VOICE

FROM OPEN TO INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

META-ANALYSIS REPORT

9 OCTOBER 2024

SUBMITTED BY
DR PATRICK MUTAHI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRONYMS

AHA	Anti- Homosexuality Act
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ARCAD	Association for Community Resilience Towards Access to Development and Health
AU	Albinism Umbrella
CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CIPDP	Chepkitale Indigenous People's Development Project
COVAW	Coalition on Violence Against Women
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ECDEC	Early Childhood Development Education Centre
FARUG	Freedom and Roam Uganda
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
KEFEADO	Kenya Female Advisory Organization
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KPO	Kenya Paraplegic Organization
K&TRC	The Kids & Teens Resources Centre
L&L	Linking & Learning
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
MCAs	Members of County Assembly
MOH	Ministry of Health
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTA	National Taxpayers Association
PWDs	People with Disabilities
TAI	Trust, Accountability, and Inclusion
ToTs	Training of Trainers
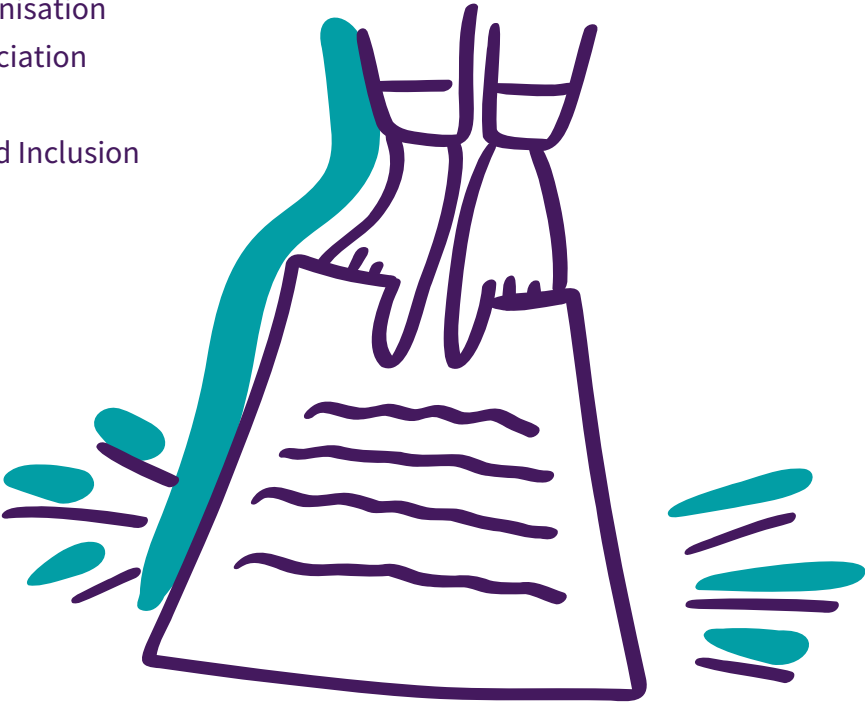
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Through the *From Open to Inclusive Governance* programme, **Voice has supported six projects to promote creativity and innovativeness in addressing social and political exclusion affecting marginalised and discriminated-against populations by leveraging their power to influencing transparency and bolstering accountability.** As this report discusses, the projects as funded by *Voice* provided significant opportunities for rightsholders to engage with government officials, opening new doors for advocacy and contributing to policy changes. The projects provided platforms for participation in governance structures and empowered rightsholders to advocate for their rights and those of their communities. These engagements often led to impactful outcomes, demonstrating the value of collaboration between rightsholders and policymakers. The projects achieved sustainability by embedding their outcomes and outputs into formal decision-making processes, ensuring that these achievements became integral to ongoing development efforts. This integration allowed project outcomes to become part of established structures rather than remaining as isolated initiatives. Empowered communities with the skills and knowledge gained through these projects are better positioned to sustain and expand outcomes, leading to lasting change.

The implementation of the *Voice* programme between 2020 and 2024 was marked by a series of challenges that required considerable adaptability from the rightsholders. The COVID-19 pandemic, political events in Kenya and Uganda, the geopolitical landscape, particularly the Ukraine-Russia conflict, and high staff turnover rates within the *Voice* programme and among government officials, further complicated project implementation. Nonetheless, the rightsholders and *Voice* programme staff demonstrated significant resilience and adaptability despite these challenges. The flexibility built into the *Voice* programme allowed for ongoing monitoring, review, and adjustment of project activities in response to changing circumstances. This adaptability was vital to maintaining progress toward project objectives despite uncertainty and disruption. The lessons from this period, particularly the importance of flexibility, digital inclusion, and strategic communication, provide valuable insights for future project design and implementation, ensuring that projects remain responsive and effective in dynamic environments.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

As this report shows, **rightsholders were able to persuade duty bearers and power holders by using evidence-based approaches, leading to significant legal victories and policy changes.** The data collected strengthened the rightsholders' voices and created legitimacy and urgency around their issues. The *Voice* programme's success in supporting the projects and ensuring sustainable change can be attributed mainly to the active involvement of rightsholders[1] from the outset. This participatory approach increased project ownership, enhanced the likelihood of success, and contributed significantly to the sustainability of outcomes. Co-creation sessions were integral to this process, with the community involved in developing every activity, including creating and implementing the data leadership curriculum, reporting, mapping project implementation sites, serving as key informants, and participating in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Expanding networks and creating strategic collaborations were crucial across all six projects and the *Voice* programme. **Collaborative efforts were critical to the projects' successes, with diverse strategies to build multi-tier and cross-sectoral relationships, alliances, and networks at global, national, and local levels.** At the *Voice* programme level, collaboration involving the Coady Institute, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI), and rightsholders was facilitated through co-creations including, for example, collectively defining and shaping learning and linking objectives and activities. These platforms were described as productive spaces for collaboration among grantees, contributing to their knowledge, facilitating learning, and improving programmatic work. However, a limitation noted by some participants was the inability of the Linking & Learning (L&L) sessions, especially those facilitated virtually, to tailor support to the individual needs of each project. While the sessions were valuable, some respondents felt that more individualised support would have been beneficial in addressing the unique operational challenges faced by different project teams. A multifaceted collaborative approach enhanced the effectiveness of rightsholders' advocacy by allowing them to embrace better practices, build supportive networks, and tap into resources and expertise from other grantees. This broadened the support for projects from state and non-state actors and *Voice* and non-*voice* partners. Some partners even engaged with new donors to secure funding and strengthen pathways for sustainable outcomes.

Involving the community in capacity building, documentation, and lesson sharing was crucial for sustainability. Peer-to-peer learning, Training of Trainers (ToTs), and mentorship sessions were instrumental in cascading knowledge across the community. Future projects should continue to focus on community-driven approaches, allowing communities to dictate their needs and pace, further enhancing sustainability. Safe spaces were critical in strengthening rightsholders' agency, providing shelter for the vulnerable, and enabling collaborative decision-making. The ongoing challenge of securing funding for these initiatives highlights the importance of engaging new donors and stakeholders committed to more long-term support.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the lessons learned from the *Voice* programme underscore the **importance of empowering rightsholders through knowledge acquisition, data literacy, and confidence-building**. The projects also highlight the **critical role of participatory action research and the need for ongoing engagement with duty-bearers to foster inclusivity and attitudinal change.** Ultimately, these efforts have contributed to more effective advocacy, greater accountability, and the creation of more inclusive and participatory governance processes.

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[1] In the report, when the term "rightsholders" is used, it is referring to the rights holders who participated in program-level activities and are members of Voice project teams.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is a Meta-Analysis of the Outcomes and Learning emerging from six projects funded under the *From Open to Inclusive Governance* grant, focusing on project, context, and meta-level analysis. **In February 2020, with support from the Hewlett Foundation and in cooperation with the Trust, Accountability, and Inclusion (TAI) network (formerly the Transparency & Accountability Initiative),** *Voice* **launched the 'From Open to Inclusive Governance' grant.** The grant sought to support initiatives aiming to enhance the inclusion of rightsholder groups (e.g., women, youth, people with disabilities/albinism, survivors of gender-based violence, Indigenous peoples, and the LGBTQI+ community) in governance, public decision-making, and service delivery.

Since August 2020, with support from this grant, six projects involving 17 organisations in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, and Mali have been implementing initiatives ranging from community-led research and data generation to the education of rightsholders on policy processes and active influencing and advocacy. The projects' focal areas are governance, public decision-making, and service delivery and access, especially health, education, social services, and other mainstream services.

Projects also focused on issues related to access to relevant public data and enhancing the ability to understand and participate in the public domain decision-making processes, especially in local budgeting and taxation and public accountability lines. Throughout this process, the programme and implementing organisations have been accompanied by and strengthened with a reflective and interactive learning component and process facilitated by the Coady Institute. It enhances the capacity of the organisations to provide citizen-led accountability and advocacy efforts, which aligns with *Voice's* goal of being a learning programme.

As this report notes, *Voice* has been instrumental in strengthening the advocacy capacity of rightsholders and their allies. This is by encouraging innovative ideas and strategies to support the rightsholders' self-empowerment and ensuring their voices are heard and respected. Some of the implemented activities can create a sustainable system that encourages respective governments to be more responsive to the people's needs. In turn, this makes public services accessible to all, including the marginalised and minorities, and places individuals at the centre of decision-making.

The report analyses the findings from the programme documentation and key informants. It set out to answer the TOR questions. **The report provides an analysis of the higher-level outcomes and lessons emerging from the six projects to serve as a resource for practitioners working to enhance inclusive governance as well as for their supporters.** It is also a tool for knowledge exchange among *Voice* grantee partners. The next section of the report discusses the context and lessons emerging before delving into the outcomes and sustainability strategies. Conclusion and recommendations form the final part of the report.

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECTS

WEALTH OF OUR LAND (BOITITAP KORENYO)

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS:

1. Chepkitale Indigenous People's Development Project (CIPDP)
2. Awana Digital (formerly known as Digital Democracy)
3. Forest Peoples Programme (FPP)

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

This project was based in Kenya and implemented from 1 June 2021 to 31 August 2023. [2] The project focused on Indigenous people in Kenya and spoke to the themes related to spaces for political participation and improved access to resources and employment. **The project's primary aim was to increase literacy in data use skills and knowledge among the Ogiek in Mt. Elgon to advocate for their rights while effectively managing their customary land. This aim would be attained using new community-based GIS technologies.** The availability and use of information would change the nature of their engagement with local authorities and conservation agencies.

OBJECTIVES

The design phase of the project, which took 6 months, aimed at:

a. Strengthening the target rightsholder's capacity to map and monitor their ancestral lands, equally creating and sustaining comprehensive knowledge mapping across all community groups.
b. Increasing the rightsholders' ability to advocate for themselves on local and national platforms and with government and other officials, thus equally reducing their marginalisation.
c. Securing greater land tenure through legal mechanisms, equally reducing conflict with neighbouring communities and increasing internal fluency on territory issues. [3]

The project's implementation phase, which took 18 months, aimed at increasing the availability and use of information to change the nature of the rightsholders' engagement with local authorities and conservation agencies.

Community Engagement with Maasai women from Mt. Elgon conducted by CIPDP and FPP in 2022 (Photo Credit: Awana Digital, CIPDP and FPP).

RAPID RESEARCH FOR AGILE POLICY MAKING

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS:

1. Icebreakers Uganda
2. Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG)
3. TranzNetwork Uganda

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

This project was based in Uganda and implemented from 31 October 2020 to 22 December 2023.[4] **It aimed at nurturing data stewardship among LGBTQI+ community members, organisations, and movements to increase self-governing capacity. Moreover, the project sought to "develop a data collaborative system that responsibly aggregates key high-quality data onto one online exchange platform for LGBTI+ communities that can be rapidly utilised for accountability and transparency initiatives."** These goals were achieved by ensuring the collected data underwent an ethical process and standardisation across indicators. The project's implementation included a 6-month design phase, an 18-month implementation phase from 30 October 2020 to January 2023, and a 7-month extension from January to September 2023.

OBJECTIVES

The design phase aimed at:[5]

• Studying and developing tools through extensive research, such as conducting needs assessments and collecting data from KII interviews. Facilitating FGDs to understand issues of LGBTQ+ community members and how they can be incorporated into policymaking to ensure inclusive participation in policymaking and accountability by governments.
• Creating semi-automated digital and in-person tools to facilitate rapid research and sharing anonymised findings with the community through workshops and web-based resources.
• Understanding the community members' needs and challenges in conducting research and sharing results. It involved identifying the bottlenecks and their impact on urban/rural communities, as well as data-sharing approaches across individual activists, CSOs, and local/national bodies.

The implementation phase focused on the knowledge acquired in the initial phase to influence developing methodologies, tools, and spaces for conducting rigorous and rapid research. These findings would help inform decision-making, the community's participation and inclusivity, and help hold institutions accountable.
This phase aimed:[6]

• To promote inclusive data-driven policies, participation and service delivery within the health sector in Uganda.
• To empower highly discriminated subgroups within marginalised communities to self-advocate.
• To inform data collection processes, research products, and policy recommendations generated from the project.
• To use the disaggregated data, collaborative data platforms, evidence-based research, and policy recommendations to influence and catalyse access to quality healthcare services and create access to safe political spaces, processes, and participation by LGBTQI+ rightsholders.

[2] Voice (2024), "Project: The *Wealth of Our Land*s (Boititap Korenyo)" Voice, https://voice.global/grantees/the-wealth-of-our-lands-boititap-korenyo/. (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Data from the End of Project Report - Pollicy- December 2023.

[5] *Voice* (2024), "Project: *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making*" Voice, https://voice.global/grantees/rapid-research-for-agile-policy-making/ (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

[6] *Voice* (2024), "Project: *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making*" Voice, https://voice.global/grantees/rapid-research-for-agile-policy-making/ (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

FULL CIRCLE TAX WATCH FOR ALL

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS:

1. **The Kids & Teens Resources Centre (K&TRC)** – lead organisation for the Consortium of 4 organisations
2. **Peer Review Forum** in Nigeria
3. **ARCAD Sante Plus** in Mali
4. **Accountability International** in South Africa
5. **Society for AIDS in Africa** in Ghana

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The project was implemented from 1 May 2021 to 31 October 2022. The project's design was executed in Nigeria in November 2020 among young persons, LGBTQI persons, and persons living with disabilities (marginalised communities), while the Implementation phase was replicated in Mali and Ghana.[7] **The project aimed to improve the understanding of budget and fiscal monitoring, pro-poor tax policy, efficient tax collection, and budget allocation initiatives in Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali. It focused on organisations addressing rightsholders' health and education needs.** It also worked toward improved institutional support for the inclusion of rightsholders in proactive engagement with tax policy reforms and budget monitoring.

OBJECTIVES

The design and implementation phases aimed at empowering young people in the 3 countries with skills to improve social accountability around fiscal issues such as taxation and public budgeting. The project also aimed to strengthen rightsholders' access to comprehensive healthcare and education services, promote gender inclusion of marginalised communities in fiscal policymaking, and conduct practice monitoring dialogues.[8]

Workshop on "Asset-based and Feminist Approaches to Advocacy", organized by the Coady Institute in Diani, Kenya, in September 2024 (Photo Credit: Coady Institute)

UNKNOWN ABOUT ALBINISM

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS:

Albinism Umbrella (AU)

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

This project was based in Uganda and implemented from 1 June 2021 to 31 October 2023.[9] **The project aimed at mapping and developing profiles of people with albinism in Northern, Western, and Central Uganda. Mapping would increase the visibility of the rightsholders and recognition of the disabling condition.** Acquired data would help create support structures to facilitate advocacy access to services as well as increase inclusion and participation in the mainstream development process. The intended goal was to use the acquired data to design strategies to improve the holistic well-being and inclusion of at least 500 persons with albinism in mainstreaming development processes. Approaches adopted to accomplish this aim were stakeholder engagements, forming support groups, and building the capacity of the rightsholders in self-advocacy, governance, leadership, and communication.

OBJECTIVES

The design phase involved [10]
- Creating a comprehensive database for the rightsholders in the three regions
- Promoting the formation of support groups for the rightsholders at grassroots levels as a basis for accessing health, education and other mainstream services
- Influencing national policy to enhance the inclusion of people with albinism in mainstream development based on the collected data

Focus Group Discussion organized by AU in Luwero, Uganda, in September 2021 (Photo Credit: Albinism Umbrella)

[7] End of Project Report - K&TRC.

[8] Voice (2024), "Project: *Full Circle Tax Watch* for All" Voice, https://voice.global/grantees/full-circle-tax-watch-for-all/#project (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

[9] *Voice* (2024), "Project: *Unknown About Albinism*" *Voice*, https://voice.global/grantees/the-unknown-about-albinism/ (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

[10] Ibid.

TUPO. TUSIKIZWE (WE ARE HERE. LISTEN TO US)

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS:

Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW)

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

This project was based in Kenya and implemented from 1 September 2020 to 31 October 2022. **The project aimed at empowering and enhancing civic awareness among marginalised women and girls and people with disabilities in Kwale County. It focused on the rightsholders' roles and constitutional rights in the county's budgeting processes and informed/empowered a gender-responsive budgeting process.** This aim was achieved by enhancing their voices to demand the uptake of their priority needs and equitable resource distribution. The objectives of the project in the design phase included:[11]

OBJECTIVES

- Enhancing the understanding of the normative budgeting framework at the county level
- Enhancing the understanding of gender-responsive budgeting and utilisation of gender-responsive budgeting principles
- Enhancing the capacity of women and girls to analyse the Kwale County budget estimates against their needs
- Recommending actions to enhance the response to GBV and economic empowerment of adolescent girls and young women
- Enhancing the capacity of girls and women to increase for the uptake of their priorities.

The project was piloted in 5 villages from the Matuga sub-county and was implemented in 10 villages in Msambweni and Lungalunga sub-counties in Kwale counties. The 15 villages include Kilolapwa, Bongwe, Makongeni, Marigiza, Magodi, Kiwegu, Shimoni, Mwangulu, Kilimangodo, Mwananyamala, Kayawaa, Madibwani, Bombo, Mteza and Lunguma villages.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting community engagement organized by COVAW in Kinondo, Kenya (Photo Credit: COVAW)

Patricia Kamade, Gender-Responsive Budgeting champion supported by COVAW, participating in the Voice Global Linking & Learning Festival organized in Bangkok, Thailand, in April 2024 (Photo Credit: COVAW)

[11] *Voice* (2024), "Project: *Tupo. Tusikizwe*" Voice, https://voice.global/grantees/we-are-here-listen-to-us-tupo-tusikizwe/ (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

CHAMBUA – ENHANCING INCLUSIVE TAXATION

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS:

1. **The Kenyan Paraplegic Organization (KPO)**
2. **The Kenya Female Advisory Organization (KEFEADO)**
3. **Kenya National Taxpayers Association (NTA)**

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

This project was based in Kenya and implemented from 1 September 2020 to 31 July 2023. The project aimed to have sustained, holistic, active participation by the rightsholder groups in Nairobi and Kisumu Counties in public funds decision-making processes. **The project aimed to ensure public funds allocation and utilisation are responsive to and reflective of the target rightsholder groups' voices, needs, and priorities. The primary objective during the design phase was to "enhance the participation and voice of 300 PWDs and 500 women in the budget-making process in Nairobi and Kisumu Counties by June 2022."**

OBJECTIVES

In the implementation phase, the project aimed at:

- Promoting greater access to productive resources and the creation of more open political participation and civic engagement by the target rightsholders
- Empowering self-advocacy and informing research-based policy recommendations to influence and catalyse the access of productive resources, political spaces, processes, and participation among the target rightsholders.

People with disabilities participate in a basketball match organized by KPO at the Ulinzi Sports Complex in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 2022 (Photo Credit: KPO)

Persons with albinism take part on a football match organized by KPO as part of their community engagements at the Kihumbini Stadium in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 2023 (Photo Credit: KPO)

METHODOLOGY

The Meta-Analysis employed a mixed-methods approach, combining an extensive literature review with key informant interviews to generate a comprehensive understanding of the six projects and their broader implications. The research was guided by a structured set of **learning questions**, which framed the data collection, analysis, and synthesis of findings (see Annex I: Learning Questions Framing the Research). The learning questions were designed to guide the research at three levels:

- **Project-Level Questions** focused on identifying the outcomes, commonalities, differences, and sustainability of the six projects after nearly four years.

- **Context-Level Questions** explored how the projects adapted to dynamic civic space challenges, influenced political, social, legal, and economic conditions, and contributed to civil society movements in Kenya and Uganda.

- **Meta-Level Questions** assessed the overarching assumptions underlying the collaboration between Voice, TAI, and the Hewlett Foundation. These included evaluating the effectiveness of rightsholder participation in governance spaces, the role of capacity strengthening through grant-making and linking and learning, and the broader implications for trust-building, advocacy, and sustainability.

The analysis integrated findings across these levels to identify emerging themes, patterns, and lessons learned. This methodological approach enabled the research to not only capture project-specific insights but also distill broader systemic learnings, contributing to the strategic reflections on grant-making, advocacy, and governance within the *'From Open to Inclusive Governance'* initiative and the Voice programme more broadly.

Participants in a Social Accountability Workshop, part of the *Chambua* project in Kisumu, Kenya (Photo Credit NTA).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The consultant synthesised all relevant documents of the *'From Open to Inclusive Governance'* grant made available to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the programme. Other relevant policies and recent academic literature were also analysed to supplement the programme documents. The meta-analysis focused on two levels of documentation: the *Voice* and Project Levels (see Table Below). The literature review process was continuous, even while collecting field data. Furthermore, the analysis from this desk review was instrumental in interpreting and qualifying the information obtained from the key informant interviews.

PROGRAMME-RELATED DOCUMENTS FOR DESK REVIEW

DOCUMENTS

- *Voice* **Level – 22 documents**
1. Programme Design Documents - Proposals submitted by *Voice* to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
2. Programme Review Documents – Reports submitted by *Voice* to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
3. Blog posts or other reflections by *Voice* staff
4. *Voice* annual reports
5. Final evaluation report

- Project Level – **23 documents, 7 audios, and blog posts from 17 organisations**
6. Programme Design Documents - Proposals generated and submitted by partners to *Voice*
7. Programme Review Reports – Periodic Reports generated and submitted by partners to *Voice*.
8. Reports from the Coady Institute of the learning events
9. Blog posts or other reflections by partners

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The consultant conducted in-depth interviews with 22 key informants from the *Voice* programme and the projects. These interviews, guided by the research's learning questions, aimed to gather valuable insights and perspectives. Additional questions addressing gaps and clarifications from the literature review were also included. The respondents were asked to provide supporting documentary evidence and any other valuable data they may be willing to share to support their findings better. All the interviews were conducted online using Zoom and transcribed for easier data analysis. The consultant ensured that gender and other special interest groups like women, LGBTIQ persons, youth, the elderly, persons with disability, Indigenous people, and ethnic minorities were included as key informants.

Key informants were purposively sampled based on the following:
- Gaps and critical issues in information arising from a review of programme-related documents
- Nature of role played by respondents in overall coordination and implementation of the programme
- Nature of engagement of key informants in the programme
- Suggestions from other key informants
- Any other criteria agreed upon between the consultant and the Client.

that demonstrated convergence or shared similar underlying concepts per the learning questions. Data sets demonstrating consistent patterns were grouped into themes as they demonstrated shared learning perspectives/outcomes. Divergence analysis helped establish varying learning perspectives and outcomes across the data sources, highlighting unique findings. This step enabled a deeper understanding and broader interpretation of the themes. It also allowed us to answer the primary learning questions and comprehend the implications of the grant on its intended goal.

Data triangulation was done using all the data from the key informant interviews and documentary evidence. Comparing the data from the interviews and documents helped validate the findings. Triangulation provided a comprehensive understanding and view of the intended learning agenda and revealed areas of convergence and divergence. This step also enhanced the credibility of the conclusions and the trustworthiness of the recommendations from the meta-analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected was analysed using a rigorous four-step process. This process ensured the findings were robust and reliable, providing a comprehensive understanding of the programme's outcomes and implications for inclusive governance.

Convergence-Divergence Analysis: This step involved familiarising with the data generated from the transcripts, reading through them to observe initial trends/patterns, and recording thoughts as guided by the provided learning questions. Secondly, initial codes were generated from the transcript, acquiring excerpts relevant to the project, programme, and meta-learning

questions. The developed codes within the data set were reviewed to identify patterns of convergence (agreement) and divergence (differences).

Comparisons: This step involved systematically comparing data segments across the developed codes from the interviews and learning acquired from the desk review of proposals, reports, and other relevant documents at the *Voice* and project levels. It helped identify similarities and differences in the learning questions.

Thematic Data Analysis: Next, the consultant developed themes through grouping/combining identified codes and the comparative analysis

VALIDATION

The meta-analysis report was validated on 26 September 2024 during a learning workshop attended by the rightsholders and facilitated by the Coady Institute.

Participants of the "Taking Charge, Making Change" Knowledge Exchange organized by Voice, Coady Institute, and Emergent Leaders Foundation (Photo Credit: ELF).

META-ANALYSIS FINDINGS

LEARNING ON CONTEXT

In this section, the consultant sought to answer the following questions:

- **How have the six projects adapted to the dynamic civic space context in their countries?**
- **How have the six projects influenced the political, social, legal and economic context in which they are operating?**
  - **What strategies have been found most useful to continue holding the line in the face of growing blowback against human rights defenders, and particular communities?**
  - **Have there been any ripple effects from the five/ six projects to the civil society organisations / social movements in Kenya and Uganda?**

The *Voice* **programme's implementation faced multifaceted and dynamic socio-economic, political, and legal environments in different countries.** The constantly changing context necessitated tremendous adaptability among the rightsholders. For instance, **the COVID-19 pandemic affected the various engagements.** The six projects were implemented between 2020 and 2023, when the World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 pandemic [March 2020], and heightened health measures were in place globally until May 2023. Due to restrictive movement policies and bans on public gatherings, rapid and agile operational approaches emerged. At the *Voice* level, e-learning platforms, e-meetings and engagements introduced by Coady Institute supported the grantees in learning and connecting with other partners worldwide. Digital platforms (Zoom, Moodle, Padlet and Skype) were also used

to facilitate the linking and learning sessions during the pandemic. One interviewee noted that COVID ensured rightsholders learned to use online spaces for engagement, communication, and project implementation. Nonetheless, using the digital space remained a challenge, especially in rural areas, due to limited supporting infrastructure and technologies not being very adaptive to people with various disabilities. [12] This underscores the need for inclusive digital solutions catering to all rightsholders' diverse needs.

The **restriction of movement and bans on public gatherings affected citizens' participation in activities such as budgeting.** The projects adopted remote and virtual approaches, including remote training, to facilitate smooth virtual engagements. This adaptability ensured the continuity of the project activities and strengthened rightsholders' ability to be dynamic and adopt digital tools within their engagement processes. The ability of rightsholders to operate during the pandemic highlighted their resilience. The experience has likely strengthened their capacity to operate in uncertain and rapidly changing environments, which is crucial for future challenges. The lessons learned from this period could inform future strategies, particularly in how projects are designed to be flexible and responsive to unforeseen difficulties.

Political events also led some projects to adopt innovative project implementation strategies. **Some project activities were postponed and not conducted within the scheduled periods due to changes within the political environment,** affecting project completion

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timelines. For example, the *Chambua* project needed to reschedule its activities due to the August 2022 Kenyan general elections. County governments were also required to fast-track the budgeting process, presenting the risk of missed opportunities for citizen participation, an essential action for the project. This highlights the importance of building flexibility into project plans to accommodate disruptions such as the general elections and change of government. Projects must anticipate such political pressures and devise strategies to ensure that essential citizen participatory processes are not compromised.

For the *Rapid Research for Agile Policy* Making in Uganda, they had to be strategic and targeted in their approaches when the **Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023** was passed into law. A key informant noted that their advocacy strategies had become more effective through the project, allowing them to be more vocal against discriminatory policies. Nonetheless, implementing the *Voice* programme after the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act exacerbated insecurity and safety issues among LGBTQ+ rightsholders, resulting in slowed project implementation due to the fear of being targeted. Due to the project's sensitivity and LGBTQ+ policy, the rightsholders integrated unique adaptability strategies to help work around the insecurities. This included creating a plan for sensitive communication and using positive language that would equally promote positive narratives of the project and advocacy. One respondent said they worked with the media "To report and present better narratives that promote equal rights for LGBTQ+ people." A key lesson was that the *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making* adopted innovative engagement, targeting stakeholders championing LGBTQ+ issues safely. Constant monitoring of

the political environment, anticipating foreseen political changes, and creating flexible contingency measures facilitated the adaptable project implementation strategies highlighted above.

The **shrinking civic space also negatively impacted the safety and security of implementing partners.** The restrictive laws culminated in fear and uncertainty among sexual minority organisations, including those partnering with the project. The Ugandan government shut down one of the largest and oldest LGBTQIA+ community organisations and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (2023). Accompanying this restrictive environment were ongoing police raids on shelters for homeless LGBTQIA+ youth in Kampala in 2021, opposition and persecution, and refusal to renew the registration of organisations supporting LGBTQIA+ rights under the pretext of financial improprieties and administrative issues. There were proposals from the NGO Bureau to criminalise the "promotion and recruitment" of homosexuality and other "deviant '' sexual behaviours".[13] One respondent stated that the sensitivity of LGBTIQ+ topics within the restrictive civic space impeded engagement between the rightsholders and key duty bearers at the Ministry of Health and the Uganda AIDS Commission.[14] This situation also created variations in value alignment among consortium members, as NGOs were required to share extensive information about their activities, partners, and beneficiaries.[15] In Nigeria and Ghana, it was identified that the **legal environment was unsafe and unfriendly, mainly for marginalised populations.** An interviewee stated the presence of a zero-tolerance policy in the countries towards LGBTQ+ members. [16]

The *Full Circle Tax Watch for All* project needed help accessing leaders. The project was implemented in Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali, countries with unique socio-political and economic environments, governance dynamics, different currencies, and inconsistent exchange rates. **Aligning project objectives with multiple local and international initiatives operating across these three countries was challenging.** According to a participant, *"Coordinating efforts and ensuring consistency while adapting to diverse contexts presented complexities in project management."*[17] An interviewee noted that they employed multiple strategies, including persistent follow-ups, direct outreach, and leveraging personal connections, where some leaders agreed to be engaged, and others declined.[18] The *Full Circle Tax Watch* for All project in Nigeria had projects targeting the national budget and taxes. However, it was noted that rightsholders only hear about budgets and taxes but do not see the need to participate. There is a lack of the right avenues for engagement and inadequate knowledge and understanding of their rights and role in these public processes. [19] In Kenya, an interviewee noted the challenges of a shrinking civic space at the national and county government levels. Lack of access to information and public access to relevant documents and information hindered effective engagement.[20]

Geopolitical factors were also a key consideration, mainly the impact of the Ukraine conflict. The Ukraine-Russia conflict, which began in 2014, escalated significantly in 2022. The Ukraine conflict, particularly following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, has had profound and widespread financial impacts globally. The conflict's uncertainty and risk led to volatility in global stock markets and significant fluctuations in major currencies. The consequences were felt globally and in various sectors, such as energy and food security. One respondent from *Voice* noted that **the economic crisis with Ukraine meant losses in exchange rates**[21] , a sentiment shared among grantees.[22] Exchange rate fluctuations led to budget shortfalls during currency conversions and increased operational costs such as fuel. In other instances, exchange gain meant more money was available for the project. For example, the *Chambua* project experienced exchange rate gains and losses in Kenya. Exchange rate losses occurred due to the fluctuations of the Kenyan shilling, adversely impacting staffing and project planning.[23] On the other hand, exchange rate gains allowed for successful implementation as the gain covered project activities without requiring additional funding.[24]

[13] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 8 August 2024.

[14] Data from the End of Project Report - Pollicy- December 2023.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Interview with a Nigerian Partner, 29 July 2024.

[17] Interview with a Ghanian Partner, 16 August 2024.

[18] Ibid.

[19] End of Project Report - K&TRC.

[20] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 2 August 2024.

[21] Interview with *Voice* Partners, 20 August 2024.

[22] See AUL End of Project Report 2023; See End of Project Report - Grantee Partners (IF-IL-SO) Phase Jan -July 2023 *Chambua*.

[23] Ibid.

[24] See End of Project Report - Grantee Partners (IF-IL-SO) Phase Jan -July 2023 *Chambua*.

High staff turnover rates within the *Voice* programme and the duty bearers impacted programme implementation. Some respondents noted the frequent turnover of government personnel[25] and changes in regimes.[26] Building and maintaining relationships with new officials required additional effort. In most implementing countries, the uncertainty presented by a new administration required strategic approaches to building relationships and advocating for project priorities.

Moreover, changes in fund managers and office personnel within the *Voice* Programme and the projects affected the flow of implementation and learning. People involved in the initial linking and learning sessions in the *Voice* Programme staff and the projects differed from those engaged four years later.[27] Another interviewee noted that frequent staff turnover at *Voice* hindered effective project oversight and understanding of the work on the ground.[28] New staff meant building new relationships and trust and gaining buy-in through multiple engagement rounds. As an adaptive strategy, some projects proactively engaged with the new staff to ensure the continuity of project

initiatives and cultivated strong relationships to facilitate ongoing collaborations. [29] This involved providing new staff with comprehensive project backgrounds and ensuring they were well-informed about ongoing initiatives. Additionally, *Voice* had a solid institutional memory through documentation and regular updates that helped mitigate the disruptions caused by turnover.

Overall, different rights holders made substantial progress toward learning from the context and integrating adaptive strategies accordingly. These adaptability strategies included creative, innovative, and practical approaches to engagement and adopting agile project implementation. With the flexibility exhibited by the *Voice* programme, rightsholders could regularly monitor and review project implementation and outcomes to the changing contexts. It provided room for ongoing reviews, reflections, and modifications where necessary to ensure the projects remain aligned with their objectives, outcomes, and the ever-changing implementation circumstances of different countries.

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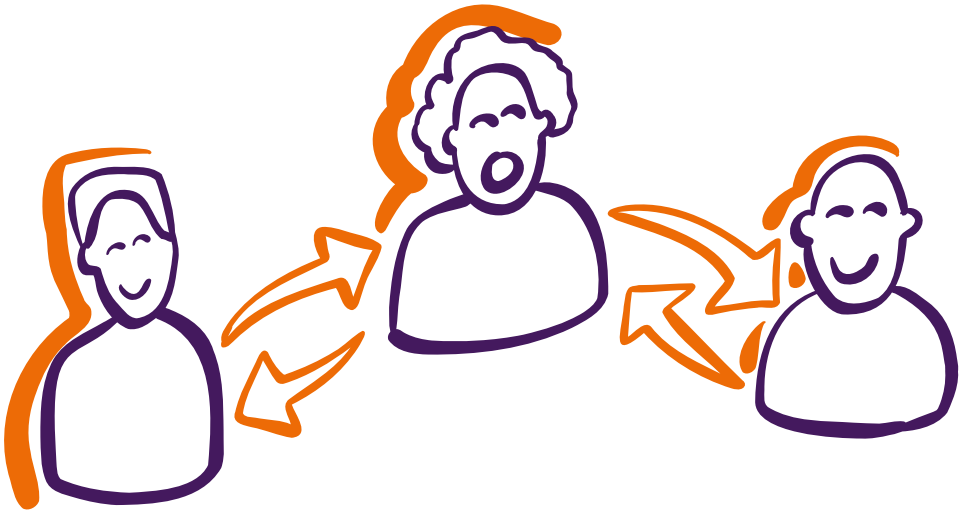
[25] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 15 August 2024; Interview with *Voice* Partners, 20 August 2024.

[26] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 30 July 2024..

[27] Interview with *Voice* Partner, 20 August 2024.

[28] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 8 August 2024.

[29] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 15 August 2024; Interview with *Voice* Partners, 20 August 2024.

Community Action Group Meeting organized by KPO part of the Chambua Project in Nairobi, Kenya, in May 2023 (Photo Credit: KPO).

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

To understand the broader impact and lessons from the six implemented projects, it is essential to identify the key outcomes across all projects, as well as their commonalities, linkages, and notable differences. To do this, **the consultant was guided by the following research questions:**

- What are the significant outcomes of the projects?
- Are there any significant commonalities in the trajectories and outcomes of these five/ six projects? Are there any significant differences?
- Is there any linkage/ connection between the projects? If yes, have the linkages and connections had any outcomes in and of themselves?
- How has the foundational assumption underlying *Voice* – that capacity strengthening through grant making as well as linking and learning contribute to increased capacity of rightsholders to demand accountability, to lobby, and to advocate – held up?
- How have the rightsholders voices been included/ heard in transparency, accountability and good governance spaces?
- Has the participation of rightsholders in the transparency, accountability and good governance spaces made these more open and inclusive to rightsholders' perspectives? Have any specific changes transpired as a result of this openness and inclusion?

The projects demonstrate strong interrelations. **Rightsholders' engagement with government officials, led to tangible policy changes. These efforts were supported by data-driven advocacy, where rightsholders collected and used evidence to back their claims.** This approach not only strengthened their advocacy but also established trust with duty-bearers, fostering long-term relationships and policy shifts. The integration of knowledge-building and awareness among both rightsholders and duty-bearers further fueled the advocacy efforts.

Training sessions in projects enhanced the capacity of rightsholders to gather, analyse, and use data for advocacy. This knowledge translated into greater confidence and active participation in governance. Additionally, the improved understanding among duty-bearers resulted in more inclusive policies.

Expanding networks and creating more strategic collaborations, along with strengthened learning and knowledge sharing, were pivotal in enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of the projects within the *Voice* programme. **The creation of partnerships between rightsholders, the Coady Institute, the TAI, and other stakeholders facilitated the sharing of diverse resources, expertise, and best practices, allowing rightsholders to improve their advocacy efforts and project outcomes.** These cross-sectoral relationships were enhanced through linking and learning platforms, where participants engaged in collaborative learning and discussions. This mutual exchange of knowledge strengthened the capacity of rightsholders to address issues of governance, transparency, and inclusive participation.

The establishment of safe spaces, both online and offline, further amplified these collaborative and knowledge-sharing efforts, offering rightsholders secure environments to engage in advocacy, decision-making, and community-led initiatives. These spaces were instrumental in fostering women's empowerment and leadership and led to more inclusive and comprehensive outcomes. The safe spaces, along with peer-to-peer learning and mentorship programmes, ensured that knowledge was not only shared but also retained within the communities, contributing to the sustainability of the projects and creating opportunities for future leaders.

STRENGTHENED POLICY INFLUENCE, CHANGE AND GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

The projects provided an opportunity for the rightsholders to engage with government officials, equally opening new doors for advocacy. Rightsholders stated to have had successful and impactful conversations with duty-bearers within various government offices. These conversations created and enhanced platforms for collaborations with policymakers, leading to policy engagements and changes. For example, In the *Wealth of our Land* project, rightsholders engaged with duty bearers from the Kenyan Judiciary, the National Land Commission, and the Kenya Wildlife Service on issues of historical land injustices. In 2022, these engagements led to the Ogiek of Mt. Elgon winning a 14-year legal case whereby a court ordered land rights be returned to the community. [30]

The *Chambua* project is said to have resulted in the launching of a county development programme known as the *Huduma Mashinani (delivery of services on the ground).* The programme sought to bridge the county executive and the people by offering a dialogue platform and participatory development. In Kisumu County, project advocacy efforts by KEFEADO led to the operationalisation of the dormant People with Disabilities Act of 2016, enabling greater PWD representation in the County Assembly. In Nairobi County, rightsholders through the NTA successfully opposed the Eco Levy targeting PWDs in the 2024 Finance Bill,

leading to its removal. [31] The Eco Levy is a charge imposed on specific goods or services with an environmental impact. The primary aim of the Eco Levy is to discourage the use of environmentally harmful products and to raise funds for ecological conservation and waste management initiatives. This levy is typically applied to plastics, packaging materials, and other products that contribute to environmental degradation. PWDs may face additional financial burdens if the Eco Levy increases the cost of essential products, especially those specifically designed or adapted for their needs. For instance, if the levy applies to medical supplies or assistive devices containing plastics or other taxed materials, these items could be more expensive and less accessible. The advocacy and policy engagements ensured that the implementation of the Eco Levy considers the specific needs of PWDs.

Engagements with policymakers are claimed to have yielded positive results. Due to the *Full Circle Tax Watch* for All project activities, the duty bearers, it was reported, had increased commitment, support, and will to include rightsholders in tax and budget processes. Moreover, representatives from marginalised communities were successfully placed on the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) of the Global Fund in Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali. [32]

In the *Tupo Tusikizwe* project, 32 proposals and contributions to creating a gender-responsive budgeting process were incorporated into policymaking within the Kwale's County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and budget for the financial year 2022/2023. Women and PWDs were identified in the 15 villages where the projects were implemented. This illustrates the value of creating spaces where rightsholders and government officials can collaborate. The platforms bridge the gap between the community and policymakers and foster participatory development, ensuring that the needs and voices of marginalised groups are heard and addressed. Moreover, COVAW, the implementing organisation, was recognised as a critical stakeholder in formulating and implementing the county's annual development plan for 2022/2023. [33] Finally, during elections, at least 17 new county assembly members (MCAs) from the project's rightsholders group were elected out of the 20 positions. [34]

The *Unknown About Albinism* project signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Health (MOH). Moreover, a National Action Plan on Albinism, a policy document promoting the protection of the rights of persons with albinism in Uganda, was adopted by the government. A policy to add sunscreen as an essential drug on the National list of essential medicines was adopted by the Ministry of Health in July 2023. Finally, the Ministry of Education also included the unique needs of learners with albinism in the revised education policy. The National Examination Board began offering large print exam papers to accommodate students with albinism. [35] These findings suggest the creation of more open and inclusive spaces among rightsholders as the projects provided the

right platform to engage government officials on development issues and a chance for participation in governance structures. The projects allowed rightsholders to participate actively in governance processes, empowering them and increasing representation. This participation gave them a voice in decision-making, helped build their confidence and capacity to advocate for their rights and those of others, and resulted in concrete changes to policies in their countries.

The success of the projects in influencing policy and governance was partly due to the strong relationships built with government institutions. Another crucial lesson learned in ensuring sustainable and effective engagement with duty-bearers in the government was the paramount importance of trust-building. As narrated by a respondent, building trust with duty bearers was a long-term activity and commitment, strengthened through ongoing accountability and consistent engagement. It involved establishing and cultivating previous political relationships to lay a robust foundation of mutual respect and trust. [36]

[30] See this link: https://terralingua.org/langscape_articles/the-wealth-of-our-lands-celebrating-boititap-korenyo-with-the-ogiek-of-mount-elgon-kenya/ (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

[31] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 8 August 2024.

[32] Interview with a Nigerian Partner, 29 July 2024. See also https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/country-coordinating-mechanism/#:~:text=Country%20Coordinating%20Mechanisms%20are%20national,of%20the%20Global%20Fund%20partnership.

[33] Kwale County Action Plan (2021) "Kwale County Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism 2020-2021" (Kenya: Kwale County), https://huria.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/KWALE-County-Action-Plan.pdf. (Accessed on 28 August 2024).

[34] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 30 July 2024.

[35] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 5 August 2024.

[36] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 2 August 2024.

DATA-DRIVEN AND EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE

The community-led data-driven and evidence-based advocacy empowered the rightsholders to lead data collection efforts, generate findings, and control their narratives. These approaches ensured the actual representation and reflection of the rightsholders' challenges, lived experiences, and success stories or changes. For example, the rightsholders in the *Wealth of Our Land* project used maps as powerful advocacy tools to visualise community narratives and champion rights. The rightsholders collected data using the Mapeo mapping tool to advocate for their land rights and fight unlawful evictions from their ancestral land. Ogiek people used the project to defend their land, telling their story through maps generated from the Mapeo mapping technology. They used the data gathered to prove their legitimacy and ownership of land and provide best practices for protecting the forest. These efforts and data were not just tools but the key to winning a 14-year legal case, demonstrating the power of evidence-based advocacy.

For the *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making* project, rightsholders created a data literacy training program and the Data Leadership Curriculum, a self-learning program. A trainer said, "Data leadership training was a cornerstone of our project."[37] This increased data literacy was a skill and a tool instrumental in strengthening the rightsholders' advocacy skills, increasing their capacity for evidence-based advocacy. An interviewee noted that the training equipped rightsholders with relevant data collection and analysis skills, which came in handy when

compiling a human rights violation report to challenge the newly passed AHA bill of 2023.[38] Within the *Unknown about Albinism* project, research data collected on the prevalence of skin cancer among people with albinism was a catalyst for change. The project's advocacy efforts, supported by data, led to the Ugandan MoH including sunscreens in the national essential medical list and the Ministry of Education including special needs of learners with albinism in the revised education policy.

A primary takeaway was that the collected data strengthened and backed the rightsholders' voices. They used it in advocacy efforts to push for greater transparency and accountability in governance. The respondents across the projects commended data-driven and evidence-based advocacy, demonstrating its vital role and impact. Grounding advocacy on solid data provided rightsholders with evidence to persuade duty bearers and power holders, creating legitimacy and urgency of the issues. As a result, projects resulted in legal victories and policy changes.

Participants take part in the "Feminist Advocacy for Agency, Equity, and Justice" Course organized by the Coady Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2025 (Photo Credit: Imani A. & Hivos EA)

[37] Annual Report – Pollicy.

[38] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 8 August 2024.

IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS AMONG RIGHTSHOLDERS AND DUTY-BEARERS

A review of the project documents shows there are claims of improved knowledge and understanding of critical issues among rightsholders and duty bearers/power holders at two levels.

Among rightsholders, knowledge and data literacy are said to have improved. For instance, a pre-and-post training assessment disseminated in a Knowledge Exchange Workshop *(Full Circle Tax Watch for All)* indicated increased knowledge of the tax and budget processes, social inclusion, participatory research, advocacy, accountability, social audit, access to services, monitoring and demand creation in Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali among rightsholders. The *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making* project equipped more than 80 Ugandan rightsholders with relevant knowledge and skills related to research, analysis, and documentation used for advocacy work.[39] There was increased demand for information about LGBTQIA+ issues from community members and other partners striving to provide support for sexual minority groups.[40] An interviewee noted this data literacy demonstrated a shift to increased community ownership of data, digital spaces, and personal success narratives among LGBTQI+ rightsholders.[41] The Rightsholders found *Full Circle Tax Watch for All* participatory action research to be "more valid, sustainable, and impactful than other methods" as not only a research method but also an educational process and an advocacy tool. The *Unknown about Albinism* project provided a credible and comprehensive understanding of the

spatial distribution, specific needs and challenges faced by the albinism community. According to the rightsholders, this mapping/profiling data was integral for evidence-based decision-making, advocacy, and designation of strategies to promote the knowledge of their rights and inclusion into development processes. Intergenerational transfer of knowledge from the elders (spatial plan committee) to the youths (community mappers) was said to have benefited Chepkitale residents in their struggle to protect their ancestral land.

Rightsholders have also reported a significant increase in their confidence in raising and amplifying their voices on public participation forums. This increase in confidence is based on the newly acquired knowledge and data, which has empowered them to present their collective demands to duty bearers. Women rightsholders within the *Tupo Tusikizwe* project claimed they could now voice out their concerns despite the cultural traditions that negatively impeded them from speaking out on matters of budgeting projects, processes, and decisions. They had increased their confidence levels to participate in public forums and engage duty bearers to follow up on stalled projects. Some took the personal initiative to look for notices to participate in public forums without necessarily being organised. Some right holders started companies where they sought funding tenders from the government.

In addition, **there was a reported reduction in stigmatisation and discrimination among women with disabilities by community**

members. This emanated from their increased visibility and confidence in speaking during the public participation forums. As a result, the number of women from vulnerable groups, such as the fish sector and persons with disabilities, participating in budgeting processes increased. **These findings suggest that the projects provided a platform upon which rightsholders felt assured that they could hold people accountable for their rights as their knowledge increased and the understanding and acceptance of the marginalised communities.**

Similarly, project documents show a significant increase in awareness, knowledge, and data literacy among duty-bearers and powerholders. This improved knowledge has helped them understand their roles in reducing the exclusion of minorities, and some have indicated a willingness to change and include rightsholders in the respective public processes. One of the reports stated:

> **The project has clearly shown improvements in the knowledge of stakeholders working in existing budget monitoring initiatives to improve the inclusion of youth, LGBTIQ, and people with disabilities in their projects."[42]**
>
> — K&TRC

Another project showed the positive impacts of raising awareness about albinism and actively engaging key district department heads, noting improved service delivery, attitude change by healthcare providers, and better rightsholders-duty bearer relationships.

> **The project further facilitated a better relationship between rights holders and duty bearers (government and service providers)"[43]**
>
> — Albinism Umbrella

> **"Several districts began electing officials and community leaders with albinism, demonstrating a tangible shift in societal attitudes and perceptions."[44]**

Increased knowledge, awareness, and data literacy resulted in attitudinal change among duty bearers/power holders who pledged to be as inclusive as possible in their work. The rightsholders' confidence in speaking out about priority needs was boosted. Moreover, rightsholders had a strengthened voice and agency to participate in public decision-making. It also strengthened advocacy skills by increasing the rightsholders' capacity and ability to use the acquired knowledge and data for data-driven and evidence-based advocacy.

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[39] See this: https://trainings.pollicy.org/courses/voice-data-literacy-training-program/.

[40] Annual Report – Pollicy.

[41] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 8 August 2024.

[42] Full Circle Tax Watch Design Phase Report – K&TRC.

[43] AUL End of Project Report 2023.

[44] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 5 August 2024.

Participants during the "Taking Charge, Making Change" Knowledge Exchange organized by Voice, Coady Institute, and Emergent Leaders Foundation (Photo Credit: ELF).

RIGHTSHOLDERS' INCLUSION FROM THE START WAS A CATALYST FOR PROJECT OWNERSHIP.

The involvement of rightsholders from the onset of the *Voice* programme was critical to achieving project success and ensuring sustainable change. This participatory approach increased project ownership, enhanced the likelihood of success, and contributed to the sustainability of outcomes. For example, the *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making* project involved rightsholders and community members in every phase, from shaping the project design to data collection and determining project outcomes. This community-driven approach ensured the project aligned with the community's needs. A project lead emphasised the importance of including LGBTQ+ voices, noting that this inclusion was essential for the project's success, as it empowered marginalised subgroups to find and amplify their voices. An interviewee also highlighted the importance of co-creation sessions, explaining that extensive community engagement was integral to developing every activity. For instance, the data leadership curriculum was co-created with the community, which was directly involved in its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Similarly, in the *Tupo Tusikizwe* project, rightsholders were actively involved in various aspects, including reporting, mapping project implementation sites, serving as key informants/respondents, and participating in focus group discussions (FGDs). They also played a crucial role in mobilising and co-facilitating sessions, as well as developing positional papers and a disability-inclusive budgeting memorandum for the financial year 2022/2023, which were subsequently integrated into the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) in Kwale County.

In the *Full Circle Tax Watch* for All project, rightsholders were involved in stakeholder mapping, designing research questions, and developing the work plan, activities, and timelines. The rightsholders found the process to be inclusive, participatory, and educational.[45] This approach clarified the project for those unfamiliar with it and built their capacity for responsibility management. The approach also helped rightsholders involved to become accountable for tax delivery, making them feel respected and valued for their contributions.

Building the capacity of persons with albinism and empowering them with the necessary skills and knowledge in different social aspects strengthened their capacity to advocate for their rights and needs. The project helped create a more empowered albinism community in Uganda, elevating the chances for integrating persons with albinism in development processes and improving their well-being. Through the project, some rights holders gained self-acceptance and confidence, taking up leadership roles as counsellors, school prefects, and ambassadors of change who link their peers to service points, positively contributing to community development.

Involving rightsholders in project design also increased their knowledge of the issues at hand and enhanced internal collaboration.

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[45] *Full Circle Tax Watch* Design Phase Report – K&TRC.

It helped reduce biases that could have led to the exclusion of minorities, fostering an environment of enlightenment and open-mindedness. For instance, a participant from the Nigerian Albino community shared his experience: "As a Pastor, I had been preaching against homosexuality, but within the three days of knowing them [LGBTQIA+] personally, I gained a new understanding that they are humans too. I pledge to help advocate for them so that the policy against them can be revisited" *(Full Circle Tax Watch for All).*

These lessons underscore the importance of involving beneficiaries in project design and implementation. Such involvement builds a common goal and unified *Voice* among rightsholders, fostering a deeper understanding and collaboration that drives sustainable change.

EXPANDING NETWORKS AND CREATING MORE STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS

The importance of collaborative efforts is visible in all the six projects and the *Voice* programme. **The projects' successes were associated with the diverse strategies to build multi-tier and cross-sectoral relationships,[46] alliances, and networks at the global, national, local and *Voice* programme levels. At the *Voice* level, collaboration was attained through co-creations, linking and learning platforms between Coady Institute, the TAI and rightsholders.** Rightsholders described *Voice* Linking and Learning activities as platforms for productive collaborations among grantees, contributing to their knowledge, facilitating learning and improving programmatic work.

A multifaceted collaborative approach facilitated efforts to address the rightsholders' needs in their spaces. **These connections promoted the effectiveness of the rightsholders' advocacy and projects across the countries by embracing better practices from others, building supportive networks, and enhancing the ability to tap into incredible resources and expertise**

from other grantees. It enhanced project effectiveness by organisations combining diverse resources and expertise. With these capabilities, there was broadened support of the projects from state and non-state actors, *Voice* and non-*Voice* partners, and among the grantees. Equally, some partners said they are engaging with new donors to get funding and strengthen pathways for sustainable outcomes.

The findings highlight the importance of establishing solid and formal partnerships with relevant stakeholders to foster sustainable synergies in implementing accountability programs. These collaborations were instrumental in amplifying the voices of marginalised communities, enhancing data literacy, and promoting inclusive participation in public processes. However, the *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making* project also revealed the challenges that can arise when safety and security concerns, such as those posed by the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) in Uganda, limit collaboration. These challenges underscore the need for adaptive

strategies to navigate complex political and social environments while striving to achieve meaningful and lasting impact. Adaptive approaches are essential in maintaining the momentum of collaborative efforts in the face of such obstacles as the one faced by LGBTQ+ in Uganda.

STRENGTHENED LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Learning and knowledge sharing occurred at the *Voice* programme and project levels through meetings, print, visual, digital, and broadcast media to distribute information, success/change stories, position papers and policy briefs. Other avenues were workshops and community engagements for dialogues of peer learning and reporting lessons learned.

Project partners rated *Voice* management (Hivos and Oxfam Novib) as responsive to and addressing their queries. There was a feedback system focused on support, desired actions, and improvements. This approach was deemed collaborative and empowering. Emulating Voice's collaborative and empowering management approach can benefit future projects. Funders can help rightsholders achieve their goals and build their capacities more effectively by providing responsive support and fostering a feedback-oriented environment.

Online and in-person linking and learning activities organised by Coady Institute were established as impactful and influential to the programme's success. Rightsholders appreciated adopting diverse learning techniques and themes, including independent learning activities, collective live discussions with other grantees, shared social accountability approaches

and tools on global good practices and case studies. Some noted the sessions strengthened the participants' conceptual understanding of good and inclusive governance, transparency, citizen engagement, monitoring government actions, and social accountability approaches. The rightsholders felt the knowledge exchange, where participants shared case studies and explained citizen-led accountability strategies and best practices, allowed for peer learning, which provided adaptable and innovative approaches that strengthened project planning and implementation.[47]

The sessions enhanced the operational knowledge and skills needed for applying these concepts in the respective projects during implementation. They were also avenues for projects building inter and intra-country networks for more sustainable linkages and outcomes. Consortium members discussed lessons learned (successes and failures), strategies, tactics, and skills from one another and equally learned from other grantees.[48] The learning-sharing platforms provided knowledge, operational skills, and best practices for use even in future projects. Nonetheless, a limitation to this linking and learning was the inability to tailor operational accompaniments for each project

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[46] While organisations like CIPDP, Albinism Umbrella, COVAW, KPO and K&TRC maintained connections with organisations within their working space, Pollicy expanded its scope to organisations not within its working space.

[47] *Full Circle Tax Watch* Design Phase Report – K&TRC.

[48] End of Project – K&TRC.

individually. Some respondents felt individual support provision was limited, which was essential to help each project team address different operational challenges.[49] According to one of the key informants, various factors contributed to this outcome, including distance, time constraints, and possibly a lower-than-expected demand from the rightsholders.[50] Nonetheless, from the onsent of the *Voice* programme, there was an intent to offer more individualised support to project teams for addressing operational challenges and redirecting activities based on learning.

For sustainability, the projects involved the community in capacity building, documenting and sharing lessons. Peer-to-peer learning, training of trainers (ToTs), and mentorship sessions were instrumental practices that enabled the cascading of knowledge across the community. An interviewee noted that employing community members as research assistants yielded valuable insights and empowered rightsholders and community organisations in leadership and governance.[51] Another stated future projects should focus on community-driven approaches, allowing communities to dictate their needs and pace.[52]

Linking and learning sessions, especially the (semi)-structured learning and accompaniment, enhanced the rightsholders' knowledge and skills. Moreover, an interviewee noted the importance of benchmarking activities where site visits to different organisations were part of the training.[53] The benchmarking allowed rightsholders to learn about each other's organisations' work and impact, identify potential gaps between different contexts (such as between Uganda and Kenya), understand progress in advocacy, and discover unique ideas to replicate back home.

The development of community learning resources, such as the Data Leadership Curriculum, Data Collaborative Exchange, and Training Program in the *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making* project, provide accessible, lifelong learning opportunities. These resources were designed to be easily retrievable at any time, allowing rightsholders to learn at their convenience and maintain the skills and knowledge gained during the project. This was one strategy for the sustainability of the project outcomes.

The ongoing use of the Mapeo mobile application and the presence of the community resource centre created a platform for continuous accessibility and use, sharing of data and engaging in advocacy. Nonetheless, there was a request for more funding to develop a Community Mapping Hub and a Community Museum to help store the maps made during the project and be used by other Indigenous people. Continued financial support would enhance these projects' long-term effectiveness and reach, ensuring they remain valuable community resources. By safely storing the maps created during the project and making them available to other Indigenous peoples, these resource centres would preserve important cultural and environmental information and promote ongoing learning and support for future generations.

The request for additional funding to develop the Community Mapping Hub and Museum underscores a common challenge in sustainability efforts: the need for ongoing financial support. While the projects have laid a strong foundation, continued investment is necessary to realise their full potential. Securing such funding presents an opportunity for the project to engage with new donors, partners, and stakeholders committed to long-term community empowerment and sustainability.

CREATION OF SAFE SPACES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The projects emphasised the importance of creating safe online and offline spaces as rightsholders advocated for inclusive policies in public decision-making and development processes. For instance, the Chepkitale Community Resource Centre is a safe place to convene community members, hold meetings and discuss pertinent issues without fear of intimidation. In the *Tupo Tusikizwe* project, an Early Childhood Development Education Centre (ECDEC) was built to provide a safe space for young children to access education and assistance. The ECDEC was significant in reducing the susceptibility risk of young children to sexual and gender-based violence, highlighting the broader role of safe spaces in protecting vulnerable populations.

Similarly, in the *Chambua* project, women groups and PWDs in the fish sector shared having safe spaces to operate their businesses safely. Through these safe spaces, these rightsholders could acquire necessities such as electricity, water and sanitation within their market areas and secure places within the market to sell products. In the *Unknown About Albinism* project, safe spaces were created through group discussions, one-on-one meetings, and the Community Score Card exercise, where rights holders discussed common health issues, shared different experiences in accessing health services, and recommended improvements. This enabled them to hold service providers accountable for their actions and boosted their confidence. Rightsholders also became aware of health facilities to acquire essential protective gear. Due to the sensitivity of the LBTQA+ issues, rightsholders created an innovative online media engagement space, a volunteer-based digital

police network[54] strengthened by a communication strategy that embodied sensitivity, respect, and inclusivity of various opinions and positive language.

At the *Voice* level, **the Coady Institute demonstrated the adaptability of safe spaces by creating a safe digital space for discussion and support systems among grantees.** This digital space, provided during the linking and learning sessions, was extensively used by rightsholders during the COVID pandemic and the insecurities arising from the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda. It served as a platform for learning and rightsholders to find respite from their normal stressful and life-threatening situations and share solidarity messages.

These spaces provided safe dialogue platforms between rightsholders, duty bearers/power holders, and other relevant stakeholders. They allowed for one-on-one engagement with duty bearers, enabling the rightsholders to air their Voices, communicate their concerns, and even hold the decision-makers accountable for their commitments. It was noted that public participation in some processes is based on invitation rather than openness.

Creating safe spaces strengthened the agency of rightsholders and helped them form support community groups. Rightsholders used these spaces to share lived experiences, which was established as key to building confidence and esteem in the community. In addition, these safe spaces enabled collaborative decision-making in the community. The establishment of safe spaces

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[49] Interview with *Voice* Partners, 20 August 2024.

[50] Interview with *Voice* programme partner, 26 September 2024.

[51] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 8 August 2024.

[52] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 31 July 2024.

[53] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 8 August 2024.

had a lasting impact on community dynamics. Their continued operation is critical for sustaining the changes achieved through them and ensuring that marginalised voices continue to be heard.

Maasai Women from Mt. Elgon collecting data with the Mapeo App (Photo Credit: Awana Digital & CIPDP)

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP

The *Wealth of Our Land* project respondents emphasised the significant role women played in the project's success. The project was women-led, with a female project coordinator. Twenty women were trained as community mappers, more than 200 ladies attended the East Africa women-led assemblies, where they discussed land rights issues, and others participated in surveys. An interviewee noted that women's inclusion brought valuable insights. For example, their maps showed detailed knowledge of areas men did not consider important as safe spaces.[55] This indicates that **women's involvement in such projects can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of community needs and resources.**

Women with disabilities were engaged in the Kwale budgeting process, and their proposals were incorporated into the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and budget. By incorporating their proposals, their contributions were validated. Further, some women rightsholders of the *Unknown about Albinism* and *Full Circle Tax Watch* for All projects were elected to governance positions, including the District Councillor position and a member of the Country Coordinating Mechanism of Nigeria. It demonstrates the potential for the *Voice* projects to cultivate future women leaders who can advocate for marginalised communities at higher levels of decision-making.

These **findings suggest that the deliberate inclusion of women increased their likelihood of participation in decision-making spaces, thus leading to more inclusivity.** Engaging women with disabilities reduced their stigmatisation and discrimination by community members, instigated attitudinal change, and enhanced their confidence to speak during public participation forums. One interviewee noted that leadership development, particularly for women, and their intergenerational and intersectional engagement was essential.[56] There is a need to invest in feminist movements to create opportunities for young women and identify areas for their participation in economic, social, and political sectors, creating future female leaders.

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55 Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 31 July 2024.
56 Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 2 August 2024.

FROM IMPLEMENTATION TO INSTITUTIONALISATION: STRATEGIES FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

The extent to which the projects' results are sustainable necessitates constant monitoring in the short and long term, during project implementation and long after their completion. Sustainability within the six projects implemented over the four years can be traced by answering, "To what extent are the results achieved by the project sustainable?" The report highlights the below as potential avenues for long term sustainability.

INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND POLICY CHANGE

The *Voice* **projects achieved sustainability by embedding their outcomes and outputs into formal decision-making processes, national or local policies, and institutional frameworks.** This integration ensures that project achievements become part of ongoing structures and development processes rather than remaining isolated initiatives. For example, the *Wealth of Our Land* Project secured legal recognition of the Ogiek's historical land injustices. This established a platform and legal pathways for recognising their community land rights, and this ruling might significantly impact other Indigenous people facing similar struggles. The use of community-driven mapping also strengthened the Ogiek community's advocacy efforts,[57] and it is a tool that future generations can use to mitigate land conflicts.

The *Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making* Project established strong advocacy and data literacy frameworks through the Data Leadership Curriculum and Data Collaborative Exchange and Training Programme. These are self-sustaining and continuous, offering learning and training support to rightsholders. The widespread adoption of these tools across various organisations ensures their ongoing use for imparting knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the Ugandan Ministry of Health issued policy guidance to include sexual minority data and interventions in health service delivery without discrimination, reinforcing the project's impact.

U*nknown about Albinism* and *Full Circle Tax Watch for All Projects* enhanced the representation of women's voices and empowered their participation in public decision-making. While holding governance positions alone does not ensure sustainability, it provides a platform for influencing policy changes that support the continuation of project initiatives. The elected rightsholders can advocate for institutionalising project outcomes, influence government resource allocation, and promote accountability within governance structures to uphold commitments made by duty-bearers.

In Kwale County, the *Tupo Tusikizwe* efforts saw an increase in community-led projects. The County leadership adopted 32 proposals into the Kwale

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57 Boititap Korenyo Achievements Report.pdf; 'We are our land'—Ogiek of Mount Elgon, Kenya: securing community tenure as the key enabling condition for sustaining community lands | Oryx | Cambridge Core.

County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and the 2022/2023 budget. Involving rightsholders in revising the plan demonstrated how project outcomes could be embedded into formal decision-making processes and county policies. Projects embedded into national or local decision-making structures demonstrate a high potential for sustainability and become part of the County's ongoing work.

Institutionalising project outcomes into policy can lead to more inclusive and responsive governance structures that better address community needs. Embedding changes into policy can also provide a permanent framework for addressing systemic issues, reducing reliance on external project interventions. However, it is notable that the sustainability of policy changes often hinges on the continued commitment of political leaders.

REPLICATION AND UTILISATION OF PROJECT OUTPUTS

Projects that create replicable and scalable outputs or models adopted by various organisations can establish mechanisms for sustainability. Large-scale implementation broadens the reach and amplifies project impacts across new communities, regions, and countries. Notably, the community mapping model could be utilised by other indigenous communities. Such replication enhances regional networks and extends the project's impact, amplifying its sustainability through widespread adoption.

In the *Tupo Tusikizwe* project, CSOs in Kwale County decided to advocate for gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). A CSO movement working on GRB was formed in 2022 to champion the gender bill, conduct civic and political education in their spaces, and advocate for ending gender-based violence cases in the County.[58] The aim was to ensure that budgets are responsive, reducing inequalities the marginalised groups face. Although the bill's adoption remains uncertain, the initiative highlights the importance of networking, collaboration, and continuous monitoring and evaluation to sustain advocacy efforts.

Organisations like the Albinism Foundation, RISE, and Sex Workers and Adolescent Girls and Young Women Group have begun utilising the project's diverse tools and instruments to influence broader advocacy efforts. This shows how outputs can drive larger movements for change for a longer time. Nevertheless, it is notable that replicating projects across diverse contexts may require significant adaptation to local conditions.

The *Chambua* project developed a sustainable engagement model that empowered rightsholders to identify local leaders and initiate community conversations. The model was replicated across different sub-county levels. Additionally, citizens' scorecards implemented by community members served as crucial sustainability measures, enabling communities to drive change independently. An interviewee noted that the scorecards empowered community members to drive change without relying solely on external funding. Their involvement in boards and committees ensured access to information and decision-making processes.[59] The emergence of organisations like Fisher Fox Women and the Kisumu County

government to support initiatives like "Tax the product, not the body."[60] underscores the project's lasting impact.

ADVANCEMENT OF INCLUSIVITY

Integrating development opportunities targeting women and PWDs into project activities enhances motivation among rightsholders and communities. This holistic approach ensures inclusive development and fosters long-term sustainability.

The *Chambua* Project created safe spaces for women and persons with disabilities (PWD) in the fish sector to operate businesses securely and access markets. Empowered women with disabilities gained access to national resources such as the National Government Affirmative Action Fund, Women Enterprise Fund, Uwezo Fund, and the Youth Fund. The election of a rightsholder to a county leadership position facilitated ongoing business initiatives and resource allocation discussions with government officials. An interviewee noted that the elected rightsholder was crucial in bringing government officials to the community to discuss resource allocation, reinforcing the project's long-term impact.

Among the 32 proposals adopted into the Kwale County budget for the 2022/2023 financial year were the construction of Early Childhood Development and Education Centres (ECDECs), renovation and equipping of health centres, and the release of funds for PWDs. The completion of the Kayawaa ECDEC led to increased enrolment and retention of girls in school, demonstrating tangible socio-economic benefits.

The *Unknown About Albinism* Project significantly improved access to healthcare services for persons with albinism by addressing systemic barriers and advocating for their rights. Enhanced attitudes among healthcare providers resulted in more inclusive and responsive services,[61] fostering long-term improvements in healthcare accessibility.

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[58] Annual Report – COVAW *Tupo Tusikizwe* 1 May 2021-30th April 2022 Final.

[59] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 2 August 2024.

[60] Interview with a Kenyan Partner, 8 August 2024.

[61] Interview with a Ugandan Partner, 5 August 2024.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The *Voice* **projects focused on capacity building to foster self-sufficiency, ensuring that community-led engagements continue beyond the project's lifespan.** Projects like *Wealth of Our Land, Rapid Research for Agile Policy Making, and Chambua* invested in peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, and ToTs, equipping rightsholders with leadership skills and the ability to advocate for their rights. This cascading approach to knowledge dissemination ensures that communities can maintain and expand project activities without ongoing external support.

An interviewee emphasised the need for future projects to invest in continuous education for community members and government officials. **Building community capacity ensures they can continue to advocate for their rights and manage initiatives independently.** This will ensure that the rights-based approaches and inclusive governance fostered by the projects remain a cornerstone of future development initiatives. Empowered communities are better positioned to sustain and expand project outcomes, leading to lasting change.

Collective Advocacy stakeholders and rightsholders pose for a photo in commemoration of International Albinism Awareness Day, organized by AU on June 2024 in Tororo, Uganda (Photo Credit: Albinism Umbrella)

Skin and eye care awareness and sensitization session for people with albinism organized by AU (Photo Credit: Albinism Umbrella)

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive review of the project documents and interviews with *Voice* programme managers and rightsholders reveals significant lessons and challenges encountered during implementation.

Rightsholders across various projects reported significant improvements in their understanding of critical issues. **Initiatives like the e-learning platforms Coady Institute introduced were crucial in supporting grantees and rightsholders to connect and learn from other partners worldwide.** Pre-and-post training assessments with the community members demonstrated increased knowledge of tax and budget processes, social inclusion, and advocacy among rightsholders in Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali. **Increased data literacy also led to greater community ownership of data**, particularly among LGBTQIA+ rightsholders and the albinism community, who used this knowledge to create personal success narratives and enhance their advocacy efforts. **Rightsholders valued participatory action research as a method of gathering information and a sustainable and impactful educational and advocacy tool.** This approach, highlighted in the *Full Circle Tax Watch for All* project, allowed rightsholders to engage more deeply in the research process and use the findings to drive their advocacy efforts. Evidence-based decision-making was integral to engaging policymakers and advocacy, helping rightsholders promote their rights and inclusion in development processes.

Rightsholders reported an increase in confidence when engaging in public participation forums. This newfound confidence also reduced stigmatisation and discrimination, particularly among women with disabilities, as they became more visible and vocal in public spaces. **The projects also increased awareness and understanding among duty-bearers, particularly regarding the inclusion of marginalised groups.** This facilitated better relationships between rightsholders and duty bearers, leading to tangible changes such as improved service delivery and a shift in attitudes among healthcare providers.

Establishing safe places and support systems was effective in promoting open communication and trust among community members, rightsholders themselves, and duty-bearers. Moreover, building resource centres and secure data management and knowledge transfer channels helped create safe venues for community discussions, engagement with duty-bearers, and havens for vulnerable groups to seek assistance, thus protecting rights holders and preserving their participation. **The lessons from the *Voice* programme highlight the importance of strategic adaptability, proactive risk management, and persistent engagement in navigating shrinking civic spaces.** Ensuring the safety of partners and tailoring approaches to diverse contexts is critical for the successful implementation of projects in complex environments. These lessons can guide future programming to be more resilient, inclusive, and effective in challenging contexts.

RECOMMEND-ATIONS

Based on the findings, the ***Voice* programme and rightsholders should**

1. Continue building long-term relationships between rightsholders and government institutions. This requires ongoing communication, trust-building, and consistent accountability to sustain positive collaborations.
2. Strengthen partnerships between rightsholders to facilitate learning and the exchange of best practices.
3. Invest in peer-to-peer learning opportunities and intergenerational knowledge exchanges, where experienced female leaders can mentor young women, share best practices, and foster collective growth.
4. Support initiatives that encourage women to pursue governance positions, increase their visibility in decision-making bodies, and amplify the voices of marginalised women in policy discussions.
5. Developing and supporting inclusive spaces where women with disabilities can engage in governance, social discussions, and economic activities is crucial. Such spaces reduce stigma, promote inclusion, and build confidence to speak in public forums.
6. Continue supporting community resource centres and other physical safe spaces to enable rightsholders to convene and discuss issues without fear of intimidation.
7. Develop more safe educational spaces like the ECDEC to protect vulnerable children from risks, including sexual and gender-based violence, while providing access to education.
8. Prioritise the continued operation and development of both online and offline safe spaces to sustain the positive community changes achieved and empower marginalised groups.
9. Emphasise community-driven project design and implementation, allowing communities to determine their needs. Regular check-ins and evaluation sessions should be used to adjust project activities and ensure they remain relevant to the community's evolving needs.
10. Engage new donors and partners to provide additional funding for sustainability initiatives such as the Community Mapping Hub and Museum, ensuring long-term impact.
11. To enhance project effectiveness and advocacy outcomes, continue fostering cross-sectoral relationships and alliances at local, national, and global levels.
12. Implement adaptive strategies to navigate political and social challenges, especially when safety concerns affect collaboration.
13. Ground advocacy in solid, locally collected data to strengthen legitimacy, enhance transparency, and create urgency in addressing governance issues.

Recommendations for individuals or organisations interested in the field of inclusive governance, drawn from the success stories and insights in the *Voice* programme

1. Engage in regular dialogue with policymakers and other stakeholders. Prioritise transparency, accountability, and the cultivation of political relationships that emphasise mutual goals for successful engagement with government officials.
2. Data collection and analysis are powerful tools to legitimise advocacy efforts. Train rightsholders and communities to collect, analyse, and use data for advocacy, empowering them to take charge of their narratives and engage meaningfully with decision-makers.

3. Facilitate forums, workshops, or other spaces where marginalised communities can directly engage with duty bearers. Ensure these platforms are participatory and allow for mutual input on development goals and governance structures.
4. Ensure Active Involvement of Rightsholders from Project Inception. Adopt participatory project design approaches that include rightsholders in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages.
5. Design and implement inclusive governance projects that account for the specific needs of marginalised groups, such as women and persons with disabilities (PWDs), ensuring they have representation in policy discussions.
6. Build partnerships between community organisations, government agencies, and civil society can sustain advocacy efforts and ensure continued support for marginalised groups.
7. Create online and offline safe spaces for engagement, such as community centres or protected digital platforms. These spaces enable advocacy, learning, and accountability dialogues without fear of intimidation or violence, particularly for vulnerable groups like women, PWDs, and LGBTQ+ communities.
8. Prioritise feminist movements and leadership development for women, especially those from marginalised groups. Inclusive governance programmes should create opportunities for women to engage in political, social, and economic sectors, fostering the development of future female leaders.

KEFEADO's Executive Director, Easter Okech, and Carmen Malena from the Coady Institute at the "Taking Charge, Making Change" Knowledge Exchange organized by Voice, Coady Institute, and Emergent Leaders Foundation (Photo Credit: ELF).

ANNEX 1: LEARNING QUESTIONS FRAMING THE RESEARCH

PROJECT LEVEL QUESTIONS

– Understand what has happened at the level of the six projects to identify themes/ angles for a meta-analysis.
- What are the significant outcomes of these five/ six projects after almost four years?
- Are there any significant commonalities in the trajectories and outcomes of these five/ six projects? Are there any significant differences?
- Is there any linkage/ connection between the projects? If yes, have the linkages and connections had any outcomes in and of themselves?
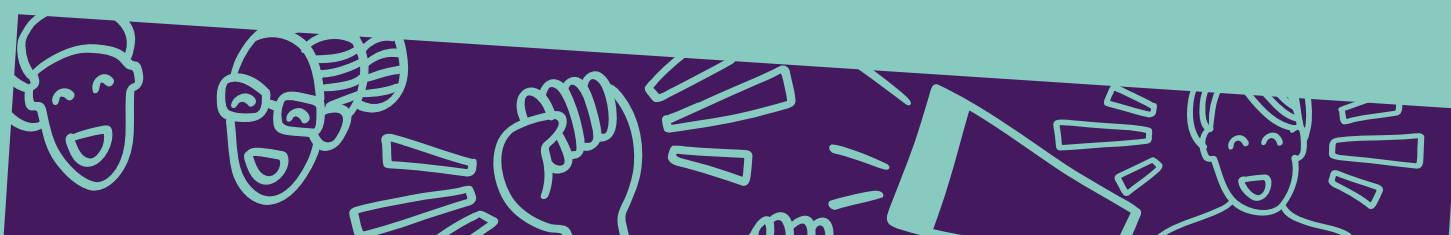- To what extent are the results achieved by the project sustainable?

CONTEXT LEVEL QUESTIONS

– Understand what has happened in the context to identify themes/ angles for a meta-analysis.
- How have the six projects adapted to the dynamic civic space context in their countries?
- How have the six projects influenced the political, social, legal and economic context in which they are operating?
  o What strategies have been found most useful in continuing to hold the line in the face of growing blowback against human rights defenders and particular communities?
  o Have there been any ripple effects from the five/ six projects to the civil society organisations / social movements in Kenya and Uganda?

META LEVEL QUESTIONS

o How have the initial assumptions underlying the start of the collaboration between *Voice*, TAI and the Hewlett Foundation held through to the end, e.g.,
- Rightsholders groups have had their voices included/ heard in transparency, accountability and good governance spaces,
- The participation of rightsholders in the transparency, accountability, and good governance spaces has made these spaces more open and inclusive to rightsholders' perspectives.
- Have any specific changes transpired as a result of this openness and inclusion?

o How has the foundational assumption underlying *Voice* – that capacity strengthening through grant making as well as linking and learning contribute to increased capacity of rightsholders to demand accountability, to lobby, and to advocate – held up?
- Any insights on trust/ relationship/ alliance building within and among the rightsholder groups?
- Any insights on how the capacity of rightsholders was strengthened (e.g., which types of interventions/support were most effective) and how this impacted their ability to make their voices heard, demand accountability, lobby and advocate?
- Any insights on the role of (semi)-structured learning and accompaniment focused on knowledge and skills related to transparency, accountability, and advocacy for inclusive governance?
- Any insights on trust/ relationship building and influencing power holders and duty bearers?
- Any practical insights on aspects such as time frame, resource needs, etc.

COLOPHON

Participants during the kick-off workshop of the "Citizen Led Accountability Learning for Strengthened Influence and Empowerment (CLASIE)" program organized by the Coady Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2024
(Photo Credit: Imani A. & Hivos EA)

VOICE

FROM OPEN
TO
INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE