

# WOMEN AND GIRLS: MAKING A LASTING DIFFERENCE

A critical reflection on the impact of the  
British Council's work with women and girls  
from 2010 to 2015

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## ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

# FOREWORD

**2016 and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) marks an important milestone for progressing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide. The UK, including government and civil society actors, have played an important role in ensuring that this agenda is central to the SDGs and has demonstrated strong commitments and actions in the UK and internationally.**

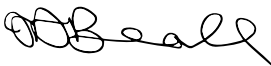
It is an enduring challenge that in all countries women and girls continue to lag behind men and boys on key dimensions of rights, opportunities and wellbeing. This is hampering global economic and social development and means that significant numbers of people, particularly women and girls are unable to contribute effectively or realise their full potential. Efforts to address these inequalities must surely be central to the efforts of governments, civil society and the private sector worldwide as well as for international organisations. However, we must also recognise that achieving change is a long-term change process that requires purpose and collaboration, within our families, communities, countries as well as organisations worldwide. This goes to the very core of the ‘global partnership’ set out in Goal 17 of the SDGs.

The British Council is committed to playing our part in contributing to improved gender equality, empowering women and girls and creating opportunity in order to contribute to a safer, more prosperous and inclusive world. Addressing opportunity for women and girls is a theme of our corporate plan and is set out as a priority for the next period until 2020. In order to do this effectively we want to have a better understanding of the impact of our work, how we can learn from and improve on our current experience. This is the main purpose of this study.

We want to ensure that we are using all the assets of the British Council to progress gender equality, recognising that there is a need for a multi-pronged and holistic approach to addressing the deep-seated inequalities that persist. This is why we have looked in the report at how all our work is and has the potential to make a contribution to this important goal. Through the diversity of our work, and the range of countries that we operate in (110 countries worldwide), the British Council is uniquely placed to participate in and to take forward this agenda of mutual learning and support. We can also draw on more than 80 years’ experience of building understanding between different cultures, often in complex situations and in areas where there is instability or conflict. In all these diverse contexts, the British Council’s cultural relations expertise, commitment to mutuality and neutrality allows us to broker relationships and build trust in ways that might be difficult to achieve for other organisations. A cultural relations approach means working through partnerships and networks, building deep knowledge of the countries in which we operate and supporting locally-led initiatives that are sensitive to local culture. In addressing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, this approach is critical.

The British Council is able to draw on a wealth of experience and resources to promote this agenda of change. Through our work in the arts and sport, for example, we can challenge gender roles as well as building the power and agency of women and girls. Education can be used to strengthen capacity for reflection and critical thinking and challenge gendered thinking from an early age. Our networks across civil society and government can bring different sections of society together to address gender inequalities and open up spaces for women and girls to participate, to exercise leadership and influence decision-making.

This publication offers an overview of how the British Council’s work addresses gender inequalities both directly and indirectly towards the empowerment of women and girls, illustrating as well how vital this theme is across a number of programmes. It also provides insights into how we can improve our work and make more of an impact as we implement our next five-year plan. The centrality of our work on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls to the British Council’s purpose is reinforced here, as is our commitment to the development of more open, inclusive and secure societies, for people of the UK and worldwide.



**Jo Beall**  
**Director Education and Society**  
**British Council Executive Board**





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**This report would not have been possible without the time and insights from the people interviewed, including project staff and beneficiaries in the eight countries visited by the study team.**

Many thanks to everyone who gave their time to answer questions and provide observations for the study; a full list can be found in Appendix 1.

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## IMAGES

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## AUTHORS

Paola Perezniето  
Anna Mdee  
Alice Alunni  
Rashid Mwesigwa  
Virginie Le Masson  
Bekele Tefera

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACFODE</b>	Action for Development
<b>ADP</b>	Adolescent Development Programme
<b>ATFD</b>	Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CSSP</b>	Civil Society Support Programme
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>ECOSOC</b>	UN Economic and Social Council
<b>EDGE</b>	English and Digital for Girls' Education
<b>EDI</b>	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
<b>EITA</b>	English and ICT for Adolescents
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FCO</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FSU</b>	Family Support Unit
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GEARN</b>	Girl's Education Research and Advocacy Network
<b>HEfDA</b>	Harmee Education for Development Association
<b>HOLLA</b>	Horn of Africa Leadership and Learning for Action
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IP3</b>	Improving Parliamentary Performance in Pakistan
<b>J4A</b>	Justice for All
<b>KIND</b>	Kidurat Initiative for Democracy
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice

<b>MWA</b>	Ministry of Women Affairs
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NSRP</b>	Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>ORWA</b>	Oromia Region Women's Association
<b>PE</b>	Physical Education
<b>PWR</b>	Promoting Women's Rights
<b>SAP</b>	Social Action Project
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SEBCON</b>	Socio-Economic and Business Consultants
<b>SUG</b>	Student Union Government
<b>TACS</b>	Take a Child to School
<b>TAMSS</b>	Tunisian Association of Management and Social Stability
<b>TGSS</b>	Tullow Group Scholarship Scheme
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>VAPP</b>	Violence Against Persons Prohibition
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>WPIPL</b>	Women Participating in Public Life
<b>WPSN</b>	Women's Peace and Security Network



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This report reflects on the work of the British Council in relation to the empowerment of women and girls between 2010 and 2015, generating recommendations on ways to improve on the existing offer through the identification of strengths, gaps and opportunities in this area.**

The British Council seeks to contribute to the overall goal of achieving gender equality as part of its remit to build long-term trust and opportunity for the mutual benefit of the people of the UK and the countries it works in. The British Council works using a cultural relations approach and has embedded equality and diversity in everything it does through its Equality policy and its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. Since 2014, it has been working on a more specific strategy to guide its work on women and girls.

The British Council conceptualises ‘empowerment’ as women and girls being able to achieve awareness of issues relevant to their development; to obtain self-confidence to achieve their aims and voice their needs and concerns; and to have equitable opportunities and resources to achieve transformational changes in their lives. To be empowered to achieve gender equality, women and girls need a supportive enabling environment. Through its programmes in developing countries, the British Council provides opportunities and spaces that contribute to women and girls’ capabilities and rights.

This report is based on research across the three British Council areas of Arts; English and Examinations; and Education and Society. It considers how gendered impacts in the British Council’s operations cut across all areas of its work and do not only arise in programmes specifically targeting women and girls. This is not an impact evaluation; rather, it is a collaborative examination of the coherence, value and potential impact of the work of a multidimensional international organisation, with a cultural relations mandate, in the area of women and girls’ empowerment.

This report captures the results of a critical reflective learning process undertaken by the British Council with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The research team used a multi-stage process, including a documentary review and eight week-long country visits (Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tunisia, Uganda) covering three regions. These visits explored projects in each country and entailed constructive discussions with British Council staff, beneficiaries, donors, implementing partners and other relevant stakeholders.

The British Council’s work on women and girls’ empowerment is framed around five outcome areas, which the report uses to explore the impact of the organisation’s programmes:

- 1. Increased awareness and agency of women and girls
- 2. Fairer access to resources and opportunities
- 3. Supportive legal and policy environment
- 4. Changes in attitudes, beliefs, practices and discriminatory social norms
- 5. Dialogue, collaboration and collective action

This framework was developed and has been piloted since 2014, and is still being adapted, so many programmes captured in this study were designed without this reference point.

An important dimension of the analysis relates to the British Council’s use of its cultural relations approach in its work on gender equality – that is, how much it shows a deep understanding of the context, promotes trust, works in partnership and fosters participation. The cultural relations approach links very well to current thinking on doing development differently, which highlights the importance of programmes and projects being locally-led, politically smart (working with and around political realities) and adaptive (based on the need to test, learn, adapt) to be more successful and sustainable.

The following themes are used to analyse how the British Council’s programmes affect women and girls:

## EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH PEACE, JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The British Council manages a number of large-scale international collaborative projects that seek to address aspects of peace, justice and security. Some of these have explicit components: addressing women and girls’ vulnerability in conflict, engagement in peace-building, tackling gender-based violence (GBV); and seeking and reforming justice. These programmes help promote an enabling environment that supports women and girls’ greater awareness and voice to engage with local actors to prevent violence and promote justice. Some are clear examples of the British Council’s convening power among national stakeholders, bringing together different actors to identify gaps and opportunities and to respond to local needs. The trust the British Council has achieved in the countries it works in gives it some influence on policy at both local and national level, through support to partners’ capacity to develop evidence and engage in activism. This capacity is also important to sustain programme results in the medium term, particularly in the absence of donor funds to continue supporting these programmes. These are all components of the organisation’s cultural relations approach in practice, facilitating its work on sensitive issues such as GBV, peace and justice for women.



EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS  
THROUGH SPORT

The British Council uses sport to reach young people and as an engagement tool to address issues such as child protection and rights, violence against women and changes in gender norms (by linking sports to education). It has consciously integrated women and girls’ participation into sports projects to subvert gender stereotypes in environments where this is not common. This has allowed it contribute to transforming discriminatory social norms and attitudes, one of its outcome areas. Some projects also build the capacity of teachers in professional coaching but also in child rights and protection, so enabling new opportunities and resources. The British Council has reached out through sport to girls in schools, young women in universities, women teachers and coaches and marginalised out-of-school girls and young women, and supported their awareness and agency through activities that strengthen their self-confidence and knowledge of their rights and how to protect themselves against violence. In terms of its cultural relations approach, the British Council builds on models drawn from the UK, such as the community development work done by Premier League clubs to tackle vulnerability and violence – including GBV – among youth in UK communities. This allows British Council partners in developing countries to see that problems are often universal in nature but solutions can be adapted to local needs.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS  
THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND  
COLLECTIVE ACTION

**British Council engages women and girls in civil society through volunteering and collective action. It sees this as critical to creating safe spaces for dialogue and promoting gender equality at the community-level.**

One global British Council programme, working in over 40 countries, is Active Citizens, which creates partnerships with local institutions that engage volunteers in locally-led initiatives (social action projects, or SAPs). Cascade training supports participants to identify local needs and implement projects to promote change. Some SAPs address issues related to women and girls, such as the need to generate space for their participation in the community or develop their abilities as social entrepreneurs. They work at a relatively small scale but can help promote improvements in the empowerment outcome areas at the grassroots level, for example by promoting women’s awareness and voice encouraging their participation in community life or generating opportunities and resources for income generation. Other SAPs promote dialogue among women, which encourages collective action to promote change.

British Council also implements large-scale civil multi-donor funded society capacity building programmes, such as the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) in Ethiopia. CSSP works through local organisations and volunteers to promote change on important issues. Women and girls are a priority target group, and local actions have been developed to tackle problems such as GBV and inequality in education. It also promotes more sustainable changes in local policies and practice by working with local governments. Both approaches illustrate ways in which individuals at the community level volunteer and promote collaboration and collective action to promote changes in behaviour or in the underlying conditions that hinder the development and empowerment of women and girls. These results contribute to positive changes in relation to the British Council’s women and girls’ empowerment outcome areas.



EMPOWERING WOMEN AND  
GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP  
AND PARTICIPATION

The British Council works to reduce the discrimination facing women and girls in public spaces and to change perceptions of women, who are not typically seen as leaders. It does this by working with institutions such as parliaments, local governments and universities and by actively engaging both men and women. Most of its work in this area develops participants’ self-confidence and knowledge on gender inequality and women’s rights so they are well informed as advocates in different platforms – as parliamentarians, in community fora and even in the private sector. Importantly, these programmes engage and leverage local institutions and CSOs that have the potential to broaden the scope and reach of initiatives in the medium term, even if the initial British Council interventions are themselves of limited scale. Programmes in this area can contribute positively in terms of improving the policy and legal environment for women, as they work at a more institutional level than programmes in other areas, while also promoting individual women’s voice, agency and opportunities for leadership, to contribute to their own transformation and that of other women.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS  
THROUGH EDUCATION

The British Council has particular expertise in supporting and extending the teaching of English, but also in building broader partnerships with and between educational institutions to promote opportunities in higher education through scholarships. Some of its gender-responsive educational programmes provide opportunities for women and girls to enhance their knowledge, skills and exposure and facilitate the creation of research networks to share knowledge about discrimination. These programmes have made specific efforts to adapt their design and implementation to achieve greater gender equity in educational objectives or recruitment practices and to promote girls and young women’s opportunities and awareness through learning and development. However, not all educational programmes are gender-responsive, and thus do not take full advantage of their potential to create an enabling environment more conducive to proving more equitable opportunities. Thus, the British Council can do more to seek empowerment outcomes for women and girls through its work with teachers and educationalists in particular. This includes, for example, by promoting changes in attitudes and social norms that discriminate against girls, as well as more affirmative action in scholarship programmes to ensure young women have increased access to opportunities in fields such as science and technology.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS  
THROUGH ARTS

The British Council supports artists in many fields – from textiles, to music and filmmaking, to writing and poetry. It also supports international collaborations between artists. Its work here contributes to some of the empowerment outcomes for women who participate. For example, women artists are given opportunities to showcase their skills and to learn from each other and from international artists. It can also facilitate the telling of stories that question gender stereotypes and thus help start conversations on gender norms and attitudes. Each of the projects explored here works in a different area within the arts. In each, the entry point to enabling women and girls’ inclusion as well as promoting gender equality messages has been different, but each project has drawn on the cultural relations approach by sharing practices and experiences from the UK yet grounding them in the local context. Some combine elements of arts and entrepreneurship, giving women fairer access to opportunities and resources in a field that tends to be more male-oriented. In all cases, spaces for artistic expression and creation contribute to the voice and agency of participating women, although their reach is quite limited.

MAIN FINDINGS

The British Council is contributing to achieve outcomes in the five outcome areas through both its targeted programmes for women and girls and other programmes that give some level of support to gender equality. As global guidance on working with women and girls is disseminated more broadly, there is likely to be a more comprehensive and systematic approach towards the ‘women and girls’ empowerment outcome areas’ to achieve a greater push on gender equality.

Many British Council projects and programmes around the world are already delivering on the outcomes, even though women and girls’ empowerment has only been a stand-alone priority in the Education and Society strategy since 2014. The outcome areas have not yet been officially communicated to country offices. This implies numerous entry points and approaches for the British Council as it works across a range of areas, for example in partnership development, trust-building and supporting locally-led ideas, among others.

The EDI strategy has been important in increasing the visibility of gender equality in British Council programming. Staff across the countries studied have a very strong awareness of and commitment to implementing the strategy, in particular with respect to the visibility of women: it has become an important entry point into greater thinking across the British Council’s portfolio. The new Education and Society strategy will thus provide an opportunity for a more holistic approach towards work on women and girls’ empowerment, which will build on the EDI strategy, from seeking only to achieve gender parity among beneficiaries – its current focus - to promoting and measuring transformational impacts on gender identities and relations.

The British Council’s work on women and girls is largely aligned with the principles of its cultural relations approach, and interviewees saw this as one of its strengths. Programmes and implementing staff are generally seen as very interested in understanding the context and adapting initiatives to it. The organisation typically works closely and collaboratively with partners and seeks out their views, their perspectives and their understandings of local realities. This helps build good trusting relationships. Programmes to support women and girls’ empowerment are generally promoted in a way that is not ‘confrontational’ with respect to local social norms and attitudes, aiming to strategically achieve the buy-in of key gatekeepers. While doing this might take time, it makes changes more sustainable - and fits well with recent calls for doing development differently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A better level of corporate information about priorities and how to engage with these could improve the way women and girls’ empowerment to address gender inequality is currently understood and how it informs programme planning, monitoring and delivery.
- A measurable monitoring and evaluation system that aims to capture indicators related to women and girls’ empowerment outcomes from a more transformational perspective could help in pushing for a change in the way working towards gender equality is conceptualised.
- Technical support is needed to help staff plan for and understand the stories of change around women and girls’ empowerment in relation to the five outcomes. This could come in the form of regional gender advisers.
- A stronger understanding of how programming can embed gender equity and transformational empowerment – including by working with men and boys – will enable the organisation to achieve more consistent outcomes for women and girls across its portfolio.
- The British Council’s work with girls in education, arts and sports for development could be expanded and strengthened. Adolescent girls in particular are at a crucial, transformative stage of their lives; working with them can generate positive results in the medium and long term.
- With a stronger knowledge management system, the British Council has the potential to draw on huge cross-pollination opportunities and internal lesson learning with respect to its work on women and girls.





# 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT FOR THE BRITISH COUNCIL'S WORK WITH WOMEN AND GIRLS

Gender equality and empowering women and girls is commanding considerable attention from international organisations and donors alike. Gender equality considerations are reflected in an integrated manner throughout the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development agreed by all UN member states in 2015, and are critical to its achievement. In the Agenda, the UN General Assembly declared that realising gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls would make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.

For example, SDG 5, 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', includes six substantive targets and three means-of-implementation targets that go well beyond the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 single target to eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015. In addition to the SDG 5 targets, targets under other goals cover a comprehensive set of issues. Among them are the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, safe cities, climate change, peaceful and inclusive societies and data. The SDGs are thus well positioned to produce results for women and girls (ECOSOC, 2015).

The UK government's policy echoes this support. In November 2015, as part of its Spending Review of UK Official Development Assistance (ODA), it specifically prioritises the rights of women and girls in its efforts to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030 and to support the world's poorest people to ensure every person has access to basic needs and build security, stability and opportunity that will benefit all. The government 'will continue to prioritise the needs of girls and women, which has been fundamental to the UK's approach to development over the last three years'.

Highlighting the UK government's Commitment for Women and Girls, on International Women's Day 2016 the Secretary of State for International Development stated that, 'The mission for gender equality will continue to underpin everything that we're doing at DFID. It underpins what this Government is doing in the UK. And it needs to underpin, I believe, the work of the UN, of all governments and businesses around our world.'<sup>2</sup>

In line with this commitment from DFID, the UK's 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review states that, '[t]he full attainment of political, social and economic rights for women is one of the greatest prizes of the 21st century, and central to greater peace and stability overseas. It is a UK priority, and we will ensure that women's rights are fully taken into account in our overseas counter-extremism work, in humanitarian emergencies, in our early warning and conflict analysis, and in our new military doctrine' (FCO, 2015).

Most bilateral and multilateral donors have also made strong pledges in relation to women and girls' rights and their empowerment. For example, the European Union (EU) has made strong policy commitments that include equality in participation in economic, civil and social life; combating violence and discrimination against women and girls; and changes in attitude and behaviour to attain gender equality. The World Bank issued an influential World Development Report in 2012 on Gender Equality and Development. Moreover, UN Women was created as a distinct entity in 2011 dedicated to women's empowerment.

## 1.2 UNDERSTANDING AND REFLECTING ON THE BRITISH COUNCIL'S WORK WITH WOMEN AND GIRLS

Given the priority given to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls within the broad development context and the British Council's alignment with UK's long-term priorities, the British Council's contribution to this agenda is increasingly important.

The British Council seeks to contribute to the overall goal of increasing gender equality as part of its remit to creating opportunities, building connections and trust between the UK and the countries it works with as well as making a lasting difference to security and prosperity. Issues of equality and diversity are an important part of the British Council's work in cultural relations, and it has adopted a strategy of embedding them in everything it does through its policy of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The British Council's cultural relations approach is based on a deep understanding of context, building trust and working in collaboration and partnership.

The purpose of this report is to reflect on the work of the British Council in relation to the empowerment of women and girls since 2010. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has undertaken an assessment of the British Council's work and how it impacts on the lives of women and girls to recommend how the British Council can improve on its existing offer, through the identification of strengths, gaps and opportunities in this area.

Although the British Council has been working on this area for a long time, this is the first time a study has attempted to reflect on this work across a number of countries and regions. This report is also intended to guide the British Council's approach to further strengthen the positive impact of its work for women and girls over the next five years (to 2020), and to improve understanding of gender equality across the organisation. It is based on research that extends across the three areas of British Council operations (Arts; English and Examinations; Education and Society) to provide a holistic view of its work. The aim was to consider how gendered impacts of the British Council's operations cut across all areas of its work and not just in programmes specifically aimed at 'empowering' women and girls. It is important to note that this is not an impact evaluation; rather, it is a collaborative examination of the coherence, value and potential impact of the work of a multidimensional international organisation, with a cultural relations mandate, in the area of women and girls' empowerment.

It is very important to look at how women and girls' empowerment features across the British Council's portfolio and the outcomes that have been achieved. While it is important to look at Arts and English and Examinations in relation to how the British Council has interpreted and implemented its mainstreaming EDI strategy, especially its gender dimensions and impacts on women and girls, the British Council's strategy explicitly focuses on women and girls' empowerment only under Education and Society. In particular, the Education and Society 2020 strategy sets out eight specialist areas or 'platforms'<sup>3</sup> for programming that have been chosen on the basis of its ability to use existing or potential strengths of the UK and UK providers to make a meaningful contribution in different sectors. The empowerment of women and girls as a route to achieving gender equality is one of these platforms.

The report was guided by the following research questions:

### 1.2.1 REFLECTION ON CURRENT PRACTICE

- To what extent does the current portfolio of work address the following five priority outcomes for reducing gender inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls:
  - increased awareness and agency of women and girls;
  - fairer access to resources and opportunities;
  - supportive legal and policy environment;
  - changes in attitudes, beliefs, practices and discriminatory social norms;
  - dialogue, collaboration and collective action?
- Are the British Council's country strategies and plans aligned with achieving the outcomes for women and girls, beyond delivery of specific projects, through their action with partners and visibility of women and girls' empowerment across the country portfolio?
- What do stakeholders and participants identify as key strengths and areas for improvement of the British Council's work on empowering women and girls?

### 1.2.2 CONTEXTUALISING THE WORK OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL

- What is the relevance of the British Council portfolio within the overall context and to other players in the field?
- What is the process of ensuring the country's portfolio is informed by the context and responds to it?
- How is the work similar and/or different to that being done by others working on the same issue? Does it complement or replicate work by other international players?

### 1.2.3 FUTURE PLANNING

- How should the British Council strengthen its offer in this area, taking into account current gaps, opportunities, strengths, feedback from key stakeholders and the development environment?

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/justine-greening-the-world-cannot-wait-for-womens-empowerment](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/justine-greening-the-world-cannot-wait-for-womens-empowerment)

<sup>3</sup> The eight platform areas of Education and Society (2015) are as follows. Education: Schools, Science and Research, Higher Education and Skills. Society: Civil Society, Rule of Law, Social Enterprise, Women and Girls' Empowerment

## 2. METHODOLOGY FOR THE RESEARCH

**The British Council is a large and complex organisation with decentralised operations, which means that, while there are global strategies and programmes to guide its work, each country office has its own programming approach, including with respect to actions around women and girls. As such, understanding the work of the British Council on women and girls takes time.**

This report captures the results of a critical reflective learning process undertaken by the British Council in collaboration with ODI. It is not a formal evaluation but is a discursive review of documentary evidence combined with qualitative fieldwork in eight countries. In order to understand the scale and scope of the British Council's work to inform the analysis presented in this report, the research team used a multi-stage process.

The first stage of the review was a scoping exercise on existing work through the collection and analysis of existing documents from a number of countries in three of the regions where the British Council works (Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa and South Asia) and interviews with global and regional key stakeholders within the British Council. Documentary material on relevant British Council programmes was collected from staff in country offices as well as from country offices' websites. However, formal monitoring and evaluation data is not available in a consistent format across all programmes, and materials reviewed were very variable in content and depth of analysis. This resulted in the report drawing most of its analysis from qualitative data collected during visits to country offices.

The second stage of the review consisted of country visits covering three regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa and South Asia. The British Council selected eight countries for field visits. These were Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tunisia and Uganda.

Programmes for field visits were designed by the British Council country offices, in collaboration with the research team from ODI and colleagues in the British Council's UK sector team. Qualitative fieldwork in each country involved British Council staff, project partners such as donors, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government officials where appropriate, depending on the programme being assessed. Group discussions with beneficiaries from two selected programmes in each country were an important source of information about the perceived impacts of the British Council's projects on women and girls. One-week field visits offered the opportunity to explore several projects in each country and to hold constructive discussions with British Council staff as well as with other key stakeholders such as donors, implementation partners, beneficiaries and, in some cases, national or local government officials familiar with British Council-supported programmes. Data collection methods included semi-structured reflective interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and project visits as appropriate. The research team developed a qualitative methodology guide and used it to frame and guide the process to ensure some consistency in the issues being explored in each of the countries.

It has been important in each of the country studies to try to understand the local context in relation to gender relations. We have included a wide-ranging exploration of programmes, incorporating those explicitly designed to contribute to reducing gender inequality as well as those that may make a more implicit contribution through the participation of women and girls. We also explore how the British Council's overall portfolio in these countries, through the work of their staff, reflects (or not) knowledge and understanding of the organisation's women and girls' empowerment framework and how it could be strengthened by more responsive gender programming.

Women and girls do not all have the same interests or experience inequalities in the same ways. Working with higher-income, better-educated, urban women is very different to working with women and girls from poorer or more marginalised backgrounds. British Council programmes acknowledge this and work with different groups of women and in so doing aim to achieve different outcomes. Therefore, the analysis tries to disaggregate as to how the different groups of women and girls have been engaged through the British Council's work.

*Women and girls do not all have the same interests or experience inequalities in the same ways.*

All participants in the research were provided with a full explanation as to the background of the study, with an emphasis on the study as a space for learning and reflection. This was intended to encourage participants to reflect more openly on the work. Participants were also given the option to remain anonymous if they wished. Each field visit was written up as a country report with the purpose of internal learning and reflection for the British Council staff and their partners.

This report consolidates and synthesises the data from both the documentary review and the field visits. We used the outcomes framework for British Council work on empowering women and girls as a way of understanding and explaining the nature and potential impact of the work. We present the findings in relation to six themes:

1. Empowering women and girls through peace-building, justice and security
2. Empowering women and girls through sport
3. Empowering women and girls through volunteering, individual and collective action
4. Empowering women and girls through leadership and participation
5. Empowering women and girls through partnerships in education
6. Empowering women and girls through arts

This research methodology can provide only a limited snapshot of British Council work with women and girls over the period of 2010–2015 given that the research was undertaken during a relatively short timeframe and the British Council's scope and scale of work are broad. As such, it is not possible to comment on the potential long-term sustainability of many initiatives, or whether there is a causal link between British Council programmes and wider changes in gender relations or discrimination faced by women and girls in the contexts where the projects are in place. We can only assess the potential contribution made by the work of the British Council, and capture the views and perceptions of staff, partners and participants in a range of projects.





## 3. BRITISH COUNCIL APPROACH TO WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT: WORKING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

### 3.1 THE BRITISH COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT

The participation of women and girls in education, employment, political decision-making and social change leads to greater well-being and more inclusive and stable societies (World Bank, 2012).<sup>4</sup> There is a case for reducing inequality for women and girls as it is thought to be intrinsically beneficial in terms of the fairness of our societies. The British Council is therefore interested in collaborating with national and international actors towards the objective of empowering women and girls and promoting gender equality in the countries it works in.

The British Council's work on women and girls is based on a holistic approach that tackles gender inequalities from a number of perspectives and demanding action from a number of stakeholders. It recognises that change is needed to support women and girls' awareness, capacities and abilities, as well as creating opportunities and an enabling environment for empowerment. Based on this definition, the British Council aims to provide opportunities through the creation of spaces in which women and girls can grow and thrive – so opportunities that can deliver real change in a woman's confidence, self-perception and ability to make decisions that will affect her life. Importantly, the British Council recognises that women's empowerment does not rest with individual women alone; working collectively to achieve change is crucial. As such, it builds collaboration and networks between women and women's organisations, as well as influencing and building alliances with other stakeholders (British Council, 2015a).

The British Council collaborates with partners from different sectors to influence policy and practice – in some cases at the local level and in some others at the national level. Programmes supported by the British Council aim to create opportunities for the women and girls they reach. Different groups of women and sometimes girls are engaged in programmes that promote education, art, the prevention of violence and representation in decision-making and influencing, peace-building and economic opportunities.

Given that discriminatory social attitudes, beliefs and social norms can negatively affect women and girls' empowerment (Harper et al., 2012), some of the British Council's work on women and girls also seeks to understand, explore and influence change in attitudes, as well as foster opportunities for influencing social norms in the longer term.

Therefore, in line with the UK government's focus on women and girls' empowerment as one of the ways to promote peace and security – as outlined in Section 1 – the British Council is increasingly engaging on relevant work with women and girls' empowerment to contribute to more secure, inclusive and prosperous futures for all.

*The British Council's work on women and girls also seeks to understand, explore and influence change in attitudes, as well as foster opportunities for influencing social norms in the longer term.*

### 3.2 THE BRITISH COUNCIL'S THEORY OF CHANGE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT

The British Council offers different opportunities for women and girls through a range of programmes in the 110 countries where it works. In order for these interventions to address gender inequality through the empowerment of women and girls, the British Council has been developing a theory of change for its work in this area, defining five 'outcomes' to frame the impacts it wants its programmes to achieve in relation to women and girls' empowerment. It should be noted that the outcomes framework was developed in 2014 and has been piloted and is still being adapted. As a result, many programmes were designed without this reference point. Nevertheless, it was useful for this study to take this framework as the reference point for the impact assessment:

#### Increased awareness and agency of women and girls.

In order to be able to make transformational changes in their lives and achieve their capabilities, women and girls need to increase their knowledge, individual capabilities, sense of entitlement, self-esteem and self-belief. The British Council works directly with women and girls, as well as through local institutions, CSOs and NGOs, to help them access relevant knowledge and informational resources to help strengthen their self-confidence and promote agency (defined as the ability of individuals and groups to think and act in their own interests) in different spheres, such as gender-based violence (GBV), educational opportunities, participation in sport, politics and civil society so they can achieve positive change in their lives.

#### Fairer access to resources and opportunities.

Many women and girls worldwide are disadvantaged because of the structural inequalities in the way institutions and societies work. Women and girls usually have greater burdens of domestic work and are less likely to have access to assets such as land or finance. They may also lack the skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge the injustice they face. Getting better access to resources and opportunities involves working with institutions to influence institutional and organisational policy and practice to promote gender equality and be more responsive to the diverse needs of women and girls. It also entails both internal processes of women and girls being represented in institutions and decision-making and also meeting the needs and priorities of women and girls through the provision of public goods, services and information enabling greater access and opportunity. Therefore, the British Council works through institutions that can strengthen girls and young women's opportunities and resources to gain skills, to access services, to build their leadership capacity and to claim their rights.

#### A supportive legal and policy environment

is important for achieving gender equality, and is crucial in enabling access to resources, services and opportunities. The legislation needs to be in place to support gender equality and also needs to be resourced and implemented. Interventions with a focus on reducing inequality for women and girls need, therefore, to take account of the legislative environment and seek to influence legislative and policy change that reduces gender inequality. Often, this means working directly with policy-makers, but also creating partnerships with civil society and the private sector to influence the policy and implementation process.



*The British Council's programmes work across different levels: offering opportunities to individuals, bringing together civil society groups, working with policy-makers and stimulating discussions around social norms.*

**Changes in attitudes, beliefs, practices and discriminatory social norms.** Social and cultural norms shape the opportunities and limits in terms of what women and girls are able to do. Attitudes and social norms, however, are not fixed and change according to a variety of influences over time. They are also not expressed uniformly across a society. Greater gender equality will require that the attitudes of men and women towards gender roles change to accommodate more flexibility for both genders. Relationships between men and women and within family structures will need to be negotiated and shifted. The British Council does not seek to shape how people think, but it aims to offer spaces for discussion of social norms and attitudes combined with its own recognition of the importance of agreed international conventions on human rights. This is based on a belief that positive sustainable change in social norms will occur progressively from this work.

**Dialogue, collaboration and collective action.** Supporting women's awareness, confidence and ability to change and improve their own lives is an important element of empowerment. This includes both working with women and women's organisations and influencing and building alliances with other stakeholders from government, the private sector, civil society and religious authorities, as well as men. Responsibility for achieving gender equality does not rest with individual women alone. Gender equality is fundamentally about the relationships between men and women in a society and therefore requires negotiation and collective power. The British Council's work encourages building networks and taking action in ways that are responsive and relevant to the local context drawing on values and practices in the UK.

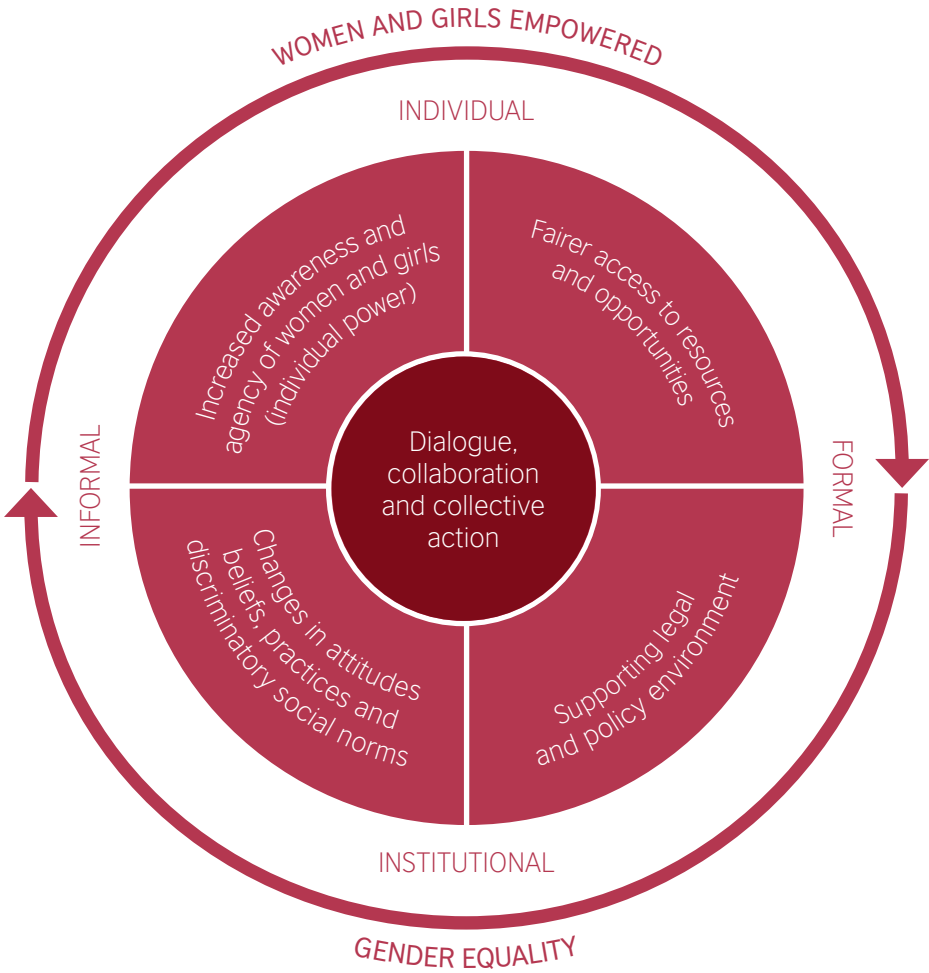
These five outcomes are interlinked and operate at the levels of the individual, civil society, the private sector, the state and society. Most of the British Council's programmes work across different levels: offering opportunities to individuals, bringing together civil society groups, working with policy-makers and stimulating discussions around social norms. Figure 1 illustrates the linkages between the five outcomes.

It is in light of this conceptual framing of its work on women and girls' economic, social and political empowerment that we examine how the British Council's programming in country is aligned with these important outcome areas and whether it is informed by this conceptual thinking in practice, which has important implications for programme design and results. In particular, there are programmes with explicit targets around women and girls' empowerment that are examined in light of how they contribute to these outcome areas. Additionally, and given that the British Council has set women and girls' empowerment as one of its priority areas of work, it is also important to understand whether non-targeted programmes that could have important indirect impacts on women and girls reflect a good understanding of gender and whether they monitor and report outcomes on women and girls' empowerment.

The following assumptions in the field of gender equality programming, and that underpin this study, are critical to the design of interventions that support the empowerment of women and girls. These have been internalised by the British Council in its conceptual framing.

- Women and girls are not a homogenous group. Valuing and acknowledging diverse women and girls' needs is important in the design of interventions and approaches. Inequality is multidimensional and not all women and girls will be equally disadvantaged. Other dimensions of power and inequality, such as age, wealth, disability and ethnicity, must also be taken into account.

FIGURE 1: THEORY OF CHANGE FOR GREATER GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS



- Having policy and legislation in place that addresses gender inequality is important, but it must be embedded in practice for it to have an impact on the lives of women and girls.
- 'Empowering' women and girls is not just about women: it is fundamentally about power and the relationships between women and men, as well as about how society shapes expectations of genders. Engaging men and boys in understanding gender inequalities and the impact these have on the lives of women and girls is a critical step towards changing gender norms and gender relations.

*Empowering women and girls is not just about women. It is fundamentally about the power and relationships between women and men.*



TABLE 1: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF MAPPING BRITISH COUNCIL WORK TO THE FIVE OUTCOMES

DIALOGUE, COLLABORATION  
AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

**Active Citizens**  
Social action projects – trains participants in the skills and knowledge needed to affect social change in their communities (global)  
**Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP)**  
Building the capacity of women's associations and working politically (Ethiopia)  
**Promoting Women's Rights**  
CEDAW implementation committees (Uganda)  
**Women, Peace and Security Networks**  
Strengthening advocacy capacity of women's networks (Nigeria)  
**Karama**  
Enhancing the role of civil society in the promotion and protection of the rights of women in disadvantaged areas (Tunisia)  
**HOLLA**  
Supporting young people to become engaged in national and local development (Ethiopia)

INCREASED AWARENESS AND AGENCY  
OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

**Premier Skills**  
Football training and rights education for girls (global)  
**DOSTI**  
Promoting skills development through football participation (Pakistan)  
**Women Participating in Public Life**  
Leadership and action research (Egypt, Tunisia)  
**Karama**  
Enhancing the role of civil society in the promotion and protection of the rights of women in disadvantaged areas (Tunisia)  
**Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls through Football (Kenya)**

SUPPORTIVE POLICY AND  
INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

**Justice for All and Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme, Girl's Education, Advocacy and Research Network**  
Influencing the Violence Against Persons Act and justice and education policy and reform (Nigeria)  
**MyRight**  
Working with the Ministry of Justice to provide services for women who have experienced violence (Egypt)  
**Women Participating in Public Life**  
Supporting civil society advocacy on electoral quotas (Egypt, Tunisia)  
**Production of the Gender in Nigeria Report and influencing of key stakeholders (Nigeria)**

FAIRER ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES  
AND RESOURCES

**Women Participating in Public Life**  
Leadership and action research (Egypt, Tunisia)  
**Arts projects**  
Promoting opportunities in the arts for women and facilitating questioning of gender stereotypes through art: Go Women Go, Naija Street Stories (Nigeria), WOW Festival (Pakistan), FEMRITE (Uganda)  
**Connecting Classrooms**  
Training on inclusive education for teachers (global)  
**English and Digital for Girls' Education**  
Stimulates the educational possibilities and answers the needs of young girls in English and ICT (Bangladesh)  
**Scholarships opportunities**  
For women to access higher education locally or in the UK such as the Tullow Group Scholarship Scheme (Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and a smaller number of scholars in other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America) and the Pakistan Scottish Scholarships Scheme  
**British Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy**

CHANGES IN ATTITUDES, BELIEFS,  
PRACTICES AND DISCRIMINATORY SOCIAL NORMS

**Active Citizens**  
Social action projects addressing gender norms – e.g. Purple People in Lagos State Polytechnic (Nigeria)  
**Premier Skills and DOSTI**  
Promoting girls' participation in sports (global)  
**Arts projects**  
Breakdancing (Tunisia) breaking stereotypes with girls participating in street dancing, Naija Street Stories (Nigeria), which talk about social challenges facing women, Creative Entrepreneurs (Egypt): women working in typically male-dominated arts and crafts  
**Nigeria Stability and Security Programme (NSRP)**  
Challenging acceptance and culture of silence on violence against women and girls  
**Promotion of Women's Rights**  
Changing community attitudes to girls' education, stopping early marriages and promotion of land ownership rights for women (Uganda)  
**SASA! (within CSSP)**  
Reducing violence against women by promoting attitude change at community level (Ethiopia)  
**Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls through Football (Kenya)**

Table 1 shows how it is possible to map the existing work of the British Council to the five outcome areas for women and girls' empowerment to tackle gender inequality. This type of mapping could be used for a more detailed analysis of individual programmes; to screen how existing programmes contribute to the five outcome areas; and during the planning phase of new programmes to ensure they are considering how they can implicitly or explicitly impact at least one outcome area for women and girls' empowerment. The table uses some examples of work that is explored in more detail in the following pages. It is not exhaustive and is provided for illustrative purposes only.

In the following sections, we provide more examples of how the British Council's work aims to contribute to achieving the five outcome areas in the three main areas of operation: Education and Society; English and Examinations; and Arts. Women and Girls' Empowerment is one of the eight platforms in the Education and Society 2020 Strategy. As such, this is the area where we explored programmes in greater depth. However, the British Council's 2015–2017 Corporate Plan also highlights women and girls' empowerment, noting that one of its priorities is 'to support greater inclusion, particularly helping empower women and girls to contribute to and benefit from development of their societies and countries'. As women and girls' empowerment is a priority across the organisation, it made sense to also look at how it informs programming in English and Examinations and Arts work concurrently.



*The cultural relations approach helps the British Council work towards the outcomes areas for the empowerment of women and girls even in environments where explicit discussion of rights or gender equality may be difficult...*

### 3.3 CULTURAL RELATIONS APPROACH

A very important dimension of the analysis for this study is the extent to which the British Council uses a cultural relations approach in its work on gender equality. This approach means building partnerships and networks, building deep knowledge of the countries in which it operates and supporting locally-led initiatives that are contextualised to local culture. This approach is particularly relevant when promoting changes in a culturally sensitive area such as gender equality. This study examines the coherence, value and impact of the British Council's work in the area of women and girls' empowerment with the British Council as an organisation with a cultural relations mandate. To do so, we begin by understanding what the British Council's cultural relations approach is. The approach comprises four principles.<sup>5</sup>

- Develop a deep understanding of societies where it works: The British Council puts its work into a broader context in the countries in which it works, taking account of the cultural norms and political, economic and social factors that shape how communities, education systems and societies operate. It supports others to have an appreciation and understanding of the attitudes, motivations and perspectives of other groups so they can contribute to change within their own communities or through international dialogue and exchange.

- Support trusted relationships: The British Council maintains its trusted position through its values. It aims to deliver high-quality work and act with consistency and transparency at all times. It creates spaces to allow other groups to develop relationships and take actions that lead to greater trust within the societies in which it works as well as internationally.
- Support effective collaboration and partnership working: It supports effective collaboration for change, through networks and coalitions within and across societies and education systems. It works in collaboration with UK and local partners to share information, to support best practice and to deliver sustainable change.
- Contribute to greater participation and inclusion: The British Council works to ensure underrepresented and marginalised groups are able to play an active role through education and social change. It supports institutions and governments to develop more inclusive approaches, policies and practice.

The cultural relations approach therefore involves an exchange of knowledge and understanding that builds trust between people of the UK and the world. It also involves understanding and reflecting on international and UK values, priorities and experience, while responding to the priorities of the countries in which the British Council works. In this way, it aims to support initiatives that will make change more sustainable in the long term (British Council, 2015b). These principles are also seen to underpin development work that is effective and sustainable for the long term. The cultural relations approach helps the British Council work towards the outcomes areas for the empowerment of women and girls – which form part of its framework presented in Section 3.2 – even in environments where explicit discussion of rights or gender equality may be difficult.

This conceptualisation of the cultural relations approach is in line with the concept of adaptive development or doing development differently, which encapsulates ideas about how best to manage and support development processes. Advocates of this approach call for reform efforts and related assistance to be locally-led, politically smart (working with and around political realities) and adaptive (based on the need to test, learn, adapt). These principles are based on two basic insights about what development is and how it occurs. First, development processes are context-specific, complex and unpredictable – so problems and realistic solutions cannot be determined in advance and change is unlikely to unfold in a linear manner. Second, development entails the redistribution of power and resources among social groups. In fact, O'Neil (2016) argues that adaptive development principles are important to the effectiveness of gender-related assistance and strategies. She highlights that gender equality, or the support of women and girls, is a core priority for many aid agencies – but there is a risk that increased funding will be spent on palliative approaches that focus on the symptoms of gender inequality, not the underlying causes. Reducing gender inequalities requires altering entrenched social norms, discriminatory laws and unequal power relations between men and women. These are all complex, context-specific and highly political processes. However, assistance to women's rights and gender equality is often too prescriptive or rigid to support feminist action and gender reform that is genuinely locally-led, and too siloed. This means practitioners can use adaptive development principles to strengthen the case for cross-sector collaboration and locally-led problem solving.

*The cultural relations approach is in line with the concept of adaptive development or doing development differently.*

Research undertaken explored how the British Council offices visited for this study understood and applied the cultural relations approach in general, and also specifically with respect to its work on women and girls. The study examined what the different partners thought about the application of these principles to programming on women and girls' empowerment, which was generally positive. As one British Council staff member noted, using this approach and working closely with partners makes the organisation's approach not seem threatening.

Examples of British Council programmes presented in Sections 4 to 9 focus on the assessment of their impact on women and girls carried out through this study. While an overview of the programmes analysed is presented to inform the reader, details of these programmes can be found either by following the links or in the case studies that form part of this study series.





# 4. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH PEACE, JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The British Council is involved in a number of large international collaborative projects that seek to address aspects of peace, justice and security. These programmes have explicit components that address women and girls’ vulnerability in conflict, engagement in peace-building, tackling GBV and seeking and reforming justice. As a cultural relations organisation, the British Council focuses on building local partnerships that stimulate transformation in social norms that perpetuate or encourage violence. The organisation is particularly concerned with providing opportunities and resources for women and girls to overcome or avoid GBV, to build collective action around these issues and to facilitate advocacy that influences policy and institutions with the long-term view of contributing to challenging discriminatory social and gender norms. This section explores the contributions to peace, justice and security of a number of programmes that were explored in greater depth during study country visits.

## 4.1 JUSTICE FOR ALL, NIGERIA (2010–PRESENT)

J4A is a large-scale DFID-funded project with a total investment of £47m. The British Council is the lead partner in a consortium of several international and Nigerian partners.<sup>6</sup> The programme focuses on reform of the justice sector and works across several states.<sup>7</sup>

This programme includes broad reforms that improve access to justice for disadvantaged groups. It is not specifically focused on women and girls, but has some explicitly gendered components. These include the following components that work on preventing, prosecuting and responding to gender based and sexual violence:

- Supporting the creation of the Mirabel Centre, situated at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, and the Tamar Centre in Enugu which provide counselling and medical support to victims of sexual and domestic violence. J4A reports that most victims are under 17 years old. It should be noted that boys are also victims but much smaller numbers are seen at the Mirabel Centre.

Staff interviewed at Mirabel reported that:

‘We help them understand that what happened to them is not their fault. We have a quarterly survivor’s forum. This is so helpful for the girls to move on and for them to open up – even when this means they are going against their parent’s wishes. We also help parents understand that they should not feel shame – we see the greatest change in their attitudes after we have spent time with them.’

It is considered a mark of success that the number of referrals to Mirabel has increased and the service is highly recommended, providing a different experience to women and girls, who are the vast majority of clients in a context where victims are often treated badly and blamed and shunned by authorities as well as families and the wider community. However, with the end of J4A on the horizon, there are concerns about sustainability.

- Model police stations: The Justice for All programme has also set up family support unit (FSUs), which deal with cases of sexual and gender-based violence, in 12 model police stations in the country.

The commanding officer of Isokoko (Lagos) Police Station interviewed for this study, said:

‘We have received training and do not compromise on these matters. Sensitive cases are sent here from other police stations. We are finding that more and more people are reporting here and referring cases to this station. We used to see domestic violence as an issue to be settled between a man and his wife. We tried to make peace only rather than to prosecute.... In J4A we have simplified the GBV and domestic violence law but we need to do more to build the capacity of police to prosecute.’

A woman inspector trained to work with victims of sexual violence reported that, ‘J4A has encouraged us to share the training and lessons that we have learnt... We have been trained by British people and we know how to appreciate and talk to the victim.’

Through the support provided, it is evident that the Model Police Station functions very differently to most police stations and therefore provides a practical example of how institutional change that has potential to be replicated.

*We are finding that more and more people are reporting here and referring cases to this station.*

Head of the Medical Women’s Association, NSRP (Nigeria)

J4A is also supporting links with local community organisations that raise awareness on issues of GBV and the need for victims to seek justice by going to the police. This challenges the acceptance of violence and increases the confidence of people to report to the Police, evidenced by the increasing number cases being dealt with and referrals to the specialist Mirabel and Tanar Centres that are deal with in a sensitive way.

While some progress has been made on the attitudes and approach to the provision of services within the Model Police Station and the specialist centres, at the time of the research, very few cases had been successfully prosecuted. This was a source of frustration for those working at Mirabel and at Isokoko Police Station. Staff in both locations felt they shouldered a significant personal impact from working on distressing cases.

In terms of the British Council’s engagement at the policy level, J4A has contributed to putting political pressure on the Nigerian president, who signed the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill (VAPP) into law in 2015. The VAPP Bill contains resolutions on the prohibition of domestic violence.

J4A has contributed to several of the British Council’s outcome areas. Through its gender-responsive components, it has the potential to promote individual power by reducing the impacts of stigma on victims and strengthening self-confidence to report perpetrators, and also by providing physical and psychological healing. It has also contributed to changing negative attitudes to victims, particularly among the police. While the current reach is too limited to be considered to have impacts in terms of social norm change, by engagement with victims and their families to counter their sense of shame it is improving social perspectives towards victims. Lastly, J4A has helped improve institutions and policies through political pressure, which can be attributed to the British Council’s strong efforts to build partnerships and promote policy and practice change.



#### 4.2 NIGERIAN STABILITY AND RECONCILIATION PROGRAMME (2011–PRESENT)

**The British Council also leads a consortium of international and Nigerian partners to deliver the DFID-funded NSRP, valued at £33m. NSRP aims to reduce violent conflict, providing support to Nigerian stakeholders to better manage conflict resulting in wealth creation, service delivery and poverty reduction.<sup>8</sup>**

In particular, Component 3, which is supported by Social Development Direct, is directed at women and girls with the aim of ‘more influential participation by women and girls in institutions and initiatives relevant to peace-building, with reduced prevalence and impact of violence against women and girls’.<sup>9</sup>

- Peace clubs are one of the elements of Component 3. Dr Eleanor Nwadinobi, who leads the work on this component, argues that a main success of the programme should be seen in the increased willingness of women and girls to report sexual violence. She explained that peace clubs train facilitators have gained the trust of young people aged 10–24: ‘These young people are willing to report issues and through the peace clubs will be linked to the “observatory” steering committee, which has medical, legal support and religious support. Peace clubs are also sometimes characterised as “safe spaces”’.

She noted that, for violence to truly start falling, there will need a big increase in number of the cases being reported and actions taken in response to this, generating a change in social attitudes towards violence. The programme is doing this on a very localised level through NGO partners.

*We have become advocates now – NSRP has given us this.*

- The Women’s Peace and Security Network (WPSN) is also supported by NSRP. There are eight state-level WPSNs and one at federal level. For this study, we held a FGD with members from the federal-level network as well as some members of the Rivers state network. They described the network as an informal grouping of women’s organisations such as Prisoners’ Rehabilitation and Reform Action, the Medical Women’s Association of Nigeria and the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria. Their meetings take place quarterly and these often involve training. All of the organisations at the federal level are significant organisations with a strong track record of action. They are staffed by dynamic professional women with great experience and knowledge.

Focus group participants argued that the added value of the WPSN was in the training offered in skills such as proposal writing, peace processes and how to use data for advocacy. For example, the head of the Medical Women’s Association stated that, ‘We have become advocates now – NSRP has given us this.’

They have also been involved in a dialogue about sensitising the national government on Resolution 1325 and the adoption of the National Action Plan and on lobbying government in relation to the five pillars of accountability within this.

The NSRP’s Component 3 is thus contributing to the ‘individual and collective power and agency’ outcome area. In the case of peace clubs, this is achieved by providing individual women and girls who have experienced violence the space and confidence to report it. The WPSN supports collective power by bringing together groups of professional women who, through their newly acquired skills, can be stronger advocates for change in governance structures that benefit society as a whole and women in particular.

It should be highlighted that a number of staff, participants and partners involved in both J4A and NSRP raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of the initiatives under the programmes. This reflects problems with sustainability in large donor funded programmes and something which the British Council should be aware of.

*To empower these women means to give them the space to take action and support them not to protect them...*

Male engagement trainer at HarassMap, My Right (Egypt)

#### 4.3 MY RIGHT, EGYPT (2015–PRESENT)

**My Right<sup>10</sup> is a partnership between the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the British Council, in collaboration with civil society representative organisations.<sup>11</sup> Valued at £1m, the programme is co-funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). It aims to contribute to the reduction of violence against women (VAWG) and helps women know and understand their rights.**

The programme has established women support centres in Egypt, which dispense expert legal advice to women and girls who are subject to violence. Psychological and social support is also there to help women who are over 18 years old. Cases that fall outside the women support centres’ remit are referred to the appropriate bodies. The MoJ has made spaces available for centres inside the courts of four cities – North Cairo, Alexandria, Aswan and Tanta – that according to national statistics have the highest rates of violence. MoJ also recruited individuals from among its staff who can deliver free, quality support and who have been through extensive training by UK and Egyptian organisations to respond to cases of violence against women. A community and a male engagement strand have been included to raise awareness among young people and men (students in universities, men working in civil society and community leaders) about the centres and issues of violence against women through training. The community strand supports locally-led social action projects to address violence against women.<sup>12</sup> The training has been taking place in the four cities since December 2015, thus it is too early to assess the impact on individuals or communities. Alongside the programme, there will be a campaign to challenge the social acceptance of VAWG.

The implementing partners and stakeholders interviewed agreed the project reflects a deep understanding of the local context in the training toolkits and responds to local needs. The male engagement trainer at HarassMap pointed out that domestic violence and rape inside and outside the family is high in Egypt: ‘To empower these women means to give them the space to take action and support them not to protect them... In the case of rape, women should not be pushed but given the space to voice their problems’. The project is giving women the space in the form of centres within family courts, ‘a place where only MoJ has jurisdiction and where women feel protected’, as one of the judges interviewed explained.

Implementing partners agreed what was exceptional about this project in the Egyptian context was its ability to bring together government, civil society, youth and men around such an important issue for Egyptian society. The male engagement trainer at HarassMap said, ‘This is the first project that engages with MoJ and we hope that in five years these offices will spread across the country in every court... What My Right is doing working directly with MoJ is a huge success’.

British Council staff also highlighted how the cultural relations approach is used in practice in this project. The deputy director said:

‘We used the British Council’s convening power to say that dealing with this problem as a government is not enough, you need to bring civil society into the equation... We use all of our influencing... to make sure the system is being influenced and we are providing a programme and achieving government trust, civil society trust and women’s trust’.

*Implementing partners agreed what was exceptional about this project in the Egyptian context was its ability to bring together government, civil society, youth and men around such an important issue for Egyptian society.*

<sup>8</sup> [www.nsrp-nigeria.org](http://www.nsrp-nigeria.org)

<sup>9</sup> [www.nsrp-nigeria.org/work/output-3-2/](http://www.nsrp-nigeria.org/work/output-3-2/)

<sup>10</sup> [www.britishcouncil.org/en/programmes/society/my-right](http://www.britishcouncil.org/en/programmes/society/my-right)

<sup>11</sup> Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development Centre, Sting Consultancy, HarassMap and Victim Support in the UK.

<sup>12</sup> See Section 6 on empowering women and girls through volunteering and collective action in this report.



A high-level representative from MoJ stressed that My Right adopts an innovative approach by providing women with services before they undertake legal action. She also appreciated the seriousness, commitment and strict methodology of the British Council. A judge interviewed noted that, 'The knowledge of the situation of women and girls in Egypt within the British Council is unique. This programme goes beyond conferences and workshops.' This indicates that the British Council's strategy to work with the government and reflect an understanding of the local context can make the process stronger. Whereas the legal consultant acknowledged that it was too early to assess the impact of the programme on women and girls, she also said that, 'Slowly but strongly the project is achieving a paradigm shift from a narrow understanding of justice focused on punishment to a broader understanding of justice that considers the victim and the witnesses.'

Finally, the deputy director noted that:

'The cultural relations approach is at the heart of the British Council work on women and girls in Egypt. The British Council is an organisation about human relations and there are not many more issues relevant than safeguarding and improving the life of women and girls... Understanding and building trust as a result of it is hard for you to do but I think what the office has done really well, I think they have spotted where the possible entry points were.'



*Slowly but strongly the project is achieving a paradigm shift from a narrow understanding of justice focused on punishment to a broader understanding of justice that considers the victim and the witnesses.'*

Legal consultant, NSRP (Nigeria)

Thus, by engaging with the government and working through existing institutions and CSOs, My Right contributes positively to developing a supportive policy and institutional environment for vulnerable women, while helping strengthen individual power and agency for women victims of violence. In addition, working with men and youth reflects a good understanding of how change in attitudes and social norms – in this case those linked to violence against women – can be achieved only by taking greater root in the community.

#### 4.4 KARAMA, TUNISIA (2014–16)

**Karama,<sup>13</sup> which was set up as a pilot, was designed by British Council Tunisia and the main implementing local partner, the Tunisian Association of Management and Social Stability (TAMSS), to enhance the role of civil society in the promotion and protection of the rights of women in disadvantaged areas of Tunisia. The total funding was £250,000 with co-financing from the EU, British Council and TAMSS.**

While the project's design was a response to the call for proposals, the specific theme was selected in response to local needs. The British Council project manager pointed out that they did background research with partners and found 'Violence against women and citizenship were very popular in light of the upcoming elections but also because nobody addressed this issue [violence] before and it's a real issue in Tunisia and is slowly becoming less of a taboo, the space is opening and people are talking about it.' Insights from local staff and the implementing partner also informed the proposal.

Women victims of violence were mainly targeted by the local NGOs, including in areas outside Tunis and in marginalised Tunisian suburbs. Policy links were limited to the Ministry of Women Affairs (MWA), with cooperation between TAMSS and MWA which was outside the scope of the project to develop two additional centres for violence against women.

TAMSS raised the problem of the lack of project monitoring and evaluation tools as well as of the limited expertise of British Council staff on gender – although the partnership was established with TAMSS providing local gender expertise.

*My Right contributes positively to developing a supportive policy and institutional environment for vulnerable women, while helping strengthen individual power and agency for women victims of violence.*

Some of the NGOs within the communities were not specialised on violence against women. This proved to be an issue in other VAWG programmes in the past. However, given the subject matter is relatively new in Tunisia, addressing it will require enhancing the capacities of organisations that want to specialise on it. Ultimately, this is what the programme aimed to achieve. The Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD) which was responsible for providing training to the implementing NGOs, also suggested that not all the partners shared the values that inspired the project. This issue suggests the need to ensure a shared understanding of underpinning values when addressing such a sensitive subject in order to deliver clear messages within the community.

The sustainability of the centres established through the programme is unclear, although there is the will in some of the centres to continue providing the services now that the current funding stream has ended through volunteering and seeking new funding opportunities. This could have been addressed by building links with state institutions such as the Ministry of Women Affairs, for instance. Furthermore, the short timeframe of the programme (18 months) also made it very difficult to produce change within the communities involved and assess the impact on the lives of beneficiaries.

Despite the clear challenges, the EU representative observed that the project exceeded the expected results. Positive outcomes included the creation of and access to an extended network of organisations working within the national gender space, which was supported by the British Council, as well as opening up dialogue and action to address 'violence against women', which is considered a taboo topic. The centres established through the programme have provided a range of services that have reached 1,420 women attended the awareness-raising workshops on citizenship and women's rights; 2,439 women attended the workshops on violence against women; 400 women received psychological support (personal or in group sessions) and 10 cases were recorded in total of women who benefited from legal support. Evidence from the project's baseline and endline surveys showed enhanced knowledge and skills for both participants in the workshops and NGO personnel. The programme has achieved some success in building capacity and delivering some immediate results, although there is little evidence that the programme has achieved the longer-term outcomes set out in the framework, demonstrating the need for creating shared vision and values, greater attention to timeframes, relationships and sustainability.

*The programmes presented in this section illustrate different ways in which the British Council collaborates with local NGOs and with government institutions to provide support for women to raise their voices against violence, to work in favour of their rights or to be part of local peace-building processes. These programmes contribute to achieving progress in several of the empowerment outcome areas, though, given their scale and scope and from the evidence analysed for this study, it is difficult to attribute the empowerment of participating women and girls entirely to them. Importantly, though, some of these programmes show how the British Council can influence policy change at either local or national level by building on the evidence and activism of organisations it partners with. They also highlight how the British Council's cultural relations approach has enabled them to set up contextually relevant mechanisms working through local communities or organisations on what are particularly sensitive issues in a way that can successfully support women and bring them together.*

# 5. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH SPORT

The British Council works through sport as a way of reaching and engaging young people, and uses it as an entry point and engagement tool to also address issues such as child protection, boys’ and girls’ rights, violence against women and promoting changes in gender norms by linking sports to education.

The British Council’s major sports programme is Premier Skills,<sup>14</sup> a global programme delivered in partnership with the Premier League that uses football to develop a brighter future for young people around the world, primarily through training courses run by Premier League club coaches for grassroots football coaches and referees. Since 2013, the programme has run in 25 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South and East Asia, and the Americas, including several of the countries visited for this report.

Others sports initiatives include Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls through Football (Kenya); International Inspiration (linked to the 2012 London Olympics, now concluded) and DOSTI (Pakistan), which uses football as a strategy for peace-building. We explore how these sport programmes have contributed to the empowerment of women and girls in some of the countries visited as they illustrate the potential for the British Council to support gender equality through work in this field.

## 5.1 PREMIER SKILLS

The Premier Skills programme has three elements:

- 1. Premier League club coaches provide face-to-face training for grassroots coaches and referees, giving them the skills and support to develop their own community football projects.
- 2. The programme works with local partners in selected countries to set up and support community projects that address specific needs (e.g. social inclusion, health) and engage marginalised or at risk youth through regular football sessions.
- 3. Teachers and learners of English are provided with a range of football-based learning materials, accessed through face-to-face training and digitally, including a dedicated website<sup>15</sup>.

### 5.1.1 EGYPT (2007–PRESENT)

**Premier Skills uses football to engage with young Egyptians and is running in various locations in the country. The more recent cycle started in 2013. Since then, 83 community coaches have been trained by Premier League coaches (32 of them women) and a further 97 new coaches (55 of them women), have been trained by the 12 Egyptian coach educators (master trainers) for the programme. Around 30 per cent of the young beneficiaries (13,274) participating in community projects and events are young women.<sup>16</sup>**

With respect to its impact on women and girls’ empowerment, at the policy level a regional policy conference that involved ministerial delegations from Egypt, Sudan and Tunisia was organised to discuss how to empower women through football. This led to the lifting of restrictions on girls playing football in youth centres. Four local football projects were more recently funded, all of them with a specific gender focus and in partnership with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education, the Egyptian Football Association and universities.

The British Council project manager noted that, since coach educators are all working as football coaches, the programme became an employment opportunity for them. They are cascading the activities to other females to become coaches and they are working side by side with female and male coaches, enhancing each other’s work; this is in itself seen as a direct change in social norms. A beneficiary stressed that, by bringing males and females together, boys listen to the opinions of girls and understand they have opinions and respect them more: ‘Now they know they have something of substance changing the concept and their way of looking at girls.’

During an FGD a Premier Skills participant said:

‘People were not used to girls playing football. They would say, ‘Why is she doing so? It’s not proper for a girl to do so.’ But the community is starting to accept this gradually.’ She added, ‘The problem is men are used to being superior to girls. When girls start entering in their field they feel they are taking their positions and places and they start complaining.’

Another beneficiary highlighted that:

‘I gained confidence and this will be reflected in everything in my life. If my husband does not like the fact that I am a woman and do sports, I will bring up the new generation in a way that they will, changing them at home.’ A trainer also noted the ‘benefit of having girls trained who will then train little girls who will know that they can do this’.

Trainers and final beneficiaries suggested it encourages collective participation, broadens perspectives, provides opportunities to gain experience, increases self-esteem and offers new theoretical information and practical experience.

*People were not used to girls playing football. They would say, ‘Why is she doing so? It’s not proper for a girl to do so.’ But the community is starting to accept this gradually.*

Female beneficiary, Premier Skills (Egypt)



<sup>14</sup> [www.britishcouncil.org/society/sport/current-mes/premier-skills](http://www.britishcouncil.org/society/sport/current-mes/premier-skills)

<sup>15</sup> <http://premierSkills.britishcouncil.org/>

<sup>16</sup> UK statistics from Premier Skills in Egypt since August 2013 provided by Susanna Carmody, British Council Senior Project Manager.



5.1.2 NIGERIA (LAGOS STATE)

**In Nigeria, Premier Skills has 10 active coach educators. They have themselves trained 26 female teachers. These teachers, acting as volunteers, have delivered the Premier Skills training to 300 female students between the ages of 12 and 16 years. Girls have participated in two football coaching sessions and one classroom-based session (on rights) per week over a nine-week period.**

Girls participating in the FGD reported:

‘[We] learnt about our rights and that we could say no’ but also that it had helped them be more serious in their studies. One girl said, ‘We have the privilege to come to school and we can help others who can’t. We tell those who are working that they have the right to refuse to do so.’

Teachers said girls had enjoyed both the training and the work. One said, ‘Parents were prejudiced about girls in participating sport,’ preferring them to focus on their studies. However, they saw participants develop better skills in football but also in knowing how to recognise and prevent abuse. They also believed the programme enabled girls to build trust and confidence over time.

The Lagos State Football Association is very keen to build on this work and to develop a women’s football league that will encourage participation in women’s football and also strengthen the Nigerian national women’s football team.

The experience in Lagos illustrates the potential of Premier Skills to strengthen the confidence of girls, particularly about their rights, and gives them greater awareness about sexual risks. This contributes to their individual power and agency, while – as in Egypt – challenging discriminatory social norms in the community that prevent girls from being actively engaged in different spheres of life.

5.2 ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH FOOTBALL, KENYA (2014–PRESENT)

**This programme is highly regarded by partners and British Council staff alike for its uniqueness working on VAWG while incorporating the sport for development dimension. DFID-funded (£1.5m), the programme was designed by the British Council Kenya office through consultations with authorities and members of the community.**

**The three-year VAWG programme has been set up as a pilot in a rural location (Mount Elgon) and an urban location (Kisumu). In Mount Elgon, where this study collected data, the programme works in two localities with 48 coaches (27 men and 21 women). There are currently 422 girls and 538 boys enrolled – so 44 per cent of girls, exceeding the target of 40 per cent.**

The multi-pronged approach engages participating boys, girls and coaches through football while including training sessions on a specially designed curriculum on VAWG. The programme trains coaches who are generally active members of the community to work with young people through regular football sessions and to help disseminate the programme’s messages more broadly. There is an advocacy component that includes a multi-media campaign, the engagement of high profile champions to reinforce the programme’s messages, and a series of capacity building and coordination workshops for key duty bearers and service providers. There are also quarterly community events with parents and community members that include facilitated community conversations to raise awareness about the risks of VAWG and provide information on prevention and responses to these issues.

*We have the privilege to come to school and we can help others who can’t. We tell those who are working that they have the right to refuse to do so.*

Female beneficiary, Premier Skills (Nigeria)



*The British Council came at a time when we needed them... The programme has developed all of us.*

Local official, Preventing VAWG (Kenya)

The design and initial implementation of this programme is a good example of the cultural relations approach in the area of women and girls’ empowerment, given its explicit efforts to understand the context, promote partnerships and build stakeholders’ trust. According to local officials in Mount Elgon and in Bungoma county, the programme is co-owned. They endorse its messages and methodology: ‘The British Council came at a time when we needed them...The programme has developed all of us’. This has been instrumental in the programme’s first year success.

At the time of writing, the programme was half-way through the curriculum, which makes it difficult to assess impacts on changes in understanding and attitudes to VAWG, particularly since these are usually engrained and difficult to change. However, we identified some important findings.

Coaches explained that the approach to integrating girls and boys through football was useful so that they could interact in a social, non-sexualised context, while the information about protection and their bodies could keep them safe. According to a female coach, ‘The programme has helped girls look at themselves in a way they didn’t before, they have more information and that allows them to be able to talk to their parents, and also to relate to boys.’

Girls interviewed agreed the programme had improved interaction between girls and boys, making boys more respectful during the football and educational sessions and beyond the programme’s activities. They also noted that they had gained some confidence to negotiate with parents concerning their safety, with one girl saying, ‘I now tell my mother in the evening that I do not want to go out to the shop in the evening to buy things for her as this can be dangerous.’ Boys said they had had increased awareness of sex education and of inappropriate behaviour towards girls; and to respect their peers, including by avoiding physical fights.

The VAWG programme aims to have an important impact in changing social and gender norms in the community that perpetuate violence; to improve the local policy and institutional environment through its work with authorities, who have become actively engaged with the programme; and ultimately, to strengthen girls’ individual power and agency with greater self-confidence and active knowledge about their rights and the risks they face, enabling them to protect themselves better. Work with boys seeks to involve them in creating an environment of respect and safety, while also teaching them about their rights and responsibilities. Therefore, while still early in the process, the VAWG programme is in line to meet two of the outcomes in the framework: increased awareness and agency of women and girls and changes in attitudes, beliefs, practices and discriminatory social norms.

*The programme has helped girls look at themselves in a way they didn’t before.*

Female coach, Preventing VAWG (Kenya)

5.3 DOSTI, PAKISTAN (2015–16)

**DOSTI<sup>17</sup> aims to create a difference by breaking social barriers and promoting community cohesion by making sports an integral part of the social life of youth in Karachi. It works in eight centres in Karachi and recently won an International Peace Award.<sup>18</sup> DOSTI did not target girls specifically. In fact, the participation of girls was unanticipated, according to an external evaluation that reported that coaches and youth workers did not expect many girls would get involved in the groups.**

One young female DOSTI participant explained, ‘We are brought up not to open up but this has changed.’ Another said, ‘Now I am confident to speak to anyone.’ Another mentioned, ‘DOSTI has taught us we can trust each other.’ Activities that involve games to swap gender roles were also highlighted as changing their perspectives on what women can or cannot do: one girl said, ‘If men can cook, then women can also drive and go out like men.’

The girls participating in the discussion in Karachi highlighted that one of the main problems they faced in their community was the fact that girls did not have freedom, and they benefited from less opportunities than boys and were less valued than them. When asked how this could change, they agreed the DOSTI programme was one way to address this but also that parents must be targeted with awareness-raising trainings. One girl said, ‘Our minds have changed but our parents need to understand what we are going through. Something needs to be done for parents.’

Although the DOSTI programme had not been targeting girls specifically and while the impact of the initiative on empowerment outcomes for girls is limited in scope, it is a good illustration of a programme that attracted girls’ involvement because they saw it as a safe space to broaden their freedoms and promote their equality with boys. In this way, DOSTI contributed to strengthening their individual empowerment and agency.

*‘We are brought up not to open up but this has changed.’*

Female beneficiary, DOSTI (Pakistan)

5.4 INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION,<sup>19</sup> ETHIOPIA (2011–14)

**International Inspiration was the London 2012’s Olympic and Paralympic legacy programme, which was delivered in partnership with UNICEF, UK Sport, Youth Sport Trust and the charity International Inspiration (IN). Beginning in October 2007, it ran in 21 countries worldwide, including Ethiopia. When International Inspiration began in Ethiopia, it had an ambitious goal to reach more children and young people, with particular focus on those with disability and girls, to help them take part in high-quality and inclusive PE, sport and play and equip them with leadership and life skills so they can address important social issues, such as harmful traditional practices. International Inspiration in Ethiopia put children with disability and girls at the heart of its programme delivery.<sup>20</sup> The programme promoted inclusivity to ensure all children, whatever their circumstances or abilities, should be able to participate in and enjoy physical education and sport.**

As part of the programme, teachers at primary and secondary level and community coaches were trained to be able to deliver high quality and inclusive physical education (PE) and sport in schools and communities, with a particular focus on girls, young women and young people with disability. To enable them to do so, skills-based training was offered for in-service and pre-service PE teachers through international trainers from the UK and other countries to build their professional competence and ensure the sustainability of the programme.



In Ethiopia, most of the games and sport activities in schools are dominated by boys and as a result, the participation of girls is considerably lower. To counteract this, netball, typically seen as a women’s sport, was introduced to girls from secondary schools across Ethiopia. This was expected to create space and opportunity for girls to participate in sporting activities.

Based on the programme’s dissemination of information and policy engagement, national policy decision-makers now recognise the importance of high-quality and inclusive PE, sport and play in national agendas, and have taken appropriate actions to ensure children and young people – particularly those with disability and girls – have improved and increased opportunities to take part in PE and sport. An example of this is the revision of the National Physical Education Curriculum, which was undertaken to improve the quality of PE in schools and to address issues of inclusivity.

*This section illustrates how the British Council has consciously integrated women and girls’ participation into a number of sports projects across the aforementioned regions. These programmes have been working to subvert gender stereotypes in environments where girls may not commonly participate in sports as well as to provide more opportunities for girls and boys to interact through sport, which may not be typical in some of the contexts in question. Such programmes also build the capacity of teachers and coaches in the community with professional coaching skills and with knowledge on how to address the rights and protection of children. By working in partnership with local organisations, these projects can also directly influence policy – particularly at the local level – and build capacity for sports development.*

*In the countries visited where Premier Skills runs, beneficiaries demonstrated how a programme that was not designed with a gender specific focus has been adapted to provide opportunities for young women and girls and challenges social and cultural norms resulting in positive change within the enabling environment. Through sport, the British Council has reached out to girls in primary and in secondary schools, young women in universities, women teachers and coaches and marginalised out-of-school girls and young women. In terms of the cultural relations approach, the British Council builds on models drawn from the UK – such as community development work done by some Premier League clubs that tackles vulnerability and violence – including GBV – among youth in local UK communities. This is interesting for some of the British Council’s partners in developing countries, since they see that the problems and approaches to solving them are universal but adapted to local needs. This approach also builds trust among local partners.*

*These programmes have been working to subvert gender stereotypes in environments where girls may not commonly participate in sports.*

17 [www.britishcouncil.pk/programmes/society/dosti](http://www.britishcouncil.pk/programmes/society/dosti)  
18 [www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/british-council-dosti-project-wins-international-peace-award](http://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/british-council-dosti-project-wins-international-peace-award)  
19 [www.britishcouncil.org/society/sport/current-programmes/international-inspiration](http://www.britishcouncil.org/society/sport/current-programmes/international-inspiration)  
20 The information provided about International Inspiration is derived from a brochure for the programme rather than from the field visit.



## 6. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

**Globally, the British Council works to support community volunteering, collective action and strengthening of civil society. British Council engages women and girls in civil society in such initiatives, seeing this as critical to creating safe spaces for dialogue and promoting gender equality at the community-level.**

Partnerships with local institutions that engage volunteers in locally-led initiatives (also known as Social Action Projects, or SAPs, within Active Citizens) are essential to this approach. These projects often encourage intercultural learning through study visits and community action. Volunteering and collective action are a means to build strong and inclusive societies. Volunteers must thus be given space to understand how gender and power shape the societies in which they live.

This section focuses on two programmes that build on volunteering and collective action to achieve change in terms of women and girls' empowerment: Active Citizens,<sup>21</sup> which is implemented in partnership with CSOs and academic institutions in more than 40 countries; and the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) in Ethiopia, a €40m multi-donor-funded initiative that aims to build the capacity of local organisations on issues relating to gender, inequality and power. Although most of the countries visited for this study were implementing Active Citizens, not all of the country examples are presented here.

### 6.1 ACTIVE CITIZENS (2009–PRESENT)

Active Citizens promotes intercultural dialogue, community-led social development and social responsibility, working to build empowerment through the promotion of social change in communities. The programme provides opportunities and resources such as new techniques to study communities and solve problems within the community, supporting a change at the individual level but also in terms of collective power through the SAPs that seek to make positive changes in society within their communities. SAPs attempt to address gender inequality through various approaches, for example training in economic skills, addressing GBV and stimulating public debate on gender norms.

#### 6.1.1 UGANDA (2013–15)

**In Uganda, the programme targeted unprivileged and marginalised communities within the five districts of Bushenyi (Western Uganda), Nebbi and Apac (Northern Uganda), Pallisa (Eastern Uganda) and Kampala (Central Uganda). The programme had a specific focus on youth, and promoted the development of social enterprises as a solution to high levels of youth unemployment. While the programme did not have a specific focus on women and girls' empowerment, there are both women-led and women-focused SAPs.**

Research for this report conducted in Apac district revealed that SAPs implemented by volunteers had contributed to increasing economic opportunities for young women participants by providing them with relevant skills in business development and financial management. A female FGD participant provided the following example:

'The knowledge and skills we got was on business development. We started with a very small tree nursery bed but now have a bigger nursery bed. Before, we were waiting for external support but after getting knowledge from Active Citizens we now started a nursery bed with our own resources.'

Active Citizens in Uganda also strengthened participation in the community of beneficiary young women through their involvement in programme activities. This was important as women are typically relegated to doing domestic work and have very limited social interaction in the community. A former male beneficiary illustrated this positive change by explaining:

'For this programme we got girls to leave their domestic work at home and come to the community so that whenever we were going for any activity we also brought some of the women with us. So one benefit they got through this programme was exposure. They realised they can be useful beyond their home, in the community.' Active Citizens 'also taught them the importance of engaging with voluntary work in the community –most of the work we did was not paid, it was voluntary. So young women learnt to spend some of their time for the benefit of the community.'

While commenting on the greatest achievements of Active Citizens that were specific to women and girls, a female beneficiary credited the project with important benefits:

'It has empowered us [women involved in the project]. We have the ability to do things the community can also appreciate such as planting trees in schools. When the community see that this group of women are the ones doing it, this makes us feel the project has empowered us... The project has specifically given me confidence to speak to people, I have confidence to approach people and even I can talk about what is wrong and good in the community and I can sensitise the community.'

A male beneficiary also explained how he perceived the programme had contributed to improving gender equality:

'The programme also addressed the problem of gender inequality in communities because now, when we hold our meetings, we ensure that we bring both young men and young women on board and make sure all of them participate equally. We also make sure all of them get equal benefits from our interventions'.

Findings from beneficiaries in Apac indicated that the project had strengthened the general knowledge and skills of girls as well as boys in business management and maintenance of sanitation and hygiene, and had enhanced the contacts of women in Apac with those in other districts through exposure: 'They have taught us how to build trust and to understand our friends, to understand how things can start and how things can get developed. Things like forming a group, how to manage the group and how you can make the group to be known outside' (female beneficiary, Apac).

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*When the community see that this group of women are the ones doing it, this makes us feel the project has empowered us...*

Female beneficiary, Active Citizens (Uganda)



In other districts in Uganda, women-led and/or women-focused SAPs have also contributed to challenging discriminatory social norms and promoting fairer access to resources and opportunities. In Pallisa, a women's income-saving group (Mother to Mother) has challenged perceptions and reduced stigma around HIV/AIDs, as well as provided affected and marginalised women with access to income to support their families and social capital. In Bushenyi, another locally-led initiative (Greater Bushenyi Muslim Women Association) has seen Muslim women making soap, which not only provides them with an income-generating opportunity but also sees them present in the public sphere, as opposed to only in the home.

Nevertheless, findings from the assessment report (British Council, 2015c) indicated that participation of active female leaders in programme activities was low owing to traditional cultural norms that assign women to many domestic chores, which leaves them with little or no free time to participate in other activities. It also concluded that a gender analysis of the project was necessary to better understand the differentiated impacts the programme had on women and men, particularly in light of the unfavourable environment for women's participation.

Findings from qualitative fieldwork in Apac district indicated some evidence of the programme's contribution to two of the outcome areas: fairer access to resources and opportunities by women who had participated in business development and financial skills training, as well as increased awareness and agency by women had become involved in voluntary work in the community and realised they could contribute through their participation. There is limited evidence on transformative changes of attitudes and social norms, however. Some community members – particularly men – said they had been made aware of the usefulness of women's participation, but it was not clear these changes had had sufficient traction at the community level to promote more sustainable change in perceptions on the role of women. However, through the creation of new spaces for women to participate more actively in community life and women's increased awareness of their contribution beyond the domestic realm, the community may, over time, open up the possibility for a transformation in attitudes and beliefs, triggered by the programme's initiatives.

### 6.1.2 KENYA (2009–2013, 2014–2015)

**Active Citizens Kenya focused on building peace and social cohesion after the post-election violence. While the programme did not target women specifically, it engaged women in some of its peace-building activities.**

Through a discussion with a programme officer we learnt more about the ways women were engaged. Initially, women were used as 'bridges': a woman from one community who was married to a man from the other community could foster closer engagement between both communities. Other positive examples of transformative actions on women and girls through this programme included SAPs that actively involved women from different ethnicities. While SAPs promoted income generation opportunities building on women's role as producers and traders, women from different ethnicities and communities came together to produce and trade. SAPs therefore promoted social cohesion through trade rather than through politics. Active Citizens then promoted 'cultural visits' with delegations from different communities. Delegations undertaking these visits were compelled to have a balanced number of men and women, which was useful in rural contexts where women are generally side-lined. This was identified by the programme officer as the cultural relations approach working at the local level. He explained that, while it was initially challenging to incorporate women in Active Citizens, given the strict patriarchal society in rural Kenya, men slowly started realising women were needed to promote social cohesion and identity-building in the community. As a result, men began including women in peace committees, something unprecedented.

Findings indicate that the programme contributed to at least three outcome areas for women and girls: fairer access to opportunities and resources through women's involvement in trade; strengthened dialogue, collaboration and collective action by showing the relevance of involving groups of women in the community to promote social cohesion; and progressive attitudes towards women as men realised the value of involving women in peace processes. However, since Active Citizens Kenya did not set out to foster these changes to gender equality, these positive results were picked up only through interviews: they are not formally recorded in programme documents. This is an example of the need for the British Council to ensure relevant monitoring and evaluation frameworks are put in place to capture the process and impacts on women's empowerment in programmes where women are mainstreamed rather than targeted.

### 6.1.3 NIGERIA (2009–2015)

**Like Kenya, in Nigeria, Active Citizens had ceased but was recently reinvigorated with the recruitment of new local partners, including universities and NGOs. The Active Citizens methodology encourages the choice of some SAPs that address gender equality, although there are no specific guidelines about the extent to which the programme should specifically advocate for this.**

One example of an SAP from Nigeria is presented in this section. It engages university level students so it illustrates a different way in which the British Council works to contribute to women and girls' empowerment.

*Men slowly started realising women were needed to promote social cohesion and identity-building in the community. As a result, men began including women in peace committees, something unprecedented.*

Active Citizens, Kenya





**PURPLE PEOPLE, FACILITATED BY KIDURAT INITIATIVE FOR DEMOCRACY (KIND) AND YMCA**

KIND is one of the facilitating agents for Active Citizens. It has also received funding from another large DFID programme (Voices for Change), through which it has also incorporated Active Citizens training into the training sessions for student volunteers. This training took place from September to December 2015.

For this study, a FGD was conducted with students at Lagos State Polytechnic to find out more about the work they are doing to promote gender equality through their SAP. It was clear from the discussion that participating students are passionate advocates for gender equality and the training received through Active Citizens has contributed to their knowledge of important gender equality issues, fuelling their activism. The students spoke of themselves as a very active group who were organising a programme of activities that tackled gender stereotypes and issues related to women's leadership.

One female student said:

'In Nigeria we find women do not contest for political office. In the next Student Union Government (SUG) we want the first female president... [T]hrough the training I have been able to achieve more. I have been promoting the ideas of equal rights to other ladies. I have also held seminar series for female leaders and stood up to male lecturers for their discrimination.'

The training was also inspiring to male participants. For example, one male participant noted, 'After the training we are expected to facilitate and cascade training – we wear our T-shirts and let everyone know that women have rights. I even stepped down from my post in the student union to leave it open to a woman.'

*I even stepped down from my post in the student union to leave it open to a woman.*

Male beneficiary, Active Citizens (Nigeria)

Other FGD engaged volunteers are operating under the YMCA. As part of the training, they said, they were directed towards projects with a gender equality focus:

'We were directed to look at projects on the gender agenda. In my own group, we got a glimpse on teenage pregnancy and girls dropping out of school, so we came up with an adult literacy programme.' And, 'We decided we could help a group of women to make a living and so we are training a group of women to make soap and other cleaning chemicals.'

While the FGD participants did not provide extensive details of how their SAPs were working and of their expected results, the conversation indicated that the programme at least had raised awareness among university level students – both young women and young men – about the importance of addressing gender equality in different spheres: political, economic and in relation to sexual and reproductive health, and how they can contribute to positive actions in this area. The study collected no concrete evidence about the impact of these SAPs on women and girls' empowerment outcomes but the work being done by students suggests they have the intention of contributing positively to the situation of the women and girls they reach.

This FGD offered an example of where training that is couched in a set of values can offer unexpected local interpretations, which is something the Active Citizens training curriculum must be mindful of in order to contribute to effecting real transformational changes in women and girls and their roles. One volunteer explained, 'We have also had the idea of a cooking competition based on the idea of building a solid family. Females in our culture must have the knowledge to show their domestic skills and to build a solid house.' This illustrated that, in order to achieve more transformative changes in attitudes and beliefs, Active Citizens facilitators could play a more active role in gender sensitisation to enable a deeper understanding of what transforming gender roles means in practice.



*Boys in their school had reduced the practice of verbally harassing girls since their 'elder brothers' from Active Citizens had come to discuss this.*

Active Citizens, Bangladesh

**6.1.4 BANGLADESH (2009–PRESENT)**

**In Bangladesh, Active Citizens enhances leadership and project management skills of local influencers. To date, it has trained more than 16,000 youth leaders in nearly 300 communities in 44 districts.**

One of the SAPs implemented by active citizens from Jahangirnagar University in Dhaka focuses on young adolescents. They organise campaigns in secondary schools to raise awareness among adolescents and teachers about health (e.g. menstruation, sexual and reproductive health) and social issues that young people face when they go through adolescence. One of the SAP leaders noted that:

'When adolescents have problems and they can't share it with their parents, their friends or their teachers, it creates anxiety and loneliness. There are a lot of cases of suicide among young people... We wanted to create a situation where society is more open to interpersonal relations and sharing of problems.'

Hence, their SAP aims to create discussions with young adolescents and break down social taboos.

Some of the young adolescent boys who had been targeted by the campaign shared some examples of the changes that had occurred in their school as a result. For example, one of the books they use in their class (Grade 6) includes a chapter on adolescent girls' health but they never studied it because their teacher was uncomfortable discussing this topic. Since the campaign, however, both pupils and teachers have discussed it more openly. They also explained how boys in their school had reduced the practice of verbally harassing girls since their 'elder brothers' from Active Citizens had come to discuss this and showed them videos denouncing this practice.

One female active citizen explained how the programme had also changed her perspective:

'I got a sense of social responsibility and I am proud of it. I have also gained skills in advocacy, communication and leadership so I can access resources around me. Before, I did not know I could access those resources... In our society, girls want to do so many social activities but they don't have a platform. The Active Citizens programme provides this platform.'

These examples illustrate how, even at the small scale in which SAPs work, the programme can make useful contributions to changing the environment to be more supportive of girls and young women, and can help increase girls' awareness and agency.

*In our society, girls want to do so many social activities but they don't have a platform. The Active Citizens programme provides this platform.*

Female beneficiary, Active Citizens (Bangladesh)

6.1.5 PAKISTAN (2009–PRESENT)

**In Pakistan, Active Citizens focuses on peace-building, promoting diversity, particularly the inclusion of people living with disabilities and women and girls, and developing linkages between civil society, community leaders, networks of young people and organisations in Pakistan, the UK and other countries. British Council Pakistan has used a unique model to work through universities, colleges and more than 35 CSOs in 70 districts across the country. The partners have cascaded 500 trainings and engaged more than 30,000 young people aged 18–30 years, who have implemented over 2500 SAPs as community leaders and volunteers between 2009 and 2014.**

Women who have received the Active Citizens training are more aware of their rights. The project co-ordinator in Pakistan explained how female beneficiaries had gained confidence to raise their voice and speak in public. Trainees interviewed agreed the programme had provided them with a space and a platform to engage, share ideas and lead initiatives; they felt they contributed to the development of their community, contributing to the outcome area of increased awareness and agency of women and girls.

SAPs led by participants of Active Citizens Pakistan include training teachers on child abuse, looking after older people in care homes, supporting the empowerment of transgender people and supporting rural women’s economic empowerment. An independent evaluation (SEBCON, 2015) also includes examples of how SAPs undertaken by young people have supported the needs and interests of women and girls. One example reported notes how an Active Citizens SAP formed a pressure group in Abbottabad to demand the establishment of a post office in the village because women could not commute to the city to pay utility bills. The pressure group achieved the goal.

*Women who have received the Active Citizens training are more aware of their rights.*

Active Citizens, Pakistan

6.1.6 EGYPT (2011–PRESENT)

**In Egypt, Active Citizens has reached more than 7,500 participants in 16 governorates including Upper Egypt, North Coast, Sinai and Red Sea working in conjunction with the Ministry of Youth and with NGOs.**

The director of implementing partner, Sting Consultancy, said that Active Citizens in Egypt came at a time of strong political divisions in the country and therefore it was very important to unite youth through dialogue, of which the project has achieved through the on-going partnership with the Ministry.

Not only do a number of SAPs tackle issues of gender and violence against women, to complement the work of My Right in-country, but the project has also seen some positive changes with regards to social norms:

‘[W]hen we started the training, women were escorted by male family members but we see this changing towards the end of the training when they participate very actively in the SAP or participating in international study visits whereas before they were not allowed to by family members. So things are changing,’ (British Council Society lead).

6.2 CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT PROGRAMME, ETHIOPIA (2011–PRESENT)

**The Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP)<sup>22</sup> is a large-scale €40 million multi-donor<sup>23</sup> programme that has awarded grants to over 500 CSOs and delivered capacity development training to over 700 CSOs. It works collaboratively with CSOs in Ethiopia to strengthen their contribution to the government’s goal of achieving national development and poverty reduction. In order to align with government requirements, CSSP has targeted members of the ‘hard-to-reach population’, defined as those left behind in the development process owing to geographical remoteness, status and overlooked issues. Women and girls are among this population. CSSP has placed particular emphasis on supporting gender equality and on reducing VAWG in Ethiopia. The programme has won a number of awards, including ‘Best International Development Project (non-infrastructure)’ as part of the British Expertise International Awards.**

Gender was a priority for donors funding this programme, as well as for the British Council. Donors view work with women and girls’, and gender more generally, as a cross-cutting issue and so they identified it as a necessary cross-cutting issue to be addressed by CSSP:

‘When we say poverty reduction, sustainable development, these are the outcomes we want to achieve through CSSP implementation period. These outcomes cannot be achieved without addressing issues of women and girls. Not only have we expected this from CSSP but also from CSOs working with the CSSP’ (Programme Officer, Irish Aid).

According to the programme’s annual review (British Council, 2014a), the heart of the programme is the relationship between civil society and regional and sub-regional government. This is based on the belief that, where civil society builds a strong relationship with local government, there are real opportunities to improve pro-poor government policies. When the programme started, the relationship was often characterised by mistrust of civil society, but there have been important changes in this relationship. For example, there is increasing tolerance and willingness on the part of government to engage with civil society in constructive partnerships. There have also been a growing number of occasions on which government officials have articulated the need for partnership between government and civil society to tackle issues – especially sensitive and entrenched issues such as caste-based discrimination – which cannot be solved or resolved by government (including government policies) alone.

An important element of CSSP is the way it has built on a careful understanding of the context, which has enabled it to develop more successfully. This is characteristic of the British Council’s cultural relations approach. An interview with CSSP’s monitoring and evaluation consultant revealed the extent to which the programme works very sensitively and politically in the local context. CSSP has also worked extensively with women’s associations, which are embedded in the government system, with which other donors typically do not work. Rather, in this approach, the local context of civil society formation in Ethiopia has been well understood and used to navigate political spaces. This is likely to lead to a more sustained and longer-term impact in the future.



22 [www.britishcouncil.org/partner/track-record/civil-society-support-programme](http://www.britishcouncil.org/partner/track-record/civil-society-support-programme)  
23 Irish Aid, DFID, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Embassy of Sweden, Embassy of the Netherlands, Canadian International Development Agency



*70% of the grants awarded have direct benefits for women.*

CSSP, Ethiopia

CSSP has its own office and an established presence in four regional locations – including the hard-to-reach Assosa. It has mature staff, many employed for at least two years. This not only ensures strong institutional memory but also contributes to continuity of relationships with both civil society and government actors. It has built relationships with a range of specialist service providers, which have added value to the CSSP’s capacity to develop new approaches to working with civil society. These include the Financial Management curriculum; the INSPIRE curriculum;<sup>24</sup> the Leadership Development Programme; SASA! for tackling Violence Against Women; and a database of Stories of Change, which provides evidence of what does and does not work in improving the relationship between Ethiopian people and those in power. Regarded with trust by senior and regional government representatives, CSSP also appears to have influenced for the better, at least indirectly, government attitudes towards civil society. Subject to an effective transition process, the end of programme target as described is on track.

CSSP places particular emphasis on supporting gender equality and on reducing violence against women in Ethiopia. To date, almost 70 per cent of the grants awarded have direct benefits for women, including strengthening livelihoods, helping girls remain in school and supporting the rights of women prisoners and their children. Through an innovative capacity development initiative, run collaboratively between civil society and the women’s associations, the programme has a transformative approach to reducing violence against women. As a result, it has been asked by the government to examine ways in which civil society could play a greater role in this important area.

CSSP has successfully built the capacity of CSOs to deliver services to the hard-to-reach people targeted by the programme. There are also indications that more girls, especially among the hard-to-reach population (for example, ethnic minorities such as the Fuga in Hadiya zone and other places) have been able to register in school and adult women have been able to obtain reproductive health services for the first time as a result of the programme’s work. Ethnic minority women, who are victims of double discrimination have also accessed economic services such as access to credit and savings.

Two initiatives within CSSP (HEfDA and SASA!), that specifically focus on women and girls, are explored in further detail in the following pages.

**6.2.1 HARMEE EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (HEFDA), ETHIOPIA**

**HEFDA was created owing to a concern regarding low female participation in schools resulting from domestic violence, migration and family duties. HEFDA’s first CSSP project was a pilot initiative focused on improving girls’ attendance and results at school.**

‘Many girls from Muneesa have migrated to the Middle East – some as young as 12 years old’, explained the project’s Executive Director.<sup>25</sup> ‘Some of them are trafficked illegally; others apply through recruitment agencies.’ Another factor contributing to girls’ dropout from education in Muneesa is abduction, with countless stories of young girls who have been forcibly taken from their families, abused and coerced into marriage.

HEFDA has taken action to remedy this situation, offering direct support to abducted girls, creating support structures and undertaking awareness-raising activities to prevent abduction. Getahon notes that, ‘We achieved results by taking a whole-system approach – we call it the watershed approach – to tackle the factors affecting girls’ education and damaging their life chances, including migration and abduction.’

*We have persuaded the iidir to include violence against women in their bylaws, meaning those who are violent towards women will be removed from the iidir.*

HEFDA Executive Director, CSSP (Ethiopia)

HEFDA has also sought to empower local girls by organising girls’ clubs in schools. ‘Girls can share their life experiences, discuss problems and act as a support group for other girls, with a view to convincing their parents of the importance of education,’ noted Getahon. The project now has 20,000 girls from 61 schools organised into girls’ clubs. This is complemented by strategic actions at local government level to establish a taskforce for women, consisting of 14 members drawn from relevant local stakeholders such as the police, the justice department, the education bureau and women’s groups.

With HEFDA’s encouragement, some 14,000 local women have also been organised into women’s groups that regularly engage with the taskforce to share experiences and influence local decision-makers. One notable achievement has been to embed anti-violence into local legislation by working with well-respected iidir community groups. ‘We have persuaded the iidir to include violence against women in their bylaws, meaning those who are violent towards women will be removed from the iidir.’

These activities are creating opportunities for girls like Gifti, who, after participating in an internship programme at HEFDA, set up a NGO – the Siiqqee for Women in Development Association – with three other interns:

*The HEFDA programme has changed our attitude, and our way of thinking for society.*

HEFDA intern, CSSP (Ethiopia)

‘Before the internship we wouldn’t have thought of setting up our own NGO – now we are focused on what we can do for society,’ she said. ‘I want to be a role model to other girls from my community ... the HEFDA programme has changed our attitude, and our way of thinking for society.’

This information about HefDA shows it is a successful sub-project within CSSP and that it contributes positively to several of the outcome areas, including by changing discriminatory social attitudes in favour of girls’ education and reduction of violence; by promoting collective action and collaboration by bringing girls together in clubs to work in favour of education; and through the organisation of local women against violence to influence local decision-makers. It has provided some local women with new opportunities by supporting the development of Ethiopian NGOs that respond to needs identified through the project, and it has also reshaped local legislation through the support of women activists on the ground.



24 INSPIRE is a project management programme, specifically designed for CSOs in Ethiopia  
25 <http://cssp-et.org/story-of-change/empowering-women-and-girls-in-muneesa/>  
26 <http://raisingvoices.org/sasa/>



### 6.2.2 SASA!, ETHIOPIA

Another initiative within CSSP that has focused particularly on improving the situation of women and girls is SASA!

The SASA! model originally came from a Ugandan organisation called Raising Voices<sup>26</sup>. The approach has four phases: 1) the Start phase, to foster power within programme participants (community activists) to address the connection between violence against women and HIV; 2) the Awareness phase, to engage the community to become aware of power imbalances between men and women and how silence about this power imbalance perpetuates violence against women and its connection to HIV/AIDS; 3) the Support phase, to engage the community in offering support to one another to confront violence against women and HIV/AIDS; and 4) the Action phase, to engage the community in using their power to take action to normalise shared power and non-violence, demonstrate its benefits and, as a result, prevent violence against women and HIV.

CSSP has partnered with four local organisations to implement SASA! These include the Addis Ababa Women Association, the Women Association of Tigray, HEfDA and the Oromia Region Women's Association (ORWA).

ORWA is the implementing partner for SASA! in the Oromia region and in parts of Addis City Administration, which is where the programme study visit took place. ORWA is a membership organisation with strong links to the government. It has developed strong experience working with marginalised women – particularly on addressing violence against women and girls.

In Oromia, SASA! is currently being piloted in Debre Libanos woreda (district). The project has completed the first phase and is well into the second. According to project staff, the first phase has been successful but since it has not yet been evaluated it is difficult to attribute changes to SASA!

Nevertheless, the ORWA Programme Co-ordinator felt that although an anti-harmful traditional practices structure exists, in the kebele (village), it does not function well. He noted that:

'the task forces at kebele and woreda level do not do preventive work. They only react when the crime is committed. SASA! is working on behavioural change to prevent violence against women. People may think that they know about violence against women but violence against women is deeper than they think.

*I used to believe that a woman needs beating to be a good wife ... there is no wife beating now. It used to happen in the past.*

Community activist, SASA! (CSSP, Ethiopia)

It is about power than anything else. Therefore, I can assure you that we have not done much in this country on the issue.'

Research for this study confirmed that community activists are teaching women and girls about their rights, early marriage, girls' education, violence against women and HIV/AIDS. Men from the community have been engaged as community activists reflecting a good understanding of local gender dynamics – part of the British Council's cultural relations approach. For example, when women interviewed were asked if it would be better to have only women activists, they said it would have been very difficult for women to teach the men alone. Some positive results were identified during the field visit with respect to changes in attitudes among some members of the community. One of the male activists noted that they are now seeing some results. He explained how he promoted change through dialogue: 'When I teach I put men on one side and the female on the other. I stand in the middle. I ask them questions: why do you beat women? Why do you beat your wives? Is it necessary? Does it change anything?'

For example, a female community activist spoke about a man who had beaten his wife for many years but who had changed since receiving SASA! sensitisation:

'After I got the [SASA!] training, I started educating him and his wife about harmful practice men are doing on women. I was not afraid of him. I used to go with my colleague [a male community activist]. After some time we began seeing change in this person. He started supporting his wife to bring water and helping her in the domestic activities at home.' Another community activist said, 'I used to believe that a woman needs beating to be a good wife ... there is no wife beating now. It used to happen in the past,' suggesting he had changed his attitude as a result of the project.

ORWA has also established two SASA! Clubs in the woredas it is implementing the project. Dere-jibo primary School is one of the schools where SASA! club is established. The Club has 14 student members (seven girls and seven boys).

*SASA! has shown important potential to change social norms and discriminatory behaviours against women and girls through community activism.*

CSSP, Ethiopia

There are also three teachers (one male and two female) who work with the students. In addition to the SASA! Club there is a Girls Club where members are only girls. The clubs have similar agendas: they both work on violence against women. However, while SASA! has support from ORWA the Girls' club has no support at all. The support the SASA! club gets from ORWA includes scripts for radio drama and posters.

The school has experience working on abduction since some of the girls coming from the lowland areas are abducted and drop out from school. SASA! has contributed to changing this situation. For example, a teacher who is also member of the SASA! School Club told a story of a brother helped his sister stay in School:

'We have a male student here. His sister stopped coming to school because her parents refused to send her to school for fear that some will abduct here. Her brother convinced his parents that he would protect her from abduction. He promised his parents that he will walk with her to school and come back home together. She is now attending in school'.

Male and female students are now travelling together. The parents of some of these students are SASA! Community Agents.

SASA! has shown important potential to change social norms and discriminatory behaviours against women and girls through community activism. Community activists, mainly women and girls but also men and boys, are educating people in the community to change their attitude towards gender power relations, which is the major factor in violence against women. But activism in Ethiopia is a new phenomenon; some ORWA senior staff believe it may

*While these initiatives tend to be quite small in scale, they can be powerful catalysts for change at the local level.*

Active Citizens

take four years to fully implement SASA!, even though initial progress has been positive. It can also be seen as contributing favourably to promoting dialogue, collaboration and collective action, with men and women volunteers working together with the common aim of improving the situation of violence and increasing women's knowledge about their rights. Community activists themselves, through training and greater spaces for engaging with the community and local government, have seen important developments in their awareness and agency. As such, this programme can be seen as contributing to three of the outcome areas.

*This section has explored two very different approaches to working through volunteering and collective action supported by the British Council. Active Citizens works mainly through SAPs, several of which contribute to promoting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment from the grassroots up, based on locally developed initiatives that aim to address issues that are locally prioritised. While these initiatives tend to be quite small in scale, they can be powerful catalysts for change at the local level and actively engage participants with the potential to contribute to further development in the future. However, the British Council and its implementing partners need to promote a more systematic generation of data (quantitative and qualitative) to assess the impacts of SAPs on women and girls and how these are being achieved.*

*CSSP is a larger model working from the grassroots through volunteers while engaging closely with local government to promote more sustainable change with regards to important issues facing women and girls, such as low levels of schooling and violence. The SASA! project, within CSSP, uses community activism and volunteers, which has been essential to its success so far. Although it is in its early days, the project seems to be contributing to changing discriminatory social norms that promote violence, while engaging the community to work together to promote change.*

*Both approaches illustrate ways in which individuals at the community level work by volunteering and promoting collective action to promote changes in behaviour or in the underlying conditions that hinder the development and empowerment of women and girls. They also contribute in different ways to the other outcome areas, for example by strengthening the awareness and agency of individuals who participate through activism. In some cases, they also achieve change in discriminatory social norms. While both seem to have potential, monitoring and assessment of their impacts in the medium term will be important to determine whether they are achieving empowerment outcomes.*



## 7. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

**Women face significant barriers to participating in political and leadership spaces in many of the countries where the British Council works. British Council works to contribute to break down such barriers. Projects offer opportunities for women and girls to build their skills, confidence and capacity for leadership and active participation in public life. By working with different types of partners – from parliamentarians to universities – the British Council seeks to facilitate learning and advocacy for gender equality and to reduce discrimination.**

Often opportunities for leadership and participation come through programmes not specifically targeted to women and girls, such as Improving Parliamentary Performance in Pakistan (IP3), which aims to strengthen the parliament as an institution and to support both committees and individual parliamentarians, or the Horn of Africa Leadership and Learning for Action (HOLLA) project, which strengthens the leadership capacity of young men and women in Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan.<sup>27</sup>

However, the British Council also has programmes specifically supporting women. Such is the case of Women Participating in Public Life (WPIPL), Springboard and Enhancing Gender Awareness and Effectiveness of Women Elected Representatives in the Federal and Regional Parliaments of Ethiopia, which provided training and support to women MPs.

This section explores some of the programmes that have made important contributions to women's leadership and participation and the results the British Council has achieved across different empowerment outcomes through these. The programmes have built awareness and agency; promoted collective action to raise women's (and men's) voices in public spheres to promote gender equality; and, importantly, have contributed to generating an enabling environment for women and girls with more supportive institutions. While the scale of the programmes is relatively small, they have created useful replicable models with the potential to be expanded.

### 7.1 SPRINGBOARD, EGYPT (2012–PRESENT)

**The British Council initiated the Springboard programme in collaboration with the Springboard Consultancy<sup>28</sup> in the Middle East and North Africa in 2005 to empower women and help them realise their potential and achieve success in their personal and professional lives. Springboard is a women's self-development programme that provides personal and work development opportunities for women in the region, challenging public perceptions of their role and contribution to their societies. Women assess themselves, set goals and develop practical interpersonal skills and the self-confidence necessary to achieve success in their lives.**

**In Egypt, this was offered as a paid service to Vodafone and Baker Hughes and implemented across six governorates and as a community programme through NGOs and through work inside three universities. Two international master trainers and 22 licensed trainers have received the Springboard certification in Egypt, and 900 women have received the cascade training.**

The British Council staff, implementing partners and beneficiaries report benefits beyond the individual level. Springboard has the potential to enhance the quality of education to promote women's access to opportunities and resources, as well as challenging social and cultural norms – two of the empowerment outcome areas. Indeed, the licensed Springboard trainer said, 'Introducing Springboard in universities has a number of benefits related to: the ability of female students to perform well academically; the establishment of trustful and respectful relations between teachers and students... In that sense, it is going to improve the quality of higher education.'

Referring to the implementation of Springboard at Asyut University, she added, The Asyut model... is linked to a big institution that collaborates; it is sustainable because it creates a pool of trainers embedded in university... it is institutionalised... and is needs-based. Asyut is a marginalised governorate bound by traditions that restrict the role of women in society, male-dominated and patriarchal, that only acknowledges women's reproductive role and not their economic and social role. It is a society where women's participation is very limited.

Springboard participants reported a number of outcomes during a FGD, such as growing self-confidence. One interviewee noted, 'I improved my self-confidence and being in media that is very important. Before Springboard I consulted male family members before doing anything, now I just do things.' Another said, 'I felt liberated by ties and bonds that I had before.'

Yet another respondent explained that her parents told her, 'You are going to be trained but in the end you are going to get married and stay at home.' This sparked a discussion in the family, something she felt satisfied with as it illustrated a change in dynamics: 'Women can change the perception of the community towards women that she can be effective as a working woman and bring up children.'

*Before Springboard I consulted male family members before doing anything, now I just do things.*

Female beneficiary, Springboard (Egypt)

While more systematic data from participants about the changes Springboard has triggered in their lives are needed, the information collected for this study suggests those participating have learnt useful skills, gained self-confidence and become more interested in having more active professional lives. This indicates that the programme is contributing to young women's individual power and agency. Moreover, even if the programme does not openly challenge social and cultural norms, the stories narrated by trainers and beneficiaries show it challenges perceptions and attitudes towards the role of women in societies by leading to debates within families and work spaces.

### 7.2 ACTION FOR STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS (PWR), UGANDA (2014–16)

This EU-funded project was implemented by the British Council in partnership with Action for Development (ACFODE), a national CSO with a focus on gender, in four local district governments in northern Uganda. The total value of the programme was €322,264. The overall purpose was to contribute to strengthening the participation of women in social and economic life and to promote a society where women and men are valued equally and have equal access to opportunities, resources and government development. Using a manual based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the project worked to increase understanding about women's rights among 140 elected women councillors, 140 social actors (clan leaders, religious and opinion leaders), 1,600 women from grassroots level, 80 duty-bearers (district and sub-county local government officials) and 40 CSOs working in the area of women's rights. The project emphasised the importance of protecting and promoting women's rights.



<sup>27</sup> This case study only focuses on the Ethiopia example

<sup>28</sup> [www.springboardconsultancy.com/british-council-empowers-women-with-career-development-s/](http://www.springboardconsultancy.com/british-council-empowers-women-with-career-development-s/)

### *Evidence from the work undertaken at the community level can be used to leverage decision-makers' political will to contribute to change.*

PWR<sup>29</sup> raised awareness about women's rights and particularly on CEDAW, and as a result participants formed CEDAW committees in their communities. Through these, women leaders and social activists engaged in sensitisations, monitoring and reporting of abuses against women. The project also focused on increasing women councillors' engagement on gender and human rights processes by developing their leadership skills. The other specific focus area was to increase women's participation in social enterprises within their communities.

The British Council's PWR project co-ordinator said one of the outcomes was a policy brief presented to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development as an input into the broader work of addressing women and girls' rights in the country. This addressed critical issues in the area of promoting women's rights in northern Uganda, relating to property ownership; domestic violence; imbalances in the ratio of female to male teachers in primary and secondary school; and lack of separate latrines for girls and how this affected the dropout or attendance of girls in many districts. The brief was informed by discussions emanating from the project at district level, and some of the recommendations stemming from it resulted in some positive changes at the local level.

The project co-ordinator also said the Minister of Education had participated in presentation of the brief, and showed a great deal of interest in the issues presented and indicated the Ministry's commitment to working on them. This illustrates how evidence from the work undertaken at the community level can be used to leverage decision-makers' political will to contribute to change. It was not clear from this study the extent to which the government has addressed the issues presented by the women from northern Uganda, but this dialogue with decision-makers was found to be a good initiative undertaken by the British Council and its partners.

Through discussions with beneficiaries, it was possible to identify positive results in relation to increased awareness and agency for the women participants. For example, one leadership training participant said:

'I did not know what to exactly do as a councillor and feared to even visiting the sub-county office until I participated in training in leadership development skills. The training developed my confidence in public speaking, lobbying and advocacy. After the training, I realised I have a role to monitor government programmes and ensure effective service delivery for the people I represent at the council' (British Council, 2014b).

Another important element identified was the partners and beneficiaries' positive view of the British Council's engagement, reflective of the cultural relations approach. These actors noted that the organisation builds trusts with its partners in the process of implementation. It also consults its partners and stakeholders in order to establish their interests before involving them in implementation. Stakeholders and staff also felt the British Council was transparent and honest and respected the views of everyone and involved everyone regardless of sex, religion and ethnic background. Partners and beneficiaries also pointed out that the British Council understood and respected the diverse local cultures and religions of different stakeholders. According to an implementing partner:

'We have been implementing the project together all through. Every time we go to the field, there are ACFODE and British Council staff... Even for national activities where the British Council has taken the lead, we have participated throughout together, even in planning; we design programmes together, even who is to attend and why they are to attend and developing concepts together. It has been a partnership whereby each one values the other because of the networks they have and the value they bring to the partnership for the realisation of the objectives.'

Findings from this study also demonstrate that the British Council, especially through the PWR project, has contributed to enhanced women's participation, ownership and management of social enterprises in Apac, Oyam, Nebbi and Pader districts. PWR beneficiaries have established liquid soap-making, piggery, poultry and bakery enterprises and village savings and loans associations, among others. Although it may be too early to determine the impact of social enterprises on women, this support was found to contribute to increasing the number of ordinary women and women leaders participating in, owning and operating various business enterprises, granting them fairer access to opportunities and resources. The findings also show that these enterprises were contributing to increased access to income by women in local communities. Some beneficiaries pointed out that the income earned helped them pay school fees and medical bills for their children.

### **7.3 WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC LIFE, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (WPIPL) (2012–PRESENT)**

**The WPIPL programme was funded by the British FCO's Arab Partnership Initiative through DFID in Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, where it ended in 2015, and later extended to Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories, where it will be completed by March 2017. The purpose of the programme is to build women's capacities and broad-based support to increase their active involvement in public life, including national and local political processes. In each country, the project is implemented through three main strategies: developing community leaders, especially women, aged 18–30 in marginalised populations (1); supporting capacity building of CSOs to conduct action research and advocacy to influence policy and practice (2); and learning, networking and coalition-building – this component aimed to provide platforms for experience sharing and learning between the four countries through regional learning events (3).**

In Egypt, WPIPL was implemented in partnership with a group of CSOs and helped women engage with policy-makers by sustaining their effort at advocating for a women quota in the parliamentary elections to be included in the constitution. As the British Council deputy director pointed out:

'WPIPL showed us we could deliver a programme very effectively in getting women closer to political developments in Egypt. We needed UK expertise to do that. The timing was right, there was an entry point to actively and publicly work in that area that is sensitive for Egypt and foreigners and foreign organisations. We had to tread carefully on this one.'

One participant stressed that it was very hard to change perceptions around women in politics in Egypt:

'Women are seen as voters and not to be voted for. Electoral results show this. WPIPL tried to challenge this but social and cultural norms around women in politics are very hard to change. There is a long way to go.'

Another beneficiary suggested women in Egypt did not have adequate legislation to secure the protection of women's rights and guarantee such rights. She also said there was a cultural problem resulting from male dominance. For her, 'The programme came as a surprise. It was useful as it had legislation at the core of action research,' which, as a lawyer, she thought important. She added, 'For the community at large the programme came at a critical time, democratic transformations, elections, new legislation. This necessitated building the capacity of young people to realise this goal and serve the community.' She also noted how, as a result of the action research, she was able to witness the change in the mind-set, abilities, perceptions and concepts of the group working with her. For example, while previously some of her collaborators did not believe in women's rights, they now advocate for them.

In Tunisia, WPIPL was delivered in partnership with the Coalition of Women's Organisations, composed of 30 CSOs across Tunisia. The FGD with members of the coalition highlighted some important findings for this study. Firstly, while women's political participation is low in Tunisia, the female president of the coalition emphasised the need to support women's economic empowerment and address the challenge of unemployment and poverty in the country, therefore providing women with means of survival: 'In some rural areas women work in agriculture as well as in construction but they are paid half the money men are paid and work mostly informally.' Secondly, she suggested a need to challenge social and cultural norms to avoid the clash between reformed laws and an unchanged mentality among average citizens.





*It has been a partnership whereby each one values the other because of the networks they have and the value they bring to the partnership for the realisation of the objectives.'*

ACFODE representative, PWR (Uganda)

The programme raised awareness through workshops within the community, and SAPs made women more active and aware of the public space. One beneficiary said that, after taking the workshop, she decided to make women more aware of the electoral process in her community and address the corruption observed within institutions. However, the limited funding provided through the SAPs could not sustain some activities, such as electoral campaigning of women candidates.

Finally, the male communication officer of the coalition stressed the need to get men involved in activities aimed at empowering women: 'I am a man and I want women to get involved and be equal. We need to work to train young men and young leaders in their local communities.'

**7.4 ENHANCING GENDER AWARENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN THE FEDERAL AND REGIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF ETHIOPIA (2010)**

**This project, also known as the Women Parliamentarians Project, had two aims: to enhance women parliamentarians' skills to make them effective contributors to legislative and policy formation within the federal and regional parliaments; and to increase male parliamentarians' awareness of gender issues so that they become positive partners in pursuing gender in development.**

**This DFID-funded project was a collaboration between the Active Learning Centre (UK), the British Council (Ethiopia) and the Women, Children and Youth Select Committee in Ethiopia's federal parliament. The project first trained a core group of trainers (men and women) drawn from the federal parliament. They in turn gave training to 105 elected women MPs (including some elected representatives from the regions).**

*While previously some of her collaborators did not believe in women's rights, they now advocate for them.*

Female beneficiary, WPIPL (Egypt)

**70 male MPs received training in gender. A mentoring scheme involving experienced MPs designed to support newly elected women MPs was also introduced (Alemu, 2011).**

The project design, its approach and the results obtained have been praised by women leaders in parliament, trainers and trainees at both federal and regional level and participants in the mentoring scheme. All participants interviewed for an evaluation of the project in 2011 noted that the activities delivered through the project provided them with practical skills and the technical capacity to speak in public, address and understand media and mainstream gender and concepts of women empowerment (Alemu, 2011).

The project activities reached almost all female MPs at federal level and 17 MPs and women's representatives from the region. On the other hand, however, fund limitations meant only 70 male MPs were trained in parliament. This restricted the ability to scale up project activities at regional level.

The project provided male and female MPs with an opportunity to obtain a common understanding of issues related to gender, such as discussing gender relations within society and the household and learning from each other's experience.

The project made significant progress towards achieving the expected outcomes. For example, both men and women MPs increased their understanding of gender issues. MPs have gained useful skills on how to mainstream gender. Both male and female MPs gave examples of how their practice with regard to gender mainstreaming had changed as a result of the training.

For example by using the gender checklists developed to ask appropriate questions of ministries and demanding disaggregated data in order to assess gender impact. A male MP noted, 'We were able to make one ministry resubmit its annual plan so that it reflects gender issue, the minister acknowledged the "gender oversight" and apologised to parliament.'

Women MPs had increased their levels of knowledge of gender issues and significantly increased their ability and their confidence levels when speaking in public. Preliminary findings showed the training has had an impact on women's ability to intervene and participate in the parliamentary process. One interesting example mentioned in the evaluation relates to standing committees asking for reports or plans to be redrafted because of the lack of a gender perspective, in addition to noticing where there was a discrepancy between the activities and the budget. Female MPs had also demonstrated outstanding performance during the mock debate held as part of the mentoring scheme. There are also instances of women demonstrating particular participation skills, for example during the Women's Fund public hearing, the appointment of judges, the orphans and adoption legislation debate, the assessment of sector plans and reports and discussions on Women's Development Packages. One female MP interviewed for the evaluation noted, 'We would like to take this to the next level, acquire skill in monitoring gender mainstreaming to supervise progress in the various ministries and on the ground.'

A British Council staff member involved in this project expressed that prior to the project, women MPs felt they were not representing their constituency well and in order to do better they knew they would benefit from additional training to develop their skills to communicate across parties, on how to engage in debate and on how to argue a case.

Thus, through this programme, the British Council trained and enabled women parliamentarians to make a speech, to gather evidence for their speeches and provided information about potential sources of evidence. The evaluation also recommended that the British Council support training for all MPs on women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming and the mechanism be adapted to be rolled out to regions, woredas (districts) and kebeles (villages).

This project is a good example of how a British Council-supported project can advance several of the strategic outcome areas identified by the framework as contributing to women and girls' empowerment: it improved women's awareness and agency – in this case by supporting women to participate politically; it built their opportunities and resources: these women now have a very different professional development trajectory; it promoted dialogue, collaboration and collective action by providing the skills and knowledge to women MPs and to their male counterparts to work in favour of gender mainstreaming and more transparent legislation; and it very clearly helped build a supportive legal and policy environment for women by training and supporting them, as well as more gender-sensitive male leaders, who are now in a strategic policy decision-making position to use their newfound understanding of gender issues to improve policy and legislation.

*We were able to make one ministry resubmit its annual plan so that it reflects gender issue, the minister acknowledged the "gender oversight" and apologised to parliament.*

Male MP, Women Parliamentarians Project, Ethiopia)





## 7.5 HORN OF AFRICA LEADERSHIP LEARNING FOR ACTION (HOLLA), ETHIOPIA, SOUTH SUDAN AND SUDAN (2015–PRESENT)

**HOLLA<sup>30</sup> works with youth and community members to develop their skills and knowledge in leadership and community cohesion. The overall objective is to contribute to peaceful co-existence, community development and cohesion among people in the Horn of Africa. Through this EU-funded project (value: €1 million), the British Council is supporting young people to become engaged in national and local development in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan. HOLLA is enabling young people to lead on and play an active role in social action projects and campaigns that can contribute positively to the region's future by supporting youth coalitions and empowering youth leaders. HOLLA is implemented by national partner organisations in each country. During the project's first year, youth coalitions have been formed at the country and regional levels, and common goals and objectives have been developed for the duration of the project.**

To ensure the project represented young women leaders, it set out to recruit 40 per cent female participants in each of the three countries. However, because young women's level of education and experience tends to be lower given the structural gender constraints in participating countries, the programme's selection committee had to use affirmative action to ensure that the minimum number of women were recruited.

There are two ways in which the youth leaders engage. One is through HOLLA's planning process. For example, youth leaders from the three countries – 10 from each – came up with three thematic areas for HOLLA to focus on in the project period. These were art and development, community cohesion youth engagement in policy dialogue. Youth then go through a capacity-building and leadership programme and participate in community and cultural events, and organise thematic workshops. Young participants then come together to identify policy issues of regional and national impact that affect youth in the Horn of Africa.

For Ethiopia, the theme of the cultural event was women in leadership – a celebration of the contribution of Ethiopian women to social, cultural and political life. The content of the event was poetry reading, presentation of research on the theme and a question and answer session with youth.

HOLLA also has some programme implementation at national level for which it uses peer educators. In Ethiopia the British Council has identified and trained peer educators (17 female and 19 male). While the number of peer educators trained is small, they then identify and train community actors (both male and female) who make a community-needs assessment and present a proposal to improve their community. In Ethiopia, 36 community actors were trained. They then apply for the SAP grant. The project is implemented by the community themselves led by the youth within the community. The SAP draws upon the Active Citizens model. Initiative Africa, which is a local NGO, helps implement HOLLA in Ethiopia. The SAP currently being implemented is aimed at addressing environmental sanitation, health, education and job creation.

British Council staff interviewed noted that the programme currently does not have results or change oriented measurements, only process indicators. However, since this gap was identified they have been working to address it by developing thorough qualitative impact measurement indicators with a gender focus. Under the current pilot period, the programme aims to draw the main lessons learnt so far and build on them for the rest of the programme period.

One of the young female leaders interviewed had the following assessment:

'HOLLA is a unique programme that has brought together youth leaders from the region...The opportunity to work as a regional team is a strength. The cultural exchange between and among the youth is also another strength. The idea of regional youth, all these are strengths. As a woman, it makes me proud to be able to be a member of the Regional Youth Programme and participate with my national and regional colleagues equally.'

*As a woman, it makes me proud to be able to be a member of the Regional Youth Programme and participate with my national and regional colleagues equally.'*

Female young leader, HOLLA (Ethiopia)

This suggests that the programme provides an important platform for participating young women that they might not have otherwise have, contributing to their leadership skills and their agency, as well as opening the door for new opportunities.

However, it is worth noting that the young woman expressed some concern about the programme's sustainability and what would happen to its achievements after it ends:

'One thing I can say to British Council is this. Projects come and are implemented effectively with a lot of enthusiasm. However, when they phase out everything ends and then another project comes. It is not sustainable. I recommend that British Council think about making these projects sustainable or think about sustainability at the time projects are designed. The project ends when the money runs out not because the project has reached a sustainable stage'.

As previously mentioned, this is reflective of the development projects more generally – rather than specific to British Council.

*These examples present different aspects of the British Council's work to promote women's – particularly young women's – leadership and participation. Each of them work differently, forming distinct partnerships to achieve its objectives. With Springboard this was with the private sector and universities; in PWR, it was with a local NGO and district governments. WPIPL worked closely with CSOs to support women's engagement with policy-makers. HOLLA works through national NGOs to provide capacity development and networking opportunities among youth. And the women MPs project in Ethiopia supported the capacity development of women and men MPs. Each project has a distinct level of engagement with government and civil society partners to achieve its aims of promoting leadership, stronger knowledge about gender equality, and relevant spaces for women and men advocates to promote gender equality.*

*These programmes also demonstrate important contributions to several of the empowerment outcome areas. For example, the PWR's social enterprise component had an important focus on promoting economic opportunities for women. Springboard, HOLLA and the women MPs project contribute to strengthening women's voice and agency by developing their capacity to speak in public and increasing their knowledge of gender equality issues to be better able to bring a voice to them. WPIPL and the women MPs project provided important support to women's political engagement, particularly in challenging institutional, legal and policy contexts that were not working in favour of gender equality. WPIPL does this through evidence-based advocacy underpinned by action research findings; the women MPs project focused on strengthening knowledge and capacity of MPs. In many of these programmes, participating women and women's advocates – which include men – have been brought together to act collectively and give a voice to gender equality issues and promote them in practice. This shows the potential for the British Council to work through different approaches and leverage its strong networks with CSOs and the trust it has with local and national governments to promote spaces for women's leaderships through gradual support for changes to discriminatory gender norms (such as those that hinder women from becoming politically active) and creating opportunities for women entrepreneurs and leaders as well as for young women.*

*The contributions of these programmes should be seen through their engagement with local CSOs and universities, which have the potential to broaden the scope and reach of the initiatives in the medium term, even if the initial British Council interventions are of limited scale. Understanding local context and responsiveness to needs, intensive work with local partners and sensitivity to messaging in adverse contexts has with the women MPs project, PWR and WPIPL in particular showed positive contributions to improving the policy and institutional environment for women. It is important to monitor this in the medium term to verify the extent to which the programmes have supported transformative outcomes for participating women and their communities. Assessing the medium-term impact of Springboard and HOLLA will be more difficult but efforts should be directed at achieving a better understanding of their impact beyond enhanced individual agency.*



## 8. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION

**The British Council is engaged in education at all levels, from primary to tertiary. It has particular expertise in supporting and extending the teaching of English, but also builds broader partnerships with and between educational institutions. In some contexts, such as in Ethiopia and Zambia, it also provides technical assistance on basic education directly to government bodies. Such partnerships can contribute directly to the five outcomes for women and girls.**

The British Council provides opportunities for women and girls to enhance their skills and build their capacities, and also facilitates the creation of research networks that create and share knowledge on the discrimination facing them. It further supports and enables such networks to advocate for positive change at the policy level. It also builds capacity on inclusive education and stimulates reflection on the social norms and attitudes that contribute to gender inequality. Post-graduate scholarships managed by the British Council, such as the Tullow Group Scholarship Scheme, provide opportunities to young women receiving them who would not have had the opportunity to study in the UK otherwise, providing a life-changing experience that can strengthen some women's presence in public, business and political spaces.

In this section, we explore some of the education sector interventions through which the British Council supports the empowerment of women (particularly young women) and girls. The interventions in countries visited for this study are only a sub-sample of the education programmes. This is an area in which the British Council has a long track record of positive experiences.

### 8.1 COLLABORATION WITH THE MACARTHUR FOUNDATION, NIGERIA

The British Council is working with the MacArthur Foundation on two projects with relevance to this study.

#### 8.1.1 TEACHER EDUCATION, TEACHER PRACTICE, APPROACHES TO GENDER AND GIRLS' SCHOOLING OUTCOMES: A STUDY IN FIVE NIGERIAN STATES

**This project, led by a research team from the University College London Institute of Education, in partnership with British Council Nigeria, aims to investigate the relationship between what teachers learn about gender and girls' education in pre-service and in-service teacher training or continuing professional development and secondary school education outcomes.**

The project is particularly concerned with whether teachers are able to put insights regarding gender equality into practice in their work in schools, and what kinds of relationships exist between aspects of teachers' training and girls' education outcomes. The government is hiring 500,000 teachers so the intervention has become particularly important to improve how teachers teach their students about gender equality. The findings of the survey work suggest teachers continue to hold discriminatory views on gender after training. Such views relate to the unacceptability of women's leadership or blaming the victim for sexual violence. These views are held by more men than women. This work has not yet concluded but is designed to feed into better training for teachers in relation to gender equality in Nigeria.

#### 8.1.2 IMPROVING THE CURRICULA FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL SKILLS

**This project seeks to look at the relevance of skills gained in school and to relate these to gaps in the labour market.**

The Nigerian government has introduced a secondary curricula designed to teach more relevant skills but no one has been prepared for its implementation. This collaboration seeks to support the change in Cross Rivers state.

The director of the MacArthur Foundation said:

'In future we should look beyond reinforcing existing gender relations. I would like us to challenge and invert stereotypes, e.g. work with women mechanics, women as drivers. We need to look at points of disruption and also for a boy's equivalent of girl power – a form of conscientisation. Let's keep a focus on gender relations. In the south-east there are fewer boys now coming to the university sector. There is an undervaluation of education so it has become an opportunity cost. Young men would rather seek an apprenticeship. Education should be for other things – not simply about economic growth, e.g. about family planning.'

### 8.2 GIRL'S EDUCATION RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY NETWORK, NIGERIA (2015–PRESENT)

**GEARN is in the early stages of establishment and aims to bring together university lecturers and educationalists in northern Nigeria and connect them with a team in the Ministry of Education. The aim is to produce high-quality research on what works in support to education of girls.**

The starting point of this project is gender inclusion policies at the national level: a National Policy Review Team examines 12–15 policies, for example on gender in basic education, Koranic schools, teacher training, youth development, women and girl's education, early childhood care and education and the child rights act. Policy content has been screened to see if it is consistent with international agreements such as the SDGs, Education for All, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW.

The network is also supporting research in six states exploring, for example, the impact of school management committees on girls' outcomes in basic education, the impact of conflict and security on girls' education and the early career prospects of female teachers in science. This research will be owned by the network and not by the British Council. This research network is at a very early stage but if embedded over the longer term could start to build up capacity to generate data for advocacy.





### 8.3 TULLOW GROUP SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME, KENYA (2011–PRESENT)

**The TGSS<sup>31</sup> programme is a regional programme funded by Tullow Oil and Gas and managed by the British Council that provides scholarships for university graduates to undertake post-graduate studies in the UK. The management team is in Ghana, but the programme is in place in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania and Uganda.**

Each country's management team (made up of a Tullow Oil and Gas representative and a British Council project manager) has some flexibility over the operational decisions it makes. In Kenya, the team has been proactively targeting women, including in some of the marginalised regions where Tullow is operating, where few women have the necessary qualifications to apply and those who do tend to lack self-confidence or interest to apply for a scholarship to study in what they see as a male-dominated field. Others have family duties they find difficult to forgo in order to live abroad for a year. As such, recruiting women with the right profile is a challenge, but the British Council is making explicit efforts – particularly since the 2015 school cycle – to recruit women as a way to provide an opportunity that can work as a springboard for their development. For example, during the next recruitment round, now that female scholars are back from studying abroad, they will be taken on road shows to serve as role models so that young women in these marginalised localities can identify them as sources of inspiration for them to further their education.

Scholars now back in Kenya who were interviewed for this study identified many positive changes in their lives resulting from the scholarship: achieving a stronger international education as a platform for better job opportunities; getting a broader world view that will contribute positively to their role in society; and pushing them to excel in a foreign environment, thus improving their assertiveness and self-confidence. One of the young female scholars said, 'I now believe in myself more... I can do new things,' illustrating the transformative role of this scholarship and experience abroad for young women who might not have received such an opportunity otherwise.

*It is an example of the British Council influencing a programme to have positive outcomes for young women.*

Tullow Scholarship Scheme, Kenya

While the scale of the scholarship is small (only 20 recipients in 2015, nine of whom were young women), and its reach is for young women already able to access a university education, it is an example of the British Council influencing a programme to have positive empowerment outcomes for young women through their increased power and agency, and has opened up the possibilities for them to access more opportunities and resources on an equal footing to their male peers.

### 8.4 PAKISTAN SCOTTISH SCHOLARSHIPS SCHEME (2013–16)

**The Scottish government is providing scholarship opportunities for young women from disadvantaged backgrounds to study at Masters level in Pakistani universities. The ambition is to help women in Pakistan achieve their potential and ambitions, supporting them to build a secure future for themselves and their families.**

The Pakistan Scottish Scholarships Scheme covers award-holders with a tuition fee for Masters courses, university accommodation and subsistence costs, at any university in Pakistan recognised by the Higher Education Commission in one of the following subject areas: Sustainable Energy, Food Security and Agriculture, Education and Health Sciences. In addition, the Scottish government in collaboration with the British Council is providing PhD research travel grants for female PhD students enrolled in Pakistani universities to support them carry out research in Scotland. 400 women from Pakistani universities have been supported to complete their Masters degrees. Some receive scholarships to study abroad, which, according to the project co-ordinator, has totally changed their life pathway.

As with the TGSS, this scholarship scheme which promotes young women's higher education is a very relevant and direct way the British Council is working on two of the empowerment outcome areas: providing fairer access to resources and opportunities and contributing to scholars' power and agency.

### 8.5 ILMPOSSIBLE: TAKE A CHILD TO SCHOOL, PAKISTAN (2013–PRESENT)

**ILMPOSSIBLE: TACS<sup>32</sup> (\$4.9m) is implemented by the British Council in partnership with the Educate a Child Initiative, and in association with the Children's Global Network Pakistan, School of Leadership Foundation and the Free and Fair Election Network. The project aims to increase primary school enrolment and improve retention in 60 districts in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces over three years.**

This education project aims to advocate for communities and parents to take up issues of quality education and enable communities to hold school authorities and government departments responsible. To date, there have been over 45 delivery partners.

A major challenge highlighted by parents, community volunteers and teachers interviewed in Kasur, near Lahore, is that although TACS has been successful at enrolling girls in primary school, they worry about the sustainability of their efforts because most girls will not access secondary school. The nearest secondary school is located a few kilometres away and mothers explained that they could not allow their girls to walk all the way to another community territory when they reach adolescence. Volunteers added that, when girls reach the age of 12 or 13 years old, parents start thinking about marriage and it is considered shameful for girls to be walking alone to another community. In fact, the implementing partner representative in Kasur explained, 'We are not here to change the culture and social norms, so we cannot do anything about this.' This vision of the project by an implementing partner suggests a limit on its transformative potential.

British Council partners also highlight that, while they keep in mind the men and women ratio for the number of participants to train as TACS community volunteers, they flag that this is challenging in rural areas. For instance, local partners train an equal number of young men and women but then women struggle to perform their activities (i.e. door-to-door awareness) because their own mobility is constrained by social norms that do not allow them to travel outside their community, even less so on their own. The TACS project manager highlighted, 'It is not smart for us to impose the recruitment of young female community volunteers when we know they will not be able to stay involved in the project due to their restricted mobility.' This illustrates how the British Council and its partners recognise the context and adapt their expectations of the project to the reality, but at the same time also suggests a possible shortcoming in efforts to provide women and girls with equal opportunities.

### 8.6 ENGLISH AND DIGITAL FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION (EDGE), BANGLADESH (2012–PRESENT)

**The British Council and BRAC implement EDGE<sup>33</sup> to stimulate the educational possibilities and needs of young girls in Bangladesh. It builds on the English and ICT for Adolescents (EITA) project, which won the Manthan Award (e-Women and Empowerment Winner in 2013). This initiative offers English and digital education for adolescents through non-formal after school clubs. It targets girls and promotes their opportunities to develop and strengthen skills in English and the use of technology, which are typically more limited than those of boys and men, which ultimately restricts their access to the labour market.**

Since the project began, almost 6573 girls have been reached directly through approximately 264 clubs within the network of BRAC. This project is one example of girls explicitly being targeted as beneficiaries through English programmes and of an equity approach being followed to provide girls and adolescents with opportunities and resources.

31 [www.britishcouncil.org/partner/partnerships/stories/tullow-group-scholarship-scheme](http://www.britishcouncil.org/partner/partnerships/stories/tullow-group-scholarship-scheme)

32 [www.britishcouncil.pk/110000-and-counting-take-child-school](http://www.britishcouncil.pk/110000-and-counting-take-child-school)

33 [www.britishcouncil.org.bd/en/partnerships/work-development/track-record/english-ict-adolescents](http://www.britishcouncil.org.bd/en/partnerships/work-development/track-record/english-ict-adolescents)



It is also the overall impact of the project that ‘adolescent girls from marginalised communities can make more informed and independent life choices, as is their right, in order to contribute more fully to the family, the economy and society’ (monitoring, evaluation and learning framework). To achieve this, the EDGE theory of change highlights four main objectives: (i) development of skills and knowledge; (ii) awareness of choices and rights; (iii); (iv) self-confidence and belief in ability to learn; and (iv) enhanced status.

The needs analysis for EDGE underscores some evidence that EDGE contributes to students completing the formal education cycle, which has positive societal impacts, including strengthening participants’ likelihood of finding formal employment and raising the age of marriage. These impacts are positively linked with two of the empowerment outcome areas: increasing access to opportunities and resources and contributing to changing social norms (which in this context perpetuate early marriage). This point was also mentioned by the BRAC education manager, who explained that EDGE contributes to tackling the rate of girls dropping out of schools: ‘Often girls fail in English and Maths so they drop out and then they get married, so we should help them in their education through linking teaching with the club sessions and linking the project with market opportunities.’

However, the needs analysis also flags that ‘these gender driven societal impacts are generally not given prominence in stakeholder’s perception of the areas in which the project is positively influencing. The predominant perception is that EDGE, through improving the participants English and IT skills, positively affects the beneficiaries’ livelihood opportunities. Prevention of early marriage is far more problematic to demonstrate as a direct result of EDGE and could be largely attributed to other components of the ADP programme [the Adolescent Development Programme implemented by BRAC]’ (British Council, 2015d). The BRAC manager also highlighted that girls enrolled and retained in secondary education still face risks of early marriage, when from poor families, and of sexual harassment, which lead parents to remove their daughters from school.

*Often girls fail in English and Maths so they drop out and then they get married, so we should help them in their education.*

BRAC Education manager (EDGE, Bangladesh)

## 8.7 CONNECTING CLASSROOMS, UGANDA (2004–PRESENT)

**Connecting Classrooms<sup>34</sup> is the British Council’s global flagship schools programme, which is jointly funded with DFID and runs in over 50 countries. By developing and networking with thousands of teachers across the world, the programme aims to help young people develop the knowledge, skills and values to live and work in a globalised economy.**

In Uganda, the programme is one of several active projects helping enhance the quality of education by providing international school partnerships, professional development for teachers and school leaders and ICT and policy dialogue and training. By partnering local Ugandan schools with international schools, teachers and students in both institutions are able to use available online resources, while learning more about each other’s cultures and broadening cultural relations.

While the programme is not specifically targeted at girls, and its design does not respond to gender-specific challenges, girls benefit through their involvement. More recently, there has been some thinking about how the programme can be better utilised to promote the gender equality dimension in education, and as a result the British Council is now carrying out a pilot to focus more on this. An officer from the Ministry of Education and Gender explained:

‘Connecting Classrooms is now ideally about skills for living in the 21st century and these skills are needed by everyone whether girls or boys but at this time the British Council has been trying to find out what is it that the Gender Unit in the education ministry is doing about girls and women...There was a meeting that took place last week between the gender co-ordinator at the Ministry of Education and the British Council to try and see what the ministry is focusing on as far as gender is concerned so that the British Council can now also know how they can come in to support the ministry.’

Some of the teachers participating in the programme are also considering the need to think specifically about girls and their needs (e.g. competing demands at home or insufficient support to study and perform better) so their performance at school can improve. A female head teacher interviewed responded:

‘When you look at the design of the programme, you can see the thread that focuses on women and girls, especially in issues of implementation. As you do the implementation, there are certain things you take note of, for example if you look at the country in general we are very cautious of the fact that women should be represented at whatever level it is... What can be done to see that they are where it matters in terms of leadership and teaching? Also, where are girls in terms of issues of access, retention and quality?’

*‘When you look at the design of the programme, you can see the thread that focuses on women and girls, especially in issues of implementation.*

Female head teacher (Connecting Classrooms, Uganda)

The programme does not have an in-built mechanism to undertake gender analysis in the localities where it works to inform its implementation or gender equity indicators (beyond parity) in schools to strengthen its programming. These targeted actions could improve results for girls, particularly given the challenging environment for girls in Uganda that leads many of them to dropping out of school after the primary school cycle.

*The education programmes presented work in different areas with girls and young women of different ages and circumstances. Those that have been adapted either in their design (EDGE) or during their implementation (TGSS) to ensure gender equity and the promotion of girls and young women’s learning and development have indicated positive results in terms of individual agency and knowledge that can lead to better opportunities.*

*However, some other programmes, such as TACS and Connecting Classrooms, while having a positive impact on girls since they are part of the total population they serve (girls and boys), are not taking full advantage of their potential to create an enabling environment that is more conducive to ensuring gender equality in education, something that could be inbuilt as part of the programme. Thus, in its work on education, more can be done by the British Council to ensure empowerment outcomes for women and girls – including, for example, changes in attitudes and social norms that discriminate against girls – are better achieved. It is important to note, however, that the British Council’s flagship programme supporting school-based learning, Connecting Classrooms, is currently piloting a more gender-responsive approach (in which Ethiopia and Uganda are involved), which looks to incorporate gender and inclusion in the programme more specifically and support those countries where there are opportunities to address gender inequalities in schools/ education. This includes a light touch gender analysis, inclusive pedagogies aimed at teachers, a package on inclusive schools aimed at school leaders and policy dialogue around gender and social inclusion. Looking at the pilot’s results and progress in promoting gender in education over the next couple of years will be important.*



## 9. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH ARTS

**The British Council supports artists working in many fields: from textiles, to music and filmmaking to writing and poetry. It also supports international collaborations between artists. Its work in arts can make an important contribution to some of the empowerment outcomes for women and girls. The British Council offers opportunities for women artists to showcase their skills and to learn from each other and from international artists. It can also facilitate the telling of stories that question gender stereotypes and that therefore help start conversations on gender norms and attitudes. Arts work can also contribute to other programme areas such as work on peace-building and security.**

The British Council's arts work operates on quite a small scale, often in collaboration with a single artist or a small organisation. Hence, the current scope and reach of the work may be quite limited, though it has the potential to influence cultural agendas and to provide stimulus for discussion of difficult gender and social issues. For example, in Ethiopia, the country office recently ran an event with Lemn Sissay and worked with Girl Effect to have a young woman and a woman street worker included in the poetry workshops organised. Participants then performed their pieces. The country office also supported a female artist only exhibition in 2014 with Lafto Gallery.



This section highlights some additional examples of where arts funding has addressed issues related to gender equality.

### 9.1 PROMOTING WOMEN IN ARTS IN NIGERIA

#### 9.1.1 NAIJA STREET STORIES

**Naija Street Stories<sup>35</sup> is a collaboration with Hatch Africa under the direction of Yemisi Mokuolu. Young filmmakers were challenged to present ideas for a women-centred documentary.**

15 participants took part in workshops, mentoring and training in 2015 and six went on to film the winning story on location. The participants were mixed in terms of gender, with the aim of equal representation. The film tells the story of a female rock breaker in Jos and will be released later in 2016. The process built the skills of young Nigerian documentary filmmakers to tell stories that raise difficult social issues that contribute to advocacy for change and influence social attitudes. It also potentially raises the awareness of elites as to the hardships faced in the lives of the poor.

Yemisi has a long-term partnership with the British Council and is very positive about the relationship:

'They just let me get on with it and we can just operate within our own context. They let us work on our own timescales and to have patience. We have trust in each other and they know that I will deliver.'

#### 9.1.2 GO WOMEN GO

**Go Women Go, a collaboration by British artist Laura Aldridge and Nike Davies Okundaye of the Nike Arts Centre in Abuja, aims to promote ceramics, textiles and sculpture.**

A series of workshops with women artists have taken place in Nigeria. The events will culminate in the wrapping of a building with textiles designed collaboratively in the workshops. The project provides opportunities for women artists and promotes and values their skills.

### 9.2 FEMRITE UGANDAN WOMEN WRITERS ASSOCIATION, UGANDA

**The British Council collaborated with the African Writers Trust and FEMRITE to support new Ugandan writing.**

This resulted in the Caine Prize for Literature taking its 2013 residency programme to Uganda in April 2013, bringing UK and international writers together. Supporting the work of women writers contributes to building a voice for women and sharing their experiences. This potentially contributes to changing social norms and influencing culture.

### 9.3 WOMEN OF THE WORLD FESTIVAL (WOW), PAKISTAN (MAY 2016)

**The British Council Pakistan collaborated with the Southbank Centre in London to host WOW- Women of the World- festival in Karachi, Pakistan in 2016. WOW celebrates the achievements of women and girls, and also looks at the obstacles women face across the globe.**

This is the first time that the British Council in Pakistan has had an arts initiative with an explicit objective to focus on women's empowerment. To plan the festival, a think-in session was organised in which women from all walks of life took part and shared their thoughts on how WOW Karachi should be designed. Prominent women leaders from the region took part in the festival's planning.

WOW Karachi was a one-day event that consisted of musical performances, dramatic readings, panel discussions, inspirational talks and a market place, showcasing the incredible achievements of women and girls and highlighting the particular challenges facing women in Pakistan. Topics covered included gender equality, violence against women, the future of the workplace, division of domestic labour and how to raise young Pakistani girls as empowered individuals.



9.4 CREATIVE ECONOMIES, EGYPT  
(2015–PRESENT)

**Creative Economies explores how to make money out of being creative, working with individual entrepreneurs (bottom up) and with government – the Ministry of Culture, Trade and Social Solidarity – on policy-level support (top down). It provides opportunities for exhibitions and networking.**

A national stakeholder analysis and informal mapping with national and international cultural institutions and entrepreneurs informed the project in Egypt and the content of the training on managing and launching creative businesses. The creative entrepreneurs are not offered funding but they are presented with alternative funding opportunities. At the policy level, the work focuses on making institutions friendly towards creative economies. The number of female creative entrepreneurs is higher than the number of men. When recruiting for the different components of Creative Economies, project managers try to ensure that at least 25 per cent of the cohort are women.

During the discussion project participants, two raised the issue of social and cultural norms being a challenge they confront in their daily work. One of them, a young woman working as a product designer with industrial leftovers, said, ‘Men would not accept to take orders from a woman. I am a girl and the kind of work I ask for would not normally come from a girl’. She admitted facing difficulties in working with men. Another, a jewellery and leather designer, agreed: ‘I face gender disparity in my work. The leather industry is male-dominated. Most men are not convinced to sell to a woman and sometime they do not accept me and ask to deal with a man so I appointed a man for this work’.

While it is too early to draw any conclusions about the outcomes of the project, it has interesting potential to engage women in a sector that is new territory for them. Through the British Council’s institutional backing and the opportunities it will enable, it may give young female participants a space they would not otherwise have had promoting their individual agency and enhancing their prospects for success.

*British Council is bringing women trainers and judges and for the boys this was said to be revolutionary, challenging their perceptions of women dancers.*

Say It Through Breakdancing, Tunisia

9.5 SAY IT THROUGH BREAKDANCING,  
TUNISIA (2015–PRESENT)

**Together with the Tunisian partner Art Solution, the British Council has brought established street artists from the UK to provide training for young Tunisians. In 2015, Say It Through Breakdancing worked with 11 young North African dancers culminating in performances in Tunisia and the UK.**

The British Council Arts lead stressed that a gender perspective is not mainstreamed but gave an example about the breakdancing project of when he had to think about women and girls when he realised girls were not taking part:

‘We realised the environment was aggressive so we enhanced security and professionalism. As a result, girls became more attracted and in the North Africa B-Boy Championship eight girls felt confident to take part in it...If the project targets a particular community or population then you think of increasing participation in that community when you see women are missing. In Arts we never thought of this because there was female participation.’

One of the project beneficiaries said:

‘B-girling is not easy. I was almost begging anybody to teach me the moves because it is not easy for girls to be in the hip-hop culture. Last year a woman artist came and it was amazing that she was a girl and not a boy!...You do not get the chance so many times here in Tunisia to have a girl coming here to do workshops and teach us...The fact that the British Council cared about bringing a girl to give us workshops was interesting. They gained our trust with that event and the UK champs. And with that event they gave attention to women and it was encouraging.’

The offer of similar events by other organisations in Tunisia was described as poor: ‘The fact that the British Council is bringing professional dancers from the UK is making the British Council more reliable to our eyes.’ Additionally, the opportunity to travel to the UK and connect with other dancers in the region through the North Africa B-Boy Championship was described as a unique opportunity for Tunisian dancers to be exposed to the world.

The young female break-dancer said the workshops encouraged her to step into the hip-hop scene and she is now learning new skills and participating in dance battles: ‘The fact that the British Council is trying to bring girls in the activities is enough for us!’ The British Council also set up a battle for girls only. For instance, women are never among judges in the competitions and the British Council is bringing women trainers and judges and for the boys this was said to be revolutionary, challenging their perceptions of women dancers. The young female break-dancer described how, on her way to the British Council, she was mocked on the street by a man who made comments about her B-girl look. She also stressed how families put pressures on girls not to dance and just to go to school, find a husband, get married and have children. She thinks parents and families should be educated to explain them that is ok to dance and that is a way to express themselves: ‘I do not blame parents. They think hip-hop is about smoking and having sex. They think it is Western culture and see only that. They need education! Dancing in school would be amazing, that would be my dream.’ In the past couple of years, more girls came and eight of them participated in the UK championship: ‘The work of the British Council is a good attempt to encourage women who are afraid to show their talent.’ The girls felt appreciated in the UK and returned to Tunisia determined to be part of the breakdancing scene in their country. In areas outside Tunis it is hard to find female dancers.

*These spaces for artistic expression and creation contribute to the power and agency of participating women.*

*Each of the projects explored here works in a different area within Arts. In each case, the entry points for enabling women and girls’ inclusion as well as promoting gender equality messages are different but interesting in how they have been adapted, drawing on the cultural relations approach, sharing practices and experiences from the UK but grounding them in the local context. Some of the projects combine elements of arts and entrepreneurship, which contribute to giving women fairer access to opportunities and resources in a field that tends to me more male-oriented. Other projects focus more on artistic expression, such as the breakdancing project in Tunisia and FEMRITE in Uganda. These are instrumental in contributing to changing gender norms that traditionally exclude women from certain art forms, as well as influencing thinking through the content of the art itself, such as in Naija Street Stories. In all cases, these spaces for artistic expression and creation contribute to the power and agency of participating women, although their reach is quite small.*



# 10. MAIN FINDINGS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The British Council is a large, complex and diverse organisation. A major strength is the way it works in countries over long periods of time and with sensitivity to the local context. In fact, in discussions with country staff – and in particular country directors – this long-term engagement and relationship in countries with diverse actors was highlighted as one of the British Council’s distinguishing factors when compared with other international organisations delivering development programmes. Interviews with a range of stakeholders corroborated that it gives the British Council credibility and trust with local and international partners – and with both national governments and civil society actors. This is part of its cultural relations approach and it works positively to facilitate the delivery of programmes in the field of women and girls’ empowerment that are contextually adapted to the different cultures in which it works, and that are responsive to local needs. As such, the British Council aims to avoid imposing a top-down strategic plan for working on the empowerment of women and girls with the aim of reducing gender inequality.

## 10.1 MAIN FINDINGS

### EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIVE OUTCOME AREAS

In this research we have attempted to produce a holistic reflection on the potential for the British Council’s work to contribute to the five outcomes for women and girls’ empowerment defined in Section 3. Much of the British Council’s contribution is made through projects that implicitly offer opportunities for women and girls to participate or to build their skills, or offer space for conversation on social and cultural norms. The British Council also undertakes a range of work that explicitly engages with gender inequality, sometimes as a primary focus for the work, but also as a component of larger initiatives.

A lot of British Council’s current work globally is already delivering on the outcomes in the framework, even though women and girls’ empowerment has only been a stand-alone priority in the Education and Society strategy since 2014. Prior to this, gender equality was seen as a crosscutting theme for Education and Society work, as opposed to a specific focus. The outcome areas have not yet been communicated formally to country offices. This implies there are numerous entry points and approaches the British Council can use because it works across a range of areas, such as partnership development, trust-building and supporting locally-led ideas, among others.

However, the British Council could strengthen its strategic thinking when it comes to its work on women and girls in order to ensure consistency of objectives from the global to the local via regional coordination. Fostering collaboration among the three areas of work is also very important to enhance the offer of the British Council when it comes to women’s economic empowerment.

*Long-term engagement and relationship in countries with diverse actors was highlighted as one of the British Council’s distinguishing factors when compared with other international organisations.*

## SCALE

The work of the British Council with women and girls operates on multiple scales, and cannot therefore be easily aggregated. Small Arts projects may work with a handful of individuals. There are also small programmes delivered within the Society portfolio, such as Karama, with total funding of £250,000. British Council flagship programmes work at a much larger scale: Premier Skills works in 25 countries and has trained 6,301 coaches and referees, who in turn have reached a further 946,386 young people. Active Citizens works in 40 countries, has launched 5,000 SAPs and is estimated to have trained 130,000 ‘active citizens’. As a contractor to the development industry, the British Council also delivers multi-million pound programmes in consortium with other actors, such as J4A in Nigeria, with a total investment of £47 million. Such programmes present financial challenges for sustainability - which was a concern expressed by staff and beneficiaries in some of the countries visited. However, this is characteristic of the development industry as a whole, and not necessarily reflective of the British Council, although its cultural relations approach may help contribute to local buy in and therefore make – at least the least costly components which are based on local participation – more sustainable. Yet programmes reach out to small numbers and the organisation needs to find a way to embed projects, trainers and reforms in the system to reach more and make change systemic and long lasting to promote real transformations on gender equality dynamics and to contribute to improving the situation of women and girls in the medium and long term.





## CULTURAL RELATIONS APPROACH

The British Council's work on women and girls is largely aligned with the principles of its cultural relations approach. Interviewees saw this as one of its strengths with respect to other organisations. Programmes and implementing staff were generally seen as very interested in understanding the context and adapting the initiatives. The organisation typically works closely and collaboratively with national organisations and local government officials and seeks out their views and perspectives on local realities to implement better, particularly by addressing sensitivities typical of a subject such as gender. A clear example of this is the Kenyan Preventing VAWG programme: the British Council, through its programme manager and the local NGO partner, engages very closely with district administrators and sub-district councillors, as well as with school officials, for more effective delivery. This helps build good trusting relationships. In many ways, programmes to support women and girls' empowerment are promoted in a way that is not 'confrontational' to local social norms and attitudes but rather strategically achieves the buy-in of key gate keepers. While this may take time, it makes changes more sustainable. This is an area of significant good practice and fits well with recent calls for doing development differently, which argue for small incremental change embedded in local realities and that is legitimised at all levels (political, managerial and social), building ownership and momentum throughout the process to be 'locally owned' in reality.<sup>36</sup>

*Programmes to support women and girls' empowerment are promoted in a way that is not 'confrontational' to local social norms and attitudes but rather strategically achieves the buy-in of key gate keepers.*

## WORKING WITH YOUTH

Across the different thematic areas, the British Council works mostly with young men and young women. This is an important strength, given the importance of this demographic to the countries and regions where it works. Contributing to the empowerment of young women in developing countries is an essential way to help them increase their knowledge and human development potential. This engagement with young people for the promotion of gender equality through different and original approaches – such as SAPs and sports for development – makes the British Council's engagement different to that of many other development actors, albeit not unique. However, much less work is done with adolescent girls, except through education programmes (particularly Connecting Classrooms) and sports for development (Premier Skills, VAWG), than with young women. It is important to strengthen work with adolescent girls given that this is a pivotal life phase with considerable enduring socialisation effects and important preparation for transitions to adult roles, including in work, citizenship, marriage and parenthood.<sup>37</sup>

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) IN THE BRITISH COUNCIL: A STRONG DRIVER IN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The EDI strategy has been an important step in increasing the visibility of gender equality in British Council programming. There is very strong awareness among programme staff across the countries studied and commitment to implementing the EDI strategy. In particular with respect to the visibility of women, it has become an important entry point to think more about the need to ensure the visibility and equality of women across the British Council's portfolio.

However, given that women and girls' empowerment is recent stand-alone priority – in the 2015–2020 Education and Society Strategy – the outcome areas and theory of change are still unknown to most of the staff members interviewed and thus most of the gender equality work is seen to come under the EDI strategy rather than as a single priority area. The new strategy will offer the opportunity for a more holistic approach to work on women and girls' empowerment, which will build on the EDI strategy, from only seeking to achieve gender parity in beneficiaries to promoting and measuring transformational impacts on gender identities and relations. At the moment, although interesting and relevant work is being done to improve the situation of women and girls', there is limited strategic planning in relation to impact on women and girls' empowerment by British Council programmes that do not target this specifically, thus it was difficult to capture and analyse this as part of this study. Some relevant information was captured through carefully guided discussions with staff.

*Art work offers opportunities to subvert gender stereotypes and tackle difficult or sensitive issues.*

## ARTS

The EDI strategy encourages staff working in Arts to think about the representation of different groups, both as recipients of funding and training, as well as participants in events. However, the organisation's Arts work also seeks to make a contribution to gender equality through the nature of the projects it funds in some of countries. This is not just about funding female writers or artists, but about facilitating work that creates space to discuss or challenge gender stereotypes and norms. It offers ARTS WORKS... offers opportunities to subvert gender stereotypes and tackle difficult or sensitive issues. The British Council's Arts work also encourages cross-cultural collaboration and learning, which has the potential to make a real contribution to opening up global discussions on gender inequality.



## ENGLISH AND EXAMINATIONS

This is the main operational business of the British Council, which is a significant global player in the provision of English language instruction and testing. It also facilitates the delivery of a wide range of examinations for other bodies. At present, country offices do not typically have data for their work here disaggregated by sex, for example of examination candidates or their performance. This is a gap that could easily be rectified and would enable a gender-responsive analysis.

Discussions with the English and Examinations staff in the countries visited was limited given the focus on other programmes. However, it was clear from FGDs with British Council staff that English language teaching and examinations – particularly in countries where English is not the language of teaching in schools – can provide important tools for young women to improve their access to economic opportunities by increasing their qualifications. However, in none of the countries visited with large English and Examinations programmes, such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Tunisia, was there any specific strategy noted to promote demand among young women. At the same time, given that sex-disaggregated data on English language teaching and examinations are not consistently available across countries, it is not possible to assess whether women are accessing these services as much as men and making use of this platform to develop their opportunities.

## EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

The vast majority of the British Council's work on empowering women and girls sits under the Education and Society operational area. The British Council is active in over 60 countries supporting access and quality enhancement in education. It works on educational research and teacher skills development and international collaboration from primary to tertiary levels. This work implicitly impacts positively on women and girls, who are among the beneficiaries of educational improvements. Strengthening education in developing countries can be of crucial benefit to girls' individual power and opportunities. However, the British Council could improve how it monitors and measures its impacts on girls' education through strong gender disaggregated data and indicators.

The British Council also supports the economic opportunities of female teachers it works with, such as in Connecting Classrooms. However, since many of the Education programmes have no explicit strategy to ensure gender parity in teacher involvement – particularly to counter discriminatory gender dynamics by male head teachers or colleagues that can be exclusionary of female teachers' participation or that do not enable women teachers to be trained in non-traditional subjects such as science – some of the potential impact on female teachers might be lost. As noted, however, the current pilot work on Connecting Classrooms aims to make the programme more gender-responsive.

As part of its work on Education, in some countries the British Council facilitates a range of scholarships for study in the UK, and it is conscious of gendered representation in the selection of candidates for these. Nevertheless, these 'affirmative action' practices to support young women in contexts where they have faced challenges obtaining the same educational opportunities and work experience as men are not consistently applied. In some cases, such as Egypt and Uganda, scholarships still do not have a gender-responsive selection process. This is an area for further work.

British Council work that focuses more explicitly on improving gender equality and promoting women and girls' empowerment is found in its Society portfolio, which includes projects such as Active Citizens, which promotes volunteering and civic action, and Premier Skills, which uses football coaching to improve child protection and address GBV. It also provides opportunities for women and girls to develop leadership skills, individual power and exposure through training programmes such as Springboard or WPIPL. Each programme is tailored to the countries where the British Council works and operates through local partners – though drawing on global models in the case of programmes implemented in multiple countries. Hence, the exact nature of the programmes varies according to the context. This is a major strength of the cultural relations approach as it forces the British Council to think about how it acts as a sensitive partner in promoting the aim of reducing gender equality.

The British Council also delivers large contracts for major donors such as DFID and the European Commission. These include justice reform, peace and stability programming and civil society capacity-building, amongst others. Again, it adapts this to the local context and makes efforts to build strong partnerships with local organisations.

This work covers a wide range of scales and focus. It is not possible here to sum up the definitive contribution of the British Council to achieving the five intended outcomes for women and girls in any of the countries visited, given the different stages at which targeted programmes currently are, as well as the different scale and reach of those programmes: overall impact on women and girls' empowerment is hard to measure. However, relevant analysis is possible within the scale and scope of the British Council actions at the country level. The British Council sets out to make a direct contribution to the lives of those who participate in its programmes, and indirectly to those around them. Discussions with beneficiaries, staff, donors and implementing partners as well as a review of the documentation available lead us to conclude that each programme contributes positively to one or two outcome areas on women and girls' empowerment. Generally, because of either the relatively small scale of the programme or the stage of its implementation, it is not possible to attribute a transformative change in participants or communities entirely to the British Council. However, it is clear it contributes – in some cases significantly – to specific important elements of this transformation: self-confidence (VAWG; My Right); greater voice for women and girls (Springboard); better education and skills development (TGSS); changes in community attitudes toward women and girls (Premier Skills); stronger individual and collective power and agency (some SAPs put in place through Active Citizens); understanding of the gendered context and greater political participation (WPIPL); better gender relations and collaboration in the community (CSSP); and greater economic opportunities for women (Creative Economies); among others.



With respect to long-term impacts, such as those resulting from social norm change or improvements in the policy and legal environment, attribution to a specific programme is complicated given that social change takes time and is influenced by multiple factors beyond the British Council's control. However, where political will and resources to work for institutional change have existed – from the grassroots to specific agenda items at the national level – there are positive examples of the British Council's contribution. This is the case with Nigeria's J4A.

While global and specific country strategies guide the British Council's work, it is a reality that country offices must seek funding opportunities to continue its work, particularly in Education and Society, and these opportunities may not always be specifically aligned with its core priorities. As such, it will be through a stronger understanding of how gender equality and transformational empowerment for women and girls can be embedded in programming that the organisation will be able to achieve outcomes for women and girls more consistently across its portfolio, and, what is more, to monitor and report on these outcomes beyond its targeted programmes. This would help ensure a coherent business development strategy within the regions and the organisation based on a sound track record.

## 10.2 CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE WORK

Despite positive achievements in the British Council's work on women and girls' empowerment, some challenges exist in improving its potential impact in this area and working more consistently to achieve gender equality.

Staff capacity for critical thinking on what it means to do gender mainstreaming in terms of design, content and measurement of outcomes – so not only 'equality monitoring' that focuses on numbers of girls/boys or women/men – is generally limited. If the British Council wants to prioritise outcomes on women and girls' empowerment, staff need to be able to think more comprehensively about what promoting transformative outcomes means in specific programmes – whether they target or mainstream women and girls. Additionally, it will be important for staff to develop a greater understanding of how changes in gender relations can be manifested, as well as the range of possible outcomes that benefit women and girls that can be achieved to reduce the tendency to count numbers of participants by sex as the only measure of success.

Monitoring and evaluation of impacts on women and girls' empowerment is an area that needs more work. The British Council needs to think more about how relevant lessons about the organisation's contributions to women and girls' empowerment can be captured and used to assess progress in the field, learn and share lessons of transformations achieved. This cannot happen without sound and consistent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and knowledge management systems that have robust qualitative and quantitative targets and indicators measuring different aspects of empowerment. Norms and behaviour change are subtle, embedded and long term, so transformative programmes need to be in place for a sufficient time and embed changes in a way that makes them sustainable. Sustainability concerns in the large-scale donor-funded programmes need to be taken into account to ensure the medium-term changes that are necessary for transformation are not lost when funding ends. This is not a new problem, but one that is endemic to development. It is important to consider carefully whether donor-funded projects are the best vehicles for long-term change in social norms, or even achieving other positive outcomes for women and girls. However, the British Council's approach of working closely with local actors and promoting ownership can help make some of the changes more sustainable.

Much more cross-cultural work on gender inequality could be facilitated, given the organisational mandate for this type of work and also given that the British Council is praised by governments and NGOs for being culturally sensitive. This is already taking place in some projects; for example, in the case of WPIPL, some participants were taken to the UK to look at how lack of participation in politics and on VAWG are being addressed in the UK through collaboration between charities and state organisations. This proved successful. Given that no society has yet achieved gender equality, this would introduce more mutuality and authenticity to the work with women and girls.

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### *The British Council's approach of working closely with local actors and promoting ownership can help make some of the changes more sustainable.*

The British Council's strategy for working on women and girls' empowerment has been developed recently, has been piloted in only a small number of programmes and has not yet been rolled out to country offices. While there is currently interesting direct and indirect work on women and girls' empowerment, the current portfolio does not have clear guiding principles. As a result, country offices might apply for funding opportunities with entry points for working on women and girls without being very strategic about how these can contribute to the newly developed theory of change or outcome areas. Moreover, given insufficient in-depth knowledge of gender programming (as noted previously), some programmes have 'women and girls' as an objective without really thinking through what it means to do transformative work around gender relations, promoting in-depth changes in social norms to benefit the situation of women and girls in the longer term. There is also insufficient disaggregation of 'women and girls' as a group. Better articulation of how and why different women and girls might be targeted (in terms of social status, location, level of education, poverty, etc.) in order to tackle gender inequality would improve the potential impact of the work.

A gap in the current portfolio articulated across a number of countries relates to economic development and livelihood skills. There is a challenge in working and thinking more holistically as to how social and economic aspects of discrimination and inequality might be addressed within programming. A more definite link could be made to the British Council's Social Enterprise stream of work which is a niche area for the organisation. Additionally, understanding the limiting contexts some of the women and girls the British Council works with, other types of programmes that enable access to resources and opportunities could also be supported by the organisation drawing on its expertise in education, for example: life-skills and financial management training with linkages to some form of start-up capital or basic job placement.



### 10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

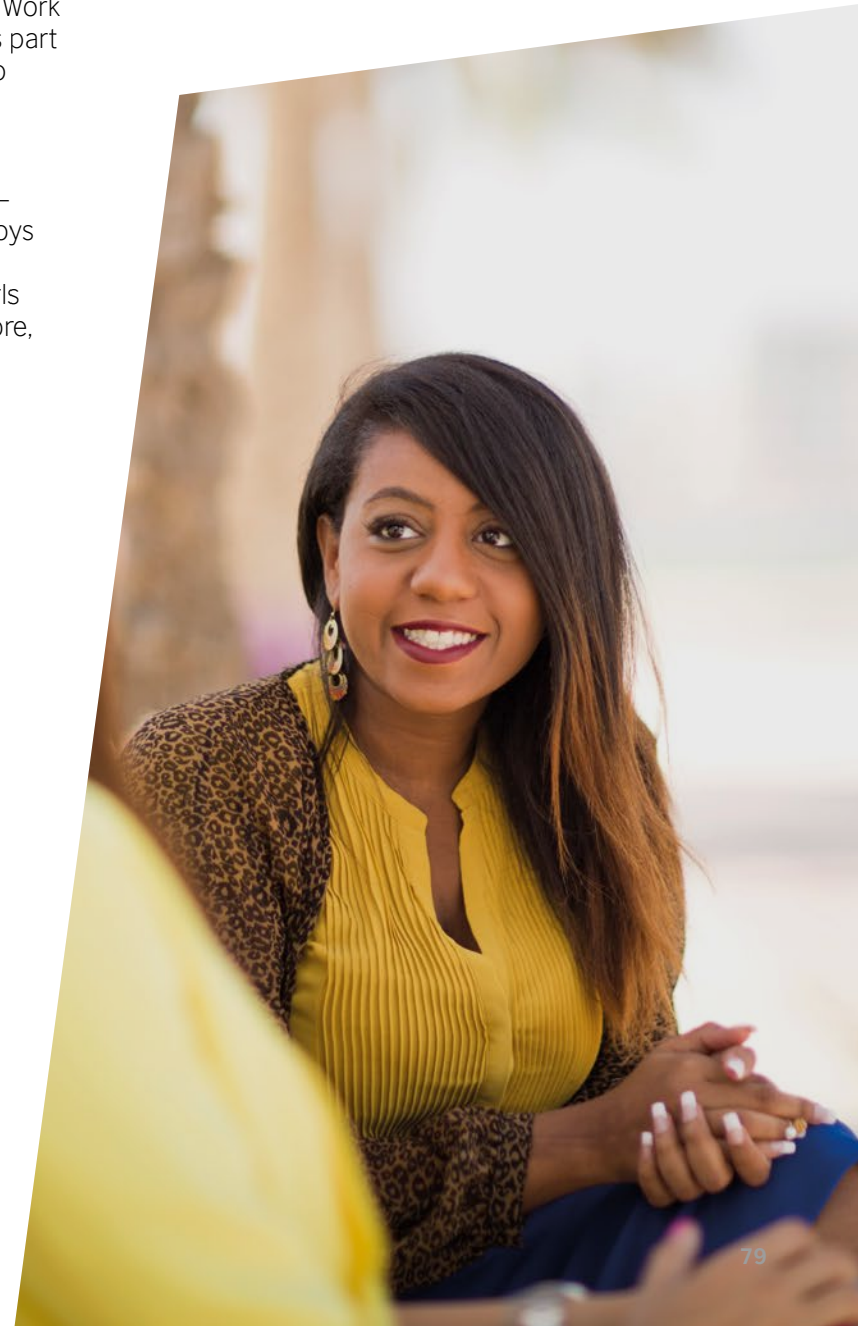
The way women and girls' empowerment to address gender inequality currently informs programme planning, monitoring and delivery could be improved by a better level of corporate information about priorities and how to engage with these. This might happen as the strategy on women and girls begins to be rolled out to country offices, but it needs to be planned carefully so that all staff – those working on programmes targeted at women and girls as well as those working on other programmes – can understand what the strategy implies and how to work with it.

A measurable monitoring and evaluation system that aims to capture indicators related to women and girls' empowerment outcomes from a more transformational perspective could help push for a change in the way working towards gender equality is conceptualised. Thus, beyond the standard EDI indicators, reporting on stronger indicators that capture transformative gender dimensions of programmes, framed around the five empowerment outcome areas, should be compulsory. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation efforts would be strengthened by commissioning independent evaluations that incorporate indicators for the different women and girls' empowerment outcome areas. This can make results more reliable and credible for partners, and more usefully assess impact. For this to take place, and given the cost of externally funded evaluations, specific funding requirements for monitoring evaluation need to be built into proposals.

Technical support and practical gender training is needed to help staff plan for and understand the stories of change around women and girls' empowerment in relation to the five outcomes. This could come in the form of regional gender advisers who have more time to dedicate to various staff in country at various stages of the programme planning, implementation and evaluation process. This must go beyond mainstream and surface understandings of gender inequality and be adapted to local contexts. This effort could begin with a facilitated brainstorming with country staff working across the portfolio to think through what the implications of their programmes are for the five empowerment outcomes, and helping them explore what the potential can be to then plan specific steps to achieve that potential. For example, in some of the Education programmes, specific awareness raising and capacity building for teachers and head-teachers on the importance of changing gender roles could increase programme impact on women and girls at a relatively low cost, though this is not something currently considered in such programmes.

The British Council's work with girls could be expanded and strengthened in relation to education, arts and sports for development. While it is important to continue its efforts working with young women, which is an important comparative advantage for the organisation, it is also essential to work with girls – particularly adolescent girls – who are going through a crucial stage of their lives, in order to ensure the foundations of empowerment are developed from a young age. British Council programmes in sports and education seem particularly well suited to engage adolescent girls, so it will be useful to develop programme designs that are responsive to the needs of adolescent girls – as with the case of Kenya's 'Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls through Football'. Work with adolescent girls should always consider them as part of a wider family, kin and cultural networks which also need to be engaged when targeting girls.

A stronger understanding of how gender equity and transformational empowerment for women and girls – including the importance of working with men and boys – can be embedded in programming will enable the organisation to achieve outcomes for women and girls more consistently across its portfolio, and what is more, to be able to monitor and report on those outcomes beyond its targeted programmes.





The financial sustainability of some of the larger scale programmes is seen with concern by implementing staff, partners and beneficiaries. Considering that achieving transformative change in women and girls' empowerment is only achievable in the medium to long term, programmes which set out to achieve changes in this area need to be planned for with such a horizon in mind. While donor funding is usually limited to three years (or less), planning from the outset how some aspects of the programme can be locally embedded and supported can help mitigate this problem. Promoting local ownership as part of the cultural relations approach, working through local volunteers, and working closely with youth are three ways in which the British Council is already contributing to embedding changes. Other specific actions to make changes more sustainable could include seeking government funding and budgetary commitments for some core activities (for example, to support newly created spaces to provide justice and security for women); guiding some of the social entrepreneurship investments to activities with proven transformational impacts to local women; and budgeting core British Council resources so that staff can check in with local volunteers (for example, local coaches or community facilitators) who were engaged in programmes that have ended, on an annual basis for at least two or three years to maintain interest, engagement and provide basic technical support as a way of incentivise continued action. This continued presence would also enable the British Council to collect some basic data on medium term changes achieved by the programme, particularly relevant in the area of women and girls' empowerment.

A lot of the work under the Society portfolio is international development but the British Council does not seem comfortable with the description of being a 'development agency'. While the British Council's work goes beyond common understandings of development, it should be comfortable being seen as doing development work, particularly as it competes for international development funding for many of its programmes and is making valid contributions to the development agenda in the countries where it works. It is precisely the cultural relations approach that gives the British Council an edge in this field. Women and girls' empowerment to tackle gender inequality is necessarily cultural, political and locally embedded. Cultural relations links very well to current thinking on making development work better (doing development differently) and the links to these type of approaches could be made much more explicitly. Research for this study suggests that it is precisely in this area where greatest results are being achieved with respect to women and girls' empowerment.

Finally, the British Council has the potential to draw on huge cross-pollination opportunities and internal lessons learning with respect to its work on women and girls. For this to take place, the organisation should strengthen its knowledge management system and build mechanisms for internal communications so interested staff members or partners can have access to relevant documentation that provides in-depth information about its work and achievements. This will also mitigate the problem of overreliance on staff's knowledge, which can be a problem with staff turnover. Lessons learnt in programme design and implementation should be well documented and disseminated in the organisation.



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**N.B. A wide range of internal British Council documentation and reports was also reviewed as part of this study. This list only references documents cited in the report.**

# APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

## BANGLADESH

**British Council staff:** Toufiq Hasan – Project Manager, Society; Mostofa Siraj Mohiuddin; Donna Farah Khan – EDI deputy lead; Hossne Ara – Head of Schools; Matt Pusey – Deputy Director; Masud Hossain – Head of Society; Nusrat Jahan – Society Project Assistant. **Partners and funders:** Mahmuda Rahman Khan – Senior Development and Gender Specialist, USAID; Dilruba Akter – BRAC Manager, ADP; Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar – Country Director, The Hunger Project; Naved Chowdhury – Poverty and Social Protection Adviser, DFID; Chukla Rani Das – Project Officer, BRAC; Mohamed Zabir Hossain – Project Manager, BRAC; Nasir – Youth Mobilisation Programme Officer, The Hunger Project; Jamirul Islam – Programme Manager, The Hunger Project; Jannatul Ferdous Iva – Programme Officer, The Hunger Project. **Participants:** Shaon Karmakar – Project Co-ordinator (British Council); members of the EDGE club (15 girls); Active Citizens from Jagannath University; Active Citizens and beneficiaries of their Social Action Project; Farjana Tasim – school teacher, councillor and former Active Citizen; Bobby Sharmin – Active Citizen and facilitator.

## EGYPT

**British Council staff:** David Knox – Director Society, MENA; James Hampson – Deputy Director; Jeff Streeter – Country Director; Jonathan Gayther – Teaching Centre and English Lead; Cathy Costain – British Council Egypt Arts lead; Doaa Hafez – Head of Programmes, Society; Maha Sharaf – Active Citizens and Skills for Employability Manager; Riham Boutros – Skills for Employability and HSBC Project Manager; Neveen Hamdy – Young Arab Voices and Springboard Manager; Shaimaa Nasr – Connecting Classrooms Manager; Shaimaa Al-Banna – Arts, Society and Premier Skills Manager; Sherwet Ahmed – My Right Manager. **Partners and funders:** Neveen Ahmed – Programme Manager Governance and Gender, EU Delegation; Mona Beckzada – Programme Manager Governance and Gender, EU Delegation; Ahmed Hegab – Harrasmap; Nehad Aboul Komsan – Legal Consultant, Egyptian Centre for Women’s Rights; Ghada el-Shahawy – Assistant Minister for Women and Childhood Affairs, Ministry of Justice; Gehan Al Batoty – Judge; Mohamed Sabri – Judge; Wael el-Shimi – Judge; Heba Adel – Lawyer, Women Participating in Public Life; Maisa Sheikh; Ahmed Abdelhim Kalil – Young Arab Voices Co-ordinator, Asyut University; Asyut University; Manal Saleh – Director, STING consultancy;

Muna Abdul Menem – Assistant Professor Physical Education; Samar Mustafa – Assistant Professor Physical Education; Amira Farahad Adam – Teaching Assistant, Business Administration; Fatma – Teaching Assistant Media Department; Youmna – Teaching Assistant Arts Department; Angi – Assistant Professor Physical Education. **Participants:** Intilga; Amira Hammad Abdelhai; Iham Gellel; Maram Shenewi; Rania Hilal; Marwa; Faiza Heaider; Basant Mehawed; Mouna Khalil; Basma Zaky; Sara Ahmed; Heba Mokhtar; Marwa Hassan; Noura el-Hammar; Amemi Basikr; Asma el-Hammar, Reham Mustafa; Raghda Ahmad; Amira Ali; Amira Ahmed; Alaa Abdeldaweb; Asma Alwack; Walaa Uzeieb; Saam Said; Aiem Autaleb.

## ETHIOPIA

**British Council staff:** Kami Asamani – Programme Manager, CSSP; Getinet Assefa – Executive Director, CSSP; Tom Miscioscia – Country Director; Wubet Girma – Head of Programmes, Society; Ayele Ashagre – Capacity Development Manager; Tsion Elias – CSSP ; Netsanet Demewoz – Director Education and Team Leader, QESSP; Kedir Musema – Results and Central Area Manager; Katrin Mader – Assistant Director; Michael Shiferaw – Head of Finance and Resources and EDI lead; Kedir Musema – Results and Central Area Manager; Soseneta Lemma – Senior Capacity Development Manager, CSSP; Tsion Elias – Project Officer, CSSP. **Partner and funders:** Bizuwork Ketete – Senior Governance Programme Manager, Irish Aid; Makda Getachew – Governance Programme Officer, Irish Aid. **Participants:** Group discussion with CSO representatives from CSSP; visit to Oromia Women’s Association; group discussion with project beneficiaries, Addis Ababa Women’s Association and SASA! project staff.



KENYA

**British Council staff:** Alice Wekesa – Programme Manager, Addressing VAWG through Football; Belinda Ogolla – EDI Focal Person; Ben Miranga – Tullow Oil Social Investment Manager; Jason Potter – Portfolio Manager, Governance & Civil Society, SSA; Sally Ireri – Manager, Tullow Group Scholarship Scheme; Tony Reilly – Country Director; George Kogolla – Head of Programmes; Pauline Gangla – Head of Education Programme and Child Protection focal person. **Partners and funders:** Caroline Tekei, Field Officer, Addressing VAWG through Football; Catherine Tekei, Field Officer, Addressing VAWG through Football; County Administrator, Mount Elgon sub-county; Gender Adviser and Gender Minister Bungoma County. **Participants:** Group discussions with project coaches; parents of beneficiaries; girl project participants; boy project participants; TGSS Scholars – Harriet Ndirangu; Rita Laibuta; Gladys Ngweno; Nancy Lubale.

NIGERIA

**British Council Staff:** Alex Bratt – UK-Nigeria Arts Programme; Dr Bob Arnott – Tekei, Field Officer, Addressing VAWG through Football; Yemisi Mokuolu – Hatch Africa; Dr Eleanor Nwadinobi – Tekei, Field Officer, Addressing VAWG through Football; Mohammed Ahmed – Director Society; Maryam Thomas – Head of Exams Training; Anuli Ezeokafor – Exams Finance Officer; Sephora Imomoh – Project Manager, Education and Exams; Tinuke Ladele – Project Officer; Output 3 Manager; NSRP Programme Manager; Fusi Olateru-Olagbegi – Project Manager; Chineze Onuoha – Project Officer, Arts; Olayinka Abiba – Finance Officer; Temitope Abbas – Facilities Manager; Ajibola Ijimakinwa – Regional Programme Co-ordinator, J4A; Chinedum Adebomi – Programme Manager, Skills; Dr Fidelis Allen – Project Manager, Scholarships; Mohammed Sani Usman – Programme Manager, Society.

**Partners and funders:** Dr. Balkisu Said, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, J4A; Maria Nwafor – Woman Inspector; Ifeanyi Owo – Divisional Police Officer, Chibogu Obinwa, CSO Co-ordinator, J4A; Ironsi Bose – Executive Director, Women’s Rights & Health Project (WRAHP); Itoro Eze-Anaba – Mirabel Centre and Partnership for Justice; Juliet Olumuyiwa-Rufai – Mirabel Centre and Partnership for Justice; Chinedum Adebomi – Programme Manager, Skills, GADA; Olaniyan T Olaniyi – CEHRD; Inyingi Irimagha – Gender and Development Action (GADA); Doris Onyeneke – Chairperson, WPSN; Eucharia Uranta Okonkwo – Gender Officer, CEHRD; Tordue Nyitse – Senior Gender Consultant, National Assembly; Justina Laman; Ogu Ogechi C – Prisoners’ Rehabilitation and Welfare Action; Dr Stella Kokoricha Essiet – Medical Women’s Association of Nigeria; Asmau M. Adamu – Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN); Dr. Kole Shettima – MacArthur Foundation Africa Regional Director and Girls’ Education Programme Manager; Laura Branelly – Education Adviser, DFID; Kemi Williams – Head Human Development, DFID; Rinmicit Temlong – Researcher, GEARN. **Participants:** Group Discussion with Active Citizens facilitators and participants; Group discussion with coach educators; teachers and students from the Ekofootball Premier Skills partnership; Group discussion with GADA/CEHRD and Peace Club facilitators; Group discussion with Research team from University of Port-Harcourt.

PAKISTAN

**British Council staff:** Maryam Rab – Director Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; Nishat Riaz – Director Higher Education; Hamza Salim – Project Manager, Higher Education; Arzu Daniel – Director, English; Faiza Inayat – Head of TACS Programme; Naser Nazir – Head of Schools Programme; Sadia Rahman – Director Society; Shazia Khawar – Director Society South Asia; Zeenia Faraz – Head Society; Jim Booth – Deputy Director; Ali Kamiz; IP3. **Partners and funders:** Fida Hussain – Director, Higher Education Commission; Abia Akram – Director, STEP; Ali Shabar – ACP trainer, STEP. **Participants:** Group discussion with school director, teachers, parents, community volunteers and local partners; Group discussion with 4 teachers of the English learning programme; Focus group discussion with young women at the Lahore College Women University and Asma Fakhani; focus group discussions DOSTI project with girls, community volunteers and teachers; focus group discussions ACP university students.

TUNISIA

**British Council staff:** Hamza Kaabar – Project Manager, Society; Nesrine Ben Miled – Project Manager, Karama; Ines Zaibi – Project Manager, Education; Nigel Bellingham – Country Director; Amina Sayadi – Programme Manager, Education; Imed Belkhodja – Project Manager, Arts; Lilia Bahri – Project Officer, Premier Skills; Zafran Iqbal – Programme Manager, Hammamet Conference; Sadem Jebali – Regional Programmes Manager, Society; Sofiene Chaouachi – Exams Manager; Jihen Ben Amor – Projects Officer, English. **Partners and funders:** Nourhein Nemri – Member, Art Solution; Emma Hsairi – Member of the Executive Committee, ATFD; Hayet Khaled – Founder, Gender Watch; Nessryne Jelailia – Programmes Co-ordinator, Oxfam; Lilia Rebai – Euromed, Head Office Tunisia Mission; Noor Kaabi – Director of Jamaity; Jejel Ezzine, TAASTI; Sana Mahfoudh; Mélanie Bride – Cooperation Attachée, Gender Equality and Civil Society Programmes; EU Delegation; Aline Reishenbach; Project Co-ordinator, TAMMS; Yosr Mezgui – Project Assistant; TAMMS; Wissal Sakri – Project Assistant; Ministry of Women Affairs; Salwa Ghiga – Adviser; Hajer Ghassri – Assistant, Family Department; Beja Shaaban – Family Department; Huda Ben Said – Administrator; Latifa Tajouri – Adviser Social Work, Family Department; Hanin Bizherti – Sociologist. **Participants:** Women Participating in Pubic Life; Dorsaf Amehid – Facilitator; Intidar Ben Ahmed; Aiman Chaambi – Communication Officer, Coalition for the Women of Tunisia; Aida Chaben – President, Coalition for the Women of Tunisia; Suil Tala – Financial Co-ordinator; Najla Rajhi – Secreteray; Zainab Hilan – Member; Boutaina Sili – Member; Houssine Ben Abdelkrim – Vice-President; Asma Kadmi – Facilitator Gafsa; Khadrin Sabri; Premier Skills Group discussion with implementing partners and beneficiaries; Amani Boukeri – Trainer; Mohammed Ayman Abbes – Trainer.

UGANDA

**British Council staff:** Maxwell Kamanyire – Project Manager, PWR; Emily Ikiriza – Project Officer, PWR; Harriet Sakira – Project Co-ordinator, Education; Tracy Osuo – Regional Support Manager, Schools; Marianne Kiggundu – Regional Co-ordinator, Commonwealth Scholarships; Karen McCormack – Assistant Director; Nyacheng Lillian – Regional Support Manager, Schools; Mark Mushabe – Exams Manager; Millicent Mugabi – Project Manager, Higher Education and Scholarships. **Partners and funders:** Regina Baraka – Executive Director, Action for Development (ACFODE); Senior Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Science Technology and Sports (MoESTS); Mary Mutende – Facilitator Connecting Classrooms; Daisy Immaculate Yossa – Programme Co-ordinator, Action for Development (ACFODE); Rose Izizinga – Head Teacher, Kitante Hill School; Irene Among – Social Development Adviser, DFID; Moses Otgwang – Field Officer, ACFODE; Okello Tom – District Community Development Officer, Apac District Local Government; Dorcas Otim – Councillor, Secretary Finance Committee, Chairperson CEDAW Committee, Apac Town Council; Felix Yine – Apac District Speaker; Sayson R. Meya – Human Rights, Conflict and Gender Adviser, Delegation of the European Union, PWR project. **Participants:** PWR; Hon. Judith Ococ – Councillor, Apac Sub County; Hon. Rose Omara – Councillor, Apac Sub County; Doreen Auma – woman leader, Apac Sub County; Margaret Ebuu – woman leader, Apac Sub County; Hon. Molly Omara – Councillor, Atana parish, Apac Sub County; Hon. Erinastin Toga – PWDs councillor, Apac Sub County; George Oloobu – Religious leader, Inomo Sub County; Francis Elem – Clan leader; Geoffrey Wilson Odot – Cultural leader; Felix Arum – Programme Officer; The Apac Anti-Corruption Coalition (TAACC); Mercy Etit – General Secretary Note en teko youth group, former Active Citizens participant; Group discussion with Active Citizens.







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