



PORTICUS

Seeds in our pockets

How can funders nurture thriving social justice movements by and for people on the move

Foreword

Dear Reader,

It is my pleasure to present the summary report ‘Seeds in Our Pockets.’ It highlights our key learnings from a 12-month pilot on movement building and lived-experience leadership by and for people on the move, and outlines how these lessons are being taken forward under the MOVE programme. At Porticus we are on a journey to realise meaningful participation of those with lived experience across our work and this initiative is an important part of that work, as well as to our commitment to systems change philanthropy. We invite you to learn with us by reading the report.

Best,

Melanie Maas Geesteranus
CEO Porticus

This paper is based on an extensive original report by Sarah Cutler from Rise With Us Consultancy Ltd., who designed and delivered the 2022 MOVE pilot learning programme with 10 pilot grantee partners. It was edited by Kristin Dannevig with input from the MOVE team.

Porticus is a philanthropic organisation that aims to create a just and sustainable future where human dignity flourishes. Our work aims to strengthen the resilience of communities so that all people have ownership over their future and natural resources are used in a sustainable way. Our work is realised through strong networks of partners including local and global NGOs, communities, people with lived experience, policy makers and co-funders. With colleagues based in 14 offices around the world, we want to provide solutions to today’s social and environmental problems that benefit generations to come in four areas: the natural environment, society, education and faith. The People on the Move portfolio referred to in this report sits under society.

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1. Making good things grow, together

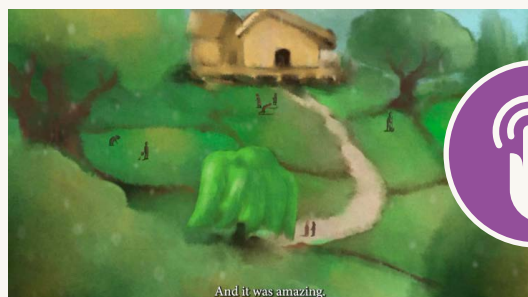


In 2022 Porticus launched a pilot learning year to support the development of a new global programme, ‘Transforming migration parameters through movement building and lived-experience leadership’ (hereafter MOVE) within the People on the Move Portfolio. The pilot was intended to directly shape the base strategy for the new programme, recognising that funding for movement building and lived-experience leadership by and for people on the move represents a different way of working for Porticus and requires new knowledge and approaches.

“Building power in communities doesn’t happen overnight. As people move, they continue to use tools, taking them to other places and sharing them. There is power in this...

It seeds of a lot of our work of showing up and accompanying people.”

This is a quote from one of the pilot grant partners, all of whom are leaders of organisations for people with lived experience of migration and forced displacement worldwide. Their knowledge and insights are central to this report. Their words and creativity also inspired *Seeds In Our Pockets*, a short video animated by [Majid Adin](#). Both outputs sum up key learnings from the 12-month pilot project.

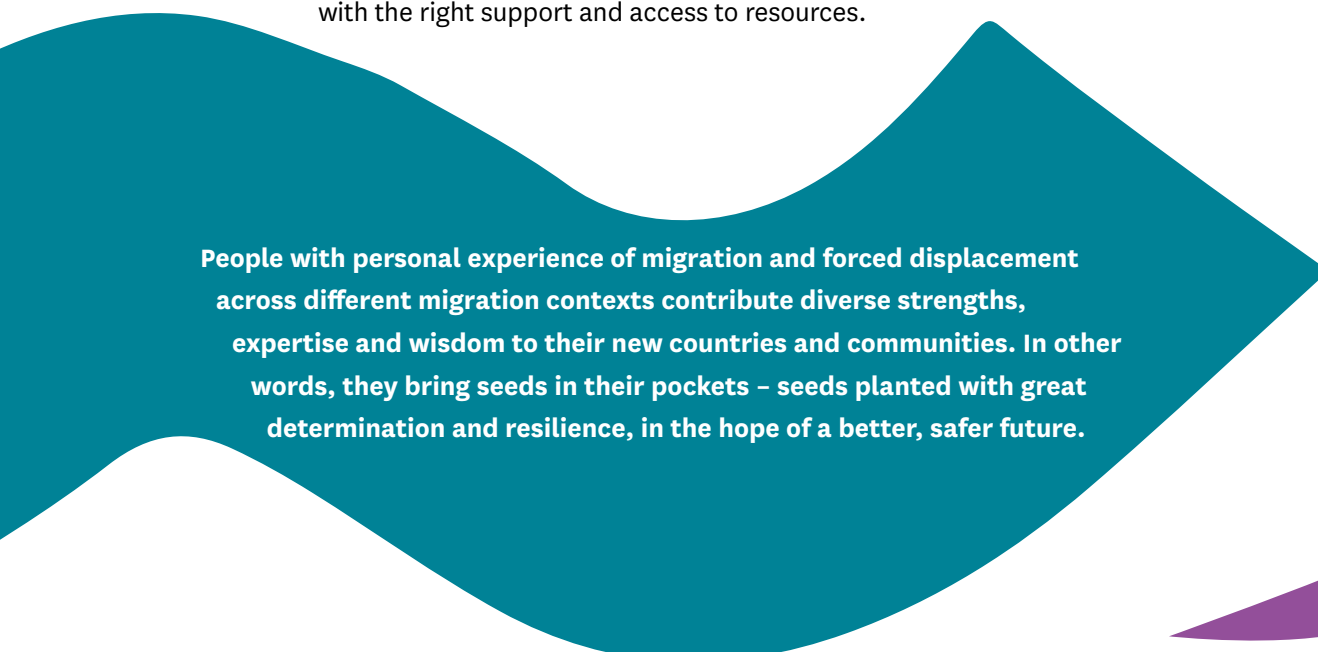




In this report, we are sharing key learnings and recommendations from the pilot and our resulting reflections and commitments as a funder in this space. We recognise these are not necessarily new learnings for the sector, but emerged in the pilot as important to understand and resonated in the development of the programme.

In sharing them here, we aim to be accountable to the pilot partner community but also invite further conversation and exchange with civil society and funder actors.

Going forward, the MOVE programme will focus on **supporting movements** and **lived-experience leadership to realise systemic change**. This approach is based on the understanding that structural, sustainable change is only possible when those most affected by injustice are able to transform their own lives and communities – with the right support and access to resources.



People with personal experience of migration and forced displacement across different migration contexts contribute diverse strengths, expertise and wisdom to their new countries and communities. In other words, they bring seeds in their pockets – seeds planted with great determination and resilience, in the hope of a better, safer future.

This work marks the start of our journey as a funding organisation in supporting movements. While we are keen to innovate, we still have a lot to learn.

We share these learnings in the spirit of openness and with the intention of sparking further conversations, forging stronger connections and planting new seeds of collaboration both within and between organisations working for social justice worldwide.

2. Learning from experience

Our learning work took place over the course of 2022, led by Sarah Cutler from Rise with Us Consultancy Ltd. Four associate researchers brought essential expertise from social movements and lived experience of migration and forced displacement across a range of contexts.

Pilot partners

Porticus invited **10 pilot partners**¹ to apply for funding during the second half of 2021. They were identified through outreach, listening and networking in collaboration with our regional offices around the world. Each partner then received a **12-month grant for leadership, movement building or organisational development** and was **invited to take part in learning activities**.



All partner organisations include people with lived experience of migration² in their leadership and are working in challenging contexts. Some focus on people who identify as refugees, others work with those who have migrated for work, and most work with people who have many different types of migration status. All organisations brought solid and varied expertise from different parts of the world, including Mexico, South Africa, Spain, Malaysia, Belgium, the Netherlands, as well as global networks.

The organisations are for the most part **relatively small**, with a **limited funding base, few paid staff**, and are having to **push for change on many fronts simultaneously**. Several are involved in building alliances and developing networks as a pathway to building power or transforming power dynamics. They have a range of influencing targets and are seeking change at different levels – locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

¹ Pilot partners can be found on page 15

² In this report we have referred to organisations as led by people with lived experience of migration systems as 'migrant and refugee led organisations'. However, Porticus recognises that movement organisations and leaders bring multiple aspects of their identities and experiences to their work.



Some have experience strengthening and supporting movements in their local or regional contexts. Many are also working on internal strengthening, fundraising and sustainability, have not benefited from traditional sources of funding.

Everyone involved in this pilot recognises that there are power dynamics inherent in funder-commissioned learning. These year-long grants were short-term in nature, and some partners received a significant proportion of their income from Porticus in 2022. The learning team were therefore mindful to keep all engagement proportionate and optional. However, we know that people took time away from busy roles to engage with our learning process.

Learning process

The learning activities for this pilot took place in the first half of 2022. They drew on the rich and varied perspectives, expertise and creativity of the 10 grant partners, Porticus colleagues, and thinkers and practitioners in the fields of lived-experience leadership and movement building by and for people on the move.

The learning team kept a flexible approach throughout the project, adding, dropping or changing activities as necessary. This was essential to follow the story emerging from conversations, pursue complex ideas and the implications, and draw out different perspectives. All activities were optional, and all partners were reimbursed for their time.

All learning activities were anchored in these three key learning questions:

- How are approaches to movement building and leadership **defined**? What are the **parameters** of these approaches?
- What are the **enablers**, **threats** and **success factors** in building movements and leadership?
- What are the **considerations for funders** who are funding movements and leadership?



Key terms

Words have power, and our understanding of terms and concepts vary depending on our individual background and experience. Here is an overview of the terms and definitions that emerged from the pilot as critical to understanding how to fund movement work and informed the MOVE programme development.

“A **movement** is a set of people with a shared experience of injustice who organise to build their collective power and leadership, develop a shared agenda for change, which they pursue through collective action, with some continuity over time... and are always about challenging power structures.”

Srilatha Batliwala³
2020

Grassroots movements can be defined as “parts of social movements which operate outside of dominant institutional structures and norms, i.e. groups which try to work in less hierarchical and more decentralised ways. This may mean being small, loose collectives.”

Debs Grayson and Mumbi Nkonde⁴
2020

Movements can also be seen as “sustained groupings that develop a frame or narrative based on shared values, that maintain a link with a real and broad base in the community, and that build for a long-term transformation in power.”

Manuel Pastor Rhonda Ortiz⁵
2009

Learnings from the pilot revealed that movements are rarely defined around shifting only one part of the system. They often aim to tackle intersecting and oppressive power structures such as capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, and racism. Movements recognise the complex interplay of forces at play in our lives and are focused on changing the mindset and attitudes both within and among us and in structures and institutions. This is often referred to as ‘**intersectionality**’.⁶


³ All About Movements: Why Building Movements Creates Deeper Change, Srilatha Batliwala, CREA, 2021

⁴ Developing a pilot movement fund, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, 2020, Debs Grayson and Mumbi Nkonde

⁵ Making Change: why social movements work and how to support them, Manuel Pastor Rhonda Ortiz, Program for Environmental and Regional Equity 2009

⁶ Crenshaw, K. W. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity, politics and violence against women of color. Stanford Law Review, 43, 1241.





Lived-experience leadership refers to “change-makers, innovators and leaders who have activated their lived expertise to inform, shape and lead their social purpose work (often in combination with their learned and practice experience) to directly benefit the communities they share those experiences with.”


Baljeet Sandhu⁷
2019

Meaningful participation is understood as “two-directional, iterative group process where funders, grantees & people with lived experience collaborate as partners and share decision-making power & mutual accountability recognising that all contribute equally valuable assets.”

Porticus
2021

Racial discrimination is defined as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life, article 1.”

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 1



Systems change “is about advancing equity by shifting the conditions that hold a problem in place.”

FSG⁸
2018

⁷ Lived Experience Leadership: rebooting the DNA of leadership, Baljeet Sandhu, July 2019

⁸ The Water of Systems Change. John Kania, Mark Kramer, Peter Senge.

3. How to build stronger movements



This section provides a summary of our key learnings in the three areas covered by the learning pilot: movement building, leadership, and the role of funder practice and behaviour. We share these in part to begin practicing our second programme value of transparency around strategy and decision-making (explored further on p.13).

People with lived experience of migration face multiple and intersecting challenges in their lives. However, there was remarkable consistency in the core message to funders that emerged from this pilot project.

Above all, participants agreed that movements by people with lived experience are essential for dismantling oppressive systems and achieving deep societal change – for the benefit of all, including wider society.

They felt strongly that change efforts should be led by people with lived experience. And they were clear that while the work towards systems change will continue with or without independent funders, it will go much further, deeper, and happen faster, with the right support and resources, and grounded in mutual understanding, trust, respect and collaboration.

Building stronger movements – together

Increasing evidence demonstrates that movements are essential to long term, sustainable social and political transformation⁹. Movements are able to shift individual and collective mental modes in ways that single policy wins and efforts to tackle the symptoms of injustice cannot.

In the face of multiple and intersecting crises around the world (climate, political, economic and health) movement building is increasingly seen as **the** most sensible and effective use of energy and resources for all involved¹⁰. **Recognising that the context for people on the move is by nature often volatile and uncertain, it is crucial to recognise that this essential work is complex and requires long-term thinking, sustained resources, time and patience.**

Funders wanting to support movement-building must therefore be **flexible and open** to different starting points and interventions. **Committing to a long-term relationship** with movement building is another important way to recognise the need for overall system change, rather than pursuing a single ‘win’.

⁹ Htun, M. & Weldon, S.L. (2012). The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence Against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005. American Political Science Review. Vol. 106, No. 3

Satell, G. (2015, July 28). How social movements change minds. Harvard Business Review, Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2015/07/how-social-movements-change-minds> Accessed December 11, 2020.

¹⁰ See for example: [How Social Movements Can Save Democracy: Democratic Innovations from Below | Wiley](#) ; [Promoting Peace and Democracy after Nonviolent Action Campaigns | United States Institute of Peace \(usip.org\)](#)

Resourcing ongoing practical support, including for organisations to cover their office and administration costs so they have time to think and plan more strategically is vital. Crisis support is also a key building block for deeper change. Migrant and refugee led organisations often work in challenging, fast-moving and hostile situations. They therefore need funding that meets basic needs and creates spaces for people to plan for the long-term.

This level of flexibility from funders is particularly important in situations where organisations lack formal registration, a bank account, and funders must find innovative ways of providing financial support, for example through value-aligned intermediaries.

Funders should also be aware of the specific barriers that people who migrate face and adjust their support and approach accordingly. Multiple internal and external factors can inhibit movement growth, including power abuses, dysfunctional structures and negative ally behaviours. It is therefore essential to **bring an intersectional lens** to all thematic areas, strategies and relationships, and invest in people's **care** and **well-being** to ensure sustained and collective leadership.

Racism is a significant challenge for migrant and refugee led organisations. It is therefore critical for funders to acknowledge the impact of systemic racism on their partners, in their own practices and assumptions, and counter these dynamics through transparency, probing questions and critical thinking.

Change efforts can include developing internal anti-racist strategies and approaches, training on allyship, collaboration and anti-racism, and drawing up standards and principles for equitable collaboration.



Nurturing leaders

Developing and sustaining different forms of leadership is essential for building power.

Movement leaders use various strategies to achieve change, depending on their contexts. Funders can support them by being flexible and having regular and open dialogue about succession planning and leadership support needs.

Leaders need space to connect with peers and develop leadership together. Instead of paternalism and tokenism, they want to collaborate with others who share their goals. Funders can help nurture this by recognising different leadership styles and encouraging the creation of structures and practices within organisations to sustain leadership at different levels, as well as explicitly supporting care-based approaches.

Grassroots organisations often experience a **power imbalance with larger, often northern based organisations** and mistrust them as a result. Funders can start to address this by exploring with leaders and teams how to best help them thrive in often competitive contexts, and by being open to different organisational structures.



Paying attention to burnout, mental health and collective care is essential, as well as prioritising people's safety and security. In practice, this means providing the right support and tools for the relevant context, also taking into account structural inequalities. **Applying feminist leadership approaches**, including the notion of 'collective protection' can be useful in this context¹¹. Generally, this is about understanding the different ways that power and privilege show up in the actions we take and relationships we forge, to build power with others and address inequities of access to time, resources and care.

How funders can help

Understanding how different movements function, develop and grow – their lifecycles and ecologies – is essential for any funder seeking to support movement building approaches. **This is likely to require new ways of learning, building relationships and partner types, and willingness to support at different stages of the movements' lifecycles.**

Landscape analysis, movement mapping and insight from partners is a good starting point for developing funding interventions.

This type of 'systems thinking' will involve new ways of measuring progress and assessing change. Instead of determining 'cause and effect' in a traditional linear evaluation framework, funders will need to gather data in multiple ways and from multiple sources, looking at the broader systems in which a movement is developing and transforming power.

Transforming systems ultimately means transforming the relationships between the people who make up the systems. Funders can support this process by using their power and influence to facilitate new connections and pursue innovative thinking and action, together with their partners, within and beyond the world of philanthropy.

While 'meaningful participation' is a useful avenue for shifting power, it requires more than tokenistic representation to be effective. Developing and maintaining truly meaningful participation and co-design requires **high levels of trust, enough time, the right tools, and changing internal processes and culture** (for example, through higher levels of transparency in decision-making and awareness of power dynamics).

There is also a complex tension between small organisations' desire for participation in philanthropy and being overburdened. Focusing on trust-based, trauma-informed grant practice and shifting power in funding processes is therefore key.

¹¹ Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders. Peace Brigades International, European Office. Published by Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human rights Defenders. 2005. AND the Self and Collective Care Guide by Jessica Horn



4. What does this mean for us at Porticus?

The above insights represent consolidated learnings from in-depth research, conversations and thinking with Porticus' partners, employees, and movement leaders over many months. These learnings strengthen our commitment to supporting movements and lived-experience leadership, but also highlight the complex nature of this work.

Going forward, we recognise that much of the work to support movements and lived-experience leadership depends on our ability to reflect on and transform our own funder practice to meet this complexity, as an individual foundation as well as a member of the broader philanthropic community.

Through the pilot, we heard that migrant and refugee-led organisations share an interest in building movements to transform migration parameters, but many are being held back and hampered by a lack of access to sustained, flexible resources, the need to provide for basic needs and respond to ongoing crises. Further, refugee and migrant-led groups working to address the same issues often do so in isolation from each other and are put in position of competition over scarce resources. To be able to build and sustain movements by and for people on the move, organisations need long-term funding, and a commitment from funders to listen to and trust them. Funders must also challenge themselves to 'unlearn' harmful attitudes, behaviours and practice which can hold back movement actors and even undermine their ability to strategise and act.

This has implications for every aspect of our work, from how we find, select and begin to work with partners to the practicalities of funding, including grant applications and reporting procedures, as well as how we define and measure impact. We also heard that supporting movements sometimes requires funders to show up in ways beyond financial resources, such as support in making connections, accessing other funding, and providing relevant expertise, but can also require funders to take more of a back seat. With these recommendations in hand, we are committed to reviewing and adapting the ways we work, but know we are at the beginning of this journey and still have much work to do.

Learnings from this pilot and external research on the power of movements demonstrate that when individuals and organisations are able to connect to others with shared experiences in new ways and develop and act on clear agendas for change together, long term social and political transformation is possible. Changing who and how we fund is key to enabling this work.

The Porticus MOVE programme team is sincerely grateful to all who participated in and led this important learning process. In order to put these learnings to good use, we have created **principles** and **values** for the programme. These will underpin our approach as a team over the coming years, as part of a dynamic and reflective process of development and accountability.

Porticus MOVE programme principles December 2022

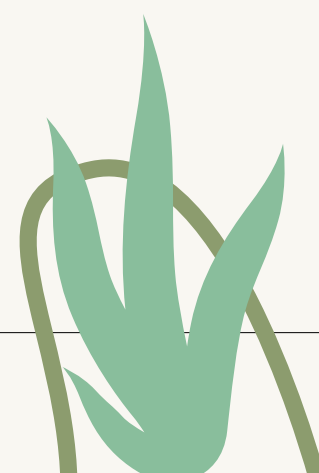



1 We seek to build **trust-based partnerships**, recognising that this will require more time and capacity as funders, and we need to be mindful of how this will impact partners.

2 We strive to be more **transparent about decision-making processes with partners** including timings and opportunities for participating in our programme.

3 We aim to create a **people-centred programme**, supporting our partners to centre well-being and practice care-based approaches. Recognising that many movement actors, particularly leaders, are exhausted and under-resourced, we seek to provide space for them to rebuild, recover and find new inspiration. Based on what our partners tell us they need, we will provide different opportunities for learning, training, networking and experimenting.

4 We are dedicated to being **flexible, responsive and accessible** to our partners, and to think *together*. Recognising that needs will differ significantly across regions, we will analyse and respond accordingly, alongside our partners. While we value collaboration, we will not force it. We will support organisations and individuals to work together, as and when they request it.





5 We will **listen deeply** to understand how our partners work, recognising that they may use different language, approaches and structures to ours. When appropriate, we will work with funders and partners to foster communication and exchange in order to broaden our partners' influence and access to resources.

6 We are committed to fostering environments where **lived-experience leadership** can thrive. We understand that leadership can take many forms and approaches, and that refugee and migrant-led organisations are often structured differently to traditional NGOs. MOVE funding should enable people's freedom to organise, reflect and plan towards long-term systems change.

7 We value efficiency, but not at the expense of quality. We recognise that a linear path isn't always the one leading to long-term change.

8 We are dedicated to conducting and integrating a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) analysis across MOVE.

5. Next steps

MOVE is for now a five-year programme with a multi-million Euro budget. Grantmaking is done on an annual basis, managed by programme managers in each of the five participating regions, as well as through a global grantmaking budget. Encouragingly, this learning project has already identified many new opportunities for cooperation within Porticus, but also with other funders, and has built confidence in fresh funding approaches across Porticus.

The MOVE team will use the principles and values (see above), and new operational tools in developing the programme, including the creation of ‘regional advisory boards’, made of current and future partners. They will serve as our compass on the next stage of our learning journey.

We would love to hear from others supporting similar work, and/or have an interest in collaboration – within and beyond Porticus, philanthropy, migration organisations and movements. In particular, we welcome comments and reflections on our principles, as outlined above.

Our sincere thanks go to all those whose time, wisdom and expertise contributed to this report and the Seeds in Our Pockets animation.

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