

South  
Asia

Connect

Create

Collaborate

## South Asia is on the cusp of a demographic dividend even greater than China's in the last century. With a population of 1.6 billion of which 20% are aged between 15–24, there is a next generation emerging.

This is a region of extremes from an aspiring middle class of over 400 million to over 520 million living below the poverty line. It is home to the world's largest democracy and also to fragile states, it has centres of world class innovation and technological literacy yet faces major challenges on access to education.

The numbers speak for themselves in South Asia: 1 million new entrants will enter the labour force every month for the next 20 years, the fastest expansion of Higher Education provision

and social media usage increasing at 38% per year! This fast-moving and turbulent region has huge problems but these are matched by huge opportunities and resilient communities. South Asia sits at the centre of an emerging network that links the countries of South Asia with the Middle East and Africa in a web of new economic, political and security relationships.

1 million new entrants will enter the labour force every month

## Did you know that...?

- there are over 2 million people of South Asian heritage living in the UK which means there are powerful diaspora connections to the region
- many of the economies in the region are growing at an annual rate of 6 per cent–9 per cent and huge investment is now going into education
- there are over 750 universities in the region but there are plans to build 1500 new universities in India alone over the next 10 years
- over 500 million young people will want skills training by 2015 but only 4 million are currently enrolled in courses
- over 420 million people are learning English across South Asia.

## What we do and where we work in South Asia

We work in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and our work includes:

**ENGLISH** we have Libraries and Teaching Centres in India and Bangladesh, we support teachers in all countries and by 2017 we aim to reach 100 million learners

**EXAMS** over 427,640 candidates sat UK qualifications in South Asia in 2012–13

**EDUCATION** we work with Governments, policy makers, teachers and learners to improve quality education and last year over 5 million people accessed our services

**ARTS** from Design Development to mapping the Creative Industries, from showcasing Arts to using Arts as a tool for reconciliation, over 1 million people in South Asia saw our work in 2012–13.

## What are we going to do in the future?

This region has rapidly-growing economies and a rising middle class, as well as conflict, extremes of poverty and low literacy rates. There are significant opportunities for the British Council's work across the region, especially for English and Skills, a rapid expansion of Higher Education, major investment in school education and a growing demand for, and interest in, the Arts, particularly the Creative Industries. We can only do this in partnership and we plan to:

- Make our English programmes and materials readily available to much larger numbers of learners, policy makers and teachers in South Asia, especially through on-line access
- Expand our work in supporting access to education opportunities for all young people
- Extend our skills work across all countries supporting the demand for vocational opportunities
- Increase our research and thought leadership work with Policy Dialogues and research in English, Education and the Arts
- Increase educational opportunities for young people through access to UK education and qualifications and by strengthening Higher Education and school systems in South Asia
- Use the Arts to build greater understanding and trust between the peoples of the UK and South Asia and to develop closer links between practitioners and policy makers
- Support the development of the next generation of leaders in South Asia in Education, the Arts, English language teaching and civil society
- South Asia is at a demographic turning point with huge opportunities and the British Council wants to be an effective partner in supporting the region and its growth through building trust and opportunity between the UK and South Asia.

## Afghanistan

### Did you know...?

Education has changed in Afghanistan.  
In the last ten years

- The number of children in primary/secondary education has increased from 1 million (10% girls) to 9.5 million (40% girls)
- The number of teachers has increased from 27,700 (virtually no females) to 200,000 (33% female)
- The number of schools has increased from 3,400 to 15,700

The British Council was first established in Afghanistan in 1964 and we have developed trust through proactive cultural relations in a country now looking to re-establish its independent nationhood.

Our vision is that by 2016, through working with today's and future Afghan leaders, we will have made an acknowledged, transformative change in the areas of English, Education and Society, and the Arts. Our strategy will involve a strong focus on leadership.

English will be our priority programme and we will look to bring about a transformational change in the provision of English teaching in Afghanistan. Programmes will thus focus on teacher training and through an ever stronger network of collaborators we will reach 16,500 of the country's estimated 45,000 English teachers. We will support the development of peer support networks in key Teacher Training Colleges and will work with the Ministry of Higher Education to lead the transition to English medium education in key universities.

We will work in partnership with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education to provide leadership training to over 1300 school heads and senior staff. We will partner with the English Premier League to provide Afghan coaches with community-based coaching skills, enabling them to reach thousands of young people.

We will look to help strengthen a democratic and tolerant space in the Arts, and promote a voice for Afghan Art and artists. Programmes will provide skills and professional development to young Afghan Arts leaders and practitioners and Arts will be used to help peaceful resolution of conflicts and promote freedom of expression.



In July 2013 twenty Afghan Premier League coaches received football and community development skills training as part of the Premier Skills training programme.

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## Bangladesh

### Did you know...?

- Bangladesh has had uninterrupted rule by female Prime Ministers since 1991. But generally progress on opportunities for women is slow. We have a significant new programme working with adolescent girls in rural communities to improve their ICT and English skills
- 50% of the population is under 30 and university enrolment has tripled over 5 years to 2.2 million. We are actively engaged with over 25% of the 96 universities in Bangladesh, supporting English language skills, bilateral research and professional development
- A moderate rise in the sea level in coastal Bangladesh over the next 40 years could create up to 20 million climate change migrants. We have pioneered a website in Bangla that explains climate science to young people through activities and films

The British Council was established in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) in 1953. Our 130 staff work in our main office and Teaching Centre in Dhaka, and in our smaller regional offices in Chittagong and Sylhet.

We work closely with the Government to share **English learning** resources with 35 million young people a year through a new network of 4,500 information centres. We provide more ways for more people to learn, practise and have access to learning English than any other organisation in Bangladesh. We offer free self-study courses and run free workshops all over Bangladesh. Our teachers are the best-qualified teachers of English and through our teaching centres, we offer the highest standard of courses leading to internationally-recognised qualifications. We provide low-cost, quality teacher training, and we increase employment opportunities for hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis by providing contextualised courses which are measurably improving their English skills.

Our **Exams** business is growing, currently enabling 50,000 candidates to sit 130,000 UK examinations annually.

Our **Arts** programme facilitates UK and Bangladeshi artists' visits for mutual learning and includes bilateral folk music workshops and concerts, young peoples' poetry collaboration, film festivals and 3 consecutive years of the Hay Literary Festival in Dhaka. We have a very successful exchange programme between the Slade School of Fine Art in London and Dhaka University, Faculty of Fine Arts.

Over the next 3 years we will start building the capacity of the Bangladesh creative economy in Fashion and Design, introduce the Graphic Novel as a new genre in Bangladesh literature and we are working with prominent UK and Bangladeshi theatre groups, and world famous facilitators, to involve Bangladeshi people with disabilities in directing and acting a major production.

Our **Schools 'Connecting Classrooms'** programme is linking some 100 Bangladesh and UK schools this year (target is 325 schools by 2015), offering professional development courses for teachers, and cross-cultural engagement for students. As a legacy of London 2012 we are introducing formal Physical Education into the curriculum of all 25,000 secondary schools in Bangladesh.



"Arts crossing physical boundaries" – a Disability Theatre Workshop with partners Graeae Theatre Company (UK) and Dhaka Theatre (Bangladesh), March 2013.

In our **Society** work we focus on youth, gender and climate change issues. We encourage young leaders to play an active role in their local communities through Social Action Projects and strong awareness of the values of global citizenship. By 2015, 7,000 young leaders and volunteers will have continued to make positive local social change throughout the country by involving 75,000 young people in community based projects. We have established a National Youth Parliament.

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## India

### Did you know...?

- The Indian education system is the biggest in the world with 40 million students due to enter Higher Education by 2020
- India has an estimated 3 million English language teachers of which British Council has reached nearly 750,000 across eleven States
- A new five-year Arts and Culture Initiative (2014–18) will build creative connections in new ways between the people of the UK and India

India and the UK are bound together by 400 years of shared history. The past offers a strong platform for rebuilding this relationship but the new “special relationship” has to be based on an equal footing, recognising the cultural nuances and current ambitions of both nations. In this context the British Council’s cultural relations work assumes special significance.

Over 600 million people in India are under 25 years old with a huge appetite for education. India desires to extend its Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education from the current 18% to 30% by 2020. This offers a massive opportunity for the UK as a leader in transnational and digital education.

UKIERI is a multi-stakeholder partnership programme funded by both Indian and the UK Governments to support educational partnerships, develop professional capacities and facilitate policy dialogues on areas of mutual interest. UKIERI has enabled 142 Higher Education Partnerships involving over 280 institutions to undertake joint research and programme delivery since 2011.

We will look to help strengthen a democratic and tolerant space in the Arts, and promote a voice for Afghan Art and artists. Programmes will provide skills and professional development to young Afghan Arts leaders and practitioners and Arts will be used to help peaceful resolution of conflicts and promote freedom of expression.

The British Council delivers high-quality English language services and we will reach 1.5m teachers over the next 3–5 years. Working through British Council teaching centres, corporate and public sector partnerships, schools and the Indian government, we reach out to millions of learners and teachers of English. Our aim is to develop a range of

partnerships that provide innovative digital English learning opportunities to young people whose economic or geographic situation gives them limited access. We also deliver more than 200,000 UK examinations in India every year and create opportunities for 2.5m young people through our work in schools and sports.

A new long-term engagement in the Arts is being planned through Re-Imagine, involving a range of Indian and UK partners. This is expected to change the nature and scale of creative collaboration between the two countries and will build on the successful showcases presented in 2013. Homelands, the largest exhibition of work from the British Council Collection, has toured to four Indian cities and the first



Students at National Council Of Educational Research and Training during an Arts Education Project, Delhi.

Impulse Dance Season demonstrated that Indian audiences are keen on contemporary dance – more than 25,000 people had the chance to see new work by five top companies from the UK. Indian States are growing in importance and in response to that the British Council library network in nine Indian cities is being re-shaped and developed further as hubs from where we will reach out to new audiences, engaging both face-to-face and digitally.

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## Iran

### Did you know...?

- Iran has a diverse and internationalised Higher Education sector, with women accounting for over 60% of students, and over 27,000 IELTS tests taken annually
- Over the last 10 years Iranian films have won more than 300 international awards
- Iran has the fastest growing scientific output of any country, with an increase in scientific publications of over 3,300% since 1996

The UK has a long history of cultural relations with Iran. Although the British Council office in Iran is temporarily closed, we are continuing to develop cultural relations in order to build mutual understanding and trust.

We support English language teachers in their professional development by providing access to resources, courses, and materials online, making accessible UK expertise and professional development opportunities from the British Council. We make available the most innovative ELT resources to learners through social media and other digital channels, where users can improve their English, find information about studying in the UK, and identify UK qualifications and examinations. We also support regional ELT conferences and promote globally the developments of best practice made by Iranian ELT practitioners.

Art continues to flourish in Iran, with a strong two-way appreciation and profound interest between UK and Iranian artists. We facilitate platforms for the manifestation of this shared interest through promoting understanding of the different arts sectors in both countries; we do this by enhancing communication and the exchange of knowledge, supporting process-led projects, and encouraging collaboration. Working with partners across the Arts sector, this year we are focusing on the four disciplines of visual arts, music, theatre, and literature.



A collaboration between London International Festival of Theatre and young performers in Tehran.

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## Nepal

### Did you know...?

- More than 20% of Nepal's GDP comes from remittances sent home by Nepalese working in other countries
- British Council Nepal is the premier provider for UK qualifications and examinations delivery, the number of UK A-Levels taken in Nepal has doubled in recent years
- 65 percent of its approx. 30 million citizens are under the age of 35 and through the DFID Global Schools Partnership project we have introduced an international dimension to education in more than 200 schools by building links with schools and Education Authorities in the UK

The British Council has been operating in Nepal since 1959, when Nepal was a relatively stable but under-developed country ruled by a monarchy. Since then there have been huge social and political changes, including the murder of most of the royal family, a 10 year Maoist insurgency, and the establishment of democratic government in 2008.

Under the British Council's 2016 Strategy we have targeted our resources on the areas where we can have most impact. These include more widespread and better quality teaching by providing state sector English teachers with an international standard of training; more widespread and better assessment by working with partners to reform the state sector learning assessment system; becoming a premier centre for professional development and cultural convention space.

We are working closely with the Ministry of Education on aspects of language policy, teacher training, and examination reform, providing individual support through our Learning Centre and offering learning opportunities to the wider population by providing access to quality English language learning by digital means.



As part of the Creativity Series, UK artist, Martina Topley-Bird fused with local band Kutumba at the World Heritage Site, Patan Durbar Square. This event drew an audience of 10,000.

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## Pakistan

### Did you know...?

- According to the United Nations, Pakistan has one of the youngest populations in the world with an estimated 126 million Pakistanis, or 70% of the population, who fall under the age of 30
- Pakistan has also been a great sporting nation. It has won world cups in Hockey, Squash, Cricket, and Snooker
- Benazir Bhutto from Pakistan became the first democratically elected female Prime Minister of a Muslim country in 1988

In Pakistan, we have been working since 1948 in the areas of Arts, Education, English and Youth Engagement in all four provinces as well as in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Our programmes in Pakistan are mainly focussed towards the youth demographic with the aim of building positive engagement between Pakistan, the UK and other countries. Our work revolves around creating international trust and understanding, improving educational opportunities, and strengthening research links between universities in Pakistan and the UK. Underpinning all this is the English language as a vehicle for international understanding and for educational opportunity.

We have provided training to over 25,000 government teachers in the last 3 years under our English Programme, while we have engaged with over 200,000 young people through our Active Citizens programme. We are promoting enterprise in Pakistan by introducing over 50,000 young people (including a large proportion of young women) from 900 technical and vocational colleges to the concept of social entrepreneurship.

We are also bringing UK qualifications to Pakistan and over the last three years we have seen steady growth in the delivery of UK exams, which now stand around 420,000 per annum.



School teacher from the UK teaching in a Pakistani classroom as part of an exchange visit under the Connecting Classrooms programme.

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## Sri Lanka

### Did you know...?

- Sri Lanka has one of the fastest growing economies in Asia with 8% growth
- 9 million viewers tuned in to watch Season 3 of The British Council's IDEATORS, a reality TV show that promotes the importance of graduate entrepreneurship in the UK and Sri Lanka
- Sri Lanka has the largest British Council Library membership in our global network with 24,000 members

The British Council has been delivering Arts, English and Education programmes for over 60 years in Sri Lanka. Each year 12,000 students learn English at one of our Teaching Centres and 34,000 examination candidates acquire a UK qualification. We train more than 2,000 English teachers annually and 1,100 public servants in conflict-affected North and East Sri Lanka.

Over 60 UK universities visited Sri Lanka last year for our annual education fair and school visits. 25 universities now offer franchised degree programmes through local partnerships and many are considering campus development in Sri Lanka.

We have partnered mobile phone content developer Z-Messenger and four leading telecommunications companies in Sri Lanka to deliver LearnEnglish material digitally through mobile phone platforms. We introduced QR codes for the first time offering digital access to a unique British Library touring exhibition, A Return to Sri Lanka.

Our work in the Arts and Creative Industries includes connecting leading UK and Sri Lankan designers and promoting creative entrepreneurship. We also work with ex-LTTE combatants and villagers from North East Sri Lanka using Forum Theatre as a tool to build social cohesion in post-conflict regions.

The British Council will deliver a range of activities around the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka in November 2013, particularly to engage young people and to celebrate Commonwealth values, as well as launching the 'Commonwealth Class' school linking project in Sri Lanka.

Our office premises in Colombo are currently being refurbished following a major investment to upgrade our services and facilities. We will also be opening a new branch in Jaffna at the end of 2013.



Performance by British Council's Forum Theatre group 'Shakthi' comprising young Sinhalese and Tamil people emerging from post-conflict communities in Sri Lanka.

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