

# The Missing Pillar

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**Culture's Contribution to the UN  
Sustainable Development Goals**





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# Foreword

2020 marks five years since the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the fifteen-year plan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was adopted by its 193 members (including the UK). There are now only ten years left to do so. This is a moment for the British Council to reflect on its contribution to the response to global challenges, and its alignment with global policies and frameworks.

The British Council has recently launched its strategy for the next five years encompassing our vision, mission, values and offer areas of work. Strategy 2025 demonstrates our ambition to support the delivery of the SDGs as part of our shared values, ensuring that the UK sits at the heart of global efforts to improve lives and protect our planet. We believe in the value of education, civil society, arts and culture to respond to local and global challenges, and that cultural relations offers an approach to drive that response. With growing recognition for our work in cultural relations and strong partnerships around the world, the British Council is well positioned to champion the impact of our work in the field of culture and sustainable development.

The Missing Pillar – Culture’s Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals highlights the evident links between culture and development. This report provides the rationale for why arts and culture are important in the development context, identifies ways in which arts and cultural programmes and initiatives can and do contribute to the SDGs, and what the key themes and recommendations are to focus and improve on. It provides a starting point for positioning culture as the missing pillar of development in the UK, and at a European and global level.

In the face of global events such as COVID-19 pandemic, it is all the more important to rally together towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and valuing our culture and heritage to secure a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous future.

I would like to thank Nordicity for their research and mapping; our Culture and Development team and the Research and Evidence teams for making this research happen; and colleagues and partners in the arts and development sectors around the world delivering such meaningful and impactful work.

Mark Stephens  
Director Cultural Engagement  
British Council



# Response from United Cities and Local Governments

## **We need to strengthen the narratives that connect culture and the SDGs**

Culture shapes the way we understand our lives and the meaning we make of them, and it lies therefore at the basis of any notion of people-centred development. Furthermore, participation in cultural life, the safeguarding and renewal of heritage, creative expression, and the celebration and discovery of diversity, among others, are integral to lives worth living.

They may also contribute to the achievement of policy goals in areas such as economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

This research and mapping undertaken by Nordicity for the British Council provides extensive evidence of this connection between culture and sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We welcome this initiative and want to commend both the British Council and Nordicity for the excellent contribution that the report makes to our knowledge on the relation between culture and the SDGs and how to make it effective through action on the ground. As the authors suggest, there is a need to strengthen the narratives connecting culture and the SDGs, and this report serves this purpose very well.

Several of the report's findings and recommendations are strongly aligned with the work of the Committee on Culture of the global network of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Among them is the need to engage communities, develop participatory approaches and draw on local knowledge in order to foster sustainable development and achieve the SDGs. Other critical conclusions include the need to improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and information systems more broadly, and the importance of conducting longitudinal work, since positive results require long-term efforts.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how cultural participation is essential to people's lives, and therefore, the urgency of the tasks described above to guarantee that culture is not missed in the policies and programmes for the recovery.

It is also particularly important to highlight, as the report does, that broader coordination of stakeholders from different sectors and levels of government is required in order to foster policy innovation and enhance our understanding of the connection between culture and the SDGs.

Indeed, building stronger, more diverse partnerships and fostering learning are key to achieving progress in this area in the coming years. It should be noted that, whereas the 2030 Agenda was signed by national governments at the UN, its implementation relies on contributions from local, regional and national governments, international organisations and development agencies, civil society organisations, and the private sector. Mutual recognition and collaboration are therefore essential. In the field of culture in particular (and mainly because there is not a stand-alone Goal on culture), stronger partnerships will be essential to enhance understanding and to improve policymaking and project delivery.

Since 2004, the Committee on Culture of UCLG has been working to foster the recognition of how culture and cultural policies are critical to achieving sustainable development, through policy development, awareness-raising, capacity-building, research and advocacy. Addressing global agendas such as the SDGs is central to this. In partnership with several other global and regional networks, in the years preceding the adoption of the SDGs, UCLG campaigned to ensure that culture would be given its due place under the banner 'The Future We Want Includes Culture' (#culture2015goal). Whereas the resulting SDGs fall short of our expectations, we remain convinced that cultural aspects are necessary to achieve progress in many areas, even where the 2030 Agenda fails to make such connections explicit.

Reports such as this can contribute to rendering the implicit connection between culture and other areas of sustainable development more visible. They also show that, even though cultural organisations do not always use the language of sustainable development, their work is clearly relevant in this area. In the long run, we believe more comprehensive, holistic agendas are needed, in which culture is given a more prominent position, recognising both its contribution to the achievement of economic, social or environmental goals and the inherent value that heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge have for lives worth living. As the authors suggest, this may require developing more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which combine quantitative and qualitative aspects. Very often, the meaning of culture for sustainable development is difficult to narrow down to individual targets – it should rather be understood as enabling forms of participation and meaning-making, generating a setting in which communities can achieve their goals. This also serves to reinforce the importance of acting at the local level and 'localising' the SDGs, something which UCLG actively advocates.

We are honoured to have been asked to write this response and encourage the British Council, as well as other arts and cultural organisations and development agencies, to draw inspiration from the examples and recommendations presented.

Over the last few decades, a more complex understanding of development has emerged, introducing aspects related to education, health, the environment, gender, and human rights, among others. Each of these steps has required the engagement of many stakeholders active at different levels. Similarly, there is a space for stronger engagement and collaboration to give culture its due place in all approaches to sustainable development.

Emilia Saiz

Secretary General

United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG



# Introduction

The Missing Pillar – Culture’s Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals highlights the importance of culture to the UN’s Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides an overview of the main frameworks and institutions that currently engage with the SDGs, analyses the SDGs through a cultural lens, offers examples of relevant British Council programmes, and sets out recommendations for the arts and culture sector to demonstrate the value of arts and culture to sustainable development.

This report is a summary of the research and mapping carried out by Nordicity on behalf of the British Council,<sup>1</sup> drawing upon desk research and interviews with British Council staff in consultation with three external advisors.<sup>2</sup> The findings of this report are of particular interest to policymakers, public bodies, cultural organisations, international development organisations, and local authorities. It can inform policies, programme development and delivery, funding mechanisms, research and evidence gathering and contribute to strengthening the cultural sector in the sustainable development agenda. The British Council plans to carry out a follow up research exercise in the near future to explore the progress made and the evidence to support culture’s contribution to the SDGs.

## Methodology

Nordicity carried out four distinct steps: a literature review; a mapping exercise of British Council programmes in the sector; the development of case studies; and an analysis phase to generate recommendations for both the British Council and the wider cultural sector. The project Team undertook a four-phase mixed methods approach, centred on an extensive document review which includes external reports from a variety of sources and programme documentation from the British Council. In addition, the project team carried out key informant interviews with British Council staff.

The report examines the relevant goals, targets and indicators and their correlation with culture, based on an analysis of the British Council’s programmes around the world. The purpose of this analysis was to identify how the British Council and the wider cultural sector responds to specific goals through a cultural lens and the benefit of this to achieve the given goals, targets and indicators.

## Section I — Culture and Sustainable Development: a literature review

In order to provide baseline evidence on culture’s contribution to the UN SDGs, Nordicity carried out a robust review of international literature by academic institutions and cultural organisations, including the British Council. The literature describes how culture can play a powerful role in working towards the SDGs, directly and indirectly, with a focus on contributing to positive social and economic outcomes via education, protecting and promoting tangible and intangible heritage, as well as digital engagement and technologies.

## Section II — Analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals through the British Council programmes

The report examines the relevant goals, targets and indicators and their correlation with culture, based on an analysis of the British Council’s programmes around the world. The purpose of this analysis was to identify how the British Council and the wider cultural sector responds to specific goals through a cultural lens and the benefit of this to achieve the given goals, targets and indicators. All SDGs and their associated targets and indicators were reviewed to identify which ones could be seen to be most relevant to arts and culture.

A formal mapping exercise was then conducted in which 15 British Council programmes were analysed and mapped to specific SDG goals, targets and indicators. In addition to programmes, the research also presented a list of themes where culture contributes to the SDGs including education, cultural heritage, positive social outcomes, technology, and gender.

The mapping highlighted 11 SDGs that are relevant to the British Council programmes, and the associated targets and indicators for these goals that the organisation is making a direct or indirect contribution towards. It also identified some of the key goals, targets and indicators that the organisation has the potential to contribute towards through its cultural relations mission and global network. Case studies have been included against several of the SDGs, although each programme analysed responds to more than one SDG in line with their cross-cutting nature.



### Section III — Recommendations

The report outlines recommendations for how cultural contributions towards sustainable development could be captured – and increased – more effectively. Overall, nine recommendations emerged from the research and analysis for incorporating the SDGs into arts and culture programmes and measuring culture’s contribution to the SDGs. These recommendations are both relevant to the British Council and to the wider sector, and have been collated and summarised in the report.

- Adopt the language of the SDGs.
- Develop training programmes that highlight the role of arts and culture in the SDGs.
- Work with community members and partners in developing, delivering and evaluating cultural initiatives.
- Advocate for specific outcomes that respond to individual SDGs through arts and culture.
- Select key targets and indicators to mainstream throughout projects.
- Collect baseline data to better monitor impact and recognise the need for longitudinal evaluations.
- Monitor stakeholder, media and digital engagement.
- Leverage digital technologies to increase engagement with the SDGs.
- Address climate change as a cross-cutting theme.

# Section I — Culture and Sustainable Development Goals: a literature review

## What are the SDGs?

With the adoption of the 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 169 associated targets in 2015, the international community committed to a broad and universal policy agenda that seeks to strengthen the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

From 2000 to 2015, the global development agenda was guided by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).<sup>4</sup> Whilst the MDGs engaged with crucial issues and the inequality between the Global North and the Global South, one of the key lessons learned from the MDGs is that 'one size does not fit all' – different cultural perspectives demand different paths to development.<sup>5</sup> The SDGs introduce a new paradigm where development is a collective journey, and that all cultures, civilisations and countries can contribute to and benefit from sustainable development.<sup>6</sup> They allow the international community to increase the breadth of certain issues and to look at the contributing factors to other areas, demonstrating the complexity and cross-cutting nature of many of today's global challenges. The 2030 Agenda seeks to support countries and stakeholders in transforming their approach to working towards inclusive, people-centred sustainable development,<sup>7</sup> by identifying critical thematic areas, universal targets and, through SDG 17, endorsing collaboration at a local, national and international level.<sup>8</sup>

Together, the SDGs integrate and balance the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental. However, from the perspective of UNESCO and many other cultural actors, culture is a 'missing pillar' of sustainability.

## What is the UK's position on the SDGs?

The UK played an important role in the development of the SDGs, and it is one of 47 countries that volunteered to present its Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019.<sup>10</sup> The UK VNR refers at several points to the SDGs as a 'collective agenda', one that is grounded in global understanding and solidarity. Indeed, in reference to Target 10.3 and South Asian countries, the report notes the role of aid and trade relationships and other diplomatic and cultural links, and how these 'create collective responsibility'.

The arts have the potential to contribute to the development of this sense of understanding, as well as provide a way in which to facilitate collaboration.

At the same time, Bond, the UK's network for organisations working in international development, carried out a review of the UK's global contribution to the SDGs. The review suggests that the UK faces challenges with regards to implementation, with contradictory policies and programming goals.<sup>11</sup> It advocates for a local civil society-led approach, shared ownership and collaboration between the UK government, international civil society and other stakeholders. It also calls for "the UK [to] do more to ensure the content of its own VNR and any actions following the HLPF are directed by the perspectives and approaches of local civil society, especially in the Global South where the UK is investing the most to deliver the SDGs".<sup>12</sup>

The British Council has notably contributed to the UK VNR,<sup>13</sup> indicating progress on achieving the SDGs at home and overseas, and reaffirming its commitment to the 2030 Agenda more broadly. The British Council also presented its cultural relations approach, inclusive growth agenda and case studies of a number of programmes at the UN High Level Thematic Debate on Culture and Sustainable Development in May 2019, held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/229 of December 2017, and in partnership with UNESCO.

In 2016, the British Council commissioned Collingwood Environment Planning (CEP) to conduct a baseline assessment of how the British Council contributes to the achievement of a sub-set of ten SDGs. The report highlights that the SDGs' emphasis on national governments defining relevant targets and indicators has the benefit of enabling countries to translate the goals into targets and indicators relevant to their own realities, thus promoting national ownership.<sup>14</sup> It also proposed that the British Council should take the lead in outlining appropriate indicators for UK international development efforts.<sup>15</sup> Following the recommendations of CEP, this report was commissioned to outline recommendations for how specifically arts and culture can contribute towards sustainable development and how this impact could be captured – and increased – more effectively.



DICE fund collaboration project between ZU-UK and La Da Favelinha.  
©Garota Hacker

Lá da Favelinha is a cultural centre in Agglomerado da Serra, Brazil. The centre offers free creative classes to local youngsters and pays for the services of more than 70 independent creative professionals who are making a living there as micro entrepreneurs. Pictured is the end of a fashion show by Remexe, a fashion label supported by a DICE Collaboration grant that specialises in upcycling genderless fashion and is led by LGBTQ+ and non-white women.

## What is the link between Culture and sustainable development?

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defines culture as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.’<sup>16</sup>

Culture and international development have long been recognised as having a reciprocal and interdependent relationship that has evolved over the last 30 years.<sup>17</sup> J.P. Singh’s study, ‘Culture and International Development: Towards an Interdisciplinary Methodology’, commissioned by the British Council, provides an outline of the history on this topic.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the 19th century, development efforts were guided by industrialisation and Keynesian ideas that became salient with international organisations, development agencies and developing country governments.<sup>19</sup> Until the 1980s, culture was ignored in the technocratic and neo-liberal economic models that contributed to the development efforts by post-war institutions, such as the World Bank or bilateral aid agencies. Over recent decades, culture has gained increasing recognition within international development discourse with particular emphasis on the concept of sustainability,<sup>20</sup> its positive impact on individuals and communities, and as a way to contribute to wider social and economic aspects of development.<sup>21</sup>

UNESCO has played a critical role in promoting and advocating culture as an important dimension of sustainable development, shifting international development discourse from an economic perspective to include social and environmental perspectives as well. The 2005 ‘Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression’, for example, was the first standard-setting instrument that linked culture and sustainable development at the heart of rights and obligations of Parties.<sup>22</sup> In particular, the Convention aimed to integrate culture as a strategic dimension,<sup>23</sup> including within international and national development plans, thereby ensuring the emergence of dynamic cultural sectors around the world.<sup>24</sup>

UNESCO has long asserted that strategies to achieve sustainable development need to be people-centred, whereby culture is a key driver of people’s participation, ownership and creativity:

‘By safeguarding cultural heritage in all its forms, both tangible and intangible; promoting the diversity of cultural expressions; ensuring access to cultural spaces, infrastructure and institutions; and protecting the rights of all peoples to enjoy and share their culture free from fear, people are rightly placed at the heart of local and national strategies for sustainable development.’<sup>25</sup>

As highlighted in a recent study by UNESCO, many countries have begun to view culture as an asset in eradicating poverty, addressing social inclusion and inequality, and creating economic growth.<sup>26</sup> Not only can culture renew and create economic opportunities, it can also boost

innovation, entrepreneurship, and employment. Enhanced trade in cultural goods and services strengthens local and national markets and can contribute to the empowerment and inclusion of all people, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.<sup>27</sup>

In the UK, the ‘Culture White Paper’ from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport emphasises that culture creates huge benefits by providing a better quality of life and well-being within local communities.<sup>28</sup> To highlight the impact of the arts and culture in the development sector, the British Council commissioned the Change Collective to write a thought piece, ‘Arts, Culture and Development – The Tricky Balancing Act’. The Change Collective emphasises that both the development and art sectors are beginning to embrace the idea of doing things differently, and that a more socially-engaged artistic practice can add real value to the development world. Within the context of the development sector, the arts contribute to addressing divisive narratives, fostering human experiences, supporting skills development and building empowerment.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the British Council has explored the notion of Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth, recognising the role of cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) in sustainable development more broadly.<sup>30</sup> It has also explored the relevance of the Cultural Protection Fund (managed by the British Council in partnership with the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) to the SDGs in its annual report in 2018-2019.<sup>31</sup>

## Where is culture in the SDGs?

Even though the SDGs did not include culture as a stand-alone goal, the resulting 2030 Agenda includes several explicit references to aspects of culture. Throughout the 2030 Agenda, culture is integrated in a cross-cutting manner across the various goals and targets. The preamble of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that: ‘We (...) recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are, crucial enablers, of sustainable development.’<sup>32</sup>

## The following targets are noteworthy:<sup>33</sup>

Target 4.7 refers to the aim to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for global citizenship and the appreciation of cultural diversity, and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

Target 8.3 addresses the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities as well as, among others, creativity and innovation.

Targets 8.9 and 12.b refer to the need to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through local culture and products, and to the need to develop suitable monitoring tools in this area.

Target 11.4 highlights the need to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage.

Despite the limitations of Agenda 2030 when it comes to culture, the SDGs open a new way for more culturally-sensitive approaches to achieve better development outcomes and integrate culture into policies for social and economic inclusion and environmental sustainability.

### **How is culture and the SDGs perceived by the culture sector and policymakers?**

Although culture has long been recognised as a crucial element in international development and social impact work,<sup>34</sup> its contribution has long been undervalued.<sup>35</sup> In recent years, there have been intense efforts from UNESCO and a number of regional and global civil society and cultural organisations to integrate culture into the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda.<sup>36</sup>

In the cultural sector, a campaign was developed for #culture2015goal including a number of European and international cultural organisations and think tanks, led by UCLG Agenda 21 for Culture. Building on these commitments, the campaign has recently been relaunched and rebranded #culture2030goal, and a report has been published entitled: “Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda”, including key messages and recommendations on the role that culture is playing (and should play) in the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>37</sup>

In seeking to incorporate culture into the 2030 sustainable development agenda, UNESCO commissioned a thematic think piece in 2012 highlighting that not only can cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism and cultural infrastructure be drivers of economic growth, they can also lead to social and environmental benefits such as greater social inclusiveness, resilience, innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship for individuals and communities through the use of local resources, skills, and knowledge.<sup>38</sup> UNESCO hosted a series of conferences concluding that the post-2015 agenda should include a specific goal focused on culture accompanied by relevant targets and indicators.<sup>39</sup> This led to the Florence Declaration that explicitly argued that the ‘core principles and priorities to be included in the elaboration process of the post-2015 development agenda’ should fully integrate culture into sustainable development strategies and policies at every level.<sup>40</sup>

After the 2030 Agenda was adopted, in 2017, UNESCO claimed that culture could contribute directly to many of the SDGs relating not only to education, but also economic growth, the reduction of inequalities, the protection of the environment, the promotion of gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies.<sup>41</sup> On 21 May 2019, the UN General Assembly and UNESCO held a high-level debate on culture and sustainable development in New York. The event’s objectives were to highlight the connection between culture and environmental challenges, to debate the role of culture in the achievement of the SDGs, and to demonstrate how culture, artistic education, and creative industries contribute

to development.<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, UNESCO gathered 120 ministers of Culture on 18 November 2019,<sup>43</sup> where they launched their thematic indicators on Culture for the 2030 Agenda.<sup>44</sup>

Following the adoption of 2030 Agenda, the European Union (EU) developed The New European Consensus on Development in 2017 to align its development policy with the SDGs. Paragraph 35 of the Consensus explicitly recognises culture as an important enabler of sustainable development, and asserts that the Union and its Member States ‘will promote intercultural dialogue and cooperation and cultural diversity, and will protect cultural heritage, boost the cultural and creative industries and will support cultural policies where these would help achieve sustainable development.’<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, in the mandate of the new College of Commissioners, the President Ursula Van der Leyen made clear that “Each Commissioner will ensure the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals within their policy area. The College as a whole will be responsible for the overall implementation of the Goals.”<sup>46</sup> A recent reflection paper “Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030” also recognised that the EU should “harness the full potential of education, training and culture as drivers for job creation, economic growth and social fairness”.<sup>47</sup> This renewed approach paves the way for the mainstreaming of the SDGs in European policymaking, and for culture’s role to be acknowledged.

The Cultural Affairs Committee of the Council of the European Union has recently approved a Resolution on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development.<sup>48</sup> It encourages EU Member States to exchange best practices, consult with the cultural sector, and include culture in their Voluntary National Reviews of the SDGs. It also calls on the European Commission to prepare an action plan on the cultural dimension of sustainable development for the EU’s implementation strategy for the 2030 Agenda.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has recently set up a Culture and Local Development team as part of the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE). In December 2018, they organised their first International Conference on Unleashing the Transformative Power of Culture and Creativity for Local Development, in partnership with the European Commission, UNESCO, Fondazione di Venezia, Città di Venezia (key partners), British Council, CoopCulture, European Creative Business Network — EBRD, and International Council of Museums — ICOM (partners).<sup>49</sup> The conference brought together representatives from government local authorities, the development sector, the arts and heritage sector, academics, researchers, Italian government and students. The main themes of the conference were centred around the role of creativity and culture for economic growth, wellbeing, social inclusion, and civic engagement. There was a focus on gathering data, creating jobs, developing skills, valuing cultural heritage, boosting innovation and finding digital solutions.

## Findings of the literature review

Despite the growing recognition of the role culture plays in sustainable development, there is a significant gap in the literature on the implementation of the SDGs through a cultural lens. Culture is only mentioned directly once in the SDGs in the context of cultural heritage under SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities. This calls for a need to create precise tools, including targets and indicators, in order to advance and evidence culture's contribution towards each dimension of sustainable development.

Whilst there is ongoing research in the development and implementation of such tools, precise SDG targets and indicators would be necessary for advancing and evidencing the role of culture in contributing to each of the dimensions of sustainable development. Furthermore, little consistency exists in how the public, private and non-governmental sectors can monitor and evaluate their own progress in applying culture to development-oriented initiatives (or vice versa). This variance is in part due to different cultural values, norms, worldviews and application of culture-driven policy and programmes in local contexts.<sup>50</sup>

The monitoring and evaluation of the value of culture in achieving the SDGs will require broader coordination of relevant public authorities from different sectors and levels of government so as to provide a basis for policy innovation in using culture as a 'driver' and 'enabler' in sustainable development.<sup>51</sup>





Cultural Protection Fund, Iraq  
©Rashad Salim

The Ark for Iraq project is revitalising and documenting the endangered watercraft heritage of traditional boats in central and southern Iraq. Pictured is a Shasha reed bundle boat on the Euphrates.

# Section II — Analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals through a cultural lens

Based on the literature review, Nordicity identified several key thematic areas that connect arts and culture with several of the SDGs: education, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, social development, gender equality, and technology. The crosscutting nature of the SDGs and of culture means that there is no “one size fits all” and there are connections to be made between thematic areas.

The below section examines the relevant goals, targets and indicators and their correlation with culture, to identify in more detail how to respond to specific goals through a cultural lens and the benefit of this to achieve the given goal, targets and indicators.

A total of 15 British Council arts and cultural programmes were mapped to the SDGs, including their related targets and indicators.

**These programmes have been captured as examples under each of the SDGs where they are responding directly or indirectly to the related targets.**

Based on the 15 British Council programmes analysed, 11 goals were deemed to be particularly relevant. This list is not exhaustive, and other SDGs can be seen to be relevant to arts and culture initiatives, particularly those focusing on planet as identified in the recommendations.

SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

SDG10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries.

SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.



Nordicity’s research largely focuses on the ‘goal’ and ‘targets’ level of the SDGs, though consideration is also given to the indicators. The analysis consisted in reviewing all of the targets for a given goal to identify which appeared to be relevant to arts and cultural initiatives, and which targets and indicators the British Council is already contributing to or able to report on through the selected programmes.

This analysis of the individual SDGs is presented alongside case studies of British Council programmes aligned with those goals.

According to Nordicity’s research, the table below outlines which targets and indicators were deemed as directly or indirectly relevant to the 11 SDGs analysed, and those that were not deemed to be relevant.

SDGs <sup>52</sup>	Direct relevance	Indirect relevance	Not relevant
SDG 1	1.1, 1.2 (1.1.1, 1.2.1 and 1.2.2), 1.4, 1.5, 1.a (1.a.3), 1.b		Indicators for 1.4, 1.5, 1.b
SDG 3	3.9		Indicators for 3.9
SDG 4	4.3 (4.3.1), 4.4, 4.5 (4.5.1), 4.7	4.4.1, 4.6 (4.6.1), 4.7.1, 4.c	
SDG 5	5.1, 5.2, 5.5 (5.5.1), 5.b, 5.c		Indicators for 5.1, 5.2, 5.b, 5.c
SDG 8	8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.9, 8.9.2	8.2.1, 8.3.1, 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.6.1, 8.9.1	
SDG 9	9.3	9.b, 9.c	
SDG 10	10.1, 10.2, 10.2.1, 10.7	10.7.1, 10.3 and 10.b	10.1.1
SDG 11	11.3, 11.4, 11.7, 11.a, 11.c		Indicators for 11.7
SDG 12	12.a, 12.b, 12.b.1		Indicator for 12.5
SDG 16	16.7, 16.7.2	16.6	Indicators for 16.6
SDG 17	17.3, 17.6, 17.7, 17.9, 17.9.1, 17.16, 17.17, 17.17.1	17.7.1, 17.16.1,	Indicators for 17.6

# SDG 1: No poverty



## Background

The first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 1) is one of the broadest and all-encompassing goals. Calling for an end to poverty in all its manifestations by 2030, it underpins the wider SDG project. Although the number of people living in extreme poverty more than halved between 1990 and 2015, with the Millennium Development Goals contributing to this significant reduction, many people worldwide continue to struggle with lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. This leads to suffering from hunger and malnutrition; limited access to education and other basic services; social discrimination and exclusion; and a lack of participation in decision-making.<sup>53</sup>

SDG 1 makes it clear that the momentum in poverty reduction is expected to keep growing and recognises a greater diversity of indicators and causes of poverty. Within this goal and the associated targets and indicators, a wide range of social issues are addressed, including welfare, discrimination and the ownership of natural resources. The goal aims to ensure social protection for the poor and vulnerable, increasing access to basic services, technology, and to support people harmed by climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.<sup>54</sup>

## Link to culture

Culture has the potential to address the economic and social dimensions of poverty and fight against it. Arts and cultural engagement can broaden the opportunities for and agency of vulnerable groups, foster resilience, enable citizen participation and community empowerment, enable intercultural dialogue, and advocate for equal rights. As the most rapidly expanding economic sectors in industrialised and developing countries, the cultural and creative industries make a direct contribution to poverty reduction by generating income, creating employment and supporting marginalised individuals and groups with safe and accessible creative spaces within which to contribute to the economic and social development of their societies.<sup>55</sup>

Support for arts and cultural activities can play a key role in addressing some of the aspects of poverty reduction included in the scope of SDG 1, such as skill development, sustainable and inclusive growth and employability. The cultural and creative industries, cultural tourism and the safeguarding of cultural heritage are powerful drivers of poverty reduction, sustainable economic growth, and job creation.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the arts and culture sector is well positioned to bring socially contentious issues into the public sphere, prompting wider discussions, activism, advocacy and change.

SDG 1 is relevant to a vast array of programmes delivered in the arts and cultural sector; however, it could be said that the links are not always clearly articulated. Given the broad scope of SDG 1, there could be a significant opportunity to align British Council programmes more closely with this SDG.

# Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth

## Case study

Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth is an action research programme currently taking place in Vietnam, Colombia and Kenya.<sup>57</sup> It aims to ensure cultural heritage in its widest sense is valued and is of social and economic benefit across society. The programme explores this global concept with local solutions, taking a people-centred ethos and providing an enabling environment for inclusive growth, based on understanding of local contexts and an appreciation of cultural diversity. UK and local partnerships include libraries, museums, communities, universities, training centres, festivals, ministries, local authorities, and funding bodies. Through the focus on cross-society collaboration, skills development and social engagement in cultural heritage, the programme may ultimately play a role in reducing poverty and leaving no one behind.

**In Colombia**, Sembrando Nuestros Saberes is working with six indigenous communities to recover and strengthen their cultural heritage, providing opportunities for cultural survival, sustainability and welfare. Community assemblies, field visits, cultural heritage mapping and documentation, tailored intergenerational workshops and research projects are being developed and delivered with elders for capacity building and protection. Additional programme themes include ethno-ecotourism, creative economy and working with stakeholders and allies across society. The communities have also taken part in the national *Expoartesanas* craft fair and an international symposium to share learning, exchange, and increase the visibility and understanding of cultural heritage.

**In Vietnam**, Heritage of Future Past seeks to protect and revitalise the country's music and film heritage that is under-represented or at risk of disappearing. Working with ethnic minority and rural groups, the Community Cultural Heritage strand focuses on education, conservation, community-based tourism, research, and documentation to safeguard and build local capacity in communities. The second strand, Film-Archive-Music Lab (FAMLAB), connects these communities with artists, creative practitioners and institutions through contemporary practices, experimentation and innovation. To raise awareness of the value of this cultural heritage, the project engages with policymakers and audiences through open consultation and high-level discussions.

**In Kenya**, #CultureGrows aims to increase visibility, ownership, accessibility, inclusivity and transmission of cultural heritage by promoting contemporary practice, youth participation and technology. With partners Book Bunk, the project revives an old colonial library and community spaces as centres of culture, learning and engagement. In collaboration with African Digital Heritage, Mount Kenya University and University of West of Scotland, training programmes provide technical and transferable skills to individuals and organisations. With HEVA East Africa Fund, seed grants have supported and stimulated those at the forefront of promoting cultural heritage to share Kenya's stories. A symposium helped facilitate exchanges across society and East Africa grass-root-level and governmental initiatives.

Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day (indirect).

Target 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions (indirect)

Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance (indirect).

Target 1.A: Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions (direct).

Other relevant SDGs: 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17.



Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth, Kenya. ©Afro Films International Ltd Harriet Ng'ok from Harriet's Botanicals developing traditional herbal products with her community.

# SDG 3: Good health and well-being



## Background

SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages. The goal combines three Millennium Development Goals that focused on issues that particularly affect countries in the Global South: reducing childhood mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Some of these previous goals have now been given specific targets within SDG 3; however, the new goal incorporates a broader spectrum of illnesses and health conditions. These include mental health (Target 3.4) and addiction (Target 3.5). By recognising the role that accidents and pollution can play in deaths, as well as the importance of education and information for both consumers and healthcare professionals, there is an attempt to treat health as a broad topic that cannot be isolated from the other SDGs.

## Link to culture

The benefit of arts for mental health and for wider aspects of wellbeing is clearly documented. In the UK, for example, Public Health England has developed a specific evaluation named 'Arts for health and well-being'.<sup>58</sup> Aesop (Arts enterprise with a social purpose) and BOP Consulting have published the 'Active Ingredients' report on arts interventions in health and social contexts. It emphasises that "there is something particular – some property, some dynamic – in the arts experience itself which enables certain outcomes to occur and which are inseparable from the experience".<sup>59</sup>

The more comprehensive approach to health and wellbeing that SDG 3 puts forward offers numerous opportunities for arts and culture programmes to be part of the global health agenda. The arts can be used to communicate important information in innovative and effective ways. In order to respond to this SDG 3, programmes would need to be designed around specific targets or indicators to advocate for or engage with certain topics or issues. To have greater impact, participants must be involved in the early stages of programme development to ensure that issues are dealt with in an appropriate and sensitive manner in a participant-led way.

The most relevant targets are those focused on prevention, promotion and access where arts and cultural interventions could contribute to awareness-raising.

# Golden Thread

## Case study

Golden Thread was a British Council-led programme from 2015 to 2016.<sup>60</sup> It was part of the 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. 14 projects in developing countries were funded to facilitate change at an individual, community and societal level through arts and creativity.

The projects aimed to strengthen artists, individuals and communities' sense of wellbeing through self expression, self awareness, and building social and cultural capital. To achieve this, projects focused on encouraging a feeling of accomplishment, on developing new forms of communication, and on exploring personal and collective identities, which can all contribute to greater wellbeing.

For organisational wellbeing, the programme focused on sustainability by strengthening their skills and capacity, and by developing international networks and long-term partnerships. Many of the projects continued beyond the lifetime of the programme, and the approach has been embedded in country and regional strategies within the British Council.

3.4: By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and wellbeing (indirect).

Other relevant SDGs: 1, 4, 5, 11, 16, 17.



Say it through Breakdancing, Tunisia  
©British Council

# SDG 4: Quality education



## Background

SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive access to quality education and training, and to promote lifelong learning and access to professional teaching qualifications. The goal's ambition is that all girls and boys will have access to quality early childhood development, and can complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education.

The breadth of SDG 4 represents a much deeper and more nuanced engagement with the question of education than in the Millennium Development Goals, which aimed to achieve universal primary education. Despite enormous progress over the past decades in improving access, progress has been tough in some developing regions due to high levels of poverty, armed conflict, and other emergencies. Children from the poorest households are up to four times more likely to be out of school than those of the richest households.<sup>61</sup>

The SDGs reflect the global community's acknowledgement that simply attending school, or in some cases simply being registered as a primary school student, is not sufficient. Through its 10 targets, SDG 4 seeks to ensure all people have equal access to tertiary education, and to increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for employment.<sup>62</sup> The goal highlights key areas of inequity in the current provision, addressing gender, access to early childhood education, disability access, education for indigenous communities and access to technological facilities.

## Link to culture

Education is an important lens through which the arts and culture sector can engage with the SDGs. SDG4 provides specific routes to make these connections through training and capacity building, awareness-raising and cultural diversity. In particular, target 4.7 focuses on education for sustainable development with a clear indication of the role that culture plays in the achievement of the SDGs.

'Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.'

SDG 4 is likely to be most effective when educational systems take the particularities of culture, place and community into consideration in line with Target 4.7. Incorporating culture into educational models helps to ensure that the system is adapted to contemporary needs, preparing young people for life in a globalised and multicultural society. This approach can take different forms, such as improving access to and participation in culture within schools and informal education sectors; the promotion of artistic education, creative and technological abilities for learning, attainment and skills development; and supporting cultural activities and educational curricula designed by artists and cultural institutions.<sup>63</sup> The cultural sector also regularly promotes cultural diversity and spaces for intercultural dialogue, for example through exhibitions profiling different cultures or practices and by engaging with diverse communities.

Highlighting the SDGs in cultural initiatives could help respond to target 4.7 and engender a wider appreciation of the role that culture plays in sustainable development. In addition, the development of specific training and skills programmes that highlight the importance of arts and culture in progressing towards the SDGs would respond clearly to SDG 4, linking culture with education for sustainable development.

# Creative Enterprise Programme

## Case study

The Creative Enterprise Programme (CEP) developed from a long-standing partnership between the British Council and Nesta to meet an emerging need to better support those in the growing global creative economy.<sup>64</sup> Designed to adapt to regional contexts and respond to local demand, CEP promotes the growth of the creative economy by working with entrepreneurs, creative industry advocates, creative organisations, partners and public bodies to increase awareness and strengthen local arts ecosystems.

At its core, CEP is a three-day capacity building workshop that brings Nesta's Creative Enterprise Toolkit to life. It provides knowledge sharing and exchange through quality enterprise training and networking opportunities for creative entrepreneurs; the programme supports them to increase their confidence and to be more aware of how to develop and grow their businesses for sustainability. Between November 2016 and February 2020, 1500 entrepreneurs have taken part in 87 workshops in 43 cities across 25 countries.

Target 4.3: 'By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university' (direct).

Indicator 4.3.1: 'Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex' (direct).

Target 4.4: 'By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship' (direct).

Other relevant SDGs: 8, 11, 17.



Creative Enterprise Programme  
Dakar, Senegal, ©Nesta

Designer Selly Raby Kane and rapper Nix at the first Creative Enterprise Programme workshop, speaking to participants about their respective creative journeys.

# SDG 5: Gender equality



## Background

SDG 5 aims to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls and eliminate all forms of violence and other harmful practices against them in the public and private spheres. Furthering women's empowerment and achieving gender equality are central to ending extreme poverty and ensuring inclusive and equitable development.<sup>65</sup> As such, the Goal seeks to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic, and public life. Moreover, it sets targets of ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.<sup>66</sup>

This is an evolution of Millennium Development Goal 3, which looked to 'promote gender equality and empower women'. In this case, the SDG takes a much clearer position, which is evident in targets that tackle specific aspects of gender inequality. This SDG is particularly important given ongoing political and sociological questions globally with regards to women's empowerment, gender-based discrimination and violence, and sexual harassment.

While the gap in economic empowerment between men and women remains high in both developed and developing countries, culture can help broaden income-generating opportunities for women and girls to take part in the cultural and creative industries within their communities.<sup>67</sup> The increased linkages between cultural activities and economic gain offer women improved employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, enhance their capabilities in employability and entrepreneurship, and allow women to advance in other sectors as well, such as education.<sup>68</sup>

## Link to culture

SDG 5 is relevant to a wide range of programmes and projects in the arts and cultural sector, as culture can contribute to furthering women's empowerment and gender equality. Understanding the socio-cultural context and fostering cultural participation is critical in order to increase resilience, reduce vulnerabilities and address gender-based violence<sup>69</sup> to achieve gender equality.<sup>70</sup> Gender relations are critical in the transmission of cultural knowledge and skills, the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage, the promotion of equal rights and access to cultural life, and the emergence and strengthening of the cultural and creative industries.<sup>71</sup>

It should be recognised that existing societal and cultural norms do also contribute to ongoing gender discrimination and sexual harassment, and that existing social paradigms can be reinforced by the arts sector (#MeToo movement), cultural practices and beliefs that have an oppressive effect on women and girls or the LGBT+ community. However, alongside more policy-oriented interventions, artistic and cultural practice can also provide a more accessible way to challenge these norms and engage with sectors where women play an important role, such as the education or non-profit sectors. A separate Arts Council England report highlights the role of the arts in offering 'a safe place to explore difficult issues, and an alternative shared language'.<sup>72</sup>

Target 5.1 aims to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls. The media, film and music industries, for example, can play a critical role in influencing the representation of gender equality through the use of language and depiction of gender relations and dynamics thanks to the large audience reach. Artists and cultural initiatives and personalities can influence and prompt public discussions and debate and encourage progress towards gender equality, such as progressive artists drawing attention to gender inequality, female role models in the arts, or specific programmes that advocate for gender equality.

The British Council has taken crucial first steps in this work by raising important topics and engaging with stakeholders through a dedicated Gender team. There is an opportunity to develop more specific programmes that contribute towards SDG 5 and align with the sustainable development agenda.



WOW — Women of the World is a global movement celebrating women and girls, taking a frank look at some of the obstacles they face across the world.<sup>73</sup> It was launched by Jude Kelly CBE at Southbank Centre London in 2010 and is produced by the WOW Foundation globally.

Since 2016, the British Council has worked in partnership with the WOW Foundation to support WOW activity across South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka) and more recently in Brazil and Turkey. Through this activity, the British Council aims to:

- Provide opportunities for women's civic engagement;
- Promote women and girls agency;
- Challenge and shift perceptions and attitudes towards gender equality by raising awareness, involving men and boys, and supporting women leaders.

WOW activities include think-ins, chapters, festivals, performances, debates and discussions run by local curators and partners, with the presence of policymakers and the general public.

Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere (indirect).

Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (indirect).

Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (indirect).

Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (direct).

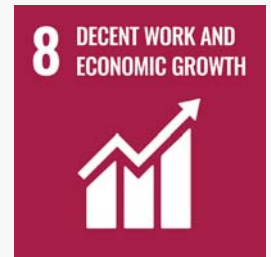
Target 5.6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (direct).

Target 5.c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels (indirect).

Other SDGs: 4, 10, 12, 17.



# SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth



## Background

SDG 8 promotes 'sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'. This goal aims towards the achievement of sustained per capita economic growth with higher levels of economic productivity and development-oriented policies, thus leading to the creation of decent work and entrepreneurship. It also seeks to address the achievement of full and productive employment and decent jobs for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities; equal pay for work of equal value; the reduction of the proportion of youth unemployment; the eradication of forced labour; and the protection of labour rights.<sup>74</sup> SDG 8 targets and indicators tend to focus on specific industries or types of industries, and also on specific audience groups.

Goal 8 does not have a clear equivalent in the Millennium Development Goals, but arguably builds on one of the more economic justifications for ODA funding – to facilitate and support the growth of less-economically developed countries. It is a reflection of the wider SDGs as it adopts a people-centred approach, directly linking national prosperity to the success and employment of a country's citizens.

## Link to culture

Active participation in culture is an essential aspect of social inclusion and can boost employment and economic growth by increasing civic participation, enhancing minority voices, and growing mutual recognition and cooperation between different generations and cultures.<sup>75</sup>

Creative industries themselves play a strong role in contributing to economic growth and job creation. Cultural initiatives encourage the renewal and creation of economic activities, entrepreneurship and employability, and the development of tourism.<sup>76</sup> The UK creative industries sector is a key employer, growing 28.6% between 2011 and 2017.<sup>77</sup> Arts and culture projects create opportunities for skills development and training which increase beneficiaries' employability and entrepreneurial skills.

Target 8.2 focuses on the high-value added and labour-intensive sectors and aims to increase the levels of economic productivity through technological upgrading and innovation. Many of the industries in the arts and cultural sector could qualify as relevant to this target, in particular the crafts sector.

Target 8.3 focuses on the policy-making aspect of promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Many businesses in the creative industries would qualify as micro-, small- and medium-sized and are also reliant on creativity and innovation for their success. A 2010 report from the European Union recognised the high proportion of SMEs in the Creative Industries.<sup>78</sup> Arguably, therefore, any policy that supports or promotes the creative industries would be contributing to Target 8.3.

Target 8.5. This target aims to achieve full employment for all by 2030, regardless of gender, age or disability status. This is in line with most organisations' policies on equality, diversity and inclusion and encourages an inclusive approach to economic development.

Target 8.6 is perhaps the target from SDG 8 that most clearly overlaps with SDG 4. It aims to reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2020. As previously noted, the British Council provides numerous training opportunities to young people, and many of these programmes aim to increase their employability. There are clear links between opportunities for skills development, poverty reduction and employment linked to SDG 1 and SDG 4.

The tourism focus in Target 8.9 aligns closely to arts and culture programmes, for instance through work focusing on heritage or cultural tourism. Target 8.9 specifically focuses on the work that countries should do to develop policies that promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

# Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies (DICE)

## Case study

Developing Inclusive & Creative Economies (DICE) aims to address profound economic and social exclusion and foster systemic and generational change within and across ecosystems.<sup>79</sup> It focuses on stimulating and strengthening homegrown creativity, enterprise, and collaboration, primarily working with and for women, young people, ethnic minorities and those disabled by society. DICE was set up in 2018 and has been piloted in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa and the UK. To date, DICE has engaged with over 15000 artists, influencers, community leaders, entrepreneurs, academics, journalists, investors, hubs managers, and policy makers. It brings together a multitude of stakeholders to co-design, build relationships, share expertise and create spaces of trust and collaboration.

DICE aims to reach three tiers of the ecosystem:

At the individual level: The DICE Fellowship Programme in Pakistan and Brazil, AfroLab Brazil, and the Impact Makers and Creators programme in South Africa provided technical support and training for individual entrepreneurs and nascent enterprises seeking to create solutions to challenges in their communities. In partnership with the magazine *Pioneers Post*, 14 young storytellers received mentoring in journalism and opportunities to share stories about positive solutions to challenges in their communities with readers worldwide.

At an institutional level: The £1.8 million DICE Fund has supported 28 collaboration projects between UK creative social intermediaries and their overseas counterparts. It has strengthened the capacity of 60 intermediary organisations and supported nearly 6000 creative social enterprises at a hyper-local level to co-create initiatives for positive change in their communities. Similarly, capacity building for creative hubs leaders took place in Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa (Creative Hubs Academy), Egypt (Creative Hubs Network) and Indonesia (toolkits for hubs). In the UK, the DICE supplier

framework aims to encourage collaboration, learning, and sharing of opportunities between 37 social and creative organisations.

At a systemic level: DICE engaged with policy influencers and those influenced by policy to create an enabling environment for the inclusion of women in leadership, and changes to the ecosystem. It encouraged policies that are co-designed and promote social and economic inclusion through policy dialogues, workshops, study visits to the UK, and research projects.

8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors (indirect).

8.3: Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services (direct).

8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value (indirect).

8.6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (direct).

8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (indirect).

Other relevant SDGs: 1, 4, 5, 9, 10 and 17.

DICE, Egypt  
©Ashraf Talaat photography

Ekra Abuzeid specialises in handicrafts and fairtrade goods and is responsible for the workshop at NilFurat, a creative hub that supplies Yadawee, a recipient of a DICE Collaboration Grant.

NilFurat started in 2013. The project includes refugees from Syria, Sudan and Ethiopia and some Egyptians who are making a sustainable income through craft.



# SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure



## Background

SDG 9 recognises that investment in infrastructure and innovation are crucial drivers of economic growth and development. It highlights the importance of mass transportation systems, adequate sanitation, effective infrastructure, and the potential of the renewable energy sectors. It also addresses the problem that 4 billion people still do not have access to the Internet, and 90% of them are in the developing world.<sup>80</sup> Goal 9 also highlights the need to 'foster innovation', which is more relevant to arts and cultural programmes.

## Link to culture

Activity in the arts sector that overlaps with infrastructure, industrialisation or innovation can contribute to SDG 9.

Target 9.3 focuses on the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, particularly in developing countries, to financial services and their integration into value chains and markets. British Council programmes, particularly those in ODA recipient countries, working with small companies or individuals to increase their access to global markets and supply chains through the provision of training or

opportunities for international connectivity would be relevant to this target. Adopting the language of the SDGs may help to make this impact clearer.

Other relevant targets include 9.b, which aims to support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, and Target 9.c, which aims to significantly increase access to information and communications technology and to provide universal and affordable access to the internet, which are both relevant to programmes in universities and libraries, for instance.

Initiatives that incorporate arts and culture into other areas of industrialisation may also contribute to other targets not identified here, by virtue of their innovation. Longitudinal evaluation approaches would help to clarify the long-term impact of these programmes to meet this goal.

## Creating Opportunities for South Africa's Youth

### Case study

Creating Opportunities for South Africa's Youth (COSY) is an EU-funded programme in South Africa (2017-2020) managed by the British Council in partnership with Business and Arts South Africa, LifeCo UN Ltd. South Africa and Livity Africa (now Digify), as well as the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) as an associate partner.

The programme delivers training opportunities for young entrepreneurs to learn more about how to access global markets and audience groups for sustainable growth. It provided finance to successful participants and improved information about opportunities for young people in the creative, social enterprise and digital sectors in particular young women in rural and semi-rural areas. The COSY project targeted regional equity by working in four provinces and eight different poor communities (Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape).

Target 9.3: Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets (direct).

Other relevant SDGs: 4, 5, 8, 10, 17.



©RM Photography & Video  
Patience Ngwenya on graduation day receiving her Start-Up Capital award (right) and a representative from Livity (left).

# SDG 10: Reduced inequalities



## Background

Goal 10 calls for the reduction of inequalities for all countries relating to income, age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or other status within a country. It seeks to eliminate discriminatory legislation, policies, and practices, and adopt and promote others that contribute to achieving greater equality. The goal also addresses issues among countries, such as fair representation, migration, and development assistance.<sup>81</sup>

SDG 10 embodies the new approach that distinguishes the SDGs from the MDGs, that improvement is not just expected from the so-called 'Global South'. Goal 10 creates a paradigm where relative national poverty is seen in the same light as the gap between the most and least developed countries. Arguably, this is also reflected in the indicators for SDG 1.

Many of the targets overlap in some ways with targets from SDGs 1, 4, 8 and 9, due to their focus on economic inequality. Target 10.2 is very broad and encompasses a wide range of issues and audience groups to encourage social, economic and political inclusion, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status. Target 10.7 focuses on migration as a specific area of discrimination and inequality, calling for 'orderly, safe, regular and responsible' migration through 'planned and well-managed' policies.

## Link to culture

Arts and cultural programmes and activities can play an important role in reducing inequalities, not only by creating employment and educational opportunities, but through art and culture's role in public space and discourse and the creative process itself. As an Arts Council England report from 2010 describes, the arts can help build social capital and community cohesion by addressing social issues.<sup>82</sup> Culture has a strong impact on welfare, health, and self-esteem, and enables individuals and communities to explore their histories and sense of identity. Moreover, new social spaces and collective meaning emerge when individuals and communities engage together in cultural processes, contributing to conflict resolution, the strengthening of the social fabric and greater resilience.<sup>83</sup> Access to culture in itself is a way of reducing inequalities, and can have positive benefits for young people, such as better academic outcomes, cognitive abilities, analytical skills and empathy.<sup>84</sup>

Whilst many connections to arts and culture can be made with SDG 10, a more longitudinal approach to evaluation would be beneficial to effectively demonstrate impact in this broad area of reducing inequalities.

## Transform

## Case study

Transform was a four-year programme (2012-2016) that sought to develop the artistic dialogue between the UK and Brazil for mutual benefit and long term impact.<sup>85</sup> It enabled artists and cultural professionals from both countries to share experiences and collaborate to bring about creative and social change for institutions, individuals and communities. The programme included 148 projects, involving eight Brazilian states, 25 British institutions and 40 Brazilian ones.

It aimed to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of arts and culture as a catalyst for change for individuals, communities and nations. Projects focusing on social inclusion and empowerment were consistent within Transform, including disability arts and the engagement of vulnerable communities.

This included exchange on artistic practice that addressed disability issues, opening up dialogue on how policy should address access and participation. This focus was welcomed by Brazilian State Governments, supporting them to construct and put into practice more holistic policies towards disability arts.

Transform was designed to be sustainable in terms of projects and partnerships, and several of the initiatives are still in place.

10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (direct).

Other relevant SDGs: 1, 8, 9, 17.

# SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities



## Background

SDG 11 does not have a clear predecessor in the MDGs, but brings together many themes that are present throughout the SDGs, most notably inclusivity and environmental responsibility. The goal also engages with the needs of specific groups, such as women and people with disabilities, and through this overlaps with many other goals.

Goal 11 is especially crucial considering rapid urbanisation and the fact that more than half of the world's population lives in cities. By 2050, up to 70% of the world population is projected to live in urban areas, with over 90% of this growth occurring in the developing world.<sup>86</sup> Goal 11 aims to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing, basic services and public transport systems. It also highlights the importance of improving urban resilience against environmental disasters.<sup>87</sup>

Cultural heritage plays a marginal role in the SDGs, but is explicitly mentioned in SDG 11 under Target 11.4, which aims to 'strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage'. Indicator 11.4.1 looks at the total amount spent on preserving and protecting cultural and natural heritage, by type of heritage, level of government, type of expenditure and type of funding.

Target 11.3 aims to make urban planning a more participatory and inclusive activity. This would ultimately make urban environments more welcoming and hospitable, and promote community ownership and engagement. It is important to consider participatory work in public spaces through consulting and engaging potential beneficiaries in the early stages of programme development to ensure impact.

Target 11.7 overlaps with Target 5.2 through its focus on providing safe public spaces for women. Children, older persons and persons with disabilities are also identified as specific groups who need greater access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces.

Target 11.c commits countries to supporting least developed countries to build sustainable and resilient buildings using local materials. This can be through financial assistance, or technical support.

Cultural heritage has been directly linked to the creation of green economies that enhance sustainability, employment opportunities that support poverty alleviation (SDG 1: No poverty), and the potential to unite people in furthering social cohesion and peace (SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions). Cultural heritage has the power to unite communities who share a common identity, attachment to place and everyday life experiences, including minorities, disadvantaged and socially-excluded persons (SDG 5: Gender equality and SDG 10: Reducing inequalities).<sup>88</sup>

Cultural heritage sites have also greatly contributed to the development of tourism and local livelihoods through the production and sale of locally produced goods and indigenous knowledge (SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, and SDG 12: Responsible production and consumption).<sup>89</sup> Cultural heritage, especially the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, generates revenues from visits and generates employment for communities. Through the sale of local crafts, music, and cultural products to tourists, the cultural and creative industries are further enhanced and supported. Cultural tourism can also lead to the creation of cultural infrastructure and institutions, such as universities, museums, cultural centres, cinemas, theatres, craft centres, and other such institutions.<sup>90</sup>

## Link to culture

SDG 11 offers an opportunity for arts and cultural programmes to engage with the SDGs, through the lens of heritage and public spaces. Culture is key to what makes cities attractive, creative and sustainable.<sup>91</sup> Built heritage is an important consideration for cities and human settlements, as rapid development can compromise a society's ability to protect monuments and other manifestations of shared history.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, changes in social structures or environments can also affect intangible heritage, as traditional ways of life can be challenged and compromised. Strengthening both tangible and intangible heritage is a lens through which arts and culture can contribute to SDG 11.

UNESCO emphasises that the safeguarding of cultural and urban heritage fosters the development of civic identity and a sense of belonging. Planning and development that integrates culture increases economic opportunities and enhances the quality of life. Culture can also transform city spaces into places of public dialogue, fostering social inclusion and contributing to reduced inequality.<sup>93</sup>

The Cultural Protection Fund is managed by the British Council in partnership with the UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.<sup>94</sup> Since 2016 it has supported projects to create opportunities for economic and social development through building capacity to foster, safeguard and promote tangible and intangible cultural heritage at risk in the Middle East and North Africa. In response to the growing need of the cultural heritage sector to prepare for and mitigate the effects of natural disasters and climate change, in 2020 the Fund launched a new Disaster and Climate Change Preparedness round to support projects in East Africa.

Activities such as vocational training, educational programmes and the targeted inclusion of women and minorities build capacity, create shared understanding, and contribute to economic and social development. The Fund has awarded over £35m to 67 projects to date, encouraging partnerships between universities, non-governmental organisations, cultural institutions, and heritage stakeholders.

Target 11.1: Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums (direct).

Target 11.3: Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries (direct).

Target 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (direct).

Target 11.7: Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities (direct).

Target 11.c: Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials (indirect).

Other relevant SDGs: 4, 5, 8, 10, 16, 17.



Drone training at a fort, Lunca as part of the Training in Action project. ©Durham University

The Training in Action programme is documenting and protecting archaeological sites, historic buildings, landscapes and monuments across Libya and Tunisia.

# SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production



## Background

SDG 12 engages with climate change and sustainability by focusing on the need to guarantee sustainable consumption and production patterns. Indeed, it is one of several SDGs that extend the Millennium Development Goal to 'Ensure Environmental Sustainability' by highlighting specific challenges and suggesting solutions to mitigate their impact.

Target 12.a highlights the role that more developed countries can play in helping developing countries to strengthen 'their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production'. The indicator for this target was also considered to be relevant, as it focuses on the amount of support for research and development in this area.

Target 12.5 focuses on waste reduction, and the possibilities to do this through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

Target 12.b focuses on sustainable tourism and commits countries to developing and implementing 'tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products'. In this, it arguably overlaps with Target 8.9, previously discussed in this report. The indicator 12.b.1 focuses on the number of sustainable tourism strategies that exist.

## Link to culture

There are clear opportunities for the arts and culture sector to engage with responsible consumption and production, and climate change more generally. Distinctive campaigns in recent years have highlighted the impact that some creative industries, such as the fashion industry, have on tackling climate change through sustainable fashion. Examples of campaigns include WWF's Water and Fashion,<sup>96</sup> Fashion Revolution,<sup>97</sup> and Oxfam's Fashion Fighting Poverty.<sup>98</sup> There are also increasing efforts across design disciplines to innovate and highlight the usage of recycled or reusable materials such as Precious Plastic.<sup>99</sup>

Alongside these industry-focused areas, the arts can play a leading role in advocacy and social change. The "Under Her Eye: Women and Climate Change" International Summit and Arts Festival in London, for example, used the arts as a way to spark conversation about climate change and responsible consumption and production.<sup>100</sup>



# Crafting Futures

## Case study

Crafting Futures aims to support a more sustainable future for crafts around the world and ensure that craft is appreciated for economic, social and environmental development.<sup>101</sup> The global programme provides education and training opportunities, connects artisans from rural communities with international designers, creates international partnerships and increases access to new markets and audiences. It enables designers and artisans (mainly women) to develop their practices (including with technology), empowers them to create their own businesses, and improve their abilities to shape local craft markets and sell their products locally and internationally. Activities include residencies, hands-on workshops, creation labs, exhibitions, and discussions on design, fashion, entrepreneurship, indigenous knowledge and cross-cultural creation. The programme investigates environmental impacts, resource efficiency, health and safety, intellectual property rights and other key considerations.

Since 2016, Crafting Futures has been active in 30 countries around the globe, supporting more than 50 projects delivered in partnership with over 30 UK-based organisations, international collaborators and entrepreneurs, and artisans globally for exchange of knowledge and the development of mutually beneficial relationships.

Target 12.a: Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production (direct).

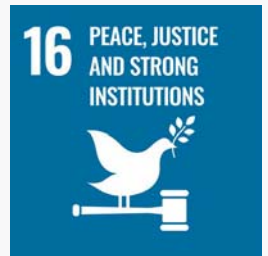
Target 12.b: Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (indirect).

Other relevant SDGs: 4, 5, 8, 10, and 17.



Crafting Futures,  
Myanmar  
©Simon Mills

# SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions



## Background

SDG 16 aims to develop more peaceful and inclusive societies to ensure sustainable development. The Goal's ambition is to increase access to justice and to foster effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, which are seen to be pre-conditions for the achievement of other goals. Under Goal 16 there are no fewer than 22 indicators for 12 targets, which range from preventing violence and crime, ensuring access to justice, freedoms and rule of law, developing accountable and transparent institutions and ensuring fair decision-making at all levels.

In 2018, the British Council commissioned Collingwood Environmental Planning (CEP) to carry out a study to determine how it contributes to the achievement of SDG 16.<sup>103</sup> The study found that SDG 16 aligns with many aspects of the British Council's work and is in line with its Royal Charter to create 'friendly knowledge and understanding between peoples and cultures'. Targets 16.6 and 16.7 are of particular relevance, focusing on accountability of institutions, and inclusive and participatory decision-making respectively.

## Link to culture

Culture is a tool that can be used to promote understanding and tolerance between people.<sup>104</sup> The clearest way in which the arts and culture sector can contribute to the achievement of this goal is through programmes that prompt discussion, debate and public engagement around questions of peace and justice. In this, arts and cultural programmes contribute to building up the 'demand' for strong and effective institutions – an area of work that is often directly funded by development agencies around the world. By bringing questions of democracy, fairness, equality and representation into the public sphere, arts and cultural programmes can offer a clear impact in this area. They can advocate for better representation and more accountable decision-making, and facilitate inclusive and approachable public discussions.

For the wider arts sector, there are clear opportunities to contribute to SDG 16. One way to increase impact in this area is to develop training programmes that highlight how the arts can contribute to social change. For artists, it can be about highlighting where injustices lie, holding institutions to account, and promoting freedom of expression and participation in public life.

## Artivism in the Horn of Africa

### Case study

Artivism in the Horn of Africa empowers young people from Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia to develop creative responses to local challenges for the promotion of peace and development through the arts.<sup>105</sup> Based on the British Council's flagship programme Active Citizens<sup>106</sup> and Arts methodology, 70 young community leaders and artists (Artivists) took part in training workshops, planned and delivered social action projects in the community, and shared their experiences locally and internationally.

The programme developed the participants' capacity and skills to engage with their communities, set up small-scale projects and ensure inclusive and participatory dialogue and decision making. The social action projects provided safe spaces for people to express themselves and enable intercultural dialogue, and they have secured local buy-in from communities, local authorities and institutions for sustainability. There is now a network of young artists and activists in the Horn of Africa with international connections.

Target 16.6: 'Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels' (indirect).

Target 16.7: 'Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels' (indirect).

Other relevant SDGs: 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 17.





Yadawee-Al Fanar, Egypt  
©Ashraf Talaat photography

An artisan from the Fowa cluster in Kafr El Sheikh Governorate, producing traditional kilim from wool and cotton.

The artisan is part of one of 28 projects to receive a Collaboration Grant from the DICE fund. The project brings together Yadawee, a social enterprise producing and exporting Egyptian handicrafts, and Al Fanar, a UK-based venture philanthropy organisation that invests in social ventures to support the empowerment and education of women, youth and refugees in the Arab world.

# SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals



## Background

Goal 17 aims to reinvigorate the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, following on from the objective of the 8th MDG to develop a global partnership for development model. The goal aims to strengthen the implementation of the SDGs by bolstering national and international efforts to contribute to sustainable development objectives. This includes offering official development assistance and other financial resources, improving technology development and transfer, capacity-building, and stronger international partnerships.<sup>107</sup>

SDG 17 is an important goal because it recognises the diverse organisations and delivery models that will inevitably be involved in making progress towards the SDGs and their targets. However, efforts have clearly been made to ensure that it is not simply a catch-all goal. SDG 17 has 19 distinct targets, the most of any of the SDGs, divided into sections: finance, technology, capacity building, trade and systemic issues. Many of the targets have more than one indicator.

The most relevant targets in this context are the following: Target 17.3 aims to bring together additional funds to support developing countries. Target 17.6 calls for partnerships to be enhanced such as North-South and South-South cooperation. Target 17.7 overlaps with Target 8.2, where Indicator 17.7.1 looks at the total amount of approved funding for developing countries to promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies. Target 17.16 aims to use multi-stakeholder partnerships that share funds and expertise to enhance the Global Partnership and support the achievement of SDGs. 17.17 encourages drawing on the experience of a range of partners and on civil society partnerships, with Indicator 17.17.1 being the amount of money committed to such partnerships.

## Link to culture

Many arts sector programmes are likely contributing to SDG 17 by working in collaboration, but the language of the SDGs is not always being used and specific goals are not always clearly articulated. The sector could emphasise the value of participatory and collaborative approaches more, and raise awareness of the SDG goals and programmes that support their targets. An example of this is the exhibition that the British Council hosted in its Spring Gardens headquarters in 2016, which profiled the different SDGs.

British Council programmes rely on a range of partnerships, delivered across multiple countries or contexts and in the framework of international cultural relations. The British Council is well placed to report on several of the targets as well as the indicators for SDG 17. Monitoring stakeholder engagement and adopting a more longitudinal approach would be helpful to further demonstrate tangible contributions to SDG 17.

# Tfanen Tunisia Creative Programme

## Case study

Tfanen is an EU-funded programme that strengthens Tunisia's cultural sector for local development, implemented by the British Council on behalf of the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC).<sup>108</sup> Tfanen delivers capacity building support to projects, organisations and individuals, and provides grants across multiple artistic disciplines to three main types of initiatives: creation, community engagement, and festivals/heritage sites. A database of over 1,500 active Tunisian cultural organisations has been created.

Tfanen seeks to involve broad audiences in the arts by creating free and inclusive programmes that can be accessed by youth, women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and prisoners. The funded projects demonstrate their ability to enhance community resilience, freedom of expression, inclusive local development and dialogue across social difference through arts and culture.

Target 17.2: Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments (direct).

Targets 17.3: Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources (direct).

17.6: Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms (indirect).

Other relevant SDGs: 1, 4, 8, 10, 11 and 16.



# Section III — Recommendations

## 1. Adopt the language of the SDGs

One clear challenge for the arts and cultural sector is the need to integrate and adopt the language of the SDGs. There is a need for major institutions to become better at messaging the impact of their work, ensuring that it aligns with the SDGs. This is important for the sector to clearly demonstrate that it is invested in the Goals, and to develop a clear story about the role of arts and culture in achieving economic and particularly social impact. There appear to be two simultaneous dynamics at work: on the one hand, many of the aims of the SDGs have long been embraced by the arts sector; on the other, there is a tension between arts and culture programmes and the technocratic nature of some of the targets and indicators of the SDGs. Accepting and incorporating the language of the SDGs is a first step to reconciling this tension.

Organisations like the British Council could consciously map their internal language to that used by the UN in the SDGs to highlight the connections. It is also important that all major public funders focus on adopting such language and approach. Another option is to adapt the language of the SDGs to the arts and culture sector to make the link more explicit, understandable and relatable.

## 2. Develop training programmes that highlight the role of arts and culture in the SDGs

Alongside the proposed shift in language, there is a need to provide capacity building across the arts and cultural sector to ensure that those working in the sector are empowered to frame their work and deliver projects that respond to the SDGs. Training programmes that highlight best practice and provide concrete ways in which the sector can demonstrate impact will also be necessary. Examples of training could focus, for instance, on participatory methods of delivery, or work that is led by beneficiary communities.

It is important for practitioners in the arts and cultural sector to be aware of the wider social and economic dimensions of their profession, and of the roles they can play in facilitating change. UNESCO has been doing important work around the 2005 Convention to raise awareness of training needs, for example, and is gradually shifting the conversation.

## 3. Work with community members and partners in developing, delivering and evaluating cultural initiatives

Working with community members and partners will be essential to identify the challenges and opportunities to be addressed, and to respond to community needs in line with the SDGs to ensure sustainability. Working with community members and partners can help provide deep and nuanced community knowledge to support a variety of initiatives, including culture-driven programmes.

The British Council's Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth is an example of a programme developed through grassroots co-design with local delivery partners and driven by baseline data (e.g. audience research, ethnography), to ensure that the programme offer is context-specific in each country (Kenya, Vietnam and Colombia) and as valuable as possible.

It was notable that the evaluation of the Artivism in the Horn of Africa programme engaged explicitly with participants and ensured that they were aware of the role that evaluation would play in the wider programme. This approach ensured that participant-initiated impact and engagement with a wide and varied range of SDGs was clear.

## 4. Advocate for specific outcomes that respond to individual SDGs through arts and culture

Programmes designed in response to individual SDGs can have significant impact. Several sectors could use arts and culture to advocate for specific policy outcomes that are highlighted in the SDG targets and indicators. Many arts programmes already highlight certain issues, but this is not always connected to tangible policy goals. For instance, Indicator 4.7.1 provides a key opportunity to engage with the education system, national curricula, and the value of the culture sector. When this is the case, however, it is important to be explicit about the SDGs that the programme is engaging with and to monitor for the associated targets and indicators.

There is a significant opportunity for organisations such as the British Council to develop programmes which have outcomes and activities that directly engage with and respond to the SDGs. The WOW programme in partnership with WOW Foundation clearly engaged with gender equality and is relevant to more targets for SDG 5 as a result. The 100

Resilient Cities work in Athens and Ramallah, in partnership with the 100 Resilient Cities network and the Rockefeller Foundation aligns with SDG 11. This approach could be used for several other SDGs – for instance, in response to climate change.

These projects have been developed into case studies on city and community-focused cultural projects that respond to the SDGs. They are included in the United Cities and Local Government's database of good practices, the OBS database.<sup>109</sup>

### **5. Select key targets and indicators to mainstream throughout projects**

Though some SDGs are more sector or context specific, there are general SDGs whose aims could be mainstreamed throughout arts and culture programmes, such as SDGs 1: No poverty, SDG 5: Gender equality and SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals. The SDGs are relevant to programmes that are delivered in any country, not only in OECD Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipient countries and are cross-cutting in nature. Specific monitoring and evaluation approaches could be used to attribute impact to arts and culture and track contributions to SDGs.

Parallel indicators could be developed so as to allow organisations to endorse the goals and use indicators that speak more directly and clearly to their existing programming and partnerships such as UNESCO's new thematic indicators on Culture. Indeed, by selecting a series of indicators that all programmes would monitor and report on, the British Council could develop a convincing case for the wide scale impact of arts and culture programming, and advocate for the importance of such programmes to contribute to the SDGs at a local and global level.

### **6. Collect baseline data to better monitor impact and recognise the need for longitudinal evaluations**

As highlighted by the external literature review, sustainable development is a long-term process and it is difficult to assess the impact of an intervention in its immediate aftermath. It is important to approach situations and develop

programmes with this in mind, and with an understanding of the barriers on the ground to delivering development work. Longer programme timelines and a more longitudinal approach to evaluation using long-term tracking and monitoring systems will help to ensure that impact is better captured and understood.

Associated with this is the need to collect baseline data in order to accurately monitor and assess programmes' contributions to the achievement of the SDG targets and indicators. Similar approaches have been used to evaluate livelihood programmes in recent years, where beneficiaries are tracked over the course of the project and are asked about changes in their incomes and daily lives, and the relationship of this change to the programme that they participated in. Particularly with arts and cultural programmes, both qualitative and quantitative indicators are needed to fully capture the impact of a programme on individuals, organisations and other stakeholders.

The British Council's DICE programme has already developed indicators that link directly to the SDGs as part of its monitoring and evaluation. A number of the capacity-building programmes being supported focus directly and explicitly on the role of arts and culture as key to addressing the SDGs. DICE aims to ensure that social creative enterprises enhance, develop, articulate, and evidence their social mandate (as related to the SDGs) and environmental awareness.

### **7. Develop a clear and consistent approach to monitor stakeholder, media and digital engagement**

As several SDGs aim for specific policy changes, a clearer approach to audience mapping and engagement would help develop narratives that link cultural initiatives with wider political and societal change. This could involve tracking tools that show which individuals and organisations have engaged with the programme, and the number of media appearances or press statements in subsequent weeks and months. Ensuring that programmes, where relevant, have clear social media strategies with monitoring tools and targets helps to understand public engagement with issues related to sustainable development.

Incorporating policy objectives could also increase participant and beneficiary community engagement by supporting the development of specific, locally relevant, self-sustaining social movements – thereby increasing the impact of the programmes.

The British Council facilitates engagement between civil society and governments, indirectly influencing policymakers and in some cases directly enabling policy change. There is an opportunity to align this work with the legislative goals highlighted by the SDGs. For instance, programmes such as the WOW Festivals could openly advocate for gender equality and human rights to be mainstreamed into educational curricula – which would directly contribute to Indicator 4.7.1.

## **8. Leverage digital technologies to increase engagement with the SDGs**

Digitalisation represents a tectonic shift in the last few decades, with digital technologies transforming society and social life, connectivity, the economy, and cultural institutions.<sup>110</sup> Cultural experiences and audiences' access and interaction with them have been significantly reshaped by the growth of digital engagement, which creates new challenges and opportunities for sustainable development.

Digital technologies provide new ways for creativity and innovation to be unlocked. The creative economy is one of the most rapidly growing sectors worldwide, creating opportunities for job creation and international markets. Driven by human creativity and innovation, creative economy can also support the emergence of new ideas or technologies, and the processes of transformational change. The interactive, immersive force of digital technologies provides new ways of enabling more people to be involved in the production and consumption of art and culture.<sup>111</sup>

In light of the opportunities digital technologies offer in achieving the SDGs, there is a need to harmonise governance and incentive frameworks by the public and private sectors with fairness, transparency, public access and right to privacy. More significant consideration needs to be paid to safeguarding privacy and data ownership; balancing public and private benefits; fostering a new civic culture to be co-creative; and creating rules and codes for a highly digital future.<sup>112</sup>

The British Council's wide global network and its interaction with a broad range of stakeholders, combined with the links between the tech sector and the creative industries, mean that the organisation is well placed to explore both the potential and challenges associated with new technologies. Ideas Change Lives is a programme that provides interesting examples of where the British Council is already working with digital technology to engage a wide audience with the SDGs.

## **9. Address climate change as a cross-cutting theme**

In July 2019, the UK's Secretary of State for International Development Rory Stewart announced that the UK's development policy would put climate change at its centre. Examples of this include the Climate 4 Classrooms work, which provides resources for teachers across five countries, and the recent article published as part of the Creative Play in the Digital Age series, which looks at the role of design in the climate movement. Wider work in the UK arts sector (e.g. Julie's Bicycle, Olafur Eliasson's In Real Life exhibition at the Tate Modern, Invisible Dust) also provides a useful blueprint of how to address climate change in creative ways.

The British Council's wider commitment to sustainability means that the organisation can incorporate messages about climate change throughout its arts and culture work and strategies, as well as consider the role that climate change can play in the achievement of all of the SDGs.



# Conclusion

This report aims to demonstrate the value of arts and culture in the context of sustainable development: for people, peace, prosperity, and planet. The case studies of British Council programmes in recent years provide concrete examples of how arts and culture play an active and enabling role across the Sustainable Development Goals and how they act as a cross cutting mechanism, be it through direct or indirect impact. Through cultural relations, artistic and cultural initiatives can develop relations based on respect for diversity, understanding of local contexts and participation of all those affected. This approach builds relationships on equal terms, and promotes trust and understanding for social cohesion and inclusive growth over the long term.

Many of the aims of the SDGs have long been embraced by the arts and culture sector. However, arts and cultural organisations and professionals do not always associate their work with the language of development and the ambitions of agendas such as the SDGs. This disassociation can result in a lack of understanding of the value and impact of arts and culture to social, economic and environmental development, and a divide between policy and practice that can limit the achievement of the SDGs.

Furthermore, in order to increase understanding of the role of arts and culture across the SDGs, there is a need to build and strengthen the evidence base around arts and culture's contribution to the SDGs. Sustainable development is a long-term process and it is difficult to assess the impact of an intervention in its immediate aftermath. Longer programme timelines, mixed methods of evaluation and a more longitudinal approach will help to better understand and capture the impact. Key to mainstreaming arts and culture in the sustainable development space is the use of quantitative and qualitative indicators that are fit for purpose and bridge the gap between culture and sustainable development. These indicators cannot simply lead to the economisation of arts and culture but must demonstrate the value of arts and culture to societies and the environment, and the cultural value created by such programmes.

Since writing this report, COVID-19 has shaken the world as we know it, and has particularly affected the arts and culture sector. On the one hand, lockdown has shut down activity including artistic and cultural practice and mobility, failing economies are affecting livelihoods and financial stability, societies face health risks and wellbeing struggles, human and cultural rights are being compromised, and the most vulnerable are the worst affected. As stated by the UN, "the COVID-19 pandemic [...] will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent".<sup>113</sup>

On the other hand, local and global acts of solidarity and creativity have emerged with more intertwining of the arts and social sectors, the digital space has provided more access and connections around the world, and with reduced consumption and pollution there is hope for a more sustainable future outlook for the world. Culture is at the heart of the situation we face: from the pandemic's effects on local cultures and the cultural sector, to new cultures emerging and cultural and innovative responses to COVID-19. This new reality has huge implications for the social, economic and environmental development of the people and places that make up our world and culture in all of its forms can be the fourth pillar that provides more sustainability.

The case studies in this report have focused on British Council programmes from before the global pandemic. In the years to come, there is no doubt that the range of cultural initiatives will need also to include universal and cross-cutting issues such as the health crisis, climate emergency, and long-standing inequalities. Along with many cultural organisations affected by Covid-19, the British Council is considering its place in the world and how cultural relations can respond to the local and global challenges which face us all.

In its Strategy 2025, the British Council has committed to advocating for the value of arts and culture in sustainable development for a more connected, understanding and trusting world. It will be taking the SDGs as a framework for its global arts programmes, which will be based on the contexts in which we operate, the people we engage with, and our shared values. The British Council aims to play an active global role by convening and taking part in local and global conversations, developing long-term evidence, sharing learning, exchanging and connecting, and creating inspiring opportunities for and with people, institutions and places. In five years' time, we will look back and reflect on the progress made to address local and global challenges through cultural relations, and culture's contribution towards the UN 2030 Agenda.

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# Endnotes

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- 2 The Nordicity Consulting Team was comprised of: Carly Frey (Project Lead), Managing Director, Nordicity West; Sophie Hollows, Associate, Nordicity; Chad Rickaby, Consultant, Nordicity; Darren Touch, Associate, Nordicity; Stephen Hignell, Associate Director, Nordicity. The external Specialist Advisors: Avril Joffe, UNESCO Cultural Governance Technical Expert, Head of Cultural Policy and Management, University of the Witwatersrand; Holly Aylett, Associate Research Fellow, Birkbeck College; Edna Dos Santos Duisenberg, International Consultant and Policy Advisor Creative Economy & Development.
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# Programme website links

The website links in this list can be used to find more information about the programmes featured within the case studies.

Should you have any questions about this report or the featured programmes and case studies, contact the Culture and Development team via [cultureanddevelopment@britishcouncil.org](mailto:cultureanddevelopment@britishcouncil.org).

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[Golden Thread](#)

[Creative Enterprise Programme](#)

[Women of the World](#)

[Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies \(DICE\)](#)

[Creating Opportunities for South Africa's Youth \(COSY\)](#)

[Transform](#)

[Cultural Protection Fund](#)

[Crafting Futures](#)

[Artivism in the Horn of Africa](#)

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