



ACTIVE CITIZENS

Globally connected,
locally engaged.



2016 – 2017
www.britishcouncil.org/active-citizens

WELCOME ...



In today's interdependent world, positive connections between different cultures and communities are more important than ever. Active Citizens is about building trust, within and between communities. We do this by supporting people who want to take action on local and global issues, giving them the ability to mobilise others, create more inclusive and resilient societies, and pave the way for stronger international partnerships in the future.

The idea of resilience was embodied by a group of inspirational young Active Citizens I met at the One Young World Summit in Colombia. They were delivering social action projects to support peace and reconciliation in communities affected by more than 50 years of conflict. It's a special moment to know that young people trained through Active Citizens are now the next generation of role models working towards a lasting culture of peace.

In Bangladesh, I met another group of inspiring Active Citizens who were taking the lead on creating positive change in their communities across a range of issues, from environmental protection to promoting women's rights. It was again inspiring to see them seize the opportunity to make a difference, with Active Citizens being the catalyst that helps them address issues that matter within their own communities, and to communities the world over.

Active Citizens has always struck me as an empowering experience. It gives people the opportunity to take the lead in making a positive difference — for themselves, for their community and for the world. I truly believe the one thing that connects all Active Citizens, no matter their background, is the belief that they can make real positive change happen. And that belief is an essential ingredient to take their ideas from spark to social action.

We've trained 55,000 Active Citizens in the last year, which is a significant achievement. It means a whole new generation of people with the opportunity and the means to go on and change their world for the better. And I am so proud to be a part of all of those journeys.

This report contains exceptional stories of Active Citizens around the world, from the UK to Tunisia. They capture the diversity of impact the programme can have on different people and communities, and I hope you are as inspired by them as I am.

Sir Ciarán Devane,
Chief Executive,
British Council.



Image © Frank Noon

ACTIVE CITIZENS AT A GLANCE

**1 GLOBAL PROGRAMME
CONNECTING OVER
50 COUNTRIES AND MORE THAN
693 PARTNERS ORGANISATIONS
WHO HAVE TRAINED
6,263 FACILITATORS
WHO IN TURN HAVE TRAINED
210,015 ACTIVE CITIZENS
HELPING THEM LAUNCH
7,854 SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS
TO BENEFIT COMMUNITIES
WORLDWIDE.**

As of April 2017

HOW ACTIVE CITIZENS WORKS

The British Council's Active Citizens programme has provided hundreds of thousands of people worldwide with the social leadership skills to address some of the big social challenges of the 21st century.

The Active Citizens vision

Active Citizens builds trust within and between communities by supporting people to take action on issues they care about. It connects people locally and globally, developing their knowledge and skills to build fairer and more resilient societies.

The learning journey

At the heart of the programme is the Active Citizens 'learning journey', which is adapted to suit the needs of different audiences and communities. This learning journey consists of four core modules with a clear set of learning outcomes.

How it works



A global network of **partners** — trusted organisations and institutions — are responsible for delivering the programme locally.



Partners recruit **facilitators** to attend Active Citizens training. Facilitators have experience in connecting and inspiring the community to learn, share and take action together.



Facilitators use the learning journey to train local participants. These **Active Citizens** develop new skills, knowledge and motivation to work with their communities, building trust and taking meaningful social action.



Active Citizens communities **connect globally** through workshops, study visits, partner networking, online resources and social media. They share experiences, build skills and generate ideas for social action.

Reaching diverse audiences

Since 2009, Active Citizens has continued to be adapted to meet the needs of different individuals and diverse communities. There have been successful examples of thematic innovation building on Active Citizens core content across social enterprise, youth, the arts, sport and mainstreaming gender and disability. Active Citizens content is now available through a digital toolkit, enabling facilitators to search for and create activities to build interactive workshops online.

As an adaptive programme, Active Citizens can work at scale through a variety of funding models and as a key component of wider initiatives. New partners and funders are being engaged to increase reach across the globe, including civil society organisations, social enterprises, arts institutions, local and national governance structures and educational institutions.

THE LEARNING JOURNEY OF AN ACTIVE CITIZEN

Active Citizens is structured around a learning journey, referred to as 'the river', which starts by building self-awareness and confidence and culminates in the planning and delivery of social action.

The river

The river flows along four stages, and participants can stop at, and revisit, these stages as required throughout their journey.

Me

Understanding ourselves: improving self-awareness and confidence; valuing different perspectives.

Me and you

Building relationships with others: learning how to use dialogue as a tool for building empathy, trust and understanding.

We

Improving understanding of communities: developing an understanding of how the community 'works'; learning how to identify interventions for addressing community issues and improving the motivation to act.

Social action

Planning a social action project in the community: this could be something new or it could build on an existing initiative; delivering the social action using improved social responsibility and leadership skills.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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I FEEL I WAS ABLE TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MY COUNTRY.

Active Citizen, Egypt

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Image © Jasmine Foundation

Partnering with civil society, schools, universities and government ministries, Active Citizens helps to deepen trust and understanding within and between communities in the Middle East and North Africa.

Through diverse social action, focusing on youth, gender, refugees and disabilities, Active Citizens continue to support communities in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Morocco and Iraq, and are reaching new communities in Yemen, Tunisia and Libya. Their work helps to empower women to take an active role in political life, build hope in conflict-affected areas, and give young people a platform to discuss the future development of their communities.



Empowering women to take an active role in political life

As part of the Women Participating in Public Life programme in Jordan, more than 900 Active Citizens and 1,000 youth volunteers developed social action projects to support women to gain access to parliament.

Set up to give women the power to make a difference in their local communities, Women Participating in Public Life aims to address low representation of women in parliament and other decision-making positions in society. It uses the Active Citizens learning journey to help participants build their confidence, value difference and deliver social action.

In the run up to the 2016 general election, the She Parliamentarian national advocacy campaign grew out of the programme as a way of encouraging local communities to vote for female candidates. Active Citizens engaged young volunteers across the country through social action projects to boost community support for female candidates. A key approach was changing perceptions about the role of women in the political sphere, which are based on traditional social attitudes about their role in society.

The results were significant, with five competitive seats being won by women, alongside the established quota, taking the total of elected women to 20 — representing the highest percentage of women members since 1989. Many candidates were part of social action projects or had participated in Active Citizens.

One such candidate is Sabah Al Shu'aar, who had run for parliament on three previous occasions, each time receiving just 300 votes. She wasn't planning to run in 2016 until she was encouraged to do so through a social action project in her area.

From one of the poorest and most marginalised communities in Jordan, she joined a social action project started by young women in her community to raise awareness about the ability of women to take a proactive role in parliament. The project worked hard to win over the influential community leaders and convince them to choose a woman to stand for parliament. Al Shu'aar was given a chance, which led to her winning the election with 6,785 votes — an unprecedented result in the village's history.

'Women can survive in tough circumstances. They are capable of fighting and standing. Do not hesitate to go for it,' she says.

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I DIDN'T HAVE THE WILL TO RUN FOR A FOURTH TIME. THE SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT ENCOURAGED ME TO RUN BECAUSE IT SUPPORTED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AND PARLIAMENT.

Active Citizen, Jordan

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Building hope during conflict

The idea behind Mobaderoon, Arabic for the 'initiative takers', was born back in 2009 during Active Citizens training in Syria. The aim was to promote peace by building trust and understanding within and between communities across the country.

Eight years later, Mobaderoon is now a network of over 5,000 activists and one of the most respected non-government organisations in Syria. Working through its network of community leaders, Mobaderoon has supported more than 100 social action projects working to build community resilience, tolerance and skills for young people.

One such project is Life Street, which has helped to improve the life chances of 250 vulnerable street children in seven communities. It brings children together in public spaces to take part in creative activities focusing on life skills, literacy, self-protection and community values. The initiative is not only giving children who would normally spend their time begging or working a valuable learning opportunity, but is garnering community involvement by including local shop owners and workers as volunteers.

As the conflict in Syria continues, Mobaderoon continues to work to connect like-minded individuals and organisations in order to strengthen their network and contribute to positive change in more communities.

“
THE TUNISIAN WAY OF 'YES WE CAN' AND 'ACTS NOT WORDS' HAS BECOME OUR MOTTO, AND WE WILL DO EVERYTHING TO ANCHOR THIS CULTURE IN THE FUTURE GENERATIONS.
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Active Citizen, Tunisia



Image © Jasmine Foundation

Strengthening community participation in Tunisia

In Tunisia, Active Citizens helped 300 young people gain the skills and awareness to become the bearers of change in their communities. Their resulting social action projects have reached more than 2,000 people, helping to strengthen citizenship and mobilise their communities to address key problems.

Iheb, from the Governorate of Bizerte, is strengthening social cohesion and youth participation in his community by reappropriating public spaces for cultural and sports events, including the transformation of a burned-out bus into a public library on wheels.

Like many, Active Citizens training has given him a renewed sense of responsibility, self-confidence and perseverance, as well as a sense that collective agency can lead to real change. *'With these programmes, we are convinced it is possible to move mountains,'* he says.

Najda, from the Governorate of Medenine, is helping young people understand the harmful effects of addictive substances. Through communications and leadership training, she is also encouraging young people's participation in local life.

'This programme has allowed us to understand the importance of the culture of citizenship and citizen engagement, in particular, critical and creative thought, the resolution of conflicts, social inclusion, the sharing of social responsibilities and societal dialogue,' she says.



Image © Jasmine Foundation



Social action showcase: Cam Yama Kan

A group of Active Citizens in Egypt participated in a project to give more young people a platform to present their ideas for addressing problems within their local communities.

'We wanted to create a shift in how older generations perceive young people, to let them see that young people can contribute to shaping the future policies of their country,' says Active Citizens facilitator Mohamed Kadry, from Think Tank Development Solutions.

Active Citizens training gave the young people a greater understanding of how to identify social issues in their communities, including who is affected, current efforts to address the issues and possible solutions.

They then worked to analyse existing policies and draft new policy proposals to address the issues they had identified, including slum areas, education and waste management, and created videos to raise awareness of their proposals on social media.

The culmination of the young people's work was the opportunity to present their proposals to groups of representatives from the private sector, civil society and government at a two-day event.

Some of the recommendations presented are now being implemented by non-governmental organisations and companies in the private sector, and the project has helped to change the perceptions of key decision makers about the abilities of young people.

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‘WHEN I SAW THE OLDER PEOPLE ACTIVELY LISTENING TO THE POLICY IDEAS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DEEP APPRECIATION AND RESPECT, I REALISED IT WAS THE OPPORTUNITY THESE YOUNG PEOPLE NEEDED TO SHOW THEY ARE AN EFFECTIVE PARTNER IN THEIR COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT.’
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Active Citizens facilitator, Egypt

SOUTH ASIA

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ACTIVE CITIZENS ARE ONE MOTIVATED FORCE, TRAINED TO BECOME LIFELONG AGENTS OF CHANGE. THEY INSPIRE COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES, FOSTERING A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND BRINGING SYSTEMIC CHANGE.

Active Citizens facilitator, Pakistan

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Across Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India, Active Citizens is partnering with civil society organisations, government ministries, schools and universities to engage local volunteers to address social issues and create positive change.

Between 2016 and 2017, more than 25,000 Active Citizens were trained across the region. They are now helping to inspire new generations of young change agents, address low school enrolment in marginalised communities, boost social enterprise and promote gender rights.

Long-lasting partnerships built through the programme have led to Active Citizens being integrated into university curricula across South Asia and are paving the way for new collaboration opportunities.

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FEMALE STUDENTS FEEL EMPOWERED TO GET UP AND SPEAK IN ACTIVE CITIZENS CLASS, MORE THAN ANY OTHER CLASS.

Senior lecturer and Active Citizens facilitator, Sri Lanka

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Integrating Active Citizens in universities across South Asia

After six fruitful years of partnership working between Active Citizens and civil society organisations across Pakistan, where 65,000 young people were engaged as leaders and volunteers, a new partnership with Pakistan's Higher Education Commission in 2015 aimed to build on this impact for the future.

The collaboration developed an innovative approach to deliver the Active Citizens methodology, by integrating it into the higher education curriculum at universities. In this way, students could be given a platform to participate effectively in social action and take up their role as community leaders.

In Pakistan, Active Citizens has become an integral part of university learning programmes, training more than 7,000 students and 600 faculty members, and generating over 800 social action projects. The unique approach has since been adopted across South Asia, providing opportunities for more students, lecturers and communities.

In Sri Lanka, the model has so far supported more than 1,000 students to take the lead on addressing key issues in their communities. As well as giving



Image © Break Free: Women's reconstruction of Self

students a greater understanding of the value of citizenship and community engagement, Active Citizens is contributing to an improved learning environment for students.

'The overall number of attendees in the classrooms has increased, and that's because of the non-threatening environment, which is conducive for learning and contributing. Student participation has improved a great deal due to the skills gained through Active Citizens,' says Suranga Jayasena, a senior lecturer at the University of Moratuwa.

Active Citizens is also helping to build greater trust and understanding between different communities, leading to new relationships. Active Citizens facilitators from the University of Ruhuna and the University of Jaffna are helping to pave the way for new collaborative relationships between the two institutions, bringing together students and lecturers from the Sinhala and Tamil ethnic groups.

'It was a wonderful initiative between the two universities, bridging the gap of ethnic, religious differences. This was my first visit to the Southern Province, and I brought back fond memories of joint working, sharing knowledge and engaging with the students there,' says Suvanthini T Shanmugaratnam, a lecturer at the University of Jaffna.

Empowering a new generation of positive change agents

In Bangladesh, the PRODIGY programme has made a significant difference to the way communities engage with local government, helping to build trust and strengthen citizen-government relationships.

As PRODIGY enters its second phase, it will build on the impact of its 540 youth leaders, who have reached more than 30,000 people in Bangladeshi communities through volunteer activities designed to increase civic engagement and promote inclusion and peace.

Thanks to Active Citizens training, these youth leaders have all been equipped with the knowledge and skills to engage communities and advocate for transparency, accountability and inclusivity from local government.

Their impact has seen an increase in the awareness of community members about their rights and access to government services, and they have inspired a further 1,200 young people to take up social action initiatives of their own.

Many of PRODIGY's youth leaders have also participated in local government internships, giving them the opportunity to represent different voices and new perspectives.

Through its second phase, PRODIGY aims to enhance the skills of existing youth leaders in the areas of tolerance, pluralism, freedom of expression and social cohesion, while also training 360 more young people to become agents of positive social change.

Active Citizens inspires youth across India

In India, Active Citizens has helped to equip young people with the skills and knowledge to become successful partners for development in a country where more than 27 per cent of the population is aged between 15 and 24.

As part of an Active Citizens partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, university students have gained a greater understanding of community engagement and the concept of responsible citizenship.

After a successful pilot, where faculty members trained as Active Citizens facilitators inspired 262 students to develop social action projects in their communities, young people at more than 20 universities are now being supported through cascaded training involving more than 40 facilitators.

Active Citizens social action projects have mobilised community action to reappropriate public spaces, raise awareness of safety and health issues, and offer educational opportunities for women and children.

An innovative project in Kerala has created a digital bank of publications in the Malayalam language, which has been accessed by over 10,000 visually impaired people. Through the project, Active Citizens are also volunteering as scribes for visually impaired people sitting employment exams and as companions to help them travel.

Through these projects, young Active Citizens have shown a desire to take the lead in creating positive change for the future of their country.

Image © Christopher Symes

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[THESE] VOLUNTEERS, THE AMBASSADORS OF EDUCATION, PLAY THE KEY ROLE OF CREATING AWARENESS AND MOBILISING COMMUNITIES TO TAKE OWNERSHIP AROUND A CHILD'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND ENSURING NOBODY'S CHILD IS OUT OF SCHOOL IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

Mr Jam Mehtab Dahar, Minister for Education and Literacy, Sindh

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Social action showcase: ILMPOSSIBLE: Take a Child to School

In 2011, a group of Active Citizens in Pakistan started a social action project to promote the value of education in communities and get children back into school. Little did they know that through the power of volunteerism, the project would spread to 65 districts across the country and help to enrol 225,000 marginalised children.

The ILMPOSSIBLE campaign was set up to tackle the issue of low school enrolment in Pakistan, where 22.6 million children are out of school. The project encouraged community ownership of the issue by training young volunteers to actively enrol children into schools.

The success of this approach, combined with the spirit of volunteerism in local communities, led to the campaign becoming a national programme in 2014. Set up by the British Council and Educate a Child, it became known as ILMPOSSIBLE: Take a Child to School.

Since then, more than 15,000 young volunteers have been trained in the Active Citizens learning journey, equipping them with the skills to mobilise support and leverage networks to boost enrolment.

Thanks to their Active Citizens training, these volunteers are able to take up the cause of education in their own communities, working with schools, teachers, parents and networks to raise awareness of the importance of education and tackle any barriers to access.

As well as enrolling 225,000 out of school boys and girls, they have been at the heart of other significant achievements, including advocating for schools to be reopened — or even building a new school — and freeing children from bonded labour.

ILMPOSSIBLE: Take a Child to School is testament to the strength of active citizenship and how it empowers young people and marginalised communities to be at the forefront of building a better future.

GLOBALY CONNECTED

Across the world, Active Citizens connect with each other to learn, share, collaborate and value difference. These global connections can happen through International Study Visits (ISVs), where Active Citizens come together to inspire and be inspired by social action; global events, where Active Citizens showcase their stories of impact; and international workshops, where participants develop their skills and knowledge. Every Active Citizen is also part of an online global community.

ISVs

ISVs bring Active Citizens together from all corners of the world to share experiences, strengthen relationships, and develop opportunities for collaboration. As representatives of their communities, they gain new ideas and inspiration for social action, which they take back to share and develop with people in their communities. These face-to-face opportunities increase participants' understanding of the power of global connections and can be the starting point for developing new international networks for



Image © Christopher Symes

In the UK ...

Active Citizens from 13 countries were hosted by partner organisations in the UK during two ISVs, where they discovered new approaches to address social cohesion, unemployment and inclusion.

'This visit expanded my mind and my vision. I was amazed by the strength of people in the UK — how much they care about their culture, people and community development. It made me think about how to strengthen my local communities from a different perspective.' Active Citizen, Bangladesh

Image © Michael Unwin



Image © Ed Sara-Kennedy

In Egypt ...

Active Citizens from seven countries visited local communities to see how social action projects are supporting people and tackling issues such as exclusion, illiteracy amongst women and unemployment amongst girls in rural areas. During the visit, the Active Citizens used the opportunity to build new networks to support future social action.

In Pakistan ...

Active Citizens from five countries got the chance to experience the diversity of social action being delivered across different communities. They were particularly moved by the work of volunteers in the Mangtawala community, who are tackling low school enrolment with minimal resources.

'The visit has changed my perspective on Pakistan, and now I have positive first-hand experiences to share.' Active Citizen, UK

'Visits by Active Citizens from around the world help us to learn from their diverse experiences.' Active Citizen, Pakistan

In the USA ...

Active Citizens took part in a themed ISV, which focused on the cultural preservation of the Western Shoshone Tribe in Nevada. The international Active Citizens witnessed how their local counterparts are working hard to preserve their native language for future generations and discovered new approaches for intergenerational learning.

Image © Ed Sara-Kennedy

International Facilitator Development Workshops

A total of 76 Active Citizens facilitators from 21 countries got the opportunity to develop their facilitation skills and share experiences and best practice at two international workshops in the UK and Ukraine. These facilitators will go on to reach an estimated 2,200 people through cascaded training in communities.

Image © Yaroslav Belinskyi





Image © Helen Clifton

Global events

Participating in international events is a way for Active Citizens to share the impact of their achievements and provides a global platform to gain exposure for their projects, organisations and communities.

Merit360, USA

Ten Active Citizens had an incredible opportunity to be a part of 360 young change makers from 85 countries to develop solutions for a safer, fairer and more prosperous world by 2030. At the Merit360 summit, hosted by World Merit, a global network of people tackling the world's most pressing issues, the young Active Citizens worked on action plans to address the Sustainable Development Goals and inspire action to create positive change. They were supported by other Active Citizens online, who shared their own solutions and ideas.

Social Enterprise World Forum, Hong Kong

A group of Active Citizens got the chance to showcase the success and impact of the social enterprises they had developed and strengthened through the programme in front of a global audience, including ministers and social enterprise leaders. The experience was also a chance to build their knowledge and skills, gain a greater understanding of the policy environment and make new connections for future collaboration.

The value of global connections

Hear how participating in ISVs in 2015 and 2016 has changed the lives of these Active Citizens ...

'After developing a positive working relationship with my ISV host organisations in the UK, I was offered and completed a one month internship in London. This contributed successfully to my personal and professional goals. The ISV enabled me to move my career forward!' Active Citizen, Morocco

'Participating in Active Citizens and an ISV was the start of a bigger push towards social action in my career. I am now training to be a teacher and working in a school teaching English. It gave me the skills and experience to move into a full-time career in education.' Active Citizen, UK

'Since the ISV in Morocco, my outlook on life has significantly changed. My passion for helping those less fortunate now has a global perspective. I've built lasting connections with an organisation we visited on the ISV. I go back twice a year to support them with their work and connect with other Active Citizens whom I'm helping to build a youth centre.' Active Citizen, UK

'When change makers from different parts of the world have the chance to come together, share experiences and inspire each other, then change becomes inevitable. It's a powerful moment, and you hold on to that power for a long time.' Active Citizen, Bangladesh

ACTIVE CITIZENS IN ACTION COMPETITION

To showcase the real difference Active Citizens worldwide are making in their communities, the inaugural Active Citizens in Action competition was launched in 2017 to showcase the year's most impactful social action projects.

Public voting

Active Citizens from across the globe entered, and five shortlisted projects were then shared on Facebook, ready for public voting. Across three days, more than 15,000 votes were cast.

A photo finish

With just hours to go before the voting deadline, the I am an Iraqi woman, so I am ... project from Iraq overtook the Happy Day project from Bangladesh to become the winner of the first ever Active Citizens in Action competition.

Active Citizens in Action

Read about each of the five shortlisted social action projects from the 2017 Active Citizens in Action competition:

I am an Iraqi woman, so I am ...

Wanting to give women the chance to voice their opinion about their role in society, Active Citizens in Baghdad, Iraq, displayed a large whiteboard and invited passers-by to complete the sentence 'I am an Iraqi woman, so I am ...'. It was a welcome opportunity to promote women's rights and gender equality publicly.

Happy Day

Active Citizens in Dhaka, Bangladesh, have established a 'Happy Day', where they spend time with the city's street children and provide food and sanitation education, play games and hold art activities. More and more community volunteers are consistently being encouraged to participate.

Sustainable Educational Far'un Park

In Palestine, Active Citizens transformed an unused park into a sustainable environmental education space to teach local children about environmental sustainability. With support from the local government, the park has benefitted 800 children and 6,000 residents.

Each One Teach One

Active Citizens in Kampala, Uganda, set out to teach 300 female and 200 male Somali asylum seekers basic English language skills, giving them a way of protecting their rights while increasing intercultural cohesion.

Green Seeds

In Hanoi, Vietnam, more than 800 school children in deprived rural areas are being given English and personal development opportunities through educational activities delivered by Active Citizens and other volunteers, leading to improved confidence and academic results.



Image © Christopher Symes

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Active Citizens is helping to improve governance, accountability and citizen engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigerian universities, Active Citizens are helping to improve collaboration across cultural and religious divides and support greater national civic engagement.

In Uganda, Active Citizens are using football to increase the life chances of street children, while in the Horn of Africa, young artists are being equipped with the tools for social change. Through two projects jointly funded with the European Union, Active Citizens is also supporting social enterprises in East Africa and engaging young people in Sudan.

“ I THINK OUR COMMUNITIES NEED A PROGRAMME LIKE ACTIVE CITIZENS TO SOLVE CONFLICTS AND MISUNDERSTANDING, TO PROMOTE PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Active Citizen, South Sudan ”

Increasing the life chances of street children through football

In 2013, it was estimated that 10,000 children were living on the streets of Uganda — a 70 per cent increase from 1993 — while in the city of Kampala, the number of street children grows by 16 each day.

To address this issue, the Premier Skills programme is working with community-based organisations in Kampala to improve the life chances of the city's street children. An international partnership between the British Council and the Premier League, Premier Skills uses football to develop a brighter future for young people around the world.

Combining the Premier Skills and Active Citizens learning journeys as an innovation in the football for development context, the programme trains Community Coaches who go on to support street children through social action projects and football clinics, where they develop their football skills, receive meals, and are educated about how to make safer life decisions.

Kazibwe Bright is a Community Coach from Kisenyi, one of the largest slum areas in Kampala. He participated in the programme to connect with street children and help them change their lives.

“ ACTIVE CITIZENS HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND YOURSELF, WHICH IS A KEY ELEMENT IF YOU ARE GOING TO WORK WITH OTHERS. IT BRINGS CONFIDENCE AND SELF-AWARENESS, AND SHOWS YOU HOW TO CONNECT WITH OTHER PEOPLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Community Coach and Active Citizen, Uganda ”

‘Children on the street are close to my heart because I’ve lived that life. I became homeless when I was nine, after my mother died, and football helped me survive. I’m now connecting with street children and giving them the knowledge and motivation to aim for a decent life,’ he says.

Through football clinics, Kazibwe is helping street children become healthier and more confident members of society, boosting their self-esteem and building their social leadership skills. In this way, he is able to motivate them to become involved in positive social action.

Aside from using football as a tool to engage young people, Kazibwe teaches the children to take care of the local area through community cleaning activities, helping to build trust and understanding in the local area. He has also engaged a local artisan to train the children on how to create art pieces, giving them the opportunity to make a decent living.

‘Eight of the children I’ve worked with have been reunited with their families and are now in school. Another 22 have enrolled back into school thanks to bursaries I’ve secured for them from local organisations,’ says Kazibwe.

Kazibwe’s dream is to set up a rehabilitation home and sports academy for street children, and Active Citizens and Premier Skills is helping him to get closer to that goal every day.



‘ACTIVE CITIZENS EMPOWERED ME TO BE A CHANGE AGENT, AND I NOW WANT TO SHARE THE ACTIVE CITIZENS VISION WITH PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY.’

Artist and Active Citizen, Sudan



Creating lasting change in the Horn of Africa

As the HOLLA programme enters its second phase, the impact of Active Citizens training delivered to young people in the programme’s first year is still being felt across Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

A year and a half after his Active Citizens training, Gassan Ali feels like a changed person. He’s been inspired to resit the national exams in Sudan, has applied to university, and has started his own insurance business.

Living in the Hamadab area, which is well-known for youth marginalisation and unemployment, Gassan was forced to leave his hometown due to the construction of the Merowe Dam. Unable to finish high school, he felt a sense of hopelessness for the future.

Active Citizens was Gassan’s first training experience since high school. It was also the first time a group of young women and men in the area had shared a room together.

The training empowered the young participants to work towards a brighter future for their community. They set up a bakery to provide healthy food for local people. They also helped to change the community’s perceptions about the role of women within society.

Gassan is now a more confident and inspired person. He is happy to be known as one of the ‘HOLLA youth’ in his community — young role models for future.

Giving young artists the tools for social change

Active Citizens has empowered young artists from Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia to become change agents and young leaders in their communities through the Artivism in the Horn of Africa project.

Artivism combines Active Citizens training with mobile journalism workshops to support emerging artists to use their practice as a tool for development. After their training, participants use different art forms and the Active Citizens methodology to cascade their learning and deliver meaningful social action.

Drawing on the expertise of Active Citizens facilitators from Sudan, Ethiopia and the UK, as well as UK art practitioners, the project has supported 60 engaged and ambitious young artists, who have gone on to develop social action projects to improve education, wellbeing and gender equality, and promote the value of cultural heritage.

‘I was able to understand the power and potential of art in triggering social change. I was able to work on my self-confidence and self-expression, and cultivate networks with other artists and professionals,’ says an artist and Active Citizen from Ethiopia.

Through Artivism, young artists have connected with their communities on issues of common concern and established a thriving network of ‘artists’ who are now advocating for positive change through arts and culture.



Social action showcase: Zeraff

Growing up in Ethiopia, Hermela Solomon has witnessed first-hand how traditional gender constructs force both men and women into certain roles within society, shaping how they are perceived and valued.

Stirred by a particular memory of her neighbours shouting abuse at her brother for fetching water, a job socially designated for women, Hermela decided to use the skills she gained through her Active Citizens training to change perceptions of gender in her community.

‘These constructs weigh heavily on people’s self-awareness, self-confidence and aspirations. It is easy for them to go on without being questioned, unless they are challenged,’ she says.

By running creative workshops and artistic performances, she gives young people the knowledge and tools to challenge gender constructs, helping them be more self-aware, confident and open to the possibility of following their aspirations.

Run at a local restaurant and social enterprise, which empowers women through education opportunities, Hermela’s performances are an opportunity for people to gather, dine together and discuss gender issues.

She is now planning to run more public workshops and organise performances at local schools to help children be less confined by gender constructs.

As well as engaging local organisations, the project has attracted the attention of the first female President of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, Mulu Soloman, who attended an event to show her support and share her own experiences.

Helping social enterprises extend their impact

Active Citizens training is being used to build the capacity of social enterprises across East Africa as part of a European-Union-funded project.

Support for Social Enterprises in East Africa will cascade Active Citizens training to 600 social enterprise leaders, giving them the business and leadership skills they need to help their enterprises thrive.

In Bungoma County, Kenya, an inspirational group of HIV+ women who produce nutritious food products for other HIV+ people in the area, used the skills they learnt through Active Citizens to secure World Bank funding to extend their impact.

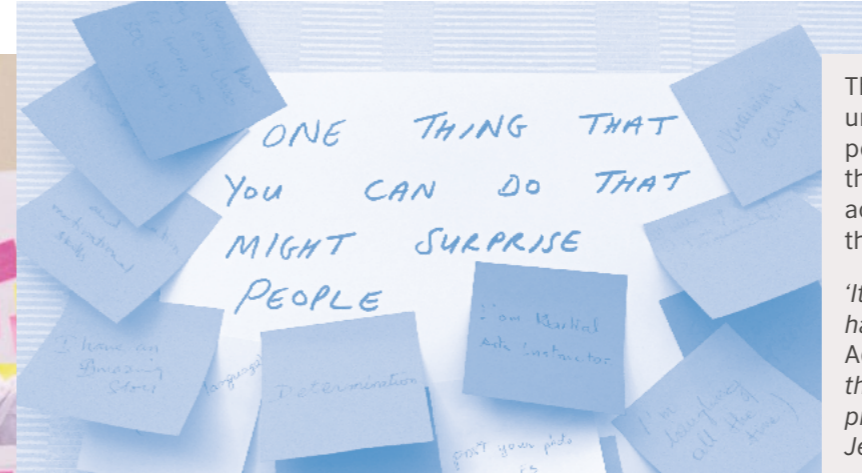
Equipped with a greater understanding of community planning and how to utilise local resources, the women developed the successful project proposal during Active Citizens training.

UNITED KINGDOM

“THE INCREDIBLE FEELING OF EMPOWERMENT THAT WE LEFT WITH MADE ME EVEN MORE CONVINCED THAT WE CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY.”

Active Citizen, UK

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Challenging stereotypes by exploring difficult issues

Active Citizens in Leeds and Bradford undertook a ground-breaking project that created spaces for Muslim and Jewish teenagers to explore a difficult issue that can be a cause of divide between the two religious communities.

The project was the result of a collaboration between Active Citizens partners the Islamic Society of Britain and Reform Judaism, who recruited young volunteers from the two communities to deliver innovative workshops in schools and youth groups relating to the situation in Israel and Palestine.

After receiving training in the Active Citizens learning journey, and gaining a greater understanding about Islamic and Jewish perspectives on conflict resolution and peace-making, the young volunteers went into their own communities to engage teenagers in discussions about the conflict.

‘We were aware that discussions on this issue can lead to stereotyping or risk slipping into Islamophobia or anti-Semitism,’ says Alex Fenton at Reform Judaism. ‘Our Active Citizens helped teenagers explore the issue from the perspective of their own identities and showed them how to hold strong beliefs without resorting to hateful viewpoints.’

The workshops gave participants the skills to understand other views on the conflict and to be positive activists without stereotyping ‘the other’. In this way, the teenagers felt empowered to participate actively in democratic processes and to advocate for their beliefs in a positive way.

‘It challenged our students to look at the issue as they haven’t done before,’ says Mr. Khan at Dixons Kings Academy in Bradford. ‘The young facilitators took the class through a series of difficult and thought-provoking activities that allowed pupils to see that Jewish and Muslim people aren’t really so different.’

The project partners both hope the initiative is a big step towards ensuring positive relations between British Muslim and Jewish communities.

Indeed, relationships developed through the project led informally to a collective public statement of solidarity, where Muslim, Jewish and Christian people, including a Bishop and the Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism, formed a symbolic human chain around a mosque in north London. *‘This would unlikely have taken place without the relationships that were built and solidified through Active Citizens,’ says Alex Fenton.*

“THE PROJECT CREATED A SAFE SPACE FOR OTHERWISE UNDER-DISCUSSED TOPICS AND LEFT PARTICIPANTS KEENER TO ENGAGE WITH THIS DIFFICULT ISSUE IN AN EDUCATED AND BALANCED WAY.”

Raina Sheaf, The Zone youth club

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In the UK, Active Citizens works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including community organisations, universities and local government, to build more inclusive and resilient communities. Through innovative social action projects, Active Citizens represent the diversity of UK society, bringing together different generations and faiths, improving community cohesion, and using the arts and social enterprise to support community development.

Through international opportunities and intercultural collaboration, Active Citizens address local and global issues, working to challenge stereotypes, build common ground through partnership, and contribute to global discussions on sustainable development.

Image © Christopher Symes

Building common ground through the power of partnership

When staff from Flying Futures CIC met other like-minded people during their Active Citizens training, they decided to work together to engage isolated young people in their community through a wholly unique event.

Doncaster-based organisation Flying Futures CIC runs a programme that supports young people with learning and behaviour disabilities who find it difficult to integrate and, as a result, are often picked on, bullied and reluctant to join shared activities. Flying Futures CIC helps these young people gain new skills, outlooks and aspirations.

Through Active Citizens training, the Flying Futures CIC team learnt innovative approaches to breaking down barriers and building bridges amongst different groups. They also connected with like-minded people from the local area, including staff from the Doncaster Children's Service Trust's EPIC team, a service working with young people at risk of being classified as young offenders.

The training helped staff from both organisations learn about the value of partnership, build empathy towards each other and gain a greater understanding of each other's goals. This bond led to them starting a shared project to bring together the two groups of young people.



ACTIVE CITIZENS GIVES PEOPLE THE SPACE TO UNPACK WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY WANT TO ACHIEVE, TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION. IT WAS BECAUSE OF ACTIVE CITIZENS THAT OUR ORGANISATIONS DECIDED TO COMBINE PROJECTS AND WORK TOGETHER.

Sarah Keenan, Flying Futures CIC



'We realised that these young people share the same space, but both feel isolated because of the perceptions of others,' says Sarah Keenan at Flying Futures CIC. 'We wanted to help them bond, to see they had things in common and build positive connections.'

Using their insights into how to engage young people through participatory activities, the two teams hosted a 'zorbing' event, where the young people wore inflatable bubbles to play a football match with a difference. As a result, the young people made new friends and felt more confident about participating in group activities.

'The young people got the chance to try something new and different to anything they had come across before,' says Sarah. 'They gained a sense of self and new confidence and left with a sense of achievement.'

Through their journey, the Active Citizens built new links, and their collaboration led to stronger bonds between Flying Futures CIC and EPIC, who had not worked together previously. The two organisations are now planning joint activities to support even more young people in the future.

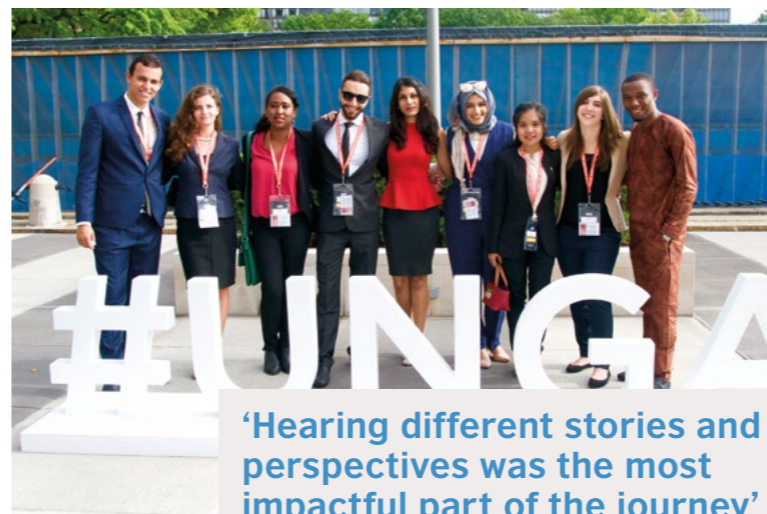


Image © Jennie King

'Hearing different stories and perspectives was the most impactful part of the journey'

Hear the experiences of Active Citizen Aqeelah Malek, one of 360 young people who travelled to New York as part of the Merit360 Summit, organised by the World Merit network.

'With Active Citizens, I had the opportunity to attend the Merit360 summit in New York, joining young people from across the world to address the Sustainable Development Goals.

The experience taught me so much, and I formed friendships that could last a lifetime. Focusing on the Zero Hunger goal, I met two remarkable individuals from India, whose initiative used excess food from restaurants to feed hungry people. Many participants were curious about my work on interfaith relations, as they had never met anyone so open about their faith before.

The cohort as a whole had this understanding that we were one humanity, and that our best hope is for the next generation of leaders to listen to each other's views.'

Social action showcase: Mai Hum aur SAB (Me, Us and All)

According to the UK's Mental Health Foundation, there is little research on the subject of mental illness within black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, yet people in these communities are generally considered to be at a higher risk of developing ill mental health.

Wanting to uncover the reality behind this perception, a group of Active Citizens in Bury, Greater Manchester, decided to conduct their own research to discover the truth about mental health in their local area.

Through focus groups, they spoke to people about the barriers to identifying and addressing mental health issues. The most common issue was the social stigma attached to mental health, as discussions about the illness are often seen as taboo and a source of embarrassment, causing many to suffer in silence and isolation.

Another significant issue was access to mainstream services, with many people in these communities more likely to disengage from these services due to social stigma or problems with communication.

As a result, the Active Citizens began conducting daily group sessions about mental health awareness for people in these communities, discussing factors that contribute to good mental health, highlighting available support, and providing translated literature.

They also developed partnerships with local National Health Service mental health branches to refer at-risk individuals, helping to create a bridge between mainstream health services and the community.

Active Citizens partner organisation ADAB is now including the sessions in its formal offer, and one of the Active Citizens on the project has been employed to work on the project full time.

EAST ASIA

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I HOPE THAT MORE AND MORE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM DISADVANTAGED GROUPS, CAN GET ACCESS TO PROGRAMMES LIKE ACTIVE CITIZENS IN ORDER TO BENEFIT FROM THEIR POSITIVE IMPACT.

Active Citizens facilitator, Vietnam

Working with partners across East Asia, including through two projects jointly funded with the European Union, Active Citizens is supporting people to create positive change, from tackling conflict through economic empowerment in the Philippines to empowering communities in Fiji to improve education and promote gender rights.

Across Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia and Hong Kong, Active Citizens are helping to develop more resilient and inclusive societies and promoting social enterprise as a tool for development. New collaboration opportunities will see this impact expand across the region through projects focusing on engaging artists and supporting women's empowerment.

Tackling conflict through economic empowerment

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, in the Philippines, has struggled through more than 40 years of armed conflict. As a result, many communities lack access to basic services, and education and employment opportunities are scarce.

As the region begins to emerge from conflict, Active Citizens is working to reinvigorate conflict-affected communities by promoting social enterprise as an effective route to economic empowerment, inclusive development and peace-building.

As part of the European Union and British Council CSO-SEED programme, community leaders are being trained in the Active Citizens learning journey and how to use social enterprise as a tool for development. They then cascade these skills and knowledge within their own communities while supporting local people to start their own social enterprises.

Unique to the project is the concept of a 'quadruple bottom line', which adds 'peace' to the existing 'people', 'planet' and 'profit' purposes of a social enterprise. In this way, social enterprise is used as a form of conflict resolution, by bringing people together to share a common goal, while also creating much-needed employment.

The Active Citizens engaged in the project come from at least six different ethnolinguistic groups in the region, showing how diversity is enabling people to discuss issues and cultural perceptions that have become a barrier to moving forward.

So far, 90 community leaders from more than 85 civil society organisations have been trained, enabling them to deepen their community engagement and develop their skills in social leadership, advocacy and coalition building.

Almost 50 per cent of those trained are women, including Noraida Datumanong, who runs an organisation for women's welfare and is delivering training to other community leaders as an Active Citizens facilitator.

'Active Citizens training made me more confident as a young Muslim woman. I've pursued things I never knew I could,' she says. 'I've used my new skills to mediate conflict and community crises between Muslim, Christian and indigenous Lumad groups.'

'I've also organised two farmers' cooperatives, one women's cooperative, a youth organisation, and an organisation of diverse people to promote unity. The aspiration now is to turn a conflict-affected area into a social enterprise centre that's free from violence.'



“
USING THE SKILLS I LEARNED FROM ACTIVE CITIZENS, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BRING TOGETHER DIFFERENT GROUPS THROUGH DIALOGUE AND BUILD TRUST AMONG THEM.

Active Citizens facilitator, Philippines

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Empowering communities in Fiji

In Fiji, Active Citizens is empowering rural communities as part of the European-Union-funded Valuing Voices project. Working with indigenous economic development group the Itaukei Trust Fund, Active Citizens has trained a new cadre of 27 facilitators, who are now delivering social action in their communities. Facilitator Jone Tuiono initiated a 416 kilometres walkathon to raise money for children's educational needs. He used the funds to develop a learning centre for children without access to education opportunities, providing a safe learning environment and access to qualified tutors. Another social action project is promoting mental health awareness and reducing stigma by touring remote villages in Fiji and sharing stories. Active Citizens is now building on this success by developing new partnerships across the Pacific region as it aims to empower more and more communities.

Supporting inclusion in Vietnam

Building on the previous success of developing the skills of young deputies in Vietnam's National Assembly through the Active Citizens learning journey, Active Citizens is helping to promote inclusion in Vietnam by providing new training opportunities for deputies and entrepreneurs from ethnic minorities. Through skills development workshops, 80 policy makers and 40 social entrepreneurs from different backgrounds learnt about social and creative enterprise and how to use new models of community-based tourism linked with cultural heritage to solve social problems and increase sustainable prosperity, especially in ethnic minority regions. The training will help to empower both deputies and entrepreneurs to make decisions and take action that will support inclusive development in the future.



Social Action Showcase: Myanmar Youth Centre

A group of nearly 200 university students from PS Business School in Myanmar received Active Citizens training with a focus on using social enterprise as a tool for development.

After the training, more than 30 students shared their learning with students from their partner university in Singapore. Together they co-created innovative social action projects to tackle challenges in Myanmar communities.

Using their new skills and understanding about identifying and addressing community issues, the students put forward ideas with a strong social enterprise element, including using recycled products for home decoration, developing a community café with street children, and creating part-time jobs for women who usually stay at home.

These students paved the way for the development of the Myanmar Youth Centre, a space for young people to come together and share ideas for social action. Now a social enterprise in its own right, the centre is helping to develop an active and cooperative youth community by ensuring more and more young people are supported in their journey to becoming Active Citizens.

AMERICAS

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WE OFTEN LIVE LIFE RUSHING AROUND TRYING TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS, SO THAT WE RARELY THINK ABOUT OURSELVES OR SEARCH FOR SELF-KNOWLEDGE. I LEARNT I NEED TO INVEST IN MYSELF SO I CAN TRY TO HELP OTHERS.
”
Active Citizen, Brazil

Since 2015, Active Citizens has grown to engage more and more communities across the Americas. In the USA, Active Citizens in Native American communities are inspiring participation and protecting their cultural heritage, while in Brazil, young activists living in complex metropolitan areas are being supported to encourage community action.

A partnership with the United Nations Association in Canada has also seen the country's first cohort of 150 social entrepreneurs trained as Active Citizens, which coincided with Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations. New partnership opportunities are now helping hard-to-reach communities in Colombia and Mexico to benefit from Active Citizens and promote local development.



Active Citizens in Canada: empowering young leaders

To coincide with Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations, Active Citizens partnered with the United Nations Association in Canada to train the country's first ever group of 150 Active Citizens.

Young leaders from across Canada took part in the training, which focused on social enterprise as an effective tool for development. It showed them how to be more self-aware and confident as leaders, strengthened their capacity to communicate, and taught them how to build strong relationships.

The Active Citizens went on to deliver innovative social action projects focusing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Fifteen of these were presented at the Youth Innovation Summit in Ottawa, in front of representatives from the public and private sectors, enterprises, start-ups and the UN.

Tina Hossain, who presented at the summit, is working on Think Jackfruit, a social enterprise that aims to tackle climate change by reducing food waste, address health problems in Canada, and provide a sustainable source of income for Bangladeshi women.

Bangladesh is the world's second largest producer of jackfruit, although much of it goes to waste. Think Jackfruit aims to manufacture the product as a vegan, gluten-free meat replacement in Bangladesh and a conscious option on the Canadian food market.

“IT WAS A TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE SENSE THAT I NOT ONLY MADE A LOT OF MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS, BUT I ALSO REALISED THAT MY PROJECT CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES.

Active Citizen, Canada



Image © Tristan Oliff Photography

'Participating in Active Citizens helped me feel validated and helped me realise that what I'm thinking about and what I want to do is not something minor, but can actually transform the way we look at our food, our environment, and our global community,' says Tina.

Hafsa Isse and Ikran Egal also presented their project, a recruitment social enterprise that focuses on employment for youth from minority communities and consults with organisations on non-inclusive recruitment policies.

Their training is helping them build connections with local organisations who can support their cause. They are also preparing to deliver pre-employment workshops to school students, focusing on CV and interview skills.

'We have always wanted to do something to give back to our community and help it grow,' says Ikran. *'We always see the issue and we want to fix it. If we just push ourselves, and have the drive and passion for it, then I think you can accomplish anything.'*

Supporting sustainable farming in Nevada

The legacy of Active Citizens continues to benefit members of the Duck Valley reservation in Nevada since its introduction in 2015.

Members of the community's Growers Group are supporting local sustenance gardeners with their hoop house project, which has been strengthened and sustained as a result of Active Citizens.

Hoop houses are weather-controlled gardens, providing the perfect conditions for crops. Originally started in 2011, the project has grown since the introduction of Active Citizens, with the group constructing a large community hoop house and organising farmers markets.

Another local Active Citizen organised a food sovereignty conference, which she planned during her training and later secured funding to host. More than 75 members of the Duck Valley community attended.

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'WE USUALLY DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO THE PLACE IN WHICH WE LIVE, OR THINK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSFORMING OUR COMMUNITY INTO ONE WE DREAM ABOUT. BEING AN EFFECTIVE CITIZEN MEANS TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOUSE, YOUR OFFICE OR YOUR STREET.'

Active Citizen, Brazil

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Social action showcase: Jardim Trindade

Due to ineffective public planning, growing levels of waste, and the flooding of a local river, the Trindade neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro has become an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes carrying diseases such as zika, dengue and chikungunya.

Realising they had a shared desire to tackle the issue, 14 Active Citizens from local schools and universities took the initiative into their own hands and started a project to transform the area's public spaces.

They encouraged participation from people in the local area by successfully mobilising more than 100 volunteers, helping to awaken a sense of belonging in a community that had long forgotten the value of social participation.

Together they removed 20 trucks of waste from a public area, and, in its place, planted crotalaria flowers to attract dragonflies, a natural predator to mosquitoes. Jardim Trindade was born.

The garden has improved life for some 2,000 residents and small businesses nearby, and 5,000 students also benefit from a cleaner, greener environment as they pass through on their way to school or university every day.

Thanks to its success, the project is now attracting support from two local universities, and the Active Citizens involved are in discussions with local government to embed the project in public policy.



Image © Zuppa Filmes

EUROPEAN UNION



'ACTIVE CITIZENS IS ONE OF THOSE EXPERIENCES THAT CHANGES YOUR PATH IN LIFE.'

Active Citizen, Poland



Building on significant impact in Poland, where social enterprise has been used for community cohesion and development, Active Citizens is now reaching more countries across the European Union through partnership-funded programmes.

In Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, Active Citizens is helping to challenge negative stereotypes of migrants and refugees through the European-Union-funded Empowering Communities in Europe project.

Across six countries, a new partnership project will support tolerance and respect on the basis of faith, religious belief and ethnicity. In Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Active Citizens is also engaging ethnically mixed regions to promote intercultural dialogue.



IT LET ME BELIEVE THAT SOMETHING THAT WAS ONLY AN IDEA COULD BECOME A REAL BUSINESS THAT SOLVES SOCIAL PROBLEMS. IT WAS A PRICELESS INVESTMENT IN MY "CAREER" AND MY LIFE.

Active Citizen, Poland



Image © Sylwester Smigielski

Active Citizens enters new countries across the European Union

As a part of an exciting people-to-people project in the Baltic states, funded by the UK government, Active Citizens has been used as a tool to bring together people from different linguistic communities to work on shared solutions to common issues in their communities. Although in its early stages, the project has already given 18 Active Citizens facilitators the skills and tools to reach out to 196 future Active Citizens in six communities. They are now planning 50 social action projects to reach at least 750 people.

As part of the EU-funded Mutual Understanding, Respect and Learning project, Active Citizens will be used to promote community cohesion across the UK, Poland, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal and Germany. The project aims to support tolerance and respect on the basis of faith, religious belief and ethnicity. It uses the Active Citizens learning journey to train local activists, leaders and community networks to encourage civic responsibility and tackle all forms of discrimination.

Social action showcase: Leżę i Pracuję

When he was 17, Artur Szaflik had a life-changing accident that left him paralysed in all four limbs. Forced to live from his bed, he felt isolated and frustrated.

Twenty years later, his life suddenly changed when he met Active Citizen and social entrepreneur Majka Lipiak. They instantly clicked over a passion for social action, and they began to think of ways they could improve the lives of people with disabilities in Poland.

The first step was to transform Artur's bedroom into an office space, giving him the ability to work effectively from his bed. Using the skills she learnt through her Active Citizens training, Majka engaged 30 volunteers to help her with this task.

Next, the two founded Leżę i Pracuję, the world's first marketing agency dedicated to providing jobs for paralysed people. The agency aims to use employment as a first step in changing the mindsets of those in Artur's situation.

Since starting, the agency has employed two marketing specialists: Mateusz, who became quadriplegic as the result of an accident, and Nicole, who was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy when she was a baby. The next goal is to expand the agency to reach every province in Poland.

WIDER EUROPE

More than 20,000 Active Citizens were trained in Ukraine between 2016 and 2017. Here, Active Citizens works to connect young people with their local authorities, helping them secure funding to address youth issues in their communities. Active Citizens are also finding solutions to support universities displaced by the conflict in the east of the country.

New partnership opportunities are now seeing Active Citizens support young people and communities to promote intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution in Moldova and the Western Balkans.



THE TINY SEEDS OF KNOWLEDGE GIVEN BY ACTIVE CITIZENS BEAR FRUIT IN YOUR LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE, BECAUSE THE MOST IMPORTANT IMPACT IS THE CHANGE IN PEOPLE'S THINKING.

Active Citizen, Ukraine



ACTIVE CITIZENS PROVIDES REAL TOOLS FOR THOSE WHO CARE ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR TOWNS.

Yevhen Kulych,
Chernihiv Town Council



Image © Oleksandra Bilyaze



Connecting communities and local authorities through young people

In response to Ukrainian local authorities placing a stronger focus on youth issues, Active Citizens is equipping young people across the country with the skills to secure government funding for social action projects in their communities.

Through a series of social action competitions, supported by the British Council and local authorities throughout Ukraine, youth activists are having the chance to pitch their ideas for social action. Thanks to Active Citizens training, the young participants gain the necessary project design and pitching skills they need for success.

So far, 16 events have led to more than 140 projects receiving government funding, supporting greater social cohesion and stability in communities. The initiative is also helping to build trust between civil society and local authorities, strengthening relationships for the future development of their local areas.

Image © Oleksandra Bilyaze

Social action showcase: Displaced Universities

Since the conflict began in eastern Ukraine, 18 universities in the most affected areas have been forced to relocate to the west of the country.

Relying on makeshift premises and suffering from a lack of funding, these universities have found it difficult to provide a stable learning environment for teachers and students.

Wanting to better grasp the challenges these universities face, a group of newly-trained Active Citizens from the Coordination Centre for Displaced Universities used their skills to conduct research with those affected.

After gathering evidence, they advocated for policy changes and were asked to advise government on the situation. Their findings formed the basis of a new law to negate financial debts due to displacement and guarantee the existence of displaced universities until the end of the conflict.

The law makes it easier for affected universities to provide better conditions for students and teachers and has also led to the establishment of a new rectors' council representing all 18 universities, providing a platform for dialogue and development.

The Active Citizens are now in discussions with government to create a student union for displaced universities, giving students the chance to raise their concerns directly to government.

'Active Citizens is about helping people to understand the world and find their place within it, to use their own resources and tools to solve problems. It's about giving people the opportunity to find their calling and acquire a new meaning in life,' says Anton Kolvakh, one of the Active Citizens involved.

“
ACTIVE CITIZENS GIVES PEOPLE THE SPACE TO UNPACK WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY WANT TO ACHIEVE, TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION. IT WAS BECAUSE OF ACTIVE CITIZENS THAT OUR ORGANISATIONS DECIDED TO COMBINE PROJECTS AND WORK TOGETHER.

Active Citizens partner, UK

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ACTIVE CITIZENS HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND YOURSELF, WHICH IS A KEY ELEMENT IF YOU ARE GOING TO WORK WITH OTHERS. IT BRINGS CONFIDENCE AND SELF-AWARENESS, AND SHOWS YOU HOW TO CONNECT WITH OTHER PEOPLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Active Citizen, Uganda

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ACTIVE CITIZENS ARE ONE MOTIVATED FORCE, TRAINED TO BECOME LIFELONG AGENTS OF CHANGE. THEY INSPIRE COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES, FOSTERING A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND BRINGING SYSTEMIC CHANGE.

Active Citizens facilitator, Pakistan

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Image © Jasmine Foundation

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The Arab Partnership
EU Non-State Actors

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Thank you to all those who have contributed to this publication.