Evaluation of the Porticus Asia Anti-Trafficking Programme

Public Summary

June 2021

Appendix C
Learnings and reflections on 'participation'

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About this report

Porticus Asia commissioned this evaluation of a three-year anti-trafficking programme that funded 16 implementing partners across the region between 2017-2021.

This **Appendix: Methodology** supplements the **Public Summary** and provides additional information about the evaluation's methodology.

Written by Lighthouse Partnerships

Lighthouse Partnerships is a not-for-profit organisation that supports for-purpose organisations to increase their effectiveness through participatory approaches to evaluation, strategy and program design. We have specialist expertise in migration and displacement in the Asia-Pacific region, including labour migration, human trafficking, refugees and people seeking asylum.

Commissioned by Porticus

Porticus is an international organisation that manages the philanthropic endeavours of the Brenninkmeijer family. Porticus collaborates with partners around the globe to build stronger systems and secure just and sustainable futures for all.

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Learnings and reflections on 'participation'

1. Relevance of participation in the anti-trafficking sector

Participation of people with lived experience[*] was emphasised by several stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation as a critical priority for funders and organisations seeking to achieve meaningful systems change.[1] According to one funder interviewed:

> *You need to have people with lived experience designing, implementing and reviewing the efficacy of interventions, and they need to be continuously engaged, not just at one point. You also need to create systems that support and protect them.[2]*

Nothing about us without us.
Sana Mustafa

Some migrant workers interviewed also spoke of the importance of NGOs engaging with them to ensure that their priorities are heard and understood. According to one migrant worker:

> *If [we] can talk about the obstacles and challenges then the hope is that the organisations can provide more support to help us and that organisations can work more effectively.[3]*

Participation is important for ensuring that interventions are relevant to and capable of addressing the needs and experiences of people affected.[4] Participation can also contribute to positive outcomes for individuals, including feeling heard and empowered, learning new skills, and increased trust.[5] More fundamentally, it has been argued that meaningful participation can directly contribute to social change by influencing power dynamics connected with systemic inequality.

> *Participation is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in decisions that affect their futures.[6]*

The term 'participation' can refer to a wide range of practices. To understand and compare the different types of participation, it can be helpful to consider them on a spectrum of power.[7] Below is an example of a spectrum based on categories used by Porticus in a grantee survey.[8]

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[*] In this paper, we use the term "people with lived experience" to mean people at risk of or affected by trafficking and exploitation, including family and community members.

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Participation Spectrum (based on the Porticus Grantee Perceptions Survey)

Inform We provide people with information.	**Consult** We ensure people's concerns are heard and considered, and we decide.	**Share power** We share ownership and partner for joint decision-making.

Increasing degree of power of participants →

Participation can take place at different stages of an intervention or program, including during design, implementation, or monitoring and evaluation, and at all different levels of organisational strategy and management.

Literature and the experiences of key stakeholders highlighted that ensuring that participation is meaningful and ethical can be challenging. Creating a safe and inclusive space, and adequately preparing people for and facilitating participation, can require significant time and investment in building relationships and trust, and sharing information.[9] This can be difficult to achieve if the basic needs of participants are not being met.[10] Participatory processes can also reinforce power inequalities if it is tokenistic or dominated by 'elites', and can lead to people feeling unheard, marginalised, or exploited. Meaningful participation requires processes for listening, accountability and follow-up, to ensure that engagement is not tokenistic.[11] More fundamentally, meaningful participation can be uncomfortable for stakeholders with privilege and power because it requires changing existing power structures, attitudes and identities.

In recognition of these complexities, one evaluation stakeholder with experience in using participatory approaches in the anti-trafficking sector emphasised the importance of the sector taking a learning approach to participation, whereby all efforts to enhance participation are regarded as opportunities for reflection, learning and improvement.
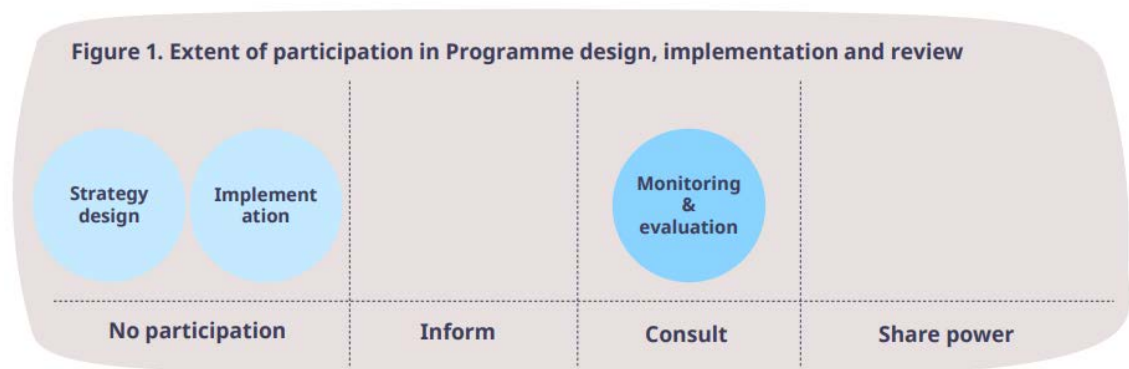
Note: Participatory approaches can also be used when working with *other stakeholders*, such as professionals involved in training programs or users of a tool. However, participation of people with lived experience is a distinct approach that seeks to recognise lived experience as necessary and powerful in creating social change.

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2. To what extent did Porticus facilitate participation of people with lived experience in the Programme?

In designing the Programme, Porticus did not directly involve people with lived experience of trafficking or exploitation. Porticus consulted widely with existing partners and other NGOs in the region, a small number of which may have been community-based organisations in at-risk or affected communities. Many partner organisations had direct relationships with people affected and it is possible that the Programme design was influenced by their perspectives. However, there was no specific evidence of this in the Programme strategy.

Porticus did not directly engage people affected by trafficking or exploitation in implementation of the Programme (for example, it did not fund any organisations or projects led by people at risk of or affected by trafficking or exploitation). However, several funded projects use participatory approaches in their own implementation. In addition, several funded projects aimed to support participation by enhancing the power of migrant workers to self-advocate; or by providing rights-based or person-centred support to people affected by trafficking. Porticus also arranged a panel discussion and workshop to discuss participation of people with lived experience with partners.

In evaluating the Programme, Porticus commissioned this evaluation which 'consulted' with people with lived experience in deciding what to evaluate (i.e. what 'justice' means). They were also consulted as key informants on programme relevance and project outcomes and had power to decide how they would be engaged (i.e. what evaluation methods). However, the evaluation did not engage people affected during analysis or in developing recommendations, and people affected did not have decision-making power apart from on evaluation methods.

Figure 1. Extent of participation in Programme design, implementation and review

Strategy design • Implementation		Monitoring & evaluation	
No participation	Inform	Consult	Share power

3. What could the Programme do to increase participation of people with lived experience in the future?

Period of change within Porticus

The Programme was designed at a time when 'systems change' was a relatively new strategic approach within Porticus. Since that time, there has been significant and rapid evolution in practices within Porticus, including:

- increased use of multi-project programmes
- greater involvement of partners in strategic design
- investment in building partner relationships and engagement with external stakeholders
- greater use of monitoring and evaluation to support learning and adaptation
- steps towards increasing participation of people with lived experience.

In the time since the Programme commenced, participation of people with lived experience has become a key strategic priority at the global level and Porticus is considering ways to use participatory approaches at multiple levels, including in their governance, programme design, and through their partners.

Table 1. How Porticus could increase participation of people at risk of or affected by trafficking or exploitation in future programmes

Programme design	• Build relationships with organisations and networks in affected communities • Partner with organisations with proximity to people with lived experience • Design programmes or projects that aim to share power with and enhance participation of affected communities • Use existing participatory research and commission new research to understand needs and priorities • Fund and facilitate participatory design processes for programmes and projects • Design strategy to be 'person-centred', with strategic objectives regarding the rights of people at risk or affected and processes for accountability to those objectives • Create advisory groups with representatives from at-risk or affected communities, for example, to provide feedback on grant applications and review performance
Programme implementation	• Fund survivor, community or peer-led organisations, programs and services • Fund grantees to develop and use participatory practices, such as inclusive governance and leadership models, community organising and leadership, peer-led programs, rights-based approaches, and mechanisms for accountability to service users • Fund capacity building for community-led organisations to address self-identified needs
Programme monitoring and evaluation	• Design monitoring systems that include people affected as key stakeholders • Commission evaluations with higher degrees of participation and power • Initiate and convene discussions among grantees, and in the wider sector, about experiences with participation, sharing knowledge and lessons learned • Evaluate participatory approaches

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Endnotes

[1] Mustafa, S., 2019, *The importance of self-representation by refugees*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daCRHNkBS_A.

[2] Interview with donor.

[3] Interview with migrant workers.

[4] ICAI, 2020, *The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme*, https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/ICAI-modern-slavery-review_FINAL.pdf.

[5] Suomi, A., Freeman, B., and Banfield, M., 2020, *Framework for the engagement of people with a lived experience in program implementation and research*, https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/anu-lived-experience-framework.pdf.

[6] Arnstein, S. R., 1969, cited by Evans, L., 2015, *Participatory Philanthropy*, https://philanthropy.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Participatory-Philanthropy-Churchill.pdf.

[7] Groves, L., and Guijt, I., 2015, *Positioning participation on the power spectrum*, https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/blog/positioning_participation_on_the_power_spectrum.

[8] See also: International Association for Public Participation, 2018, *IAP2 spectrum of public participation*, https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2018_IAP2_Spectrum.pdf.

[9] Ireland Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015, *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020*, citing Lundy, L., 2007, ""Voice" is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child", *British Educational Research Journal*, 33:6, 927-942.

[10] Programme partner.

[11] Suomi, A., Freeman, B., and Banfield, M., 2020, *Framework for the engagement of people with a lived experience in program implementation and research*, https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/anu-lived-experience-framework.pdf.

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