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FEBRUARY 2021

# Youth, Voice and Development

The Transformative Power of Creative, Participatory Approaches for Young People in a Time of Crisis: a Mapping of Initiatives from Changing the Story and the British Council





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(CTS) P2 Bosnia and Herzegovina 2019. Photo Credit: Tiffany Fairey

# "YOUNG PEOPLE MATTER"

## INTRODUCTION

Young people matter. They represent over a fifth of the world's population[1] but are too often ignored in decision-making and planning for economies and societies they will inherit. Young people are being directly and disproportionately affected by systemic issues that include inadequate access to decent work and poverty: an estimated 90% of youth live in developing countries and 500 million live on less than \$2 a day.[2] British Council Next Generation research in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Europe highlights critical areas of concern for young people across a range of developing countries. The research reveals that in many countries education remains far from fit for purpose, failing to prepare youth for employment, and that young people are most affected by rising rates of unemployment and that, on a global scale young people feel governments do not represent their voices or their needs. The research also suggests that gender and other forms of difference compound these inequalities and that young women are often exposed to multiple forms of discrimination and risk, most notably in the form of gender-based violence (GBV).

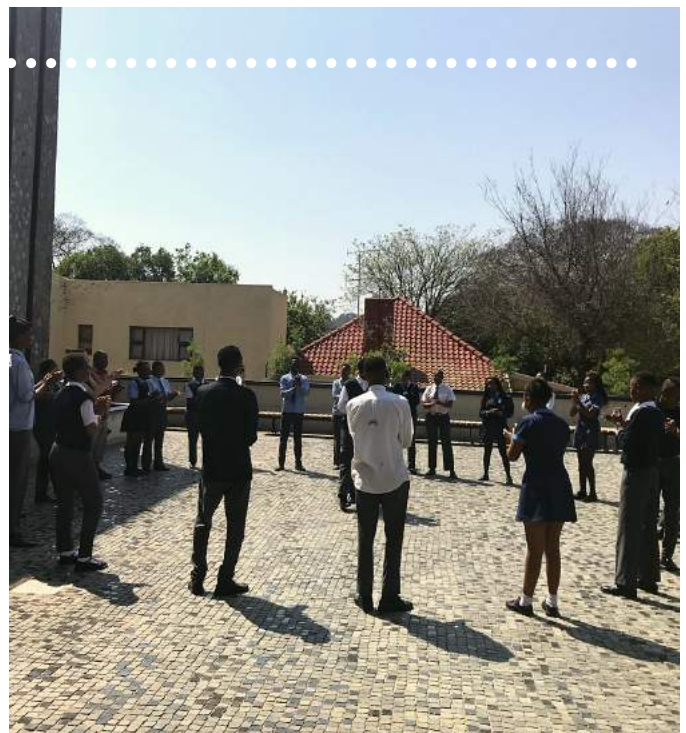
These inequalities are likely to be exacerbated further by the global COVID-19 crisis. Organisations that include the UN, UK Youth, Save the Children and Plan International are warning that those hardest hit by COVID-19 will be children and young people, due to reduced access to essential services, education and economic opportunities and heightened risks of phenomena that include school drop-out, early marriage and sexual exploitation and abuse, often affecting adolescent girls in particular.[3] These risks are likely to be even more severe for the children and young people who account for around a third of those already affected by conflict and violence.

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has highlighted the urgent need to ensure that young people are active participants in shaping and monitoring policies and actions aimed at delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[4] It asserts that, “without engaging young people seriously” it will “simply not be possible to deliver” on objectives of strengthening global peace, security and governance; strengthening resilience and responses to crises; promoting global prosperity; tackling extreme poverty and helping vulnerable people. [5]

This report is part of a wider response to the imperative of understanding what young people want and need and amplifying their voices in the identification and creation of positive, meaningful pathways forward at individual, community and national levels in Official Development Assistance (ODA) countries. Specifically, it draws on work conducted for a University of Leeds/British Council collaboration on ‘Youth, Voice and Development’. The aim of phase one of YVD was to map connections and identify areas of synergy and mutual learning between the youth-focused work of the British Council and the Leeds University-convened programme ‘Changing the Story’ (CTS) between the youth-focused work of Changing the Story. (CTS) is an international, multi-disciplinary participatory action research (PAR) project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF),[1] which supports the building of inclusive civil societies. CTS asks how young people can and do shape and influence societies of countries affected by conflict and/or undergoing a transition, such as accelerated development. CTS is a collaborative project between universities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), artists, grassroots civil society organisations (CSOs) and young people across the world. It aims to enable learning about the work of CSOs with young people as well as testing innovative, arts and heritage-focused approaches in order to inform future practices that promote social justice and inclusivity.



(CTS) ECR Connective Memories, 2019; Photo Credit : Deus Kwizera



(CTS) P1 South Africa, 2018, Photo Credit: The Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre

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***“It aims to enable learning about the work of CSOs with young people as well as testing innovative, arts and heritage-focused approaches in order to inform future practices that promote social justice and inclusivity.”***  
 .....

Currently in its second phase, CTS encompasses diverse projects, with 17 teams working in Colombia, Cambodia, Kosovo, Rwanda, South Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Kenya, Nepal, Malaysia, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. In addition, this report also encompasses an analysis of findings from British Council's flagship Next Generation research with and for young people in countries undergoing significant change across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Asia, Europe and the Middle East with the aim of understanding youth attitudes and aspirations, amplifying youth voice, in turn supporting better youth policy-making. It also reflects on other relevant British Council projects aimed at understanding, empowering young people in ODA countries.

The British Council is a British organisation that works in over 100 countries - including ODA countries in SSA, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. It focuses on promoting cultural relations and understanding, while responding to the priorities of the countries in which it works. This is achieved through building partnerships, networks, and combining this with a deep knowledge and understanding of the countries where the British Council works. A primary aim is enabling people's voices to be heard and to shape their futures through participatory research and practical interventions.[7] The organisation has a commitment to supporting young people and empowering marginalised groups, particularly women and girls.[8]

(CTS) P2 Colombia 2020. Photo Credit: Marlies Kustatscher



The overarching questions driving phase one of YVD were:

- Which key issues for young people are highlighted through Next Generation work? How, to what extent and how successfully are these being addressed in CTS and British Council work?
- Which aspects of CTS work could be useful for addressing or further exploring some of the issues raised by the British Council, and how can British Council approaches and findings inform the work of CTS?

Information for the project has been gathered through available documentation and interviews with 16 CTS researchers and six British Council project leads. Two virtual brainstorming sessions were also held to enable knowledge sharing and discussion among CTS and British Council members.

The report highlights emerging key messages from across CTS and British Council work as well as identifying axes of mutual learning for existing programmes of work with regard to sharpening thematic focus, identifying good practices and tools, considering policy implications and mapping next steps for enabling meaningful change.

Section Two of the report provides insights into key issues and concerns for young people across a wide range of ODA countries that are emerging from the Next Generation research and other sources. Section Three articulates a theoretical framing of the interlinked issues of change, power and development that underpin and drive much of the CTS and British Council youth-focused projects and programmes. Section Four considers the extent to which the CTS and British Council approaches are addressing these issues in ways that offer creative, sustainable pathways for enabling people-centred development and engaging critically with forms of power, with the aim of supporting meaningful, sustainable change. Section Five maps challenges, questions and lessons associated with youth-focused work in ODA countries, using CTS and British Council projects as examples. Section Six provides a conclusion and Section Seven communicates key recommendations for policy makers.

(CTS) P1 Cambodia, 2017. Photo Credit: DC-Cam



# LEARNING FROM THE EVIDENCE - REFLECTIONS ON KEY ISSUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN ODA COUNTRIES

The British Council's Next Generation research highlights key themes and areas of concern for young people across a range of countries, many of which are also reflected in the SDGs. The emerging body of evidence sheds light on the multiple ways in which both states and social and economic development processes are failing and excluding young people. It highlights commonalities across global regions and ODA countries as well as specific socio-cultural issues.

This section highlights four overarching themes to emerge from the Next Generation work (with a focus on the ODA countries of Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Lebanon): a crisis in education; a growing crisis in the availability of decent work for young people; the exclusion of young people from voice, agency and leadership; and exposure to GBV. The section considers gender and gender equality in a cross-cutting way while also considering gender-based discrimination as an issue in its own right.

The next  
**GENERATION**



## A Crisis in Education

Global development databases such as the United Nations Development and Gender Inequality Indexes reflect high levels of registration at primary level in the majority of countries.[9] However, young people surveyed for the Next Generation research reported that the quality of education is lacking and does not prepare youth for employment.[10] Data from 2020 indicates that 85% of primary school teachers and 86% of secondary school teachers worldwide have received the minimum required training. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest percentage of trained teachers: 64% at the primary level and 50% at the secondary level (UN, 2020). In Ethiopia under a third (29%) of Next Generation participants felt their education prepared them well for work, while only 23% felt it had improved their chances of getting a job (British Council 2019a). In Lebanon only 47% of young people aged 25-29 responded 'yes' to the question: "Do you have an education that enables you to get a job?", while 71% said that personal connections or 'wasta' are more important than qualifications in securing a job (British Council 2020b).

This is contributing to rising levels of school drop-out, especially for the poorest households.[11] Recent evidence from 2020 indicates that, in low-income countries, the primary completion rate is only 34% for children from the poorest 20% of households and 79% for children from the richest 20% of households. Dropout rates are particularly high for girls in some SSA countries.[12]

Next Generation research reveals relatively high rates of dropout in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lebanon and South Africa. For example, the Lebanon research revealed that 20% of 25-29 year olds participating in the survey had not completed secondary school (British Council 2020b).



Poverty is a key factor influencing dropouts for all young people, particularly in urban areas, but research from many of the countries indicates that girls are particularly susceptible to dropping out – for example, in Kenya a household survey indicated that 15% of 19- to 24-year-old males had dropped out of primary or secondary school, compared to 22% of females (British Council 2018b). This phenomenon can be attributed in part to cultural gender norms that devalue girls' participation in education and normalise early marriage and pregnancy. For example, in Zimbabwe high dropout rates among young women were attributed to early pregnancies among teenage girls (British Council 2020a). In Ethiopia 15% of girls reported that they had left school because their parents no longer wanted them to attend, compared with only 4% of boys (British Council 2019a). In Lebanon 20% of males who dropped out of school reported they did this in order to pursue paid employment, while 20% of girls said they had dropped out in order to get married (British Council 2020b).

Other intersectional factors compound exclusion from educational opportunities. In Ethiopia young people with disabilities are facing educational challenges because of both negative social perceptions and issues with physical access (British Council 2019a). Ethnic marginalisation and tensions are also affecting young people's decisions to go to university outside of their regions due to fears of violence. In Lebanon young Palestinians cited harassment or punishment in school as key reasons for dropping out of school (British Council 2020b).

Violence in schools is a very serious issue for African countries, in particular. For example, in Kenya only one in five respondents said they felt safe at school. Most worrying is the reporting of highly inappropriate behaviour perpetrated by teachers against girls, including sexual harassment and abuse (British Council 2018b). It is possible that the anonymity and safe environment of the study enabled these often hidden practices to emerge.



## A Growing Crisis in the Availability of Decent Work for Young People

All the young people participating in the Next Generation research were keen to enter well-paid employment, but in many countries they face high unemployment. For example, in 2016, 66% of young people surveyed in South Africa between the ages of 15 to 24 were unemployed (British Council 2018a). Contrary to expectation, many of the studies indicated that those with secondary and tertiary education are often more likely to be unemployed because of the lack of skilled jobs and the gap between demand and supply in the employment market. Although much of the research was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, it is highly likely that this will exacerbate the existing employment deficit in many ODA countries, with young people worst affected. This is already proving to be the case in Lebanon (British Council 2020b).

There is also a growing number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This phenomenon is exacerbated by gender – for example, in Kenya 49% of young women interviewed fell into the NEET category, compared with 37% of young men (British Council 2018b). Race may also be a contributing factor in some countries – in the South African sample, the NEET rate for black African youth was three times higher than for white youth (British Council 2018a).

In most of the countries surveyed young women were more likely to be unemployed than young men. More research is needed into the reasons, but one likely factor is implicit biases in hiring practices fuelled by discriminatory attitudes about women's capabilities and employers' unwillingness to pay maternity leave or offer flexible hours. Once in work some of the young women participating in the Next Generation study reported being subjected to sexual harassment and discrimination: in Kenya women reported being asked for sexual favours as a condition of employment, while others reported being sexually harassed by customers and colleagues (British Council 2018b). The research also indicated that disabled people are also less likely to be employed than those who are able-bodied.

Migration is one symptom of unemployment in many of the countries surveyed – for example, in Kenya 71% of young people interviewed said they were willing to relocate if they had the opportunity. Mass migration for young people is leading to the problem of 'brain drain' in some countries such as Zimbabwe, which many skilled, educated youth are leaving (British Council 2020a).

In all the countries the majority of young people wanted to find secure employment but there was also a strong interest in entrepreneurship – for example, in Ethiopia – 75% of the sample stated that they would like to set up their own business (British Council 2019a). In Lebanon 61% of surveyed youth who were not already self-employed indicated that they would be interested in setting up their own business, citing lack of qualifications, a competitive labour market and high unemployment as the main reasons (British Council 2020b). However, young people in most of the countries surveyed noted that getting started in business was a problem due to lack of capital and difficulties accessing bank loans. Lack of markets was also cited as a barrier.

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*"MIGRATION IS ONE SYMPTOM OF*

**UNEMPLOYMENT"**

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## The Exclusion of Young People from Voice, Agency and Leadership

In the majority of the countries surveyed for Next Generation young people reported a deep distrust of authorities. It is clear that many had been completely turned off politics, even in countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa, where there is new-found democracy. For example, in Zimbabwe more than 60% of those interviewed were unwilling to engage in politics and did not think their vote could change things for the better (British Council 2020a). In Sri Lanka 90% of the young people did vote but this was out of a feeling of civic duty (British Council 2019b).

Many young people reported not feeling represented or listened to by governments. They were also concerned about corruption and nepotism among those with power. In Ethiopia 36% of the young people participating had experienced political corruption in the past five years (British Council 2019a). However, there are indications that young people would welcome opportunities to be more involved in politics, given the right conditions – for example, 44% of young Kenyans interviewed said they would consider standing for public office (British Council 2018b). In some countries, such as South Africa, the Next Generation research indicated more youth engagement at local and civic levels. However, overall there was very low political representation of young people in many of the countries, a situation exacerbated by the abandonment of youth quotas in some cases. Evidence from research in Lebanon revealed the politically motivating potential of disruptive moments for young people.

An uprising began on 17 October 2019 led by young people who have been calling for radical changes to a sectarian system, political corruption and economic hardship: “Youth are fighting to bring about a new political system to not only improve their daily lives but also to allow for a brighter future for themselves and their country” (British Council 2020b). Interestingly, Next Generation data indicated that, prior to the October uprising, only 27% of Lebanese youth surveyed for the study expressed an interest in politics compared with 40% of those surveyed after the uprising. The study also indicated that, while young people’s trust in their government decreased from 22 to 20% over this period their belief in themselves as agents of influence and change increased from 19% to 42% (British Council 2020b).

A pervasive issue is the poor representation of women in the majority of ODA (and many developed) countries and the need to create the enabling conditions for women’s political empowerment.[13] There are some promising developments that may begin to redress the balance – for example, in Sri Lanka a quota of 25% of seats in government for women has been introduced (British Council 2019b), but this measure only begins to scratch the surface of gender inequitable representation and does not guarantee equitable participation or treatment of female politicians.[14] One clear message is the need to encourage more young women to critically engage in politics as voters, agents of accountability and leaders.

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***“Youth are fighting to bring about a new political system to not only improve their daily lives but also to allow for a brighter future for themselves and their country.”***

BRITISH COUNCIL 2020

.....

## Exposure to Gender-Based Violence

The British Council research echoes concerns raised by the UN and other development actors that there is a serious growing problem of GBV at home, in communities and in schools for young women in particular in many ODA countries.[15] For example in Kenya, young women said they often felt pressured by men into performing sexual acts, and that the threat of violence made them afraid to refuse. They reported feeling at risk in their communities, homes, social spaces, schools and workplaces. Where this was discussed, young women indicated that shame and stigma meant they felt unable to report instances of sexual abuse and when they did, they were often not taken seriously (British Council 2018b).

Pressure on young girls to marry early, often leaving school to do so, also emerged as a key issue in Next Generation research in SSA countries including Kenya and Zimbabwe.[16] Emerging evidence indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating these issues. [17] However, entrenched social norms, stigma and lack of effective interventions often means that little happens to change this situation. These are extremely sensitive, often hidden issues and any available data only reveals the tip of a far larger iceberg, but they are vital issues to raise and understand through effective approaches with young people, in order to address harmful behaviours and attitudes within their local and national communities.

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***"Data only reveals the tip of a far larger iceberg, but they are vital issues to raise and understand through effective approaches with young people"***

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(CTS) Malume uya Lumana, 2019. Photo Credit: The Bishop Simeon Trust and young people at Rearabilwe Safe Park in Tsakane, South Africa



## Impacts and Potential Repercussions of These Issues

The body of evidence from across both ODA and developed countries summarised above points to a global crisis for youth that is likely to be exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Without urgent action these negative outcomes for children and young people will translate into longer-term systemic impacts, ranging from economic stress and exploitation (including through illegal migration and trafficking) and mental health issues to participation in risky and/or violent behaviours.

One worrying trend in low and middle-income countries is the rise of gang membership and violence, which has been identified as “the primary threat to regional stability and security” in the Latin American region (Muggah and Aguirre, 2013). Research indicates that a negative educational experience, unemployment and the lack of a sense of belonging or purpose are key drivers of gang membership for young men in particular: “youth gangs can...provide a form of social capital, a sense of belonging and purpose to disenfranchised youth” (Higginson et al. 2018: 5)[18] as well as a site for performing “an extreme public masculinity that provides the gang member with power or ‘respect’” (Higginson et al., 2018: 12; Adams, 2012; Baird, 2012). Evidence shows that these factors, coupled with mistrust of authority and feelings of alienation, also contribute to young people’s attraction to violent extremism and membership of fundamentalist groups (Stewart 2018).

The youth-focused work of CTS and the British Council is demonstrating the enormous importance and value of working with young people through creative, embodied arts-focused participatory action research (PAR) methodologies that provide support in navigating the complex, rapidly shifting environments in which they live, thereby not themselves to be defined by them. These approaches are helping young people to articulate often difficult, abstract feelings and to envision and shape their futures. They are also demonstrating the power of arming young people with practical and/or marketable skills in leadership, social entrepreneurship, media and the arts. Section Four provides a discussion of these approaches, illustrated through case studies from the field in different ODA countries.

The next section provides a theoretical lens on the interlinked issues of change, power and development which underpin much of the British Council and CTS projects. The aim of the section is to foreshadow the unique, innovative elements of many of the projects outlined in Section Four, both for the young people they engage with and for broader social transformation.

.....  
***“Participatory arts approaches are helping young people to articulate often difficult, abstract feelings and to envision and shape their futures”***  
 .....



Unsplash, 2017. Photo Credit: Billetto Editorial



"How does change  
**HAPPEN?"**

## CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT, POWER AND CHANGE

This section provides a theoretical framing of the interconnected issues of power, development and change that both underpin and intersect CTS and British Council youth-focused work. It highlights tensions and contradictions within understandings and articulations of these 'meta-themes' and begins to explore the ways in which the CTS and British Council projects critically and creatively engage with notions and processes of power and development in pursuit of positive micro-level and personal change for young people in countries undergoing radical transitions. These initial thoughts are further expanded and illustrated through examples in Section Four.

Both CTS and the British Council are motivated by a central problematic: the critical need for young people to be front and centre of policy and practice in developing countries (particularly those emerging from conflict or radical change) and the need to confront systemic failures to include or take them into account. They see themselves as part of 'a' solution, by both being the change and working with young people to reflect on effective routes to change.

However, the idea of **change** is contentious and difficult to pin down, raising the questions of who determines the conditions and goals of change, how these are negotiated between stakeholders and within groups and at what levels change happens. These are superseded by the larger question at the heart of all social scientific enquiry: 'how does change happen?' This report cannot promise answers to these questions but it provides insights into innovative, participatory approaches from within CTS and British Council projects that aim to provide young people with the support, tools and space for deep reflection on the types of changes they would like to see and on potential enablers and blockers of changes.

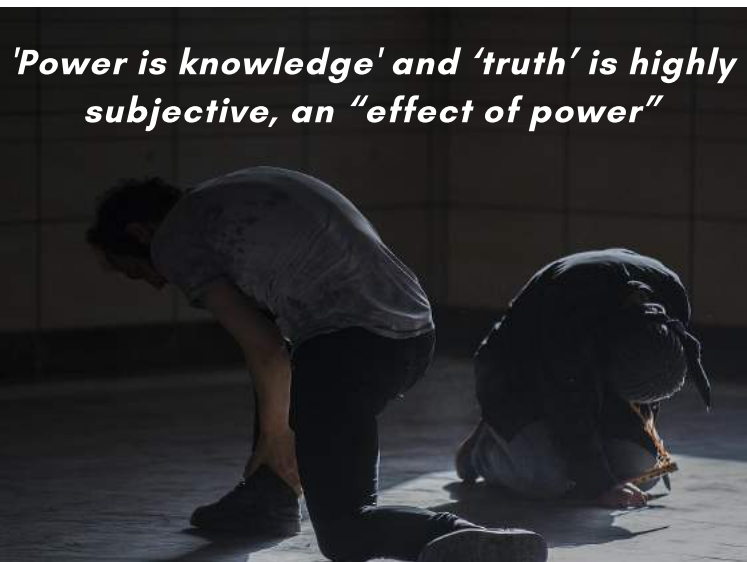
Bourdieu articulated the notion of embodied cultural capital or *habitus* as a kind of status quo where cultural and social norms are naturalised and “taken for granted” because of the engrained nature of the daily practices, structures and relationships that appear so ‘ordinary’ and predictable as to go unquestioned. These practices are given meaning through doxa - the taken-for granted assumptions that inform “social thought” but which may also be proactively mobilised by dominant actors and institutions. Bourdieu refers to the “sense of limits” that constrain aspirations and are reinforced by (perceived) opportunities and possibilities. However, he posits two interconnected theories of change: 1) as a gradual process that happens in the interstices between the social ‘rules’ of which most people are inherently aware and which guide ‘acceptable’ forms of behaviour, thinking and speaking – and the human instinct to ‘bend’ rules creatively (what he refers to as “improvisation” or “invention within limits”) through their daily interactions; and 2) as a an effect of disruptions or crises that enable people to see beyond and question the very conditions on which the “sense of reality” (Bourdieu 1972:164) is based. As the examples in Section Four will reveal, a common trait of CTS and British Council projects is the enabling of quietly ‘disruptive moments’ where young people are encouraged to view themselves, their immediate communities and larger national realities through a new, objective lens and – as a result – see the possibility to imagine and begin mapping alternative paths and futures.

Unsplash, 2019. Photo Credit: Mostafa Meraji

***‘Power is knowledge’ and ‘truth’ is highly subjective, an “effect of power”***

Questions about change are also inextricably linked to the concept and reality of **power**, with associated questions of how power is produced and reproduced to maintain a particular social order and a level of public compliance within that social order. Following Foucault, power is not ‘held’ or ‘wielded’ but is diffuse, endlessly iterated and reiterated through overlapping narratives or ‘discourses’, social interactions and thought processes. According to Foucault “power is ubiquitous, and appears in every moment of social relations – hence, the operations of power are not departures from the norm, but rather [are] constantly present” (Gaventa 2003). In this sense power is creative and people are (usually unwittingly) complicit in its reproduction. Echoing Bourdieu, Foucault talks about the constellations of discourses that constitute ‘domains’ of study and expertise, creating and reinforcing the credibility associated with, for example, dominant versions of history, culture, art, nationhood and progress and making other versions literally ‘unthinkable’. Consequently ‘power is knowledge’ and ‘truth’ is highly subjective, an “effect of power” (Gaventa 2003).

Those working in the applied social sciences, including in the field of development, tend to acknowledge Foucault’s theoretical framing but have also tended to dismiss it as unworkable because it seems to offer few constructive pathways for change through individual or collective agency. Yet Foucault articulates ways in which power can be disrupted, by exposing the mechanisms and artifice of the discourses that create and sustain it. He notes: “Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart” (Foucault 1976). As will be explored in Section Four, different CTS and British Council projects take up this notion that meaningful change happens not only at the individual and community levels, but also at the broader level of discursive interaction: for example, by engaging young people in critical analysis of dominant narratives as a means to negotiate and ‘own’ alternative stories and truths that have more resonance for them.



The perceived need for change is also inextricably bound up with the desire for **development**, particularly in ODA countries. However, critical anthropologies have asked 'whose version of development counts?', asking 'where are the people in current planning and to what extent are their interests served by top-down, largely Northern-driven priorities underpinned by a focus on macro-economic progress that, on close examination, often perpetuate inequalities?' (Escobar 2012; Chambers 1997). In the 1990s, Robert Chambers made a powerful argument that development planning and interventions were repeating the same mistakes because of a fundamental failure to work with and learn from local people as subjects, rather than seeing them as objects of an imposed development delivered by 'experts' with Northern-centric perspectives and assumptions. He made a convincing case for the use of PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) approaches that directly engaged the rural and urban 'poor' in the identification of problems to be solved, demonstrating that they are often not only best placed to do so, but have the capacity to analyse their own complex and diverse realities. Notably, he articulated the potentially empowering nature of these 'non-extractive' processes for those involved. Through his work he has highlighted the importance of self-critical awareness among development professionals coupled with shifts in concepts, values, methods and behaviour (Chambers 1997). The global take-up of PRA approaches has been testimony to the enormous and significant influence of Chambers. Since the early 2000s PRA has evolved into PAR approaches that engage people in identifying, planning and reflecting on the effectiveness of locally relevant solutions to development 'challenges.'

While traditional participatory approaches have no doubt contributed to far better targeted development interventions, they contain within them a conundrum. Chambers' argument for taking local knowledge seriously rests on the central premise that 'ordinary' people in rural or urban communities in developing countries are, or can be, as analytical as Northern scientists. In other words, they prove their credibility as sources through their ability to articulate complex ideas through language, maps and diagrams, to think and articulate ideas in ways that organise the arbitrariness and emotion of everyday life and relationships into neat, logical/cerebral patterns. He notes that "these methods...attractive" have provided a professionally acceptable point of entry for the spread of PRA. PRA methods which generate figures, matrices and tables can be immediately attractive (Chambers, 1996). His words reflect the perceived need for PRA to demonstrate a Cartesian sense of rationality if it is to be taken seriously (Bendelow and Williams, 1998). The sub-text here might be that rural 'undeveloped' people are also logical, rational beings, rather than being stereotypically 'other': unsystematic, irrational, arbitrary or consumed/led by emotions.

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***"PRA has evolved into PAR approaches that engage people in identifying, planning and reflecting on the effectiveness of locally relevant solutions to development challenges."***

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Unsplash, 2019. Photo Credit: Joel Muniz

These imperatives are further bolstered by the increasing insistence by donors on the generation of logical frameworks that equate project success with the achievement of short-term measurable goals. These bureaucratic imperatives often entail a stymying of the deeper forms of transformation that happen over time and that are crucial for long-term sustainable change. The focus on logical frameworks also replicates dominant Northern-centric perceptions of what constitutes valid research in a development context and it raises the question of what is lost in the process of ignoring or tidying up the messy, contradictory and often emotional experience of being human. And, despite the aspiration to “hand over the stick” allowing “the insiders [to] determine the agenda, categories and details” (Chambers 1996), the expectation of specific outputs and outcomes also raises questions of how authentic participatory processes and voices can be in practice.

A more fundamental question is whose voices and experiences may be excluded from these processes? Critics have pointed to the (often inadvertent) exclusion of women, girls and marginalised groups such as disabled, ethnic minorities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people from these spaces.[19] An additional question would be the extent to which conventional participatory methodologies provide inclusive or relevant spaces for young people.

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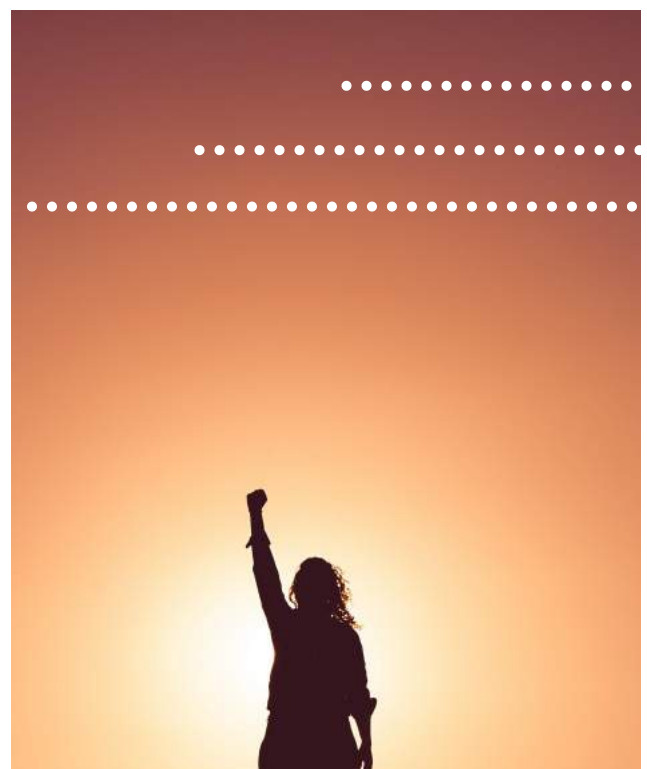
***"A fundamental question is whose voices and experiences may be excluded from these participatory processes and to what extent do participatory methodologies provide inclusive or relevant spaces for young people"***

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Given these limitations to current research practices, embodied methodologies can have enormous added value for participatory work undertaken in development (and other) contexts. As the name suggests, these methodologies aim to help capture the “extra discursive” (Chadwick 2016): the complex, sensory experience of “actual felt bodies”, both valuing and enabling the expression of emotion, and the “embodied creativeness”, including “non-cognitive” and “non-verbal” forms of social practice” in ways that “go beyond the new canonical cultural methods – in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation ...” (Simpson 2001).

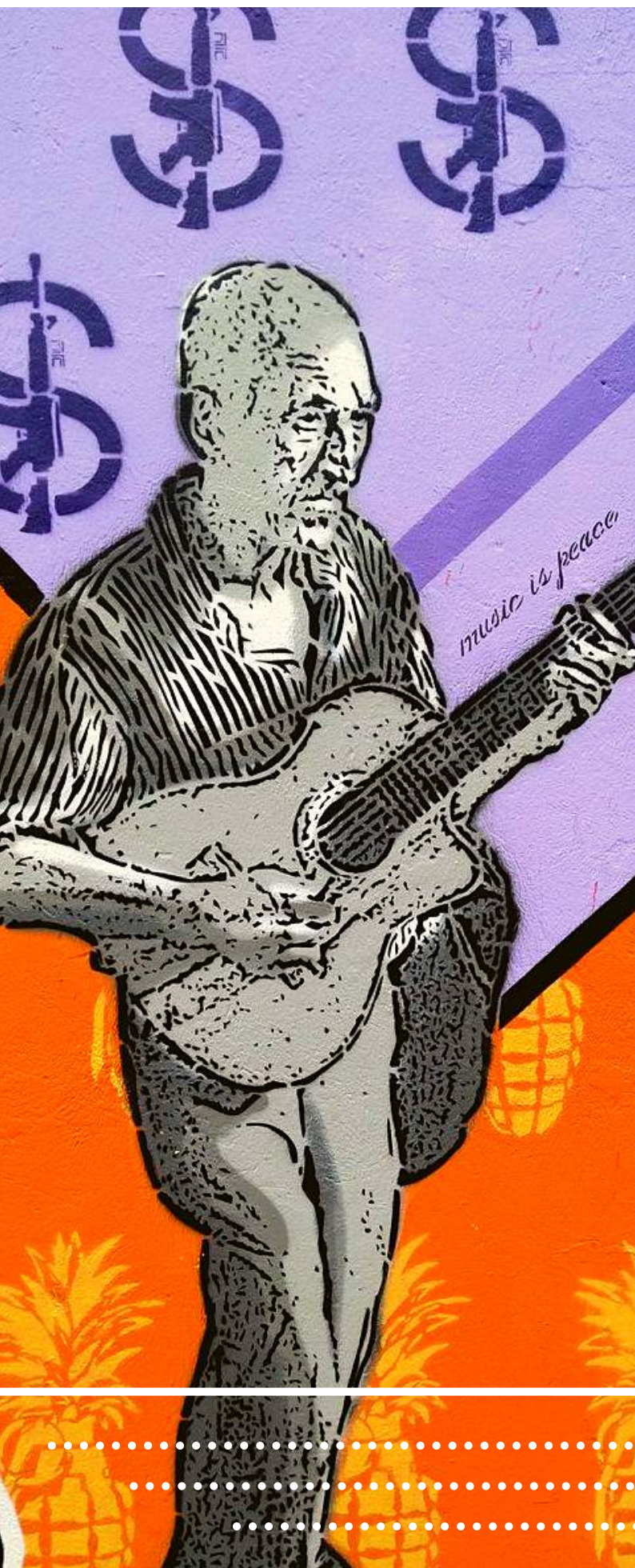
Embodied approaches are about the means of *co-producing knowledge* through creative processes such as performance, art and poetry and the modes of *communicating knowledge* through creative pieces, film and other unconventional research dissemination vehicles. As the examples in Section Four will illustrate, CTS projects are demonstrating the enormous potential of using these types of approaches for work with young people in post-conflict and other sensitive situations, and there are clear avenues of learning for other researchers or practitioners with similar aims.

Unsplash, 2019. Photo Credit: Miguel Bruna





(CTS) Colombia, 2020. Photo Credit: Katie Hodgkinson



## INNOVATIVE CHANGING THE STORY AND BRITISH COUNCIL RESPONSES

This section aims to map some of the ways in which CTS and British Council projects and programmes are responding directly and indirectly to issues raised in the Next Generation research. It highlights key methodological and thematic learning from a range of post-conflict and transition ODA countries, demonstrating commonalities in issues faced by young people both in countries included in the Next Generation research and those falling outside of its purview. The section is grounded on case studies and information from in-depth interviews with project leads as well as from CTS and British Council reports and other relevant information. It sheds light on innovative aspects of the approaches, on how they engage with issues and manifestations/practices of power and development – and asks to what extent they are contributing to change at different levels.

### **The Value of Arts-based, Embodied Methodologies for Working with Young People**

A major critique of traditional development approaches is that they generate information in extractive ways and fail to reflect the perspectives of ‘real people’ at the micro-level of project design and implementation. As we saw in Section Three, participatory methodologies have responded to these top-down approaches by ‘handing the stick’ to local people and valuing local knowledge’ but, as noted, these ‘ground up’ approaches often prioritise cerebral, rational aspects of personhood and sideline the emotional, intangible experiences and expressions that are integral to being human.

By contrast, many of the CTS projects and some British Council youth-focused projects take a people-centred approach to development and change that focuses on the 'whole person'. The 'embodied methodologies' mobilised through a diverse range of CTS projects take as their starting point the reality that people are complex beings that feel and experience in both verbal and non-verbal ways. CTS projects demonstrate the particular value of these methodologies for working with young people by enabling them to express ideas and emotions through art, film-making and performance.

Notably the work is deliberately and explicitly non-extractive, offering routes for transformation at the micro-level of both individual perception and collective understanding. The approaches are based on an intrinsic understanding of change as a longer-term, non-linear process that is contingent on subtle but fundamental shifts in mindset at the individual and collective levels. Notably, they demonstrate the importance of stories for illustrating trajectories of change for young people and the connecting moments that so often are not or cannot be captured by big data.

A significant theme is the use of creative, arts-based participatory approaches for working with young people in communities affected by conflict and other traumatic situations. In particular, these approaches are enabling them to express and confront painful experiences and to articulate often very abstract ideas about the past, self, community and identity. They can help with addressing personal and collective trauma (including GBV) and even contribute to reconciliation and peace building processes.

Arts-based participatory approaches have been identified as 'an essential component of peacebuilding work' in post-conflict societies (Zelizer 2003: 62). For example, community theatre has played a key role in reconciliation efforts in Rwanda (see Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2017). **Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP)**, part of CTS, uses arts for peace building with young people, with music, dance and drama providing a means of enabling dialogue on issues of conflict and personal security. The MAP project uses a methodology that engages participants through exercises that generate trust and teamwork, alongside developing conflict analysis and problem-solving skills. The methodology provides a space for young people to participate in discussions about issues of concern to them. These issues often emerge from story circles related to a problem that the young people face, alongside other exercises. The stories are then analysed, and themes are developed, to form the basis of short plays that are written and performed by the participants, who suggest solutions at local and regional levels.

(CTS) P1 Rwanda Mobile Arts for Peace, 2019. Photo Credit: Deus Kwizera & Kurtis Dennison



(CTS) P1 Rwanda Mobile Arts for Peace, 2019. Photo Credit Deus Kwizera & Kurtis Dennison



MAP aims to provide a more contextually relevant approach to dealing with trauma than Western psychosocial approaches, responding to the disconnect between Western approaches to trauma and lived experience. Rather than relying purely on verbal cues MAP is attuned to non-cognitive expressions of emotion and meaning such as body language. Efforts are also made to contextualise concepts, to enable the authentic expression of people's experiences and potential healing. The CTS project **'Connective Memories: Intergenerational Expressions in Contemporary Rwanda'** worked with a group of MAP-trained young people as young researchers in Rwanda. The process revealed the relevance and usefulness of proverbs and stories as tools for stimulating expressions of memory. MAP also demonstrates a clear duty of care to young people through a holistic approach. For example, when young people talk about particularly painful memories – in one example girls in Rwanda enacted a story about a child being raped by a teacher – a psychologist is always on hand for follow-up and appropriate actions at the group and individual levels.

The power of arts-based embodied methodologies for amplifying young people's voices in non-verbal ways is clear in the example of The CTS project **'Street Art to Promote Representation and Epistemic Justice Among Rural Marginalized Zimbabwean Youth'** which focused on epistemic injustice and cultural poverty in Zimbabwe. The project engaged young people from poor, marginalised communities in Zimbabwe whose voices are often silenced because their Tonga language and culture are viewed as irrelevant or 'second class' within Zimbabwe's mainstream culture. The remoteness and poverty of the communities in which they live, coupled with endemic ethnic conflict, further entrench this sense of exclusion. Furthermore, the Tonga language and cultural practices are at risk of becoming extinct because they are associated with negative economic capital and are not being transmitted to young people.

The project, co-designed with a local Zimbabwean youth-based NGO, aimed to enable young people from these communities to articulate their thoughts, feelings, concerns and aspirations.

Some of the most high-profile artists from Zimbabwe - including those linked with the national gallery in Harare - were invited to collaborate with the project and introduced street art forms such as graffiti to the young participants as a form of expression and protest. A week-long training was held with the artists to engage them in thinking about youth, barriers young people face and what agency they have and to support them in developing a practical workshop that would be underpinned by these theoretical concerns.

The workshops were very successful, reaching out to young people who had never received art training and introducing many of the students to street art. A sensitivity to language was a central part of workshop design, giving the possibility for the young people to participate and express themselves in their own language. Despite their lack of previous training they produced some impressive pieces of art, which were displayed through high profile exhibitions in the national museum of Harare and venues in other towns and cities. The art communicated multiple themes, including concerns about the quality and value of education; the need for capacity building in vocational skills and the loss of local livelihoods such as fishing. A significant theme was gender equality, particularly the dominance of patriarchal norms and practices, and the prevalence of GBV. The students also made a connection between the issues of poverty, school dropout, early pregnancy and marriage.

(CTS) ECR Zimbabwe 2019. Photo Credit: Faith Mkwanzani



Importantly, the project did not claim contribution or attribution to any grand material changes. Rather it was built on an implicit understanding that “cognitive change is the first step” and that it is “much more about reflecting on how to enable change in the mindsets of people first.” One shift in mindset relates to the questioning of assumptions for the young people, who recognised their own innate capacity to be artists and saw the possibility for art to be a democratic space they could occupy or own, rather than simply being defined by a wealthy, powerful minority. Melis Cin, one of the project leads noted: *“[the project] showed young people that art is not exclusive or a luxury but can be very inclusive and that young people can contribute to the development of art.”* Significantly the assumptions of that powerful minority were also held to account as they viewed the art and began to review their own narrow ideas about the value and quality of community-based arts.

In addition to these perceptual changes, the young people expressed a strong interest in reclaiming and energising their own cultural practices and art forms, calling for more workshops with a focus on teaching skills in local crafts such as basket weaving (for which Tonga people are renowned), which could also provide a route to income generation.



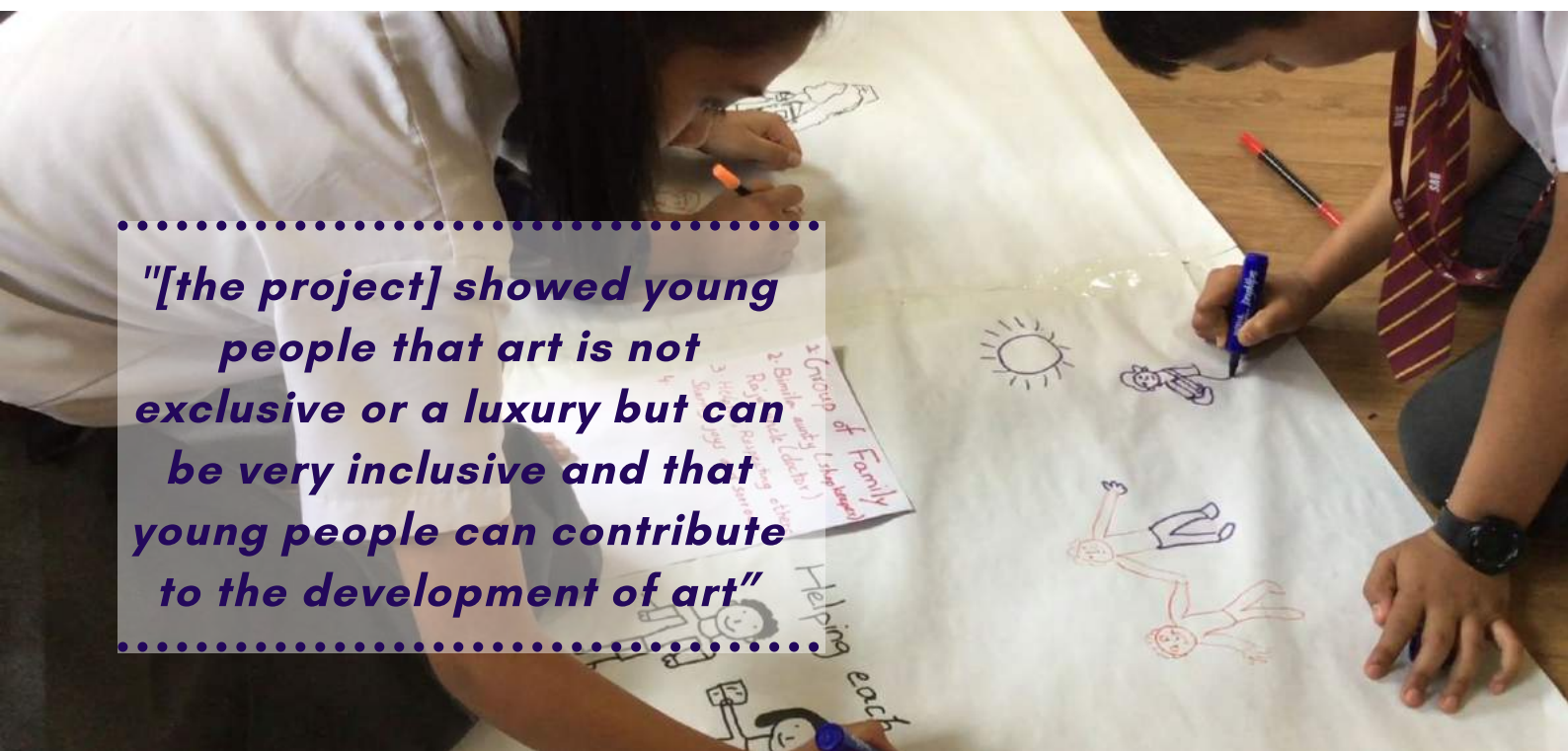
(CTS) P2 Zimbabwe. Photo Credit: Faith Mkwanzani:



(CTS) P2 Zimbabwe. Photo Credit: Faith Mkwanzani:

(CTS) ECR Kenya and Nepal, 2019. Photo Credit: Marlon Moncrieffe

***“[the project] showed young people that art is not exclusive or a luxury but can be very inclusive and that young people can contribute to the development of art”***



## Democratising History, Culture and Art for the Imagining of Inclusive Futures

The discussion of power and change in Section Three revealed history, culture and art as key sites for reproducing dominant, state-led narratives and ‘official’, validated truths or ‘national imaginaries’ (Anderson 1983; 2016). Often defined by an established elite, these narratives contain within them the inherent negation of alternative forms or stories or render them completely invisible, beyond the realms of imagination. Consequently, they actively produce exclusivity and exclusion of those falling beyond their narrow purview. For example, a core critique by Black rights activists, including the Black Lives Matter movement is of the ‘white washing’ of history which minimises the brutality of slavery and its contribution to Britain’s global power, and the glorification of former slave owners. [20]

Projects and findings from CTS and the British Council in diverse ODA countries are interrogating the issue of whose versions of nationhood, progress, history, art and culture are being perpetuated and how these are being mediated through school curricula, media representations, national art galleries, museums and other forms of cultural expression.

CTS projects in Cambodia Colombia and other countries are revisiting notions of history, art and culture in ways that democratise them, make them relevant for all and reposition them as powerful forms of agency and creation in the search for meaningful individual and collective futures. The example from Zimbabwe in 4.1. illustrated the transformative potential of creating cultural capital that is owned and defined by people on the ground, rather than a few at the top. In this way they are contributing to moments of change that, although subtle, can have iterative and cumulative power.



.....  
***"Creative, embodied approaches are helping young people to gain a sense of ownership over their lives and futures, for example by engaging them in processes to enable them to retell their personal, communal and national histories in ways that make sense to them."***  
.....

In Cambodia the project ‘**Contemporary Arts Making and Creative Expression among Young Cambodians**’ is subtly countering notions of formal, ‘big C’ Culture as something fixed and immutable by presenting alternative visions and practices of culture as dynamic, changing, engaging and relevant. The project engages young artists and performers in providing performative narratives that multiply those state-endorsed notions of formal culture that aim to reconstruct and preserve traditional forms of expression and embodied knowledge that were nearly obliterated by the Khmer Rouge. In a country where 65% of the population is under 30 (UNDP 2020), young people do not necessarily relate to the experience of genocide or to narratives surrounding the loss of cultural forms. The project asks: ‘How do the arts express what it means to be Cambodian today?’ The project lead noted: “Young people are moving on from the [traditional, state-led] narrative around artistic expression and do not always see their creative works as needing to engage with the experience of the Khmer Rouge era. They have a wider set of interests, from environmentalism to LGBTQ rights, and seek to make art that reflects these concerns.” The aim of the project is to interrogate these tensions through the development of performance works by young and intergenerational artists. [21]

In Colombia, Rwanda and Cambodia, CTS projects are mobilising arts-based methodologies to provide space and time for young people to process experiences, histories and national identities linked with violence and conflict; reflect on their own identities; and consider the futures they would like to help shape, both at an individual and collective level. Creative, embodied approaches are helping young people to gain a sense of ownership over their lives and futures, for example by engaging them in processes to enable them to retell their personal, communal and national histories in ways that make sense to them. Rather than being defined by top down/imposed stories of the past and national identity these processes are enabling young people to redefine themselves in ways that reflect who they are, their values and who they want to be. This can contribute to increased wellbeing.

The CTS project **'Connective Memories: Intergenerational Expressions in Contemporary Rwanda'** focused on questions of intergenerational transmission of trauma in the shadow of the 1994 genocide. It critically engaged with narratives that position children and young people as passive recipients of their national history and the associated trauma. For example it is challenging to think about concept of memory in Rwanda in a non-politicised way as the word for memory (*Kwibuka*) is the same word used to commemorate the genocide so is bound up with a certain perception of the past and certain set of memories. The project aimed to understand how Rwandan youth are actively making meaning, how they are engaging with these narratives and what concerns and aspirations they have.

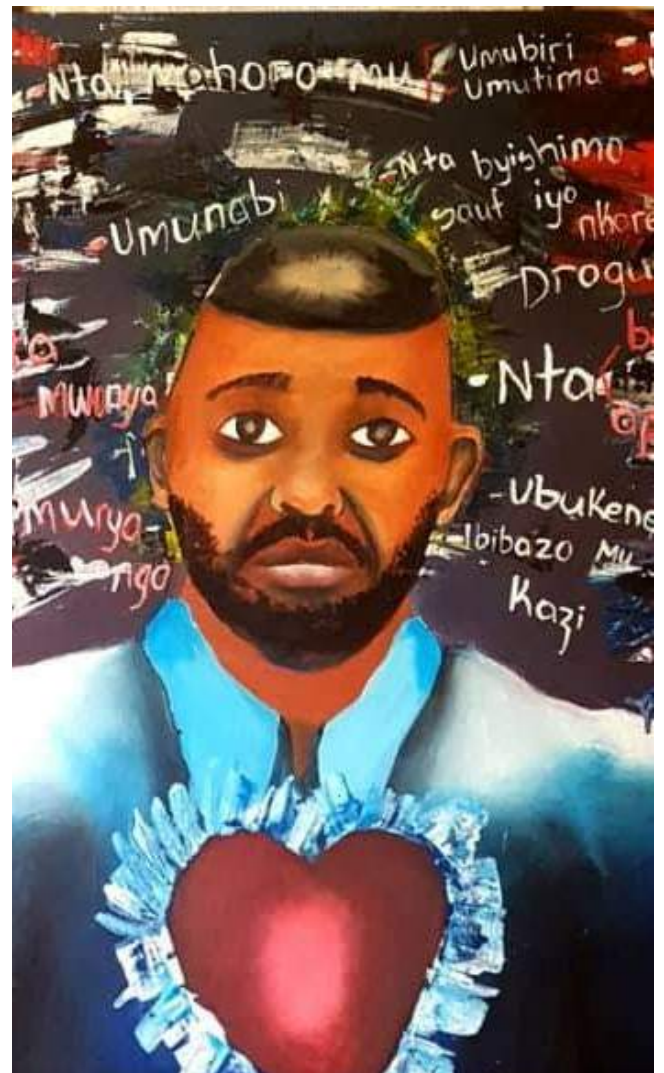
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"What does memory mean  
**TO YOU?"**

.....

As the project was about memories, the first challenge was to find an alternative word to *Kwibuka* as using this term would frame the project as being associated with a narrow idea of memory and set of official state narratives. Working with five boys and five girls from a representative sample of schools, the project facilitators used arts to explore the idea of memories themselves, asking 'what does memory mean to you?' Based on their discussions, the group decided to use the concept *Isangizanyankuru* meaning 'to share stories' as their conceptual foundation rather than *kwibuka*. The young people developed short plays based on the stories they had generated and performed these to adults in order to stimulate dialogue and thereby a potential pathway to change.

(CTS) ECR Connective Memories, 2020. Photo Credit: Chaste Uwihoreye



The stories revealed that the young people were often more concerned with immediate problems in the present rather than seeking answers in the past. Significantly, they enabled reflection and disclosure of the highly sensitive issue of GBV. Stories revealed situations or young people's concerns about teachers sexually abusing girls as well as cases of domestic violence in the home. One story was about a teacher who had raped a female student, resulting in her pregnancy. This prompted a discussion where the adults identified the need for security cameras in schools, but the young female researchers recognised this was not practical, realising that the teachers could simply switch them off and continue the abuse.

The CTS project **YouthLEAD: Fostering Youth Peacebuilding Capacity in Colombia** was developed in the wake of the 2016 Peace Accord. The project asks how young people in Colombia are coping with the impact of war and how they are processing these individual and collective histories to understand the present and look forward to the future. Significantly, the project asks how arts-based practices can help close the gap between generations and social groups in Colombia. Central to this project was the training of young people in local communities to work with children aged 6-13 using photography and mural painting as part of a historical memory approach. The children were asked to think about issues such as displacement, place, community assets and changes they would like to see and contribute towards and to analyse the photos they had taken in order to deepen their understanding of these issues. The work was shared through a mobile exhibit in Bogota.



(CTS) ECR Colombia YouthLEAD, 2019. Photo Credit:: Laura Taylor

In a similar vein, the CTS project **The Making of the Museum** aims to look at the ways in which museums emerge, the interactions between places, narratives and social actors in the process of excavation and construction of pasts. The project has worked with young people in Pristina, Kosovo, to involve them in influencing, shaping and designing a new initiative - the School House Museum. Through participatory methods young people are being encouraged to produce knowledge and content for the Museum, a process which enables them to critically reflect on the past violence of the region and identify ways to promote awareness and active citizenship among museum visitors.

(CTS) ECR Colombia YouthLEAD, 2019. Photo Credit: Laura Taylor



## Citizenship, Leadership and Political Inclusion

(CTS) P2 Bosnia and Herzegovina 2019. Photo Credit: Tiffany Fairey

The Next Generation research and experience of the British Council and CTS working with young people in diverse countries reveals the intense, growing mistrust of government, politicians and even of social action reflected by the Next Generation research and in many CTS countries. This is contributing to a deep sense of disenfranchisement and hopelessness among many young people. As noted in Section Two, failing to actively engage with these issues will have certain implications for the mental health of young people, particularly young men, and is likely to push them into illegal activities such as gang or fundamentalist group membership or risky migration strategies. CTS and British Council projects are actively engaging with this issue, encouraging young people to recognise their own power and responsibility to enable change through peaceful yet powerful means.

Insights from British Council work on Strengthening Resilience (Stewart, 2018) are particularly salient. Identified key push factors for involvement in violent extremism emerging from work in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia and from the body of resilience research include:

- Unfair Governance
- Unequal social, political and economic opportunities
- Lack of voice/representation
- Intergenerational trauma and sense of a threat to identity
- Conflict
- Endemic violence
- State repression, surveillance and coercive policing
- Injustice and perceptions of injustice





These factors contribute to a perceived and real narrowing of young people’s options and perspectives and make them increasingly susceptible to powerful messages from violent fundamentalist movements (see Figure 1). Stewart notes that “young people are not radicalised so much as ‘recruited’ into organisations that, very simply, provide community and a sense of direction” (2018: 15). Research indicates that some or all of these factors are also present in motivations for other forms of gang membership (Higginson et al.2018), whose impacts may be experienced at the community level but which are often as concerning as involvement in extremist groups, given the growing prevalence of violent gang-related knife and gun crime in many countries. [22]

.....

***"lack of representation/voice, unfair governance and conflict among other factors contribute to a perceived and real narrowing of young people's options and perspectives"***

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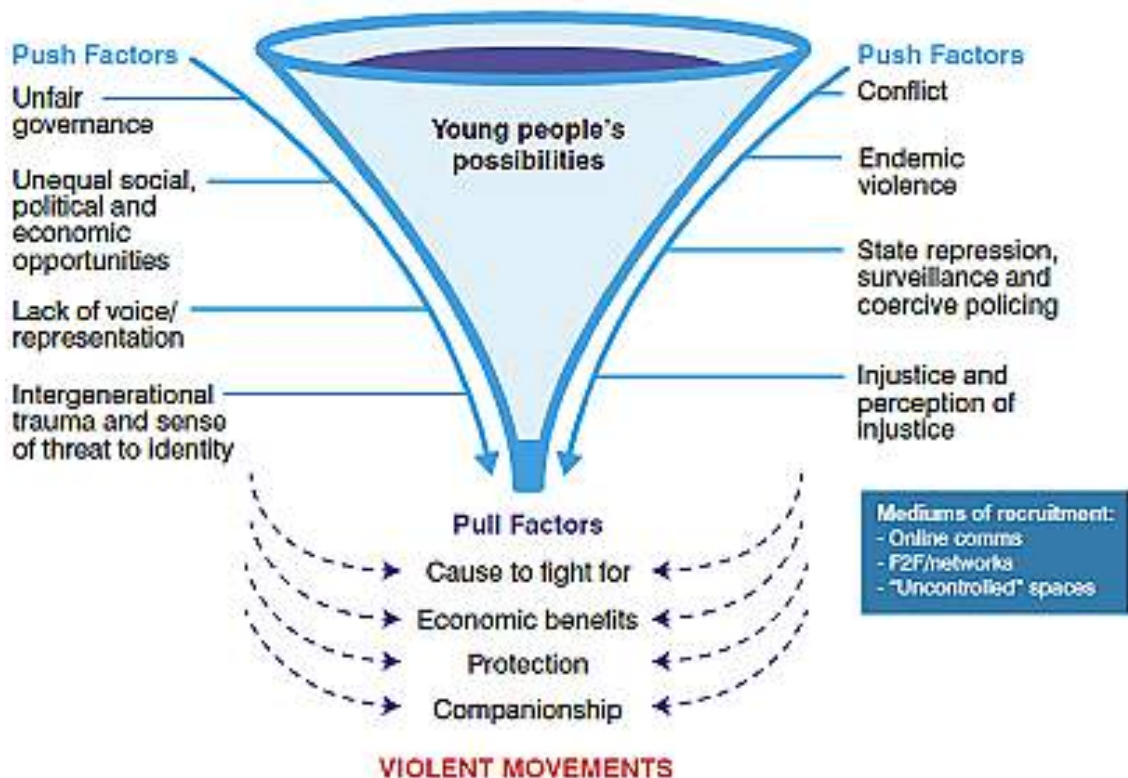


Figure 1: Process resulting in violent extremism (taken from © British Council, 2019 (developed by the British Council through the Strengthening Resilience Programme – funded by the European Union)



The British Council Strengthening Resilience framework emphasises the need for complex interventions that encompass both individual capacity building and collective action, providing a shared sense of purpose. According to Stewart: “Resilient individuals utilise the opportunities that exist – and create new ones – which develop social networks and benefit the community at large. They, and therefore their communities, are i) less likely to conclude that violence is the only option; and ii) when confronted with problems, can draw on a wider skill set to manage them positively” (Stewart, British Council 2018).

Among the identified key principles for achieving resilience is facilitating young people in the development of a broad range of skills and personal resources that encourage personal agency, support relationship building and help create a sense of belonging and life purpose. This resonates with participatory approaches from CTS and the British Council that are allowing young people space for reflexivity.



British Council Active Citizens workshop (image © British Council)

(CTS) ECR Venezuela, 2020. Photo credit: Marcelo Rodríguez

The British Council **Strengthening Resilience** programme translates these principles into practice in post ‘Arab Spring’ Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. The programme aims to build the resilience of young people and their communities – helping them to “survive and thrive” whatever pressures and hazards they confront – and reduce the appeal of violent extremist narratives. Through the programme the British Council is demonstrating how innovative participatory processes can build resilience of young people to choose positive pathways. According to the project lead a key question is: “how can these creative practices with young people enable them to step out of the conventions and constraints that have been imposed on them and think in new, different ways that are empowering, motivating and liberating?”

In Venezuela the CTS project **‘Pensamiento y Libertad (Thought and Freedom)’** helps young people develop critical thinking skills through art to enable them to visualise what life post conflict would look like. This work is important because of the sense of hopelessness, powerlessness and political demotivation that many young people feel in Venezuela. The project lead explained: “Young people feel their lives are static and not going anywhere - they can’t plan or hope. They have no aspirations – they can’t go to university and need to work but can’t save or buy anything. They need to work to earn money to support their families. They work all day but don’t achieve anything, work all day to earn money for food. They are living a hand to mouth existence.” The only form of dissent they recognise is violent protest but the project is helping give young people tools for expressing what changes they want and how they want change to happen, to see that they can be the change they desire and fight for something better.

*"the project is helping give young people tools for expressing what changes they want and how they want change to happen"*

Other approaches are more proactive, actively building practical skills in leadership and political agency. For example, the British Council programme **Future Leaders Connect** aims to foster young people's ability to shape policy as well as promoting ownership and skills-building in leadership in 14 countries. Young people who are able to demonstrate examples of previous leadership are invited to apply and are selected according to the strength of their (non-formal) experience and ideas. The young people participating must be interested in making a change through policy and the programme provides opportunities, networks and learning for them to develop practical leadership skills, think about the changes they want to contribute to and help them narrow this to actionable policy change. The initiative connects young people with key stakeholders in government, enables them to understand the processes behind policy making and facilitates them in developing their own leadership model. A key aim is helping young people to understand how change happens in policy and what barriers to change have been in the past.



'Junaid Oliephant from Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba, Graff Reinet, South Africa on his way to a protest'.

The British Council **Active Citizens Social Leadership training Programme (ACP)** works with young people at the local level to be change agents in multiple countries by promoting community-based social action and building confidence to influence policy. The Programme focus is promoting social leadership skills and social action. Working with local change agents ACP aims to build trust and understanding between communities and work with partners that include government actors and arts associations to deliver the programme in local communities. ACP is based on the theory that change can happen through the power of intercultural dialogue. A central principle is that fostering empathy and the power to affect policy can be achieved by working with diverse stakeholders and connecting with marginalised people. This builds trust and confidence through the mobilisation of participatory creative, arts-based approaches that enable the expression of new ideas for inclusion and promoting the political empowerment of young people. A key element of the Programme is the development of adaptable learning modules on identity and culture as part of a process of supporting community-based social action. For example, in Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia young artists are working with local communities to create positive change through arts and culture. In Syria a network of over 5000 activists has been developed to help strengthen civil society and provide support to those displaced by conflict.

(CTS) P2 Venezuela, 2020. Photo Credit: Jesús Flores



## Increasing the Value, Reach and Inclusivity of Pedagogy and Education

Education represents a key site of action and change in ways that resonate with Bourdieu's critique of pedagogic authority's key role in reproducing the cultural norms and ideals of ruling classes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). According to Bourdieu "All pedagogic action (PA) is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power... PA reproduces the dominant culture, contributing thereby to the reproduction of the structure of the power relations within a social formation." PA refers not only to educational content but to "institutional educational systems" - the institutional forms, processes, relationships, language and rules that constitute the field of education.

Stewart (2018) emphasises the importance of effective, targeted education that teaches life skills such as "self-esteem, agency, perspective-taking skills, and empathy, as well as the ability to network and negotiate" for fostering resilience among young people. She notes that "building resilience is... about how students are taught as well as what they are taught." Significantly, she cautions that "there is evidence that the wrong sort of education can reduce resistance to violent extremism. In short, where education fails to encourage questioning or allow alternative points of view, debate or critical thinking, this can foster a particular mindset, which is attracted to simple solutions and absence of ambiguity, nuance or debate and that can lead to vulnerability to radicalisation" (Stewart 2018: 12).

Many CTS projects are piloting innovative approaches that subtly challenge established forms of PA. Projects in India, Nepal, Kenya and other countries are exploring the value and feasibility of introducing a critical thinking approach to educational pedagogy and through arts projects as a means to foster reflection and 'out of the box' thinking for young people in ways that promote optimism and a sense of empowerment.

The CTS project '**Tribal Education Methodology: Sustainable Education Through Heritage and Performance**' in India illustrates the potential of creative approaches to include and amplify the voices of disenfranchised or marginalised groups of young people. One aim of the project is to develop a creative, theatre-based module for the school curriculum aimed at raising awareness of tribal cultures that have been systematically excluded from educational materials. The modules promote participatory performative approaches that enable young people from remote tribal communities to express their cultural values in their own languages and forms of cultural expression. Part of the philosophy is that teaching and learning should not be purely cerebral and that a more embodied engagement will energise and motivate students. The project aims to foster mutual respect and understanding through cultural and intergenerational exchange. An end goal is to reduce the high dropout rate among (primarily male) students from tribal communities by making the school curriculum more relevant to them and by increasing understanding and support of the teachers.

The project works with allies in the Ministry of Education, the Kerala Development and Innovative Strategic Council (KDISC), the Government of Kerala and the Kerala Social Security Mission. The overall goal is to integrate these approaches into the national curriculum. The project is being piloted initially with 15 schools in a high mountainous area of Kerala with a large tribal population. The approach will then be scaled up to include other schools and Indian states.



(CTS) Tribal Education Methodology Project, 2020. Photo Credit Sreenath Nair

## Building Capacity for Economic Empowerment

The negative impacts of slower economic growth on decent employment opportunities for young people in many ODA countries are reflected in section three. While many young people expressed a preference for the security of work in the private or public sectors, in many of the countries surveyed for Next Generation there is increasing interest in entrepreneurship as a means of proactively seeking economic empowerment, resilience and self-determination. The growing social entrepreneurship movement is offering opportunities for young people to develop small, innovative not-for-profit businesses in ways that are both socially and environmentally responsible. Social enterprise (SE) differs from purely commercial entrepreneurship models in that it is driven by a social purpose, deploying market mechanisms to create social change, for example through supporting refugee communities with access to education and safe, secure, well-paid jobs that bring dignity as well as an income. British Council research estimates that in Sub-Saharan Africa, SEs employ between 28 and 41 million people. The research indicates that SEs actively promote social inclusion and empowerment of traditionally marginalised groups in SSA: around 73% of SEs actively employ people from poor communities, compared to 56% of profit-first businesses, while women account for a higher percentage of SE employees and managers than in for-profit MSMEs and private sector workplaces (British Council 2020c). A number of CTS and British Council projects and programmes are demonstrating the enormous potential of SEs for addressing the issue of youth unemployment in ways that are intrinsically empowering.

The CTS project **'Building Inclusive and Sustainable Civil Society: A Social Entrepreneurship Wellbeing Toolkit Created by and For Young People'** recognises that organisations and businesses are only as strong and sustainable as the individuals behind them. It takes a people-centred PAR approach to understanding the motivations of young social entrepreneurs in Malaysia and Cambodia and contributing to their and their families' wellbeing. The desired change/outcome of the project is to enable young people to be active citizens and change-makers in ways that are authentic to them rather imposing external perceptions of 'ideal' social change and social entrepreneurship.

Participatory events have been piloted in Malaysia that enable young social entrepreneurs to share their experiences and map ways forward using tools such as journey mapping and story boarding. In partnership with local organisations, the project leads are developing a toolkit, supplemented with locally relevant case studies, which is intended to help young social entrepreneurs to maintain wellbeing.

The innovative capacity of these young entrepreneurs has been illustrated by their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which many have viewed as an opportunity to increase the resilience and responsiveness of their organisations. Some are using the opportunity to make and distribute personal protective equipment and deliver food and other essential items. Others have taken a step back to think about how their organisations can become more resilient in the face of future challenges.

Unsplash, 2019. Photo Credit: Aaron Kar



In a similar vein, the British Council **Global Social Enterprise Programme**[23] provides social entrepreneurs in over 30 countries with access to training, mentoring and funding and also convenes policy dialogues, on promoting social enterprise and promote social enterprise education in schools and universities. Working in some of the most deprived areas, the programme starts from the premise that there is no empowerment without economic empowerment. Since 2009 the programme has trained 17, 590 entrepreneurs, engaged more than 100,000 people face to face, and formed over 150 partnerships across government, civil society, business and academia. Examples include a project with Diageo in India that aims to foster gender equality and economic empowerment by cascading training to 4,000 women social entrepreneurs; a project in the Philippines which strengthened civil society participation in policy reforms and promotes job creation and small and medium enterprise development; and a social enterprise training programme in Morocco which supported youth employment and addressed some of the root causes of instability leading to the exposure of young people to extremism.[24]

The British Council programme **Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies (DICE)** is a global, experimental and consultative programme aiming to reduce profound economic and social exclusion. DICE aims to encourage economic agency among constituencies that include youth, women and differently-abled people in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa and the UK. DICE has reached an estimated 18,970 people, of whom 37% were youth, 15,626 were entrepreneurs, 1,981 worked for intermediaries, and 1,363 operated at policy level. In nurturing creative social entrepreneurs and policy-makers to address social and economic challenges, DICE explores connectivity, creativity, inclusion, and the role of storytelling and cultural relations to develop an economy that is more inclusive and creative.



***"DICE aims to encourage economic agency among constituencies that include youth, women and differently abled people in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa and the UK."***



DICE collaboration fund training – Picture of a group activity during capacity building session of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan under the DICE Collaboration Grant project delivered by DEMO in Pakistan and Manchester Digital Laboratory (MadLab) in UK. - Photo Credit: The British Council.



YSM – A group picture of young journalists DICE has brought together known as Young Story makers, to write about the project activities and to build their capacity by linking them to UK's leading journalists working on social enterprise and impact. The picture dates to May 2019, during the DICE conference in London. Photo Credit: The British Council.



DICE works at three interconnected and interdependent levels:

- 1) **Policy level** - influencing and supporting policies that will provide an environment for creative social enterprises, particularly those led by women or young people.
- 2) **Intermediary level** - working in partnership with and building the capacity of institutions that help support creative social enterprises.
- 3) **Enterprises with social purpose** - supporting social entrepreneurs to find their purpose and set up businesses that will help serve the community as well as providing them with a living.

Delivering over 150 inter-related projects, DICE included the **DICE Young Storymakers**: 14 young journalists from each DICE country who were selected to tell the stories of economic inclusion and creative social entrepreneurship in their communities. **The Critical Play Series** in South Africa convenes young people from across 'the ecosystem' to playfully imagine new cities. **The DICE Fund**, a £2 million initiative supporting 28 co-designed capacity-building projects between UK and DICE country intermediaries included the partnership of ZU-UK and La Da Fahvelinha, where young designers in Belo Horizonte, Brazil partnered with like-minded creatives in Bristol UK to establish a new upcycling fashion label; and YouthBank International (Northern Ireland) and Waqfeyat Al-Maadi (Cairo), encouraging young people to research problems that matter to them, and to raise money and make small seed grants to other young people.

A global evaluation has confirmed that DICE has contributed to important pre-conditions for inclusive growth through its systematic ecosystem approach, including: through increasing capacity, turnover and confidence of creative social enterprises; strengthening intermediaries, contributing to a more positive and supportive enabling environment for social enterprise through its policy work; and creating a network of like-minded people working toward system change.[25]

CTS projects are also indirectly responding to the crisis in youth employment by transferring and building young people's skills in potentially marketable areas that include media and film, photography, arts and performance and research.

In South Africa the project **Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba** aimed to tell the story of young South Africans living in the Karoo, a central region characterised by inequality, poverty and an arid climate. The focus was a small town in Karoo that was at the centre of development debates about sustainable energy and the struggle for land justice and rights. The project worked with young people to develop film and theatre narratives about land stewardship, ownership and cultivation among landless people. Media was deployed as a tool for raising awareness and helping to foster intergenerational dialogue and understanding. Intended outcomes of the project were to engage young people as champions of land justice and to arm them with skills in persuasive documentary film and theatre production, with a focus on using narrative methodologies. Skills developed by the 15 young participants included social research, participatory film making, interviewing, transcribing and translating interviews and editing them into films with subtitles.

# CHALLENGES, QUESTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This section focuses on some of the reflexive learning for CTS researchers and British Council project leads that has emerged during the 'Youth, Voice and Development' process. It is intended to raise critical questions rather than offering solutions, but where possible good practices that aim to mitigate some of the challenges discussed are included.

## **The Limits of PAR Approaches for Work With Young People and the Dilemmas of Representation and Authenticity of Voice and Priority**

### ***Enabling True Ownership and Authenticity in Work With Young People***

A key issue raised in the online 'brainstorming' discussions between CTS and British Council researchers is the extent to which participatory processes enable authenticity, how possible it is to reflect youth voices without mediation or curation and whether this is even desirable. Tina Ellen Lee talked about the cynicism of international NGOs who are only interested in hearing stories about the war and the 'research fatigue' of young people who didn't want to be interviewed by another researcher wanting to know about war.

The question was raised of the extent to which methodologies can ever be truly participatory. One point related to the tautological irony of asking questions that are 'interesting' from an external research question but are answered in ways that say more about what respondents think researchers would like to hear rather than in an honest, 'authentic' way. Paul Cooke noted: *"the fundamental shape of the development industry is a challenge. The people in the middle e.g., NGOs delivering the services need to be accountable to funders while also making sure young people's voices are heard. It seems ridiculous that you can ignore young people in these questions. How can we make our projects accountable to the end users?"*

So how can we ensure that young people's experiences and words are front and centre where possible? One possible way to avoid over-mediation is through the use of audio diaries and visuals, a methodology used by the British Council in Zimbabwe, where young people are given more open-ended requests to discuss or express what is important for them.



***"How can we make our projects accountable to the end users?"***





### ***The challenges of building trust and contributing to long-term change for young people***

An issue that provoked discussion between CTS and British Council participants was the connected dual challenges of ensuring sustainable impacts from small-scale, time-bounded projects and ensuring a duty of care to young participants. However impressive their short-term outcomes may be, there is often not enough time to enable lasting changes or to build the trust with young people, local communities and local organisations that is required for longer-term change to happen. One problem is that expectations are raised, only for researchers to leave and never return. Tina Ellen Lee, who has been working with young people in Bosnia for many years said: *"Young people get used to lies - you have to show that you care that that it is long-term."* Aylwyn Walsh (CTS) noted: *"In Eastern Cape, we have highly trained (young) film makers as a result of our project, but if there is no employment outside of the project, I'm not sure how sustainable it is."*

Scott Burnett said of his work creating understanding of land ownership and farming issues through participatory film in South Africa: *"the amount of the work that the partners have done to make the project work because they are excited by it, is much more than they are being paid. When you are working with unemployed young people who are building their skills this can also distract from studying, searching for work etc. Then you come to end of the project and there's no follow-on funding so then what? I worry about these things for our participants and our partners."*

Faith Mkwanzani, co-investigator on the CTS Zimbabwean street art project talked about the importance of going beyond tokenistic inputs with young people in challenging ODA contexts:

***"we gave them skills of art, graffiti and networking but what happens after that remains the crucial question... we're working with young people because actually what we want is change."***

However, the nature of funding and the pressure to demonstrate short-term results means that this luxury of time is not usually possible in the context of development research. One way of achieving more longevity is to work closely with local organisations who will continue the work once the researchers leave or project funding comes to an end. For example, Petra Kiwan from the British Council Lebanon office is undertaking outreach activities with young people who are linked into extremist networks. She acknowledged the critical importance of building trust with them and noted:

***"We don't have that trust yet but we mapped all CSOs working in certain regions to see how close they are with local community. We can work with them to gain trust."***

Unsplash, 2019. Photo Credit: Eyoel Kahssay.



## The Need for Gender Aware and Socially Inclusive Research Approaches

The critical importance of integrating gender and other social inclusion considerations into research, policy and practice is now widely understood and accepted, and is a legal requirement of all development assistance under the International Development Gender Equality Act[26]. As UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)[27] recognises, research and other development interventions that do not take gender into account risk exacerbating existing inequalities: “working in a development context, including through research and innovation, can affect gender equality and gender relations, and it is important that UKRI ODA research and innovation considers this and ensures that research does not negatively impact gender equality”. It states: “UKRI wants to ensure that through GCRF and Newton Fund funding, inequality is not perpetuated; that the different rights and needs of all genders are recognised and addressed; and that women and men share the benefits of research and innovation projects.”[28]



(CTS) P1 Kosovo 2020. Photo Credit: ACT

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***"Working in a development context, including through research and innovation, can affect gender equality and gender relations"***

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A gender-aware approach means at the very least considering “How... any risks and unintended negative consequences on gender equality [will] be avoided or mitigated against, and monitored” and ensuring that “measures [are] put in place to ensure equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different genders to be involved throughout the project.”[29] Yet, going further, development-focused research and other interventions can also actively contribute to promoting outcomes that are transformative in terms of gender and other forms of social exclusion such as race, ethnicity or disability, whether practical – for example through skills and confidence building of girls and women, and/or disabled people – or strategic – by revealing and addressing forms of discrimination based on gender and/or other dimensions of difference. According to the British Council “more gender-inclusive societies experience reduced levels of conflict[30], increased competitiveness and economic growth[31] and more representative governance[32]... Change is needed to support women’s and girl’s awareness, capacities and abilities, as well as creating opportunities and an enabling environment for empowerment” (British Council 2016: 1-2).

A few CTS and BC projects had considered how to capture gender dimensions of the issues and communities where they were working. Some had ensured both male and female voices and concerns were reflected in their work - for example **YouthLEAD** in Colombia ensured that both the mentors and children participating in the project were 50% male and 50% female, while both **MAP** and **'Connective Memories'** also ensured an equal gender balance among participants. Participants are selected in relation to gender balance between male/female participants in the 25 schools using the MAP methodology. Additionally, the MAP youth facilitators who were trained as Master Trainers included five males/five females. The 69 MAP adult trainers and 35 youth facilitators across the 25 schools were also selected in relation to gender balance. The MAP Youth Advisory Board includes one male representative and one female representative at a local and national level. Connective Memories considered gender balance in the selection of young people from Uyisenga Ni Imanzi and also through discussing intersections of gender and generation in sharing stories.



Nalitari and Epic Arts case study – A picture from DICE Collaboration Grant project- a project delivered in Indonesia by a collaboration between Nalitari in Indonesia and Epic Arts in the UK. Photo Credit: The British Council.



(CTS) P2 Colombia YouthLEAD. Photo Credit: Laura Taylor

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***“More gender-inclusive societies experience reduced levels of conflict, increased competitiveness and economic growth and more representative governance... Change is needed to support women’s and girl’s awareness, capacities and abilities, as well as creating opportunities and an enabling environment for empowerment”***

***(British Council 2016: 1-2).***

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There were examples from Connective Memories, MAP and the street art project in Zimbabwe where sensitive participatory approaches provided an enabling environment for the surfacing and sensitive exploration of gender-relevant issues such as the feminisation of poverty, GBV, early marriage and child pregnancy, and patriarchal norms and practices. MAP encourages the consistent exploration of issues related to gender in terms of cultural norms/taboo, power dynamics, and gender-based inequalities. Supporting gender equality and contributing to the reduction of GBV was an important aspect of the British Council **Civil Society Support Programme**, which worked collaboratively with organisations in Ethiopia to build capacity, share knowledge and promote change. [33] For example, a partnership was established with a local organisation, Harmee Education for Development Association (HEfDA) to develop capacity and expand a multidimensional initiative to understanding and combating girls' migration, abduction, school drop-out and domestic violence (British Council 2016).

However, many CTS and British Council projects have not taken explicit measures to integrate gender awareness and social inclusion into their planning and implementation, with the associated risks of potentially skewed or unrepresentative findings as well as missed opportunities for addressing inequalities. Scott Burnett, project lead for the CTS project **Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba** in South Africa, noted the implications of failing to take these dimensions into account from the outset. With regard to the aim of capturing representative farmers' voices and experiences on film, he noted that participants were self-selecting and that there was only one woman among all the farmers who were interviewed. This is despite the reality that women represent around 40% of the agricultural labour force in southern Africa [34] and are at the forefront of the fight for land justice in South Africa. There was also a lack of gender balance within the group of young people being trained to develop the films. This inadvertently contributed to a male-dominated power dynamic within the group.

Other lessons from this project also related to the importance of anticipating differences and forms of exclusion at the point of planning. Scott noted that the reliance on the English language in the project inadvertently deepened a linguistic divide, privileging middle class participants who had been to model C schools and were able to speak articulately about social theory and excluding those who were only able to communicate in Afrikaans. Scott noted: "It was a constant negotiation of many different dimensions of difference, including ability." He explained that one of participants is in a wheelchair but "people weren't anticipating her needs, so she felt she was slowing everything down and was also motivating people to stay positive."

In his discussion of the CTS **Change Makers Programme** in South Africa, aimed at developing civil responsibility and resistance to extremism among young people, Stuart Taberner noted the value of understanding specific cultural norms within research communities and addressing Northern and/or white-centric assumptions at the research planning stage in order to ensure greater relevance and inclusivity. He explained that some of the young participants were inadvertently excluded due to the use of English as the primary research language and to culturally inappropriate learning methods.



(CTS) Ilizwi Lenyaniso Lomhlaba 2019. Photo Credit:: Scott Burnett

## The Benefits and Challenges of Co-Creation

Co-production is at the heart of both CTS and British Council approaches to youth-focused work. Co-production models vary from project to project. Partnerships have been forged with ODA country research institutions, CSOs, International NGOs, heritage institutions such as museums, government actors, local artists and musicians. Often partner organisations link researchers with local communities or schools and assist with selecting project participants.

Co-creation has many clear benefits. Forming these local connections often leads to information and approaches that are ‘more than the sum of the parts’ and which enable research and learning with increased relevance and representativeness. The active engagement and reflective learning of participating organisations also potentially facilitates sustainability beyond the immediate life of projects as insights and new skills are brought to bear in future planning and activities.

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***“Forming these local connections often leads to information and approaches that are ‘more than the sum of the parts’ and which enable research and learning with increased relevance and representativeness.”***

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(CTS) P2 India. Photo Credit: The Kohima Institute

A key message was the importance of ensuring the right fit between researcher partner organisations by ensuring there are shared overall goals and thematic relevance and a clear negotiated understanding of project aims, roles and ownership. This will help provide a strong foundation for co-creation and help mitigate any potential tensions in the collaborative process. The critical value of working with the right local organisations was articulated by Petra Kiwan, who leads British Council work in Lebanon aimed at preventing violent extremism among young people. Petra noted that a mapping of local CSOs was conducted in order to identify those with the strongest influence and bonds of trust with marginalised young people who are most susceptible to being recruited into terrorism but are typically difficult to locate or engage in this type of work.

(CTS) Tribal Education Methodology, 2021. Photo Credit Sreenath Nair:



## Translating Research Into Policy-Level Changes

One concern raised in the 'brainstorming' discussions was the gap between research and policy, and the question of how to maximise research findings so they are as useful and useable as possible in a policy (and practice) context. A critical question was: 'How do we translate the findings into something real?' Christine Wilson (British Council) said of the Next Generation research work:

***"How can we build on Next Generation data to improve the impact of programmes? How do we translate learning into action - who do you need to demonstrate it to? We haven't done enough to say what does this work tell us about the status of young people in the world at the moment, e.g. potential routes to employment, their voice, their agency, etc."***

She noted the importance of looking at findings and key messages across the Next Generation work to identify common trends as well as specific issues.

Many CTS researchers talked about the aspiration to influence, transform or even 'disrupt' policy on education, culture, history and other key sites of knowledge production and transfer. Yet a potential challenge for CTS projects in terms of having wider relevance for policy is the small-scale nature of the projects. The question was raised of whether they would be considered robust or representative enough to be taken seriously in development planning and of how replicable or scalable they are. These are significant issues in the context of increasing demands by donors for results and clear outcomes.

The development of toolkits with the potential for adaptation to multiple contexts has proven successful in fostering scalability and sustainability for several CTS and British Council projects, including MAP, Active Citizens and 'Youth-led Social Enterprises.'

One key point was the value of fostering connections with actors in policy spaces. Simba Mukwacha, who works with the British Council in Zimbabwe, noted that the quality of research produced by her team is respected by policy makers and has provided leverage for discussions with government ministries. Sreenath Nair highlighted the value of being able to work directly with the ministry of education in India to develop an educational module that will be piloted at part of the school curriculum in several areas.

CTS researchers and partner organisations hoped to raise the profile of their work and to forge future relationships with influencers through policy-focused events, but the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented many of these from taking place. Researchers were considering different options for policy and public influence as a result of their work, including the development and dissemination of policy briefs, films, the development of dedicated websites and other resources, forging relationships with journalists and involvement in radio programmes. However, in many cases the global pandemic of 2020 has meant putting policy and public engagement activities on hold or trying to think creatively of other ways to share findings in constructive ways that could contribute to change. Practical ideas that emerged from the CTS/British Council brainstorming sessions included enabling young people to speak directly to policy makers via films, graphic novels and other innovative forms of media and disseminating information via webinars, podcasts and other online platforms.

## Managing the Impacts of COVID-19

Some of the actual and potential implications of COVID-19 for young people in ODA and developed countries have been set out in the introduction to this report. Now more than ever there is clearly a vital need for work that promotes the wellbeing and good mental health of young people through participatory arts processes while also focusing on building practical skills for an increasingly competitive employment market. Yet, it is clear that both CTS and British Council projects and programmes have been impacted in different ways by the global pandemic, with knock-on effects for the young people they target.

Lock-down, travel restrictions and social distancing measures have hit projects reliant on 'socially together' participatory approaches particularly badly. For example, the CTS project '**Cuál es la verdad? What is the truth?**' focuses on Chocó, a remote region of Colombia home to Afrocolombian and indigenous populations. The structural marginalisation of the area has been exacerbated during the pandemic by increased levels of violence and armed gangs. The project was intended to work with young people caught up in inter- and intra-neighbourhood violence, enabling them to revisit ideas of collective identity and memories through a series of workshops encouraging them to produce musical instruments from recycled materials and use them to write songs, choreograph dance and generate dialogue about alternative futures and express their hopes and dreams as well as obstacles and tensions in that way. However, after launching in November 2019, in-person workshops were due to begin in March 2020 and had to be called off due to COVID-19. The research team developed an alternative digital methodology involving a multi-modal approach to draw on different technologies and forms of expression (Kustatscher et al. 2020).

While this approach provided rich opportunities for in-depth engagement with young people over the space of 10 months, it also highlighted issues of unequal access to the digital sphere, and challenges to replicating the creative and embodied nature of arts-based methodologies online. This concern that introducing a remote approach could widen the digital divide and exacerbate poverty is echoed by other researchers reliant on participatory methodologies, although there is a recognition that reducing overseas travel could contribute to reducing carbon emissions.

A key concern is the impact of the pandemic on planned policy events and the potential difficulties of recapturing momentum and enabling representation from both project participants and policy makers in any rescheduled future events. This has potentially resulted in a loss of traction for projects. For example, consolidation workshops in Colombia and Zimbabwe were cancelled due to COVID-19.

From the perspective of ongoing and future research and interventions with young people it is clear that old questions will need to be rephrased in light of this new reality, and new questions will need to be asked about the immediate and long-term repercussions – in particular for the poorest, including girls, women and other marginalised groups – and the societies in which they live. It will also be necessary to understand the actual and potential implications of the crisis for social programming in the future and to recognise that the priorities and aspirations and experiences of the young people may have changed in light of the pandemic. As resources become increasingly squeezed, it is also ever more important to gather evidence that supports the added value and need for participatory arts-based programmes for young people in these times of great uncertainty.

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***"Lock-down, travel restrictions and social distancing measures have hit projects reliant on 'socially together' participatory approaches particularly badly."***  
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(CTS) Tribal Education Methodology, 2021. Photo Credit: Sreenath Nair



## CONCLUSION

Emerging research from the Next Generation programme and other sources highlights four critical areas of concern for young people across ODA countries: educational systems that are far from fit for purpose; rising unemployment; intense disillusionment with government; and entrenched forms of gender-based discrimination and violence that are affecting young women and girls. These issues are being compounded by the global COVID-19 pandemic. This is a critical moment - evidence indicates that unless these multiple, overlapping crises are addressed serious repercussions for young people at the individual and wider social levels will range from economic stress and exploitation and mental health issues to participation in risky and/or violent behaviours. It has never been more important to understand what young people want and need or to engage them meaningfully in defining their lives and futures. Without their involvement the global SDGs will fall short of achievement.

Drawing on insights from the British Council youth-focused portfolio and CTS, this report has argued for the enormous value of 'ground up', creative, participatory approaches that are generated with and for young people, that respond to their specific contexts and complex situations and take into account their concerns and frustrations as well as their aspirations. It has explored the ways in which British Council and CTS projects critically and creatively engage with notions and processes of power and development in pursuit of positive micro-level and personal change for young people in ODA countries undergoing rapid transitions. In doing so the report has returned to the deep, often elusive questions of what factors enable or block change and of how positive change can happen at the individual and collective levels.



The report has focused on the potential of 'embodied methodologies' to capture and enable verbal and non-verbal expressions of the messy complexity of human experience and thought. It has shed light on the central role of art, film-making and performance for enabling this in ways that go beyond more traditional participatory processes. CTS and British Council projects illustrate the strategic value of these approaches for work with young people, demonstrated through - for example - the capacity of MAP to address highly sensitive issues such as conflict-related trauma and girls' experiences of GBV, and 'Street Art to Promote Representation and Epistemic Justice Among Rural Marginalized Zimbabwean Youth' to enable reflection on issues of injustice, poverty, inequality and marginality.

The report has highlighted the strategic value of re-imagining and reclaiming personal, communal and national histories and the institutions that sustain power and continuity as part of a quietly disruptive process of change that shines a light on new possibilities and modalities. It has drawn attention to the often unspoken role of formal, accepted and acceptable arts and 'big C' Culture in underpinning power, while revealing the potential for creative projects - including CTS projects in Cambodia, Colombia and other countries, and British Council projects such as Active Citizens - to engage young people at the local level in reclaiming art and performance as expressions of self and identity. These endeavours are enabling young people to negotiate and 'own' alternative stories and truths that resonate with their specific situations and help them envisage more positive futures.

***"Creative participatory methods are enabling young people to negotiate and own alternative stories and truths"***

(CTS) P1 Colombia YouthLEAD, 2019. Photo Credit:Laura Taylor



Through an exploration of British Council and CTS projects the report has emphasised the value of building young people's capacity to create and lead the peaceful, inclusive, democratic societies they want to see, re-imagining and re-making political systems from within rather than accepting existing conventions and norms. It has argued that education can be an immensely powerful catalyst for empowerment but only if learning is designed in ways that resonate with, inspire and engage students. Examples from CTS in India and other countries illustrate the importance of school curricula and pedagogical methods that encourage critical thinking, mobilise creativity and performance and reflect local realities as the cornerstones of effective educational systems that attract and retain students.

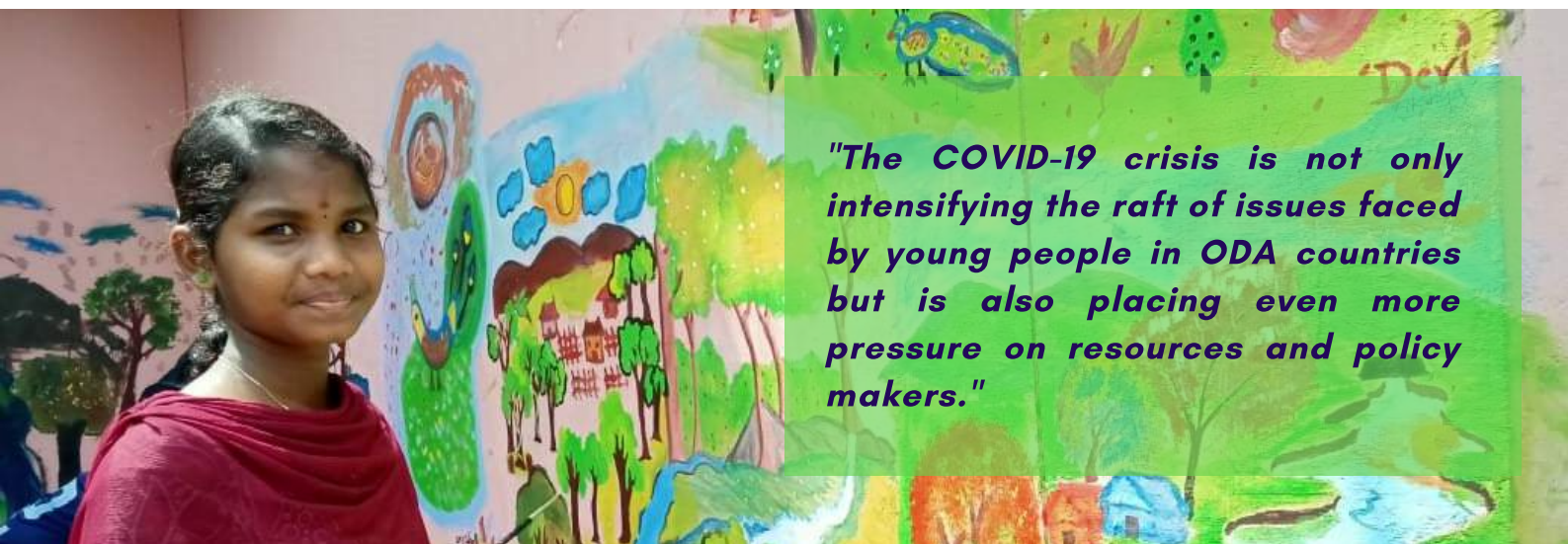
The report has also reflected on the role that innovative PAR approaches can play in fostering economic empowerment for young people, including those who are often the most disadvantaged due to gender, ethnicity, refugee status, disability and other factors. In particular, enterprise with a social purpose offers productive, sustainable routes for young people to shape their economic futures in ways that garner their creativity and entrepreneurship, giving them ownership and pride in projects they have developed while also enabling them to generate a viable income.

The report has also raised critical challenges and lessons associated with working with young people in participatory ways.

It highlights the critical importance of ensuring participatory projects are inclusive in terms of gender and other axes of marginalisation, and points to the transformative potential of many projects for addressing discrimination. It asks to what extent many participatory projects succeed in 'handing the stick' to young people and what the risks and benefits might be of allowing youth voices to speak without mediation or curation. It has highlighted the difficulties of walking the fine line between introducing exciting, yet often time- and resource-bound innovations to young people and managing expectations in ways that allow for continued optimism. It has argued that working with local organisations to co-produce projects is one way to foster sustainability and continuity but that these relationships need to be grounded on principles of mutual respect and collaboration. Translating findings and successful processes into policy recommendations and actions is also a possible route to the types of broad systemic change that could have meaningful implications for the lives of young people and their communities, but the link between PAR and policy is not always evident.

Finally, the report notes that the COVID-19 crisis is not only intensifying the raft of issues faced by young people in ODA countries but is also placing even more pressure on resources and policy makers. This makes it ever more important to have clearly articulated reasons for investing in the types of creative, participatory approaches that have clear benefits for young people and the potential to bring exciting, inspiring new landscapes into focus.

Tribal education methodology. 2020. Photo Credit: Sreenath Nair.



***"The COVID-19 crisis is not only intensifying the raft of issues faced by young people in ODA countries but is also placing even more pressure on resources and policy makers."***

## KEY MESSAGES/ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY



**Young people globally - and particularly in ODA countries - are facing a growing crisis in relation to education, employment, political engagement and gender-discriminatory practices.** These crises are being further exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19. Without urgent action these negative outcomes for children and young people will translate into significant longer-term impacts, ranging from economic stress and exploitation, migration, mental health issues to risky and/or violent behaviours that include GBV, gang membership and recruitment into fundamentalist groups.



**Without a clear, targeted focus on young people, government policy and interventions will fail to deliver on the SDGs.**



**It is imperative to fund appropriate interventions that help foster new generations of resilient, empowered youth.** Harnessing the agency of young people in representative ways that take into account their specific situations and views is a vital part of this process.



**This means engaging young people in designing policy and interventions in ways that are truly participatory and demonstrate true downwards accountability.** It means funding innovative creative projects and programmes that amplify the voices of young people and enable them to shape the terms of conversations that are meaningful for them. It also means creating and funding sustainable economic opportunities for young people in ways that will contribute to socially and environmentally responsible national, regional and global communities.



In funding and designing these interventions **particular attention must be paid to inclusivity of groups subjected to discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability and other axes of difference.** Efforts must be made to fund initiatives that promote gender equality and social inclusion, and which address pernicious issues such as GBV and child marriage.



**A realistic level of multi-year funding** must be mobilised to support these youth-focused activities and processes.



## ENDNOTES

**[1]** This is based on an estimated 7.7 billion total global population, of which recent figures indicate around 1.2 billion are aged 15-24 (United Nations, 2018, World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNDESA).

**[2]** DFID, 2016, Putting Youth at the Heart of Development: the Department for International Development's Youth Agenda

**[3]** See for example UN, 2020, 'Policy Brief: The impact of Covid-19 on Children', [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/202004/160420\\_Covid\\_Children\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/202004/160420_Covid_Children_Policy_Brief.pdf); UK Youth, 2020, The Impact of Covid 19 on Young People and the Youth Sector', [https://www.ukyouth.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/04/UK-Youth-Covid-19-Impact-Report-External-Final\\_08.04.20.pdf](https://www.ukyouth.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/04/UK-Youth-Covid-19-Impact-Report-External-Final_08.04.20.pdf); Plan, 'How will Covid-19 affect girls and youngwomen?' <https://planinternational.org/emergencies/covid-19-faqs-girlswomen>(accessed 21/08/20); Save the Children, 2020, The Changing Face of Covid-19: A Live Tracker of its Impact on Children, <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/blogs/2020/the-changing-face-of-covid-19-a-live-tracker-of-its-impact-on-children> (accessed 21/08/20);

**[4]** See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

**[5]** DFID, 2016 (ibid).

**[6]** GCRF is a £1.5 billion fund announced by the UK Government in late 2015 to support cutting-edge research that addresses the challenges faced by developing countries. The fund aims to: promote challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, including the participation of researchers who may not previously have considered the applicability of their work to development issues; strengthen capacity for research, innovation and knowledge exchange in the UK and developing countries through partnership with excellent UK research and researchers; and provide an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need (<https://www.ukri.org/research/global-challenges-research-fund/>).

**[7]** <https://www.britishcouncil.org/society>

**[8]** British Council, 2016, Women and Girls: the British Council Approach, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/women\\_and\\_girls\\_the\\_british\\_council\\_approach.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/women_and_girls_the_british_council_approach.pdf)

**[9]** <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

**[10]** e.g., the key areas for improvement in the Sri Lankan education system identified by the respondents to the British Council survey were: improvement in the quality of teaching, improvements in the curriculum, and improvements to the facilities at educational institutions (British Council (2019), Next Generation: Sri Lanka, London: British Council).

**[11]** According to the Sustainable Development Goals report for 2020, globally educational attainment is close to gender parity at 96.1%. However, rates of drop out for girls are still high in some Sub-Saharan countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa (UN, 2020, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>)

**[12]** UN, 2020, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020,

**[13]** See for example UNDP Gender Inequality Index (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-5-gender-inequality-index-gii>); Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in Politics: 2020, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020>

**[14]** See A.Brody, 2009, Gender and Governance, Bridge Cutting Edge Pack, Brighton: IDS.

**[15]** The SDG Report 2020 notes: "According to surveys conducted between 2005 and 2017 in 106 countries, 18 per cent of ever-partnered women and girls 15 to 49 years of age experienced such violence by a current or former intimate partner in the 12 months prior to the survey" (Un 2020, SDG Report (page 34). UN Women estimates that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner (not including sexual harassment) at some point in their lives, and some national studies indicate that up to 70% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime (UN Women, Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-againstwomen/facts-and-figures> (accessed September2020).

**[16]** According to the SDG report, in 2019 the risk of child marriage was highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than one in three women (34.5 per cent) between the ages of 20 and 24 were married before the age of 18. S (UN, SDG 2020 Report).

**[17]** UN, 2020, SDG Report.

**[18]** The studies were conducted in Turkey, Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean, El Salvador, China and Brazil (Higginson, A., Benier, K. et. al. ,2018, 'Factors associated with gang membership in low and middle-income countries: a systematic review', In A Campbell Systematic Review, Vol. 1,Number 1.

**[19]** See for example Cornwall, A., 2000, 'Making a Difference? Gender and Participatory Development', IDS Discussion Paper 378, <https://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/Dp378.pdf>.

**[20]** <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/14/the-day-bristol-dumped-its-hated-slave-trader-in-the-docks-and-a-nation-began-to-search-its-soul>

**[21]** At the time of writing this aspiration had unfortunately been disrupted by Covid 19 but was set to resume later in 2020.

**[22]** For example, there has been a sharp rise in knife crime in the UK since 2015. Statistics for NHS hospitals in England over this period showed an 8% increase in admissions for assault by a sharp object, leading the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to conclude there had been a "real change" to the downward trend in knife crime. Doctors said the injuries they were treating were becoming more severe and the victims were getting younger, with increasing numbers of girls involved(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42749089>)

**[23]** <https://www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise>

**[24]** British Council, Global Social Enterprise Programme Brochure [global\\_social\\_enterprise\\_booklet\\_final\\_web.pdf](#)

**[25]** Sources: <https://www.pioneerspost.com/news-views/20190520/reporters-ready-young-storymakers-kick-training-london>

**[26]** The Act, passed in 2014, requires all development assistance and humanitarian assistance to countries outside the United Kingdom to "contribute to reducing poverty in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequality between persons of different gender"([https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/9/pdfs/ukpga\\_20140009\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/9/pdfs/ukpga_20140009_en.pdf))

**[27]** UKRI is a non-departmental public body of the Government of the United Kingdom that directs research and innovation funding and the steward of the GCRF.

**[28]** <https://www.ukri.org/research/global-challenges-research-fund/gender-equalityand-international-development-research-and-innovation/>

**[29]** <https://www.ukri.org/research/global-challenges-research-fund/gender-equalityand-international-development-research-and-innovation/>

**[30]** Hudson, V et al. (2012) Sex and World Peace. Colombia University Press.

**[31]** World Economic Forum Gender gap report 2014. [www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR\\_CompleteReport\\_2014.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf)


**[32]** World Bank (2012) Gender and Development. <https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/77862101315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf>

**[33]** <https://ethiopia.britishcouncil.org/programmes/society/civil-society-support-programme/about>

**[34]** SOFA team and Cheryl Doss, (2011), 'The Role of Women in Agriculture', Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

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