

# How Porticus Embeds Values in Education for Lasting Impact

<b>Grantmaker</b> Type of Funder	<b>Global</b> Country	<b>1995</b> Year Established	<b>In the education sector: Lebanon, Jordan, India, Bangladesh, Haiti, Peru, Brazil and Kenya</b> Active in	<b>Catholic values, but not primarily faith-led</b> Faith
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Porticus is a philanthropic organisation that aims to create a just and sustainable future where human dignity flourishes. The organisation advises and manages the private philanthropic funds of the Brenninkmeijer family business owners. Porticus works with over 1,000 partners worldwide in over 130 countries and supports numerous active programmes that address global challenges through evidence-based, locally informed solutions. Leveraging its local networks and knowledge, Porticus identifies the root causes of societal and environmental challenges to enable systems change that is inclusive, participatory and makes a difference in the long term. The philanthropic work of the Brenninkmeijer family business owners has always been rooted in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching – serving the common good and promoting human dignity and social justice. Inclusive, high-quality education is a critical ingredient for a just and dignified life. That is why Porticus designs and funds programmes that support communities to advance education. Its education initiatives in Asia follow a values-driven approach guided by subsidiarity, solidarity, and sustainability, blending systemic reform with local agency to create long-term, impactful change in education.



# Unpacking the Values that Guide Porticus's Approach

Porticus' education initiatives in Asia are shaped by three core values which support a context-sensitive, inclusive, and long-term approach to philanthropy.

- **Subsidiarity:** Porticus empowers local communities by supporting solutions that respect regional knowledge and context. It collaborates closely with local organisations, trusting them to design and implement effective educational initiatives.
- **Solidarity:** The organisation prioritises inclusive projects that bridge social divides and ensure equitable access to quality education.
- **Sustainability:** Porticus commits to long-term systemic improvements by building local capacity and resilience, ensuring lasting benefits beyond specific programmes.

Taking a systems perspective, Porticus seeks to drive systemic change rather than short-term relief. As a philanthropic organisation with the flexibility to take calculated risks, it targets deeper, often overlooked levers within the education system to catalyse structural reforms and innovations.

## Grounding Interventions in Evidence

A rigorous evidence-based approach underpins Porticus' work, ensuring interventions are informed by reliable data, measurable outcomes, and proven strategies. The organisation collaborates with research institutions and evaluation organisations to generate actionable insights.

Porticus' Building Future Generations sector work aims to ensure that more children, especially those in extreme adversity, receive inclusive, high-quality education, helping them reach their full potential. Since 2016, Porticus has partnered with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to examine how social and emotional skills influence education and life outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The findings highlight the significant impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) on academic success and well-being. Aligning its initiatives with such research, Porticus ensures its programmes are backed by robust evidence.

One example is **Project Sampoorna**, a proof-of-concept initiative in Jharkhand, India, aimed at embedding SEL in school systems.<sup>2</sup> In collaboration with four partners and an evaluation organisation, the programme worked across 121 schools to develop and implement a holistic SEL model, demonstrating how SEL can be systematically integrated into government schools.

<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024, [Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives](#)

<sup>2</sup> Project Sampoorna, 2021, [A Whole Child Development Programme "Project Sampoorna"](#)

## **Initiative: Driving Inclusive Education through Project Sampoorna**

Socio-emotional learning (SEL) is a process that fosters self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, positive relationship-building, and responsible decision-making. Project Sampoorna<sup>3</sup> emerged from the recognition that addressing children's social and emotional needs is not only vital for their well-being but also a prerequisite for academic success.

While adolescents across India face various adversities, Jharkhand experiences a higher prevalence of substance abuse, political unrest, poverty, and malnutrition. It also has the highest proportion of girls aged 15–19 currently married, at 49%, highlighting the critical need for targeted interventions.

Implemented in partnership with the Government of Jharkhand and a consortium of organisations—including Porticus, Dream a Dream, QUEST Alliance, Kaivalya Education Foundation, Sattva Consulting, and IDinsight—Project Sampoorna aims to embed and strengthen SEL policies, practices, and approaches. The intended outcomes include five dimensions, namely, physical growth, cognitive growth, social growth, emotional growth and safe and enabling environments.

3 Project Sampoorna, 2021, [A Whole Child Development Programme "Project Sampoorna"](#)

# Driving Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Holistic Impact

Porticus employs a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure its initiatives address challenges from multiple angles. Project Sampoorana set an ambitious goal of equipping 1 million adolescents with SEL skills by 2024.<sup>4</sup> Achieving this required extensive collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mutual support among various partners and stakeholders.

Each partner played a distinct role in the initiative.<sup>5</sup> Dream a Dream contextualised the curriculum, trained self-reliant groups (SRGs), and embedded SEL through teacher training. Kaivalya Education Foundation strengthened district-level officers (DLOs), integrated SEL into state and district monitoring systems, and engaged government departments. QUEST Alliance worked directly with schools, supporting children and educators in SEL development. Sattva Consulting provided programme design, strategy, project management, governance, and ecosystem engagement. IDinsight led monitoring and evaluation to ensure evidence-based decision-making. Meanwhile, Porticus, as the donor, provided strategic oversight, funding, and programme design input while collaborating with global networks to mainstream SEL assessment in Jharkhand and Telangana.

The success of Project Sampoorana lies in deep collaboration across all levels of the education ecosystem. School leaders, teachers, parents, and district officials were actively engaged, ensuring alignment with local needs and sustainable impact. By fostering collective learning and adaptation, the initiative strengthened the capacity of both individuals and institutions to sustain and scale SEL integration.

<sup>4</sup> Project Sampoorana, 2022, [Project Sampoorana Annual Report 2022](#)

<sup>5</sup> Project Sampoorana, 2021, [A Whole Child Development Programme "Project Sampoorana"](#)

# Developing Contextual Solutions and Shifting Power Dynamics

Recognising regional nuances, Porticus prioritises culturally relevant interventions. Since 2014, it has supported the BRAC Institute of Education Development (BIED) in Bangladesh, advancing play-based pre-primary education models tailored to local contexts.<sup>6</sup> Leveraging BRAC's experience in early education since the 1990s, Play Labs provide high-quality, low-cost learning opportunities for children aged 3–5 through culturally relevant activities like rhymes, stories, and dancing.<sup>7</sup> BRAC has established Play Labs across multiple countries and is now collaborating with the Bangladesh government to integrate this curriculum into national education systems. Porticus has also supported the adaptation of Play Labs to humanitarian settings for Rohingya refugee children, funding Child-Friendly Spaces (CFSs) to ensure early childhood development, child protection, and psychosocial well-being.<sup>8</sup>

A key aspect of systemic change involves reexamining power dynamics between funders, grantees, and beneficiaries. Traditional donor-driven approaches can sideline local expertise and exclude beneficiaries from decision-making. Porticus actively challenges this by empowering grantees, local organisations, and government stakeholders to lead. Its support for BRAC's locally developed Play Labs and the adaptation for humanitarian settings reflects its commitment to scaling culturally relevant solutions rather than imposing external frameworks.

By amplifying local agency and valuing grantees' expertise, Porticus fosters a more inclusive and participatory approach to philanthropy. This ensures that education initiatives are not only effective and sustainable but also deeply embedded in the communities they serve, ultimately driving long-term systemic change.

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<sup>6</sup> Porticus, n.d., [Giving children in Bangladesh the start they deserve](#)

<sup>7</sup> BRAC, 2021, [Play Lab Research Brief](#)

<sup>8</sup> BRAC, n.d., [Story Evolution of Brac Humanitarian Play Lab \(HPL\) in Rohingya Camps of Bangladesh](#)

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

## **Initiative: Advancing Early Childhood Development through BIED Play Labs**

Play-based learning is a proven approach that fosters cognitive, social, and emotional development in children, setting the foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. BIED Play Labs are designed to provide high-quality, culturally relevant, and cost-effective early childhood development (ECD) programs for children aged 3–5 in low-resource and humanitarian settings.<sup>10</sup>

The Play labs incorporate local cultural elements, such as rhymes, stories, and traditional games, to create playful, engaging, and meaningful learning experiences. The key outcomes include: enhanced cognitive development, social-emotional growth, cultural preservation, psychosocial support in crises and community empowerment.

Since 2014, this model has been implemented in diverse settings across Bangladesh, Uganda, and Tanzania. In response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, BRAC adapted the Play Lab model into Humanitarian Play Labs (HPLs), emphasising psychosocial well-being, child protection, and cultural preservation for displaced children. With the support of partners like Porticus and the Lego Foundation, BRAC has established over 500 Play Labs, benefiting thousands of children globally.

<sup>10</sup> BRAC, 2021, [Early childhood development should be a global priority](#).

# Key Lessons for Faith-Aligned Giving in Asia

1. **Define Core Principles for Grantmaking:** Porticus applies guiding values such as subsidiarity, solidarity, and sustainability to empower local communities, bridge social divides, and build long-term resilience in education systems. Organisations can similarly adopt clear principles to align their funding with their mission and foster trust.
2. **Promote Scalable, Evidence-Based Solutions:** By incorporating robust data collection and evaluation into its programmes, Porticus ensures solutions are effective and scalable. For instance, its SEL initiative in Jharkhand involves an independent evaluator to validate outcomes and support long-term adoption.
3. **Leverage Unique Strengths:** Porticus capitalises on its flexibility, risk tolerance, and convening power to address systemic inequities and drive impact in overlooked areas. Identifying and utilising unique strengths enables organisations to focus resources where they can create the greatest change.
4. **Counter Power Dynamics in Grantmaking:** Porticus challenges traditional power imbalances by empowering grantees to lead and shape programme design, leveraging the expertise of local organisations working on the ground. This ultimately allows the organisation to design more contextually relevant local solutions.
5. **Act as a Proactive Collaborator:** Porticus exemplifies proactive collaboration by co-investing in initiatives, sharing insights through case studies, and mobilising resources from diverse stakeholders. These efforts amplify collective impact and create a virtuous cycle of shared learning and strengthened networks.


Porticus demonstrates how philanthropic organisations can transcend traditional grantmaking roles to act as catalysts, conveners, and brokers for systemic change. By actively engaging with funders, civil society organisations (CSOs), and governments, Porticus mobilises collective action to address critical social issues. This collaborative ethos is rooted in a commitment to evidence-based interventions, shared learning and flexibility, ensuring that programmes remain relevant, scalable, and impactful.

Explore the full brief on *How Values and Beliefs Shape Education in Asia*.



 info@avpn.asia

 avpn.asia

 171 Tras Street, Union Building, Level 10,  
Singapore, 0790252

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