

The Missing Pillar: Culture's Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

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The Missing Pillar - Culture's Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals highlights the importance of culture to the UN's Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides an overview of the main frameworks and institutions that currently engage with the SDGs, analyses the SDGs through a cultural lens, offers examples of relevant British Council programmes, and sets out recommendations for the arts and culture sector to demonstrate the value of arts and culture to sustainable development. This report is a summary of the research and mapping carried out by Nordicity on behalf of the British Council,¹ drawing upon desk research and interviews with British Council staff in consultation with three external advisors.² The findings of this report are of particular interest to policymakers, public bodies, cultural organisations, international development organisations, and local authorities. It can inform policies, programme development and delivery, funding mechanisms, research and evidence gathering and contribute to strengthening the cultural sector in the sustainable development agenda. The British Council plans to carry out a follow up research exercise in the near future to explore the progress made and the evidence to support culture's contribution to the SDGs.

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

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

Section I - Culture and Sustainable Development: a literature review In order to provide baseline evidence on culture's contribution to the UN SDGs, Nordicity carried out a robust review of international literature by academic institutions and cultural organisations, including the British Council. The literature describes how culture can play a powerful role in working towards the SDGs, directly and indirectly, with a focus on contributing to positive social and economic outcomes via education, protecting and promoting tangible and intangible heritage, as well as digital engagement and technologies. **Section II - Analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals through the British Council programmes** The report examines the relevant goals, targets and indicators and their correlation with culture, based on an analysis of the British Council's programmes around the world. The purpose of this analysis was to identify how the British Council and the wider cultural sector responds to specific goals through a cultural lens and the benefit of this to achieve the given goals, targets and indicators. All SDGs and their associated targets and indicators were reviewed to identify which ones could be seen to be most relevant to arts and culture. A formal mapping exercise was then conducted in which 15 British Council programmes were analysed and mapped to specific SDG goals, targets and indicators. In addition to programmes, the research also presented a list of themes where culture contributes to the SDGs including education, cultural heritage, positive social outcomes, technology, and gender.

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

analysed responds to more than one SDG in line with their cross-cutting nature.

Introduction 8 Section III - Recommendations The report outlines recommendations for how cultural contributions towards sustainable development could be captured - and increased - more effectively. Overall, nine recommendations emerged from the research and analysis for incorporating the SDGs into arts and culture programmes and measuring culture's contribution to the SDGs. These recommendations are both relevant to the British Council and to the wider sector, and have been collated and summarised in the report.

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