



# THE DECODE KNOWLEDGE PROJECT

Co-construction, Decolonisation & Transformation  
Producing Actionable Knowledge for the Challenges of Our Times

Funded by the International Development Research Centre

A research project of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility  
in Higher Education in collaboration with the Knowledge for Change Consortium.

## Knowledge and the Challenges of our times:

We are facing an all too familiar set of global challenges. The most recent of these are the fires and floods of the climate crisis that engulf our communities everywhere. The UN SDGs articulate many of these, outlining an agenda for action at whose centre is the issue of knowledge. To advance and address the complexities facing humanity new knowledge is needed. But whose knowledge? What kinds of knowledge? What are the sources of knowledge? Are there new understandings of knowledge? What about previously ignored or rejected systems of knowledge? Framed within a gender and decolonial lens, this project builds on theoretical understandings led by Tandon and Hall on knowledge democracy and the recognition of community knowledge cultures.

Specifically, this project will enhance the potential of locally contextualized actionable knowledge in addressing challenges identified by communities themselves. Through a peer learning, collective reflections and systematisation process, the co-chairs of the UNESCO Chair on Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education and the Knowledge for Change Consortium will engage with global networks of community and Indigenous led research practitioners to deepen our understanding of principles, policy implications, and supportive infrastructures needed to further advance community and Indigenous led knowledge movements. Results and reflections will be shared through the creation of an open access community-based participatory research knowledge platform created by PRIA in India and the University of Victoria.

## The Task at Hand

At this stage in the development of these knowledge movements, there is a perplexing variety of concepts, terms and practices around the world. This diversity is providing richness to the discourse and inclusion of hitherto invisible voices and perspectives. Yet, it has also led to over-use of the labels of co-construction, without putting to test the relative value-addition in a research-action program. When every produce is called 'organic' it is hard to select about the usefulness. As this movement and related practices grow, there is increasing demand for evidence of impacts and results. Even when local actionable knowledge is the primarily focus, it is unclear if adequate efforts are in place at gathering of evidence of impacts on issues investigated and policies examined. Evaluating evidence of impacts on issues, communities, policies and knowledge domains remains rather weak at this stage.

In order for more realistic and impactful utilisation of such research methodologies such that this epistemic movement gains strength and remains inclusive, and contributes to a transformative future for all, it is important that systematisation of methodologies and practices is undertaken with emerging evaluation of evidences. This is particularly relevant in domains of food security, health and ecological regeneration. Given the much-neglected understanding of gendered ways of knowing in academic communities, it will be especially critical to explore these aspects in a granular manner.



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## Objectives:

1. Systematize existing practices of community-led participatory research to draw lessons about values, principles, ethics and methods that support multi-dimensional impacts on current developmental challenges.
2. Facilitate peer learning about good practices amongst civil society, engaged scholars and community researchers, and train the next generation of researchers, to deepen future impactful policies and practices.
3. Create an open access digital knowledge democracy platform where DECODE and other experiences in community and/or Indigenous led research may be made available throughout the world

## Initial Case Studies

- Western Canada - Using Indigenous Research to Plan for Future Pandemics
- Malaysia - Modernizing Traditional Apung Production in Samarahan
- Inuit-Homelands, Arctic - Nanuk Narratives
- Uganda - Regenerating Acholi Traditional Knowledge
- India - Food from Forest - Bridging Tradition, Science and Sustainability in the Himalayas
- Colombia - Guardians of the Forest



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