



# Humanis Way: Participatory Grantmaking for Meaningful Change



## **Humanis Way: Participatory Grantmaking for Meaningful Change**

### Credits

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## Humanis Way: Participatory Grantmaking for Meaningful Change

### Table of Contents

A. Introduction	2
B. Understanding Participatory Grantmaking	5
C. Key Principles	8
1. Centering Care	9
2. Trust-Based Power Shifting	13
3. Walking with Social Movements	16
4. Embedding Intersectionality	21
5. Reimagining Adaptability and Flexibility	25
D. Overall Reflections	29
E. Recommendations and the Way Forward	31



### A. Introduction

Yayasan Humanis dan Inovasi Sosial (hereinafter referred to as Humanis) manages a diverse portfolio of programs that employ tailored strategies and approaches to grantmaking. Each approach is carefully designed to ensure that decision-making processes, particularly participatory ones, align seamlessly with Humanis' core values and program goals.

This guideline aims to **document our core processes, capture key insights into the nature of** participatory grantmaking, and identify **strategic areas for growth in future programming**. Our goal is to establish a set of guiding principles that ensure Humanis' grantmaking remains participatory, care-based, community-centered, inclusive, transparent, and accountable. Learning from our experiences and best practices, we acknowledge that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach.

This document is both timely and strategic, serving as a testament to demonstrate Humanis' **commitment, reliability, and credibility** in participatory grantmaking. We recognize the long-standing systemic complexities within the development sector, including top-down funding dynamics, increasingly restricted civic spacetime, and the complex political landscapes that often hinder access to resources and collaboration. By acknowledging these realities, we envision this document as a living reference: guiding Humanis and its partners in **program design and implementation**. Our goal is to foster a space for honest dialogue, ensuring our practices remain both visionary and pragmatic.



Humanis Way: Participatory Grantmaking distills five key principles to guide all grantmaking processes that enable meaningful participation:

**Centering Care**

**Embedding Intersectionality**

**Walking with Social Movements**

**Reimagining Adaptability and Flexibility**

**Trust-Based Power Shifting**

The sections that follow elaborate on Humanis' practical understanding of participatory grantmaking. For each principle, we examine its meaning, relevance, and strategic benefits, while candidly addressing the challenges to anticipate. Each section is supported by relevant case studies drawn from our firsthand experience. The document concludes with actionable recommendations to improve grantmaking practices, not just within Humanis, but in collaboration with civic actors and the broader development sector.

This document is not a rigid blueprint, template, or format that limits our imagination and interpretation. Rather, we share stories from our experiences to illustrate the diverse ways these principles can be applied. However, we invite interested readers to reach out to Humanis for further information and guidance on how to tailor these principles to their own organizational contexts.

## B. Understanding Participatory Grantmaking

Before exploring the Humanis methodology, it is essential to clarify our definitions of “participatory” and “grantmaking,” how these concepts intersect, and how we operationalize this approach in practice.

In defining participation, Humanis draws inspiration from Sherry R. Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation, which illustrates varying degrees of engagement, from information-sharing and consultation to partnership and citizen control. Humanis recognizes that not all grantmaking contexts allow for the highest rungs of participation at all stages. However, we intentionally design processes that move beyond tokenistic consultation — the mere ‘ticking of boxes’ — toward **genuine, power-shifting participation**, where rightsholders meaningfully influence decisions that affect them.

**‘Participatory’** refers to the act of taking part and actively contributing to a process or activity. It implies meaningful involvement of individuals, communities, and groups in discussions, deliberations, and actions that directly affect them.



**‘Grantmaking’** refers to the process by which organizations or institutions provide funds and resources to carry out specific initiatives. This typically involves outreach, proposal appraisal, due diligence, capacity assessments, awarding resources, providing accompaniment and mentoring, monitoring implementation, and evaluating results.

**Participatory grantmaking (PGM)** integrates these two frameworks into a single, transformative approach. It is a collaborative and inclusive approach to distributing resources, ensuring that rightsholders, community members, and their representatives are actively engaged at every stage of the cycle: from initial program design and grant allocation to selection processes, implementation, long-term accompaniment, monitoring, and evaluation.

By involving those directly affected, PGM shifts traditional power dynamics, ensuring that decision-making is more equitable. It prioritizes diverse voices and perspectives and seeks to democratize the process from start to finish — fostering trust-based relationships, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, inclusion, and long-term sustainability.

In practice, Humanis recognizes that **meaningful participation** is context-specific rather than uniform. Rather than pursuing an abstract notion of ‘full participation’, we promote participation that is genuine, intentional, and power shifting, carefully calibrated to context while remaining accountable to communities.

Several factors shape the degree and form of participation, each with implications for how power is shared as follows:

### Program Focus and Objectives:

Different thematic areas require bespoke decision-making structures and levels of community involvement.

### Organizational Capacity and Readiness:

Participation must be designed to avoid overburdening communities or inadvertently excluding less-resourced actors.

### The Nature of Civic Actors:

Participation models must reflect local organizing cultures, histories, and trust dynamics.

### Funder Requirements and Flexibility:

A funder’s openness directly affects how far power can be shifted across grantmaking stages.

### Program Duration and Resources:

Meaningful, deeper participation requires dedicated time, expert facilitation, and care-oriented resourcing.

Across these various factors, Humanis seeks to maximize rightsholder-centric decision-making, particularly in agenda-setting, initiative selection, implementation, reflection, and collective learning. Participation within Humanis-supported grantmaking is not static; it takes diverse forms across the program cycle, including: co-designing program strategic priorities, participating in selection panels or advisory bodies, shaping implementation approaches, contributing to monitoring and reflection processes, and defining what success and impact actually look like in their own contexts. While the degree of participation may vary at each stage, Humanis is committed to ensuring that **communities are not merely consulted, but are actively positioned as co-decision-makers wherever possible**.

Humanis positions itself as a facilitator of participatory grantmaking rather than a gatekeeper. Humanis works to minimize the gap between funders and communities by fostering dialogue, trust-building, capacity sharing, and collective governance. This facilitative role is intended to **enable — not replace — community participation**, ensuring that accountability mechanisms remain accessible, inclusive, and grounded in lived realities while still fulfilling necessary funder requirements.



## C. Key Principles

Based on Humanis' experience, participatory grantmaking is more than a procedural shift; it is a mindset and practice that centers care, equality, collective trust, and accountability. The following five key principles serve as our framework for designing a grantmaking ecosystem that ensures meaningful, inclusive, and impactful implementations.

# 1.

## Centering Care

Care is at the heart of Humanis' approach. We reimagine grantmaking as a form of 'care work' — a deliberate practice of redistributing resources and power in ways that prioritize the well-being and sustainability of individuals, rightsholders, communities, and movements. For Humanis, grantmaking is not a mere transactional exchange, but a relational, nurturing process grounded in allyship, responsibility, and long-term commitment. By centering care, we ensure that the human experience remains at the heart of our administrative and strategic processes.

## What it means:

- Designing grantmaking procedures that minimize harm and prevent burnout for both partners and staff.
- Ensuring that due diligence, reporting, and compliance requirements are proportionate, supportive, and non-extractive.
- Cultivating an organizational culture where feedback, flexibility, and empathy are valued and integral to how work is carried out.
- Recognizing the risk of burnout among staff who facilitate complex participatory processes, ensure proportional workloads, dedicated space for collective reflection, and robust internal support mechanisms.

## Why it matters:

Centering care strengthens trust, reduces unnecessary administrative burden, and enables partners to focus their energy on driving meaningful change rather than fulfilling compliance-driven paperwork. It fosters a more resilient ecosystem where both the funder and the partner can thrive in the long term.

## What it enables:

- **Support that extends beyond funding and themes**, including accompaniment, trust-building, well-being resources, and peer learning.
- **Healthy and context-driven budgets** that are proportionate, care-focused, and shaped by community needs, accounting for time, care work, access barriers, and local dynamics.
- **Flexible and developmental design** that allows iteration, learning, growth, innovation, experimentation, and institutional strengthening, including resource mobilization.
- **Long-term, mutually beneficial relationships** where partners are not merely “contracted”, but accompanied by reasonable timelines, trust-based reporting, and dialogue-driven accountability.

## Challenges to anticipate:

- **Balancing essential funder requirements** with the flexibility required for care-centered grantmaking processes.
- **Managing finite time and funding** to ensure sufficient space is preserved for dialogue, reflection, and meaningful emotional support for partners.
- **Engagement with funders, intermediaries, and grant facilitators** to shift expectations away from rapid delivery and toward longer timelines that value care and justice alongside measurable outcomes.



## Humanis experience:

### Political Accompaniment: Collective Care in Practice

The **Women's Voices and Leadership (We Lead)** program (2019-2023) aimed to advance gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls in Indonesia. Humanis, in collaboration with Just Associates (JASS) as co-lead, partnered with five advocacy-focused Indonesian women's rights organizations with strong legitimacy among their constituencies and communities.

Within We Lead, Humanis deliberately operationalized the principle of care through the practice of political accompaniment. Feminist Popular Education was meaningfully embedded as both a core approach and a guiding principle throughout the entire process. We designed a mechanism of support that prioritized a sustained and relational process grounded in collective care, reflection, mutual learning, and long-term engagement.

Political accompaniment was structured as an ongoing cycle of dialogue and collective reflection situated within a continuous learning trajectory. Reflection at the end of activities informed future strategies, ensuring that learning shaped program direction rather than being extracted for reporting purposes only. This accompaniment was also central to the internalization of feminist values in collaborative work, fostering safe spaces and mutual trust while enabling knowledge sharing among partners.

Collective care became most urgent in moments of crisis, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic deepened, communities faced multilayered emergencies, the loss of loved ones, collapsing incomes, the blurring of personal and professional environments, and deepening fatigue and burnout, borne most heavily by women activists and caregivers.

In this situation, the We Lead consortium centered on safety and care as political commitments. We accompanied women's organizations in reimagining their plans,

strengthening digital security and access, practicing regular collective check-ins, and staying attuned to rapidly shifting local realities. Through rapid response grants, we supported women-led communities to sustain safe spaces, collective livelihoods, and a shared ethics of care, so movements could hold one another, survive the crisis, and continue organizing for justice.

Importantly, accompaniment was intentionally distinguished from standard capacity-strengthening activities in the program design. It was recognized as a relational and political process, separate from efforts to strengthen partners' internal organizational sustainability or external advocacy skills. This distinction was reflected in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework, which explicitly included indicators such as:

- *"Accompaniment and technical support between training and activities"*.
- *"Support provided to set up processes and safe spaces to share analysis and lessons learned"*.

In practice, accompaniment reflects the principle of collective care by recognizing that, for women activists, personal experiences are deeply political. The practice of "check-ins" at the start of every meeting, for example, created space for participants to share personal challenges, including exhaustion, exposure to risks and violence, and emotional labor. They were treated not as private matters, but as structural realities shaping feminist organizing.

Accompaniment extended beyond the conventional scope of technical assistance, becoming a safe space for collective strengthening and healing. It supported joint advocacy grounded in trust, solidarity, and collaboration, rather than competition among partners. The We Lead experience demonstrates how centering care through political accompaniment can sustain activists, strengthen alliances, and enable more resilient and transformative feminist movements.

# 2.

## Trust-Based Power Shifting

Participatory grantmaking is a continuous effort to rebalance decision-making authority. Humanis believes that frontliners and rightsholders are best positioned to define priorities, assess risks, and shape solutions for themselves. Participatory grantmaking is therefore not an add-on to existing systems, but a challenge to traditional, top-down power relations between funders and recipients. By grounding partnerships in mutual trust, Humanis seeks to foster relationships that are more equal, transparent, and productive.



### What it means:

- **Involving rightsholders, partners, and community members** in designing criteria, reviewing proposals, and making funding decisions.
- **Using decision-making models (e.g., advisory committees and selection panels)** that are transparent, inclusive, and representative of rightsholders and the relevant expertise.
- **Building systems that share information and authority**, rather than gatekeeping access and knowledge.
- **Recognizing care work and local knowledge** as legitimate sources of power in organizing and sustaining movements.

### Why it matters:

Shifting power leads to initiatives that are more relevant, locally owned, and sustainable. It deepens accountability and strengthens trust between Humanis, partners, and communities.

### What it enables:

- **Democratized decision-making** where diverse voices shape priorities and solutions.
- **Greater ownership and commitment** to achieving outcomes by communities and partners.
- **Stronger and more equitable partnerships** between funders, intermediaries, and partners.

### Challenges to anticipate:

- **Funder requirements** that may constrain participatory decision-making.
- **Internal readiness and staff capacity** to facilitate shared-power processes.
- **Potential pushback from stakeholders** who are uncomfortable with explicit power analysis.

Humanis recognizes that under time-bound or crisis-driven funding, participatory designs may be constrained and decision-making may become more centralized. In such situations, Humanis commits to being transparent about these limitations and actively seeks to reopen participatory spaces as conditions allow.



## Humanis experience:

### Redistribution of Power in Dayakita – Collective Care Fund

**Dayakita** is a grantmaking program which purposefully integrated collective care as a strategic approach to strengthening women-led organizations and movements in Indonesia. It provided small and medium-sized grants, particularly for grassroots organizations that faced structural barriers to accessing funding. A key learning from Dayakita was that meaningful involvement should avoid mere quantified representation by creating a deliberate strategy to enable trust-based power shifting within grantmaking.

To institutionalize this principle, Dayakita established a governance structure that intentionally distributed roles and decision-making authority across multiple bodies:

- **Advisory Board:** Responsible for oversight and ensuring the quality and integrity of program management, implementation, reporting, and compliance.
- **Steering Committee:** Advises on overall strategy and the focus of calls for proposals, provides thematic and regional insights grounded in rightsholders' perspectives, and offers guidance on resource mobilization and scaling.
- **Selection Panel:** Tasked with assessing proposals and selecting grant recipients based on clear and transparent criteria. Panel members are recruited through an open call for each grant cycle, with selection criteria that emphasizing relevant lived experience and knowledge of the grant theme; a proven track record in gender equality and women's rights; previous work experience with marginalized groups; an understanding of core collective care principles; integrity and accountability; and diversity of representation (across gender, geography, age, and social positioning).

Learnings from **Semai Setara**, one of the Dayakita's grant schemes, demonstrated how the direct involvement of rightsholders in proposal selection can meaningfully alter decision-making dynamics. Perspectives that were brought into the center of deliberations as lived experiences and intersectional insights. This shift encouraged the program team to become more reflective and attentive to elements within proposals that had previously appeared neutral or purely technical, but actually reproduced unequal power relations or created barriers for certain groups in practice.

Beyond proposal assessment, this participatory process ingrained the principle of collective care across the entire grantmaking cycle. It facilitated more thoughtful communication with partners, informed a reporting design that minimized administrative burden, and established a clear prioritization of authentic lived experience as a central indicator of an initiative's value and relevance. These learnings underscored that trust-based power shifting required both structural changes and a fundamental shift in mindset among all actors involved in participatory grantmaking.



# 3.

## Walking with Social Movements

**Grantmaking should do more than fund one-off projects. It should strengthen collective ecosystems and movements that can generate lasting change, adapt to shifting contexts, and endure beyond individual funding cycles.**



### What it means:

- **Prioritizing funding approaches** that support collective action and shared agendas, rather than isolated organizational outputs.
- **Encouraging collaboration and coalition-building among partners**, with clear articulation of roles, facilitation structures, and decision-making processes to ensure inclusion and accountability.
- **Supporting movement sustainability** through regeneration, including intergenerational dialogue, leadership rotation, and knowledge transfer.
- **Providing non-financial** support such as convening spaces, capacity sharing, peer learning, and coordination where needed.

### Why it matters:

When movements are strong, connected, and cared for, change becomes more systemic, resilient, and less dependent on individual actors or short-term interventions.

### What it enables:

- **Brokering across groups and issues** to weave intersectional solidarity and reduce fragmentation.
- **Leveraging collective influence** to shift policies, narratives, and power structures. Creating continuity and sustainability beyond individual projects or protest moments.

### Challenges to anticipate:

- **Additional time, resources, and care work** are required to convene and sustain networks.
- **The risk of reinforcing existing hierarchies** if movement spaces are not intentionally designed.
- **Tensions between short-term project deliverables** and long-term movement-building goals.

In some contexts, sustaining a movement requires facilitation or coordination roles. Humanis approaches this carefully, supporting these functions without reinforcing rigid hierarchies or dependency, and instead encouraging shared leadership, the rotation of roles, and collective accountability.

## Humanis experience:

### Free to Be Me's Communities of Action in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the **Free to Be Me (F2BM)** program implemented a participatory grantmaking mechanism through the Communities of Action (COA) scheme, a non-competitive, network-based approach to funding LGBTIQ+ organizations. This scheme utilized the existing movement network to disseminate information regarding grant calls, thereby avoiding open and competitive calls. This approach enabled Humanis to localize F2BM's Theory of Change by centering the community's perspective.

Humanis recognizes that sustaining movements requires trust, solidarity, diversity, and coherence to function effectively. The CoA was composed of 31 LGBTIQ+ organizations representing diverse advocacy areas, sectors, geographies, and levels of organizational maturity across the country's three (3) main island regions. It intentionally brought together established movement pillars and nascent organizations to work collectively.

Over the three grant cycles spanning 2022 to 2025, CoA members jointly identified priorities, aligned plans, and collectively decided which organizations would implement collective initiatives. In this process, organizations transitioned from being passive recipients of funding to becoming both subjects and agents of participatory grantmaking. Decision-making authority rested within the movement itself, supported — but not directed — by the funding mechanism.

The CoA grant scheme enabled coordinated advocacy around gender-affirming policies and socio-economic rights. It also strengthened the movement's infrastructure, extending beyond the life of the project. CoA members continue to share knowledge and information about opportunities and sustain collective actions. It also demonstrates how movement-centric grantmaking can produce continuity, trust, and shared community ownership beyond funding cycles.

### Role Clarity and Shared Accountability in Connect, Defend, Act (CDA)

The mass protests across Indonesia in August 2025 underscored that sustaining movements required care beyond moments of mobilization. As civic actors took to the streets, they also exercised democratic rights through cross-sector collective actions. However, violent state responses — marked by the use of excessive force, arbitrary arrests, and intimidation toward media organizations, revealed the fragility of civic spacetime when movements confront repression without a system of collective protection.

**The Connect, Defend, Act's (CDA)** partners in Indonesia embodied an ecosystem-based approach to sustaining movements by prioritizing collaboration, role clarity, and mutual reinforcement. Each partner or collective was responsible for several specific tasks to ensure functional movement, without limiting opportunities for collaboration or network building. These tasks encompassed legal aid, the documentation of violence, brokering connections between civic actors, monitoring civic spacetime, archiving, and knowledge management.

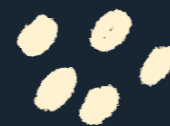
Together, these actors formed a mutually reinforcing ecosystem that supported leadership regeneration, knowledge transfer, and collective protection. By weaving together legal advocacy, academic solidarity, citizen action, and cultural expression, CDA demonstrated how engaging and sustaining movements enabled more systemic and resilient change that was capable of withstanding repression and continuing to organize beyond single events or funding cycles.

# 4.

## Embedding Intersectionality

Social issues are complex, interconnected, and shaped by political, economic, and geographical realities. A participatory approach must be intersectional and incorporate a political-economy analysis, recognizing how overlapping identities and structural inequalities influence access to power, resources, and decision-making spaces. For Humanis, intersectionality is not only an analytical framework but also a design principle that informs who is prioritized, how processes are structured, and what knowledge is documented.

### What it means:



Recognizing diverse geographical contexts, particularly in archipelagic and decentralized contexts such as Indonesia and the Philippines, as a structural factor influencing participation, organizing strategies, and political access.

Analyzing how gender, class, race, age, disability, and other factors shape access to and control over resources, and power over information and opportunities.

Actively centering marginalized voices in decision-making, ensuring they act as agenda-setters and leaders, rather than just participants.

Supporting solutions that are responsive to multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion.

### Why it matters:

Intersectionality ensures that grantmaking addresses the root causes of exclusion, rather than surface-level symptoms, leading to more equitable, relevant, and transformative outcomes.



### What it enables:

- **Contextual and targeted strategies** that are grounded in diverse lived realities and reach those most affected yet often excluded.
- **Funding decisions** that account for the layered barriers to participation, safety, and resource access faced by communities.
- **Holistic and systemic change** that benefits multiple communities and challenges entrenched power relations simultaneously.

### Challenges to anticipate:

- **Limited data or institutional capacity** to fully apply a comprehensive intersectional analysis.
- **The risk of overcomplicating processes** without clear guidance or practical tools.
- **Navigating representation** without falling into tokenism or overburdening marginalized communities.
- **Funder preferences for short-term ‘innovation’** that can undermine the continuity of long-term organizing.



## Humanis experience: Linking and Learning in Voice ‘Indonesia Inklusi’ Program

**Voice** is an innovative grant facility designed to promote diversity and inclusion among rightsholder groups across 10 countries, including Indonesia. Guided by the principle of “Nothing about us Without Us (NOW-Us!),” Voice aimed to amplify previously unheard voices and ensure that no one was left behind.

Voice operationalized intersectionality throughout its entire grantmaking cycle by recognizing that exclusion is multidimensional. The program adapted its application, selection, and reporting processes to accommodate five different rightsholder groups and four grant types. This structural adjustment reduced access barriers and challenged the assumption that a single, standardized system can serve communities facing vastly different forms of exclusion.

In Indonesia, this intersectional approach enabled Voice to prioritize those most affected by intersecting discrimination, including people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ individuals, women experiencing violence, age-discriminated groups, and indigenous peoples. Grantmaking criteria explicitly emphasize reaching those most ignored by mainstream development actors and those facing heightened risks of repression for claiming their rights. This targeted approach enhances access to resources, facilitates political participation, and promotes social inclusion, while challenging systemic stereotypes and stigma by shifting power toward those who are structurally excluded.

**Linking and Learning** was a central pillar of this approach. Rather than treating learning as a process of knowledge extraction, Voice facilitated spaces for mutual learning, collective reflection, and solidarity-building among partners and rightsholders. Through human-centered methods, participants shared lived experiences, surfaced intersecting challenges, and co-created solutions and strategies that reflected their diverse realities. These continuous processes ensured that intersectionality was not only a guiding principle but an active practice, enabling marginalized voices to influence policies and shape inclusive development agendas.



# 5.

## Reimagining Adaptability and Flexibility

The political, social, and environmental contexts in Humanis' areas of work are constantly shifting. Therefore, grantmaking must be designed to respond to uncertainty, volatility, and emerging realities rather than the presumption of linear progress.

### What it means:

- **Allowing flexibility** in budgets, timelines, and deliverables when contexts change.
- **Employing adaptive management approaches** that treat plans and Theories of Change as a living document open to constant revision.
- **Cultivating a culture of trust** that encourages partners to communicate challenges, risks, and strategic pivots as they arise.

### Why it matters:

Flexibility ensures grantmaking remains resilient and relevant, particularly in contexts where political shifts, crises, and external shocks shape civic spacetime.

### What it enables:

- **Responsive support** that can address emergent needs and humanitarian or political crises.
- **Iterative learning and innovation** within the program's design and implementation phases.
- **Stronger partnerships** grounded in honesty, shared problem-solving, and mutual accountability.

### Challenges to anticipate:

- **Balancing flexibility with accountability**, including within monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems.
- **Securing funders' support** for adaptive approaches and open-ended funding structures.
- **Maintaining programmatic coherence** while adjusting strategies mid-cycle to remain responsive to movement needs.

## Humanis experience:

### Adaptive Grant Cycles in Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) Indonesia

Across multiple programs, Humanis has embedded adaptability as a design principle, rather than a reactive contingency plan. In the Voice program, for example, the team introduced **conversation-based reporting** methods to accommodate partners who were more comfortable with verbal reflection than written reports. This shift reduced administrative burden while preserving accountability and learning.

In **Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA)**, adaptive management was intentionally integrated from the outset, supported by funders who shared a commitment to learning-oriented and transformative grantmaking. Given VCA's focus on advocacy and influencing within highly dynamic political, social, and environmental contexts, flexibility was essential. Civic spacetime contracted rapidly, while political shifts, elections, and climate shocks created both risks and unexpected advocacy opportunities.

To respond, VCA employed flexible budgets and treated its Theory of Change as a living framework rather than a fixed blueprint. This allowed partners to recalibrate priorities and strategies as contexts evolved, without losing sight of long-term objectives.

A key innovation within VCA was the **Next Level Grant Facility (NLGF)**, a rapid and flexible funding mechanism designed to complement longer-term grants. NLGF specifically targeted grassroots groups, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), environmental and human rights defenders, and other marginalized actors often excluded from conventional climate finance.

Through simplified reporting and adaptive grant cycles — both regular and urgent — NLGF enabled timely responses to emergencies, emerging policy windows, locally driven climate solutions, and holistic protection needs, including legal support, advocacy access, campaigns, and disaster response. This mechanism allowed VCA to act with the agility that standard grant cycles, which are often too rigid or slow, could not provide.

Across seven countries, including Indonesia, VCA partners faced political instability, a shrinking civic spacetime, extreme weather events, and sudden policy shifts that could not have been fully anticipated at the design stage. Flexibility proved essential to sustaining momentum when advocacy timelines were disrupted. Experience demonstrated that adaptability is only effective when paired with transparency and accountability. Regular coordination with funders ensured that emerging challenges and strategic shifts were communicated early, maintaining trust while enabling timely course correction.

Ultimately, these experiences reaffirm that **trust is the backbone of adaptive grantmaking**. Flexible funding alone is insufficient without intentional efforts to build safe spaces for honest communication. In VCA, this included partner-led task forces — covering advocacy, communications, data, and finance — that enabled partners to collectively shape strategies. This transparency supported peer learning, timely capacity support, and shared problem-solving, allowing the partnership to respond proactively rather than react after harm had occurred.

Together, these practices demonstrate how adaptability and flexibility — when grounded in trust — make grantmaking more resilient, responsive to crisis, and capable of sustaining long-term partnerships and impact.

## D. Overall Reflections

Participatory grantmaking is both a rigorous practice and an evolving journey. From Humanis' experiences, adopting participatory approaches has yielded several meaningful outcomes:

### Stronger ownership:

When communities co-create decisions, initiatives become more relevant, culturally grounded, and sustainable.

### Shared accountability and local leadership:

By dismantling top-down decision-making structures, a deeper sense of responsibility is fostered among partners and rightsholders.

### Sustained movements:

Institutionalized capacity sharing strengthens communities, organizations, and stakeholders, ensuring impact that extends well beyond the life of a single project.

### Mutual learning and inclusive practice of care:

Creating a safe space for funders, intermediaries, and partners to reflect, adapt, and grow together.

### Intersectional solidarity:

Connecting diverse activists, issues, and sectors, ensuring no one is left behind.

### Redefining success and impact:

Challenging conventional monitoring and evaluation by recognizing that success should be defined by and for rightsholders. Measurement evolves into a process of mutual accountability, learning and shared sense-making, moving beyond the limitations of mere compliance.

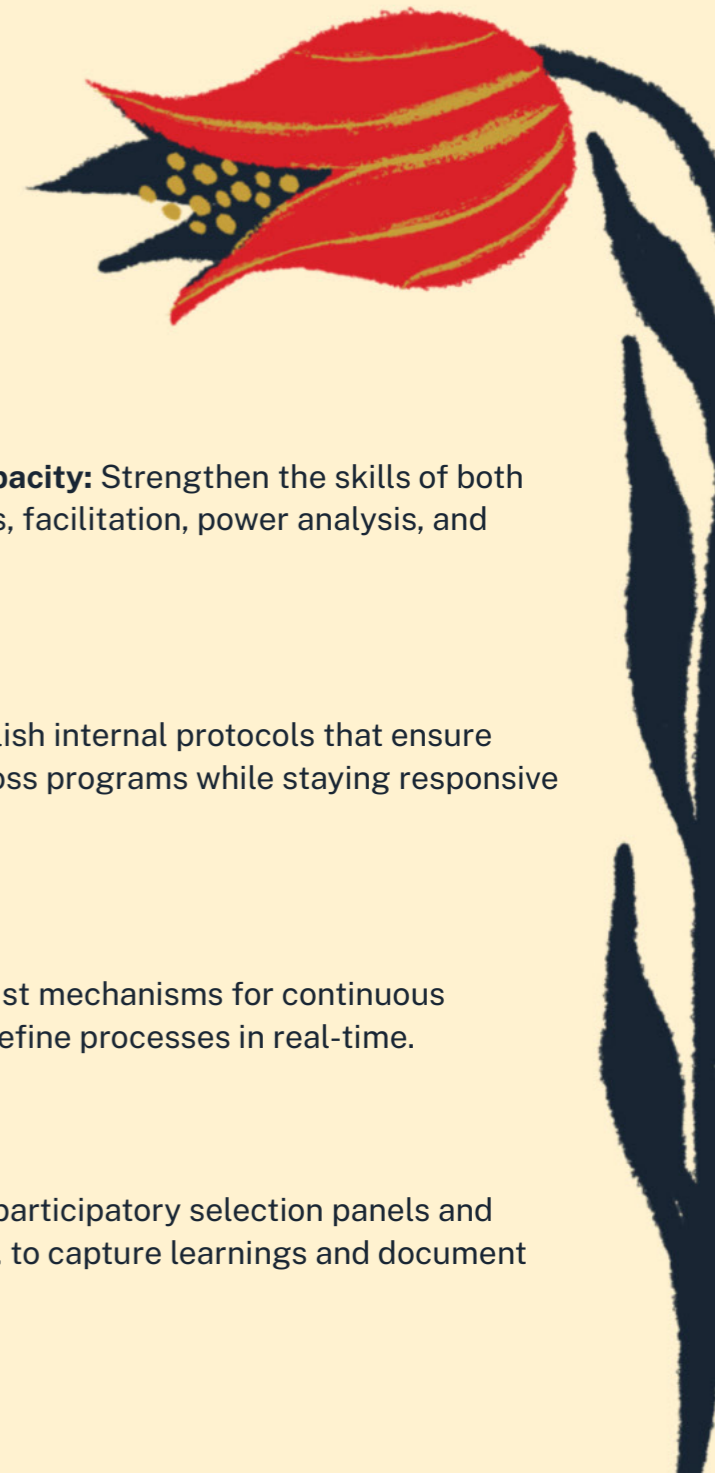
These reflections affirm that participatory grantmaking did more than redistribute power; it built the foundations for long-term, systemic change.

## E. Recommendations and the Way Forward

Pathways to inclusion are rarely simple without cost. They require more than goodwill and commitment; they demand adequate investment in time, funding, and human capacity.

### Recommendations for Strengthening Participatory Grantmaking:

- **Reimagine Grantmaking as Care Work:** Position grantmaking not merely as a technical process but as a practice of collective care and solidarity. This means embedding values of trust, reciprocity, and trust-based accountability into decision-making, ensuring that grantee-partners and communities are heard, seen, and supported rather than burdened.
- **Resource Participation and Care Intentionally:** Meaningful participatory requires grantmaking dedicated budgets for facilitation, care work, convening, and adaptive learning. Humanis will continue to engage funders to recognize these as essential, core costs rather than optional.
- **Deepen Funder Engagement:** Work closely with funders to build a shared understanding of the need for flexibility regarding timelines, budgets, and compliance, allowing for deeper, more meaningful participation.
- **Cultivate Facilitation and Power-Sharing Capacity:** Strengthen the skills of both staff and partners in participatory approaches, facilitation, power analysis, and adaptive learning.
- **Develop Clear yet Flexible Guidelines:** Establish internal protocols that ensure participatory practices remain consistent across programs while staying responsive to diverse contexts.
- **Institutionalize Feedback Loops:** Create robust mechanisms for continuous feedback from partners and communities to refine processes in real-time.
- **Pilot and Iterate:** Test new models — such as participatory selection panels and flexible reporting — within selected programs, to capture learnings and document best practices.



### The Way Forward:

Humanis envisions **this document as a living reference**, evolving as we continue to experience, experiment, learn, adapt, and reflect. Our immediate next steps include socializing these principles internally, piloting them in upcoming grant cycles, and inviting partners and funders to co-reflect on how to deepen participation together. Through this collective commitment, **we aim to transform grantmaking from a transactional process into a catalytic force for justice, care, and systemic change.**

