

# Participatory Grantmaking in Kenya

Pilot Report | September 2023



**“I’m now spending my time using my mind to come up with a plan I love. This way of doing things costs me something, I got no money for the time I spent working on it but I prefer to work this way where we’re both investing something. I have to be serious in the decisions I’m making because I have something to lose. They’re my ideas and I want them to work.”**

Edith, project participant and member of Kithima CBO

This is a summary of findings from an independent assessment of the Participatory Grantmaking pilot and monitoring by Transform Trade. The external assessment was led by Mr. Deo Ochieng’, Mr. Edwin Otieno Ondiege and Dr. Oscar Ingasia Ayuya using a participatory, strengths-based, mixed method approach.

## About the pilot

Our Participatory Grantmaking pilot started in May 2021; this report spans the two years from then, up until May 2023. The project worked in Meru and Kitui counties in two ‘pathways’. Pathway 1 started in May 2021 with two farming collectives and one women traders group with a ‘light touch’ participatory grantmaking approach. Pathway 2 was rolled out from June 2022 with a co-creation workshop with the Support Group – expanding the scope of the approach as well as geography of the project.

Transform Trade led facilitation with communities and the Support Group to make decisions on their priorities. From the beginning, we built the understanding, trust, and capacities of the collectives and groups we identified. Once decisions were made, we split our support into three core areas; direct grants, accompaniment/partnership support, and transforming systems.

Support group definition: A group made up of representatives from community based organisations (CBOs), Kitui Development Centre, Kenya National Farmers Federation, Kenya Community Development Foundation, and Transform Trade. They played an “advisory” role and guided the delivery of the approach.

<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>£34,268</b>	<b>£36,418</b>	<b>694</b>
grant cycles	proposals submitted	proposals approved*	in cash grants distributed**	of in-kind contributions	people*** participated

\*1 proposal was not approved due to a lack of sustainability around market access for the proposed commodity, as well as an identified financial risk due to evidence of a conflict of interest within the group.

\*\* So far, 7 groups received their grants (6 farmers collectives and 1 women traders group).

\*\*\* 510 female and 184 male, and a mix of farmers and traders

## Trade impact findings

Self reliance and climate resilience: Participants are building self-reliance and climate change resilience through this project. The three key drivers of impact were: 1) stronger trust in the community (both in the relationship with Transform Trade and between group members), which led to increased accountability; 2) built capacity to establish sustainable partnerships, meaning participants have more power to drive development; and 3) increased knowledge about their chosen value chains.

Increased income for farmers: Farmers who received their grants before the last planting and harvesting season have seen their incomes increase significantly. 86 onion farmers who used the grant to buy better quality seeds increased their average income by £91.94 from December 2022 to March 2023 - a significant 17% increase on their usual average income of £530 per year.

## **Trade impact findings continued**

Increased farming productivity: 67% of farmers who collectively bought better quality seeds had a 225% average increase in productivity. This means they are generating more produce from the same area of land. On average farmers with 0.25 acres increased volume of produce from 300kg to 975kg with some farmers reporting a harvest of 1500kg – giving them the opportunity to earn significantly more.

Sustainable trade interventions: Collectives are already making steps towards scaling their enterprises by pooling produce and selling together. This prevents exploitation by middle-men and capitalises on opportunities to sell to more viable markets. This means local farmers can achieve better prices for their products and have the power both to set their own prices collectively and sell their produce at the optimum time when the market is high.

Access to investment: Seven collectives have set up saving schemes for revolving funds to build financial inclusion and access to investment. 592 farmers and 10 women traders are now successfully saving together and using the schemes to invest in their enterprises. The schemes also provide a safety net for members in times of need, such as droughts.

Articulation of systemic issues: Participants strengthened their ability to articulate the systemic issues in their supply chains, their enthusiasm to tackle them, and increased their involvement in decision-making. For example, CBOs have identified a systemic barrier to accessing credit and are developing ways to challenge this.

Influencing for trade justice: Collectives are progressing in identifying their areas of influence, understanding of the power they hold and how to use it. Some groups have initiated conversations with the county government and other stakeholders to discuss issues and solutions around government support for small-scale farmers and complex regulatory processes.

Climate resilience: The pilot has improved communities' abilities to withstand the effects of climate change through diversifying into short-cycle crops such as onions, and climate-resilient enterprises such as beekeeping and poultry farming. Communities report increased access to improved, climate-resilient seeds and breeds and higher productivity.

Fighting injustices in the agricultural value chain: Collectives are taking initiative to negotiate with stakeholders for inputs such as chicks, fertilisers, and seeds. They can now negotiate prices more effectively and access the benefits of economies of scale, such as discounts and reduced transaction costs.

Building networks through procurement: Collectives completed training on procurement processes and requirements, and Transform Trade facilitated the co-creation of procurement tools and documents. Collectives then led their own procurement for inputs and assets. Traditional development projects would usually manage all procurement for any items needed by farmers or collectives and then transfer ownership to them. Through this, collectives have built their skills in procurement and, crucially, have developed working relationships with suppliers and wholesale buyers.

## **Approach findings**

Despite the short implementation period, there is evidence of significant impact from the participatory grant process, especially compared to traditional approaches.

Active participation and planning: Through active participation in the approach, collectives have envisioned their futures and planned long-term, sustainable interventions. Interventions include climate-resilient practices, enhancing productivity, and tree planting. When comparing this approach with a traditional donor-driven approach of rigid, time-bound interventions, it is clear the traditional approach limits thinking around creative long-term sustainable interventions.

Positive change in attitudes and commitment to development: Collective members reported a greater sense of ownership over the interventions because they actively designed, prioritised and implemented interventions aligned with their needs. This led to increased participation from members in decision-making and resource allocation, as opposed to a conventional grant-making approach.

## Approach findings continued

Self-worth and confidence: Evidence gathered found the collectives' active involvement has enhanced their feelings of self-worth and confidence as drivers of change in trade justice.

Organisational development: Although participatory approaches have presented challenges in group dynamics, the groups have seen improved organisational development and ability to influence other initiatives in their communities.

Self-reliance: There is compelling evidence the project has enhanced the capacity of communities to be self-reliant in addressing injustices within the agricultural value chain, such as through negotiations within supply chain actors (for better prices and terms) and advocacy with government.

Triggering mindset change: There's evidence of a change in mindset towards upscaling community driven efforts. Collectives demonstrated the self-drive to discuss future self-initiated interventions and enhance internal governance structures. Plans include transitioning into cooperatives, increasing reach, improving productivity, and building greater influence in communities to safeguard themselves against market and trade injustices.

As one member said:

**“The new approach resonates well with us and our vision. We don't want things done for us just like previous organisations that brought projects to us. I prefer the current program since it allows us to do things for ourselves with support from them.”**

Jennifer Mutia of Yike Wikwe CBO

## Lessons learnt

1. The most transformative, sustainable changes do not happen in a three-year project period – it is the internal change in people and group mindsets which, once established, can stand the test of time and tackle new challenges as they emerge.
2. The 'Support Group' made up of members with diverse lived experience is key to implementing this approach. They need to be supported to come to a shared understanding of the approach
3. Supporting infrastructure (e.g., water and irrigation) is key to building resilience in agriculture regardless of the approach used.
4. It is important to monitor and tackle existing and emerging power dynamics within collectives and the Support Group.
5. Building community trust, self-confidence, and transparency is essential for the approach to be successful.
6. For sustainability, financial inclusion should be integrated into the approach (such as through table banking, no/low interest loans, and connections to commercial banks).
7. Demand-driven support and mentorship is vital.
8. A flexible funding model is needed for this approach so grants and support can be tailored to collectives' needs.
9. Mindset change is a continuous process and efforts are required throughout to support this.
10. Co-creating interventions with communities enables people to invest their time and resources more appropriately (compared to a traditional donor approach).
11. Supporting collectives to build partnerships and mobilise diverse local resources, develops the sustainability of the approach, and paves the way for reduced donor-dependency in future.

## Recommendations for future participatory grantmaking

- Pre-grant phase: Ideation and co-creation mainly involved the collectives' leaders, not wider members. Involvement of members should be more extensive to be more informative and participatory.
- Simplify the application process: The application form is 10 pages with 23 data points, and collectives' leaders and members might not easily understand the questions and respond to the best of their ability. Therefore, there is need to: 1) co-create the application form and process with collectives; and 2) provide additional support in filling the templates.

## Recommendations continued

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- Review timelines: Where produce is rain-fed, funding and support should be aligned with planting seasons. Turn-around times between ideation, co-creation and when funding is disbursed must work with seasonal patterns.
- Support Group composition: The composition of the Support Group could be decentralised and representatives in closer proximity to the communities. Collectives should be more aware of the role played by the facilitators and the nature of support they can draw from them.
- Partnerships: Continue the strong partnership at the Support Group level and increase the partnerships and engagement with local organisations and government actors at the community level.
- Increase community support and presence: Transform Trade should deploy more staff to closely collaborate with the community and monitor implementation.
- Flexible funding model: Transform Trade should build a flexible funding and grantmaking model with a range of possible grant limits for collectives to apply to that are unique to each project site based on the context.
- Support community priorities: Transform Trade has strategic focus areas, however, implementing Participatory Grantmaking means community priorities take precedence. Where they cannot make grants, communities should be assisted to identify alternative funding or support.
- Measuring success: Documenting milestones towards mindset change and adopting participatory grantmaking is more meaningful than value for money assessments. Monitoring and evaluation should be participatory and incorporated into implementation. An assessment/evaluation should be conducted after each full implementation cycle.

## Case study – Yike Wikwe

Yike Wikwe, a CBO formed in 1992, loosely translates as “I do it first and it will be done for me”.

“The new approach resonates well with us and our vision, we don't want things done for us just like previous organisations that brought projects to us. I prefer the current program since it allows us to do things for ourselves with support from them,” said a member of Yike Wikwe.

“The other organisations used to give us absolutely everything and they also did everything for us, but when we met Transform Trade, we saw changes because we are the ones who sat down, made decisions as a group, developed a proposal and did everything for ourselves. That is something we never had with the previous organisations,” another member of Yike Wikwe added.

Some members spoke about the progress they're making on their farms. “What we are seeing is that with this new approach, we stand to see direct impact in our incomes at the family level. I'm really happy at the prospects,” said one member. Another noted that “28 of our members have already received an average of 26 birds each with each adding an equivalent to their flocks. Our neighbours are beginning to admire what we are doing and would wish to join us, so we expect that we will have a bigger number in the future and if we progress like this, we will kick molyo (relief food) out of Kitui County.”

## Summary

Overall, the Participatory Grantmaking pilot has proved development can be done differently, and that the people closest to the challenge do indeed have the ability to design and lead sustainable solutions that work for them. We have seen growth in many areas for the collectives that would not have been possible using traditional project delivery approaches. Transform Trade has learnt through experience of how to share decision-making power with communities – including the challenges that come with it and how to work through them.