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# British Council 'Golden Thread' Culture and Development Programme Evaluation

Final Report

December 2016

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**BOP**  
Consulting





## Foreword

The British Council was founded to create a “friendly knowledge and understanding” between the people of the UK and the wider world. We use the cultural resources of the UK such as art, sport, education, science, culture, language, innovation and creativity to make a positive contribution to the people, institutions and governments of the countries we work with. This creates opportunities, builds connections and engenders trust, so that we make a lasting difference to the security, prosperity and influence of the UK.

For the British Council, Culture is an enabler and driver of sustainable development, a way of engaging communities in shaping our shared future and supporting open, inclusive and stable societies. Artistic and cultural approaches empower diverse groups to participate in cross-cultural dialogue, creative and collective problem-solving, and capacity building. Culture also provides tools and spaces for creative expression and gives voice for individuals to raise awareness, build solidarity and encourage change.

Our Culture and Development agenda draws on the strengths of UK Arts and Creativity sector and uniquely combines it with British Council’s work in education, society and language, responding at scale to the global challenges of social and economic development. This approach is born out of an absolute commitment to mutuality, honest and equal collaboration, long-term engagement and a deep understanding and appreciation of the local context. Our programmes employ the arts and culture to explore contentious ideas and contested truths and to safely connect with the past to explore alternative futures and to generate new opportunities. They encourage engagement and a strong sense of cultural identity at an individual and a community level. This is designed to strengthen individual resilience, encourage community engagement, support policy development and protect vital cultural heritage.

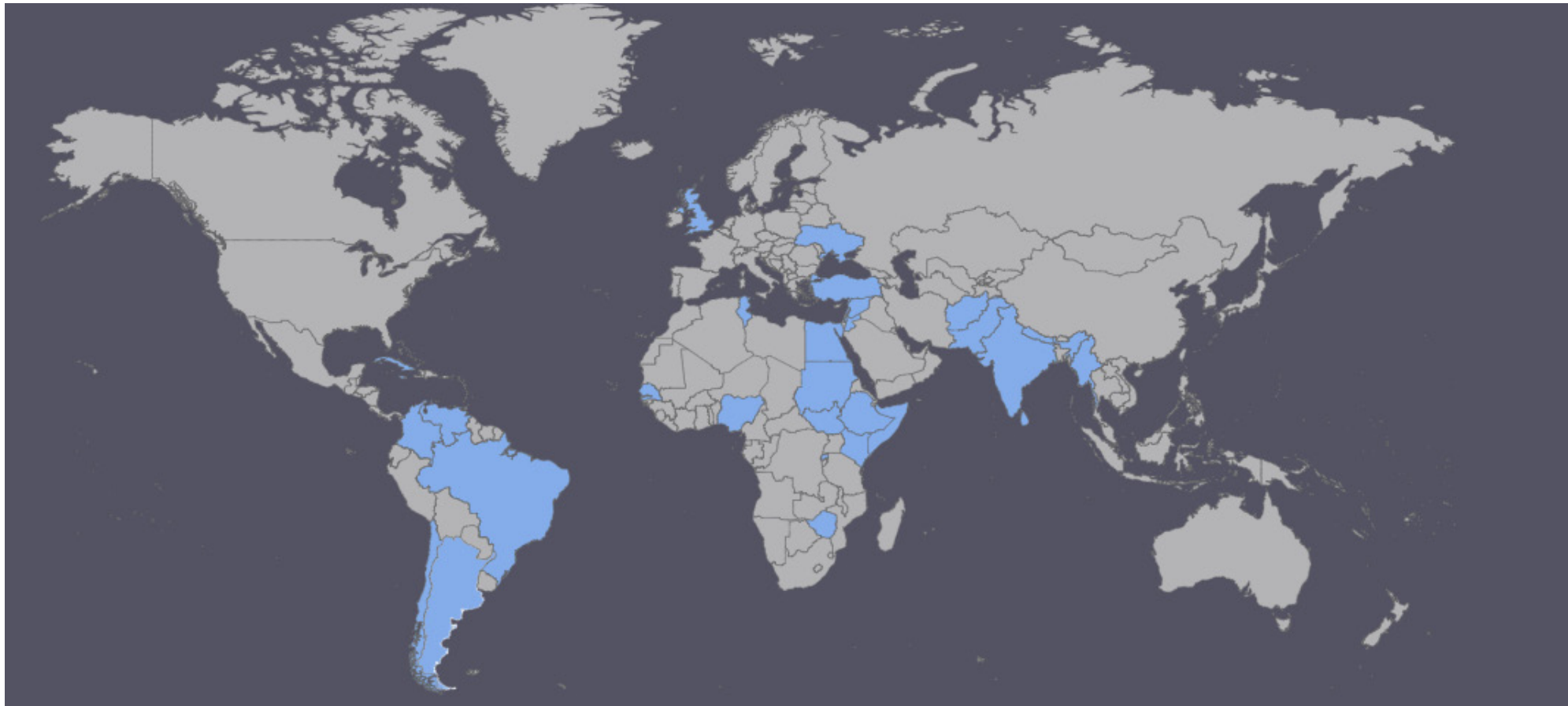
In June, the British Council released its Arts Strategy including five central pillars: 1) Sharing UK Arts with the World; 2) Policy and Research; 3) Arts for Social Change; 4) Capacity Building and 5) Fostering Collaboration and Networks. These pillars further reinforce the British Council’s work in the field of Culture and Development, as this programme covers all five areas, and in particular arts for social change.

Last financial year (2015–16), the British Council was awarded funding through the Golden Thread Official Development Assistance programme for two Culture and Development flagship programmes, ‘Artists in Recovery’ and ‘Voices and Spaces for Social Change’. These programmes are made up of a number of one year pilot projects in different countries across the British Council global network.

This document is a report and evaluation of our Culture and Development response to ‘Golden Thread’. It explores the impact and the change effected at individual, community, and organisational level of the pilot projects and sets the programmes in an international development context. By doing so, the report reflects the long term and large scale ambition of our Culture and Development work, which aims to make a lasting difference for positive social change globally.

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[www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development](http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development)



Countries reached as part of the Culture and Development Golden Thread programme:

**Americas** – Jamaica, Cuba, Venezuela; **Middle East North Africa** – Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, Palestine; **Sub Saharan Africa** – Nigeria, Zimbabwe; **South Asia** – Sri Lanka, Afghanistan; **East Asia** – Burma; **Active Citizens and Arts** – Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Jordan; **World Stages** – Somalia, Egypt, Pakistan, Ukraine; **World Voice** – India, Nepal, Hong Kong, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and all four UK nations.

Average amounts spent per programme and/or region:

Artists in Recovery £500,000

Voices and Spaces for Social Change £1,210,000

- Americas £135,000
- Middle East North Africa £135,000
- Sub Saharan Africa £135,000
- South Asia £110,000
- East Asia £150,000
- Active Citizens and Arts £160,000
- World Voice £385,000

**TOTAL: £1,710,000 + additional costs (incl. staff, M&E etc.) = £2,000,000**

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# 1. Introduction

This report explores the impact of the British Council Golden Thread programme. The programme funded 14 projects in 2015/16 taking place in ODA priority countries around the world. Each project used arts and creativity to bring about change at the individual, community and societal level.

## 1.1 The International development and humanitarian aid context

2015 and 2016 have been pivotal years in humanitarian aid and development. The Millennium Development Goals provided a clear framework for global development to 2015 and were the most successful anti-poverty movement in history. They helped lift more than a billion people out of extreme poverty, made inroads against hunger, enabled more girls to attend school than ever before and took steps to protect the planet. The newly agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup> seek to realise the human rights of all and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. They balance three aspects of sustainable development; economic, social and environmental.

The World Humanitarian Summit brought together more than 9,000 stakeholders to discuss how to improve aid delivery to people affected by crisis. It sought to make aid more effective by asking donors to give over a longer period and with more flexibility. It addressed the politicisation of aid. Flagrant violations - including direct attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, as well as disregard for the rules governing humanitarian access – severely hamper the ability to reach people in need. The summit gave formal recognition to protracted conflict as the ‘new normal’ - one increasingly concentrated in urban areas, causing the collapse of infrastructure and public services, reversing development gains previously made and highlighting the often artificial humanitarian/development divide.

1. UN, Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics>

Recent years has also seen an intensification of the global refugee crisis. Over 60 million people are displaced worldwide due to conflict, disaster or persecution - more than at any time since the Second World War. Most refugees are hosted in developing countries; in 2014 they hosted 86% of refugees. The most visible results of the migration crisis in Europe was the arrival of over a million refugees in 2015. While the immediate situation has been calmed by the EU-Turkey deal the underlying problems of conflict, inequality and a humanitarian system and an EU unable to cope with causes and consequences remain. The fact that migration is caused by conflict and failures of development is prompting discussion over ways to improve development and counter conflict within and between states.

Despite some gains huge challenges persist. Inequality is dramatic and progress has been uneven. Progress has tended to bypass women and those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are disadvantaged because of their age, disability or ethnicity. Disparities between rural and urban areas remain pronounced<sup>2</sup>. Progress requires political will to tackle root causes and integrate the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions of sustainable development.

The British Council Golden Thread programme was taking place as part of this need to explore flexible and context-specific approaches to increasingly complex issues in international development.

2. UN, MDGs Summary, 2015



## 1.2 The role of culture in international development

The role of culture within global development has been increasingly recognised but remains misunderstood and undervalued. Development interventions that are responsive to the cultural context and advance a human-centred approach to development are more effective and more likely to yield sustainable, inclusive and equitable outcomes<sup>3</sup>. Despite this, culture is largely absent from the SDGs despite pressure from a number of sources for its inclusion on a par with economic, social and environmental factors. There remains a lack of theoretical or practical tools to fully understand or utilise the role of culture in development.

The role of creative and artistic approaches in development has been supported by UN agencies including UNESCO and UNDP and by a number of NGOs<sup>4</sup>. To further integrate culture in the development agenda clear objectives, definitions, mechanisms, tools, monitoring and evaluation systems are needed.

Despite progress and campaigns including Agenda 21 for Culture and Culture Action Europe, culture was not mainstreamed into the SDGs and nor is there a standalone SDG on culture. Cultural issues are mentioned in over half of the proposed goals and the issue has special prominence in Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements<sup>5</sup>, but given that culture has not been mainstreamed it may be difficult for countries to elaborate policies and provide funds for projects that rely on culture's role as a driver and an enabler of sustainable development.

## 1.3 A potential way forward

Campaign groups intend to continue to advocate for the inclusion of culture in development frameworks and strategies. They propose that creative and artistic approaches be included in development plans and that culture be included in implementation plans for SDGs even where it has not been included in goals or targets. British Council is committed to taking a different approach to

3. UN System Task Team, 'Culture: a driver and enabler of sustainable development', 2012.

4. For example, SafeHands for Mothers (safehands.org) uses film to communicate health messages promoting maternal and child health. Fashion Revolution (fashionrevolution.org) use the power of fashion to inspire change in the fashion industry and reconnect the broken links in the supply chain. Safe Kenya (safekenya.org) uses film, street theatre and community programmes to promote positive behaviour change.

5. UN, SDG Topics, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics>

6. Culture Action Europe, 'Culture in the SDG - The Future We Want includes Culture' <http://cultureactioneurope.org/news/the-future-we-want-includes-culture/>

development and building programmes that take context into account and take a more mutual bottom-up approach in their design and implementation, which fits well with the suggested focus on arts and culture in development.

For this to gain traction the narrative on culture and sustainable development should be strengthened with evidence-based research and indicators. Culture can be used in development to enhance governance, economic development, sustainability and social cohesion. It can promote the participation of women and children. Key to mainstreaming culture is the development of quantitative and qualitative indicators. These cannot simply lead to the economisation of culture but must demonstrate the value of culture to development programmes and the cultural value created by these programmes.

This report seeks to contribute to these issues by exploring how arts and cultural projects have led to outcomes relevant to international development. It describes the context of the Golden Thread fund, describes each of the projects and explores the way that arts and culture have been used to create change, the extent of the impact of the funding on participating organisations, presenting findings from data gathered across each project. This data relates to six core objectives, structuring the projects and the evaluation framework. The methodology and theory of change are also presented and considered.

## 1.4 The British Council Golden Thread programme

The Golden Thread programme was part of a Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) initiative in international development which sought to encourage open societies that promote individual and social wellbeing and freedom of expression. The British Council received funding for a number of projects taking place through its Arts team that use creative interventions in order to support these aims. These projects focused on creating open and equitable societies from the ground up, and used cultural activity as a catalyst for broader personal and social change.

The programme was made up of two strands. Artists in Recovery focused on the need for artists to develop and deliver practice in safe spaces. It was designed to encourage artists displaced by the Syrian conflict to develop

small-scale projects that can provide creative responses to the acute challenges of crisis and displacement. Alongside the development of individual sub-projects, it provided mentoring and dialogues between the commissioned artists, as well as a platform for debate and discussion of the role of creative practice in policy. This strand of the programme is still underway at the time of writing so the developmental aspects that have occurred in 2015/16 are presented and discussed.

The second strand, Voices & Spaces for Social Change provided safe spaces and environments to allow cross-cultural dialogues to take place and to generate new solutions to social challenges through innovative arts and cultural approaches. The programme aimed at empowering diverse groups through intercultural dialogue and creative problem solving.

Through arts and culture-based projects the Golden Thread programme aimed to facilitate bottom up development and enable marginalised people to express themselves freely and advocate for their rights successfully. It is by understanding the change taking place at an individual level 'upwards' that we can understand how change can take place at local, regional or international policy levels. In this sense it is equally emotional, psychological and behavioural change that drives social development as much as (the arguably more easily measurable) economic drivers. This thesis was discussed at length in the World Bank's 2015 World Development Report.<sup>7</sup>

While the funding of this programme focused on developing the cultural opportunities and forms of expression made available to marginalised communities, an increase in openness more generally can only be successful if it is supported by networks and infrastructure that enable these modes of expression to take place safely, and expand beyond the funding period. This evaluation can contribute to this shift describing how and why different approaches have achieved certain outcomes and the role of the British Council in achieving these changes.

In strengthening the arts and cultural infrastructure in diverse global locations, this programme also contributed to the evolution of the 'Golden Thread' approach to international development, providing findings relating to how complex human,

social and material factors combine to extend the openness of societies and economies and contributed to greater stability at personal, local, regional and international levels.

The programme was based on six objectives, each of which is considered in turn in this report based on data gathered from the 14 projects. These objectives were informed by the British Council Culture and Development Theory of Change (provided in the appendix to this report) and were:

1. Support open, inclusive, stable societies through innovative arts and cultural approaches to sustainable development
2. Create new safe spaces, or facilitate access to existing safe spaces so artists can perform or exhibit their work
3. Provide opportunities for artists to develop their creative practice in and/or beyond conflicted territories
4. Build capacity at the individual, community and policy maker level to support social cohesion, freedom of expression, inclusive institutions and improved social and economic well-being
5. Engage UK creative practitioners and cultural organisations in project delivery helping to establish the UK as a leader in delivering cultural impact in developing countries
6. Strengthen artists, individuals and communities' sense of well-being through creative activity

Camara Chica © Andres Franko



7. World Bank Group (2015) 'Mind, Society and Behaviour'

**Table 1. Alignment of projects with programme objectives**

	1. Support open, inclusive, stable societies through innovative arts and cultural approaches to sustainable development	2. Create new safe spaces, or facilitate access to existing safe spaces so artists can perform or exhibit their work	3. Provide opportunities for artists to develop their creative practice in and/or beyond conflicted territories	4. Build capacity at the individual, community and policy maker level to support social cohesion, freedom of expression inclusive institutions and improved social and economic wellbeing	5. Engage UK practitioners and cultural organisations in project delivery helping to establish the UK as a leader in delivering cultural impact in developing countries	6. Strengthen artists, individuals and communities sense of well-being through creative activity
Active Citizens, Global	➡➡			➡➡		➡➡
Artists in Recovery, Middle East North Africa	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡		➡➡
Say It Through Breakdancing, Tunisia	➡➡	➡➡		➡➡	➡➡	➡➡
Camara Chica, Cuba and Venezuela	➡➡			➡➡	➡➡	➡➡
Creative Collaboration, Egypt	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡	
Choir of London, Palestine-UK	➡➡		➡➡		➡➡	
Human Drama, Myanmar	➡➡	➡➡		➡➡	➡➡	➡➡
Acting Together, Nigeria	➡➡		➡➡	➡➡		
Run Free, Jamaica	➡➡	➡➡		➡➡	➡➡	➡➡
Dance for Reconciliation, Sri Lanka	➡➡			➡➡	➡➡	➡➡
Turquoise Mountain, Afghanistan	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡		➡➡	➡➡
World Stages, Global	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡	➡➡
World Voice, Global	➡➡			➡➡	➡➡	➡➡
Hip Hop Shakespeare, Zimbabwe	➡➡	➡➡		➡➡	➡➡	

## 1.5 The evaluation framework

The evaluation methodology was designed to understand and measure change at the individual, organisational, and social levels, and to aggregate and analyse data from diverse international contexts to demonstrate the impact of the Golden Thread funding at a global level.

Our framework used direct data captured from those taking part in funded activity, interviews with the in-country and UK-based organisations delivering the work, and data from British Council staff co-ordinating and facilitating the projects.

We aimed to capture baseline and follow-up data from each project to explore the impact funding has had at an individual, workforce, organisational and social level. A full discussion of some of the methodological issues arising is discussed later in the report, but where survey data was not provided we received qualitative data from each project relating to the following main outcome areas:

- Artistic and creative development
- Wellbeing and self-determination
- Social and cultural capital
- Workforce and organisational development

An outline of the evaluation methodology can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2. Evaluation methodology

Method	Description	Rationale
Baseline and follow-up participant surveys	Overarching framework through a variety of bespoke questionnaires tailored to each project	Exploring creative and artistic development, self and professional identity, wellbeing, social capital.
Cross-sectional surveys / interviews with workforce and organisations	Short 5-6 question surveys/ interviews with practitioners and organisations (both local and UK partners)	Exploring professional development, capacity development, role and fit of project, legacy, impact on local community
Qualitative data capture	Open-ended questions, ipad, photo, video, audio data emerging from projects	Framework analysis of qualitative data to explore relevance to programme objectives, results and impact
Focus Group with British Council Regional Directors	Professional perspectives on function of culture in projects being explored and captured, including community/local influence and policy change	Directors as a data source provide expert knowledge and perspectives and 'on the ground' knowledge, discussion of impact on local infrastructure and policy

Camara Chica © Andres Franko



World Voice © British Council



Figure 1 illustrates how we understood the outcomes across the 14 projects linking together, and the findings below present data relating to each of these levels to illustrate and explore the links between them. It indicates that by measuring and demonstrating **creative development** in participants we explored links to **psychological development**. These outcomes often result in changes in how people relate to each other and the communities and societies in which they live, contributing to **social development**. The development of **organisational capacity and networks** enables these projects to take place, and often in extending the work (or the learning generated by it) beyond the projects themselves, enables further impact to take place concurrent to or after the individual projects.

**Figure 1 - Relationships between Golden Thread Outcomes**



By exploring change at each of these levels, as well as how they interrelate, we assessed impact at a programme level. By aggregating data generated from within a common framework from each project we can assess and present impact at a global level. This framework and evaluation enabled us to better understand the role and function of culture in an international development context at a policy level, potentially influencing future programming and funding within and beyond British Council.

**Table 3. Project data included in evaluation**

Project	Evaluation data recieved or colletced
Active Citizens, Global	Project reports / Interviews with participants (n=14) Interviews with tutors (n=6)
Artists in Recovery, Syria and Conflict-affected countries	Interview with International Alert Interview with Prince Claus Fund Project quarterly reports
Say It Through Breakdancing, Tunisia	Interview with Art Solution (local partner) Surveys from participants (n=10) / Project report
Camara Chica Cuba and Venezuela	Project reports / Filmed video of project ASDASD
Creative Collaboration, Egypt	Interview with British Council Head of Arts Interviews with participants (n=4)
Choir of London, Palestine-UK	Project reports Surveys from participants (n=6)
Human Drama Myanmar	Project reports Interview with Pan Intercultural Arts Surveys from participants (n=8) Filmed You Tube documentary
Acting Together, Nigeria	Project report
Run Free, Jamaica	Interview with National Theatre of Scotland / Interview with Manifesto Jamaica / Interview with British Council Regional Director / Filmed YouTube documentary
Dance for Reconciliation, Sri Lanka	Project report / Interview with Birdgang Dance
Turquoise Mountain, Afghanistan	Interview with Turquoise Mountain charity Surveys from participants (n=20)
World Stages, Global	Interviews with participating UK theatres (Sheffield Theatres, Birmingham Rep, Royal Exchange Manchester, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Royal Court Theatre) / Surveys from participants (n=4) / Surveys from organisations (n=5)
World Voice, Global	Project evaluation report Individual project reports / Interview with UK tutor / Interview with UK co-ordinator (adapted evaluation forms to be used in the future)
Hip Hop Shakespeare, Zimbabwe	Project reports

## 1.6 The role of British Council in running the programme

The aims of the programme and the role of the British Council in funding culture and development projects was discussed at a focus group with all Regional Directors from the Arts team in October 2015. The British Council was identified as having a key role to play in facilitating these projects, convening appropriate organisations and individuals and opening up conversations that would not necessarily take place otherwise. This was justified as being due to the extensive presence, networks and experience the British Council has working in these regions over a number of years.

By developing these projects according to an emerging theory of change around culture and development (see Annex 1), it enabled consistency in applying a framework to these capacity building activities. In this way, the British Council has developed the field of practice in culture and development at a global level, but while being mindful of the specific local needs.

British Council staff implementing these projects commented on how culture can act as a point of convergence for very diverse populations in developing contexts. As the Golden Thread programme illustrates, artistic and creative activity is very widely defined and differs based on local and national contexts. Rather than this being a limitation on the programme it was highlighted how the variety of perspectives explored and represented in cultural activity brought people together in ways that other programmes did not (e.g. specific skills development or more traditional 'training' programmes).

It was reiterated throughout the programme that there needs to be sufficient time for projects to be developed in a way that is appropriate to their local context. The delays in project delivery which occurred in some instances across the programme were largely down to the need to achieve buy-in at a local level and ensure that projects were not being 'flown in and out' and driven by top-down agendas. This was particularly true for cultural projects where specific and sensitive local knowledge was required before partnerships could be formally established and participants recruited.

Some projects were intended to be the first stage of a new and lasting partnership that would hopefully extend beyond the funding period of this programme. In other cases, the set-up of the work and the establishing of relationships and the building of understanding between partners had been an element pre-dating the Golden Thread project. This also led to a variety of starting points, and 'distance-travelled' across the projects.

There was also an acknowledgement that arts and culture is defined very differently in diverse global contexts, and the British Council needs to be sensitive to existing cultural activity, as well as how it is defined. This includes considering the social roles and status of 'artists' in different settings and potentially where practice that appears 'mundane' in a UK context may bring immediate challenges in other global settings.

The discourse linking arts and culture to broader social change also needs to be negotiated at a local level. The idea that arts and cultural activity can bring personal or social benefits beyond aesthetic development is still gaining traction in the UK, and requires some level of interpretation in diverse global settings.

There was agreement that investment on this scale (i.e. the Golden Thread funding), while substantial at a global level, is only really opening up the field of enquiry at the local level (i.e. when it is dispersed) and individual and social impact is likely to be limited due to the relatively short-term or pilot nature of many of the projects (i.e. one year programme funding). This should not be considered a limitation however, as the learning emerging from each project provides a strong evidence base to develop future strategy. It also provides an opportunity to be clearer about what kind of outcomes, on what scale, may be possible in different contexts in the future thanks to lessons learnt from the programme. The findings below indicate that the programme has provided British Council with the opportunity to build on lessons learned, strengthen partnerships with and between UK and international partners and build capacity on the ground. This should, in turn, enable British Council staff and partner organisations to develop programmes that will achieve scale and impact over time.

There was some debate by British Council staff during the course of the programme over the extent to which policy (domestic and international) could be influenced by this work. It was clear that while projects were sometimes about influencing policy, the programme as a whole was more about influencing attitudes within the public sphere and civil society at a local level. Findings relating to this aspect are also discussed below.

## 2. Project descriptions by region

Each project took a unique approach tailored to the needs and opportunities of the regions or countries in which they were located. This section summarises each of the projects before presenting a description of the outputs achieved at a global level and then the presentation of findings relating to each objective in the following section.

All projects were designed and signed-off, in many cases building on innovative pilot projects, and in others developing context-specific projects based on local need. All projects were designed in light of the existing Culture and Development Theory of Change and have components directly encouraging social change through cultural activities.

Evaluation plans were agreed for most projects and, where further development was required, existing evaluation frameworks were integrated into the one outlined in this document.

### 2.1 Global Projects

**World Voice** - This is an existing schools-based project seeking to develop singing capacity in the classroom in international contexts and provide training to teachers in how to use songs to explore freedom of expression. Funded activity took place in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Palestine, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

**Active Citizens** - This is a British Council global programme which received Golden Thread funding to explore how arts and culture can complement its aims of increasing self-determination and active citizenship across diverse populations. Two pilot projects took place in Jordan ('Artivism') and the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan).

**World Stages** - This was a sub-project of Artists in Recovery seeking to create knowledge exchange trips between UK based theatres and theatre artists in Conflict-affected countries.

### 2.2 South Asia

**Dance for Reconciliation, Sri Lanka** - This project brought two trainers from Birdgang, the oldest community dance group in the UK, who work with disabled and non-disabled dancers together, to work with eight dance groups from around Sri Lanka, including Natanda, in a residential workshop. It also ran an international dance festival later in the year and invited all the dance groups that were at the workshop to attend and perform alongside international artists.

**Turquoise Mountain, Afghanistan** - This project was an extension of previous successful work between the charity Turquoise Mountain and a number of artisans in Afghanistan to produce jewellery and ceramics to be sold in British and international retailers. The project seeks to create safe spaces for artisans to make work and learn from each other in the collective.

### 2.3 Middle East and North Africa

**Artists in Recovery** - this strand of the programme included a number of projects. **Create Syria** focused on capacity building for artists, cultural entrepreneurs and community organisations using arts for peacebuilding and sustainable development in Syria and Conflict-affected countries. It was run in partnership with International Alert and Ettijahat Independent Culture, In Place of War, and a network of Syrian CSOs.

Create Syria included a number of different elements:

- Consultation with relevant Syrian and local stakeholders in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey who used arts-based practices to build resilience and recovery among displaced Syrians and host communities
- Publication of mapping of existing practice and needs to support recovery and resilience for Syria and host communities
- Delivery of training based on consultation and needs assessment with International Alert (peacebuilding specialists) and In Place of War (specialists in supporting creative entrepreneurs in conflict).
- Funding of 11 artist projects focused on using cultural methods in a time of crisis (projects running February –May 2016)
- A series of ‘dialogues’ between artists, international relief organisations and policy makers, to explore how creative approaches can be used in this context and their effects.
- Artists in Recovery also supported other initiatives as outlined below:

**Beyond Arts MENA, Syria** - Co-funded by the Prince Claus fund: Small grants for 8 cultural initiatives in Syria and from displaced Syrian artists in the Middle East North Africa region, and beyond. The project aims to reach artists and cultural organisations who through their work actively deal with issues related to Syria and Syrians in the current contexts and create a space for cultural expression, dialogue, opportunities for freedom of speech, critical thinking and positive impact within the respective local contexts.

**Action for Hope, Lebanon** - A mobile summer music school supporting Syrian and Palestinian children in Lebanon to develop their talents as musicians. Golden Thread supported the local partner Action for Hope.

**Min Tala, MENA** - Golden Thread supported this pan-Arab dance network that works to build relationships between Arab countries and the wider world.

**Say it Through Breakdancing, Tunisia** - The project engaged with young people from North Africa and used an interest in breakdancing as a way of exploring and telling stories whilst developing participants’ skills and understanding of street dance as an expressive form. The collaboration with UK specialists Impact Dance and Hakim Onibudo (choreographer in residence at the Southbank Centre) received international publicity in the first stages of the project.

**Creative Collaboration, Egypt** - This project built on previous successful partnerships between UK-based and Egypt-based artists to support capacity in the wake of the 2011 uprising. This project represented a partnership between Canny Creatives (UK-based) and a number of Egyptian artists, seeking to explore and promote ‘safe’ spaces for artistic practice and collaboration and deepen understanding of how the arts can be linked to social impact.

**Choir of London, London/Palestine** - Singing and performance project with four young Palestinian musicians who came for a residency with 12 UK-based musicians. This included learning experiences with the Royal Academy of Music, Aurora Orchestra and Pro Corda, culminating in a final performance at the Southbank Centre in July 2015.

## 2.4 Americas

**Camara Chica, Cuba and Venezuela** - Building on a previous pilot project, the principle aims of which were to build capacity in educators and community leaders across Cuba, equipping them with the skills needed to teach digital filmmaking to young people; and to introduce young people to filmmaking and visual storytelling. ‘Camara Chica’ was managed by British Council and delivered in partnership with UK young people’s filmmaking organisation First Light. The 2016 activity focused on extending the model to Venezuela.

**Run Free, Jamaica** - This project was delivered in partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland and Manifesto Jamaica, based on the successful ‘Jump!’ parkour project piloted in the UK. It was based on choreographed parkour, providing discipline and expression for young Jamaican males. This project is relevant to other parts of the Caribbean and Americas where it responds to other local priorities seeking to engage young men in positive activities in their communities.

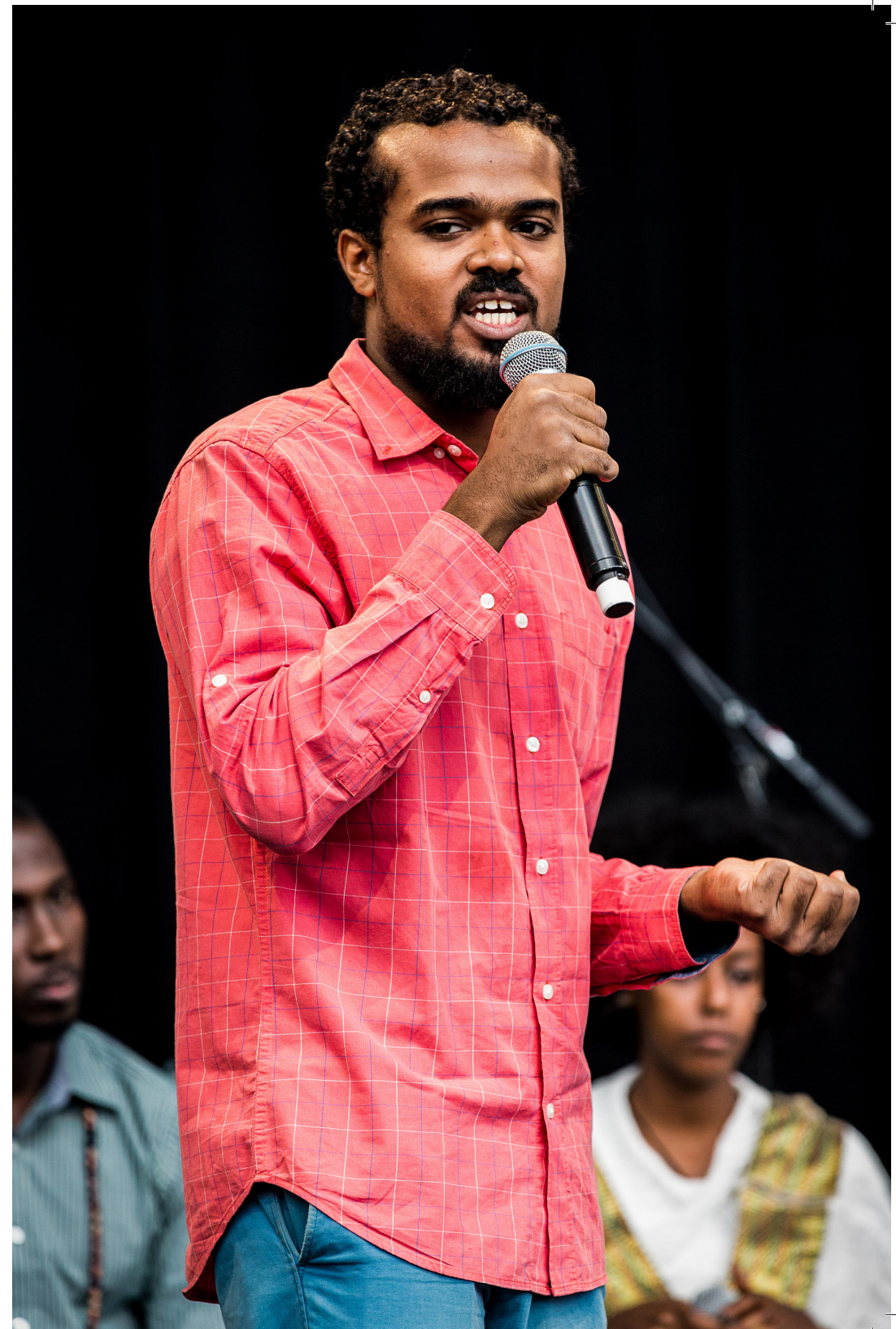
## 2.5 Sub-Saharan Africa

**Acting Together, Nigeria** - Working with, Kabosh, a UK partner from Northern Ireland with experience in using arts for community development in conflict environments, this project developed the capacity of 14 CSOs and 14 Arts organisations in the target communities to use arts for community development and conflict resolution. Stage 2 provided small grants and mentoring for the development of 3 – 5 productions by participating companies and CSOs and provided a training programme for community and arts organisations to learn how to use drama and community theatre to address social outcomes.

**Shakespeare Hip Hop, Zimbabwe** - This project worked with Civil Society/Community and arts organisations to build their capacity in the use of culture as a mechanism for peacebuilding and conflict management. The project included an 11-day training programme on the creative and cultural industries and how culture relates to society, personal and professional development. The project was in collaboration with The Hip hop Shakespeare Company (THSC) and youth theatre groups to deliver an educational and citizen engagement project targeting young people and civil society organisations in three cities. The project used music, theatre and spoken word to engage the target audience in communities and schools.

## 2.6 East Asia

**Human Drama, Myanmar** - This was a forum theatre project focusing on training actors to engage communities in performances about social justice. In collaboration with international development organisation FXB, and UK-based Pan Intercultural Arts, the team used Human Drama as a tool to work on over 30 issues affecting communities across Myanmar. The methods developed led to collaborations with Pyoe Pin (a British Council nationwide justice project), local government, and development agencies. Over 2015/16 the project expanded on this strand of programming to explore the effectiveness of this approach as a tool to achieve development goals while simultaneously building up capacity in participatory theatre across the country.



## 3. Impact findings across the six programme objectives

### 3.1 Support open, inclusive, stable societies through innovative arts and cultural approaches to sustainable development

#### 3.1.1 Enabling engagement in an artistic process and community learning

Across the projects there were several examples of how they were directly exploring social issues through arts and cultural activity and how this, in turn, was leading to an increased understanding of individual and collective roles and responsibilities in society. Many of the projects understood that more open, inclusive and stable societies were likely to be encouraged by using the arts to explore and discuss issues of social justice and freedom of expression. Some focused explicitly on engaging the community in an artistic process in order to increase learning. Improving community learning was interpreted by the projects as being a core element of supporting open, inclusive and stable societies.

In Myanmar, the Human Drama project used forum theatre to raise awareness of pressing social issues, including child labour, domestic violence, bullying and human trafficking. Forum theatre brings audience members into the performance in order to have an input into the dramatic action and understand how to dramaturge aspects of their lives. The audience has a chance to suggest different actions to change the outcomes of the play.

The 14 performers in Human Drama's troupe used real stories to engage the target communities in the play. At the end of each play, they encouraged the audience members to contribute their opinion to the second round of the play as a solution to the relevant social problem. Over the year, the troupe conducted 14 workshops with a total of 395 active participants from total audiences of 5,806.

The Human Drama project evaluation report shows an increase in people's awareness of social issues, willingness to discuss them and act upon them:

- 90% of respondents found learning through the representations really useful for themselves and community as a whole and admitted they had not received such information before.
- 80% of the audience expressed their willingness to take part in dispute resolution process in real life and showed increased awareness of communal resources such as neighbours, friends, fellow residents and accessible NGOs.

This highlights the shifting attitudes of local people in handling dispute resolution and increased understanding of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The case study received from the project and presented below shows how forum theatre can empower victims of social transgression, helping break several, important barriers at the same time. First it can address ignorance and unawareness, by bringing up pressing social issues, that are often taboo. In this case, alcohol abuse and its negative impact on the family. Other themes were domestic violence, child labour, human trafficking and school bullying. By bringing up these social issues in the streets and the squares, forum theatre facilitates wider access to information, in a more engaging and captivating way.

The participatory, problem-solving stage in the second act of the theatre performance can help people understand not only that they can take action but that there are other people in the community who are receptive to their problem.

The Human Drama project shows how forum theatre can also address the lack of empathy and understanding from people in society, triggering behavioural change. Individuals who have engaged in disruptive behaviour, can better understand the victims' perspective and the burden they face as a result of their actions. Empathy and increased understanding are critical to behavioural change.

**Table 4. Issues explored by forum theatre approach in the Human Drama project**

Domestic Violence	Child Labour	Human Trafficking
Raise the awareness of gender equality between husband and wife	Raising awareness of working conditions of children	Raise awareness of what the life of the trafficked people is like
Suggest the women to use constructive engagement with the abusive husband to minimize the tension as much as possible	Educate the parents of working children to understand the socio- economic costs of child labour	Encourage the audience to seek consultation from communities members when job is offered to their children by someone
Encourage the audience to use community resources as alternative dispute resolution mechanism	Encourage community members to enter into negotiation between the employer and child worker over unfair working condition	Encourage the audience to intervene in the difficulties of their friends and neighbours in terms of providing information and assistance for families in need
Provide the information of free legal aid providers and their numbers so that the victims can take action against the abusive husband – if they want	Provide the information of free access to legal aid providers that mitigate the dispute between employees and employers lpad, photo, video, audio data emerging from projects	Provide the important numbers and addresses of not only police forces and but also people from some community-based groups who can help



In the Horn of Africa and Jordan, the ongoing British Council Active Citizens programme (a global social leadership programme that promotes community led social development) used Golden Thread funding to implement an arts strand, where issues of agency and social engagement were explored and discussed using a variety of art forms and creative methods.

One of the workshop leaders described the function of the approach and how artistic methods were well suited to an established model of engaging with young people to increase their social participation. As this objective was seeking to create more open and inclusive societies, the findings reported from those taking part indicate that through increasing social networks, and a deeper understanding of how art can be used to address social issues, there would likely be an onward social impact:

“ Taking artists through a well-held Active Citizens journey, we can create a product in terms of art and culture that has the potential to inspire, to unite and to transform. Active Citizens creates the conditions for community members to become change agents, and to develop key leadership qualities. They begin to understand the agency they have in their own lives. Active Citizens could help artists see the potential of their work for directly impacting social transformation – at a personal, community and wider social/political level. (Active Citizens Workshop Leader)

“ After today I can be closer to others in the community and I can solve the problems of the community through better communication with other people (Active Citizens participant, Sudan)

“ I’ve learned how important art can be for the community, how it can affect things far and wide... I can be effective through art and make a lot of changes in the community that I couldn’t even talk about if I did a different job. (Active Citizens participant, Sudan)

“ Photography has a thousand words, it says things that you can’t say in words and people can make sense of it in ways they cannot with words. I have been able to see and meet people from all over Jordan and explore their lives. Their lives are very different from my life in the capital city. In this workshop we have found a way to communicate with each other and found out we are the same, not different. Using art we can see things in a different perspective. We understand each other’s society. (Active Citizens participant, Jordan)

By using artistic methods to explore social issues participants are enabled to discuss and challenge social norms and established ‘ways of being’ through metaphor and analogy. This creates a safer space for potentially contentious issues to be brought to the fore and a number of possible resolutions to be tabled. In enabling this process to take place, these projects are helping individuals to reframe their place in society, and locate individual agency as well as deepen their understanding of how to relate to others. While the knock-on effects of this in these societies is difficult to determine within one year, the accounts provided by projects and participants indicate that there will likely be meaningful social impact beyond their involvement in the workshop sessions.

### 3.1.2 Enabling new forms of expression through artistic and creative processes

Projects also contributed to more open societies by enabling more inclusive forms of expression for individuals. Either those who have been silenced due to oppressive regimes, or those who are marginalised in their communities due to their age, level of ability or status (e.g. young male adults perceived to be disaffected or disengaged).

Say it through Breakdancing in Tunisia helped a group of young men from North Africa to use movement to tell their own stories in a region that is undergoing major political, cultural and social change. By supporting breakdancing artists, the project helped to revitalise a suppressed form of creative expression. The project application documents explained how breakdancing was marginalised during the Ben Ali regime. Dancers were practising at home, but with few publicly available development facilities or opportunities. This project focused on the inclusive dimension of breakdancing: it is inexpensive and open for all to participate, using the streets for creation, rehearsal and self-expression. The programme validated breakdancing as a legitimate form of creative expression and a legitimate and inclusive form of social dialogue. As a result, the breakdancing community is now much better regarded; one of the programme leaders Chouaib Brik reported how official governmental institutions (i.e. the Tunisian Ministry of Culture), reached out to them as a result of the project.

Further, the project brought breakdancing performances from the street to the theatre. The directors proactively encouraged the dancers to engage with socially relevant issues through dance, but also through the process of identifying personal and social issues that were relevant to individuals’ lives and supporting the expression of these issues through training and development in dance. Hence, from occupying a marginal space in society these dancers were literally invited to take centre stage and express their views on the wider, broader socio-political context, as well as representing their day-to-day challenges. One of the participants said:

“ As an artist and as a person with an opinion this project has created a safe space to express myself, as an artist, as a person, as a young man. We talked about the problems affecting our societies today and used our dance to explain them. (Say it Through Breakdancing participant)

Say it Through Breakdancing also provided its participants with both social and cultural capital, enabling them to become more well-rounded and far-reaching both as artists and as people. As reported by the programme leader in the quote below, the programme provided the dancers with access to training and facilities they would not have otherwise had. The programme ran competitions for artists from different countries and backgrounds creating opportunities for social exchange, and enabling participants to develop international networks.

“ Before us these kids were learning through you tube. We are bringing them quality and experience, so we give them opportunities to develop as artists... But it is not just about dancing: we provide them with an opportunity to go abroad and see new cultures. Some dancers have already made their names in competitions abroad: they went to the world final in Montpellier and made their own networks. (Chouaib Brik, Artistic Director, Say it Through Breakdancing, Tunisia)

The programme also proactively sought to equip its participants with transferable skills. In the questionnaires participants often referred to how the group element of dancing helped them develop important values like respect, team-work, collaboration, persistency and trust:

“ I am discovering that I actually have more capacity than what I thought, particularly in terms of energy but especially in developing human relationships. (Say it Through Breakdancing participant)

A similar approach was taken in the Run Free project in Jamaica which is based on well-developed and theoretically-based parkour practice. It is a very planned and intentional process conducted with highly-skilled practitioners. Interviewees reported how this thoughtful process with integrity is crucial to the project's success. The course tutor stated that the programme of activity needs to be authentic and arts-based in order to build trust with participants, who would not respond to 'social work by the back door'.

The practice includes elements of storytelling and creative writing. The participants dramaturge their lives through metaphor, analogy, myth and movement. They always know that they are working towards a performance which also highlights the creative aspect of the process and that the activity is part of an artistic process. Participants are not 'fooled' into thinking the project is solely an athletic pursuit (even though physicality and athleticism are core aspects), they know the project is there for them to develop aspects of their creative and emotional selves and willingly engage in new forms of self-expression.

Parkour philosophy is based on movement with grace and purpose and the course is designed to use this as a metaphor for the young participants' lives. A participant stated on the video from the project: "it's not every day that you get the chance to express your feelings, to express what you're going through and this project gives us that chance". Another suggested "by coming to see the performance [the audience] can see this as a different place, and me as a different person". Through being given a space and a platform to present alternative versions of their selves the participants are changing the narrative they have with their communities and how they are perceived, which in turn is likely to lead to positive social impact.

Both of these projects demonstrate how, through explicitly learning new creative skills, and by being given the platform on which to express themselves, these young participants were more directly engaging with and communicating to their communities. In doing so they were contributing to the creation of more open and inclusive societies (i.e. through developing a voice through creative activity and being heard and listened to by those around them).

### 3.1.3 Creating and sustaining Communities of Practice

Across many projects a core aim was to bring together artists and participants to engage in collective activities, building networks at a local level and beyond. As stated by a participant in the Active Citizens and Arts project in the Horn of Africa:

“The workshop has helped me to widen my network, I know new people, people from other cultures, from other parts of Sudan and elsewhere, for me as a filmmaker this is brilliant. (Active Citizens participant, Sudan)

The World Stages project enabled theatre artists from conflict-affected countries including Ukraine, Zimbabwe, and Pakistan to spend extended periods of time in the UK to develop their practice and to increase their professional networks. This global approach to developing communities of practice in art forms indicates not just inter-cultural dialogue but also the potential for ongoing and future collaboration. This approach develops artists and their practice, but also the nature and experiences of audiences in both countries. In this way the dialogue takes place between participating artists, but also between audiences and broader society:

“Theatre is inherently collaborative: multiple imaginations (the author's, the director's, the creative team's, the performers', the audience's) combine to make it happen in a live space, in the present. And so it is inherently dialogic: complex, complicated, complicating. What it does best, in my opinion, is raise questions. And any society committed to making things fairer, more honest and more free must question itself constantly. This project will give us the chance to ask big, global questions in a big, global way. (Royal Exchange, Manchester)

Using theatre to raise questions, engage new audiences and reflect social issues is a key process in engaging social actors in a democratic process. Whether this is through developing an individual artist's voice, or providing a safe space for that voice to be heard, it is an inherent function of the practice. Providing an opportunity for artistic voices to be aired and expressed is a core aspect of living in a democratic and free society, and these projects have sought to highlight and enable this process.

There is clearly cross-over between the outcomes achieved through the project activities described under this core programme objective. In most of the projects above there has been a building and extending of communities of (creative) practice, which, at the same time, enables voices and perspectives to be shared across new audiences. The Golden Thread funded projects here are creating more inclusive and open societies by both facilitating creative individuals to learn new skills, interact with broader communities of practice and grow networks, while at the same time, ensuring there are audiences willing and able to listen to these new and, in some cases regularly silenced, perspectives.

### 3.2 Create new safe spaces, or facilitate access to existing safe spaces so artists can perform or exhibit their work

Building from the first, a second programme objective focused explicitly on enabling and facilitating artistic expression in 'safe' spaces. These could be permanent or temporary spaces, either within countries or through visits elsewhere. Providing access to physical safe spaces was the focus of some projects, whereas the creation of ideological or socially constructed safe 'places' was the focus of others.

A central aspect of the World Stages project was enabling theatre artists to develop new work in collaboration with UK-based theatres in spaces where they were free to develop and perform work of their choosing. Through a number of staff exchanges and residential periods in the UK, directors and playwrights were provided with an opportunity to develop work or create original work, often in dialogue with diasporic communities in their locality (e.g. the Pakistani community in Birmingham or the Ukrainian community in Manchester). This exchange enabled an international dialogue and exchange, as well as developing audiences in the UK and abroad. In providing safe spaces for these artists to produce and showcase their work the project enabled wholly new forms of expression, as well as developing new audiences in the host cities:

“ The potency of the project comes from the artist's development and then finding an audience for what they are creating. You need to start with the artist and then broaden out the conversation. This allows you to develop a way in to audiences and think about what you want to achieve. Small conversations across continents can lead to broad and wide impact on audiences. (Birmingham Rep).

Beyond the UK, a number of projects have focused on creating safe spaces that enable artists to present or develop their work. The Create Syria project (as part of Artists in Recovery) brought together 15 displaced Syrian artists in Lebanon to develop participatory projects across a broad range of art forms (of which 11 have been selected to be funded and delivered across the region). Although, due to the complex situations that many of these individuals face, the participatory projects are still underway at the time of writing, there has already been a significant degree of development for those individuals taking part. The UK partner, International Alert, noted in their March 2016 progress report:

“ During the first period of the project, all activities implemented have contributed towards the achievement of the objective of building the capacity and connectivity of up to 15 established and emerging Syrian artists and CSOs working for social change and peace. Activities have centred on identifying, selecting, training, facilitating the engagement of key Syrian artists and cultural actors and supporting them in designing innovative artistic local projects with Lebanese and Syrian communities across Lebanon. (International Alert progress report)

The report also highlighted how bringing together and training displaced Syrian artists is absolutely focused on their professional practice and development. The whole project is designed to 'normalise' arts practice at a time where there are a number of challenging and conflating factors at play in the artists' lives.

We can observe impact here on two levels; one is the provision of safe spaces for artists to come together and develop their practice (an enabling function), and in the process, facilitate their artistic development and ability to work in new ways with new communities (a more explicitly developmental function).

Beyond explicitly creating physical spaces for artists to work together, projects have also focused on creating new forms of communities that can represent socially constructed spaces as something that has been reinterpreted from normative experiences:

- In Human Drama, through forum theatre, participants voiced their opinions and shared their ideas in a metaphorical and imaginary context. This facilitated broad engagement with audiences and lessened the risk of people feeling intimidated if such topics were to be discussed in traditional social forums.
- Run Free created a safe space in the community for the young people taking part. This was both a physical space and a community of individuals who were brought together to learn a creative activity and progress and perform together. By representing the activities of young men as productive and thoughtful, the project repositioned their place in the community and society as one of productive safety.
- In a similar fashion, Say it Through Breakdancing brought breakdancing to theatre stages, providing safe spaces for breakdancing artists to develop as dancers and as people. The young participants involved talked about the challenges of being perceived negatively by a society that does not recognise their positive social contribution and commitment. The artistic process here created a way for the young participants to indicate how they occupy spaces constructively rather than being 'a social problem'.

### 3.3 Provide opportunities for artists to develop their creative practice in and/or beyond conflicted territories

As with the previous objective, the Create Syria project (as part of Artists in Recovery) was explicitly concerned with enabling artists to develop their practice when displaced by conflict. The interview with International Alert highlighted this aspect:

“ This is the essence of the project. It's all about building capacity and empowering people. That is the focus. Technical skills around peace building/ managing grants. Allowing artists to meet others in the same space. Meeting others in the same space creatively and socially.... training participants said... 'This training has helped me a lot in progressing and made me understand more clearly the concepts and needed techniques', 'I specifically learned how to assess possible risks and the importance of identifying a specific target for the project', 'I have gained more insight into my own personal weaknesses, strengths, and gaps in my thinking processes'. (Interview with International Alert)

The Syria, Beyond Arts project focused on engaging communities and populations who are displaced in professional participatory arts practice, thereby extending the impact of the funding beyond the professional development of just the artists themselves. As the co-funder of the project, the Prince Claus Fund in the Netherlands, stated in their interview:

“ The project overall objective is to strengthen networks for Syrian artistic expression and culture in exile within refugee and host communities in crisis, and generate enabling environments for Syrian artists, cultural activists, and civil society organisations to play an active role in bettering the life of Syrians inside and refugees outside Syria.... We didn't support these projects to make a difference on the ground. We supported them to make a difference to the individuals to help them make something ground-breaking. This is why quality is very important, looking at something beyond language to create a profound change for individuals at a number of levels. (Prince Claus Fund)

While these two projects are ongoing, it is implied from the statements above that the opportunity to access funding to develop their work and to improve their professional development and networks is of value to those Syrian artists in Lebanon who have been selected to take part. This is reiterated by the co-funding organisation Prince Claus Fund as they 'reframe' the intended impact as much within the groups of participating artists, as those they will eventually be working with on the ground.

The World Stages project also created opportunities to support artists affected by conflict or oppression. Interestingly, working with a playwright from Zimbabwe, the West Yorkshire Playhouse highlighted the importance of not setting up expectations around what the artistic material should focus on. The very nature of enabling freedom of expression outside of potentially dangerous settings is to allow for artistic freedom rather than an assumption that the political conditions in which artists live should necessarily be the focus of their work:

“ It's interesting that when working with an artist from a particular political context that there is an expectation to write about that context, a sense of obligation within their domestic professional networks to discuss specific topics, but this in itself stifles freedom of expression. The whole point is that you enable artists to say whatever they want, about whatever they want. (West Yorkshire Playhouse)

“ I wrote this play. I was not seeking to be controversial; I was hoping to make a significant difference in my country. The experience of this production has taught me caution, has taught me brevity above all, has taught me to value my writing. Not to share it when I feel the time is not right, when my gut feeling tells me the collaborative partnership is not right. I am not afraid to stir the hornets' nest. This work led to a documentary, has led to success beyond my imagination and all I can do is stand on the side lines because I was naïve enough to just want my work out there. This piece of work has above all freed me from self-censorship, it's the duty of others to censor me, to block my works, it's my duty to write as I feel, be true to my inner voice all the time. (World Stages Participant)

Both of these extracts highlight the centrality of freedom of expression in the work to support artists experiencing conflict or oppression. Rather than some of the more 'instrumental' aims of some of the projects (i.e. working through the arts to achieve broader personal and social development with onward impact), those projects seeking to support artists to develop and share their work outside of conflicted territories are successful because they stem directly from the artists' intentions and needs around freedom of expression. This being something that cannot be fostered effectively in their domestic environments.

In Afghanistan, Turquoise Mountain encompassed a broad range of outcomes, including cultural, economic and social outcomes, while also providing a safe space for artisans to work. Through accessing training in their crafts, participants had the opportunity to carry on Afghan traditions and cultural heritage, express themselves creatively and develop as artists. The project also created opportunities to travel abroad. This year a number of the artists were involved in Turquoise Mountain's exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum's Freer-Sackler Galleries in Washington D.C.

Turquoise Mountain has also connected Afghan jewellery businesses with a number of international designers including Zara Simon, Kara Hamilton, Jenny Bird and Pippa Small. Connecting Afghan artisans to these designers and their creative process has also improved the ability of Afghan artisans to develop their own collections and extend their artistic vision and practice. The artists have also benefited from close proximity with each other, learning from each other's fields and techniques, spanning woodwork, ceramics, calligraphy, carpets and textiles.

The young Palestinian musicians taking part in the Choir of London bursary scheme were given the opportunity to develop their musicianship by being provided access to training, expertise and networks in London. The institutions involved included the Royal Academy of Music, Aurora Orchestra, the Royal Albert Hall, the British Council and the Qattan Foundation. The participants listed a range of ways in which it enabled them to extend their artistic practice:

“ I was able to talk to the audience in Arabic by playing Arabic music. The audience were really happy and surprised that there are Palestinians who can play that well. (Choir of London participant)

“ Being able to play solo and talk about Palestine solo as well really made me feel accomplished on a different level rather than for example playing in PYO [the Palestine Youth Orchestra]. (Choir of London participant)

“ It made me more aware of who I want to be and what I want to be as a musician. (Choir of London participant)

“ It helped me to express things in many new ways, like talking with English people and learning more English words and changing my way of speaking English. This is very important. When you go out to work in a new country or a new place, this could be very important to express something new, and when you express things with new people, this could be very important too. (Choir of London participant)

Each of these quotes from the young musicians shows how they developed artistically, and by extension also developed personal and social skills including increased self-awareness, confidence and self-efficacy. In being trained in a new context and being exposed to new audiences, participants were enabled to express themselves in different ways than they had previously, and in their own words, improve their self-concept as musicians and their emerging professional identities.

### **3.4 Build capacity at the individual, community and policy maker level to support social cohesion, freedom of expression, inclusive institutions and improved social and economic well-being**

The core element of this objective is understanding how projects are building the adequate capacity to support social cohesion, freedom of expression, inclusive institutions and improved social and economic well-being. This is taken to mean working with individuals, practitioners and organisations to ensure that the most positive impacts can be achieved during the life of projects as well as when project funding has ended.

### 3.4.1 Supporting social cohesion

In terms of supporting social cohesion, Acting Together in Nigeria supported community organisations across Northern Nigeria and the Niger Delta (Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Rivers, Plateau) to promote dialogue and manage conflict through a creative engagement process and resulted in the creation of two performance projects in public spaces.

The project worked with civil society/community and arts organisations to build their capacity in the use of theatre and dance as a mechanism for peace building and conflict management. It subsequently supported them to produce performances in public spaces to increase access to art that challenges communities' divisive ideas of each other and encourages dialogue and other positive behaviours as a means of resolving differences and managing conflict.

The core project was a three-day workshop that developed the capacity of 14 civil society organisations and 14 Arts organisations. The workshop laid out best practice on using theatre and dance to foster peace building and equipped participants with key project management skills such as planning and implementation. One of the participants noted:

“ The training provided me with a deeper understanding of project design and implementation from the point of view of a Civil Society organisation (Participant, Art Organisation, Acting Together)



Building capacity in educators and community leaders across Cuba and Venezuela was one of the main objectives of Camara Chica. The programme successfully engaged six community centres and eleven community leaders, all of whom have stated they would now feel confident to run a film workshop with children without the support of the UK mentors. Further, all eleven leaders rated the project either 'very worthwhile' or 'extremely worthwhile'. This "training the trainers" approach is likely to leave a lasting legacy amongst those participating and enable future generations of young film makers to benefit from the practice.

Camara Chica also helped develop the careers of twelve students from the FAMCA film school in Havana. The students supported the community centre leaders and learned how to work with children in a filmmaking context. All twelve students reported that they would recommend getting involved in 'Camara Chica' to others, and have since returned voluntarily to the community centres they worked in to help sustain the project. As one of the participants reported:

“ The most important thing for me was working with the children, it was a real challenge because I had never done it before. Now my communication with children is much improved, and I feel prepared to go on teaching them and learning from them. (Participant, Camara Chica)

A core aim of the Human Drama project in Myanmar was equipping the drama workers to continue the work autonomously after project funding has ceased. Through extensive workshops the programme transferred knowledge and skills to practitioners in the field. John Martin, Artistic Director at Pan Intercultural Arts, ran a ten-day workshop. John reported: "the idea is to provide them with instruments and transfer skills which then stay at the local level, rather than creating a dependency." According to John, the impact on community leaders to date has been significant: the programme equipped people from poor economic backgrounds with technical, teamwork and leadership skills, helping them develop from shy and introverted individuals to community leaders.

The workshops also encouraged independent thinking and boosted confidence: For example, by the end of the ten-day workshop, John noted an important change in participants' attitude to communication and questioning. In Myanmar's culture asking a question to a teacher is insulting, but by the end of the course many participants were confident enough to ask John questions, indicating an understanding of the importance of enquiry and self-reflection in community arts practice.

### 3.4.2 Freedom of Expression

Another aspect of capacity building within the programme has been enabling freedom of expression; supporting individuals to find their voice and to express themselves through their creative practice.

As part of the Say it Through Breakdancing project, participants were supported to find meaningful ways to share their thoughts and ideas, and in doing so, work collaboratively to shape the training and performative aspects of the project. As their tutor highlighted:

“ These kids are not only learning how to dance, we help them to think independently, gain new perspective. And this can create a chain effect, because they can influence their own communities, talk to their friends and their families. (Say it Through Breakdancing tutor)

Within the World Stages project there was an explicit focus on supporting artists to develop their creative practice and communicate with new audiences, sometimes explicitly about censorship and issues related to freedom of expression, and in other cases, providing them with artistic freedom to discuss anything they like. Thus the exchanges were shown to increase individual capacity, but through the development of new ideas and approaches, also extend networks. It is likely that there will be onwards impact when the artists return to their communities; as one of the artists noted:

“ I have contributed to the cause of peace and promotion of human rights (especially gender, minorities, youth and peace with Pakistan) and motivated people to resist violent extremism. I feel a sense of satisfaction and pride in being able to run a theatre group in Pakistan in spite of enormous odds and inspire others in the field... The performances of my plays enable me to connect with people from similar fields and those who support the cause of socially meaningful art. I am able to connect with like-minded people in other countries during my tours or through Facebook and social media. Such interaction inspires me to continue regardless of the challenges, it also enables me to get a sense of the quality and relevance of my work. (World Stages participant)

Indeed, the West Yorkshire Playhouse pointed out that enabling international freedom of expression is a crucial way to build the capacity of theatre to impact upon society in the UK and abroad, but that with the constant strain on resources domestically, funding for this type of work is rare and extremely valuable:

“ A really important aspect of this funding is that it is enabling conversations between international artists. This may seem minor, but is so rare and valuable in the current funding climate. (West Yorkshire Playhouse)

Both quotes indicate that the ability for diverse voices to be heard in international contexts is valued by the participating artists. The funding has enabled the participating artists to exchange ideas and perspectives in a way that simply would not be happening otherwise. In doing so, it enables culturally specific topics and issues to be discussed and brought to new audiences. This creates new forms of expression, but also new forms of reflection from the participating artists, audiences and UK-based theatres.

### 3.4.3 Social and economic wellbeing

The main ways the programme was reported as affecting social and economic wellbeing was in organisational development, strengthening the capacity of organisations on the ground to continue work beyond the initial funding period and developing practitioners to change the way they work in the future. The value of increasing international networks was also highlighted by projects.

Lesley-Anne Walsh, the in-country partner for the Run Free Jamaica project discussed how she saw the British Council as more of a partner than a funder. She highlighted how the partnership between the British Council, National Theatre of Scotland and Manifesto Jamaica had been reciprocal, respectful and a pleasure to be involved in. She also discussed how it was very beneficial for Manifesto Jamaica to be involved in terms of their local and international profile. The project was longer term than most others they are involved in, which enabled the participants to commit under the assurance that it would continue. At an individual level, tutors described how the activities were presented as a 'challenge' to participants and this is how best to engage them in committing to the project. If it was presented as a creative opportunity they would likely not engage in the same way, but by establishing a committed community of practice, participants were keen to keep developing their skills with Manifesto after this project finished. All organisations involved described how struck they were by the participants' enthusiasm to maintain the collective and continue their training journeys.

The Turquoise Mountain project in Afghanistan explicitly focused on developing artisans' business management skills, equipping them to set themselves up as individual traders and small businesses in their own right and connecting them to international markets. These elements were crucial in the creation of sustainable livelihoods for the artisans. With Afghanistan's economic growth stalling, creative entrepreneurship provides a powerful vehicle for economic empowerment. By ensuring that the artisan sector is economically viable for the workers themselves, the project also ensures the continuity and growth of their skills.

The World Voice project model is focused on building capacity within every country it operates in. In 2015/16 the programme directly trained over 2,250 teachers across 15 countries, and worked directly with over 7,000 children.

The project has a 'snowball' approach where the UK tutors arrange a visit and work with in-situ 'master trainers' who are from the region and are supported to work with those teachers who are trained by the UK tutors after they have left. In this way the model is building capacity within communities of educators.

Creativity is a core element; singing allows people to develop their creative identities and think about creative ways in which a range of school subjects can be taught. The project is predicated on the principle that creativity is a key workforce skill and that if teachers can be supported to develop their creative capacities then World Voice is contributing to a change in pedagogy at a global level.

There have been some observations around how to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of the teachers trained. Findings within the evaluation report from the project in India indicated that 57% of teachers trained once continued to use the methodology when back in their own classroom, but 95% of those trained twice (by the master trainers) were using singing in their classrooms on a regular basis. This demonstrated the need to ensure that the master trainers are well equipped to sustain the model once the UK practitioners have left.

While there were few findings indicating a clear and demonstrable impact on economic wellbeing directly as a result of projects (with the exception of Turquoise Mountain which is explicitly focused on building international markets for the artisans involved), those findings indicating that the Golden Thread funding has increased organisational capacity and the knowledge and skills of a range of practitioners suggest that there will likely be a lasting impact on economic outcomes for some of those involved.

### 3.5 Engage UK creative practitioners and cultural organisations in project delivery helping to establish the UK as a leader in delivering cultural impact in developing countries

Every project has been assigned at least one UK-based organisation or practitioner to work with. Doing so enables practice to be shared in both directions so that in-country organisations can learn from UK practitioners, and they, in turn, can develop their practice and learn from diverse cultural contexts. The accounts of the practitioners and organisations clearly indicate the value of taking part in the Golden Thread funded projects.

In Say it through Breakdancing the collaboration with the UK was particularly important in challenging some of the Tunisian organisation's stereotypes of breakdancing. Chouaib Brik, Artistic Director said:

“ The British Council funding was so important. If we only worked in Tunisia I would only be working with government institutions that don't understand what we are doing. We never got support from the Ministry of Culture before, now we are starting to get contacted. Doing work with international partners helps us change how people see us. (Artistic Director, Say it Through Breakdancing)

For the Run Free programme in Jamaica, Simon Sharkey the Artistic Director from the National Theatre of Scotland discussed the value to the NTS of taking part:

“ Not only is it valuable to grow and extend international communities of practice and exchange ideas, working in Jamaica enabled the NTS practitioners and me to extend and deepen our practice by working in a different cultural context and having to alter the way we present ourselves and the practice. This will help us to do more work in the UK and in other international settings. (Artistic Director, National Theatre of Scotland)

Birdgang dance has over ten-years' experience doing international development work, and according to their artistic director every project, including the British Council project in Sri Lanka, creates important opportunities for artistic and social development:

“ It is important for us to do international work. We get inspired artistically and creatively and at the same time we can share our expertise in different areas of the world. Each time we learn something new, especially our ability to adapt to places and tailor our practices. (Director, Birdgang Dance)

Both organisations highlight how the opportunity to work in new environments with new partners is a core and essential element of their professional learning and development. The ability to adapt practice to local contexts and be able to work with more diverse communities and populations was one area of clear value to UK-based organisations.

The Choir of London provided the opportunity for five young Palestinian musicians aged 14-18 to visit the UK, offering tuition, musical training and experience of the London music scene. The British teachers, workshop leaders and young musicians in the choir all got an opportunity to develop personally and artistically, as they reflected on their own identities, values and practice through learning about the lives of the Palestinian pupils. Several teachers reflected on the importance of learning about Palestinian culture as well as the current Palestinian context.

One of the teachers said:

“ In every part of the world, there is a unique way of thinking about music, its place in a society and therefore the way it is performed, and by absorbing influences from around the globe there becomes a much wider palette with which to create musical performances. It is for this reason that working with artists on a global level is so important. (Teacher, Choir of London)

Engaging UK practitioners and teachers in an international conversation was also a key feature of the World Voice project. Nine UK-based practitioners travelled to 16 countries around the world to share practice and cascade learning on how to use song as a pedagogical device in the classroom. They have also generated a bank of online resources to be used by UK educators. After each international visit, songs were added to the resource which has over 22,000 UK-based teachers registered. This provided a useful way to link pedagogy and practice between the host countries, as well as enabling teachers to engage with issues of global citizenship through song (and the broader context provided with the pieces) in UK classrooms.

Cultural exchange and learning was also central to the World Stages project, which sought to set up UK theatres in an international conversation, supporting new forms of expression and sharing successful operational models around the world:

“ The project helps understand our culture and that of our International partners in a fresher context, it allows for global and international collaborations and conversations and, in this instance, to get a stronger sense of the Pakistani community in this city and how we might make work with, by and for them. (Birmingham Rep)

“ Theatre ought to reflect the world. And our world isn't small anymore: it's culturally porous and hyper-connected. But that doesn't mean it's homogenized. There's a wealth of different ways of doing things, expressed in a wealth of different theatrical cultures all over the world. By exploring these different cultures, we can better understand what it is we share as human beings. Any good art is about being a person. By sharing and exploring what we share, we can better understand what makes us who we are, right now. And so we can make better theatre. (Royal Exchange, Manchester)

Across many of the interviews with UK-based practitioners and organisations interviewees described the motivation for their involvement less as a way to demonstrate the UK's leading place in this work globally, and more as an essential aspect of contributing to and learning from global artistic practice. The concept of exchange was writ-large across the accounts of the practitioners and organisations we spoke to, highlighting that there was as much to learn from the practice in these diverse contexts as there was to contribute.



Tunisia Breakdancing © Helen Maybanks

### 3.6 Strengthen artists, individuals and communities' sense of well-being through creative activity

The way that wellbeing has been supported in projects is mostly linked to concepts of self-efficacy, self-awareness and self-expression. This can be considered as a process whereby individuals are made to feel useful (in a particular arts field, or in general), that they are further motivated to continue activities and are enabled to do so through supportive structures. There are several examples of this process taking place across projects.

Turquoise Mountain survey responses showed how creative activity made the artisans feel “happy”, “proud” and “more optimistic about their future”. Many participants described how creating beautiful objects following local traditions uplifted them and made them feel a sense of accomplishment. Some participants described how they enjoyed learning about jewellery making as well as other skills such as using technology and other digital tools. Participants also noted how they felt closer to a community of arts practitioners as well as a global community of designers and distributors as a result of participating.

Within the Active Citizens project a number of participants noted how they were learning how to use the arts as a means of self-expression, and how the training was enabling them to think differently about how they communicate ideas amongst their peers and broader audiences:

“ I know that arts can be used as a way of reflecting thoughts without any words. Sometimes I’m afraid that people won’t get what I’m saying, but since I’ve done this workshop I know people can understand things based on their own way of taking meaning from something I create, I don’t have to make it really obvious. (Active Citizens Participant)

“ We’ve learned how to talk in groups without using any language, using gestures and silence, this is such a new thing for us. (Active Citizens Participant)

Both quotes indicate participants learned new forms of communication and recognised how to use their arts practice as a way of further understanding their selves and communicate that to others. This is widely understood as being a core aspect of subjective wellbeing, i.e. feeling able to express thoughts, feelings and ideas to other people in your community.

In the Run Free Jamaica project both Lesley-Anne from the local organisation, Simon from the National Theatre of Scotland, and the participants themselves all discussed how the project enabled them to tell their stories. Lesley highlighted that “no-one ever asks them ‘what is going on in your mind?’ and this project is based on this question”. This can be seen in how the whole project is based on the participants being encouraged to express themselves through alternative means from everyday speech and language. The participants take ownership of the project and the creative process and in doing so they are provided with an opportunity to reflect and to think about their lives in a more abstract way. It is this artistic process (i.e. of finding and cultivating a voice) that is unique compared to some other projects or opportunities they may be offered. As Simon pointed out: “The project creates a window for the young people to see their lives outside of their everyday contexts... they are able to tell their stories through a high quality art experience”. Both Simon and Lesley-Anne also highlighted that this is a crucial time in these young men’s lives to be participating. As they are making the transition to adulthood, maturing and developing emotional intelligence through the project, they are learning skills that will serve them well as they gain greater independence and consider how they are contributing to the world as an adult.

As with some of the other objectives the results relating to individual wellbeing are not immediately obvious. This is likely due to the fact that the explicit discussion of wellbeing was not a core aspect of any project. Nevertheless, there are emergent findings which suggest that core aspects of what contributes to subjective wellbeing are operating within projects. This mirrors an emerging body of work linking artistic practice with psycho-social development and would likely be a useful focus for future culture and development work.

### 3.7 Survey findings

Each project was encouraged to use survey questions with participants, designed to measure and highlight key aspects of the evaluation framework and programme. While in practice this was not always possible (the methodological limitations are discussed fully in the next section) three projects did administer the surveys cross-sectionally, to measure the participants' feelings and perceptions of their practice and psycho-social states whilst taking part in the activities.

Each scale was measured on likert scales from 1 to 5 (either 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree' or 'None of the time' to 'All of the time' for the questions relating to subjective wellbeing). This allows us to present mean scores across the cohorts on a scale of 1 to 5, as presented in the tables below. While the samples are small, they also represent the perspectives of all the participants in each project, which make the findings representative of the groups taking part (if not the broader population).

#### **Turquoise Mountain Mean Scores (n=20)**

I can share my artistic work with others whose opinions I respect	4.95
I feel optimistic about the future of my work	4.7
I currently feel able to engage in the arts practice I would like to	4.55
My current arts practice makes me feel useful	4.45
I am connected to a community of artists who I value	4.2
I am happy with my current level of artistic ability	4.15
I've been feeling close to other people	4.15
My current arts practice allows me to express myself	4.05

Within the Turquoise Mountain project we can see that the participants scored themselves relatively highly on all dimensions, although higher on measures indicating that they felt part of a community of artists whose opinions they

respect (mean score of 4.95 out of 5), feel optimistic about the future of their work (4.7), feel enabled to engage in the arts practice that they would like to (4.6) and feel useful through engaging in their arts practice (4.5).

While the mean scores were high across all dimensions, the slightly lower levels of impact were in feeling able to express themselves through their arts practice (4), feeling close to other people (4.2) and being happy with their current level of artistic ability (4.2). Because the sample is small and the range of difference within the responses is relatively narrow, it is difficult to interpret further meaning from these findings, although it suggests that future research could focus on whether the project is developing the artisans creatively but with a more limited impact on their subjective wellbeing (which will likely also be affected by many factors outside of their work on this project).

#### **Say it Through Breakdancing Mean Scores (n=10)**

I am learning new things about myself	4.7
I regularly have the opportunity to meet new people	4.7
I can share my work with others whose opinions I respect	4.6
I am learning new things about other people	4.6
I am connected to a community of dancers who I value	4.4
I am in contact with people with similar interests as me	4.3
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	4.2
I am learning new things about the world	4.1
I've been feeling close to other people	4.1
I currently feel able to engage in the dance practice I would like to	4
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	4
I've been thinking clearly	3.8
I am happy with my current level of breakdancing ability	3.7
I've been dealing with problems well	3.6
I've been feeling relaxed	3.5

There was a broader difference in mean scores among the participants in the Say it Through Breakdancing (3.5 – 4.7). The participants rated themselves higher in measures of learning new things about themselves (4.7), meeting new people (4.7), sharing their work with people they respect (4.6) and learning new things about other people (4.6). They scored themselves less highly in the dimensions of feeling relaxed (3.5), dealing with problems well (3.6), being happy with their current levels of breakdancing ability (3.7) and thinking clearly (3.8). These findings suggest that the project was more likely having an impact on the social aspects of the young participants' lives and enabling to learn about themselves and others, than having a strong impact on their subjective wellbeing. This is not surprising given the account of the tutor and artistic director above suggesting that the project was aiming for them to explore their identities and connect to each other and their broader communities more meaningfully, rather than on developing their psychological wellbeing explicitly (which will, like all the variables considered, be dependent on a host of factors outside of the control of this project).



**Human Drama Mean Scores (n=8)**

I've been feeling close to other people	4.88
I am able to learn useful new skills in my work	4.88
I am in contact with people with similar interests as me	4.75
I regularly have the opportunity to meet new people	4.75
I am learning new things about myself	4.63
I regularly reflect on and evaluate my work	4.63
I've been dealing with problems well	4.50
I get a sense of accomplishment from my work	4.50
I am learning new things about being an artist	4.38
I've been thinking clearly	4.38
I currently feel able to engage in the arts practice I would like to	4.13
I can get out of the house often to do things I enjoy	4.00
I am connected to a community of artists who I value	3.88
I am learning new things about the country	3.88

There was a moderate range in the responses from participants in the Human Drama project (3.9 to 4.9). The scores indicate that participants felt they had been feeling closer to other people (4.9), have learned useful new skills (4.9), are in contact with people with similar interests (4.8) and have the opportunity to meet new people (4.8). Participants scored themselves less highly on learning new things about the country (3.9), feeling connected to a community of artists they value (3.9), getting out of the house to do things they enjoy (4). As with the other projects the extent to which these quantitative measures are indicative of impact should be treated with caution as they are cross-sectional and the samples are small. However, as with the survey in the Turquoise Mountain project it does suggest that future research or evaluation could explore the salience of different outcomes, for example, whether the project is increasing bonding social capital between group members, or 'bridging' social capital between the troupe and their audiences/communities.

It is unfortunate that many of the other projects felt unable to use the survey design in their work as, at a project level, it is a useful way of understanding the different aspects of the overall evaluation framework. It would have also enabled the measurement of dominant dimensions when aggregated at a programme level. This is not possible due to the small number of projects engaging in the quantitative methodology. The intention to use a repeated measures design would have enabled us to explore change in the dimensions over the life of a project, but was not possible due to the nature of many of the activities, the delay in some projects starting and the relative disengagement of British Council regional staff in the evaluation process.



Camara Chica © Andres Franko

## 4. Overall findings and conclusions

The overall findings are presented according to the intended impact areas included in the British Council Culture and Development Theory of Change.

### 4.1 Human rights and freedoms are realised, including diversity and freedom of expression

The Golden Thread programme has provided several examples of how human rights and freedoms have been realised. In some projects (Create Syria, World Stages, Choir of London) this has been through explicitly providing funding for platforms that enable artists to develop their creative abilities and engage with audiences in safety. In other projects this has been enabled through validating participants' voices and supporting them to develop new forms of expression (e.g. dance, movement, drama or song).

The scale of change has been considered on a project by project basis as the extent to which human rights and freedoms are limited will vary greatly between and within countries. The activities required to bring about positive change has also necessarily been different based on the unique local contexts in which projects take place. The findings presented here indicate that the project designs have engaged large numbers of people in creative processes that have allowed them to explore their self and social identities and reconfigure the way they interact with the world. In doing so it can be confidently claimed that the Golden Thread programme has enabled diversity of expression and freedom of expression on a large scale. Diversity here can also refer to the diverse range of cultures that have participated in projects and the inclusive nature of project designs which have often sought to target those either marginalised in their societies, or at risk of being so (e.g. Say it Through Breakdancing, Sri Lanka Dance, Run Free).

## 4.2 Communities and institutions support creative, open, inclusive societies

One of the key ways that positive change has been enabled through this programme is in creating and sustaining new communities of practice. Participants and partner organisations have reported how the projects have changed the perceptions of communities towards certain groups (Say it Through Breakdancing, Run Free), as well as facilitating dialogue between groups in new ways (Sri Lanka Dance, Human Drama). In doing so these projects are likely to have increased inclusion through enabling new cultural outputs to be produced as well as bringing together representatives from communities to experience them together. The longer-term impact of such experiences is difficult to establish from an evaluation relating to one year, however the reports of these organisations and participants that they have increased capacity and the ability to continue the work in some form does also suggest that these relatively short interventions may have longer-term impacts in supporting more open and inclusive societies.

## 4.3 Policy change promotes creative, open, inclusive societies

There was some debate by British Council staff over the course of the programme on the extent to which policy (domestic and international) could be influenced by this work. It was clear that while projects were sometimes explicitly about influencing policy, the programme as a whole may be more about influencing attitudes within the public sphere and civil society.

Examples given of the former were the Artists in Recovery project staging an exhibition in the European Parliament with wrap-around policy dialogues and documentary screenings addressing Culture and Conflict, or the Camara Chica project having led the Cuban Institute of Cinema to re-think how they work with children and young people. Slightly differently it was described how in the Human Drama project in Myanmar the aim was to develop a

a community of practice among development professionals there around how to use cultural approaches in international development work, which highlights an attempt to influence policy by changing the mind-sets and skills of the development sector.

While it cannot be claimed based on the evidence presented in this report that the projects have led to lasting policy change at a national or local level, the programme provides an opportunity to present at high levels these projects and their achievements as a viable way of engaging people in society and using arts and culture as a means of facilitating freedom of expression and social cohesion, which may affect policy more strongly in the longer term. Essentially the projects highlight that to establish whether work of this nature can have a lasting impact on policy will require longitudinal measurement and a different approach to evaluation.

## 4.4 The UK holds a new place in the world, as a leader in creativity, culture & development

By designing the programme with UK-based organisations and practitioners involved at every level, the Golden Thread funding has undoubtedly raised the profile of UK creative organisations and practice internationally. The accounts of the UK-based practitioners and organisations clearly indicate the value of being involved, particularly in developing their own practice and in enabling them to improve their inter-cultural work.

The findings presented here indicate that UK creative and cultural organisations are operating at the cutting-edge of culture and development in very diverse global contexts. As the understanding of this work increases (including through further research and evaluation of how it is functioning in these contexts) it is likely that the UK's reputation and position in the field will be strengthened.

## 4.5 Methodological limitations and recommendations

As has been discussed there were a number of limitations to the methodology. The main one is that much of the data has been secondary, and that the one-year funding period has made it difficult to establish longitudinal impact. Similarly, while the diversity of the projects is completely necessary and valuable, it also makes the evaluation framework and methods challenging to apply rigorously across all interventions.

We suggest a number of measures to improve evaluation practice in future funding and work of this type:

- Further direct contact with regional directors and project managers at the beginning of the funding period to establish what is practical and achievable in terms of methodology
- A clear and overarching evaluation framework within which all work can sit, and agreement to evaluation terms as part of the funding agreement and established before funding is agreed
- Overarching tools based on programme objectives that individual projects can adapt to their context (this was attempted but logistics and project variances prevented it from being applied across the portfolio). It is suggested that these would include measures of participants' creative and psycho-social development as appropriate
- Online/smartphone surveys through Survey Monkey or Typeform – which can include submission of photo, video and web links
- Clear ownership of the evaluation approach either within the British Council or with an external partner



Say It Through Breakdancing © Helen Maybanks

## Appendix – Culture and Development Theory of Change

What Happens?	Who is involved ?	What happens to direct participants in the short term?	What happens next, to direct and indirect participants?	What are the longer term changes to communities, societies and markets?		
Individuals and organisations participate in and facilitate high quality British Council culture & development activities. Including: International arts events, professional development and skills workshops, safe spaces forums and networks mentoring and exchanges, policy dialogue, publications, roundtables and symposia, technical expertise training, international mobility and visits	Individuals (including marginalised groups)	→ People feel happiness and joy as a result of creativity	→	Social and economic wellbeing improves	→	Human rights and freedoms are realised, including diversity and freedom of expression
		→ People have the ability to do things they couldn't before: Improved capacity for social / economic engagement: new knowledge, skills, confidence, inspiration and commitment, and changed beliefs and attitudes.	→	Community cohesion and trust increases		
		→ People use safe spaces to engage in dialogue with diverse	→	New safe spaces are created		
		→ People build cross-cultural networks	→	Civil society becomes more organised, active and influential		
	Local civil society organisations & partners	→ Organisations have the ability to do things they couldn't before: Improved capacity for delivering	→	Wider social institutions become more inclusive: embracing equity and diversity	→	Communities and institutions support creative, open, inclusive societies
		→ Organisations build cross-cultural networks	→	Policies change: - Increased cultural investment - More inclusive policies		
	Policy and decision makers	→ Decision makers gain knowledge and change attitudes about: - Cultural activities and their role in development - Local issues and citizen perspectives	→	Creative and social enterprises flourish and new actors appear	→	Policy change promotes creative, open, inclusive societies
		→ Decision makers build networks with citizens and cultural organisations	→	New models for resourcing creative and social enterprises emerge		
	Global & UK creative and development organisations (including the British Council)	→ Organisations have the ability to do things they couldn't before: Improved capacity for accessing and creating international culture & development opportunities	→	Increased funding is available for culture & development	→	The UK holds a new place in the world, as a leader in creativity, culture & development
		→ Organisations build networks with other culture & development actors	→	The British Council is recognised as a global leader in culture & development		
			→			
			→			



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