NIRAS

Driving meaningful and sustainable change in philanthropy

NIRAS' Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) experts

deliver high-quality services worldwide for more effective, transparent, trust-based and sustainable philanthropic support. Our demand-driven, rigorous evaluations and robust monitoring systems support adaptive management and continuous learning, ensuring that critical decisions are informed by solid evidence and strategic insight.

We bring deep cross-cutting expertise in supporting a wide range of philanthropic partners. With a **strong understanding of the philanthropic landscape,** we help foundation leaders generate timely, actionable insights to guide learning, reflection, and strategy development.

Our capabilities lie in **strategy review, evaluation, research, data analytics and the design of fit-for-purpose monitoring systems.** We support foundations in making sense of complex challenges, learning from diverse stakeholder perspectives, and tracking progress in real time to adapt their strategies and improve partner engagement. We have extensive experience working with funders to monitor and evaluate grant portfolios against clearly defined success metrics, **generating meaningful insights into effectiveness, efficiency, and impact.** We also support the design and implementation of intentional, inclusive learning strategies that are aligned with each foundation's mission and ways of working.

What we offer:

Strategic guidance
on how to leverage evidence for effective planning and decision-making.

Design of systems, tools, and approaches
for intentional organisational learning.

Facilitation of theory of change
development and co-creation workshops.

Digital solutions and real-time dashboards
for tracking and communicating key indicators.

Development and review of learning frameworks
to enable continuous reflection and improvement, including systems and tools, indicator design (quantitative and qualitative), baselines, progress markers, targets, and risk assessment.

Training and tailored support
in a range of approaches, including Impact Measurement and Management (IMM), Results based management (RBM), Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting, and more.

Establishment and facilitation of Communities of Practice (CoP)
to enable peer learning around shared learning agenda with grantee partners and funders.

Our recent work in philanthropy includes support for **participatory grant making, trust-based philanthropy and impact investing.** We aim to deliver MEL support that is ambitious yet pragmatic – grounded in contextual, honest reflection, and a commitment to measurable meaningful change. **Learning is at the heart of our approach.** We see evaluation as one of many tools for decision-making – not a punitive tool. We prioritize inclusivity by fostering collaboration, **embracing diverse perspectives,** and sharing insights widely, with cultural competence at the core.

OUR KEY STRENGTHS

Strong and diverse in-house expertise situated across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, combined with an extensive global network of MEL experts, with strong representation from the Global South

Tried-and-tested expertise and systems for project managing and delivering operationally complex assignments including multi-country teams, significantly improving value for money and efficiency.

Strong track record of delivering to a high standard and on deadline, meeting requirements for credibility, independence, and usefulness.

Cutting-edge data analytics and digital technology expertise: making best use of the latest advancements for collecting, analysing and sharing digital data to support near-real time learning, and acting as thought leaders in the use of data science approaches for MEL.

Excellent mixed-methods capabilities, working with both quantitative and qualitative data sources and methods.

Strong knowledge, experience and expertise across a wider range of evaluation approaches and methodologies, including formative, developmental and summative evaluation designs.

Ability to manage high level **strategic evaluations, meta evaluations,** and **large-scale MEL framework contracts** that span over multiple years.

Expertise in approaches that integrate gender equality, diversity and inclusion: we consistently consider human rights principles (participation, accountability, non-discrimination, equality, and transparency) throughout the monitoring, evaluation and learning processes and in data collection and analysis.

NIRAS has worked closely with the following foundations: Mastercard Foundation, Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation, Climate Breakthrough, Gatsby Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Quadrature Climate Foundation, Dubai Cares, Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, African Climate Foundation, Bosch Foundation, Henrich Böll Foundation, etc.

Our people

120
Highly experienced in-house MEL specialists

located across our offices and hubs in Africa (Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Mozambique), Europe (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, France, Germany, Switzerland, UK, Poland, Ukraine, Serbia), Asia (Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos), and Latin America (Colombia).

10,000+
Evaluators and technical specialists

Supported by our diverse network of evaluators and technical specialists, we are able to operate with a truly global geographical reach.

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A developmental evaluation to test Gates Foundation's SAGE model on gender integration

Since 2024, the developmental evaluation of the Sustainability Action for Gender Equality (SAGE) initiative aims to generate actionable insights and deepen Gates Foundation's understanding of **how gender mainstreaming can drive gender equality outcomes and amplify impact.** Using a developmental evaluation approach, NIRAS is in the process of co-designing an evaluation that will help SAGE partners strengthen their strategies, inspire innovation, and enhance the effects of gender mainstreaming efforts during the grant period (2024-2028). In addition, our team provides capacity building through a **MEL Clinic** offering diagnostic assessments, tailored mentoring, coaching and tools to strengthen partners' monitoring systems and enhance gender-responsive programming. Our innovative, iterative and real-time approach supports **adaptive learning** for partner organisations and program officers at the Gates Foundation.

MEL systems and digital solutions for a global clean energy initiative led by a group of foundations

Since 2022, NIRAS has been the MEL partner of the **Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP),** an initiative jointly funded by **Rockefeller Foundation, IKEA Foundation, and Bezos Earth Fund.** GEAPP aims to support developing countries' shift to clean energy, using a pro-growth model with long-term goals to reduce carbon emissions, increase access to energy, improve jobs and livelihoods, and mobilise climate finance. As a **critical friend** of this fast-growing initiative, NIRAS provides **thought leadership** to help GEAPP establish and improve key methodologies, such as the process for setting country impact targets, and has provided on-demand support to key stakeholders (including board members and country teams).

To support GEAPP in better communicating its impact, our **in-house digital solutions specialist** designed a **bespoke MIS dashboard** to collect and publish **aggregable indicators relevant to GEAPP's long-term impacts in real time.** We have also developed a comprehensive MEL framework to cover a diverse set of interventions within the GEAPP portfolio and ensure a cohesive approach across all workstreams and geographies.

A long-term participatory and developmental evaluation of the Ford Foundation's BUILD model (2018-2025)

The **Building Institutions and Networks (BUILD)** initiative launched in 2016 was a five-year, USD 1 billion investment in the long-term capacity and sustainability of 350 social justice and civil society organisations around the world. NIRAS conducted a developmental evaluation of the BUILD model, covering grantees in the US and Global South. With a **participatory, iterative and adaptive design,** the evaluation was able to flexibly respond to the changing contextual environment and the emerging findings. Employing a mixed-method approach, the evaluation placed a strong emphasis on **strategic communication to build understanding, evidence, and influence.** The evaluation met both accountability and learning objectives, providing real-time feedback to inform programme adjustments, surfacing emerging issues as well as longitudinal impacts, and informed the next phase of BUILD.

A second six-year phase of the BUILD initiative began in 2022, including a **longitudinal study led by NIRAS** to assess the long-term impact of BUILD on organisational and financial resilience, particularly beyond the first five-year phase. The study also explored how partners, with or without continued BUILD support, sustained impact and pursued social justice goals over time. Grounded in a utilisation-focused approach and the **Equitable Evaluation Framework™** (EEF), the study was co-designed through six convenings with partners, the philanthropic community, and Ford Foundation staff. It generated practical learning for grantees, the Foundation, and the wider philanthropic field, and explored whether, how, and to what extent BUILD enhanced partner resilience and effectiveness.

Supporting the forestry legislative reform process in Kenya with the Gatsby Foundation

Commissioned by the Gatsby Foundation, the NIRAS forestry team supported the development of Kenya's commercial forestry sub-sector. First, we **identified key issues and challenges along the commercial forestry value chain** and recommended policy interventions to support sector growth. The team reviewed the Draft National Forest Policy and Forest Conservation and Management Act (FCMA) from 2016, highlighting gaps and opportunities to better integrate commercial forestry. We also examined **best practices from other African countries** to inform the process. The assignment culminated in a detailed Technical Policy Report, which included national and county-level policy recommendations to strengthen commercial forestry within government forests, drawing on best practices and recent policy analysis.

Documenting progress and improving performance under the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)'s Renewable Energy Portfolio

Over a four-and-a-half-year period (2018-2023), NIRAS conducted a meta-evaluation of CIFF's Renewable Energy Portfolio, which included eight investments across five geographies (China, India, Southeast Asia, Mexico and Brazil). These investments aimed to **influence climate and energy policy in middle-income countries** through technical assistance and civil society strengthening. Using a flexible, adaptive approach, NIRAS ensured the evaluation stayed responsive to the portfolio's complexity and evolution. The work included **strategic M&E support and collaboration with grantees and program staff** to gather evidence and inform performance improvements. The assignment produced a range of deliverables, including deep-dive investment reviews, light-touch case studies, thematic synthesis reports, and communications and learning materials.

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Realising your sustainable potential