Jerico Daminello, Cica Scarpi, Dennis Arends, Douglas Calixto, Lucile Corman, Marat Yu, Nathan Koblintz, Rodrigo Bustamente, and Steffen Eikenbusch.

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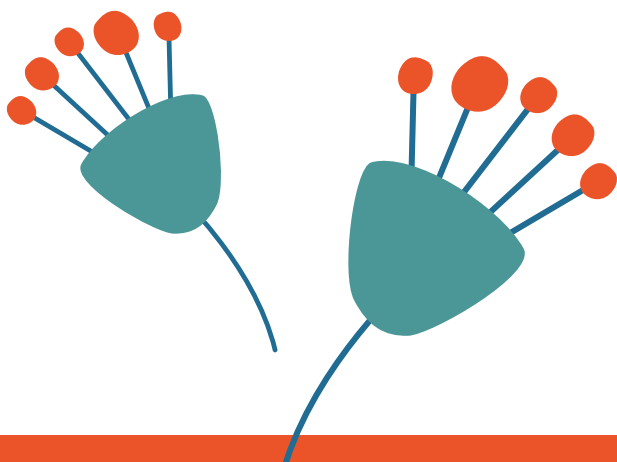
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# Annex A: Porticus' Thematic Focus Areas and Strategies for Social Change

- **Building Future Generations** - Advocating for a whole child approach across local, national and global child-care and education systems.
- **Strengthening Our Societies**
  - **Criminal Justice** - Working with civil society actors, governments and donors to ensure that successful rehabilitation and reintegration of incarcerated people becomes the norm.
  - **People on the Move** - Working for a world where migrants can directly participate in the planning and implementation of policies and programmes that foster human dignity – and affect their lives.
- **Caring for the earth**
  - **Fair Transition** - Ensuring urban policy and practice plays a key role in fair transition. And that rural practice supports climate mitigation and improves lives.
- **Fostering Vital Faith Communities**
  - **Vital Catholic Thought** - The aim is to revitalise the tradition of Vital Catholic Thought to contribute to rebuilding the credibility of a Church that has been hit by numerous institutional crises.
  - **Building a Vital Church** - By building capacity, convening others and advocating for change the aim is to help make the Church more credible and relevant, and the world more just and sustainable.
  - **Child Protection** - The goal is to look after children by creating places where they are valued, protected and safe and encouraging the Catholic Church and other child-serving organisations to become more responsible leaders in preventing abuse

Porticus strategies for social change:

- **Service Delivery:** The provision of public services (e.g. health, education) through a series of interventions. This includes crisis/humanitarian response.
- **Capacity Development:** The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources through formal and informal training, workshops and experiential learning curriculum.
- **Influencing Public Perception:** The process by which socially constructed views, beliefs and norms are changed e.g. through media, social communications strategies, community organising etc.
- **Infrastructure Development:** The construction of basic foundational services in order to stimulate economic growth and improve the quality of life, including transport, energy, water, green infrastructure, and technology.
- **Influencing Policies, Planning and Practices:** The use of various strategies (advocacy, partnerships, campaigning, movement building and strategic communications) to call for and shape new policies, laws and behaviours from decision-makers and power holders.
- **Coordination and System Strengthening:** A series of interventions to improve the interconnectedness and effectiveness of the structures, people, institutions, resources and activities that make up systems e.g. health, education, and justice systems etc.

# Annex B: Tables of Case Study Analysis

**Table X: Assessing the evidence of participation's effectiveness in contributing to social change**

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach <sup>54</sup>	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
1	<p><b>Type:</b> Opinion piece</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Alio, Mustafa, Shaza Alrihawi, James Milner, Anila Noor, Najeeba Wazefadost, and Pascal Zigashane. 2020. "By Refugees, for Refugees: Refugee Leadership during COVID-19, and beyond." <i>International Journal of Refugee Law</i> 32 (2): 370–373. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeaa021">https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeaa021</a>.</p>	Refugee-led organisations mobilised to provide information, services and advocacy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	Service delivery; Influencing public perception	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The article presents examples from several refugee-led organisations across different regions, but does not triangulate with other data sources.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> As an opinion piece, it does not employ a clear research methodology.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> There are no details on any validation or peer review process.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 2 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The article centres the perspectives and actions of refugee-led organisations. However, it does not directly include refugee voices.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The article discusses shifts in power, with refugees being recognized as leaders and partners rather than passive recipients of aid.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The article presents the perspective of the authors as representatives of refugee-led networks. Potential biases are not explicitly examined.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 3 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(2+3)/2 = 2.5</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Moderate</b></p>
2	<p><b>Type:</b> Journal article</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Gonzalez Benson, Odessa, Irene Routte, Ana Paula Pimentel Walker, Mieko Yoshihama, and Allison Kelly. 2022. "Refugee-Led Organizations' Crisis Response during the COVID-19 Pandemic." <i>Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees</i> 38 (1): 62–77. <a href="https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40879">https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40879</a>.</p>	Refugee-led organisations provided effective case management, outreach, programming and advocacy to respond to community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Service delivery; Influencing policies, planning and practices	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The study triangulates interview data from refugee organisation leaders with document analysis. Community perspectives are not included.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The study uses semi-structured interviews and document analysis, with a clear description of methods. The analysis is guided by an existing conceptual framework.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> There are no details on external validation. Limitations are acknowledged.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 3.5 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The study focuses on the perspectives of refugee organisation leaders. The voices of diverse community members are not directly represented.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The article examines how refugee-led organisations challenged power dynamics to meet community needs. A deeper analysis of power relations could be beneficial.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The researchers' positionality is not explicitly discussed. The use of an existing conceptual framework may introduce some bias.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 3.5 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(3.5+3.5)/2 = 3.5</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>

54. See Annex A: Porticus' Thematic Focus Areas and Strategies for Social Change.

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
3	<p><b>Type:</b> Book chapter</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Macaulay, Fiona. 2015. “Whose Prisoners Are These Anyway?” Church, State and Society Partnerships and Co-Production of Offender ‘Resocialisation’ in Brazil.” In <i>Transnational Penal Cultures: New Perspectives on Discipline, Punishment and Desistance</i>. Edited by Vivien Miller. 202-216. New York: Routledge.</p>	Community organisations partnered with the state to support the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners in Brazil.	Service delivery; Coordination and system strengthening	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The study draws on interviews with diverse stakeholders including prisoners, organisation staff, and government representatives, allowing for triangulation of perspectives.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The study uses interviews, focus groups and document analysis. The methodology is described but more detail would be beneficial.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> As a chapter in a published book, it is likely the study underwent editorial review, providing a form of validation. However, the exact validation process is not specified.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The study includes the voices of prisoners and community members alongside organisational and government representatives.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The study extensively examines power dynamics between community organisations, prisoners, and the state. It critically analyses questions of control and ownership.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The researcher’s positionality is not explicitly discussed. The analysis presents a balanced perspective noting benefits and challenges.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(4+4)/2 = 4/5</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>
4	<p><b>Type:</b> Journal article</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Godden, Naomi Joy, Pam Macnish, Trimita Chakma, and Kavita Naidu. 2020. “Feminist Participatory Action Research as a Tool for Climate Justice.” <i>Gender &amp; Development</i> 28 (3): 593–615. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1842040">https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1842040</a>.</p>	Grassroots women used Feminist Participatory Action Research to document their experiences, build movements, and advocate for climate justice.	Capacity development; Influencing policies, planning and practices	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The study triangulates data from interviews, document analysis, and participatory workshops, capturing diverse perspectives.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The study uses a clear Feminist Participatory Action Research methodology, with a detailed description of the process and analysis.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The article has undergone peer review as part of the publication process in the <i>Gender &amp; Development</i> journal, providing a strong form of academic validation.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 5 out of 5 - Excellent</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The programme included young women researchers across Asia, representing a diverse range of communities.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The FPAR projects were led by the young women researchers, indicating a high degree of ownership and power.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The programme was designed to address the intricate interplay between gender injustice and climate change, indicating a feminist perspective.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 5 out of 5 - Excellent</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(5+5)/2 = 5</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Excellent</b></p>



No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
5	<p><b>Type:</b> Journal article</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Chakma, T. 2016. "Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR): An effective framework for empowering grassroots women &amp; strengthening feminist movements in Asia Pacific." <i>Asian Journal of Women's Studies</i> 22 (2): 165-173. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2016.1168153">https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2016.1168153</a>.</p>	Grassroots women used Feminist Participatory Action Research to document their lived experiences, build capacities and movements, and advocate for climate justice and development justice.	Capacity development; Influencing policies, planning and practices	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The article presents case examples from various FPAR projects across different countries, but does not triangulate findings with other data sources.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> As an overview article, it does not detail a specific research methodology. It describes APWLD's general FPAR approach.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The article is published in a peer-reviewed journal, the Asian Journal of Women's Studies, which provides a level of academic validation.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 3 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The article centres the voices, experiences and knowledge of grassroots women engaged in FPAR projects. It provides direct quotes from women participants.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The article explicitly examines how FPAR shifts power to women and communities. It uses a feminist lens to analyse structural oppression.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The author acknowledges her position as a staff member of APWLD. The article aims to highlight the perspectives and achievements of grassroots women.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4.5 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(3+4.5)/2 = 3.75</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>
6	<p><b>Type:</b> Blog post</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Munyambanza, Joseph. 2020. "Refugee-Led Organizations Can Deliver Education to Refugee Children during COVID-19 and Beyond." <i>AllAfrica</i> (blog). June 19. <a href="https://allafrica.com/stories/202006190040.html">https://allafrica.com/stories/202006190040.html</a>.</p>	Refugee-led organisations provided adaptive education services and community support to refugee children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Service delivery; Influencing policies, planning and practices	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The blog post primarily presents the perspective and experiences of the author, with some reference to the work of other refugee-led organisations. It does not triangulate findings with other external data sources.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> As a blog post, it does not employ a formal research methodology. The author draws on his personal experiences and observations.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> There are no details on any external validation or peer review process.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 2 out of 5 - Limited</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The post centralises the voice, experiences and knowledge of a refugee leader deeply involved in community-based education initiatives. It provides direct examples from refugee-led organisations.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The post explicitly examines power dynamics, arguing for a shift in power to refugee-led organisations as key partners and "problem-solvers" rather than passive beneficiaries.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The author writes from his perspective as a refugee and leader of a refugee-led organisation. The post openly advocates for greater recognition and support for refugee leadership and innovation.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4.5 out of 5 - Excellent</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(2+4.5)/2 = 3.25</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Moderate</b></p>



No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
7	<p><b>Type:</b> Book</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Drummond, W. J. 2020. <i>Prison Truth: The Story of the San Quentin News</i>. First Edition. Oakland: University of California Press. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqr1bhx">https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqr1bhx</a>.</p>	An inmate-run newspaper provided a platform for prisoners' voices, perspectives and stories of personal transformation, contributing to changing public narratives about incarceration.	Capacity development; Influencing public perception	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The book draws on interviews with key participants, analysis of the newspaper's content and coverage, and the author's firsthand observations as a volunteer. This allows for the triangulation of different data sources and perspectives.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> As a work of narrative journalism, the book employs immersive reporting, interviews, and historical research. The author's positionality and methods are made clear.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> Published by the University of California Press, the book has likely undergone editorial and peer review, providing a form of validation. The author's credentials as a journalism professor add credibility.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The book centres the voices, experiences and perspectives of incarcerated individuals who worked on the newspaper. It provides a platform for their stories to be heard.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The book examines issues of power and agency, looking at how the newspaper navigated prison administration and regulations. It shows prisoners reclaiming some power to shape narratives.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> As a memoir, the book inherently presents the author's perspective. He reflects on his own positionality and biases. The book purposefully seeks to challenge dominant biases about prisoners.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (4+4)/2 = 4 out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
8	<p><b>Type:</b> Research report</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Ross, Chris, Elaine Kerridge, and Amy Woodhouse. The Scottish Government. (2018). "The impact of children and young people's participation on policy making." The Scottish Government. <a href="https://sccr-files.s3.amazonaws.com/sites/5384a71b21ba55270a000002/assets/5aaf892aa4aa837bda11a469/The_Impact_of_Children_and_Young_People_s_Participation_on_Policy_Making.pdf">https://sccr-files.s3.amazonaws.com/sites/5384a71b21ba55270a000002/assets/5aaf892aa4aa837bda11a469/The_Impact_of_Children_and_Young_People_s_Participation_on_Policy_Making.pdf</a></p>	<p>Youth participation impacted policies across diverse areas like police powers, education, children's hearings, violence against women and human rights in Scotland. It influenced specific policy decisions, parliamentary evidence, and organisational practices.</p>	<p>Influencing policies, planning and practices; Coordination and system strengthening</p>	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The report uses a case study approach, synthesising data from interviews with policymakers, organisations supporting engagement, and in one case, children and young people themselves. This triangulation across stakeholder perspectives strengthens the credibility of the findings.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The study employed a systematic methodology, using an initial survey to identify potential cases, followed by a selection process to choose 6 diverse case studies. Interviews followed a semi-structured guide and data was thematically coded and synthesised. This allows for a robust analysis.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The report was written by Children in Scotland and commissioned by the Scottish Government. However, there are no details provided about any oversight, peer review or other external validation of the research process and findings.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The 6 case studies were selected to include a diversity of policy areas, geographies, and demographics of children and young people. Several cases focused on engaging vulnerable groups such as care-experienced youth and those affected by domestic violence. However, the report notes that younger children and those with disabilities were often underrepresented in participatory processes.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The report examines the different levels of influence children and young people had, from agenda-setting to research and evaluation. It notes that participation tended to be more meaningful when young people were engaged from early stages. The analysis surfaces power imbalances such as lack of clarity on how children's input would be used and challenges with closing feedback loops.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The report openly discusses limitations in children and young people's participation, such as tokenistic one-off events and lack of inclusive engagement. It amplifies young people's perspectives on what meaningful participation should look like.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 3.5 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(4+3.5)/2 = 3.75</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
9	<p><b>Type:</b> Journal article</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Crowley, Anne. 2015. "Is anyone listening? The impact of children's participation on public policy." <i>The International Journal of Children's Rights</i>, 23(3): 602–621. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02303005">https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02303005</a></p>	<p>Children's participation through Neighbourhood Children's Parliaments in Tamil Nadu, India led to tangible improvements in local services and facilities, while youth forums in Wales, UK focused on citizenship development outcomes for the children themselves.</p>	<p>Influencing policies, planning and practices; Capacity development</p>	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The research uses a longitudinal comparative case study approach, triangulating data from interviews, focus groups and observations with children, support workers, managers and policymakers across the two contexts.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The study followed a systematic methodology, developing an impact assessment framework, selecting cases, and collecting data at two points in time. However, the small number of cases limits generalisability.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The article was published in a peer-reviewed journal, lending credibility to the findings.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 3.5 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The study included a diversity of stakeholder perspectives, with a particular focus on children's views and experiences in both contexts. However, the voices of younger children and those with disabilities were not captured.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The article critically examines power dynamics, contrasting tokenistic participation in Wales with the more empowering approach of NCPs in India. It surfaces enabling factors like integration with adult civic engagement.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The researcher openly reflects on her positionality as a long-time advocate for children's participation. The discussion thoughtfully examines tensions between participation as empowerment versus social control.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (3.5+4)/2 = 3.75 out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
10	<p><b>Type:</b> External evaluation report</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Essex-Lettieri, Diana. 2022. <i>Understanding RLO Impact: A metasynthesis of five external impact evaluations covering programs run by Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs)</i>. RRLI. September. <a href="https://www.refugeeslead.org/evidence">https://www.refugeeslead.org/evidence</a>.</p>	<p>The refugee-led organisations across five regions were found to provide accessible, holistic, culturally sensitive services that provide life-saving support and access to long-term solutions for community members.</p>	<p>Service delivery; Influencing policies, planning and practices</p>	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The meta-synthesis uses conceptual content analysis to identify impact trends across five external evaluations. It triangulates findings across the evaluations, as well as data from the RLOs themselves and existing literature. This multi-source approach strengthens the credibility of the findings.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The meta-synthesis employed a systematic methodology, using selective reduction to identify positive and negative impact themes. It followed a structured process of literature review, data analysis, and validation with RLOs. The methodology is clearly articulated.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The report was reviewed by several academic experts in forced migration.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 5 out of 5 - Excellent</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The meta-synthesis centres the perspectives and experiences of five RLOs across diverse regions. It amplifies refugee voices by directly engaging the RLOs in the research process. However, the voices of program participants are presented through the lens of the original evaluations rather than directly.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The meta-synthesis critically examines assumptions around the factors that enable RLO impact. It questions dominant narratives that emphasise RLO capacity building and specific operating environments, instead highlighting the importance of flexible funding, partnerships, community embeddedness and refugee leadership.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The researcher is transparent about her positionality and the limitations of the meta-synthesis. The report openly acknowledges the assumptions and power dynamics within the humanitarian system that constrain RLO impact.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4.5 out of 5 - Excellent</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (5+4.5)/2 = 4.75 out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
11	<p><b>Type:</b> Government website</p> <p><b>Source:</b> The Scottish Government. 2023. “Just transition fund: Year one projects.” <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/just-transition-fund/pages/year-one-projects/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/just-transition-fund/pages/year-one-projects/</a>.</p>	Participatory community budgeting expanded climate investment beneficiaries beyond the usual suspects through localised choices.	Infrastructure development; Coordination and system strengthening	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The information comes from a single official government source. There is no triangulation with other data sources to verify the accuracy of the project details and funding amounts.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> As a government web page, this is a direct reporting of information, not a research study. There are no details on data collection or analysis methodology.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The information is presented on an official government website, which lends credibility. However, there are no details on any validation or auditing of the reported information.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 2 out of 5 - Limited</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The information focuses solely on relaying government funding decisions. There is no representation of diverse stakeholder voices, especially those of the communities intended to benefit from the Just Transition projects.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> There is no discussion of the power dynamics behind the Just Transition funding allocation process or the design of funded projects. The information does not analyse who is making decisions and who benefits.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> As an official government communication, the information presents the funding decisions and projects in a positive light. It does not interrogate potential government biases or unintended consequences.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 1.5 out of 5 - Limited</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(2+1.5)/2 = 1.75</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Limited</b></p>
12	<p><b>Type:</b> Learning brief</p> <p><b>Source:</b> UNGEI. 2022. <i>Intergenerational Partnerships for Transformative Change: A Learning Brief.</i> <a href="https://www.ungei.org/publication/intergenerational-partnerships-transformative-change">https://www.ungei.org/publication/intergenerational-partnerships-transformative-change</a></p>	Intergenerational alliances leveraged respective strengths pursuing unified advocacy that achieved wider gender education reforms.	Influencing policies, planning and practices; Coordination and system strengthening	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The brief is based on the lived experiences and realities of various organisations, suggesting some level of data triangulation. However, the specific sources of data are not explicitly mentioned.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The brief was co-developed by feminists representing their organisations from across generations, indicating a collaborative approach. However, the specific methodologies used to gather and analyse data are not detailed.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The brief was produced by reputable UN agencies but does not reference an external peer review process.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 2 out of 5 - Limited</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The brief was co-developed by an intergenerational group of feminist activists, centring perspectives of young feminist networks, especially from the Global South.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> It explicitly aims to shift power to youth through co-leadership models and recognizing intersectionality of age, gender and postcolonial issues.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> It takes an intentional feminist, rights-based and decolonial approach. It acknowledges this perspective openly.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Overall quality of evidence:</b> <math>(2+4)/2 = 3</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Moderate</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
13	<p><b>Type:</b> Monitoring report</p> <p><b>Source:</b> MADE Network. 2016. <i>ROM (Results Oriented Monitoring) Report on the IMPACS Migration &amp; Development Project.</i> <a href="https://www.madenetwork.org/made-publications">https://www.madenetwork.org/made-publications</a></p>	CSO capacity building and joint advocacy in regional and global for improved protection and recognition of migrants and their contributions.	Capacity development; Influencing policies, planning and practices	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The ROM review collected data from multiple sources, including project documents, and interviews with the project team, partners, and external stakeholders in several countries. This allowed for triangulation of findings from different perspectives.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The ROM review followed a systematic methodology, using the standard ROM criteria and report template. It included a documentation review, development of interview guides, field visits, and qualitative data analysis. The methodology is clearly explained.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The report went through a review process involving the EC services and the lead implementer ICMC, which provided comments and clarifications that were incorporated. This validation process adds credibility to the findings.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The ROM review engaged a range of stakeholders, including CSOs, governments, and international organisations. It captured diverse perspectives from the global and regional levels. However, the voices of migrants and communities themselves are not directly represented, likely because this was not the focus of the project or review.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The report analyses how the project helped shift power to CSOs to influence migration and development policies and practices. It notes the project's contribution to increasing CSO access, legitimacy and influence in key policy processes like the GFMD. However, the analysis of power dynamics within the CSO sector or between CSOs and other actors is limited.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The review was conducted by external experts, which helps mitigate bias. It provides a balanced perspective noting both strengths and areas for improvement. However, as a ROM review commissioned by the EU as the donor, it is situated within that particular institutional perspective and accountability framework.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 3 out of 5 - Moderate</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> <math>(4+3)/2 = 3.5</math> out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Outcome of participation	Strategic approach	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
14	<p><b>Type:</b> External evaluation report</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Pugh, Sarah. 2017. <i>Migration and Development Civil Society (MADE) Network: External Evaluation</i>. MADE Network. <a href="https://www.madenetwork.org/made-publications">https://www.madenetwork.org/made-publications</a></p>	The MADE Network strengthened civil society capacity and engagement in migration and development policies and practices at regional and global levels, resulting in expanded civil society participation, strengthened networks, enhanced thematic expertise, and some influence on policies.	Capacity development; Influencing policies, planning and practices	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The evaluation triangulated data from document review, diverse stakeholder interviews (MADE staff and partners, donors, international organisations, governments), and a participatory workshop, allowing cross-checking and capturing different perspectives.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The evaluation used mixed methods, structured around OECD/DAC criteria, with strategies to improve data reliability and analysis.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> Preliminary findings were validated with MADE partners through the workshop and the draft report was circulated for feedback.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4.5 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The evaluation included diverse perspectives from 31 interviews with staff, partners, donors, governments, and external stakeholders. Regional partners were actively involved. However, migrant and community voices were not directly represented.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The evaluation analysed some power dynamics, such as the ICMC-MADE relationship, North-South partner selection, and MADE's legitimacy and representativeness.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The evaluator acknowledged her positionality and discussed bias mitigation strategies. The evaluation was balanced, noting strengths and weaknesses, but may have some inevitable 'performance bias' as a donor-mandated evaluation.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (4.5+4)/2 = 4.25 out of 5</p> <p><b>Very good</b></p>



**Table Y: Assessing the evidence of participation’s effectiveness in participatory philanthropy**

No.	Case study example	Level and outcome of participation	Functional area <sup>55</sup>	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
15	<p><b>Type:</b> Magazine article Source 1: Glass, Juniper. 2021. “Decisions in Communities Hands: Learning by Grantmakers in Canada.” L’Annee Philanthropique Volume 3. <a href="https://philab.ugam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Etude-de-cas-Glass.pdf">https://philab.ugam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Etude-de-cas-Glass.pdf</a>, 59</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Newspaper article Source 2: Buhles, Kelley. 2020. “Arctic Indigenous Fund Transforms Philanthropy’s Power Dynamics.” Medium. June 5. <a href="https://medium.com/reimagine-money/arctic-indigenous-fund-transforms-philanthropys-power-dynamics-bcc4619a7b2b">https://medium.com/reimagine-money/arctic-indigenous-fund-transforms-philanthropys-power-dynamics-bcc4619a7b2b</a>.</p>	<p><b>Depth of participation:</b> Full - Community controls decisions</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Has led the transformation of traditional power dynamics in philanthropy by shifting decision-making power toward Indigenous communities. This has resulted in more effective community-led decision-making processes in grantmaking.</p>	Governance & Leadership; Grantmaking	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The sources primarily rely on interviews with people directly involved in the Arctic Indigenous Fund. There is limited triangulation with other data sources to verify the claims made.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The sources are journalistic articles that do not detail a specific research methodology. They present case studies and insights based on interviews, but the data collection and analysis methods are not clearly outlined.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> As media articles, the sources have likely gone through an editorial review process. However, there are no details provided about external validation of the findings presented.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 2 out of 5 - limited</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> Both sources include diverse perspectives from various stakeholders involved in participatory philanthropy, particularly centring the voices of Indigenous leaders and advisors.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> Both sources discuss the shift in power dynamics from traditional grantmakers to Indigenous communities, providing a strong power analysis.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The sources present a positive view of the Arctic Indigenous Fund’s participatory approach, which may indicate some bias. However, they do note some of the challenges faced in implementation.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (2+4)/2 = 3 out of 5</p> <p><b>Moderate</b></p>

55. We adopted and mapped the functional areas from the Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool (APPT). See <https://www.advancingparticipation.com/monitoring-evaluating-learning>

No.	Case study example	Level and outcome of participation	Functional area	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
16	<p><b>Type:</b> Learning report</p> <p><b>Source:</b> FRIDA   The Young Feminist Fund. 2023. "Reflections on Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice." <a href="https://youngfeministfund.org/resourcing-connections/">https://youngfeministfund.org/resourcing-connections/</a></p>	<p><b>Depth of participation:</b> Full - Young feminist activists co-design FRIDA's grantmaking strategy and process.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The co-design of the grantmaking strategy and process by young feminist activists has strengthened FRIDA's ability to resource and support young feminist organising and connections. The participatory approach has informed grantmaking practices and shifted power in governance and decision-making.</p>	Grantmaking; Governance & Leadership	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The report triangulates data from multiple sources, including feedback and voting comments from over 900 groups, interviews with grantee partners, advisors, and applicants, and survey responses. This allows for cross-verification of findings from different perspectives.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The report employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data from interviews and surveys with quantitative analysis of voting comments. The methodology is clearly described, including the use of youth co-researchers, semi-structured interviews, and multilingual surveys.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The preliminary findings were validated through a participatory process involving FRIDA staff and co-researchers. The use of youth co-researchers also enhances the credibility of the findings.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4.5 out of 5 - Excellent</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The report actively involves young feminist activists from the Global South and East as co-researchers and participants. It seeks to centre the voices and experiences of a diverse range of young feminist collectives.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The report explicitly aims to interrogate power dynamics in grantmaking and shift power to young feminist movements. The participatory research approach itself challenges traditional researcher-researched power imbalances.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The report openly acknowledges its feminist, participatory perspective and the positionality of the researchers. The use of youth co-researchers helps mitigate potential biases.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 5 out of 5 - Excellent</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (4.5+5)/2 = 4.75 out of 5</p> <p><b>Excellent.</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Level and outcome of participation	Functional area	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
17	<p><b>Type:</b> Newspaper article</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Ali, Sabir, Lusine Kosakyan, Nyasha Yvonne Manungo, Puseletso Mpeisa, Nadia Mutisi, Naznine Nahar, Fer Rocha Castro, Rostyslav Semka, and Khalid Ahmad Tamu. 2023. “‘For the youth by the youth’: Young grantmakers reflect on their participatory grantmaking.” Alliance Magazine, September 23. <a href="https://www.alliancemagazine.org/analysis/for-the-youth-by-the-youth/">https://www.alliancemagazine.org/analysis/for-the-youth-by-the-youth/</a></p>	<p><b>Depth of participation:</b> Full - Young people serve as grantmakers, designing the process and making funding decisions.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Having young people serve as grantmakers in the Spark Fund has increased youth participation, agency and leadership in grantmaking decisions and governance. The participatory process has shifted power dynamics, though specific outcomes are not evidenced in the article.</p>	Grantmaking; Governance & Leadership	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The article relies on reflections from youth participants. No triangulation with other data sources.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The article presents participant reflections. As a magazine article, it lacks methodological rigour and clear structure.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> Participant quotes provide face validity. No external validation processes were described.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 2 out of 5 - Limited.</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> Young people from diverse backgrounds across multiple countries serve as grantmakers.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The article seeks to shift power to youth in grantmaking decisions. Examines adult-youth power dynamics.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> It presents youth perspectives. It acknowledges some challenges faced.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very Good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (2+4)/2 = 3 out of 5</p> <p><b>Moderate.</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Level and outcome of participation	Functional area	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
18	<p><b>Type:</b> Research paper</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Lewin, T., Cannon, M., Johnson, V., Philip, R., and Raghavan, P. 2023. Participation For, With, and By Girls: Evidencing Impact, REJUVENATE Working Paper 2. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. <a href="https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/participation-for-with-and-by-girls-evidencing-impact/">https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/participation-for-with-and-by-girls-evidencing-impact/</a></p>	<p><b>Depth of participation:</b> Substantial-Full – Examines different levels of girls’ participation (for, with, by) in development projects and evaluations.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Higher levels of girls’ participation in projects and evaluations have enabled more nuanced and contextually relevant MEL metrics, unintended effect analysis, and intersectional programming in grantmaking and grant administration. Girls’ participation has influenced what is measured and how.</p>	Grantmaking; Grant Administration; Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The paper triangulates perspectives from participants, grantmakers, and some community members. Enhances credibility of findings.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The participatory evaluation methodology examined processes and initial outcomes. Limitations were acknowledged. The methodology is appropriate for assessing the participatory process.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The participant validation of findings enhanced the credibility of the paper. The external evaluation provides some objectivity.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very Good.</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The youth were engaged as co-evaluators. The paper assesses the diversity of participants. The paper seeks to centre youth voices.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The paper examines shifting power dynamics in grantmaking. Analyses adultism. The analysis considers contextual barriers.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> The paper clearly values youth participation and acknowledges challenges and limitations.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very Good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (4+4)/2 = 4 out of 5</p> <p><b>Very Good</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Level and outcome of participation	Functional area	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
19	<p><b>Type:</b> External evaluation report</p> <p><b>Source:</b> IWORDS Global. 2021. Evaluation of Youth Participatory Grant-making Pilot Initiative in Sierra Leone. <a href="https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL_PGM_REPORT_WITHOUT_ANNEXURES.pdf">https://wearepurposeful.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL_PGM_REPORT_WITHOUT_ANNEXURES.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Depth of participation:</b> Substantial-Full – Young people serve as grantmaking panellists, designing the process and making funding decisions.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Young people’s involvement as grantmaking panellists has increased youth participation, agency and leadership in grantmaking decisions, governance and MEL. The participatory process has shifted power dynamics and informed grantmaking practices, though long-term outcomes are not yet captured.</p>	Grantmaking; Governance & Leadership; Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The report triangulates perspectives from participants, grantmakers, and some community members. This enhances the credibility of the findings.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The participatory evaluation methodology examines processes and initial outcomes. The limitations are acknowledged. The methodology is appropriate for assessing the participatory process.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> The participant validation of findings enhances credibility. The external evaluator provides objectivity.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 5 out of 5 - Excellent.</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> The youth are engaged as co-evaluators. Assesses diversity of participants. It seeks to centre youth voices.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The report examines shifting power dynamics in grantmaking. Analyses adultism. The analysis considers contextual barriers.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> It clearly values youth participation. Acknowledges challenges and limitations.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 5 out of 5 - Excellent.</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (5+5)/2 = 5 out of 5</p> <p><b>Excellent.</b></p>

No.	Case study example	Level and outcome of participation	Functional area	Conventional standards	Inclusion standards	Overall quality of evidence
20	<p><b>Type:</b> Learning brief</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Colnar, Megan, Andrea Azevedo, Courtney Tolmie, and Hannah Caddick. 2022. "Setting New Standards for Better MEL." BetterEvaluation, Global Evaluation Initiative. <a href="https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/setting-new-standards-for-better-mel-lessons-for-grantees-funders">https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/setting-new-standards-for-better-mel-lessons-for-grantees-funders</a><sup>56</sup></p>	<p><b>Depth of participation:</b> The MEL system and tools were co-developed in partnership with grantees through consultations, feedback mechanisms, and direct technical assistance.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Co-developing MEL systems and tools with grantees has improved grantee MEL capacity and practices, enhancing their ability to generate relevant evidence for learning and adaptation in grantmaking. Participatory MEL has rebalanced funder-grantee power dynamics and made MEL more useful for grantees.</p>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; Grantmaking	<p><b>Triangulation:</b> The brief draws on feedback and insights from grantees, program staff and evaluations. Triangulation between sources enhances credibility.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The brief describes MEL capacity building and technical assistance approaches. The evaluation methods include grantee interviews and assessments. There is a moderate level of methodological description.</p> <p><b>Validation:</b> Grantee feedback and external evaluations provide validation. Independent evaluation enhanced credibility.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very Good.</p>	<p><b>Representation:</b> Grantee needs and feedback clearly centred in developing MEL approaches. This aims to build grantee MEL capacity.</p> <p><b>Power analysis:</b> The brief explicitly aims to rebalance power dynamics between funders and grantees in MEL. It allows grantees to define their own indicators.</p> <p><b>Bias/perspective:</b> It articulates intent to improve MEL practices for grantee benefit. It acknowledges funder power and past harmful practices.</p> <p><b>Score:</b> 4 out of 5 - Very Good</p>	<p><b>Overall score:</b> (4+4)/2 = 4 out of 5</p> <p><b>Very Good</b></p>

56. This resource is part of BetterEvaluation's Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) toolkit for grantmakers and grantees by Global Evaluation Initiative. <https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/monitoring-evaluation-learning-mel-toolkit-for-grantmakers-grantees>



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