



Developing an Integrated Participatory Framework for Achieving SDGs in the SADC Region

Knowledge Co-Production for Regional Development

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How Can PAs Support the SDGs?

They actualise the SDGs for communities and researchers through, localisation and inclusion.

They align research with local needs and involve those whom it will impact.



Why PAs are key to achieving the SDGs

SDG Monitoring:

Generating local data in regions where official statistics are scarce

SDG Implementation

Leveraging local knowledge to design context-sensitive solutions

SDG Needs Assessment

Capturing lived realities to ensure actions align with community priorities

Leave No-One Behind

Overcoming data inequalities by integrating unheard voices of marginalized groups

Empowerment

Enabling communities to shape decisions that affect their lives

Capacity Building

Strengthening local skills and institutions for long-term impact

Risk of Choosing the Wrong Approach and Methods



Methodological Exclusion

- **Digital methods:** digital divides exclude those without internet access, digital literacy, or necessary devices - a significant concern in SADC where internet penetration ranges from just 14% in Madagascar to 68% in South Africa.
- **Focus groups:** may not be suitable for sensitive topics (e.g., gender-based violence, political oppression), leading to self-censorship, particularly in contexts where traditional norms discourage open discussion.
- **Text-based or literacy-dependent methods:** exclude those with limited literacy skills, particularly in multilingual contexts common throughout the SADC region.



Power Dynamics Within Communities

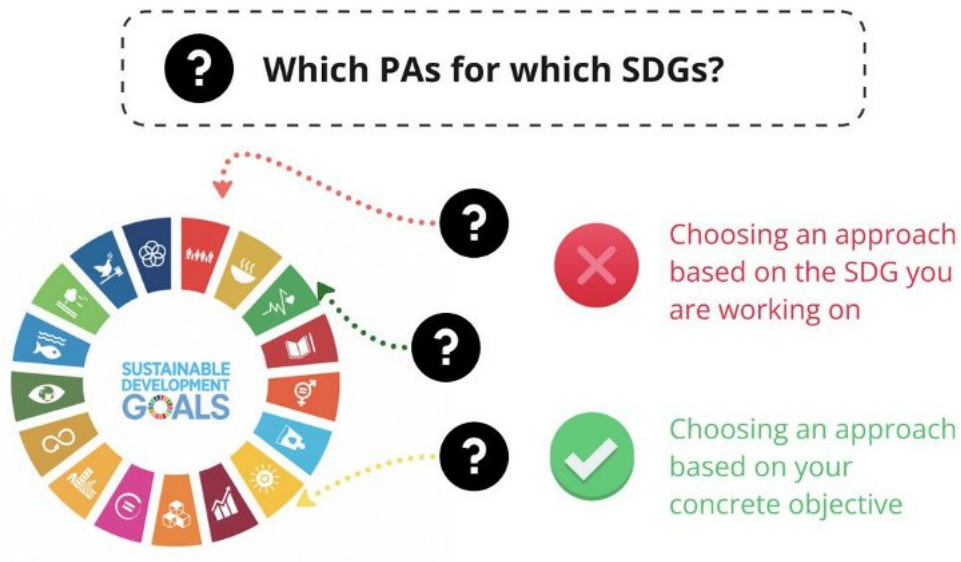
- **Gender norms:** may limit women's ability to speak freely in mixed-gender settings.
- **Age hierarchies:** may silence youth perspectives in favor of elders.
- **Local power structures:** may determine whose voice carries weight.
- **Economic status:** within communities often shapes who feels entitled to participate.



Researcher-Participant Dynamics

- **Role of the researcher:** as an outsider creates power imbalances that can influence participation.
- **Academic or technical language:** creates barriers to meaningful engagement.
- **Extractive research practices:** may alienate communities with histories of being "researched but not benefiting".

The Link Between PAs and the SDGs:



Knowledge gap related to use and application of PAs from the SADC context connected to SDGs.

Existing resources have a Global North focus or are contextless.



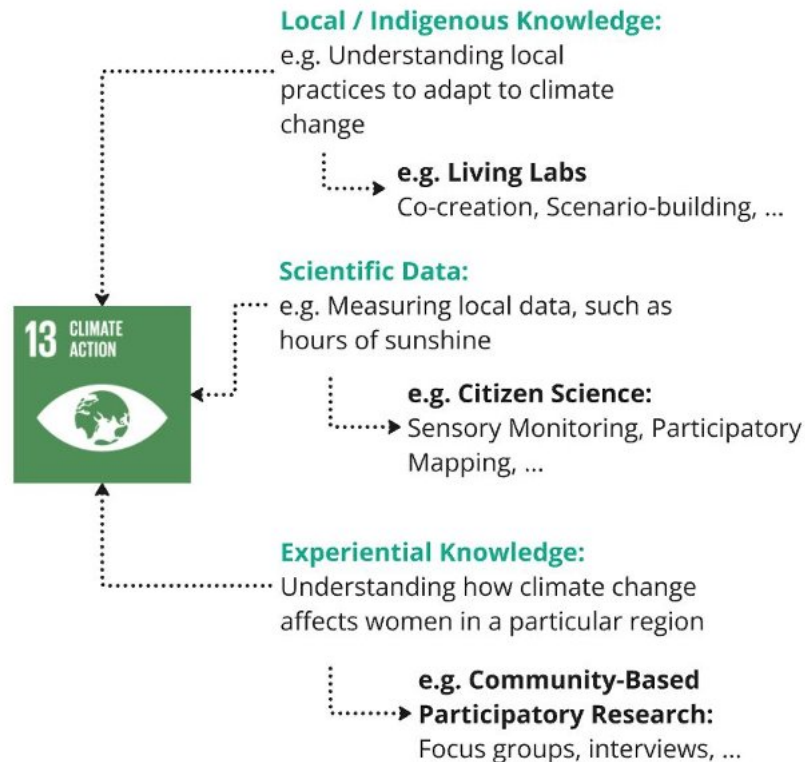
Scenario: Climate Change Project

Approach will depend on aspect being studied.

Will vary by project type:

- Climate adaptation strategies: living labs.
- Data on environmental conditions: citizen science.
- Woman affected by climate change: CBPR.

Example: Participatory approaches and Climate Change



Methodology

Analysed >30 toolkits and
>120 studies

Conducted expert interviews

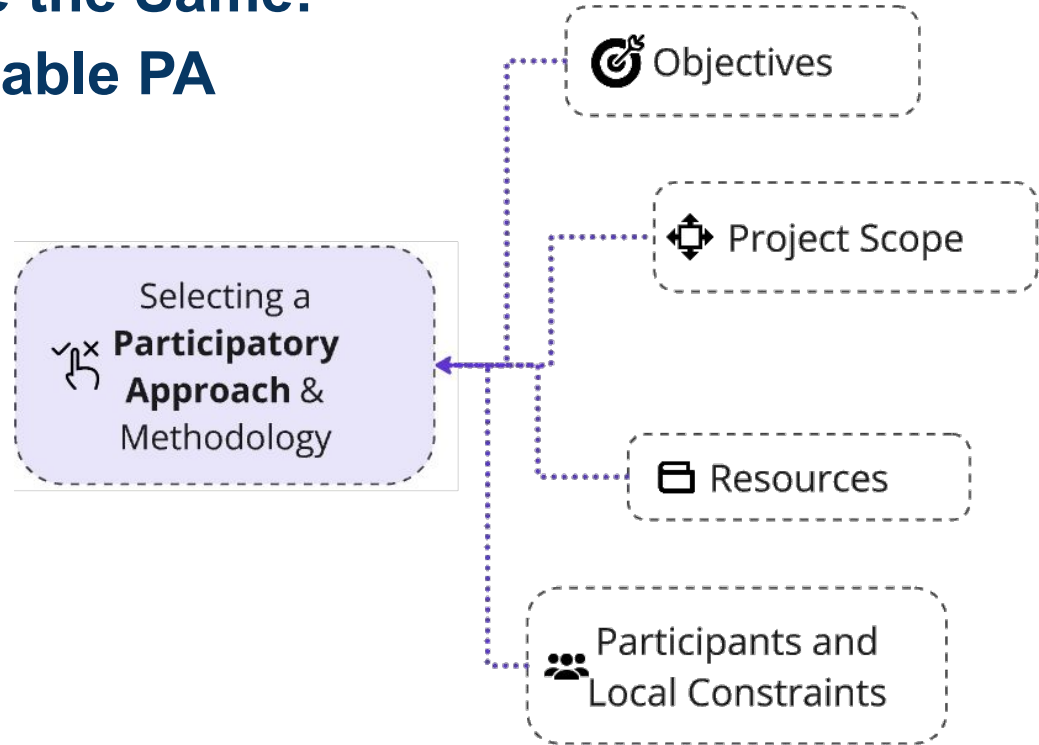
Ranked, clustered and
compared across major
approaches and methods

Developed a framework



No Two Approaches are the Same: Choosing the Most Suitable PA

Which approaches and methods are appropriate in which context, for which purpose, with which groups...?



Each approach and method comes with different strengths, limitations, and affordances.

How do your **objectives** shape your choice of PAs?

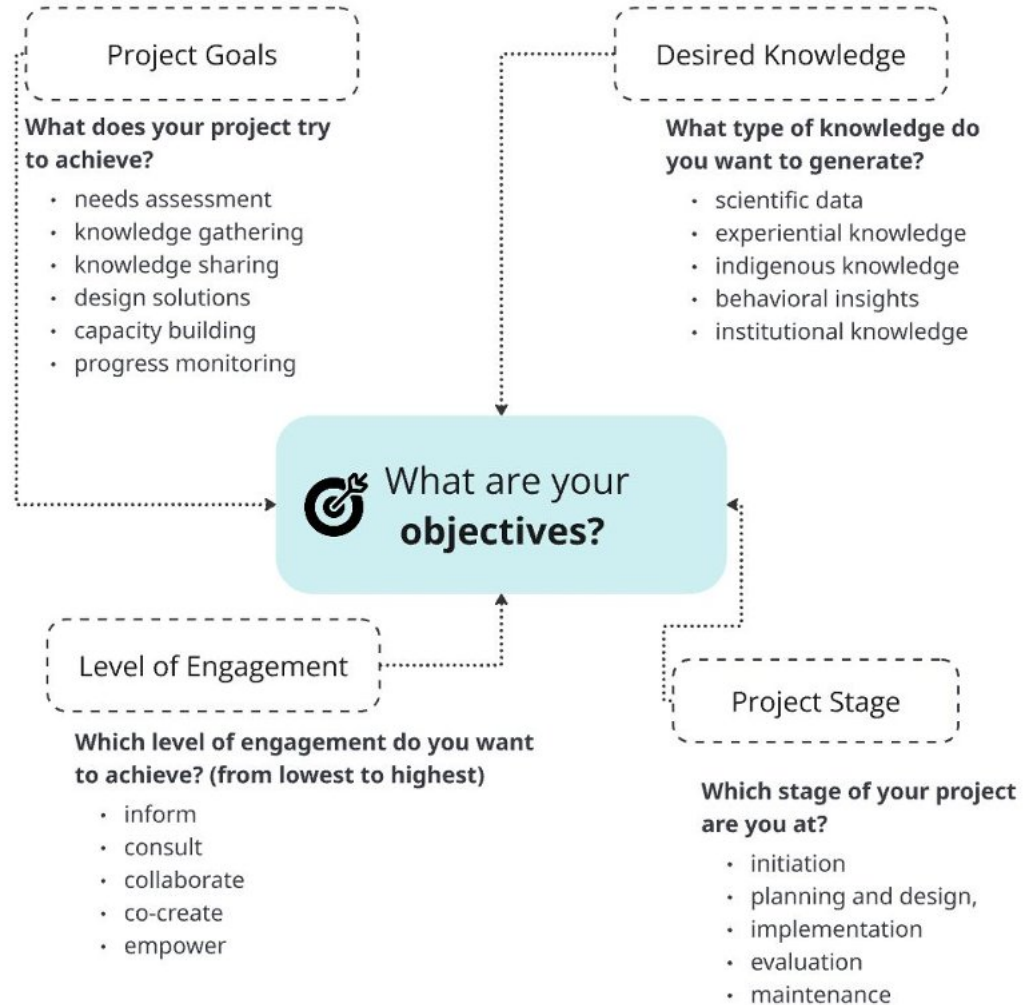
Different PAs are suitable depending on your

Project Goals

Desired Knowledge

Level of Engagement

Project Stage



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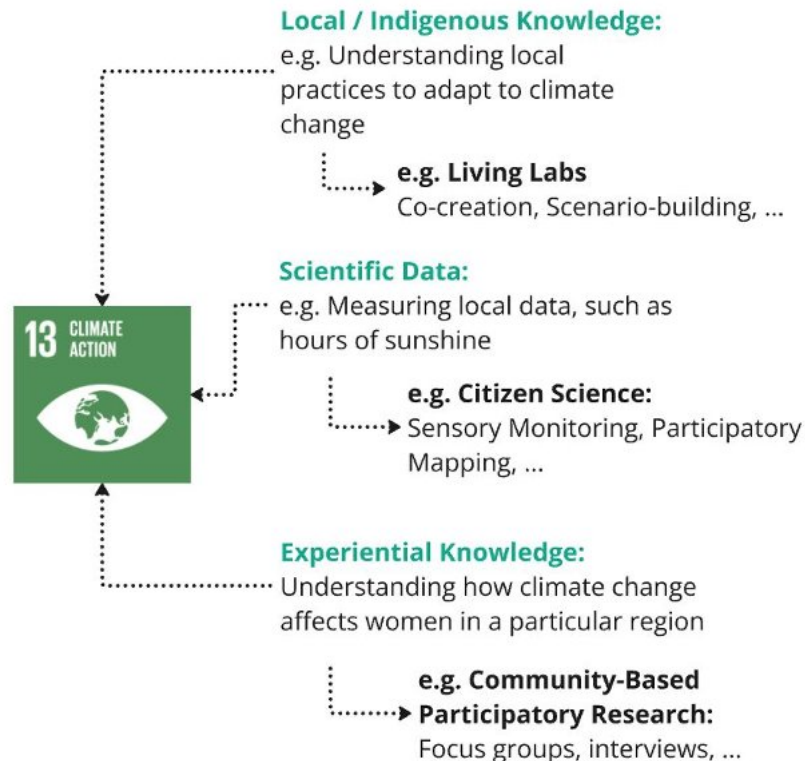
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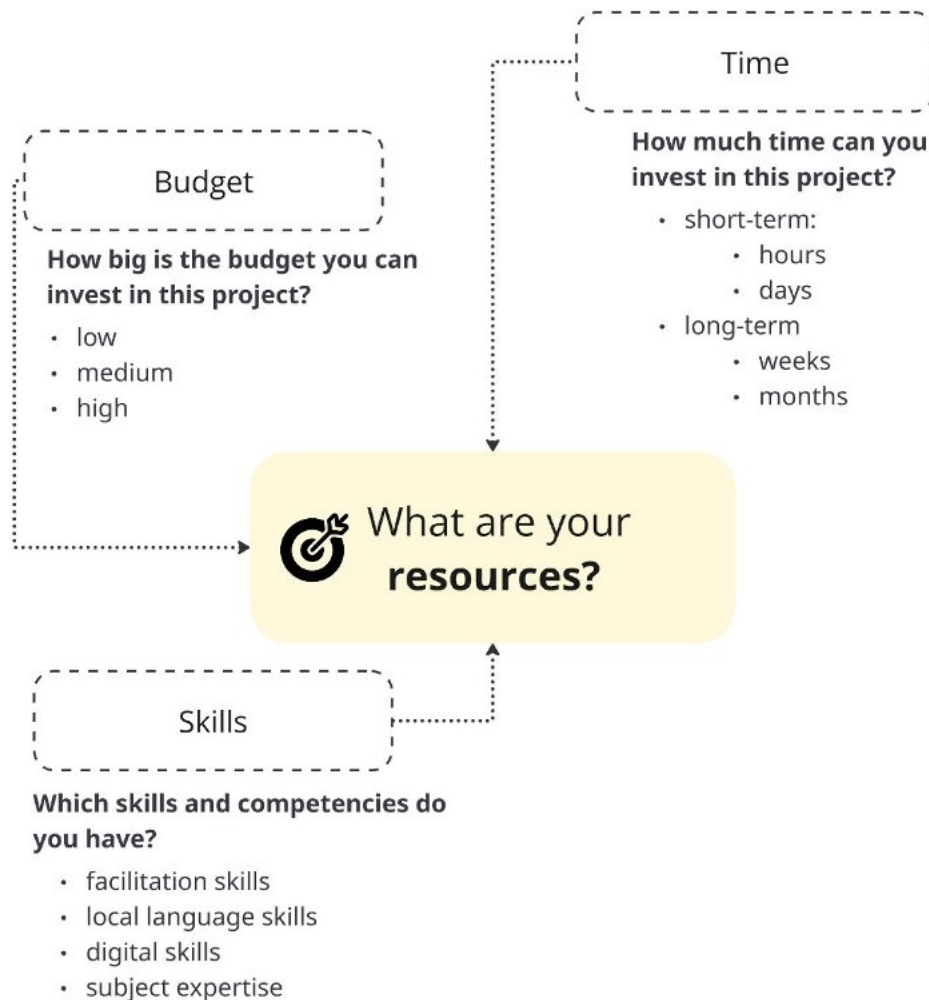
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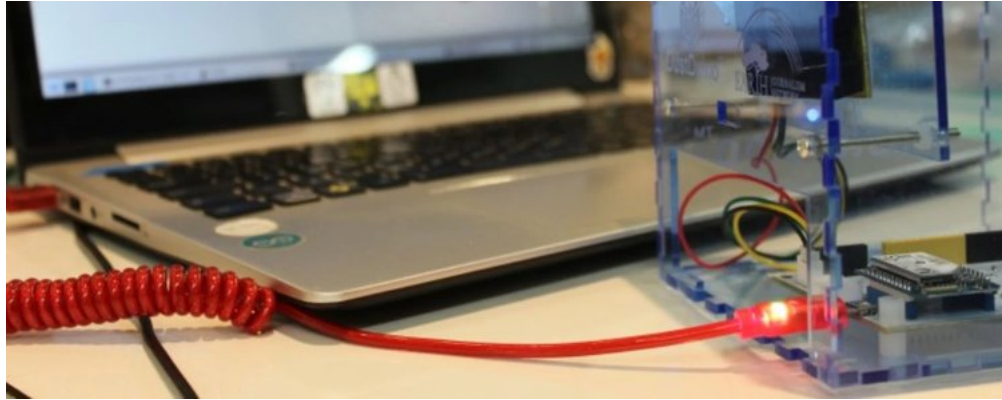
How do your **resources** shape your choice of PAs?

Many participatory approaches are adaptable to different budget levels,

However, there are important differences for the concrete methods



How do your
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choice of PAs?



High-Budget Citizen Science



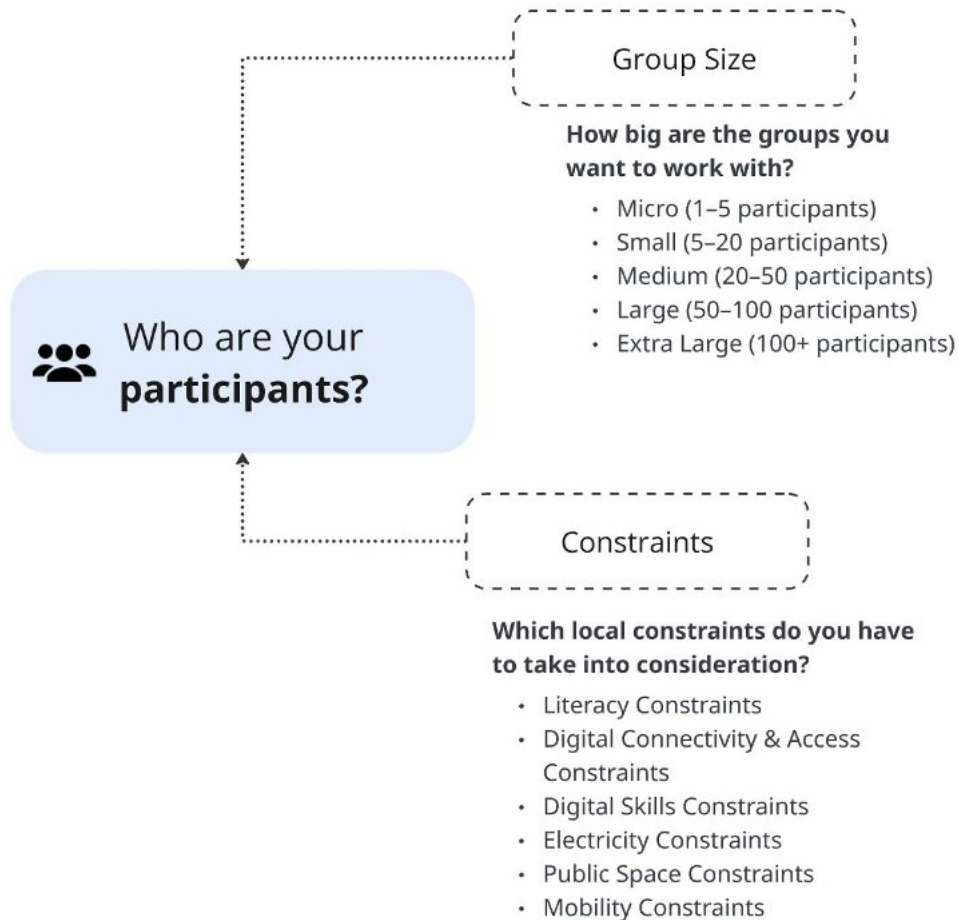
Low-Budget Citizen Science

Resources often don't determine your approach, but your method

Which PAs & Methods for which **Participants**?

- Group size shapes suitability of PAs
- More importantly, participants' local resources and constraints matter

PAs and methods must be chosen and tailor to local realities - this is often lacking in toolkits from the Global North



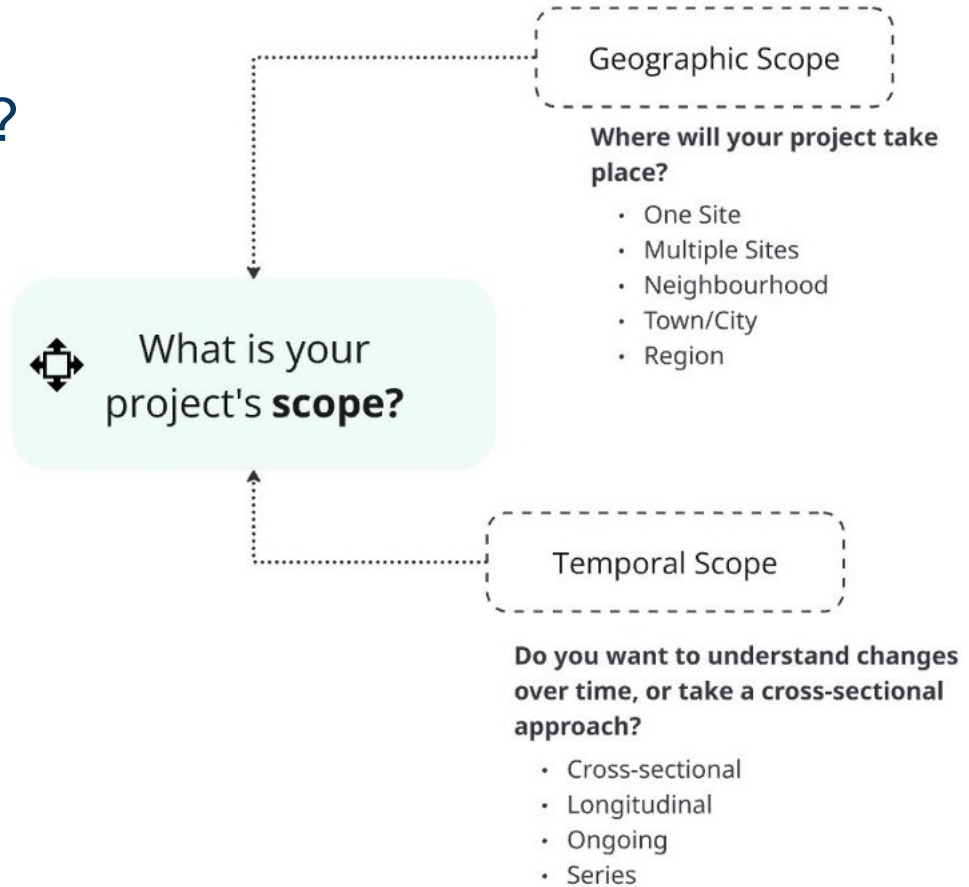
Which PAs & Methods for which **Participants**?



How does your Project's **Scope** Affect your Choice?

Not all PAs work for all geographic scopes.

Likewise, some are suitable for short-term studies while others require long-term commitment.

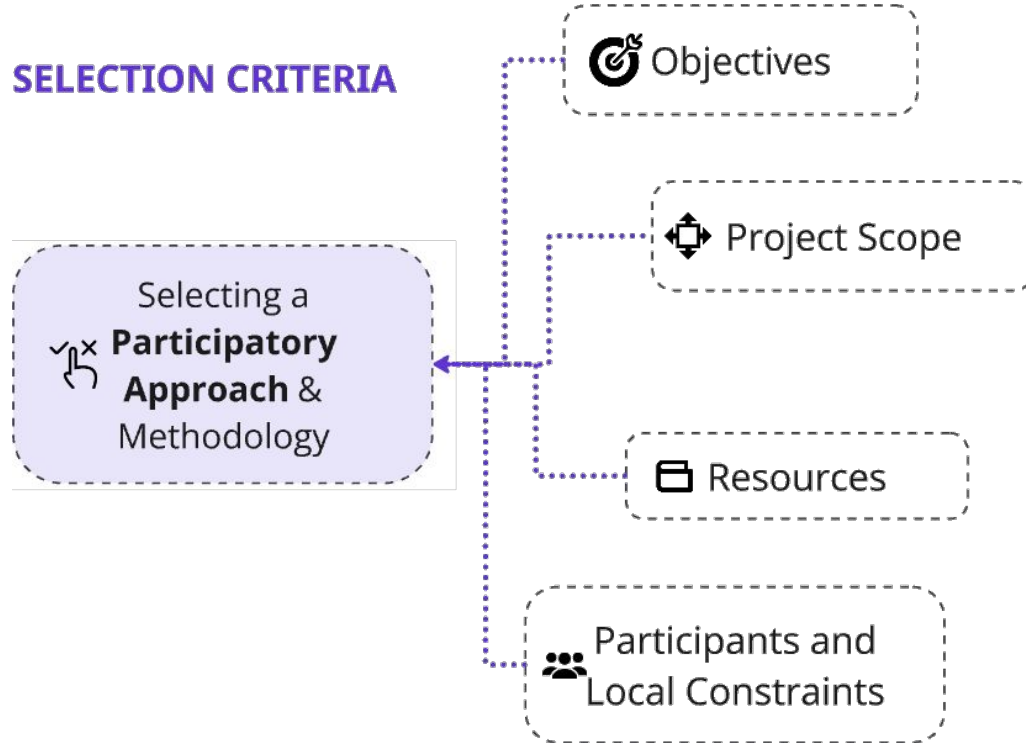


How does your Project's **Scope** Affect your Choice?



PAs in the SADC Region: Towards an Integrated Framework

SELECTION CRITERIA

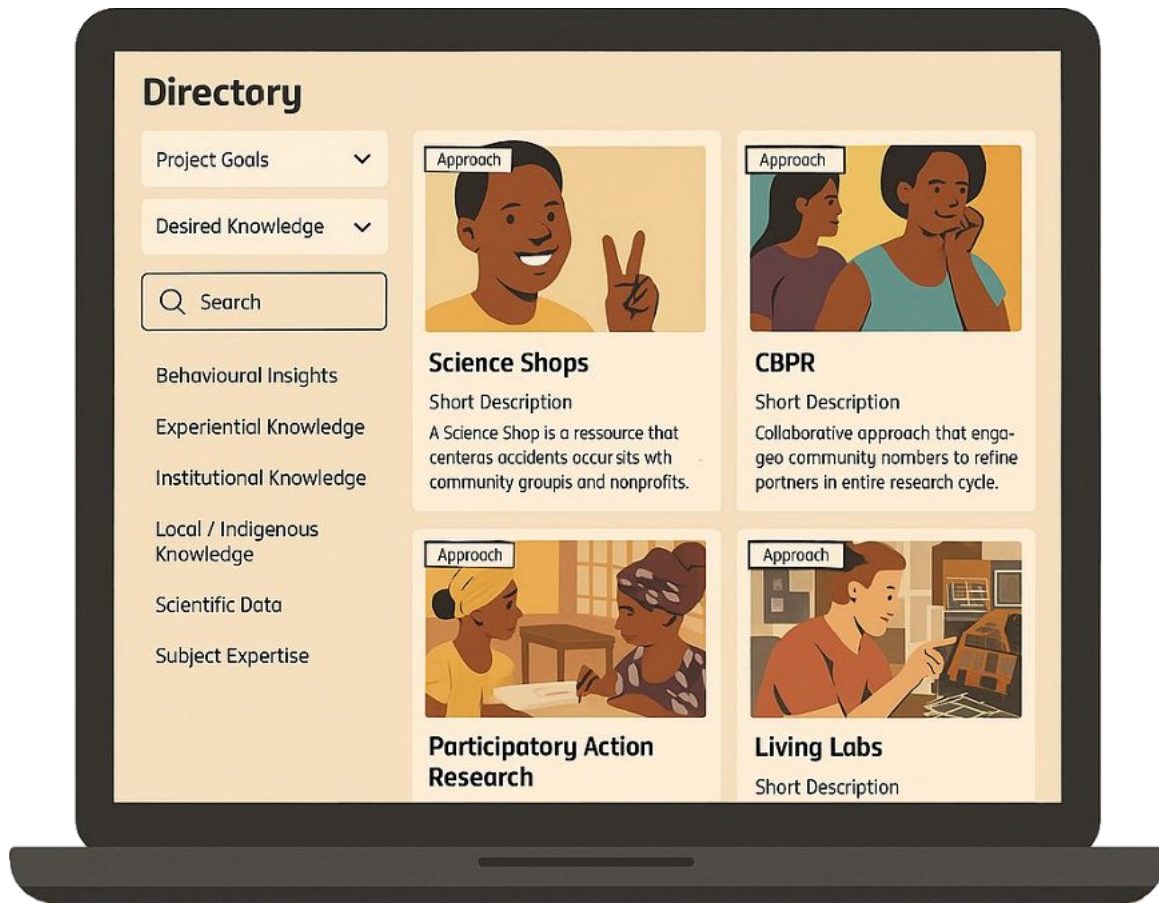


Our Approach

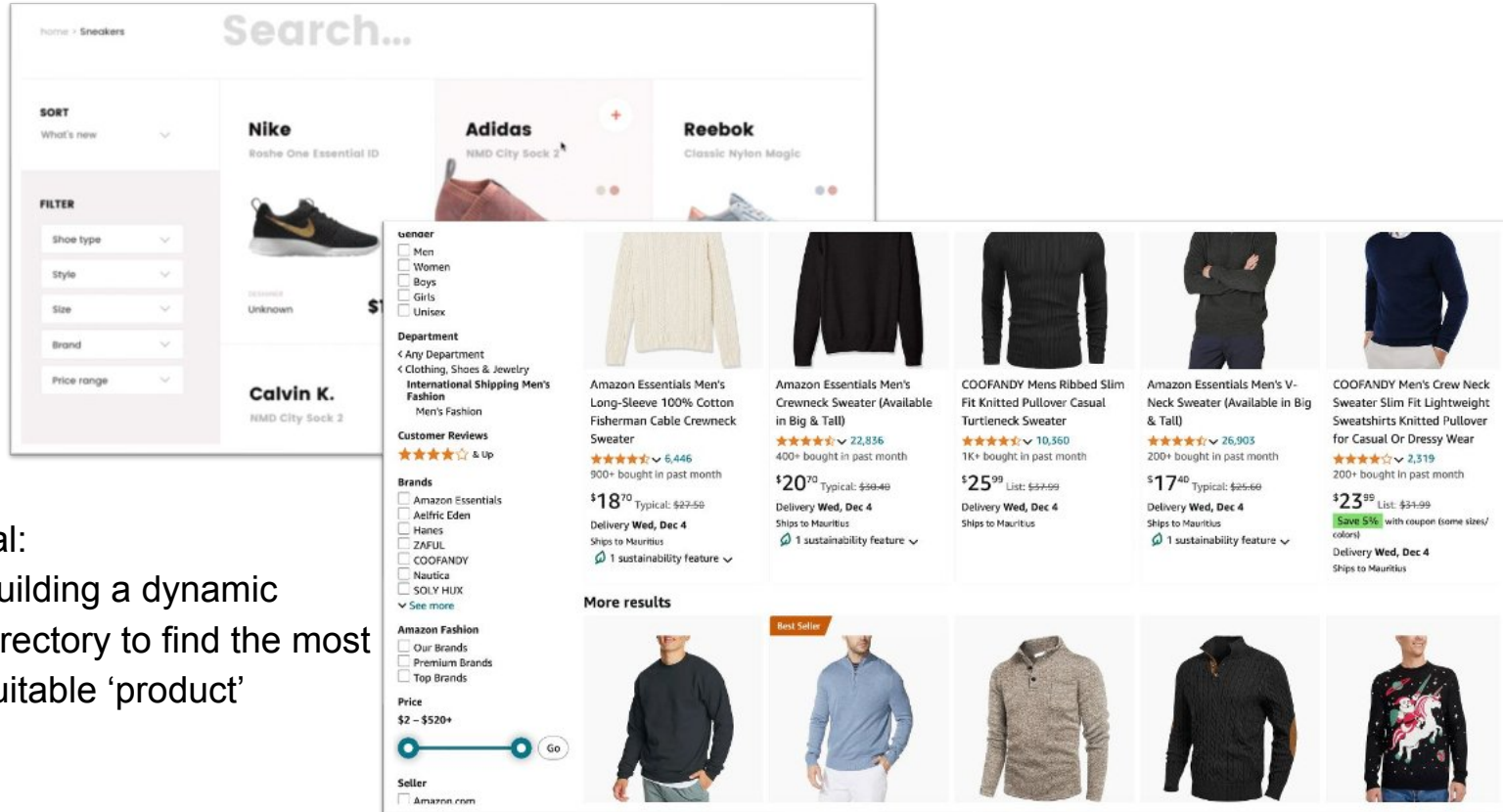
Develop selection criteria for
PAs and methods

Expand and complement
existing toolkits beyond a
Global-North Focus

Develop a dynamic directory to
guide the selection



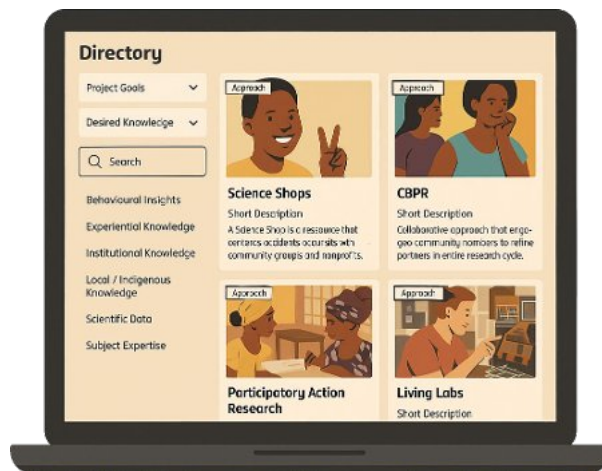
PAs in the SADC Region: Towards an Integrated Framework



Our goal:

- Building a dynamic directory to find the most suitable 'product'

The Integrated Participatory Framework



Filter the approaches based on your needs and context.



Click on an approach to learn more, explore examples and find guidance.



For each approach, find the most suitable method for your project.



Learn about the pros and cons of different methods and explore examples from the field.

EngageSDG: Integrated Participatory Framework (Prototype)

Welcome to the prototype of our integrated participatory framework (IPF) - your gateway to leveraging participatory approaches (PAs) in pursuit of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Designed for researchers and higher education institutions, the IPF provides valuable insights into the use of participatory approaches in your context. Our interactive directory of approaches and methods guides your selection process, empowering you to drive impactful participatory engagement for the SDGs.



Overview of What to Expect



About PAs and the SDGs

How can you use participatory approaches in pursuit of the SDGs - and why should you?



Inclusive Participation and SADC

What to consider when applying participatory approaches in the SADC region.



Selection Criteria

What to consider when choosing your approach: Explore the various criteria that shape your decision-making process.



Search Directory

Have you familiarised yourself with the background information and selection criteria? Now you can use our search framework to identify your approach and method!



Integrated
Participatory
Framework

The Integrated Participatory Framework

Project Goals ▾

Desired Knowledge ▾

Time ▾

Group Size ▾

Budget ▴

High ☐

Low ☐

Medium ☐



Science Shops

A Science Shop is a resource that connects academic expertise with community groups, civil society organisations, and nonprofits, making scientific knowledge accessible to address societal needs and challenges.



Community-Based Participatory Research

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a collaborative approach involving community members as active participants throughout the entire research cycle.



Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a bottom-up approach of involving local communities in the research for a well-rounded



Living Labs

Living labs are open innovation ecosystems that integrate research, experimentation, and co-creation in real-life environments.

Budget ▾

Group Size ▾

Goals ▾

Type of Knowledge ▴

Behavioural Insights ☐

Experiential Knowledge ☐

Expert Insights ☐

Institutional Knowledge ☐

Local / Indigenous Knowledge ☐



Co-Creation

Co-creation is a participatory research method that brings together researchers and communities to collaboratively identify problems, develop innovative solutions, and generate relevant knowledge.



Participatory Epidemiology

Participatory Epidemiology (PE) actively involves community members in identifying and addressing health issues. By combining local knowledge with scientific methods, the method helps in disease surveillance and ...



Observations

The observation method is a qualitative research technique where researchers systematically observe and record behaviour, events, or phenomena in their natural setting.



Focus Groups

Focus groups are small, structured gatherings of people (typically 6-10 participants) who are brought together to discuss a specific topic or product under the guidance of a moderator. They're a qualitative research method used b...

The Integrated Participatory Framework



Community-Based Participatory Research

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[Focus Groups](#)[Interviews](#)[Surveys](#)[World Café](#)[Participatory Rural Appraisal](#)[Observations](#)[Workshops](#)[Prototyping](#)[Storytelling](#)[Sampling and Specimen Collection](#)[Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation](#)[Scenario Planning Workshop](#)[Participatory Mapping and GIS](#)[Co-Creation](#)[Walkthroughs](#)[Photovoice](#)[Citizens' Jury](#)[Participatory Epidemiology](#)[Crowdsourcing](#)

About the Approach

Community-based research has emerged as a significant methodological approach in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, emphasising collaborative knowledge production and social transformation. Before embarking on CBPR, it is essential to assess its suitability by examining your project's objectives, available resources, target audience, and scope. This assessment will help determine if CBPR aligns with your research needs and contextual realities within the SADC region.

Explore this Approach

Find out whether this approach fits your project, explore related methods and consult additional material as well as real-life examples:

Is this the Right Approach?

See if this approach fits your project goals.

[Go to Section](#)

Related Methods

Check out specific methods you can use.

[Go to Section](#)

Additional Material

Find guides and toolkits to help you get started.

[Go to Section](#)

Examples from the Field

See real-world projects using this approach.

[Go to Section](#)

The Integrated Participatory Framework

Related Methods

To adjust this approach to your specific needs, you will have to carefully choose the concrete methods you will apply. Browse the most appropriate methods and click to learn more:

[Back to Top](#)

Budget

Group Size

Desired Knowledge

Goals

Local Constraints

Time



Co-Creation

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Participatory Epidemiology

Participatory Epidemiology (PE) actively involves community members in identifying and addressing health issues. By combining local knowledge with scientific methods, the method helps in disease surveillance and control, and in the development of prevention strategies,....

Digital Connectivity & Access Constraints

Digital Skills Constraints

Electricity Constraints

Literacy Constraints

Mobility Constraints

scientific research.



...tory method where a large
teers, contribute to data
em-solving to advance

The Integrated Participatory Framework

Guiding framework for applying participatory approaches to SDG challenges

Integrated knowledge hub combining a wide range of approaches + methods.

Dynamic decision-making tool that strengthens capacity and guides choices

SADC-specific — explicitly acknowledging local contexts, constraints and Leave-No-One-Behind priorities.

The Integrated Participatory Framework

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