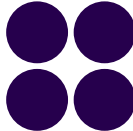


Possibility.

Stories of skills, creativity
and opportunity across
the continent

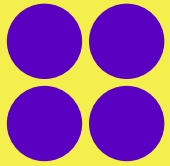


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•• Sudan

•• Tanzania
•• Uganda
•• Zambia
•• Zimbabwe





**Opening up
new
possibilities**

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Foreword



Lucy Pearson

Africa's future is being built today, in classrooms, studios, workshops, and communities across the continent. The British Council is proud to stand alongside the young Africans who are shaping it.

This book celebrates a fraction of the millions of individuals whose lives have been transformed through our programmes across youth skills and employability, teacher and leadership development, creative economy, higher education, digital inclusion, girl's education and gender equity, and cultural heritage. Their stories span ten countries and countless disciplines, but they share a common thread: the power of opportunity, well-placed, to change the course of a life.

When young people are equipped with the right skills, connected to the right networks, and given genuine platforms to grow, they become agents of change not only for themselves but for their communities, industries, and nations. We have seen teachers become school leaders. Entrepreneurs build internationally recognised brands. Students access world-class universities and forge research collaborations that bridge continents. These are not exceptional cases. They are the expected outcomes when investment in people is sustained, strategic, and rooted in genuine partnership.

The British Council's programmes address some of the most pressing challenges facing young Africans today, youth unemployment, digital exclusion, gender inequality in education and enterprise, and the need for creative economies that generate dignified livelihoods.

We hope these stories inspire continued ambition, in our partners, our participants, and in all who believe that Africa's greatest resource is its people.

Lucy Pearson

*Geographic Director, Sub-Saharan Africa and Americas
British Council*



Ethiopia

The British Council in Ethiopia advances inclusive opportunity by connecting people and institutions in Ethiopia and the UK through education, English, exams, arts, culture and civil society.

Our work supports young people, educators, creatives, professionals and communities to build the skills, confidence, qualifications and networks they need to participate in Ethiopia's social and economic development. In education and English, we support the Ministry of Education's ambition to strengthen English language learning by improving the English proficiency and professional practice of pre-service and in-service teachers.

Through our exams work, we provide access to internationally recognised English language tests, school qualifications and professional assessments that open pathways to study, work and career progression. In arts and culture, we strengthen Ethiopia's creative economy by supporting creative professionals, particularly women, to build sustainable careers, expand networks and draw on the country's rich cultural heritage as a source of identity, enterprise and exchange.

Our civil society work supports more inclusive, transparent and accountable governance by strengthening the capacity of organisations and advocates working to improve access to services and protect the rights of all Ethiopians. Across our work, we contribute to a more skilled, inclusive and connected Ethiopia.



Telling the story of Africa

Girum Chala tells us how the British Council's radio training opened the door to a career in journalism.

Girum has always loved stories. Inspired by tales from the priests at his local church in Ethiopia, as a child he dreamed of becoming a journalist and telling great stories of his own.

Girum studied English at university in the hopes of pursuing a career as an international correspondent. But a lack of opportunities and media experience led him into a career as an English teacher instead.

Then Girum heard about our Learn English Audio



Programme. It supported English teachers to use radio to plan their lessons and improve classroom activities. Girum was chosen to host and produce a radio show for the programme and given training in using audio equipment.

It was the first time in my life that I heard my own voice. I said: 'Look, man! I used to want to be a journalist, and now the British Council is helping me walk the talk.' The show ran for a year on two radio stations in Ethiopia, giving Girum the skills he needed to apply for other journalism opportunities.

'I was much more confident looking for a job in local

or international media after that,' he says. Girum was soon hired by a local media house, before moving on to his current role as an international correspondent at China Global Television Network (CGTN).

In his career he has written and reported on some of the biggest news stories across Africa.

But Girum isn't done telling stories yet. He now plans to launch his own news channel, the Global Television Network of Africa, to tell the story of Africa the way it is meant to be told. 'There is no media house that represents the continent internationally, so Africa doesn't have a voice in the global arena. It is misrepresented and misunderstood,' Girum explains.

“

It was the first time in my life that I heard my own voice. I said: “Look, man! I used to want to be a journalist, and now the British Council is helping me walk the talk.”

”



Fasil acknowledges the impact of the Strengthening Teacher's English Proficiency (STEP) Programme.

Starting as a Finance Officer handling taxation at the British Council, Fasil didn't foresee the profound impact he would make on his community. His experience with the British Council broadened his understanding of his potential for change, motivating him to seek roles that would enable him to make a difference. Transitioning from finance to the English Programmes (currently known as English and School

Education Programme), he aimed to extend his influence and contribute more significantly to the community.

Initially tasked with coordinating the nascent Strengthening Teacher's English Proficiency (STEP) project, Fasil found himself at the vanguard of a transformative initiative. The STEP project sought to enhance the English proficiency of educators. Armed with innovative pedagogical techniques, teachers were equipped to engage students more effectively, thereby bolstering their English proficiency in a nation where English stood as a foreign language.

Yet, as Fasil bore witness to the tangible impact wrought through his stewardship of the STEP project, destiny beckoned once more. An opportunity to spearhead the English and Digital Girls' for Education (EDGE) Programme emerged, presenting Fasil with yet

Uplifting young girls from the margins



another avenue through which to effect profound societal change. The EDGE Programme, a bastion of empowerment for adolescent girls hailing from marginalised communities across Ethiopia, offered training in both English proficiency and digital skills. More than mere academic enrichment, the programme embodied a holistic approach, enlisting Peer Group Leaders (PGLs) to champion girls' education within their communities, countering the entrenched tradition of early marriage.

'In the realm of the EDGE Programme, our ambitions extend far beyond mere academic instruction,' Fasil articulated passionately. 'We seek not only to equip these young women with the tools of language and technology, but to instil within them the unwavering confidence to pursue their aspirations in defiance of societal norms. Moreover, we endeavour to engender a paradigm shift within society itself, championing the cause of girls' education and combating the scourge

of early marriage that has long plagued our communities.'

Fasil expressed gratitude to the British Council for providing him with a sense of purpose in serving his nation. He acknowledged the impact of programmes like STEP and EDGE in supporting teachers and girls, highlighting the effectiveness of his efforts. Fasil sees himself not just as a Programme Manager but as a catalyst for societal change, committed to creating a brighter and more equitable future for all.



The World Voice Programme transformed English language education in Ethiopia through the innovative incorporation of musical elements into the teaching framework.



In Ethiopia, where Amharic is the official language, English is initially taught as a subject until grade 7. However, students face challenges when English becomes the medium of instruction in higher grades, as they may lack proficiency in the language, leading to difficulties in understanding various subjects.

Recognising the systemic hurdles posed by this transition and the imperative to bolster English proficiency among Ethiopian students, the British Council introduced the World Voice Programme. This innovative initiative sought to harness the power of music as a pedagogical tool in enhancing English proficiency. Reflecting on the enduring impact of the programme, Zeny Zerfu, the programme manager, reminisces, 'Songs are inherently conducive to learning, as evidenced by research. The World Voice Programme revolutionised English language instruction in

Harnessing the power of music to instruct

“

The World Voice Programme revolutionised English language instruction in Ethiopia by integrating songs into the curriculum.

Zeny Zerfu

”

Ethiopia by integrating songs into the curriculum. Though the programme has concluded globally, its legacy remains palpable in Ethiopia to this day.’

The World Voice Programme relied on English and Music teachers to implement it, using songs to improve students’ language skills and make learning more engaging than traditional grammar-focused methods. ‘The children eagerly embraced this novel method of instruction,’ Zeny notes. ‘Classrooms were no longer silent; instead, students found their voices and actively participated. Homework ceased to be a chore, as learning became an exciting journey, fostering a more positive attitude towards English.’

In the bustling capital city of Addis Ababa, over 100 thousand students benefited from the programme by its conclusion in 2019. Moreover, tens of thousands more across various regions of the country were touched by its transformative influence, leaving an indelible imprint on Ethiopia’s educational landscape. To preserve the legacy

of the World Voice Programme, Zeny, along with other stakeholders, established the World Voice and Arts Association in Ethiopia. ‘The impact of the World Voice Programme transcended its participants, reaching hundreds of thousands of students,’ Zeny explains. ‘Recognising the invaluable contribution of the programme, we felt compelled to sustain its legacy by forming an association with the support of the British Council.’

To date, the World Voice and Arts Association in Ethiopia has trained over 200 teachers and established World Voice Clubs in numerous schools across the country. Committed to advancing the mission of the World Voice Programme, the association endeavours to continue fostering English proficiency among Ethiopian students through innovative pedagogical approaches.





Plus-size fashion from Ethiopia

Betselot Zewge - Creative DNA Programme

Betselot Zewge, the creative force behind Zemenay, an avant-garde fashion house in Ethiopia for plus-size women, has been passionate about fashion since childhood. Supported by her parents, she evolved from sketching designs in fifth grade to mastering the entire design process by twelfth grade. Despite briefly considering architecture, her dedication to clothing design solidified her career path.

Determined to pursue her passion for fashion, Betselot enrolled in fashion school to delve deeper into the intricacies of the craft. Complementing her practical skills with theoretical knowledge, she pursued a degree in Marketing Management, recognising the pivotal role marketing plays in the fashion industry. Despite her education, Betselot struggled to find her niche in the competitive world of fashion until 2017.

In a serendipitous encounter, a plus-size client approached Betselot with a request for a custom design. This pivotal moment sparked a revelation for Betselot, igniting her desire to create a brand that catered to the underserved plus-size community. Driven by a mission to support plus-



59%

of programme participants created between one and twenty new roles, boosting employment opportunities in the creative sector.

size individuals and instil confidence, Betselot founded Zemenay, a brand dedicated to celebrating diversity and inclusivity through fashion.

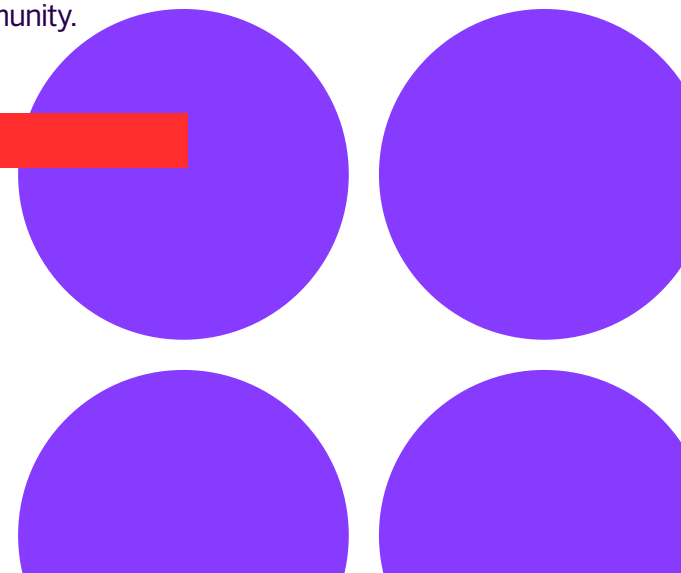
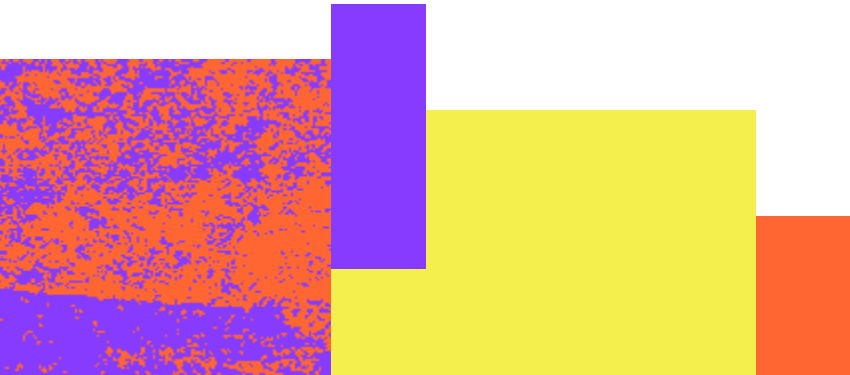
Establishing Zemenay as a pioneering plus-size brand presented formidable challenges, particularly in carving out a market niche. However, Betselot's fortunes took a decisive turn when she stumbled upon the Creative DNA programme, a transformative experience that would shape the trajectory of her brand.

Describing the Creative DNA programme as unparalleled in its impact, Betselot credits the initiative with providing invaluable networking opportunities and opening doors to untapped markets. Through the programme, she participated in prestigious events such as CANEX (Creative Africa Nexus) in Egypt and the Hub of Africa Fashion in Addis Ababa, garnering international recognition for Zemenay.

The ripple effects of Betselot's participation in the Creative DNA programme were profound. Zemenay gained global exposure, with features in esteemed publications like Vogue Italia and USA, catapulting the brand onto the international stage. Additionally, Betselot secured a coveted spot on an international UK e-commerce platform, further expanding Zemenay's reach to new audiences worldwide.

Betselot's ambitions for Zemenay are boundless. Armed with newfound visibility and momentum, she plans to elevate Zemenay into an internationally renowned brand. With the imminent launch of a new store in Addis Ababa, Betselot is poised to make an even greater impact within the plus-size community.

[Watch video >](#)





How one woman's journey through irregular migration became a force for protection and healing in her community.

“

Telling my story is not just for others, it is also how I continue to heal.

Mikiyas

”

**From silence to action,
pain to purpose**

36

policy recommendations formulated under eleven themes, presented to the Regional Partnership Coalition

216

potential migrants connected to local livelihood options.

Mikiyas did not leave Ethiopia out of desperation.

She left because of an image, a neighbour returning from abroad, looking well and free. At the time, she and her husband had no independent income, and she wanted to change that.

What followed was a story that irregular migration tells with brutal consistency. She worked, sent money home, and trusted that it was being received, a future being built, returning and finding that her husband had moved with her best friend. She went back abroad a second time, determined to rebuild. But the personal cost could not be recovered.

On one of her trips, she was arrested, imprisoned, and witnessed firsthand what irregular migration does to women with no protection - violence, abandonment, and in some cases, death. She came home carrying all of it.

Determined to turn her experience into something useful, she attempted to organise fellow returnees to seek government support. Most eventually gave up. She refused.

When a government official encouraged her to apply for Better Migration Management (BMM), she did. The training gave her what years of lived experience alone could not, language, framework, and purpose.



73,736

people reached through the
BMM Safe Migration advocacy campaigns

She learned to understand the systems that make irregular migration so dangerous, and the structural gaps that leave returnees without recourse or recognition. She gained skills in advocacy and community engagement, and crucially, she found a space where her story was not a source of shame but of authority.

‘That moment became the beginning of my healing,’ she says.

She now uses everything she learned to protect others before it is too late.

‘That is why I speak. Telling my story is not just for others, it is also how I continue to heal.’

She has turned what was done to her into something that shields others from the same path. Her journey is not finished. But it has found its direction.

Ghana

The British Council in Ghana works to broaden access to skills, enterprise and opportunity by connecting people and institutions in Ghana and the UK through arts and culture, education, TVET and exams.

Our work supports young people, creatives, students and professionals to gain practical skills, recognised qualifications, market access and international networks. In the creative economy, we build the capacity of artists and entrepreneurs across fashion, literature, music and related sectors through enterprise development, mentoring, showcasing and access to new audiences, with a focus on inclusion for women and creatives with disabilities.

Through education, we support study pathways, lifelong connections and professional collaboration between Ghana and the UK. Our exams work provides access to globally recognised English language tests and professional qualifications that open doors to study, work and career progression.

In TVET and skills development, we support demand-led training that improves youth employability, strengthens pathways into decent work and advances economic growth. Across our work, we contribute to a more skilled, inclusive and globally connected Ghana.



Making melodies from the heart of Ghana

Atswei explains how the harmonies of the Creative Enterprise Support Programme tuned into her life.

In the lively corridors of her primary school days, Francisca shone as a young prodigy, excelling in both sports and music. Yet, it was her fervent passion for singing that burned brightest, awaiting its moment to illuminate.



Transitioning to high school, Francisca's ardour for music eclipsed her athletic pursuits. A serendipitous encounter, where her voice captivated a stranger during a phone call, ignited her journey into the realm of music. Thus, Atswei Franaalo was born, and she recorded her debut song, "February," a heartfelt tribute to love.

Post-high school, Atswei embarked on a professional music career, disseminating her songs digitally. Facing early setbacks, including a disappointing inaugural show, she reluctantly set aside her musical aspirations until a friend encouraged her to apply for the British Council's Creative Enterprise Support Programme – MUSIC.

70%

of British Council SSA Arts participants
produced new cultural works

This programme, an offshoot of the Creative Hubs Programme, provided training, mentoring, and opportunities for music entrepreneurs.

Immersing herself in the programme's rigorous training and mentorship, Atswei gained fortitude and knowledge to re-enter the music industry. Bolstered by the insights gleaned, she reinvested her passion into music, facilitated by a grant from the programme.

Atswei's music, steeped in African rhythms with hints of jazz and R&B, celebrates her cultural heritage and linguistic diversity. Singing in Ga, her local dialect, she seeks to preserve her roots while transcending borders with her melodies.

With aspirations akin to African music icons like Burna Boy, Atswei acknowledges the programme's pivotal role in her resurgence. It equipped her with skills, confidence, and mentorship, enabling her to navigate the intricate pathways of the music industry.

Looking ahead, Atswei strives to create music that fosters unity through shared emotions and experiences. Dedicated to mentoring budding musicians, she aims to contribute to a thriving African music scene that embraces diversity and innovation.

[Watch video >](#)



Using art in digital marketing



Cherubim shares how his art opened the door to digital marketing and eventually earned him a scholarship to the UK through the Blazing Trails Programme.

Cherubim Mawuli Amenyedor's journey is characterised by transformation and dedication. While studying Industrial Art with a specialisation in Ceramics at Kwame Nkrumah University in Ghana, he developed a strong interest in digital marketing during his time as a faculty editor. Recognising the potential of digital marketing for content promotion, he began learning about this field, alongside acquiring skills in website development and blogging to support his career shift.

After graduating, Cherubim completed Ghana's mandatory national service. During this time, he discovered the British Council's Blazing Trails programme, which equips graduates with essential employability skills. This programme gave Cherubim the confidence and foundational skills to pursue a successful career as a digital marketing and transformation strategist.

'The Blazing Trails programme by the British Council not only imparted me with the skills I needed to set off my career but also gave me the much-needed



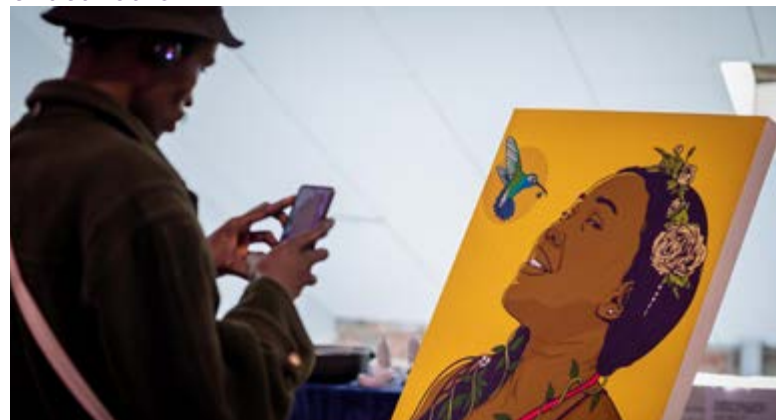
confidence to start. I credit the programme for laying the foundation I needed,' Cherubim recalls.

Cherubim's enthusiasm during the Blazing Trails programme led to his first job with the British Council as a monitoring and evaluation officer for the same programme. After his contract ended, the British Council recommended him for a Marketing Associate position at Invest in Africa, marking the start of his marketing career.

Following several high-level roles in corporate settings, agencies, and entrepreneurial ventures, Cherubim pursued a second master's degree in digital marketing through the prestigious Chevening Scholarship. The Chevening Scholarship supports emerging leaders in gaining skills and networks to drive positive change through a one-year master's degree in the UK.

Upon returning home after his scholarship, Cherubim became actively involved in the Alumni UK programme by the British Council. This programme fosters a community of individuals who have studied in the UK and monitors their impact upon their return. Earlier this year, Cherubim was selected as an Ambassador of the Alumni UK programme for Western and Central Africa.

Cherubim, founder of his digital transformation agency Strimpe Ltd and Director of Digital Strategy and Marketing at Dominion TV in Ghana, expresses profound gratitude for the British Council's impact on his career. He credits the Blazing Trails programme for giving him the confidence to start his career and appreciates the opportunities provided by the Alumni UK community and various British Council events. These experiences have expanded his network and knowledge, helping him excel in his professional endeavours.



Kenya

The British Council in Kenya builds connections, understanding and trust between people in Kenya and the UK through arts and culture, education, English language and internationally recognised exams. Our work responds to a clear need: expanding access to skills, qualifications, networks and platforms that help young people, educators, creatives and institutions participate in Kenya's social and economic development.

Working with government, education institutions and local partners, we support inclusive learning, teacher development, creative-sector growth, cultural

exchange and stronger pathways into employability, entrepreneurship and international collaboration. Our arts, culture and heritage work helps Kenyan and UK practitioners connect, collaborate, showcase talent and access new opportunities, while initiatives such as the UK/Kenya Season strengthen cultural ties and open new platforms for exchange.

Across all our work, we help build a more skilled, inclusive and globally connected Kenya by supporting the next generation of leaders, educators and creatives to access opportunity, build confidence and contribute to shared prosperity.



Setting up a formidable fashion brand in Kenya



James explains how a transformative opportunity shaped the trajectory of Itikadi Fashion House.

Fashion is deeply ingrained in James's family history, with a lineage that spans generations. It all began with his grandmother, who crafted garments for children, followed by his mother, who honed her skills in sportswear and uniform design. Now, James Ong'weny continues this legacy with his own venture, Itikadi Fashion House, a name derived from the Swahili term meaning tradition or ideologies.

After completing his degree, James secured a job to support himself financially while nurturing his passion for fashion on the side. Investing his earnings into a sketching course, he equipped himself with the technical skills necessary to bring his design visions to fruition. It was during this time that the seeds of Itikadi Fashion House were planted, as James channelled his newfound expertise into developing his own brand.

Initially, Itikadi Fashion House operated as a part-time endeavour, focusing primarily on men's wedding attire. However, as James witnessed the growing success of his venture, he made the bold decision to commit full-time to its expansion. Yet, despite his determination, James encountered numerous

challenges stemming from his lack of industry experience and expertise. Undeterred, he sought to fill these knowledge gaps by embarking on an internship at VIVO, a renowned fashion brand, where he immersed himself in every aspect of the industry.

James's dedication and hard work paid off when he was offered a senior design position within VIVO's Safari and Zoya Brand, a testament to his talent and perseverance. However, amid his career ascent, James felt a pull towards entrepreneurship and a desire to carve out his own path in the fashion world. It was during this pivotal moment that he stumbled upon the Creative DNA programme, a transformative opportunity that would shape the trajectory of Itikadi Fashion House.

The Creative DNA programme provided James with invaluable insights into the intricacies of the fashion business, from strategic planning to cost management. Interacting with industry leaders and fellow participants enriched his understanding and inspired new approaches to managing and growing his brand. Armed with this newfound knowledge and a renewed sense of purpose, James set his sights on elevating Itikadi Fashion House to new heights.

With plans to open a flagship store and expand into men's ready-to-wear collections, James is poised to cement Itikadi as a prominent fashion brand in Kenya in the coming years.



Transforming Kenyan libraries through digital archiving

How Book Bunk is reclaiming Nairobi's public libraries as living cultural institutions through restoration, archiving, and community programming.



When Angela Wachuka and her co-founder, writer Wanjiru Koinange, walked into the McMillan Memorial Library in Nairobi, what they encountered was a building carrying more history than its ageing infrastructure could sustain. Like many public cultural institutions across the continent, it had for years faced the quiet pressure of under-resourcing, a basement archive of thousands of documents, photographs, and manuscripts slowly losing the battle against time. The building had simply outgrown what available resources could maintain.

That visit became a conviction. In 2017, Book Bunk was founded to help public libraries become what communities needed them to be.

With support from the Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth programme, Book Bunk developed and executed a community-led restoration strategy that transformed three of Nairobi's public libraries into fully functioning, inclusive cultural spaces.

The revitalised spaces now provide free WiFi, personal computers, and extended opening hours. Alongside the physical restoration, Book Bunk introduced programming rooted in community need, including an arts and culture curriculum anchored in African music, legal awareness clinics, and digital literacy workshops serving both librarians and patrons.

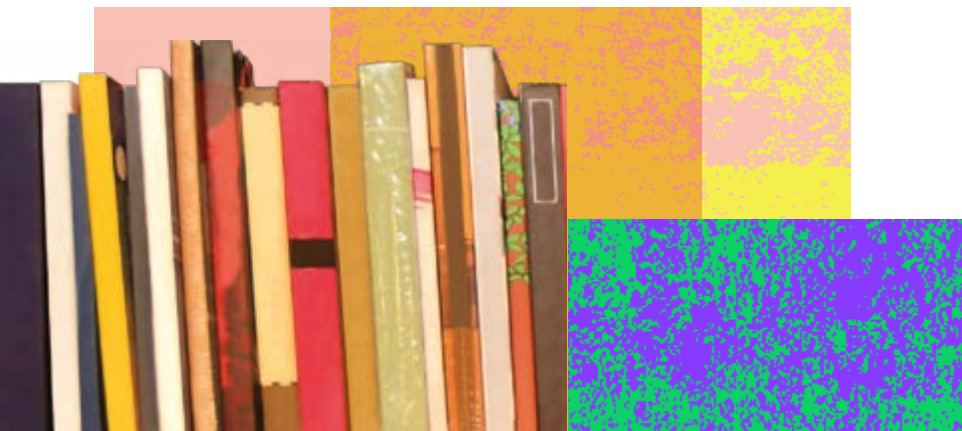
The archival work has been equally significant. Working alongside 30 student interns, Book Bunk catalogued over 137,000 books at McMillan and began digitising a historic archive dating back to 1904. The Cultural Protection Fund enabled the restoration and digitisation of over 49,000 items, a critical step in safeguarding Kenya's pre and post-colonial heritage for generations to come.

€7 million

ACP-EU Ignite Culture programme fund

Further support from the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund, implemented by HEVA Fund in partnership with the British Council, deepened that reach, expanding public programming and equipping Book Bunk with a partnership toolkit to share its restoration model with cultural institutions across the continent.

Angela remains committed to taking that model further and advocating for policies that strengthen the creative sector and nurturing a vision that Book Bunk could one day open across Africa.



37

projects across

10

countries funded through
the ACP-EU Ignite
Culture programme

Preserving Kenya's musical heritage through technology

Dr. Kahithe Kiiru, currently the Production Manager at Bomas of Kenya, has always been a staunch advocate for the creative economy. Bomas of Kenya, a government-owned centre dedicated to preserving the rich and diverse cultures of Kenya, provides a perfect backdrop for her work. Growing up in a family of creatives, she was inspired to explore her own talents in dance. Her career has spanned multiple roles in the theatre scene, including choreographer, dancer, and dance educator, ultimately leading her to the intersection of academia. Dr. Kiiru holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Paris X Nanterre, France, and a master's degree (MPhil) in Ethnomusicology and Dance Anthropology from the same institution.

Dr. Kiiru explains how the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund contributes to the archival of cultural heritage.

In her role as Production Manager at Bomas of Kenya, Dr. Kiiru's responsibilities include conducting cultural research. Through her research, she proposed the SampleBar project to the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund. The ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund programme, funded by the European Union, managed and implemented by the British Council and HEVA Fund has been instrumental in bringing the SampleBar project to life.

SampleBar is a Digital Documentation Project by Bomas of Kenya in partnership with Libido Music, aimed at preserving Kenya's diverse musical heritage. "Through the SampleBar project, we have been able to sample and create sounds from all regions in Kenya. By utilising technology such as infrared and QR codes, visitors can have a digitised experience of the sounds from across the country. This is groundbreaking, as no such project has been undertaken before, and it will significantly contribute to the archival of our cultural heritage," explains Dr. Kiiru.

Dr. Kiiru praises the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund as revolutionary for Bomas of Kenya. Since its inception in 1971, the institution has never executed such an intensive and significant project that integrates modern technology. The training programmes offered by the British Council and HEVA Fund have equipped the team with crucial skills in project management, including monitoring and evaluation. These skills have been vital in the successful execution of the SampleBar project.

Looking to the future, Dr. Kiiru aspires to expand the project to target producers and artists by creating producer kits that incorporate the sampled sounds into modern music. This next phase aims to bridge traditional and contemporary music, ensuring that Kenya's rich musical heritage continues to thrive and evolve.



An agent of change for Extended Reality (XR) in Africa



Brian and Shamina elaborate on the vision for BlackRhino VR as they hope to foster a new generation of tech-savvy creators.

In the aftermath of the Westgate terror attack in Nairobi, Brian Afande, the CEO of BlackRhino VR, found himself contemplating a profound change in his career path. Surviving such a harrowing experience compelled him to seek a more meaningful and impactful direction. It was during this introspective period that he stumbled upon Virtual Reality (VR). Brian recognised VR as the next frontier in technological advancement and therefore set up BlackRhino VR to advance this interest in VR.

Black Rhino VR aims to be an agent of change for Extended Reality (XR) in Africa. One of their visionary products is MediAR, an augmented cloud platform editor that enables non-coders to develop VR products.

The realisation of BlackRhino VR's MediAR product was made possible through the support of the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund. Managed by the British Council and implemented by HEVA Fund, this programme was instrumental in bringing MediAR to life.

Brian expresses his excitement about achieving this milestone and the impact it is set to have. 'MediAR is Africa's first augmented reality cloud editor and publishing platform editor, enabling content creators to build AR content with no need for coding experience. Our ethos at BlackRhino VR is to demystify, democratise, design, and deploy XR technology. Our platform MediAR not only allows content creators to build AR products but also provides access to a comprehensive curriculum on augmented reality, enabling them to learn and participate in this technology. So far, MediAR has over 200 users building AR content, and this number will continue to grow as we have just launched our marketing campaign. For this significant feat, we are grateful to the British Council.'

Shamina Rajab, the Managing Director of BlackRhino VR, adds that their long-standing relationship with the British Council has been instrumental in BlackRhino VR's growth. 'We have engaged with the



British Council from the inception of BlackRhino VR through numerous collaborations and projects. Our most recent engagement was the invitation by the British Council to the SoCreative Summit in South Africa, where we had the opportunity to showcase our technology.'

The vision for BlackRhino VR is expansive and deeply rooted in creating opportunities for African talent and innovation. By democratising access to VR and AR technologies, they hope to foster a new generation of tech-savvy creators who can contribute to the global tech ecosystem.

[Watch video >](#)



Growing my business digitally in rural coastal Kenya

Hamisi breaks down how he leveraged digital tools from the Inclusive Digital Participation Programme to grow his clothing business.



Hamisi Mwajembe, hailing from rural coastal Kenya, encountered his first computer in grade six, sparking a fascination with its potential. Learning foundational computer skills and internet navigation opened up a world of possibilities for him.

As a member of the wildlife club, he used his newfound internet access to research mangroves, eagerly awaiting each school computer session to delve deeper into his studies.

Inspired by his initial experiences, Hamisi decided he wanted to pursue a career in IT. He chose Computer Studies as a subject in his early secondary education. However, his dreams were thwarted when his school could not provide a computer teacher for forms three and four.

This setback diminished his chances of pursuing an IT-related course at university, leading him to opt for a course in procurement for his college education.

While studying at the Mombasa Technical Training College, Hamisi had an entrepreneurial epiphany. He decided to establish a clothing business named Swiss Collection, starting by selling primarily to his classmates. It was during this period that a friend suggested he apply for the British Council's Skills for Inclusive Digital Participation Programme. This programme is designed to enhance participants' digital skills, thereby positively impacting their businesses. The timing was perfect for Hamisi, as the programme equipped him with significant digital skills that directly benefited his venture.

'The Skills for Inclusive Digital Participation Programme by the British Council was transformative for me,' Hamisi recalls. 'The skills we were taught were practical and could be immediately applied to my business. We learned how to create a digital presence and market our business online. When I implemented these skills, my business's revenue

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When I implemented these skills, my business's revenue doubled within a few months.

Hamisi Mwajembe

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doubled within a few months. I expanded my client base and received orders from far beyond my local area.'

The programme's curriculum included essential skills such as building a website and utilising various social media platforms to attract and engage customers. These newly acquired skills were invaluable to Hamisi. Not only did he create a website, but he also started attracting clients from distant locations. 'I am immensely grateful to the British Council for allowing me to participate in this programme. I urge them to continue offering such courses, as they had a direct and profound impact on me and my business.'

Equipping future innovators and entrepreneurs

Vincent talks about the Innovation for African Universities programme's hands-on approach to creating an ecosystem where students can learn, experiment, and grow.

Vincent's professional ethos has always revolved around making meaningful contributions on regional, continental, and global scales. Over the past two decades, he has remained steadfast in this pursuit, holding various roles that align with his vision.

Currently, he serves as the Director at Ashoka, an institution dedicated to nurturing the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. This role resonates deeply with Vincent, as he witnesses firsthand the tangible impact it has on society.

In 2020, Vincent felt compelled to address a longstanding concern that had been gnawing at him for years. He was troubled by the inadequacies of higher education institutions in suitably preparing the leaders of tomorrow. Vincent recognised the urgent need to reimagine the educational landscape and equip future innovators and

entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and mindset to thrive.

The opportunity to realise his vision materialised through the British Council's Innovation for African Universities (IAU) Programme. This initiative aimed to foster an environment within universities that nurtured creativity, encouraged exploration, and empowered students to become the researchers and innovators of tomorrow.

To bring his idea to fruition, Vincent reached out to his longtime friend and colleague, Professor Abel Kinoti, the founding Dean of Riara University in Nairobi. Together, they sought to merge their shared vision with that of the British Council, envisioning a future where students were equipped to explore their ideas and make meaningful contributions to society. Thus, the Accelerating



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Universities are teeming with ideas, but what they lack is the space to accelerate these ideas. Through the AESU programme, we aim to build an architecture within the university to accelerate innovation, catalyse social change, and foster stronger linkages between academia and industry.

Vincent

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Entrepreneurship amongst University Students (AESU) programme was born.

The pilot phase of the AESU programme was launched at Riara University, with the aim of creating an enabling ecosystem for students within the institution. Vincent explains, ‘Universities are teeming with ideas, but what they lack is the space to accelerate these ideas. Through the AESU programme, we aim to build an architecture within the university to accelerate innovation, catalyse social change, and foster stronger linkages between academia and industry.’

The adaptive approach of the IAU programme proved instrumental in shaping the AESU programme, facilitating collaboration with UK-based universities, including the Open University. Vincent emphasises the invaluable role played by the British Council in unlocking resources, networks, and ecosystems that would have otherwise been inaccessible.

Two generations, stitched together

Kevin Abwova tells us how the Creative DNA programme turned a family workshop into an internationally trading brand.

Kisero Leather began as most enduring businesses do, quietly, out of necessity. Josephat Abwova was a shoe repairman in Rongai with a rare gift for working leather. His son Kevin, fresh out of high school in 2016, joined him not from ambition but circumstance. Together they mended shoes, then made them. When the pandemic closed the doors of larger companies, they began producing leather goods under other brands' names. 'Our initial capital was our labour,' Kevin recalls. 'We came with our own skillset and manpower.'



77%

of participants increased
export value and/or sales

Credit: British Council SSA, Arts
Programme Impact Report, 2025

It was Kevin who first saw the larger opportunity hiding in his father's hands. 'I tapped into his skillset and came up with bag designs with great functionality,' he says. In 2020, the pair stopped making products for other people's labels and started making them for their own. Kiseru Leather was born.

For three years, the business grew the way most small creative enterprises do in Kenya, through word of mouth and sheer persistence. It was a viable livelihood but not yet a scalable one. What Kiseru lacked was not talent, but infrastructure: the strategic positioning, market access, and international exposure that turn good craftsmanship into a competitive brand.

That gap closed in 2023, when Kevin joined the Creative DNA programme. The return on that investment has been substantial and measurable. A Creative DNA grant strengthened their business, improving production capacity and working conditions while funding new collections and stronger brand storytelling. The programme's market access benefit led Kiseru from informal sales to structured sales through pop-up markets across Kenya and built a network of fellow designers that continues to inform Kevin's strategic thinking today.

The clearest return came in August 2025, when Kiseru Nairobi was selected to showcase at Africa Fashion Week London, realising a childhood ambition and opening doors no domestic platform could. An accompanying industry immersion programme gave Kevin direct exposure to UK retailers and manufacturers, insight he has since converted into practice: Kiseru now fulfils orders from UK, Italy and US customers and collaborates with UK-based creatives, commercial relationships that trace directly back to the

84%

increased turnover or income



opportunities presented through the programme.

The business has scaled accordingly. Kiseru now operates two physical stores in Kenya, with five more planned as the brand deepens its domestic footprint while sustaining its new international trade.

'You cannot speak of fashion without mentioning Creative DNA,' Kevin says, a verdict that doubles as the clearest evidence of programme impact available.

What began as a father teaching his son to mend shoes has become a Kenyan brand trading internationally, employing local artisans, and carrying African craftsmanship onto runways and into homes well beyond Nairobi.

[Watch video >](#)



25%

of participants proceeded to register a
new business



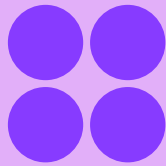
86%

increased social media visibility

97%

gained business confidence in Year 4





“Since participating in the British Council programme, my perspective has significantly expanded. It opened up my mind to a world of opportunities, especially those that foster cross-cultural exchange, which is something I deeply value. I now feel more connected to a global creative community, and I’m more confident exploring international collaborations in my career.”

Biennale Connect participant, Kenya



In Nigeria, one of Africa's most dynamic centres of youth talent, creativity and enterprise, our work helps expand opportunity, strengthen employability and support inclusive economic growth, while deepening lasting connections between Nigeria and the UK.

We work across education, English, exams, skills, arts, culture and society to create more inclusive pathways into learning, work, enterprise and global collaboration. Through our education and skills programmes, we connect schools, higher education institutions and vocational partners in Nigeria and the UK, supporting international partnerships, education reform, teacher development, inclusive education and demand-driven training that strengthens youth employability and entrepreneurship.

In arts and the creative economy, we support young Nigerian creatives and cultural organisations to build artistic, enterprise, digital and management skills, develop new work, access markets and collaborate with peers across Africa and the UK. Through our exams work, we provide access to internationally recognised qualifications that help students and professionals pursue study, work and career pathways globally. Across all our work, we help young people, educators, creatives, institutions and communities gain the skills, confidence, networks and qualifications they need to contribute to a more prosperous, inclusive and connected Nigeria.

Nigeria



Embracing inclusion through digital training



How the Skills for Inclusive Digital Participation Programme gave Aisha Abba Haladu the tools to grow her business and the confidence to bring hundreds of others with her.

Aisha Abba Haladu had always moved between worlds. A student of English Language at Bayero University, a poet, a writer, and the founder of All Scents and More, a local incense company she built from the ground up, Aisha carried her father's legacy with her everywhere. He had been a professor, and his belief in education as a path to possibility never left her.

But running a small business in Kano without digital skills placed a quiet ceiling on everything she was building. She could not create content, run digital advertisements, or reach customers beyond her immediate community. In a rapidly digitising economy, that gap was growing.

The Skills for Inclusive Digital Participation (SIDP) Programme was designed precisely for that gap, equipping digitally excluded individuals with the skills to participate fully in the digital economy and broader society. When Aisha discovered it, she enrolled not only to grow her business but with a longer ambition in mind: to become a facilitator and bring those skills back to her region.

The programme delivered on both counts. ‘It gave me comprehensive training on navigating the digital landscape,’ Aisha said. ‘Through SIDP, I gained a solid grasp of content creation, vital for any entrepreneur. I also learned how to develop and run digital ads, which has been crucial for my business.’

The impact on All Scents and More was immediate, a digital presence, a wider customer base, and the ability to market her products beyond her immediate circle. But what followed was equally significant. After completing her training, Aisha became an SIDP facilitator herself, going on to train hundreds of participants, many of whom had never interacted with a computer before. The programme introduced them to both hardware and software, unlocking pathways to freelance work and digital opportunity that had previously been entirely out of reach.

‘The greatest satisfaction I derived as a facilitator was witnessing the transformation the programme brought to the trainees,’ she said. ‘It not only imparted new knowledge but equipped them with practical skills, enabling them to become freelancers and tap into existing digital opportunities.’

For Aisha, the SIDP Programme did more than close a skills gap. It confirmed what she had always believed, that education, at any level, is the most powerful tool a person can carry. With her sights now set on building a portfolio of enterprises, she left the programme not just more capable, but more certain of where she was headed.

[Watch video >](#)

5,841

learners trained through Skills for Inclusive Digital Participation (SIDP)

3,225

of those trained were women

“

The programme gave me comprehensive training on navigating the digital landscape. Through SIDP, I gained a solid grasp of content creation, vital for any entrepreneur.

Aisha Abba Haladu

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Babayemi recounts how the STEP project equipped him to support over 250 teachers across Nigeria.

Babayemi Opeyemi has devoted nearly two **decades** to promoting the English language in Nigeria, embarking on a remarkable journey that began with his service in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). This compulsory programme requires Nigerian graduates to engage in community development, offering them a unique chance to contribute to different regions of the country. Babayemi, armed with a degree in Christian Studies, found himself

posted to Ekiti State, far from his native Kogi State, where he taught English and Christian Studies at a local secondary school.

Initially, Babayemi hadn't envisaged a career in teaching. However, his time in the classroom proved revelatory. He discovered a natural talent for instruction, a skill that flourished with each lesson. 'Realising my ability to impart knowledge sparked a passion in me to refine this skill,' he reflects.

Starting as a primary school educator, Babayemi advanced to secondary education, earning recognition for his administrative and training prowess. This led to his appointment as the training

Imparting knowledge through language



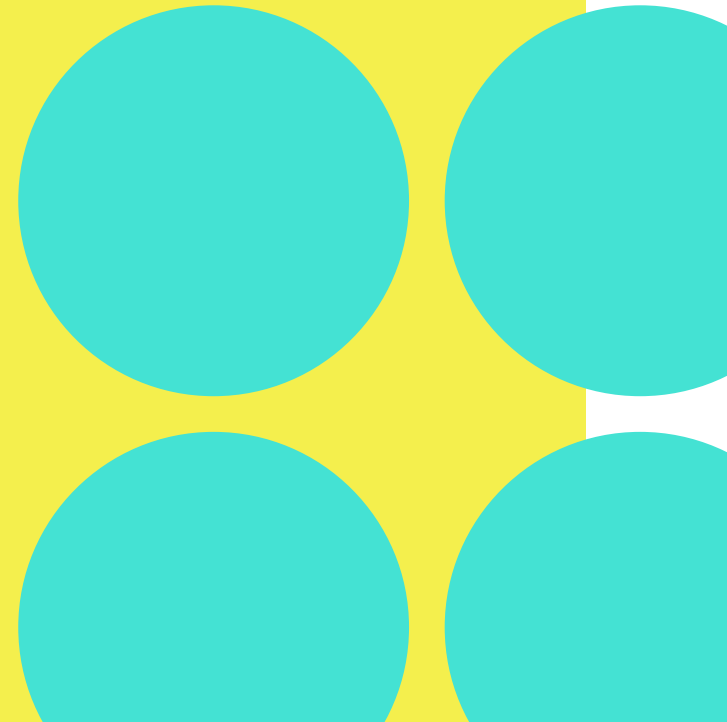


officer at the Universal Foundation Education Board. His reputation positioned him as an ideal candidate for the British Council's Strengthening Teachers' English Proficiency (STEP) project, designed to enhance teachers' English proficiency and equip them with essential 21st-century skills for fostering lifelong learning.

The STEP project marked a turning point for Babayemi, allowing him to delve deep into English language pedagogy. 'The programme introduced me to inclusive teaching methodologies,' he explains. 'It's not just about imparting knowledge of English; it's about conveying it in a manner accessible to all learners. Incorporating local dialects alongside English enhances comprehension and appreciation for the language.'

Armed with insights from the STEP project, Babayemi set out to revolutionise English language education across Nigeria. He empowered over 250 teachers, enhancing their English proficiency skills. Additionally, he expanded his literary repertoire by publishing his second English textbook titled *Key Guide to English* and a recent short story entitled *Pelewura*. Babayemi also ventured into radio education, hosting a weekly English language programme on Kwara Radio 99.1 FM.

For Babayemi, English represents more than just linguistic utility; it embodies a way of life and a means of expression amidst Nigeria's diverse tapestry of over 200 local dialects. Through his unwavering commitment to English language education, Babayemi continues to champion lifelong learning, leaving an indelible mark on generations of learners and educators alike.



Advocacy against gender-based violence in Nigeria

How the Future Leaders Programme gave Oluwaseun Osowobi the policy tools and international networks to turn personal conviction into systemic change.

When Oluwaseun Osowobi returned to Nigeria from abroad, she came back to a country where Gender-Based Violence was handled in ways that consistently failed survivors. The media misrepresented their experiences. Institutions offered little support. The legal frameworks that existed were rarely enforced. For Oluwaseun, dissatisfaction became determination. She started with a blog, a platform for survivors to speak without fear and for the public to be educated on realities that were too often ignored.

That blog became Stand to End Rape (STER), an organisation focused on gender equality, government collaboration, and direct support for survivors through mental, medical, and legal aid. STR worked across healthcare and judicial systems, and its early advocacy contributed to the 2015 passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill, a landmark legislative achievement. But Oluwaseun knew that passion and grassroots reach alone could only go so far. Changing



systems required understanding how they worked from the inside, how policy was made, how stakeholders were engaged, and how change was argued for in rooms where decisions were actually taken.

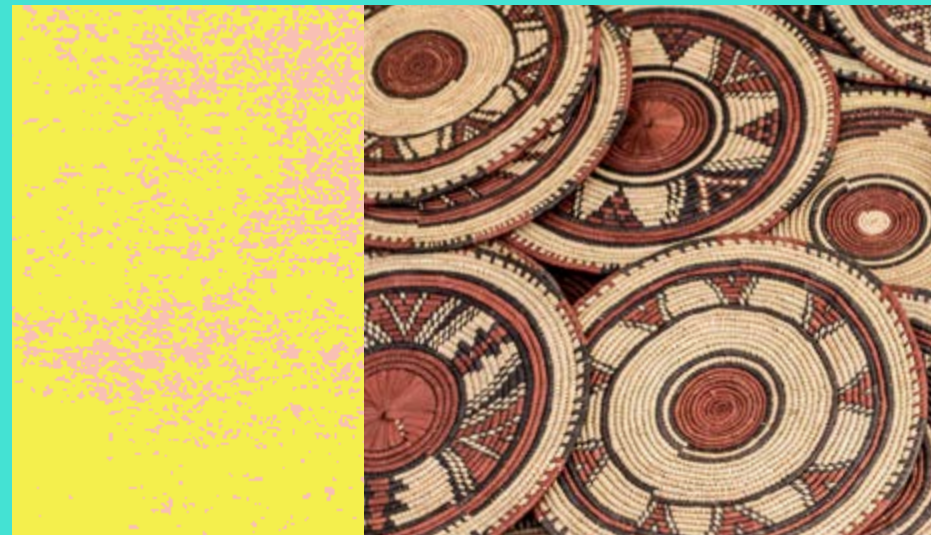
That knowledge came through the British Council's Future Leaders Programme. The programme took her to the UK House of Parliament, where she observed policy development and debate first-hand, and to the University of Cambridge, where she undertook a course in policy advocacy and communication. The experience fundamentally changed how she approached her work.

'The Future Leaders Programme was instrumental for me,' she said. 'I had the opportunity to witness first-hand the intricacies behind the policy making process. I learned how to build interest on policy amongst stakeholders, frame policy that would benefit the

community, and engage with stakeholders on the opposite side.'

The impact was swift and measurable. Drawing directly on the advocacy skills and networks the programme built, Oluwaseun partnered with the BBC to produce the documentary 'Sex for Grades,' which exposed sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions and catalysed the Senate to pass the Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions Bill. She also launched teachconsent.org, an online platform that has since educated over 2,000 learners on sexual harassment and consent.

Today, as a council member of NALA Feminist Collective, Oluwaseun works to shape policy across Africa, building accountability in advocacy and addressing emerging intersections between gender-based violence and issues such as climate change. The work that began with a blog has become a blueprint, proof that when advocates are equipped with the right tools, individual conviction can become continental change.



Educating young learners in Nigeria through evidence-based learning

Gbemiga Bankole explains how the Connecting Classrooms Programme helped students in Nigeria and Wales learn with each other, not just about each other.



Initially trained in microbiology, Gbemiga Bankole Afolabi never anticipated a career in education. However, fate intervened when the Lagos State government issued a call for graduates, regardless of their educational background, to join the teaching profession. This marked the beginning of Gbemiga's journey as an educator, and she has since thrived as a biology teacher for over a decade.

The year 2020 brought unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst this turmoil, Gbemiga discovered and applied for the British Council's Connecting Classrooms programme. The Connecting Classrooms initiative was a global education programme designed to cultivate essential skills in young people, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, to effectively navigate a globalised world.

Participation in the Connecting Classrooms programme proved transformative for Bankole. She acquired innovative teaching methodologies and essential skills

[Watch video >](#)

aimed at imparting critical thinking and problem-solving abilities to her students. ‘The knowledge I gained from the programme was invaluable,’ she remarked. ‘I was eager for the students to return to the classroom after the COVID restrictions were lifted so I could implement the action plan I had developed.’

As physical classes resumed, Bankole wasted no time in executing her action plan through her project’s framework. Her initiative, titled ‘Introducing Children to Problem-Solving Using Evidence-Based Learning,’ targeted senior secondary school students. Using the biology subtopic ‘Microorganisms and Man’ as a foundation, she employed the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study to engage students in critical thinking and problem-solving exercises. Through guided methodologies, students were empowered to discern misinformation surrounding the pandemic, actively participating in problem-solving discussions and collaborating to separate fact from fiction.

Bankole’s innovative teaching methods earned her acclaim from her students, who appreciated her dynamic and engaging approach to learning. Additionally, her involvement in the Connecting Classrooms programme facilitated a partnership with Nantgwyn Rhondda Valley School in Wales. This partnership enabled cross-cultural exchanges and collaborative projects between Nigerian and Welsh students. The success of her programme highlighted Bankole’s dedication to education and her

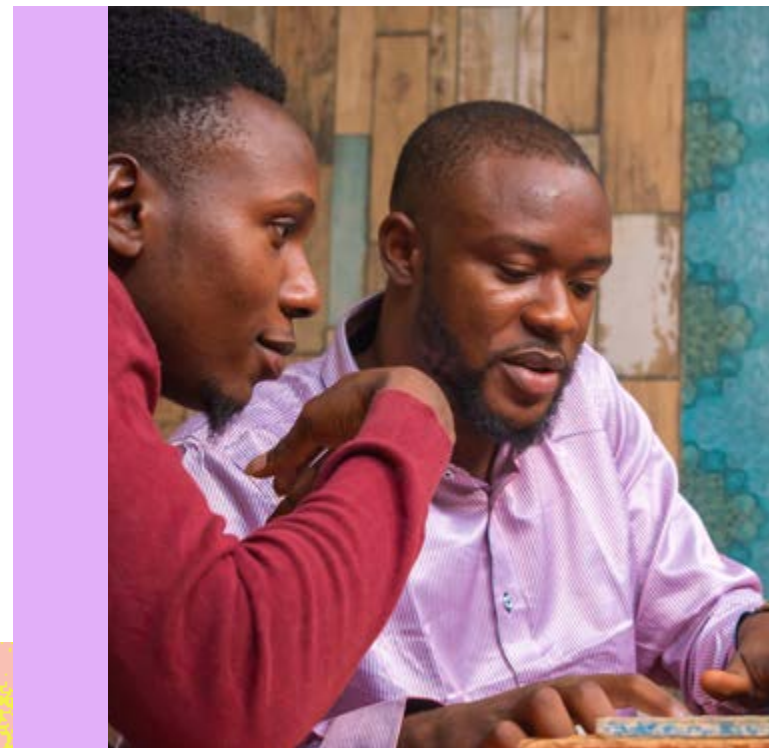
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The knowledge I gained from the programme was invaluable. I was eager for the students to return to the classroom so I could implement the action plan I had developed.

Gbemiga Bankole Afolabi

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commitment to fostering inclusivity. In 2022, her efforts were recognised when she was nominated to represent Nigeria in the Commonwealth Connections programme, affirming her status as a leader in the field of education.



Professor Josiah recounts how the Schools Connect Programme inspired new teacher standards in Nigeria and ignited broader change across the continent.

A policy shift within the African continent

Professor Josiah Ajiboye has carved an illustrious path in academia, ascending to the prestigious position of Registrar at the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), a role to which he was appointed by the country's President in 2016. His influence extends beyond Nigeria, with his appointment as President of the African Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities, an affiliate of the International Forum of Teaching Regulatory Authority (IFTRA). These esteemed positions enable him to shape the trajectory of the teaching profession not only within Nigeria but across the African continent.

His involvement in the British Council's Schools Connect Programme (part of the English and School Education portfolio) in 2021 marked a pivotal moment in his career. This programme, tailored for school

leaders and policy influencers, equips participants with the leadership skills necessary to drive effective policy formulation and instructional leadership within their institutions and countries. Reflecting on his experience, Professor Josiah describes the programme as transformative, citing its emphasis on practical leadership practices suited for the demands of the 21st century.

'The programme fosters collaboration among academic experts to explore innovative approaches to school management,' explains Professor Josiah. 'Through its focus on instructional leadership, participants transition from antiquated leadership paradigms to modern, effective practices.' He vividly recalls visiting a school in South Africa where the impact of the programme was palpable, with teachers

and students demonstrating heightened commitment and alignment towards shared goals.

As a direct outcome of his participation in the Schools Connect Programme, Professor Josiah spearheaded the development of a groundbreaking document outlining teacher professional standards. This initiative, a pioneering effort in Africa, aims to redefine the teaching landscape by providing educators with clear guidelines for professional conduct and development. Not content with its impact confined to

Nigeria, Professor Josiah has extended his expertise to assist Sierra Leone in formulating its own teacher professional standards.

Currently, Professor Josiah is on the cusp of unveiling a groundbreaking policy on school leadership. This policy document seeks to catalyse a paradigm shift among school leaders, transforming them from mere resource managers to visionary leaders capable of driving educational excellence. His vision extends beyond Nigeria, as he advocates for the widespread adoption of the Schools Connect programme vision across all African countries, urging education ministries to establish dedicated departments to ensure its continued advancement and implementation across the continent.



Hamza Isah takes us through how he used digital skills to expand his world through the Skills for Inclusive Digital Participation (SIDP) Programme.



Hamza Isah's life took a turn at three when he contracted polio. His parents, firm believers in 'disability is not inability,' ensured he led a normal life. This belief was put to the test when Hamza was assigned to serve in a Southern state under the Nigerian Youth Service (NYS), despite being from the North. His parents encouraged him to embrace this opportunity, seeing it as a chance for him to inspire others with disabilities.

As a teacher during his National Youth Service, he aimed to motivate students, proving disability shouldn't hinder life fulfilment. Following his tenure as a biology teacher, Hamza made a pivotal decision to pursue a Diploma in Computer Service, recognising the growing importance of digital skills in the modern world. This marked a significant shift from his undergraduate studies in microbiology, reflecting his desire to stay relevant in an increasingly digital society.

**Disability is
not inability**



1,297

persons with disabilities were trained through SIDP

225

community-level trainers were equipped through the programme

His foresight proved fortuitous when he was presented with an opportunity to join the inaugural cohort of the Skills for Inclusive and Digital Participation Programme (SIDP) by the British Council. The SIDP Programme empowered participants with digital literacy skills, enabling them to harness the potential of the digital world.

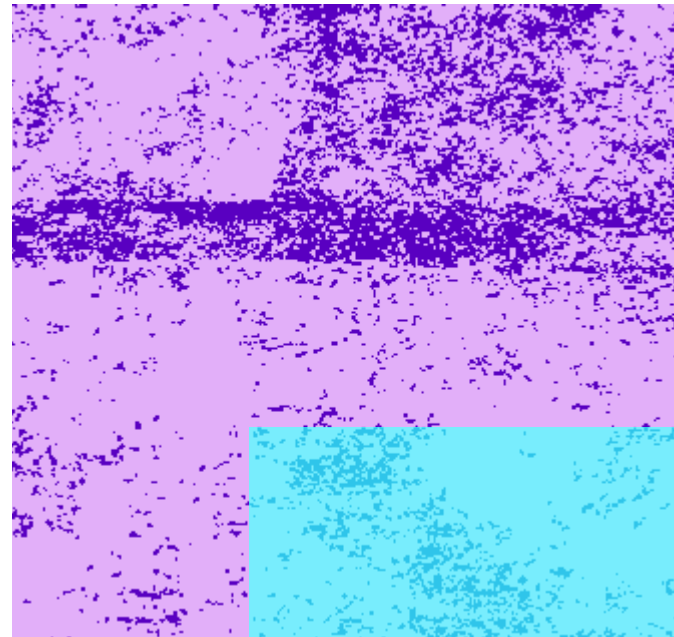
Hamza wholeheartedly embraced the programme, recognising its transformative impact on both his personal and professional life. Applying the digital skills he acquired, he leveraged technology to expand his existing business, that he ran concurrently while pursuing his education, selling cosmetics and sewing materials, attracting customers from beyond the Northern State and driving significant business growth.

The programme also educated him on the dangers of fake news, essential in today's digital landscape. Impressed by

its inclusive environment, catering to persons with disabilities, Hamza became a trainer for the SIDP Programme, challenging stereotypes in the process.

Looking forward, he plans to enhance his digital education with CISCO and online courses in Data Analysis and Project Management. With aspirations to develop digital solutions for global challenges, Hamza aims to prove that disability fuels innovation and change.

[Watch video >](#)



Core skills in the modern educational landscape



Onagbola, 21st Century Skills Training through the Connecting Classrooms Programme

When Onagbola started her teaching journey three decades ago, she followed in the footsteps of her parents, both esteemed educators. Now serving as the principal of a Technical College in Lagos State, Nigeria, Onagbola's career reached a pivotal moment when, after teaching at the primary level for 20 years, she was transferred to a technical college. During this transition, she encountered a transformative opportunity: 21st Century Skills Training, through the Connecting Classrooms programmes by the British Council. This training initiative focused on introducing core skills vital for the modern educational landscape. 'The training was a game-changer,' she recalls. 'It inspired me to rethink my approach to teaching and engage students in a more interactive and democratic manner. When I applied these technical skills, I witnessed a significant improvement in my students' performance.'

Energised by the programme, Onagbola became a catalyst for change within her school community. She not only impacted her students but also inspired her colleagues. By promoting collaboration and interactive teaching methods, she witnessed a remarkable transformation in classroom dynamics, with students becoming more engaged and motivated to learn. Onagbola's efforts did not go unnoticed, and she was soon promoted to the position of Vice Principal.

Continuing her pursuit of excellence, Onagbola enrolled in the Instructional Leadership Training offered by the British Council in 2020. 'The programme taught me the importance of relational leadership and how to motivate and support my staff,' she explains. 'It empowered me to lead with confidence and compassion.'

The culmination of Onagbola's journey came in 2023

when she successfully applied for the position of Principal at the Technical College in Lagos State. This achievement is significant, as she is the only female principal of a technical college in Nigeria. She credits her career growth to the invaluable insights gained from the British Council programmes. Her rise to the position of Principal highlights the critical role of continuous learning and professional development in achieving career milestones.

[Watch video >](#)

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The programme taught me the importance of relational leadership and how to motivate and support my staff.

Onagbola

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African animations to the world



How the Creative Enterprise Support Programme gave Oluwaseyi Fajimi the business foundations to turn a childhood obsession into an internationally acclaimed animation studio.

Oluwaseyi Fajimi had been drawing characters since he could hold a pen. Inspired by the cartoons and comics he consumed as a child, he filled diaries, gifted by his father, with imagined worlds and original figures. The passion was clear from the beginning. The pathway to turning it into a career was anything but.

Without formal animation training at university, Oluwaseyi taught himself through online courses, piecing together skills through determination and self-directed study. A stint at an animation studio gave him his first real professional footing, hands-on experience that sharpened his craft and planted the seed for what would eventually become his first original IP, a project called 'Pepe and Tomati.' The concept was alive in his imagination. What he lacked was the business knowledge to bring it to life on his own terms.

Animation is an industry where creative talent and



commercial infrastructure must work together. Without understanding production pipelines, intellectual property, revenue models, and business planning, even the strongest creative concept can stall. For Oluwaseyi, that gap was real and limiting.

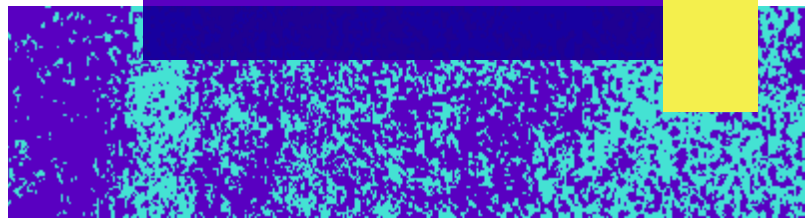
In 2022, he joined the British Council's Creative Enterprise Support Programme - Animation. The programme demystified the business side of an industry that had always felt creatively intuitive but commercially opaque. Oluwaseyi developed a comprehensive business plan, gained insight into the intricacies of animation production, and acquired the tools to navigate the creative process with commercial confidence.

The impact was immediate. Equipped with that foundation, he shepherded 'Pepe and Tomati' from concept to completed production, infusing it with African charm, humour, and cultural specificity. The result earned a place at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival in France, one of the most prestigious platforms in the global animation calendar and a significant milestone for any African animator.

The momentum continued. Through the British

Council's Creative DNA Programme, Oluwaseyi directed 'Finding Jomijo,' a collaborative project that screened at several international festivals, further cementing his reputation on the global animation stage.

Today, Folktail Studio operates from the heart of Lagos, producing commercial work and original intellectual properties for audiences well beyond Nigeria's borders. Oluwaseyi's ambition is clear: to build Folktail into the premier animation hub in Africa, a home for African stories, told in African voices, seen by the world.



The stories he wears

Henry Uduku tells us how the Creative DNA programme gave him the infrastructure to take his Lagos-born menswear label from local promise to global platform.

Henry Uduku had been drawn to fashion from a young age. What began as a personal obsession with clothing eventually became something more deliberate, a conviction that Nigeria had the creative intelligence, the craft, and the cultural depth to produce menswear that could hold its own anywhere in the world. In 2017, he turned that conviction into Henri Uduku, an androgynous menswear brand rooted in Lagos, built on a simple but ambitious proposition: quality, versatility, and 100% made in Nigeria.

The brand's ethos was clear from the start. By sourcing materials locally and working directly with indigenous artisans, Henry was not simply building a fashion label, he was making an argument for what Nigerian manufacturing could become. Collections defined by clean lines, refined detail, and a storytelling sensibility drew on memory, identity, and modern city life.

But ambition without infrastructure has its limits. Knowing how to design was one thing. Understanding how to



position a brand internationally, navigate global markets, and build the business architecture to sustain creative growth was another. That gap closed when Henry joined the British Council's Creative DNA programme, a fashion accelerator supporting entrepreneurs across Sub-Saharan Africa through mentorship, business development, and international showcasing.

'I tell better stories on the runway with pieces from different collections,' he reflects. The programme gave him both the platform and the framework to do exactly that.

What followed was a clear upward trajectory. Henry presented his work to global fashion buyers at the Creative Africa Nexus (CANEX@IATF2023) in Cairo and at Creative Economy Week 2025 in Harare, building his international profile continent by continent.

Then came London. As part of the British Council Creative DNA delegation, Henri Uduku took to the runway at Africa Fashion Week London 2025, joining designers from Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana and Zimbabwe on one of the most significant platforms for African fashion globally. Beyond the catwalk, Henry participated in business clinics with facilitators from Westminster University and the Fashion Retail Academy, toured UK manufacturing and retail hubs, and engaged in panel discussions that deepened his understanding of the global fashion ecosystem. The visibility that followed extended further still, with Henri Uduku featured in Vogue Italia after being

[Watch video >](#)

spotted at AFWL 2025, marking a significant milestone for a brand built entirely in Lagos.

Henry's journey is a reminder that building a sustainable creative career is not about flash, it is about infrastructure: visibility, networks, and real support. The Creative DNA programme provided all three. What he brought to the runway in London was not simply a collection. It was the result of years of craft, community, and a programme that understood Africa's fashion future is not something to be waited for. It is something to be built.

Creative DNA programme benefits included

- **Incubation**
- **Visibility**
- **Market access**
- **International exposure**

Credit: British Council SSA,
Arts Programme Impact Report, 2025

Innovative, sustainable African fashion



How the culturally diverse background in Northern Nigeria inspired Precious's artistic expression.

Precious's journey into the world of fashion began at an early age, where her innate fascination with mixing and creating new designs from her mother's vintage pieces was unmistakable. Growing up in the culturally diverse Northern Belt of Nigeria further fuelled her artistic expression, as did the musical influences of icons like Fela Kuti, whose fusion of music and fashion resonated deeply with her.

Unlike the conventional parental expectation for children to pursue STEM courses, Precious's parents supported her unconventional path into the fashion

industry. She strategically pursued degrees in languages, focusing on Russian and French, to deepen her understanding of different cultures, as she believed fashion and culture were inherently intertwined. 'Languages lead to fashion because they serve as a bridge for connecting with people,' she explains. Today, she is fluent in seven languages, including Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, German, and Swahili.

Her journey towards realising her fashion design dream gained momentum during her university years, where she designed pieces for beauty pageants, honing her skills in the process. By the time she completed her degree, she was certain that fashion was her calling. Concurrently, she enrolled in illustration courses to enhance her drawing skills while already designing pieces for clients.

The birth of her business, Ivory Afrikaan, stemmed from her win in a university beauty pageant titled the Ivory

Queen, symbolising her intent to serve the black African woman. Recognising a gap in the market for women-focused fashion brands, she seized the opportunity to cater to this niche by creating contemporary pieces that celebrated colour and the African community.

Precious's introduction to British Council programmes came in 2019 when she responded to a call for a sustainable fashion grant. Prompted by the environmental impact of the fashion industry's waste, she pitched an idea to recycle fabric waste by transforming it into reusable thread. Although she wasn't awarded the grant, she remained undeterred, embracing sustainable fashion as a core value of her brand. She incorporated clay into her jewellery and fashion accessories, a departure from traditional materials like plastic or wood.

In 2023, the British Council offered Precious a transformative opportunity to participate in the Creative DNA at CANEX@IATF2023 programme in Egypt, owing to her innovative approach to sustainable fashion. The exposure and networking opportunities

provided by CANEX catapulted Ivory Afrikaan onto the global stage. 'I am forever grateful for the opportunity because it opened doors that I never thought possible,' Precious reflects. Through CANEX, she secured global stockists and expanded her business into interior design through a collaboration with an international designer impressed by her style.

Her participation in the Creative DNA Africa programme further accelerated her entrepreneurial journey in the fashion sector. Mentored by industry experts of international repute, Precious honed her pitching skills and business acumen, gaining invaluable insights into the fashion industry's intricacies. Her pitch for sustainable fashion using clay won her a grant, alongside numerous orders garnered through her participation in the programme.

Looking ahead, Precious is on the cusp of releasing her new collection, the Zodiac Collection, and is implementing insights gleaned from the Creative DNA Africa programme to propel Ivory Afrikaan onto the global stage.

At the centre of Rwanda's growth story is a generation of young people, educators and creatives with the ambition to learn, lead and connect with the world. Our work in Rwanda helps turn that ambition into opportunity by strengthening English, education, exams, arts and culture, while building lasting connections between Rwanda and the UK.

We work with government and partners to improve English language proficiency among teachers, strengthen classroom practice and support more inclusive learning, with attention to gender and disability

inclusion. Through our exams work, we provide access to internationally recognised qualifications that open pathways to study, work and career progression.

In arts and culture, we connect Rwandan creatives with wider African and UK networks, supporting collaboration, skills development, creative enterprise and cultural exchange. Across our work, we help young people, educators, creatives and institutions gain the skills, confidence and global connections they need to contribute to Rwanda's inclusive growth and future prosperity.

Rwanda





The transformative impact of the Secondary Teachers English Language Improvement Rwanda (STELIR) Project on Virginie's life.

Virginie Umugwaneza's journey is a compelling **testament** to the transformative power of English proficiency in Rwanda, a nation historically rooted in French-speaking traditions. With a bachelor's degree in science, specialising in chemistry and physics, Virginie's career path took an unexpected but

fortuitous turn when she found herself teaching English alongside her role as a deputy head teacher. The opportunity emerged when an English teaching vacancy arose at her school. Initially stepping in temporarily, Virginie's exceptional proficiency in English soon made her an indispensable asset to the school.

In 2016, Rwanda undertook a significant linguistic shift, transitioning its official language from French to English. This decision was driven by the country's ambition to compete on a global scale. This pivotal transition marked the beginning of Virginie's involvement with British Council programmes, starting with the Building Learning Foundation (BLF) Project in 2018. As a mentor trainer, Virginie played a crucial role in training teachers to enhance their English

English -
a gateway
to global
opportunities



proficiency, enabling them to deliver their subjects with greater fluency and confidence.

The success of the BLF Programme paved the way for the Secondary Teachers English Language Improvement Rwanda (STELIR) project, aimed at further elevating the English proficiency of secondary school teachers. Through this initiative, teachers underwent comprehensive training in various methodologies to enhance their teaching capabilities in English. Virginie reflects on the undeniable impact of the programme, noting how teachers' confidence in the language soared, resulting in more engaging and effective classroom environments. With newfound proficiency, teachers embraced innovative teaching practices, fostering better comprehension and participation among students.

Central to the STELIR project's success are the School-Based Mentors (SBMs), who provide ongoing support and professional development to teachers within their schools. Through weekly meetings and continuous mentorship, SBMs ensure the programme's momentum is sustained, leaving a lasting impact on both teachers and students across Rwanda. Virginie herself has been an integral part of this mentoring process, helping to build a robust network of English-proficient educators.



Virginie views English not merely as a language but as a gateway to global opportunities. She recognises the STELIR project's critical role in Rwanda's transition to an English-speaking nation and envisions a future where English-proficient students contribute meaningfully to global challenges. She dreams of seeing Rwandan students representing their country on the world stage with pride, innovation, and a sense of purpose.

The background is a collage of various abstract images. On the left, there's a blue rectangular area. Below it is a colorful, abstract painting with red, blue, and yellow tones. In the center, there's a circular pattern of red and white concentric rings. To the right of this is a blue area with yellow speckles. Further right is a solid yellow vertical bar, and on the far right is a purple area with green speckles.

844

school-based mentors
trained to lead CPD

96%

of participants improved
digital literacy for
professional development

98%

of teachers reported improved
classroom English confidence

10,081

education influencers (teachers,
mentors, school leaders) engaged
across Rwanda

75

5,463

teachers enrolled in
blended English courses

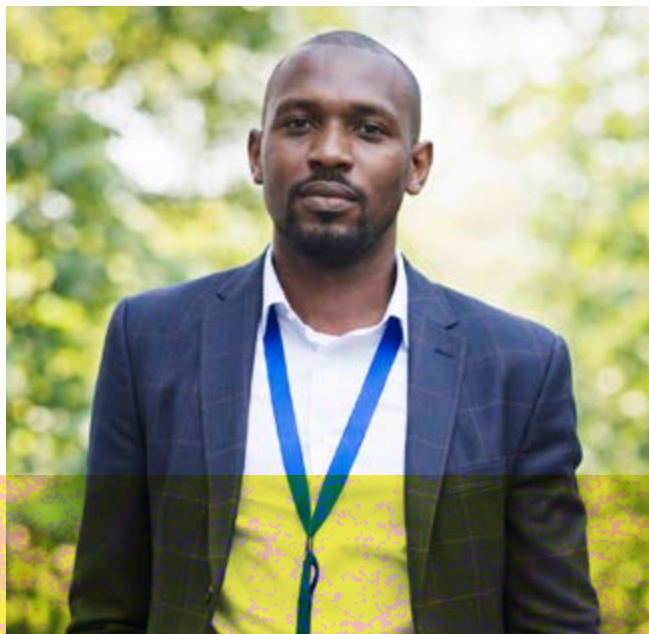
**STELIR -
Empowering teachers,
transforming Rwanda's future**

6,598

in-service teachers
Aptis-tested in English

English as a tool for transformation

The Building Learning Foundation Project enabled Emmanuel to train in English proficiency, subsequently imparting this knowledge to fellow teachers within his school.



Emmanuel Tuyishimire's journey with English as a transformative tool epitomises the profound impact of education, opportunity, and commitment. Inspired by his father's teaching at the primary level, Emmanuel nurtured a deep-seated ambition to follow in his footsteps, captivated by the enriching experience he observed. His aspirations came to fruition when he secured a government scholarship to pursue a Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Education, eventually embarking on a career as a teacher.

His professional odyssey commenced at a pivotal juncture when Rwanda transitioned to adopt English as its official communication language, replacing French. This marked a momentous shift, with Emmanuel playing a pivotal role in facilitating this transition through his involvement in the Building Learning Foundations (BLF) Project, spearheaded by the British Council. Serving as a School Based Mentor (SBM), Emmanuel underwent training in English proficiency, subsequently imparting this

knowledge to fellow teachers within his school, who, in turn, passed it on to their students.

Reflecting on this transformative experience, Emmanuel recalls, “The BLF Programme introduced innovative teaching techniques that have become integral to our practice as teachers, resulting in empowered educators and transformed students. This new approach has not only led the students and teachers alike in embracing the English language but has also seen an overall improvement in academic performance.”

In 2023, Emmanuel seized another opportunity for professional development with the Secondary Teachers English Language Improvement Rwanda (STELIR). Building upon the foundation laid by the BLF Programme, STELIR aimed to enhance English proficiency among secondary school teachers. Through his involvement, Emmanuel guided teachers accustomed to French and Kinyarwanda in navigating the intricacies of the English language, instilling confidence in both educators and students alike.

Emmanuel perceives English not merely as a language but as a gateway to the global stage, unlocking new opportunities and experiences. As an SBM, he remains steadfast in advocating for the widespread adoption of English within Rwanda’s education system. Emmanuel aspires to further his own education abroad, inspired by the myriad possibilities illuminated by his engagement with British Council programmes.



The BLF Programme introduced innovative teaching techniques that have become integral to our practice as teachers, resulting in empowered educators and transformed students.

Emmanuel Tuyishimire





South Africa



By aligning UK expertise with South Africa's priorities in education, science, skills and culture, we help strengthen institutions, expand opportunity and support inclusive growth.

We work with government, education institutions and sector partners to support long-term collaboration, innovation and inclusive growth. In higher education and science, we help build sustainable partnerships between UK and South African institutions, supporting research, innovation, commercialisation and employability. Through our skills and TVET work, we promote demand-driven training that strengthens colleges and improves employment prospects for young people.

In foundation education, we work with partners to improve the quality of English teaching and learning, while programmes such as Premier Skills use sport to build life skills, employability, inclusion and community resilience. In arts and culture, we connect South African artists and creative organisations with UK and global networks, supporting collaboration, creative practice and access to new markets. Across our work, we help create pathways for young people, educators, researchers and creatives to participate in a more skilled, connected and inclusive society.



Coaching beyond the game

How Premier Skills and the International Enterprise Programme propelled Nomonde's journey from sports enthusiast to educator and community coach.



Nomonde Mashabane, dubbed the ‘Sports Encyclopaedia’ by her siblings, demonstrated a deep passion and extensive knowledge in various sports from a young age. Excelling in sports like football, hockey, swimming and basketball, she aspired to pursue football professionally after high school. After securing a scholarship, Nomonde was able to study sports management, enabling her to pursue her passion for sports while furthering her education. During her internship with the South African Football Association (SAFA), a friend suggested that she apply for the Premier Skills programme, seeing it as a pivotal opportunity for her career growth.

Delivered by the British Council in collaboration with the Premier League, Premier Skills supports

primary school teachers in delivering high-quality physical education and sports. Through the Premier Skills 'Introduction to Community Coaching', Nomonde obtained her South African Football Association (SAFA) D licence in 2014. After earning a level one status in the programme, she was able to run similar programmes within her community. Reflecting on the experience, Nomonde says, 'Premier Skills provided me with extensive knowledge in coaching and becoming a coach educator. It helped me gain a solid understanding of various aspects of the game, supporting other coaches and contributing to the game's overall development.'

Following her success in Premier Skills, Nomonde was offered the career-altering opportunity to participate in the International Enterprise Programme (IEP). Looking back, she regards this programme as pivotal in shaping her career trajectory. The IEP was a collaboration between the British Council and the Premier League. The programme focused on using the global popularity and power of football to support enterprise skills and social entrepreneurial development in South Africa by partnering with local NGOs and Premier Soccer League football clubs.

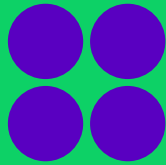
Speaking on the programme's impact, Nomonde reflects, 'I gained insights into various business models

to manage a football club. It shared valuable knowledge that I believe many young people lack in their pursuit of a career in the game, as most aspire only to be on the pitch, overlooking the vast opportunities behind the scenes crucial for the game's advancement.'

Inspired by the knowledge she gained from the IEP, Nomonde transitioned into the education sector. She became a Life Orientation teacher at Knights Preparatory School, where she oversees Physical Education (PE) classes. Nomonde saw this role as a perfect blend of sports and education, allowing her to impart the knowledge and insights gained from the various programmes to the next generation.







‘Premier Skills provided me with extensive knowledge in coaching and becoming a coach educator. It helped me gain a solid understanding of various aspects of the game, supporting other coaches and contributing to the game’s overall development.’

Nomonde Mashabane

The future of fashion

Ntando gives us a breakdown of how Design Futures Lab Programme was a transformative force in the industry.



Ntando Ngwenya leads the esteemed Ntando XV fashion brand, renowned for its artisanal excellence and innovative approach to contemporary fashion. With a firm dedication to craftsmanship and meticulous attention to detail, each garment exudes a unique aesthetic appeal, setting them apart in the fashion landscape. Ntando attributes his success to the unwavering support of his community and the invaluable mentorship of renowned designer David Tlale, who has been instrumental in propelling both Ntando and his brand to prominence.

During his brand's showcase at Africa Fashion International and Johannesburg Fashion Week, Ntando stumbled upon the British Council's Design Future Labs Programme, thanks to a friend's inadvertent recommendation on Instagram. The timing was impeccable as Ntando was already exploring the transformative potential of augmented reality (AR) in fashion.

The Design Future Labs Programme proved to be the ideal platform for his vision. Initiated by the British Council, it supported South African content creators to craft immersive digital narratives focused on

sustainable fashion and design, harnessing the expansive possibilities of extended reality (XR).

The programme enabled Ntando to realise his vision, resulting in the creation of his groundbreaking product, XV Algorhythm. This AR solution seamlessly integrates into social media, allowing clients to virtually experience products before physically accessing them, democratising the fashion experience. XV Algorhythm represents a shift towards sustainable fashion and ethical practices, offering users a seamless journey from conception to experience. Brands can showcase their collections virtually, enabling clients to preview products before physical creation, a revolutionary change in the fashion landscape. Collaborating with Aranda Blankets, Ntando showcased XV Algorhythm's potential, allowing users to immerse themselves in augmented reality via Instagram.



85

Ntando hails the Design Future Labs Programme as a transformative force in the industry, praising its role in fostering technological innovation and collaboration. The programme accelerated XV Algorhythm's development and facilitated Ntando's participation in international showcases, including Creative Africa Nexus (CANEX2022) and Portugal Fashion Week. Looking ahead, Ntando envisions Algorhythm shaping the future of the fashion industry, fostering inclusivity and collaboration among designers worldwide.

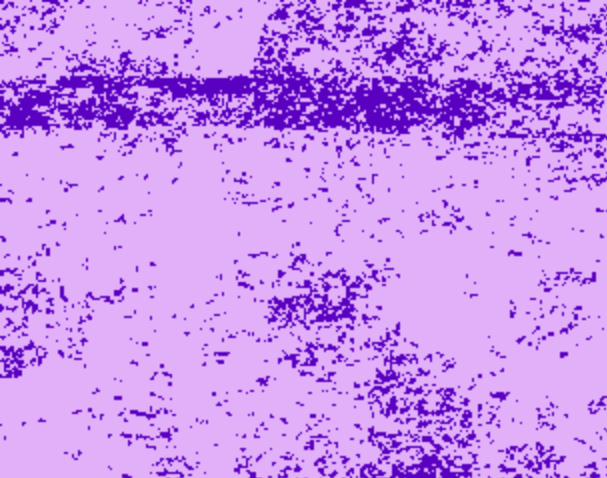
Hector tells us about his experiences going through the Cultural Producers Programme.



Hector Mgiba's journey from rural Mpumalanga Province to Johannesburg is a tale of determination. Growing up in a tranquil village, he aimed for a career in the creative industry. After high school, he moved to Johannesburg, diving into its music scene.

As a recording artist, Hector faced a significant challenge - the lack of platforms to showcase his artistry and connect with audiences. Instead of viewing this as a setback, he saw an opportunity to pivot towards cultural curation. His goal was to create platforms and experiences that would not only benefit himself but also uplift other creatives within the industry. This transformative shift led to the founding of Xquizified Media, a platform dedicated to collaborating with creatives and venues to curate captivating experiences.

**Cultural
curation
through the
power of music**

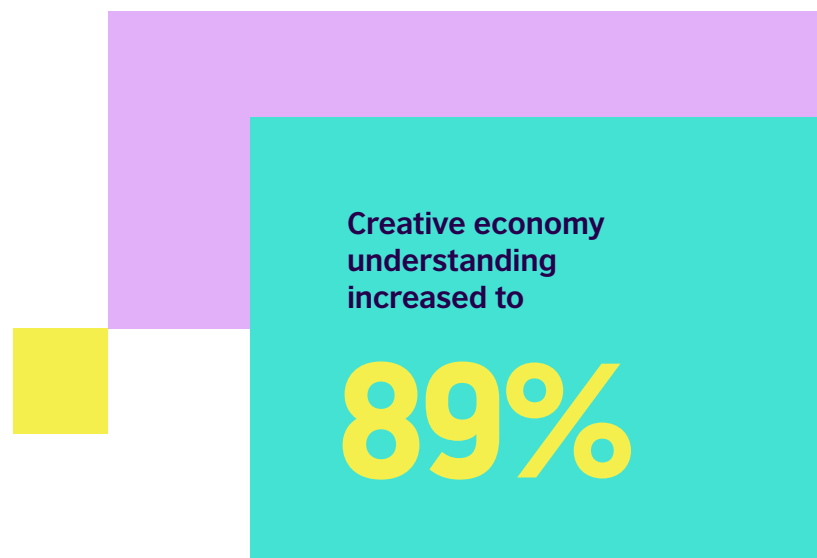


Hector's journey advanced with the Cultural Producers Programme by the British Council. This life-changing experience, designed to support cultural producers with practical industry knowledge, exposed Hector to international facilitators, including experts from renowned global events such as the Manchester Festival. Their insights and global perspectives revolutionised his approach to cultural curation and business positioning within the international market.

The practical knowledge and skills gained from the Cultural Producers Programme opened doors to unprecedented opportunities for Hector and Xquizified Media. Notable highlights include curating experiences for esteemed global dignitaries such as Angela Merkel, Former Chancellor of Germany, and Antony Blinken, United States Secretary of State.

These events involved orchestrating creative art experiences through poetic pieces and performances aligned with the dignitaries' visit themes. Leveraging his programme-acquired expertise, Hector secured international collaborations with prestigious institutions like the Museum of the United Nations and Shade Studios in New York, underscoring his strategic positioning in the global creative market.

Inspired by his journey, Hector aims to guide aspiring youth in the creative industry through his podcast "Thriving Artist 101," reflecting the impact of the Cultural Producers Programme on his commitment to supporting the next generation.



Transformation through teaching

The Connecting Classrooms Programme exposed Ms. Dziba to cutting-edge approaches designed to cultivate analytical reasoning skills among learners.



Ms. Nomfuneko Dziba began her teaching career with ambitions of reaching the top, and after three decades of dedication and learning, she now serves as the Circuit Manager in Eastern Cape, South Africa, overseeing 26 schools. Starting as an English teacher, she progressed through various roles, including head of department and school principal. Her approach to teaching was transformed by the Connecting Classrooms Programme by the British Council during her time as a principal.

The Connecting Classrooms Programme introduced Ms. Dziba to innovative teaching methods focused on nurturing critical thinking in

students. Embracing these approaches, she empowered her students to think creatively, enriching their learning experience. Additionally, the programme provided digital literacy skills, essential for rural schools like hers. Reflecting on her experience, she remarks, 'Gone are the days when teachers were perceived as the sole fount of knowledge. The Connecting Classrooms Programme enlightened us to the idea that students also possess valuable insights.'

Ms. Dziba's implementation of the programme's approaches resulted in tangible outcomes at her school, including the transformation of disused classrooms into a vibrant library. This initiative earned her school the reputation of being the "reading school" within Eastern Cape, highlighting its significant impact on fostering a culture of reading. Her remarkable achievements led to recognition from the Department of Education,

earning her a bursary to pursue a Bachelor's degree in English at Rhodes University.

Undeterred in her pursuit of professional development, Ms. Dziba enrolled in the Instructional Leadership Training by the British Council, which enhanced her leadership skills and prepared her for her current role as Circuit Manager.

After thirty years of dedicated service in the education sector, Ms. Nomfuneko Dziba is preparing to transition to a new chapter. With a wealth of experience and knowledge gleaned from British Council programmes, she plans to establish her consultancy company. Her aim is to extend her impact beyond geographical boundaries, leveraging her expertise to effect positive change not only within the education sector but in broader spheres of influence.



Sudan

For more than seven decades, the British Council has worked with people and institutions in Sudan to expand opportunity through education, skills, culture and international connection. Since the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, our commitment has remained strong, with our operating model redesigned to sustain delivery, support partners and remain connected to communities in exceptionally challenging circumstances.

We now work through remote operations from neighbouring countries, supported by on-the-ground Cluster Coordinators, British Council-trained experts and Sudanese consultants. This model builds on our long-standing networks across several states and enables us to continue supporting education, youth skills development, cultural heritage protection and community resilience.

Education remains central to Sudan's recovery. We continue to support teacher development, school leadership, English language teaching and learning, post-school pathways,

and informal and non-formal education. Our work helps strengthen institutional capacity, improve foundational learning outcomes, and connect education more closely to labour-market needs, with particular attention to young people, girls, young women and vulnerable learners.

Through our skills and employability work, we help young people gain technical, vocational, enterprise and life skills that can support livelihoods, employment and Sudan's longer-term economic recovery. Our cultural heritage work, including support through the Cultural Protection Fund, helps safeguard Sudan's rich and diverse heritage at risk from conflict and climate change, while contributing to social stability, identity and future prosperity.

Across our programmes, we aim to sustain opportunity during conflict, support community resilience and help lay the groundwork for Sudan's long-term recovery and renewal.



The course of Samah Ayoub's life has been deeply influenced by the British Council's presence in Sudan from her earliest years.

Samah Ayoub Hussain Khalifa fondly reminisces about her childhood, during which she stood out among her siblings by finding joy in tinkering with electronics. Unlike her family members, who typically pursued careers in teaching or medicine, Ayoub was determined to chart her own path as an engineer, becoming the first in her family to do so. Encouraged by her parents, who recognised her passion, she embarked on a bachelor's degree in Electronics at

the Sudan University of Science and Technology. She not only made history as the first female engineer in her family, but also excelled academically, graduating at the top of her class.

Armed with an impressive academic background, Ayoub eagerly sought opportunities in the engineering field, but her efforts were met with disappointment. Despite her relentless pursuit and numerous applications, she encountered discrimination from potential employers who doubted her ability to handle the physical demands of engineering due to her gender. Undeterred by this setback, Ayoub refused to let stereotypes define her career. Instead, she embraced a national civil service opportunity at the Sudanese Thermal Power Generation Plant, determined to prove her capabilities. Initially relegated to administrative tasks, Ayoub persevered, dedicating herself to her

**100 girls,
100 future
initiatives**



duties and unyieldingly lobbying for a chance to work in the engineering department. Her persistence paid off when she finally earned a transfer, proving her worth by solving complex engineering challenges and earning the respect of her colleagues.

In her journey to overcome gender barriers in the engineering profession, Ayoub discovered the Connecting Classrooms Programme by the British Council, a fortuitous opportunity that provided her with the skills and knowledge to support other women facing similar challenges. Through this programme, Ayoub gained skills and knowledge in coding, entrepreneurship, and gender equality, topics that resonated deeply with her own experiences. Inspired by her newfound knowledge and driven by a desire to challenge stereotypes, Ayoub founded the '100 Girls - 100 Futures' initiative, aimed at supporting young women to pursue diverse career paths despite societal barriers.

Motivated by the success and knowledge gained through the Connecting Classrooms Programme, Ayoub's initiative has made a tangible impact, providing employment opportunities for girls amidst the turmoil of war in Sudan. Through skills development and mentorship, Ayoub's initiative has enabled young women to navigate and overcome the obstacles hindering their professional growth, offering hope and empowerment in challenging circumstances.



Kids can be coders too

How Eiman equipped children from underprivileged backgrounds with essential coding skills through the Coding for Kids Programme.

Eiman Mohamed, originally trained in Telecommunication Engineering, unexpectedly found herself drawn into the world of development amidst Sudan's revolution in 2016. Engaging in volunteer work during tumultuous times, she intensified her efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading awareness campaigns and distributing sanitisers. In 2021, she continued her dedication by

providing emergency assistance during floods. Her passion for community development led her to establish East Nile Youth Organization (ENYO), a non-profit focused on supporting youth and children through education and developmental initiatives.

Just two months after its inception, Eiman stumbled upon a call for applications from the British Council for the Coding for Kids Programme. With her background in IT and her organisation's mission in mind, she saw an opportunity to make a meaningful impact. Applying for the programme, she advocated for its implementation in Sudan's Eastern Nile region, where her organisation aimed to make a difference. The British Council responded positively, granting her the opportunity to bring the programme to fruition.

Eiman's vision for the Coding for Kids programme was clear: to equip children from underprivileged backgrounds with essential coding skills. Collaborating with public institutions, she made the programme



accessible during both summer breaks and regular school sessions. In some instances, she had to undertake extensive renovations of school labs to equip them with the necessary software and hardware.

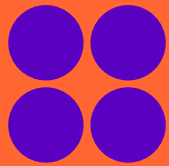
Using Scratch, a beginner-friendly coding platform, the children were introduced to the fundamentals of coding. As part of a culminating project, they were tasked with creating their own games, applying the knowledge and skills acquired during the programme. The impact of the initiative has been profound, reaching 10 schools and benefiting 400 students. Moreover, the programme has empowered trainers, some of whom have secured employment

opportunities beyond Sudan's borders, despite the challenges posed by the ongoing conflicts.

Eiman's journey with the Coding for Kids Programme has been fulfilling, witnessing students excel in coding competitions and reaching out to children with hearing impairments, providing them with often overlooked opportunities. Despite a pause due to ongoing conflict instability, Eiman remains committed to self-improvement, pursuing a master's degree in Digital Development. Her scholarship to study at the University of Manchester was influenced by her practical development experience from the programme. Eiman looks forward to stability in Sudan, aiming to expand the programme's impact and continue fostering positive change in her community.







“They taught slowly and with patience. Even those who never used a computer before can now operate it confidently.”

Learner, Kibiya

Dr. Minni explains his commitment to promoting a peaceful, educated and equitable world.

Embracing peace & sustainable development in Sudan

Dr. Ahmed Minni, Director of Peace and Sustainable Development at Red Sea University in Sudan, has made significant strides in academia and peacebuilding. Under his leadership, the university has collaborated extensively with the British Council, notably through the Enabling University Peace Education Programme. This initiative promotes peace building and dialogue within the academic community, contributing to sustainable development and social cohesion.

The Enabling University Peace Education Programme is crucial for Sudan, a country currently embroiled in conflict. Dr Ahmed explains, “Through the Enabling University Peace Education Programme, students are trained on the concept of peace. We have trained three universities in the Eastern Cluster Universities





of Sudan despite the challenges of the ongoing war. This programme is essential in ensuring participants understand and embrace the concept of peace.”

Despite the myriad challenges, Dr. Ahmed Minni has remained steadfast in Sudan, executing his role with the hope that his efforts will contribute to the much-needed peace. His illustrious career, spanning three decades, has been entirely within Sudan, and he remains hopeful of a brighter future.

Dr. Ahmed Minni’s journey began as an Arabic teacher. His career took a significant turn when he encountered the British Council through the Connecting Classrooms Programme. Inspired by the principles and practices he absorbed, Dr. Minni decided to deepen his understanding of the English language. With unwavering determination, he enrolled in a Bachelor’s Degree programme in English Language, driven by his passion for fostering effective communication and learning.

His engagements with various British Council initiatives further fuelled his enthusiasm for language learning and teaching. Leading programmes such as the Sudan English Programme (SEP) and English

Connects Programme (SE), he immersed himself in the language, eventually pursuing advanced studies culminating in a Master’s Degree and later a PhD in English.

Grateful for the invaluable support from the British Council, Dr. Minni remains committed to leveraging his expertise and experiences to effect positive change. His work continues to inspire future generations in Sudan and beyond, promoting a vision of a peaceful, educated, and equitable world.

In Tanzania, we draw on more than seven decades of presence, having worked in the country since 1950 to build trust, opportunity and enduring connections between Tanzania and the UK.

Today, we support young people, educators, policymakers, academics, creatives and entrepreneurs to gain the skills, confidence, qualifications, networks and platforms they need to shape their futures. Through our work in education, English, Skills, TVET and the Arts, we connect Tanzanian institutions and communities with UK expertise, partnerships and global networks.

Our programmes strengthen education systems, support policy dialogue and promote international collaboration. In skills and TVET, we work with colleges and partners to improve employability through demand-driven training and stronger links with industry. In the Arts and creative economy, we support young artists and creative entrepreneurs to build enterprise, digital and cultural exchange skills. Across all our work, we help create pathways for Tanzania's young people to access opportunity, participate in a changing economy and contribute to a more skilled, connected and inclusive society.

Tanzania



Supporting women in the events industry



A 20-year tradition of showcasing vibrant sounds at the Sauti za Busara Festival augmented by the Amplifying Women's Voices Programme

Every February, the historic streets of Stone Town in Zanzibar come alive with the vibrant sounds of the Sauti za Busara Festival. This renowned event showcases music groups from across the African continent and its diaspora, a tradition that has continued since 2004.

Spanning three days, Sauti za Busara features 40 performances across three stages, attracting over twenty thousand attendees from all corners of the globe. The festival has firmly established itself as a staple in the global music calendar over the past two decades. While it primarily serves as a platform for musicians, it also provides invaluable opportunities for technical personnel in the music industry to hone their skills. However, the festival team noted a significant gender disparity among the technical crew, who were predominantly men. In response, they proposed the Amplifying Women's Voices Programme to the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund.



The Amplifying Women's Voices Programme focused on enabling women by equipping them with the skills needed to become professionals in the events industry.

Safina Juma



Safina Juma, the administrator of Sauti za Busara, explains, 'The Amplifying Women's Voices Programme focused on enabling women by imparting them with the skills needed to become professionals in the events industry. Traditionally, this field has been dominated by men, but through this programme, we equipped more women to contribute significantly to the festival. Our goal is for women to become movers and shakers in the industry, and we have already seen a significant change with women forming a substantial part of our crew. The programme has also facilitated performances by all-women groups like Warriors from the East from Arusha, Tanzania, and numerous other female artists from across the continent. This has had a profound impact, as the festival has intentionally focused on supporting women.'

The Sauti za Busara team lauds the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Fund as a crucial enabler in bridging the gender divide within the music industry. By providing a platform for women to showcase their skills and talents, the festival not only promotes gender equality but also

enhances the overall quality and diversity of the event. The festival is a significant venue for international promoters and festival organisers, offering women the chance to gain contracts and opportunities at other prestigious platforms.



Martin Mhando tells us how the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Programme helped ZIFF deepen its roots and extend its reach as East Africa's most important cinematic platform.

Every June, the ancient streets of Stone Town come alive with something that feels like more than a film festival. The Zanzibar International Film Festival, known across the continent simply as ZIFF, is East Africa's largest multi-disciplinary arts and cultural event. Since its founding in 1997 by celebrated Tanzanian filmmaker Professor Martin Mhando, ZIFF has been doing something quietly remarkable: keeping cinema alive in a region where, by the 1980s, almost every theatre had closed its doors.

'For many years ZIFF was the only space in Zanzibar where you could sit with hundreds of people to enjoy a film,' Mhando reflects. 'In that way, ZIFF has opened society up to global influences.'

But running East Africa's most ambitious cultural festival on a continent where creative infrastructure remains chronically underfunded is no simple task. Support from the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Programme, an EU-funded programme technically supported by the British Council and implemented in partnership with HEVA Fund, provided a critical intervention through capacity building and the



Where African stories come home

ZIFF Equipment Support Project. The grant enabled ZIFF to procure essential screening equipment, strengthen its operational capacity, and expand its reach well beyond Stone Town.

The immediate impact was visible at ZIFF26 in June 2023. The 26th edition of the festival delivered a comprehensive programme of 12 events across four venues in Zanzibar, including film screenings, outreach initiatives, workshops, and masterclasses, attracting 17,493 attendees. On the festival's sidelines, the British Council and HEVA Fund hosted Zanzlgnite, the first in-person regional networking event of the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Programme for Eastern Africa. Over three days, beneficiaries from eight countries joined industry leaders and policymakers for panel sessions focused on audio-visual arts, festival management, cultural tourism, and the future of creative and cultural industries across the region. ZIFF was central to making that exchange possible.

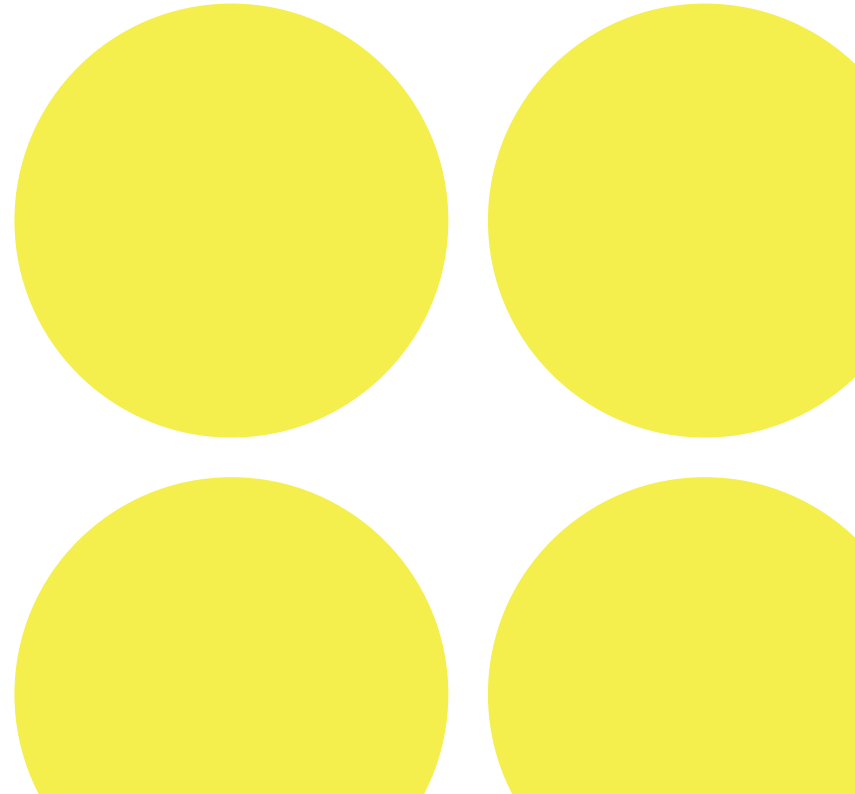
The capacity building and equipment grant unlocked something further still. Between December 2023 and February 2024, ZIFF launched 'ZIFF Goes Mainland,' taking film screenings and cultural events to higher education institutions across Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo, and Morogoro. The programme engaged over 2,305 participants, using films from both Europe and Africa to foster cultural exchange and promote creative diversity far beyond the island's shores.

ZIFF now receives close to 3,000 film submissions annually and screens work to schoolchildren, village communities, and international audiences alike. Tanzania's Minister for

Culture has publicly credited a ZIFF youth programme with first inspiring her own leadership ambitions as a girl of twelve.

'No longer is a festival about a place alone,' Mhando says. 'It is about its creative structures, its sustainability, and its contribution to the multi-coloured garden of world cinema.'

What the ACP-EU Ignite Culture Programme recognised and invested in was not simply a film festival. It was a cultural institution that has spent nearly three decades proving that African stories, told by Africans and celebrated on African soil, belong at the centre of world cinema.





Uganda

In Uganda, we build connections, understanding and trust between Uganda and the UK through education, English, exams, skills, society, arts and culture. We support young people, educators, institutions, creatives and communities to access opportunities, strengthen capability and build global connections. Working with schools, higher education, vocational training, civil society and the creative economy, we

help expand access to international expertise, recognised qualifications, study and career pathways.

Our partnerships strengthen local institutions and create pathways for young people to develop the skills, confidence and networks they need to participate in a more inclusive, skilled and connected society.

The journey not taken

Eric tells us how the Better Migration Management programme gave him the knowledge to protect himself and his community from exploitation.

Eric knows what deception costs a family. His older brother was promised a managerial job in Kampala. What followed was something far darker. Lured through illegal routes, stripped of his national ID and phone, underfed and isolated, his brother was forced to guard a forest alone, with no qualifications, no support, and no way home. When he and others tried to reclaim their documents, they were tortured. Eric's family spent what little they had to bring him back. It was not an isolated case. Many boys in their village had faced the same fate.

'Before, I could have easily fallen into the same trap,' Eric reflects. 'But through the Better Migration Management programme, I've gained knowledge and skills that have completely changed my outlook.'



No one can lie to me the way they did to my brother.'

Supported by the British Council, the Better Migration Management (BMM) programme equips young people in vulnerable communities with the awareness, skills, and tools to protect themselves from exploitation and build sustainable livelihoods. For Eric and his neighbours, the programme addressed what he describes as their community's greatest challenge - not lack of ambition, but lack of knowledge.

The transformation has been practical as well as protective. Eric is now planning to launch a bakery, channelling the skills he gained through the programme into a concrete path forward. The random calls still come with promises of high-paying jobs, targeting anyone who might be unaware. Eric is no longer that person.

But his ambitions extend beyond his own security. Having witnessed first-hand what trafficking does to a family, Eric is determined to use what he has learned to raise awareness in his community, ensuring that the knowledge the programme gave him travels further than his own doorstep.

'I want to do more than just help myself,' he says. 'I want to share the skills I've learned so others don't go through what my brother did.'

+7 million

reached through safe migration
advocacy campaigns

In a village where opportunity has too often arrived wearing the mask of exploitation, Eric represents something the Better Migration Management programme was designed to create, a young person equipped not only to build his own future, but to safeguard others from losing theirs.



Irene tells us how the Social Action Projects (SAP) gave her the skills, voice and purpose to rebuild her life and protect others from the trap she fell into.

**A voice,
a life,
restored**



Irene left university full of ambition. Jobs were scarce, and when a friend in Abu Dhabi mentioned an opening with Fly Emirates, it felt like the opportunity she had been waiting for. She trusted the connection, moved through the process, cleared the airport, and arrived ready to begin. Within hours, everything changed. Her documents were confiscated. She was transferred without explanation to a company forcing young women into prostitution.

Irene refused.

What followed were three of the hardest months of her life. Threatened, displaced from her accommodation and left with nowhere to go, she survived on the streets of Dubai before a stranger took her in. It was, she says, the lowest point she had ever known. But she did not give up. A friend in



Germany advised her to present herself to the courts in Dubai. She did and recovered her documents, received partial compensation, and eventually made her way home to her mother in Inkozi, determined to start again.

That determination found direction when a friend introduced her to the Social Action Projects (SAP), a part of Better Migration Management (BMM). Supported by the British Council, SAP equips young people with skills, awareness and pathways to sustainable livelihoods, precisely what Irene had lacked when she first went looking for work.

‘If only I had known this before,’ she reflects, ‘I might have avoided the nightmare I went through.’

But Irene has found purpose in her experience. When she discovered her cousin was on the verge of being trafficked, she intervened, telling him exactly what to expect, what questions to ask, and

how to protect himself. The knowledge the programme gave her did not stay with her. It travelled.

Since 2021 she has been rebuilding, step by step. The SAP programme has given her skills, restored her confidence, and handed her something she did not have before, a voice.

‘I have experience that can protect others,’ she says. ‘I’m not where I want to be yet. But I’m no longer where I was. And that’s something worth fighting for.’

56,666

people in Uganda reached in person through safe migration advocacy campaigns

From Maasai market to the world

In 2016, while studying in Kenya, Yvonne Ahimbisibwe spent her weekends wandering through Nairobi's vibrant Maasai Market. She was captivated by the handmade brass jewellery, the craftsmanship behind every piece, and the stories each one carried. What began as curiosity soon became a calling.

Being away from home gave her a new appreciation for the richness and diversity of East African cultures. Inspired by the artisans she met and the work she encountered, she began creating jewellery that celebrated African identity through a contemporary lens. That idea became Shwanda Kollection, a Ugandan brand specialising in handcrafted brass jewellery inspired by African authenticity and creativity.

For years, Yvonne built the business with passion and determination. 'The biggest challenge was limited resources and a lack of exposure to wider, more upscale markets,' she says. 'I had the passion

Yvonne Ahimbisibwe tells us how the Creative DNA programme transformed a student-inspired idea into a recognised African brand.

and the vision, but I needed access to opportunities that could help me grow.'

That opportunity came through the British Council's Creative DNA Uganda programme.

For Yvonne, it was more than training, it was a shift



in perspective. One lesson stayed with her above all others: great creativity also needs structure. Shortly after completing the programme, she formally registered and incorporated Shwanda Kollection as a company.

‘I realised that running the business professionally wasn’t just good practice, it was a growth strategy,’ she says.

The impact was soon evident. Through mentorship, grant funding, and industry exposure, sales increased by 25 per cent and the brand secured retail partnerships with Bold in Africa and Sawe Creations. Through more than fifteen Creative DNA-supported showcases and pop-up markets, Yvonne introduced Shwanda Kollection to new audiences across Kampala’s growing premium fashion market.

Bigger stages followed. In 2025, she exhibited during Creative Economy Week in Harare, Zimbabwe and participated in Africa Fashion Week London with support from the British Council.

The international visibility Creative DNA unlocked translated into something unexpected back home. Miss Universe Uganda officially appointed Shwanda Kollection to style contestants for their national photoshoots, a recognition that placed Yvonne’s



handcrafted jewellery at the centre of one of Uganda’s most high-profile platforms. “At this point I knew the brand had reached another level,” she says.

Today, Shwanda Kollection is more visible, more structured, and better positioned for long-term growth than ever before. Yet the heart of the business remains unchanged, every piece of jewellery tells a story of identity, creativity, and pride in African craftsmanship. Through Shwanda Kollection, Yvonne is showing that locally made products can resonate far beyond their place of origin, and that African stories, told with authenticity and confidence, can find audiences around the world.

[Watch video >](#)

96%

of existing enterprises
expanded operations

A few years ago, Katende Godfrey was designing and producing garments from his living room in Kampala. Today, he welcomes clients into IGC Fashion's flagship store in the city centre and leads a growing creative enterprise that has taken Ugandan fashion to international audiences. The journey between those two realities has been shaped by persistence, creativity, and a deep belief that Uganda's heritage belongs at the centre of contemporary fashion.

Drawing inspiration from indigenous materials, Lubugo barkcloth, raffia, and cowrie shells, Katende has built a brand that challenges perceptions of what African fashion can be. His collections combine traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design, celebrating heritage while speaking to new audiences at home and abroad.

The decisive turning point came in 2023 when he joined the Creative DNA programme.

'The British Council partnership gave me exposure that completely changed how I saw my work and my business,' Katende says. 'It helped me position IGC Fashion on a regional and global stage and connect with people who believed in what we were building.'

Weaving Uganda's heritage into opportunity



Katende Godfrey tells us how the Creative DNA programme helped him take IGC Fashion from a living room operation to an internationally recognised creative enterprise.

The doors that opened were significant. Among the collaborations that followed was Woven Worlds, a partnership between IGC Fashion and Salford Slow Fashion in the UK, a project exploring the relationship between traditional textiles, sustainability, and contemporary design, while bringing new international attention to Uganda's barkcloth heritage. His work has since been showcased in London, New York, Johannesburg, Dakar, Cairo, and Nairobi, with further support from the British Council, Prince Claus Fund and the Victoria and Albert Museum's Karun Thakar Fund enabling deeper research and public engagement around indigenous textiles.

Yet some of the work he is most proud of happens closer to home. The IGC Fashion studio now serves as both a creative workspace and a learning hub for emerging designers. Through Fashion Cypher, a community initiative he founded, young people from underserved communities gain practical skills, mentorship, and pathways into creative careers. In Northern Uganda, the programme supports young people with training in sewing, design, and garment production, creating routes to income and self-employment where few existed before.

His annual platform Kwetu Kwanza brings together designers, artists, and communities to explore sustainability through creativity, and a partnership with Nyege Nyege, one of East Africa's largest cultural festivals, is carrying those conversations to even wider audiences.



For Katende, success is not measured only by international showcases. It is measured by the young creatives who discover confidence in their talent, the communities finding new economic opportunities through fashion, and the growing appreciation for Uganda's cultural heritage.

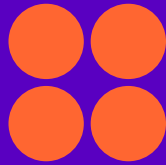
His vision remains unchanged, to prove that Uganda's heritage is not something to be preserved behind glass, but something to be worn, celebrated, and carried confidently into the future.



The British Council partnership gave me exposure that completely changed how I saw my work and my business

Katende Godfrey





“Through the British Council, we’ve been able to call on literally the biggest people we could find in the industry. We would ask the designers who they wanted to meet and we would make sure people like that were in the room. These people had candid, open conversations, and it was good watching brands grow thereafter.”

Nunu Mugyenyi, Managing Director, Bold Woman Fund.



zimbabwe

Through long-term partnerships in education, culture and skills, we strengthen connections between Zimbabwe and the UK while helping people and institutions access opportunity, knowledge and global networks.

We support young people, educators, institutions, creatives and communities to build capability and participate more confidently in a changing world. Our work improves access to quality learning, supports teacher and leadership development, promotes

inclusive education, and strengthens research, policy and academic collaboration.

In arts and culture, working with strategic partners, we connect Zimbabwean creatives with UK and international networks, supporting collaboration, co-creation, creative enterprise and cultural exchange, with a focus on expanding opportunities for women. Through our exams work, we provide access to internationally recognised qualifications that open pathways for study, work and professional growth.





Margaret expounds on how the Scripts and Bars Programme empowered her to grow from debut author to founder of a publishing house.

Margaret Chideme's journey from the construction industry to the world of authorship and publishing is a testament to the transformative power of passion and opportunity. For over a decade, she navigated the complexities of construction, until an inner calling nudged her towards a new horizon in 2021 - the realm of literature. Her debut book, 'First 30,' emerged as an anthology of poems, carefully crafted to chronicle her life's odyssey.

Margaret's literary journey truly unfolded with her participation in the Scripts and Bars Programme (now Music Connects Africa), an accelerator initiative tailored to nurture creatives and transform their art into viable businesses. Selected for the 2022-2023 cohort, Margaret found herself at the precipice of a profound transition. Immersed in a curriculum tailored to her needs, she gleaned invaluable insights into

**Crafting
futures
through
creative
support**

authorship as a commercial enterprise. ‘The programme provided me with the tools to navigate the intricacies of the publishing world,’ she reflects, ‘enabling me to position myself effectively and attract investment.’

A grant received through the Scripts and Bars Programme facilitated the creation of an audiobook version of ‘First 30,’ expanding Margaret’s reach to new audiences. Buoyed by this success, she ventured into the Value Creation Challenge (VCC) Programme - an entrepreneurial boot camp aimed at fostering innovative business ventures. Drawing upon the knowledge garnered from her previous endeavour, Margaret conceived The Lifeline Narrative, a publishing house with a noble mission to support authors to sustainably earn a livelihood through their craft. Her pitch resonated with the judges, securing crucial funding to bring her vision to fruition.

As the founder and driving force behind The Lifeline Narrative, Margaret’s journey took an unexpected turn when she was commissioned by the British Council to conduct research on the African publishing industry, focusing on her native Zimbabwe. This opportunity not only deepened her understanding of the sector but also afforded her a seat at the prestigious London Book Fair, an experience that broadened her horizons and enriched her perspective on the global literary landscape.

Grateful for the opportunities bestowed upon her by the British Council, Margaret remains steadfast in



her commitment to amplifying African voices on the world stage. Armed with newfound knowledge and experience, she aspires to foster a vibrant ecosystem where authors can thrive, and their narratives can resonate with audiences worldwide.

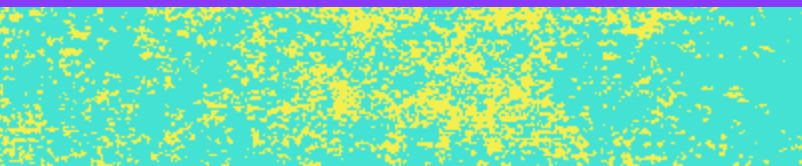
[Watch video >](#)





‘The programme provided me with the tools to navigate the intricacies of the publishing world, enabling me to position myself effectively and attract investment.’

Margaret Chideme



Advocating for gender equity in education



The Instructional Leadership Training equipped Mr. Ndoro to cultivate educational settings that promote gender equity, ensuring equal access and prospects for all students.

Mr. Taungana Blessings Ndoro serves as the Director of Communication at the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe. His role involves communicating policy directives, advocating for educational initiatives, and acting as the ministry's spokesperson. Since participating in the British Council's Instructional Leadership Training in 2021, Taungana has become a fervent advocate of its principles and practices. The programme targets school heads and other education leaders, instilling transformative leadership skills to help them excel in their roles.

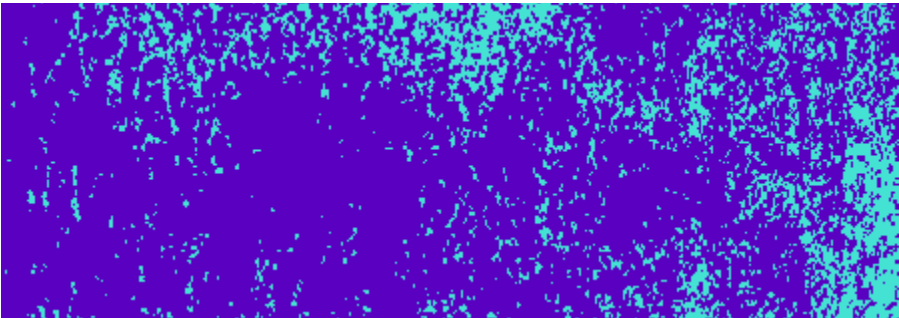
'The Instructional Leadership Training taught me the importance of inclusive leadership,' reflects Taungana. 'A leader is only as effective as their team; no vision can be realised without collective effort. I've not only embraced this philosophy within my team but also championed it among school leaders.' The training's impact has been remarkable, with deputy heads advancing to head positions and current school heads driving positive change within their institutions.

Evidence of the training's success can be seen in the improved performance of schools whose leaders participated. Taungana cites instances where schools achieved a 100% pass rate, a significant improvement from previous pass rates as low as 70%, which he attributes directly to the programme's influence.

Beyond the Instructional Leadership Training, Taungana has also engaged in the Leading Learning for Gender Equality Programme (LL4GE), facilitated by the British Council. This initiative, an extension of the instructional leadership framework, aims to cultivate gender-sensitive school leaders. By addressing stereotypes and promoting gender equality, the training empowers leaders to foster inclusive learning environments where all genders are afforded equal opportunities.

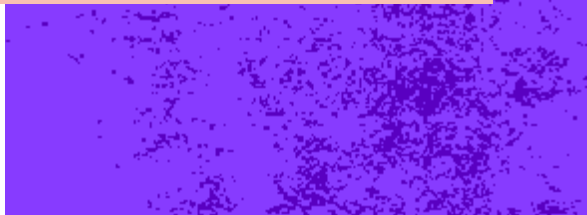
As a result of his participation, Taungana has emerged as a staunch advocate for gender equality within the ministry. Leveraging his role, he champions the development of policies aimed at promoting gender equity and dismantling discriminatory practices. He recognises the pivotal role played by the British Council's programmes in driving positive change within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe.

'The impact of the British Council's programmes on our ministry cannot be overstated,' acknowledges Taungana. 'These initiatives are integral to our government's vision, and I commend the approach taken by the programmes in addressing critical issues in education.'



The impact of the British Council's programmes on our ministry cannot be overstated

Taungana Ndoro



Advancing African stories through storytelling

Rutendo illuminates the role the Scripts and Bars Programme played in supporting the mission to provide a platform for entrepreneurs.



Rutendo Denise Mutsamwira, a Zimbabwean creative entrepreneur, has built a diverse career as a radio presenter, fashion designer, emcee, and now, a spoken word artist. Her journey includes internships with fashion designer David Alford and participation in global fashion shows like Accra, Nairobi, and New York Fashion Weeks. She has also served as Head of Public Relations for Zimbabwe Fashion Week, features editor for Domino magazine, and worked at Microsoft while modelling as a plus-size model.

Reflecting on her experiences, Rutendo acknowledges their role in honing her creative skills, eventually leading her to spoken word. Despite budget constraints limiting her to three tracks, she joined the British Council's Scripts



The programme provided exposure to diverse audiences through events organised by the British Council.

Rutendo Mutsamwira



and Bars Programme (now Music Connects Africa) to further refine her craft and potential.

The Scripts and Bars Programme proved transformative for Rutendo's spoken word journey. She immersed herself in intensive creative enterprise training, benefiting from the expertise of industry professionals who facilitated the programme. 'Through the programme, three significant things happened to me,' Rutendo reflects. 'Firstly, I was able to define and refine my artistic identity, laying a solid foundation for my career as a creative entrepreneur. Secondly, I gained insights into establishing a business structure, enabling me to monetise my work effectively. Lastly, the programme provided exposure to diverse audiences through events organised by the British Council.'

Participating in the programme broadened Rutendo's horizons, leading to international collaborations like contributing spoken word to a project for Repezent Radio in the UK. She also credits the programme for opportunities

such as creating a digital poem for King Charles' Coronation event reception at the British Embassy in Zimbabwe. It pushed her out of her comfort zone, facilitating her transition from a recording to a performing artist, culminating in her first international performance at the Harn Museum, University of Florida. Additionally, the programme provided Rutendo with a grant crucial in producing her EP titled 'Mukundi', which includes tracks that have become dance sensations played at festivals. She delved into indigenous culture, collaborating with Dzimbanhete Art and Culture to incorporate the Mbira, a traditional thumb piano, into her work.

Inspired by her exploration of indigenous culture, Rutendo founded Undeniably African, a communication consultancy aimed at advancing African narratives through storytelling. With ambitions to expand her agency and further her career in spoken word on global platforms, Rutendo is poised to continue championing African stories and traditions.

Imagination beyond borders

Danayi broadened her fashionable horizons through the Creative DNA Africa Programme.

Danayi Madondo is a dynamic creative force, seamlessly merging fashion design, textile artistry, and visual storytelling. Initially, the notion of venturing into fashion design appeared an unreachable dream for Danayi. However, after completing her degree in Film, Television, and Creative Advertising overseas and spending a year in the media industry, she found herself at a crossroads. The burgeoning recognition of African designers on the global stage inspired her to establish Haus of Stone, an independent fashion brand.

Haus of Stone commenced modestly in her parents' cottage, where she honed her creative vision. What began as a humble endeavour swiftly flourished into a thriving business, gaining popularity within her community and exceeding her initial expectations. Despite her undeniable talent and creativity, Danayi soon realised she lacked the skills to manage the growing demands of her enterprise. This led to lost clientele and eventual burnout as she struggled to cope with the rapid expansion.

Amidst these challenges, Danayi stumbled upon the Creative DNA Africa Residency Programme offered by the British Council. This transformative

opportunity transported her to London, where she collaborated with fellow African and international designers. The residency broadened her horizons, exposing her to diverse cultures and perspectives within the fashion industry. It instilled in her a global mindset and a vision to establish an internationally recognised brand.

Participation in the Creative DNA Africa Residency Programme culminated in Haus of Stone's debut at London Fashion Week, propelling the brand onto the global stage. This milestone was swiftly followed by

66%

**of delivery partners
were female-led**

another Creative DNA @CANEX Showcase programme, which unlocked even more opportunities. Haus of Stone was chosen to exhibit at the Intra Africa Trade Fair (IATF2023) in Egypt, expanding its reach to new markets and audiences. Danayi reflects, 'The experiences through the Creative DNA Africa programmes were invaluable as they gave me insights into positioning my brand globally.'

Presently, Danayi is in the process of repositioning Haus of Stone to further elevate its profile as an international brand. This strategic shift is informed by the knowledge and exposure gained through her participation in the British Council programmes.

[Watch video >](#)



Gilmore Qhawe Khumalo tells us how the Culture Responds programme helped him transform Zimbabwe's cultural memory into a living, wearable archive.

**Wearing
heritage
forward**

Across Zimbabwe, cultural knowledge is disappearing one generation at a time. Gilmore Qhawe Khumalo found a way of preserving it through fashion. As the founder of Paper Bag Africa, a creative enterprise at the intersection of fashion, research, and African heritage preservation, Gilmore has spent his career asking what it means to truly honour heritage rather than merely borrow from it.

That question became the foundation of I Wear My Culture, a project supported by the British Council through its Culture Responds programme. Launched in 2022, the initiative brought together 22 emerging designers from 14 ethnic communities across Zimbabwe and the UK. Each designer was placed in a community outside their own background, learning



directly from elders about colour, beadwork, materials, motifs, and the deeper meanings carried in everyday dress.

‘We were not asking designers to reproduce tradition as costume,’ Gilmore explains. ‘We were asking them to understand it, sit with it, and then create from that understanding.’

The results were remarkable. The project produced 22 contemporary garments rooted in genuine cultural research, alongside a 65-minute documentary, a fashion film, a lookbook, and a rich photographic archive. It connected young creatives with historians, translators, photographers, and cultural authorities, building an ecosystem around the work rather than a one-off showcase.

For the designers, the most lasting impact was methodological. By embedding research into their creative process, they learned to move beyond surface-level inspiration, exploring why certain colours carry meaning, how beadwork communicates status and spirituality, and how dress can hold memory, identity, and belonging across generations.

The project’s reach has extended well beyond Zimbabwe’s borders. The film has received recognition at the International Tourism Film Festival

Africa and La Bohème Cinema in Russia, demonstrating that locally rooted cultural knowledge, handled with seriousness and creative ambition, can travel globally without losing its integrity.

Through continued showcases in Harare, Bulawayo and Durban, I Wear My Culture has given emerging designers a public stage to present research-led collections and given audiences a new way to encounter Zimbabwe’s cultural diversity. Not preserved behind glass, but embodied, styled, and worn forward into the future.

Watch video >



Kim Makumbe tells us how the Music Connects Africa programme gave her the platform, production support, and distribution reach to announce herself to the continent.

Zimbabwe's music ecosystem has never lacked talent. What it has often lacked is infrastructure - the production resources, distribution networks, and market access that turn a gifted artist into a sustainable career. For Kim Makumbe, a vocalist and songwriter from Zimbabwe, that gap was real and

**One song
at a time**

familiar. Until the Music Connects Africa programme changed the equation.

Selected as one of 100 creatives to participate in the initiative, formerly known as Scripts and Bars and supported by the British Council, Kim received the financial and technical backing needed to produce and release her single 'Body,' complete with a professionally directed music video. For the first time, her work reached major global streaming platforms, putting her voice in front of audiences far beyond Zimbabwe's borders.

The investment paid off swiftly. In March 2023, Trace Africa playlisted the 'Body' video, a significant milestone for any African artist seeking continental recognition. Her momentum continued when she was featured on 'Mashoko,' a standout track on Zimbabwean music icon ExQ's album Enoch, cementing her position among the country's most compelling rising voices.

The profile that followed opened doors. Kim has since performed on some of Zimbabwe's most prominent stages, including Unplugged Zimbabwe and the Stanbic Jacaranda Music Festival, building a loyal fan base and the kind of live experience that sustains a career beyond a single release.

Kim's journey reflects what the Music Connects Africa programme was designed to make possible. Since 2022, the initiative has supported just under 200 emerging artists and music



professionals across the continent, helping them monetise their work, grow their creative enterprises, and contribute to a wider music economy.

For Kim Makumbe, it began with one song. What it unlocked was a future.

[Watch video >](#)

72%

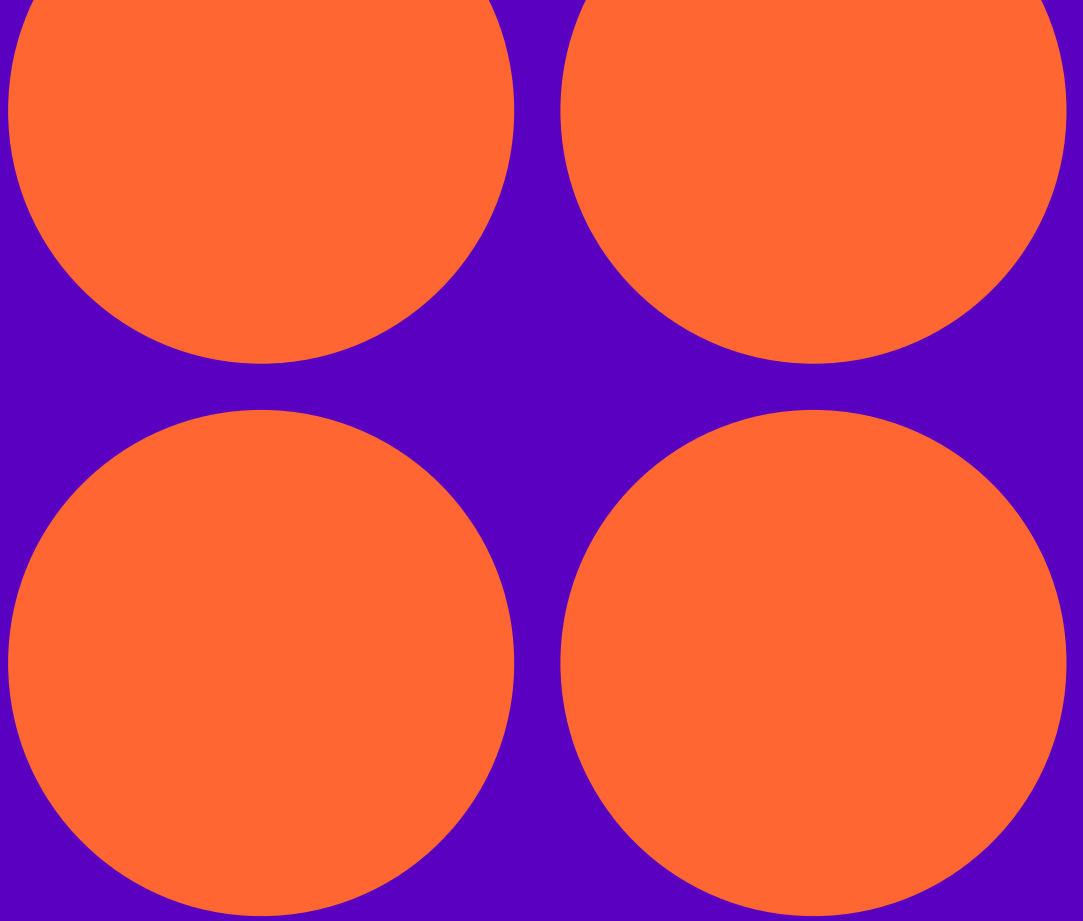
**developed new
products or services**

Looking ahead

The young people in these stories did not wait for permission to dream boldly. They found a teacher, a grant, a mentor, a platform, and built from there, often through partnerships that connected them to the UK and to a wider network of regional and international collaborators. That is the model the British Council will keep building across Sub-Saharan Africa: foundational learning and teacher development that strengthens systems from the ground up, skills and employability pathways that help young people follow positive trajectories of their own choosing, and creative enterprise support grounded in sustainable, equitable international partnership that helps artists and creative businesses grow, compete, and thrive.

Forging ahead, we will keep investing in increased agency and voice for women, girls and marginalised communities, in cohesion and trust between communities and cultures, and in the partnerships with the UK and a growing community of local and international institutions that allow talent, ideas and trust to travel in all directions. Heritage will continue to be protected as something lived, worn, performed and carried forward. The next chapter is already being written by young people across the continent who are ready to lead it.





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