

# Engaging Canadians:

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Insights on Decolonial, Anti-Racist,  
and Feminist Approaches





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# Introduction

The current global context is marked by multiple crises, rising extremism, political uncertainty, reductions in funding for international cooperation, and increasing threats to the rights and freedoms of marginalized groups. In this context, strengthening public engagement practices and strategies is increasingly crucial, not only to foster collective awareness and action, but also to build and sustain public support for more just and equitable futures.

Traditional public engagement strategies may no longer be sufficient in these realities. They may fail to meaningfully engage those most affected by systemic inequalities or may (unintentionally) reproduce or reinforce the very global inequities they seek to address. As a result, decolonial, feminist, and anti-racist approaches are critical. They offer essential frameworks for rethinking engagement strategies in ways that are more equitable and responsive to current realities.

In more recent years, organizations in Canada's international cooperation sector have begun to take concrete steps towards adopting decolonial, feminist and anti-racist frameworks in their work. For instance, the Anti-Racism Framework,<sup>1</sup> developed in 2021 through the ARC Hub,<sup>2</sup> provides a collective space for organizations to commit and work towards anti-racist practices. However, despite such efforts to embed equity and justice into organizational policies and programming, achieving systemic change remains a significant challenge, particularly in the absence of sustained efforts to address the colonial and racist foundations that continue to shape the sector.

The Inter-Council Network has contributed to this ongoing work within the sector through research, workshops, webinars, and a learning series. More broadly, our work<sup>3</sup> has focused on four key questions including:

- 1 Can we dismantle colonial, racist and patriarchal systems?
- 2 How can we imagine and cultivate alternative systems?
- 3 What role can the public play in this work?
- 4 How best can we engage the public in this regard?

Our past research<sup>4</sup> examines the use of decolonial, feminist and anti-racist approaches in public engagement. Through this research, we find that to move towards more decolonial, anti-racist and feminist public engagement, both governmental and non-governmental actors need to center communities, invest resources, foster open dialogues, build relations of trust and solidarity and develop critical reflexivity mechanisms. Although these actions suggest pathways towards better public engagement approaches, in the absence of a supportive environment these actions are likely to lose their potential to contribute to substantial change.

**Our current research extends this work and explores the ecosystem within which decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches are applied by organizations in public engagement work.**

In our analysis, we focus on how the current environment shapes what kinds of engagement are possible, what gets prioritized, and whose voices are centered and/or excluded.

<sup>1</sup> Anti-Racism Framework available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> <https://centre-arc-hub.ca/>

<sup>3</sup> Read more about ICN's work [here](#).

<sup>4</sup> [Towards a More Decolonial, Anti-racist and Feminist Public Engagement Research.](#)

# About the Research

The study draws on survey data, in-depth interviews, and focus groups to examine both the opportunities and constraints that organizations face in attempting to adopt these approaches in practice. It pays particular attention to the institutional conditions that enable or hinder transformation, including organizational culture, funding structures, and access to resources.

More specifically, the research aims to:

Analyze the broader ecosystem within which international cooperation organizations implement decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches in public engagement

Collate and document tools and practices currently being used across the sector

Identify key challenges and tensions organizations encounter in applying these approaches

Develop recommendations to inform policy and practice in public engagement and global citizenship education.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1 What is working in the use of decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches in PE?
- 2 What challenges do organizations face in their use of these approaches?
- 3 What support is needed to strengthen their use of these approaches?

By situating these questions within a wider context of global instability and institutional constraint, the research seeks to better understand what is required to move from aspirational commitments to sustained, meaningful practice.

<sup>5</sup> Used here to refer to oppressive systems such as racism, patriarchy, imperialism, and sexism among others.

<sup>6</sup> See for example: Ziai, A. (2025). Partnership Instead of Colonialism? The Origins and Colonial Elements of Development Cooperation. In Global Partnerships and Neocolonialism (pp. 47-70). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.



# Naming Systems of Harm

Perhaps the most critical starting point for decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist work is the explicit naming of systems of harm<sup>5</sup> and their colonial foundations. This means directly acknowledging that many of the structures shaping contemporary international cooperation practices and policies are rooted in colonialism.<sup>6</sup> Colonial roots continue to shape power dynamics, knowledge creation processes, and access to resources in uneven ways that benefit particular groups while marginalizing others. Acknowledging these realities is a necessary political step without which it becomes difficult to identify the root causes of inequalities or to meaningfully transform the conditions that sustain it.

Confronting the systems and structures of power embedded in colonial histories is also a relational endeavor that requires acknowledging and learning from the activists, scholars, and social movements that have long resisted colonial, racist and patriarchal systems.

Indigenous, Black, Feminist, and Global South movements, among others, have developed critical frameworks and practices that challenge dominant paradigms of being and knowing, and more importantly, international cooperation. Movements such as Idle No More,<sup>7</sup> Zapatista Movement,<sup>8</sup> and Black Lives Matter<sup>9</sup> continue to be instructive in their resistances.

Engaging critically with this body of work means moving beyond extraction or symbolic inclusion towards forms of partnership grounded in respect, reciprocity, and accountability. It also means acknowledging and honoring the longstanding collective action that informs, and in many ways strengthens, how decolonial, feminist, and anti-racist principles are applied over time across different contexts. In this sense, this work must be premised on a commitment to redistributing power and resources instead of harmful paternalistic tendencies such as saviorism.<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately, confronting colonial logics is not a one-time task but a continuous process of naming, unlearning, and rebuilding. This is essential for creating public engagement practices grounded in equity and justice. As such, adopting decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches in public engagement is crucial for transforming how organizations design, implement, and evaluate their public engagement activities and the systems within which public engagement occurs. The following section builds on this foundation and focuses on key strategies that participants involved in this research use to meaningfully integrate decolonial, anti-racist and feminist lenses in their work.



## Strategies Networks of Support

To start, we find that organizations that adopt decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches in their public engagement work often prioritize building networks of support and solidarity with other organizations and communities as a strategy. These networks nurture relationships and spaces for organizations and communities to share their work and priorities in ways that foster collaboration.

This way, these networks enable a shift away from prescriptive, top-down models to more collaborative and localized approaches where activities are shaped by both organizational goals and communities' priorities. At their core, these relational practices center marginalized and historically excluded voices while, crucially, fostering conditions in which participation is safe and meaningful. Nurturing such networks, as research participants in this study emphasize, requires critically examining whether existing public engagement programs and practices can hold multiple ways of being and knowing and working collaboratively with communities to transform them where they cannot.

Such collaborative efforts call for sustained commitment, resources, and a willingness to shift organizational practices and power dynamics. This includes investing time and resources in relationship-building beyond project cycles, as well as adopting concrete practices, such as dignified storytelling, that help nurture these relationships in ethical ways.

As organizations in this study show, relation-building work, especially in a sector long known for extractive practices, is challenging as it requires first and foremost critical reflection and changes in longstanding organizational practices and policies especially as it relates to partners and the communities they work with. This calls for a recognition and compensation of the labor, often unpaid, of community partners, while remaining attentive to the risks of overburdening those already engaged in resisting systems of harm in their work and everyday lives.

As such, organizations must be prepared to navigate tensions, address conflict, and remain responsive to evolving community priorities, understanding that trust is built over time. In this sense, networks of support require ongoing reflexivity, care, and long-term commitment. Grounded in solidarity, these networks can contribute to the redistribution of resources, power, and strengthen collective capacity for sustained and meaningful change.

## Co-creating Resources

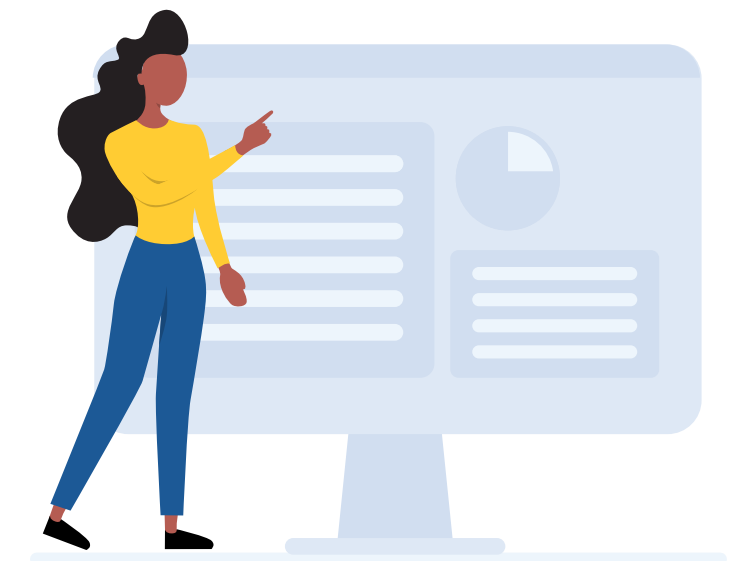
For organizations committed to decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement, co-creating and sharing resources is critical. This work involves collaboratively curating resources on decolonization, anti-racism, and feminism with partners, advisory groups, and community members, in a way that ensures that knowledge mobilization reflects diverse lived experiences rather than a single institutional perspective. This is especially important given the historical exclusion and marginalization of particular communities from such processes.<sup>11</sup>

A critical part of co-creating resources, as emphasized previously, is recognizing and compensating the labour that goes into such processes, whether from partner organizations, advisory committee members, or community partners. Building honoraria and equitable pay into project budgets, for example, acknowledges the emotional,

intellectual, and cultural contributions that communities bring and is a significant step towards avoiding extractive dynamics.

Equally important, investing internally by allocating time and resources for staff training, reflection, and dialogue strengthens their ability to engage in this work responsibly and collaboratively as a team. By embedding ongoing learning opportunities, organizations can foster more ethical, inclusive, and sustainable approaches to producing and sharing knowledge both internally and with external partners.

It is worth noting here that there is a growing body of resources developed in the sector to support organizations (and individuals) in their decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist efforts. Sector-wide initiatives such as the aforementioned Anti-Racism Framework and related learning resources<sup>12</sup> provide practical guidance, shared language, and accountability tools for organizations seeking to advance this work. In addition, many organizations have developed internal frameworks, guidelines, resources and modules that aim to embed equity and justice into their public engagement work.<sup>13</sup> Together, these resources reflect a growing commitment within the sector to move towards more decolonial, anti-racist and feminist practices.



<sup>7</sup> <https://idlenomore.ca/>

<sup>8</sup> [The Zapatista Uprising, 30 Years Later](#)

<sup>9</sup> <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

<sup>10</sup> See for example: <https://theconversation.com/how-white-saviourism-harms-international-development-199392>

<sup>11</sup> Epistemic injustices continue to shape which knowledges and resources count and which ones are rendered invisible or erased altogether. More here: de Sousa Santos, B. (2015). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Routledge.

<sup>12</sup> <https://centre-arc-hub.ca/docs/>

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, this [collection](#) that includes resources by Canadian and global organizations.

## Learning Spaces

Along the same lines, learning spaces emerge as a key strategy in the use of decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches not simply as spaces to build skills but as relational spaces that foster mutual learning and collective transformation. In other words, findings in this study suggest that using decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches in public engagement needs to be accompanied by collective learning about these three frameworks.

Learning spaces play a key role in enabling ongoing learning while also creating space for dialogue that centers the voices, experiences, and leadership of communities and partners. For these spaces to do so, they require relationships of trust, solidarity, and care, not only with communities, but also among practitioners working within and against colonial, racist and patriarchal systems. From this perspective, learning becomes a communal practice that can inform collective practices towards changing these systems.

It is important to note that such spaces require intentionality. Creating spaces to gather, connect, reflect, and learn requires rethinking dominant notions of time and productivity, recognizing that meaningful learning and transformative change cannot be rushed and may not always align with immediate project outputs. This calls for a deliberate commitment of resources and time to sustain these spaces over time without which such spaces risk becoming symbolic.

Finally, the growing availability of digital platforms has expanded the possibilities for sustaining and scaling these learning spaces across geographical boundaries. Virtual spaces can support more accessible, flexible, and continuous forms of gathering and learning, enabling participants to connect, share knowledge, and build relationships in ways that were previously more constrained. While digital spaces are not without limitations, such as digital safety and unequal access to technology, when thoughtfully designed and resourced, they can complement in-person efforts and help cultivate inclusive, enduring communities of learning (and practice) that advance decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist practices.

## Accountability Practices

Participants in this study also identify accountability practices as a crucial component of decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement. Accountability requires organizations to move beyond surface-level evaluation, which may be inadequate, to mechanisms that support ongoing critical reflexivity. Developing internal accountability frameworks allows organizations to examine how power operates through their programs, policies, and practices, and how these may unintentionally (re)produce colonial, racist, or patriarchal harms. Tools such as regular check-ins, collective reflection spaces, and iterative evaluation frameworks emerge as critical mechanisms that organizations use.

Such tools help examine organizational policies, practices, and programs to ensure they do not reinforce the very systems organizations aim to challenge. Central to this work is articulating where accountability lies. In other words, who organizations are accountable to. In practice, this often involves navigating responsibilities to multiple parties, including funders, communities, staff, and other partners. Decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist lenses call for a nuanced approach that prioritizes accountability to communities most affected by systemic inequalities. This involves creating feedback mechanisms that go beyond mere checkboxes to inviting participants to share more in-depth feedback and suggestions for future programming.

In this sense, accountability becomes an ongoing relational practice between organizations and the communities they engage. Rather than being driven solely by external reporting demands, it calls for a reorientation toward responsiveness, transparency, and shared responsibility with communities. This shifts accountability from an institutional requirement to an ethical commitment embedded in everyday organizational practices. Ultimately, centering accountability in this way strengthens the integrity of public engagement efforts and supports more just, equitable, and transformative outcomes aligned with decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist principles.

## Challenges

### Resources

Limited resources remain a significant challenge for organizations seeking to meaningfully integrate decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist principles into public engagement. Structural inequalities shape who is able to participate in this work: the communities that organizations most need to engage are often those with the least access to time, funding, and institutional support. Within this context, community-based organizations, particularly those working directly with marginalized groups, are frequently overburdened with requests for collaboration, stretching already limited capacity. This creates ongoing tensions.

While public engagement aims to address inequities, it is constrained by the very conditions those inequities produce. Without sufficient and sustained resources, there is a risk that engagement becomes extractive, relying on under-resourced partners to contribute without adequate support.

Resource constraints are not only about the amount of funding available, but also about how it is allocated. Many funding models remain rigid, limiting organizations' ability to adapt budgets to support practices such as translation into local languages, fair compensation for participants, or capacity strengthening for participants. Efforts to shift toward more equitable approaches, such as redistributing funds, investing in local leadership, or supporting partners to work in their own languages, often require navigating restrictive institutional guidelines. This can reinforce existing power imbalances, particularly

when organizations in the Global North retain control over resources while partners in other contexts are expected to adapt to externally imposed systems, formats, and expectations.<sup>14</sup>

This is compounded by the internal challenges that organizations face, including limited access to training and resources needed to build staff and volunteer competencies in decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist practices. Smaller organizations, in particular, often struggle to afford specialized training or to dedicate time to ongoing learning and reflection. In response, as participants in this study note, some organizations are exploring collaborative approaches, such as pooling resources, sharing training opportunities, and building partnerships to make capacity-building more accessible.

Addressing these funding challenges ultimately calls for both organizational and systemic change. Internally, organizations must assess how they allocate resources, prioritize equity-driven practices, and support both their teams and community partners. Externally, there is a critical need to advocate for more core, flexible and long-term funding models that recognize the realities of this work and which would enable more equitable engagement. This includes funding mechanisms that shift the ways in which power and resources are distributed. For example, feminist funding models such as those advanced by the Global Fund for Women,<sup>15</sup> FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund,<sup>16</sup> Mama Cash,<sup>17</sup> and Black Feminist Fund<sup>18</sup> illustrate how flexible, trust-based, and participatory approaches to grantmaking can better align with decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist values. Without such shifts, efforts to advance decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement risk being constrained by the very systems they seek to transform.

<sup>14</sup> This continues to be a challenge for localization. More on localization here:

- [Localize or Perish: What you need to know about localization.](#)
- [What does it mean to be community-led?](#)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://youngfeministfund.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.mamacash.org/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://blackfeministfund.org/>



## Organizational Policies and Practices

Another key challenge in advancing decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement lies in the fact that these principles are not yet fully embedded within organizational policies and practices. Institutional constraints are especially visible in organizations, where rules and norms around funding, programming and monitoring and evaluation may not align with decolonial, anti-racist and feminist principles. Requirements around how funds can be spent, for example, can limit flexibility to support community priorities, compensate participants equitably, or adapt processes in culturally relevant ways.

The move to apply these lenses without having the necessary frameworks, resources, or capacity in place to do so meaningfully can lead to two problematic outcomes. Organizations may struggle to implement these approaches in ways that are thoughtful and effective, potentially stretching their capacity and undermining the quality of their work, or they may adopt them superficially, resulting in harmful tokenistic efforts. Without clear institutional grounding, these approaches can become add-ons rather than central elements in how organizations operate.

This is further compounded by the slower evolution of institutions. Staff and practitioners may be motivated to adopt more equitable ways of doing public engagement, but encounter barriers from organizational policies, practices, and norms. When institutions lag behind, it can discourage transformation and lead staff to revert to familiar practices, particularly when the outcomes of new approaches are uncertain or difficult to measure in the short term. This tension highlights the importance of individual commitment and systemic transformation to sustain meaningful change.

Addressing these gaps requires deliberate effort to embed decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist principles into organizational policies, practices, and cultures. This includes rethinking governance, funding mechanisms,

and evaluation frameworks to better support relational, community-centered approaches. It also involves investing in capacity-strengthening and creating supportive spaces for staff to experiment, learn, and reflect as a continuous practice. Ultimately, aligning internal structures with these principles is essential in ensuring that commitments can be translated into actions.

## Knowledge and Capacity Gaps

Knowledge and capacity gaps present a significant challenge to decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement work, often manifesting at both individual and organizational levels. While systemic barriers remain deeply influential, many participants in this study encounter resistance that is more immediate and interpersonal. This is especially the case within teams where individuals may hold entrenched biases or feel uncertain about how to engage with these frameworks. In such contexts, even well-designed initiatives can falter if staff are not adequately equipped or willing to engage.

These gaps are further complicated by differing understandings, and sometimes misconceptions, of decolonization, anti-racism, and feminism. While these concepts are complementary and are broadly concerned with systems of harm,<sup>19</sup> decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches offer distinct analytical lenses. Decolonial approaches focus on how colonial power relations continue to shape contemporary social, cultural, political, and economic systems. Anti-racist approaches examine how racism is embedded in policies, practices, and everyday lives while feminist approaches foreground gendered power relations and highlight how intersecting systems of oppression produce and sustain inequalities. Although broadly understood along these lines, these terms are constantly contested and re-interpreted and may be leveraged towards goals that do not necessarily align with their core principles.

As a result, frameworks used in one context may not translate seamlessly to another, and in some cases, the language itself can create barriers. For instance, terms like “decolonization” may generate resistance within institutional contexts where their implications are not well understood, while “feminism” may be narrowly interpreted in ways that overlook intersectionality. This highlights the need for ongoing dialogue and learning to ensure that these concepts are meaningfully understood and applied, rather than reduced to mere labels or checkboxes tied to funding requirements.

Importantly, this can also lead to misinterpretations of what success looks like. For example, as one participant observes, “high participation rates by women in public engagement processes may be taken as evidence that a feminist approach is already in place, without considering who those women are, whose voices are still missing, and whether all participants feel safe, respected, and heard.” A decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist lens requires a deeper analysis of power and access, inclusion and participation. Specifically, how intersecting identities such as race, class, age, and gender shape access, inclusion and participation in public engagement activities.

Addressing these knowledge and capacity gaps requires sustained training, learning, and institutional support. It also involves creating space for ongoing reflection and dialogue, where staff can build shared understanding and challenge assumptions in constructive ways. Equally important is recognizing and valuing the knowledge that already exists within communities and among practitioners who may not explicitly use these terms to describe their work but are nonetheless engaged in decolonial, anti-racist and feminist work. Bridging these gaps, then, is not only about integrating these frameworks in public engagement, but also about fostering cultures and spaces of learning in community.

## Towards Change

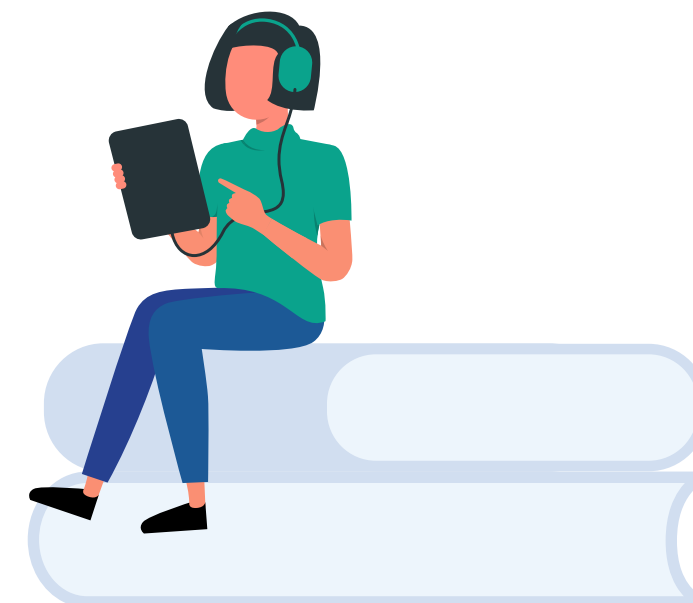
This study makes the following recommendations for international cooperation sector organizations, policy makers and community partners invested in adopting decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches.

## Invest More Resources

A key recommendation emerging from this work is the need for resources specifically allocated for decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist work in public engagement. Such funding would enable organizations to dedicate time and resources to building and sustaining relationships with communities. This work is often undervalued and underresourced, yet, as we have already seen, it is essential to move beyond transactional engagement.

Investing resources should be done in a way that enables organizations to embed this relational work into project timelines and budgets, even when it is not directly tied to immediate outputs. Similarly, resources should be invested in strengthening organizational capacity through ongoing training and reflective practices that enable staff and partners to engage with these approaches in meaningful ways. This involves, as previously discussed, resourcing learning spaces.

An important element here is critically examining how funding is structured and distributed. Reliance on government funding raises important questions about accountability and priorities with the potential for contradiction between transformative goals and institutional requirements. Addressing this tension requires advocating for resources and for more flexible funding models. This would allow organizations to align their priorities with those of the communities that they engage with alongside the funders’ priorities.



<sup>19</sup> [This is the Work: Applying anti-racist and decolonial approaches to policy and advocacy.](#)

The work of crafting new modalities for distributing resources should also extend to directing resources towards creating awareness among the general public as a way to challenge and counter harmful narratives, attitudes and stereotypes that continue to reinforce colonial, racist and patriarchal systems and to amplify decolonial, anti-racist and feminist work within the sector. Ultimately, resourcing this work adequately and equitably is essential for the change that decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches to public engagement seek to achieve.

## Create More Opportunities for Learning

To strengthen decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement, this study recommends investing in sustained, meaningful learning opportunities that go beyond the typical trainings. This could include opportunities that are co-created and co-led by communities such as workshops, communities of practice, learning circles, and community gatherings that create space for ongoing dialogue, reflection, and collective growth.

Such participatory and collaborative learning spaces could provide much needed opportunities for individuals to critically examine their assumptions, privileges, and positionalities. Effective learning in this context requires facilitation that is grounded in, and responsive to, participants' realities. This entails recognizing that resistance and discomfort, often tied to assumptions and beliefs, is part of this work. Addressing this requires thoughtful facilitation and a focus on broader systems to help participants engage in critical discussion without becoming defensive.

At an organizational level, this could involve embedding continued learning into policies and practices for instance by establishing dedicated roles, working groups, or communities of practice focused on the use of decolonial, anti-racist and feminist lenses. Without clear responsibility and sustained attention, efforts risk becoming fragmented or superficial.

Finally, continued learning about decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist lenses should be understood as a long-term, iterative process that extends beyond the confines of organizations into broader societal contexts. In other words, this kind of learning is fundamentally part of living together in community. It requires ongoing reflexivity, humility, and openness to unlearning deeply embedded assumptions, as well as a willingness to be accountable to those most affected by systemic inequities.

## Strengthen Advocacy Mechanisms

Advocacy plays a crucial role in advancing decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement. Organizations can contribute by raising awareness of these principles in accessible and culturally-sensitive ways, helping to deepen understanding while challenging misconceptions. This includes not only naming and denouncing colonial, racist, and patriarchal systems, but also amplifying nuanced representations that center the agency, leadership, lived realities, and work of marginalized communities.

Ensuring that diverse voices are not only included but also valued is key to disrupting persistent stereotypes and shifting dominant narratives. Advocacy in this sense is both disruptive and constructive: it challenges harmful assumptions while creating space for more just and equitable ways of seeing and engaging with the world.

Intersectionality<sup>20</sup> is an essential tool in advocacy work. It enables us to recognize that diverse individuals experience systems of harm differently based on their positionality. From this point of view, while struggles against oppression are interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation, they also require a more nuanced approach that encompasses the experiences and priorities of multiple groups. As a participant emphasizes, "this requires a willingness to confront tensions and blind spots within movements themselves, for instance acknowledging that some feminist approaches may reproduce racist assumptions if they are not grounded in intersectional analysis." Navigating these contradictions is a necessary, if uncomfortable, part of the work.

More importantly, advocacy must extend to transforming the systems and frameworks that shape the sector within which we work. This requires critically examining existing practices, policies, and institutional norms to identify how they may (re)produce inequities, even unintentionally. It also calls for a willingness to rethink and reimagine these structures by working towards alternative approaches that are grounded in decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist principles. Such efforts involve not only internal organizational change but also collective advocacy to influence broader sectoral practices and policy processes. From this perspective, advocacy can help create the conditions for more equitable and transformative public engagement.

<sup>20</sup> [The Urgency of Intersectionality.](#)



## Conclusion

Overall, this study finds that there is a growing and, in many ways, enabling environment for the adoption of decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist approaches to public engagement within Canada's international cooperation sector. Organizations are not starting from scratch; many are already advancing this work through strategies such as building networks of support, co-creating resources, fostering intentional learning spaces, and strengthening accountability practices. These efforts signal an important shift in how these approaches are used in practice in public engagement work. However, the findings underscore that persistent challenges, including inadequate resources, restrictive organizational policies and practices, and knowledge and capacity gaps, continue to constrain the depth and sustainability of this work.

Moving forward, strengthening this environment will require sustained and collective action across the sector. This includes increased investment in resources, expanded opportunities for critical and ongoing learning, and more robust advocacy to transform the structural conditions that shape the international cooperation sector. It also calls for continued commitment to collaboration and solidarity, ensuring that efforts are grounded in the knowledge and leadership of communities most affected by systemic inequities. Ultimately, advancing decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist public engagement is not a destination but an ongoing process that demands persistence, reflexivity, and a shared commitment to building more just and equitable futures.

# For more information about ICN's work on public engagement:

[icn-rcc.ca](http://icn-rcc.ca)

