



# Global Evaluation Report for Crafting Futures

Commissioned by: British Council



Authored by: The Social Investment Consultancy



May 2022

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## Acknowledgments

The report authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Global Programme Managers at Crafting Futures over the years: Kendall Robbins, Katia Stewart and Sevrá Davis (covering for this role as Director of Architecture, Design and Fashion); the Evaluation Steering Group members: Gary Mundy, Ian Thomas, Nikki Locke, Liliana Carral; and all the country Arts teams involved in Crafting Futures programme delivery. Report's cover image is taken by Simon Mills, as part of Crafting Futures Thailand programme.

## Executive Summary

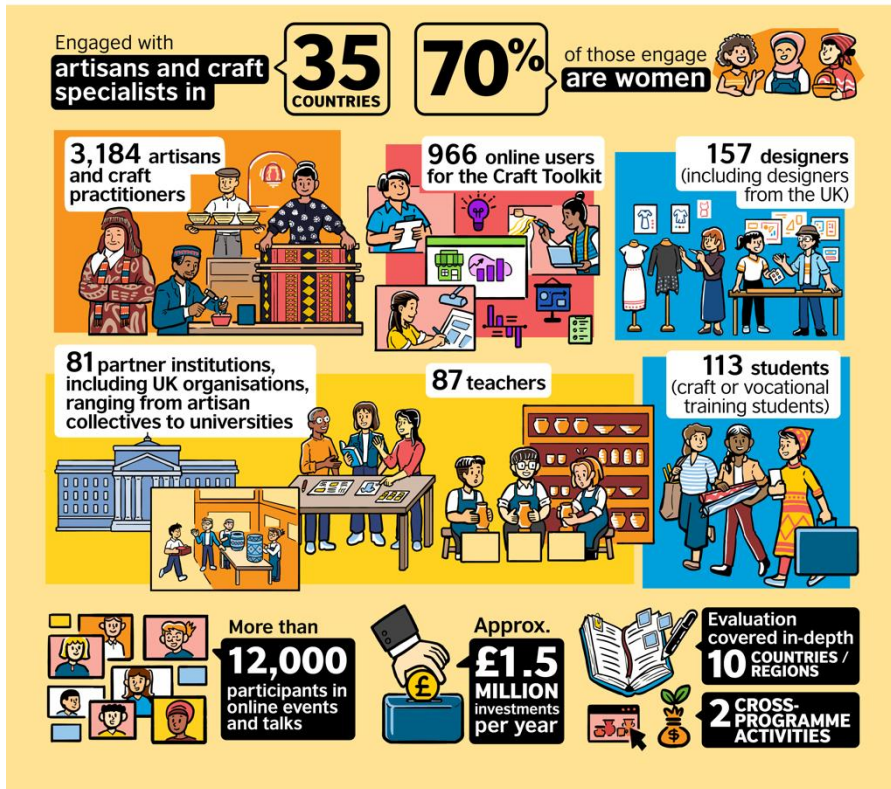
Crafting Futures is a global programme which aims to support a more sustainable future for crafts around the world and ensure that craft is appreciated for economic, social and environmental development. In September 2019, the British Council commissioned The Social Investment Consultancy (TSIC) to conduct a global evaluation of Crafting Futures. As the programme started informally in 2017, a certain number of projects has already entered delivery phase, but there was no uniform reporting system for the whole programme. This evaluation commissioned in 2019 looks at the programme over the course of the three years in a coherent and consistent way. Moreover, TSIC has also provided M&E support to Crafting Futures throughout the timeframe.

This evaluation report summarises the impact of Crafting Futures, based on its Theory of Change focused on four areas: 1) Individual, enterprises, practitioners, students and teachers; 2) Institutions and partners; 3) System Change and 4) International Collaborations. Even though Crafting Futures has been engaged with artisans and practitioners in 35 countries, this report is focused on data from 10 countries and regions, and two cross-country programmes – the Digital Craft Toolkit and Grant Scheme.

This report contains six sections:

- Section 1 provides further background to Crafting Futures;
- Section 2 describes the evaluation methodology, including the development of the Theory of Change and Global Framework, approach to data collection and analysis and research limitations;
- Section 3 provides an overview of impact in terms of outputs and outcomes in the four areas;
- Section 4 describes the impact of Crafting Futures' cross-programme activities;
- Section 5 captures the learnings from programme implementation; and
- Section 6 summarises TSIC's programme and M&E recommendations.

Detailed impact on a country level are captured in Annex 1, accompanying this report. More information on the Digital Craft Toolkit, and stakeholder engagement methods and research ethics, are contained in Annexes 2 and 3 respectively.





Crafting Futures supported the recognition of craft as an important means of responding to global challenges among key partner organisations



**EXAMPLE: CHINA**

Research found that there was a lack of awareness of sustainable materials and recycling waste in craft production.

Foraged local materials and ...

ceramic waste materials for glazing

Through the programme, UK practitioners demonstrated how sustainability could be integrated into craft production

Natural plant dye and sustainable design materials

Which led a cultural institution in China to reconsider global challenges including gender equality and sustainability in art engagement.

AT LEAST **6 PROJECTS**

showed that they contributed, even in small ways, to promoting an enabling environment for creative and social enterprises

**EXAMPLE: INNOVATION INDIA**



Supported the craft sector in adopting innovation, more specifically leveraging digital technologies in the sector. This represented a real progress, given the informal nature of the craft sector in the country.

**EXAMPLE: LOCAL NETWORKS AND COLLABORATION MALAYSIA**



Supported the development of networks of local artisans and students, including a marked improvement in their network and increased number of collaborations offers.

**EXAMPLE: POLICY AND CURRICULUM CHANGE GEORGIA AND ARMENIA**




Craft modules developed as part of the programme were approved by national authorities and will likely be integrated into the formal curriculum in vocational education programmes.

**At least 10 projects** were able to evidence impact towards increasing the number or quality of international collaborations, often by **developing relationships between UK craftspeople/designers and local craft practitioners**



**EXAMPLE: INDIA**

**80%** of all Crafting Future India participants said that they **learned something new about craft practices from other countries**



**EXAMPLE: ARGENTINA**

University partners indicated that the programme **enabled them to develop international connections**, not only in the UK but also with other countries



## 1. Introduction to Crafting Futures

Crafting Futures is a global programme which aims to support a more sustainable future for crafts around the world and ensure that craft is appreciated for economic, social and environmental development.

The programme first began in 2017 with a few parallel craft-focused programmes and was formally established by the British Council's Architecture Design and Fashion team in 2019 as a three-year programme running from 1 April 2019 through 31 March 2022. Since 2019, the programme, has engaged with artisans and craft specialists in 35 countries and 70% of those engaged are women. The programme has successfully supported them to develop their skills and boost their ability to earn more income. Due to the nature of the programme, it is difficult to quantify the exact investment in Crafting Futures, but a typical year in the three-year programme (in a non-pandemic year) with the programme working across multiple countries is approximately £1.5million and includes staff time both in the UK and around the world. The programme brings together craft practitioners, designers and organisations from around the world to explore possibilities for this future together. It provides education and training opportunities, connects artisans from rural communities with international designers, creates international partnerships and increases access to new markets and audiences.

The programme enables designers and artisans to develop their practices (including with technology), empowers them to create their own businesses, and improve their abilities to shape local craft markets and sell their products locally and internationally. Activities include residencies, hands-on workshops, creation labs, exhibitions, and discussions on design, fashion, entrepreneurship, indigenous knowledge and cross-cultural creation. The programme investigates environmental impacts, resource efficiency, health and safety, intellectual property rights and other key considerations.

Crafting Futures is tailored to the needs of the local communities, and its inclusive approach means it is open to craft practitioners of any background in any location.

The programme is currently active in 20 countries across East Asia, South Asia, Latin America and Wider Europe. The list of country projects presented in the report is a small selection of projects conducted in the context of Crafting Futures.

## 2. Evaluation methodology

### 2.1 Development of the Global Framework

In September 2019, the British Council commissioned TSIC to conduct a global evaluation of Crafting Futures. As the programme started informally in 2017, a certain number of projects has already entered delivery phase, but there was no uniform reporting system for the whole programme. This evaluation commissioned in 2019 looks at the programme over the course of the three years in a coherent and consistent way.

The first task was therefore to map different projects and their expected outputs and outcomes to get an overview of the current portfolio of the Crafting Futures programmes. Although there were clear synergies between the projects, it is important to note that projects were also very diverse in their approaches, audiences and delivery models. As activities had been locally developed, and the central “Crafting Futures” programme came after many of them had already completed the design phase, there was a certain degree of independence of each country programme. One of the challenges of this evaluation was therefore to bring together projects that were not developed as a coherent programme and establish opportunities for them to develop an “identity” around Crafting Futures.

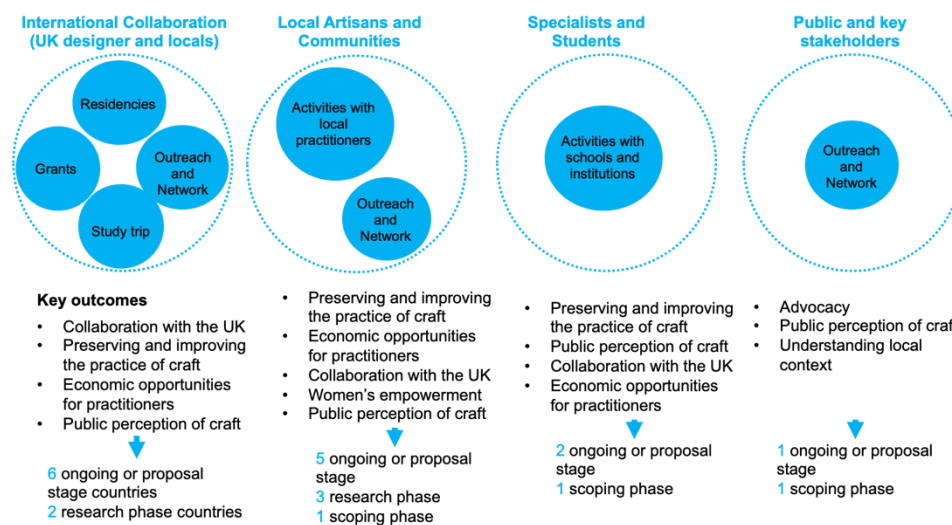


Figure 1: Programme clusters of Crafting Futures in the initial mapping from September 2019

The “portfolio overview” allowed TSIC, in consultation with the British Council, to identify four key areas of impact: individual participants, partners/organisations, system change and international collaborations.

Following the mapping exercise and the delivery of an inception report, TSIC conducted an evaluability assessment, which aimed to support the team to identify countries with a high degree of evaluability. The criteria for evaluability were: Scope and scale of intended outcomes; Completeness of data available; Plausibility of causal pathways; Team readiness; and Feasibility of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan. TSIC reviewed documentation from all the active country programmes under Crafting Futures at the time and conducted key informant interviews with six country programmes. Then, TSIC identified eleven priority programmes that met the requirements for effective evaluation. In



consultation with the British Council, TSIC removed some programmes from the final list, predominantly due to their delivery model or the fact that they will be presently closing the programme. Bearing in mind considerations around geographic and cluster representativeness, TSIC suggested the following countries and programme elements for receiving enhanced support in evaluation and to serve as “models” for the global impact framework. The countries/elements identified were: Malaysia, South Caucasus (three countries), Afghanistan, Argentina, China, India and the Grants Scheme. After the initial selection, the British Council requested TSIC’s support for Central Asia (three countries), the Digital Craft Toolkit and Nepal (however Nepal did not submit any data for this report).

Given the clear need for alignment between the Arts Theory of Change and Crafting Futures’ Global Theory of Change, outcomes from the Arts Theory of Change were selected and mapped against the four impact areas identified in the mapping exercise. The Global Theory of Change then served as a basis for the development of the Global Impact Framework.

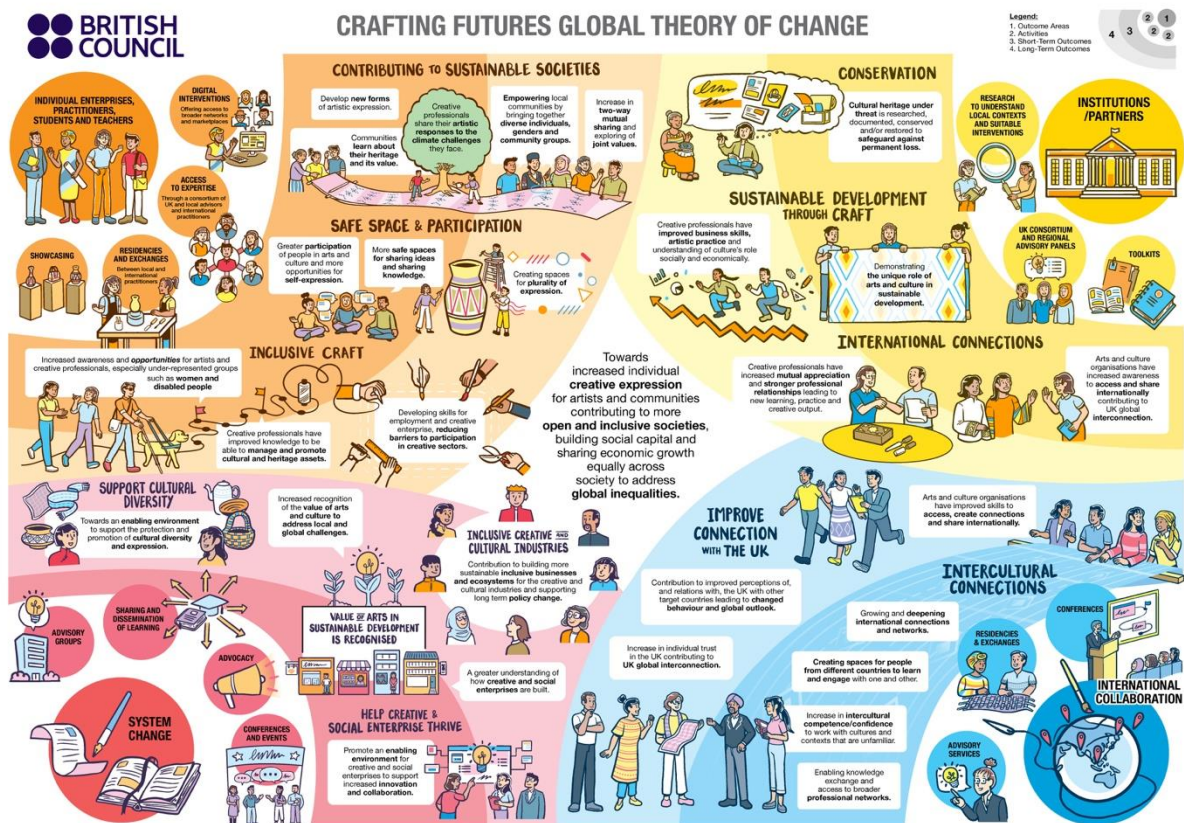


Figure 2: Global Theory of Change of Crafting Futures

TSIC started developing M&E plans for the selected countries based on the Global Theory of Change, but tailored to their local needs and capabilities, in close collaboration with country teams, through workshops. The experiences of working with countries informed the development of the Global Impact Framework, which was being developed in parallel. The Framework is structured under the four areas of change and outcomes from the Theory of Change. For each outcome, it contains a list of indicators (measures of change), data collection tools (questions for interviews or surveys), and information about how to use those tools (frequency, etc.). The idea was that the Framework would provide a “menu” of indicators that country teams could select from and measure data against. They were not expected to collect data against all the indicators in the Theory of Change.

Following the development of the Impact Framework, TSIC developed Guidance notes and support material for country teams, including ready-to-use tools that they could use or integrate into existing



data collection plans. Guidance notes included advice on data collection, planning, sampling and analysis. As upskilling country managers in evaluation was one of the explicit goals of this evaluation, TSIC organised a series of workshops to introduce country teams to the framework. Feedback from country teams was also gathered during those sessions to improve the Guidance notes.

Between 2020 and February 2022, TSIC continued providing support to selected countries. However, measures resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak meant that many programmes suffered delays or disturbances in their planning and delivery, which complicated impact evaluation in 2020 and 2021.

## 2.2 Approach to data collection for final evaluation

Country teams were responsible for data collection, with the support of TSIC. They were asked to upload the data they had collected over the course of the programme onto a Teams Channel and after a review of the data available, TSIC reached out to individual project managers to ask for additional data where there appeared to be some missing.

TSIC also asked project managers to answer some questions about the impact that they had witnessed, as well as unexpected outcomes from the programme, even if it relied on anecdotal information. A final question inquired about learnings from the programme, summarised in the last section of this report. Most project managers replied via email, while a few others scheduled a call with TSIC for a more in-depth discussion.

It is worth noting that ten out of 16 countries collected data against the framework, with some of them collecting solid and coherent data across multiple projects (e.g. India, Digital Craft Toolkit). The limitations of the data shared by countries is outlined in the “Limitations” section below.

Country	Provided data against the framework	Main reason for not using the framework
<b>Afghanistan</b>	No (but indicators used very similar to the framework)	Main data collection phase occurred before the framework implementation
<b>Argentina</b>	Yes (but limited)	
<b>Armenia</b>	No	Unknown
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Yes (but limited)	
<b>Chile</b>	No	Data collection tools unsuitable for local participants
<b>China</b>	No	Main data collection phase occurred before the framework implementation
<b>Digital Toolkit</b>	Yes	
<b>Georgia</b>	Yes (but limited)	
<b>Grant Scheme</b>	No	Unknown
<b>Indonesia</b>	No	Programme was early stage at the time of the framework implementation
<b>India</b>	Yes	
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	Yes (but limited)	
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	Yes (but limited)	
<b>Malaysia</b>	Yes	
<b>Thailand</b>	Yes (but limited)	
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	Yes (but limited)	

Table 1: overview of countries that provided some data against the framework

### 2.3 Data analysis and synthesis

When reviewing final impact data collected by countries, it became apparent that only a limited amount of data had been collected using tools from the Global Impact Framework (see section on limitations). In order to do justice to the work that had been delivered by country projects, it was decided to take into account any kind of data that the country managers could provide, including reports drafted by partners and testimonials collected by the teams.

Moreover, it was originally planned to have the evaluation timeframe cover the period after the Global Impact Framework has been created and implemented. However, owing to COVID-19 disrupting a lot of the activities, it was decided to expand the timeframe for the evaluation, in order to adequately capture the impact of Crafting Futures. This included data from programmes implemented as early as 2017 (in cases of China and Afghanistan)

Given the diversity of projects and the lack of data collected based on indicators from the Global Framework, it was decided to focus on country-level impact instead of attempting an in-depth review of the programme as a whole. The third section of the report provides an overview of the impact achieved against the four impact areas of the Global Theory of Change, but only on a relatively superficial level and without making direct comparisons between countries.

### 2.4 Limitations

There were a number of limitations that readers should keep in mind when considering this evaluation. Limitations outlined below will serve as a basis for reflection in the “Learning” section.

**The lack of data collected against the Global framework was the main and most important of all limitations.** Ten projects out of 16 collected data points based on the framework, but this was often limited to a few questions and in some cases very small sample sizes (less than ten respondents). While some countries have made use of surveys with ready-made questions (seven of them did), others collected information against outcomes without using the framework tools. Most projects complemented the framework with information collected from partners.

The reasons for this relatively limited engagement with the global framework are not entirely clear, but we give an overview of known challenges that might have hindered the adoption of the framework in the “Learnings” section of this report.

Given the lack of data from the framework, the evaluation relied heavily on **anecdotal evidence** from partners and participants collected by British Council staff. Although this type of evidence should not be ignored and provides valuable insights into the impact of a project, especially in the context of small projects resulting in subtle, complex changes, it does not warrant the same level of confidence in assessing impact.

**Small sample sizes in many projects made it difficult to reach solid conclusions.** This resulted from challenges in collecting data from participants and partners through forms, but also reflected the small audiences some programmes deeply engage with (which has no effect on their impact on those audiences). This indicates a need to rethink the type of data that should be collected in the context of small-scale programmes.

In some cases where country teams provided data, there was a lack of information regarding the way the data had been collected and analysed (e.g. total number of respondents, context of the survey). There is also a clear lack of output data from the projects. Demographic information was not collected systematically – e.g. disability status was reported by a few countries only.

The evaluation reveals a **misalignment between the outcomes from the Arts Theory of Change and what country projects can deliver** on the ground. Outcomes from the Arts Theory of Change are very broad and ambitious, containing assumptions about causal pathways that remain difficult to assess without proper resources. This is one of the reasons why we decided to identify impact based on

documentation provided by the projects, instead of looking to evidence impact against the outcomes from the Theory of Change only.

Challenges around the breadth and quality of data, combined with the fact that country programmes have different objectives, makes it difficult to identify with precision where “gaps in impact” occurred – e.g. where activities were delivered to achieve a certain outcome, but did not have the expected outcome.

### 3. Impact: overview

#### Outputs overview

Together, the country programmes evaluated in this report reached at least:

- 3,184 artisans and craft practitioners
- 35 countries, including seven communities in Thailand
- 966 online users for the Craft Toolkit
- 113 students (craft or vocational training students)
- 157 designers, including designers from the UK
- 87 teachers
- 81 partner institutions, including UK organisations, ranging from artisan collectives to universities
- More than 12,000 participants in online events and talks

#### Overview of outcomes

This evaluation shows that the Crafting Futures programme has led to a wide range of positive changes across the countries where it has been implemented. A certain number of outcomes from the Theory of Change were evidenced by data collected by country projects, while others have not been validated by available data yet.

The first outcome area – individual participants – benefitted from the largest amount of data collected by country; as a result, the impact in this area is the most established. It is not necessarily surprising, as data collection in this area relied primarily on project participants, which is a common way of evaluating impact. Capturing impact on partners and system change proved to be more challenging.

The table below provides a simplified overview of our level of confidence that outcomes have been realised for each outcome area. It is worth noting that, for all impact areas, the breadth and quality of the data does not allow us to reach definitive conclusions about the medium and long-term impact of the project.

Outcome area	Level of confidence that outcomes have realised (High, Medium, Low)	Justification
<b>1: Individual, enterprises, practitioners, students and teachers</b>	High for short-term outcomes, medium to low for long-term outcomes	This outcome area benefits from the strongest evidence across all outcome areas. There is evidence that the programme contributed to increasing artisans, students and entrepreneurs’ capacities in the short-term; however, there is still limited data collected to show the medium and long-term sustainability of those outcomes.



<b>2: Institutions and partners</b>	Medium to low	Testimonials and surveys filled in by partners show the benefits they gained from the programme, but the evidence base on this is still relatively limited in terms of depth of evidence and sample size.
<b>3: System Change</b>	Medium to Low	There is solid evidence to show that the programme had an impact on systems (e.g. education systems) in two countries; however, there is limited evidence for the rest of the programme.
<b>4: International Collaborations</b>	Medium to Low	There is some evidence to show progress towards outcomes in this area, but it is not consistent across all countries and remains relatively limited.

Table 2: overview of confidence level for each impact area, based on data reviewed for this evaluation

The lack of data evidencing certain outcomes does not mean that those outcomes did not materialize. The projects may well have led to this outcome, but the evaluator did not have access to sufficient evidence to assess the impact in question. In recognition of the challenges involved in measuring long-term change, in cases where key informants (British Council staff) strongly suggested that they had witnessed a positive change, those outcomes were integrated into the report with a note of caution.

The section below provides an overview of the key outcomes collectively achieved by projects within Crafting Futures, based on the four pillars of the Global Theory of Change.

### 3.1 Outcome area 1: Individual enterprises, practitioners, students and teachers



The first area of outcomes in the Theory of Change focuses on impact at individual level for craft practitioners, artisans, students, designers and other participants in the programme.

A review of country evaluations shows that the programme strongly impacted the **development of new forms of artistic expression, cultural participation and heritage interpretation among participants** (*Develop new forms of artistic expression, cultural participation, heritage interpretation and create new ways of stimulating inclusive growth*). Most country projects (ten out of 16 countries/projects evaluated in this report) can evidence varying levels of impact towards this outcome, at least in the short-term. It is worth noting that for many countries, the evidence collected is still anecdotal.

Projects contributed to this outcome by enabling craft artisans, students and designers to discover and gain exposure to new design and craft techniques. Newly acquired skills and approaches introduced during workshops helped them develop new forms of expression and, in some cases, produce new designs. This process took many different forms depending on the content of the workshops and the context:

- Most users (93%) of the Digital Craft Toolkit agreed that the Craft Toolkit helped them find new inspiration for their work; 37% said that they definitely changed the way they develop, design or think about craft products as a result of using the Craft Toolkit.
- In Malaysia, 70% of participants of the Design Innovation Pop Up Studio reported an improvement of their creative process. Participants felt they learned to gain inspiration from their peers and nature.
- In Uzbekistan, ceramic and textile practitioners participated in a practical dyeing workshop, after which they expressed their interest in continuing to work with the technique (although there is no data to evidence long-term change in practices).
- In Afghanistan, one of the participants, a female owner of a craft enterprise, said that the support received through The Virtual Workshop programme helped her successfully produce new jewellery designs.



*Image 1: A training in Turquoise Mountain's Alokozay Hall for the participants of the Virtual Workshop*

Another key outcome of the programme was the **increased capacity of participants to manage and promote cultural and heritage assets, including their own craft practices** (*Creative professionals have improved knowledge to be able to manage and promote cultural and heritage assets which will benefit the local economy and society*). In most cases, increased capacity occurred as a result of participants gaining business-related, communication or other entrepreneurial skills, or better understanding the opportunities to commercialise their products on local or international markets.

Eleven projects (out of 16) were able to evidence some degree of impact in this area, but it is important to stress that there is no data to show how participants implemented this knowledge in the long-term. Examples include:

- In Chile, workshops with carpenters and weavers supported them in exploring the commercial potential of their products, especially on an international market.
- In India, trainers in Gujarat provided women of Qasab with simple tools and training to take pictures of their products for advertising on social media during the peak of the COVID-19

pandemic. As a result, the community reported being able to maximise their reach on social media.

- After completing the first module of the Craft Toolkit, 60% of users agreed that they had a good sense of their goals and priorities for their craft business, compared to 44% at the beginning of the course. All respondents affirmed they had a better understanding of managing money after section 4 (with 54% strongly agreeing).
- In Malaysia, among the 24 participants in the workshops, 15% reported an increase in their communications skills, and 75% agreed that they were good at communicating about crafts.



*Image 2: Training workshop on product development for bespoke orders in Sarawak, Malaysia*

At this stage, there is not enough data to show the link between the training or tools provided by the British Council and increased income or economic growth. Two projects (Thailand and Afghanistan) gathered some evidence that could suggest a causal pathway between British Council activities and increased income for artisans. However, at this stage, there is only very limited data from the projects to evidence the link between improved design skills, new products or business skills, on one hand, and inclusive growth or increased income on the other.

In Thailand, testimonials from participants suggest that the projects (Wanita and Tai Lue), which equipped artisans with new design skills, resulted in tangible economic impact, indicated by participants reporting increased numbers of orders after the project and more employment opportunities as a result. They attributed the change to Crafting Futures activities.

Data collected by Turquoise Mountain in Afghanistan shows a marked increase in participants' revenues, which grew by 49.6% on average between the beginning and the end of the programme. It is difficult to establish a counterfactual in this case, but this rate of growth appears remarkably high compared to usual patterns of revenues in the sector. This data was supported by a number of examples of female artisans receiving large commissions shortly after the programme.



*Image 3: Business Training Session with Amin Jan Fayez at the Design Center, Turquoise Mountain*



The programme led to other outcomes in this outcome area, including the creation of spaces for local communities to learn about and celebrate craft heritage (four projects have evidence of this outcome). This was achieved through research with the local community (Argentina), intergenerational exchanges (Kyrgyzstan), or workshops with children who were exposed to a certain craft technique for the first time (Grant Scheme).

In at least four projects, participants were enabled to exchange ideas and strategies for sustainable craft practices (Grant Scheme, Thailand, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Argentina).



*Image 4: Craft leaders and practitioners discussing and mapping key issues for crafts, including sustainable practices, in Kyrgyzstan*

### 3.2 Outcome area 2: Partners and Institutions



The second area of outcomes in the Theory of Change focuses on impact at partner or institution level. Through this impact area, we are interested in understanding the connections created between organisations, their increased capacity and perception of craft, but also their role in the preservation of craft heritage.

There is some evidence showing that Crafting Futures might have supported the **recognition of craft as an important element** to respond to global challenges among key partner organisations.

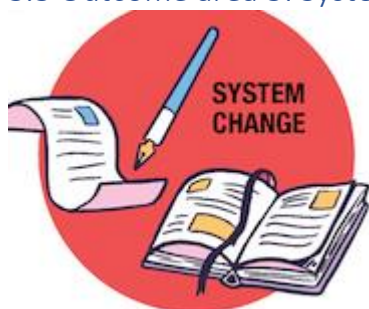
At least three projects (out of 16) were able to demonstrate some level of impact towards this goal, although most of the evidence is anecdotal:

- In China, research found that there was a lack of awareness of sustainable materials and recycling waste in craft production. Through the programme, UK artists shed light on how sustainability could be integrated into art creation, which led a cultural institution in China to reconsider global challenges including gender equality and sustainability, in art engagement.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the project established partnerships with important institutions in the country, which might contribute to increase key stakeholders' awareness of the importance of craft, although there is limited data to evidence progress.

Further impact on partners can be found in Malaysia, the team was able to evidence the impact of the programme on their main partner, IKN, which developed new collaborations within the craft sector and beyond (*Creative professionals have increased mutual appreciation and stronger professional relationships leading to new learning, practice and creative output*).

At least four programmes supported the documentation and safeguarding of craft heritage (Cultural heritage under threat has been researched and documented to safeguard against permanent loss), mostly through research projects in India, Thailand, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

### 3.3 Outcome area 3: System Change



The third outcome area was certainly the most ambitious of the programme and the hardest to evidence. It aimed to strengthen craft industries in target countries, in the long-term, by changing elements of the system in which they operate (e.g. perception of craft, policy framework).

Nevertheless, a certain number of projects were able to generate some evidence of impact in this area. At least six of them showed that they contributed, even in small ways, to promoting an enabling environment for creative and social enterprises (*Through our arts and culture programmes, promote an enabling environment for creative and social enterprises to support increased innovation and collaboration*):

- In Argentina, the research conducted through the programme paved the way to improve innovation and collaboration in design and crafts sectors. Partners highlighted the importance of the findings in opening doors for future research, but also as a starting point for any project aiming at strengthening the sector, as it provided an overview of good practices in design and craft across the country.
- In addition to providing essential resources to craft practitioners, such as the Afghan Artisan Toolkit in local languages and in printed copies, Crafting Futures Afghanistan kickstarted the development of a network of leading female craft entrepreneurs, which after a short period of time were organising events without the support of Crafting Futures.
- In Malaysia, anecdotal evidence shows that the programme supported the development of networks of local artisans and students. Some participants reported a marked improvement in their network and increased number of collaborations offers.
- In India, partners observed that the programme supported the craft sector in adopting innovation, more specifically leveraging digital technologies in the sector. This represented a real progress, according to partners, given the informal nature of the craft sector in the country.

The evidence is still mostly anecdotal, but it shows the potential for those projects to influence the wider system within a country.

In other cases, projects were able to affect policy change, and more specifically changes in the curriculum of the education sector as it relates to craft:

- In Georgia and Armenia, craft modules developed as part of the programme were approved by national authorities and will likely be integrated into the formal curriculum in vocational education programmes. In Armenia, the module is being considered by the Ministry of Education to be the skills development tool for culture professionals – heads of cultural institutions, venues, performing arts companies and other practitioners. This represents major progress towards the valorisation and professionalisation of craft in the countries.

- In Malaysia, one of the educational partners, IKN, was keen to integrate the Craft Toolkit into their programme. IKN (Institut Kraf Negara), established by the Malaysian Cabinet in 2001, is the National Craft Institute of Malaysia, and trains hundreds of students every year in six craft majors (Batik, Weaving, Ceramics, Wood, Metal and Rattan). Crafting Futures has instigated a lasting change on their curriculum and pedagogy for craft education.
- In Kazakhstan, Crafting Futures initiated discussions between craft practitioners and policy makers. The events exposed the lack of understanding of the craft sector by policy makers, which might lead to further discussions. In Kyrgyzstan the programme brought together craft practitioners to identify challenges in the sector, to which policy makers could respond. The long-term impact of those initial conversations cannot be assessed at the time of writing this report, however.

### 3.4 Outcome area 4: International Collaborations



The last outcome area focused on improving international connections between craft practitioners and sectors in target countries and in the UK, but also between countries.

All projects had an element of international collaboration embedded in the project design. At least ten projects were able to evidence impact towards increasing the number or quality of international collaborations, often by developing relationships between UK craftspeople/designers and local craft practitioners. This is the case, for example, of Afghanistan, Thailand, and the Grant Scheme.

Some projects were able to show evidence of increased cultural understanding and ability to collaborate internationally among participants:

- In India, 80% of all Crafting Future India participants said that they learned something new about craft practices from other countries.
- Partners in China reported that they identified new opportunities to collaborate further with artists or organisations in the UK thanks to the programme.
- In Argentina, university partners indicated that the programme enabled them to develop international connections, not only in the UK but also with other countries.
- Some users from the Digital Toolkit mentioned they would be interested in developing partnerships with UK craft practitioners or craft organisations. Some of them were unsure how to initiate such a partnership, however.

There is little evidence, however, to show that Crafting Futures contributed to increasing participants' skills to create new connections in the long-term, or that it contributed to improved perceptions of the UK in target country, although some projects might hint at those outcomes.

## 4. Impact: cross-programmes activities

### 4.1 Digital Craft Toolkit

The Digital Craft Toolkit was developed in 2018 and is available online to this date. It is part of the British Council's Crafting Futures project, aiming to expand crafting business learning opportunities



through an online platform. It covers a variety of lessons such as setting business goals, overall business planning, creating design concepts, developing products, sales and marketing, as well as budget management. Artists, designers, entrepreneurs or anyone else interested in crafts can freely access the Craft Toolkit online. The courses were developed by Applied Arts Scotland, a non-profit organisation operating in Scotland's craft industry (see Annexe 1 for further details). The content is available in Thai, English, Indonesian, Malaysian, Azerbaijani, and Spanish.

The Thailand and Indonesia also provided in-person training on the Toolkit. The impact of the training is outlined in the respective country sections.



*Image 5: In-person workshop in Kelayang, Indonesia, with craft and micro small and medium enterprises community in Belitung*

The toolkit comprises four modules, each with interactive exercises:

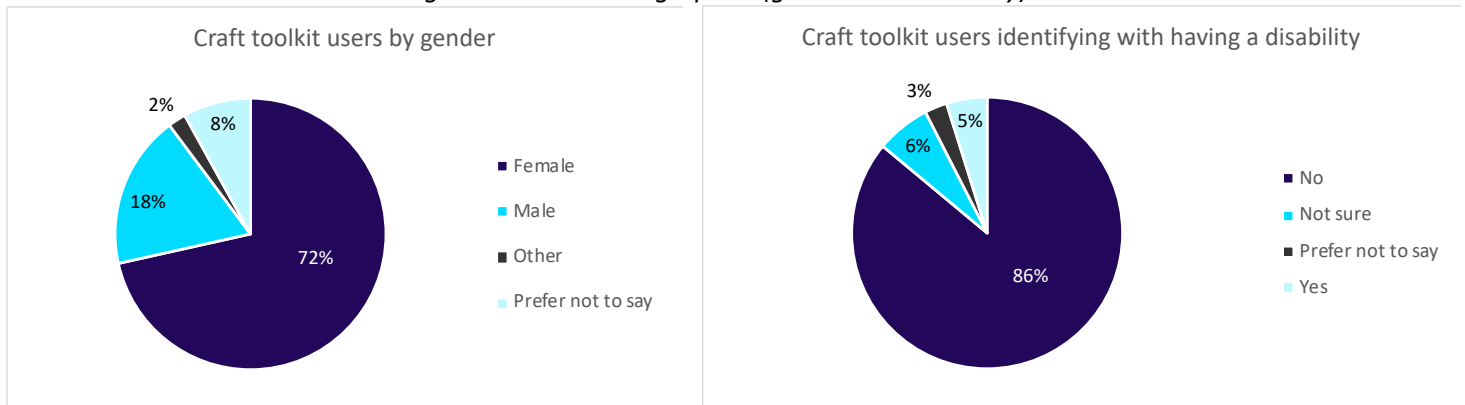
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. The Bigger Picture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal Setting</li><li>• Relationship Mapping</li></ul>  | <b>3. Selling and Marketing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating Customers</li><li>• Telling a Story</li><li>• Ways of Selling</li></ul> |
| <b>2. Planning the Details</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing products &amp; services</li><li>• Getting Inspiration</li><li>• Checklists for business development</li></ul> | <b>4. Managing Money</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Costing and Pricing</li><li>• Cashflow</li></ul>  |

To evaluate the impact of the toolkit, the British Council integrated a survey throughout the e-platform. As of January 11<sup>th</sup> 2022, users have answered questions at six stages of the learning experience:

- III. Onboarding questionnaire (186 responses, out of 966 users)
- IV. End of section 1 - The Bigger Picture (52 responses)
- V. End of section 2 - Planning the Details (41 responses)
- VI. End of section 3 - Selling and Marketing (29 responses)
- VII. End of section 4 - Managing Money (24 responses, out of 42 users)
- VIII. Final questionnaire, upon completion of the four modules (12 responses out of 13 users)

The survey toolkit users represented 22 different countries (see the Annex for full list), the five most represented countries being Indonesia (37%), Chile (23%), the United Kingdom (14%), Malaysia (12%) and Thailand (2%). As illustrated in Figure 3 below, the responding audience is mainly female and doesn't identify as having a disability.

Figure 3: Users demographics (gender and disability)



The following section outlines the contribution of this project to each outcome area of Crafting Future's Global Theory of Change.

#### 4.1.a Outcome Area: Individual enterprises, practitioners, students and teachers

##### **Outcome 1: Practitioners from creative industries were enabled to develop new forms of creative expression**

The interactive toolkit allows users to create their own to-do list. At the end of each module, the user is prompted with questions about how they can address development within their business.

From the surveyed users who completed section 1, 95% said they changed the way they develop, design or think about craft products as a result of using the Craft Toolkit (59% a little bit and 37% said they *definitely* did). Moreover, 93% agreed that the Craft Toolkit helped them find new inspiration for their work (61% said this was *definitely* the case).

A Thai artisan shared his experience following the training: *"I have produced something that is unique and never done before. This is the first time I had a chance to do that."*

##### **Outcome 2: Creative professionals increased their awareness of opportunities available to them**

Following the completion of Section 1 on 'The Bigger Picture', respondents stated that the Toolkit had helped them to understand and know more about:

- Funding opportunities (75% agreed)
- Partnership opportunities (84% agreed)
- Research (92% agreed)
- Best practice (88% agreed)
- Other markets and craft organisations (90% agreed).

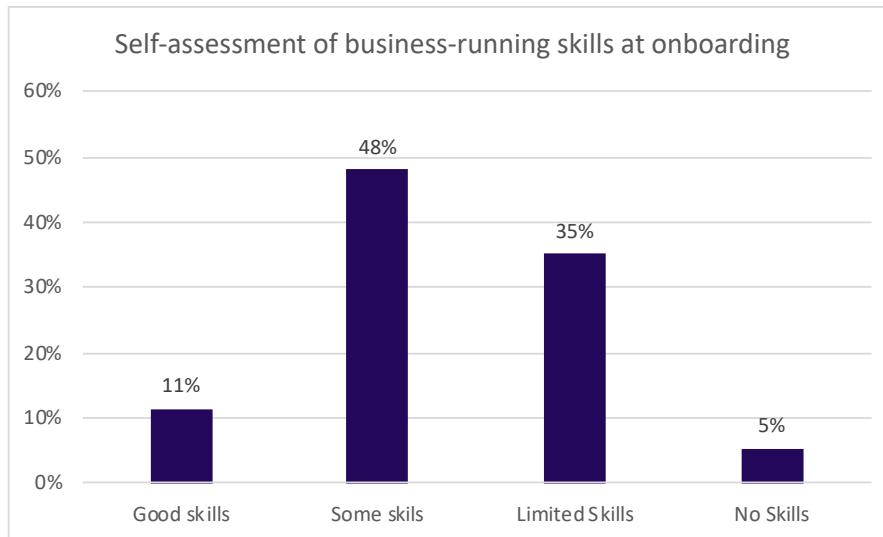
These insights from the Toolkit's users show that the platform has enabled wider awareness of the ecosystem of creative industries and craft. This knowledge is an important step to unlock opportunities for creative professionals and reduce their barriers to full participation in the sector.

With regards to market opportunities, section 3 guides users through topics such as creating customers, telling a story and ways of selling. After completing this module, 97% of respondents said that using the Craft Toolkit helped them to discover new opportunities such as new markets or new ways of selling.

Given the significant representation of women among users (72%), it is reasonable to assert that the toolkit is supporting underrepresented groups in the sector in terms of gender. However, the representation of disabled people remains low (5%).

### **Outcome 3: Creative professionals have improved their business skills, opening new opportunities for their enterprises**

Through its different modules, the Digital Craft toolkit has provided users the opportunity to upskill to meet the needs of their enterprises. As outlined in the Figure 4 below, only 11% of surveyed users stated they had good skills at running a business. This is evidence of the relevance of providing such skills to professionals from the creative industry.

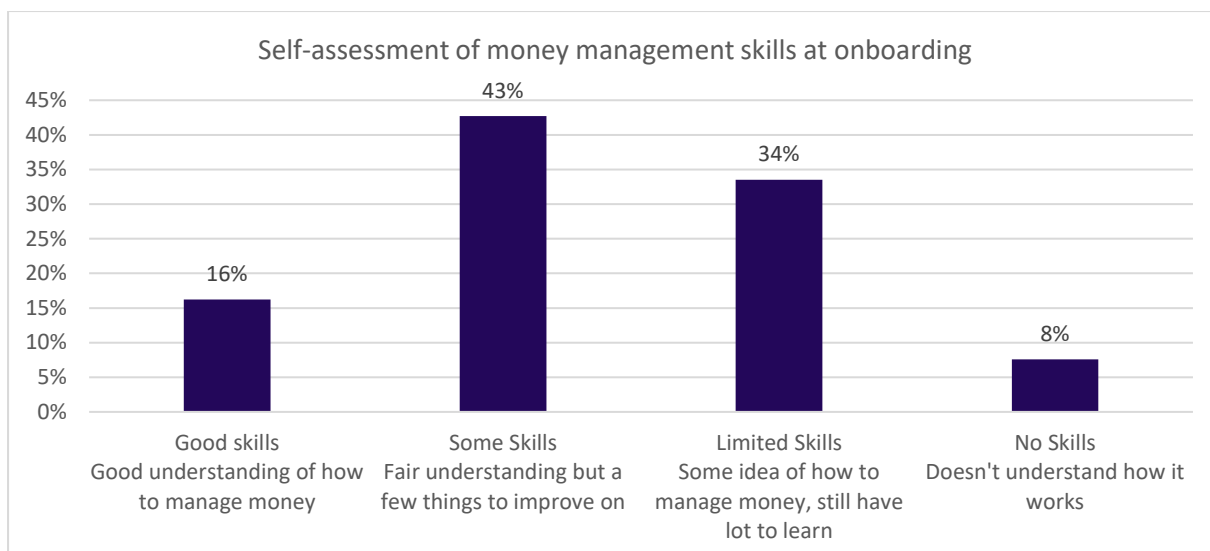


*Figure 4. Level of business-running skills at onboarding*

The training materials have enabled users to develop a better sense of their business goals and priorities: 83 % of users agreed or strongly agreed after completing the first module, compared to 66% at onboarding. Moreover, the “Selling and marketing” module has enabled users to have a better understanding of how to run their business: 66% of respondents affirmed they *definitely* had a better understanding after completing this module and 31% said that this had improved a little bit.

Finally, section 4 provides training on how to manage money, guiding users through costing and pricing as well as managing their cash flow. This was particularly relevant as 42% of respondents at the onboarding stage considered they had limited or no skills in this area and that they had a lot to learn. Figure 5 below outlines this in more detail.

*Figure 5: Level of money management skills before the training*



After completing section 4, all respondents affirmed they had a better understanding of managing money (with 54% strongly agreeing). Moreover, 38% said that the Craft Toolkit *definitely* gave them a better understanding of how to price their products, and 58% mentioned it helped them to understand this a little better.

It is worth noting that 82% of respondents of the final questionnaire strongly agreed that the Craft Toolkit covered what was important to them, and 18% agreed with this. This speaks to the relevance of the skills and knowledge provided by this toolkit. Moreover, creative practitioners have had an opportunity to put these skills into practice, as an artisan from Dahong village (Thailand) explains:

*"I've never joined this kind of training before. I'm glad to meet the instructors who had transferred the knowledge to us. At home, I simply produce the products. I've never been out of the community to sell any products. But when Wanita (and British Council) approached me, I accepted the offer. I'm the first person who goes out and sells the products, helps develop new tools and design new products."*

#### **Outcome 4: Toolkit users were given tools to facilitate their collaboration with others**

During section 1 ('The Bigger Picture'), users are guided through a relationship mapping exercise. Following this module, 88% of respondents stated they were planning to work with someone new as a result of using the Craft Toolkit.

This is evidence that the Craft Toolkit is encouraging practitioners and entrepreneurs to collaborate with others in the creative and craft sector, creating new opportunities for their businesses.

#### 4.1.b. Outcome Area: International Collaboration

##### **Outcome 1: Creative professionals from around the world increased their awareness and interest in the UK's craft sector**

The Digital Craft Toolkit was built to enable the translation of content into further languages. Being currently available in six languages, it has been able to reach creatives from over 22 countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe.

Throughout the four learning sections, the Toolkit showcases stories by Scottish and Thai makers, designers, and craftspeople about their creative and business setup and development.

After completing all the Craft Toolkit questions, 58% of respondents (seven users) mentioned they would *definitely* be interested in developing partnerships with UK craft practitioners or craft organisations. Four users expressed they would be interested in this possibility, but they don't know how to reach out to them. These initial insights show the explicit interest in international



collaboration, sparked by the Craft Toolkit's materials and content. Although the current sample is small and doesn't allow to make final conclusions, it sheds light on the potential that the tool has to promote connections among craft practitioners from different countries.

Nevertheless, current implementations of the toolkit have been done at the national level. It would be worth exploring how to facilitate international connections and collaborations, creating channels for interested users.

## 4.2 Grant Scheme

Crafting Futures Grant Scheme took place between 2019 and 2020. It was a collaboration between the British Council and the Crafts Council as part of the wider Crafting Futures programme.

The Grant Scheme was designed to provide an opportunity for individuals and organisations from countries outside of the existing Crafting Futures programming to get involved and contribute to the mission of supporting a sustainable future for craft around the globe. The primary aims of the CF Grant Scheme were:

- Building stronger connections with the UK craft sector and creating opportunities for future exchange
- Supporting craftspeople in the UK and overseas to have the ability to improve their livelihoods
- Generating greater understanding and perceived value of craft within the sector, alongside developing new audiences and markets
- Supporting the strengthening and development of the quality of creative practice and craft work globally
- Increasing opportunities for people to learn, train and enter craft practice.

Eight grants of £5,000 each were awarded to collaboration projects between UK-based practitioners, researchers and local communities or practitioners in target countries. The projects explored ideas or questions that will provide valuable insights to support the future of craft. The projects were delivered in these eight locations:

- Tbilisi, Georgia
- Sisimiut, Greenland
- Yupukari, North Rupununi, Guyana
- West Java, Indonesia
- Catania, Sicily, Italy
- Condega, Nicaragua
- Michoacán, Mexico
- Tonahuixtla, Puebla, Mexico

In July 2021, the Grant Scheme was replaced with the second iteration of the programme, which was announced under the name of Crafting Futures Digital Collaboration Grants. The new scheme has a focus on fostering important international connections and devising alternative ways of collaborating virtually. In total, five grants of £8,000 were awarded to collaborations between the UK and Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey, Brazil and India. As the projects are still in progress, this report will only overview the impact of the first round of the CF Grants Scheme that was completed in 2020.

The following overview was made taking into account the documents and data provided by the British Council, including four evaluation reports from the grantees. Due to differences in project design and aims the projects that had a stronger focus on engaging the community (e.g. Guyana project) collected more qualitative data than others.

#### 4.2.a. Outcome area: Individual enterprises, practitioners, students and teachers

##### **Outcome 1: Craft artisans developed new ways of expression by bringing traditional and contemporary practices together**

Supporting craft artisans to develop new ways of expression in existing craft practices was the main goal of a number of projects. The project in Guyana successfully used participatory techniques of ideation to generate new ideas on forms, designs and patterns that make use of and valorise indigenous practices. The project lead described that the results of the process were visible when comparing the products produced before and after the workshops:

*“This gave them space to try different forms, for example vases, goblets and cooking pots. [...] I used activities such as brainstorming traditional livelihoods and practices, traditional stories, everyday encounters as ways for the potters to think about and create designs, motifs and patterns. [...] During the workshop we built on these skills – using forms such as moulds, pinch pots, making whole objects by combining pinch pots, making tiles. We also made slips with different coloured clays, and terra sigillata to help seal the pots. Lastly, we worked on decoration techniques including mishima, sgraffito, burnishing, and use of additions such as sand. [...] Looking at the pots they had produced prior to the project, and the pieces they produced during the workshop, shows a creative turn towards detailed decoration, use of colour and diversity of forms”* – Project Lead, Indigenous empowerment through ceramic craft-making in the North Rupununi, Guyana

The photos below were taken by the lead for the Guyana project, Jay Mistry, showing the changes in the ceramic work before and after – before, the pieces had no decoration, and were copying ‘Western’ notions of what pottery should be, i.e. mugs, bowls and plates; after, the pieces were more diverse in their forms, were decorated using designs from notions of traditional livelihoods and identity, and had more colour.



*Image 6: Examples of ceramics made during a workshop in North Rupununi, Guyana*

A project participant also described the knowledge of craft techniques gained during the project:

*“I improved a lot, because the first time I came everything was rough. Because before, I did not know about burnishing, putting design, paint, nothing like that. When you came here, I learnt more things”* – Participant, Indigenous empowerment through ceramic craft-making in the North Rupununi, Guyana

##### **Outcome 2: One project supported craft entrepreneurs in scaling their operations**

In some cases, the training provided enabled craft entrepreneurs to scale their operations. In Mexico, one of the CF Grant Scheme was particularly successful in bringing tangible economic benefits to a local business:

*“End-to-end business design support for [redacted] in Tonahuixtla with [name redacted] and his employees over the span of 12 days and remotely afterwards - arriving to a solution for process*

innovation. [...] The result enables [redacted] to improve efficiency of production, while also scaling responsibly. [...] The project is ongoing, with 13 farmers now growing heirloom corn using the new approach. This is an increase from 3 farmers” – Project Lead, Future of Craft x Business Design

### **Outcome 3: Safe spaces to share ideas and knowledge were created**

The “Cultivating an Earth-based Practice” project recognised how important it is to create a space where learning and exploration can happen in a safe and collaborative way. With local partners, the project created a physical workshop space at Guapamacataro to deliver clay-based workshops with children and the community. This space, which can still be used after the project ends, was recognised by partners as one of the key elements of success of the project. Having a physical safe space meant that organic learning among the group was taking place in parallel to the activities:

*“Within this space, conversations naturally arose around clay, craft and learning, but this could not be controlled or predicted. It was a reminder that whilst the facilitator can provide the structure for what activities may happen in the space, they cannot really set an agenda or predict what each individual may gain from it”* – Project Lead, Cultivating an Earth-based Practice

The photo below was taken by Lone Maria Rojas, of the site El Granero. Originally built as a grainstore for corn and wheat, it was repurposed in the 1970s for horse stables. With neither grain nor horses kept at Guapamacataro anymore, this stable became the site of the project’s ceramics workshop transformation.



*Image 7: ‘El Granero’, a grainstore repurposed as the space for the delivery of the ceramics workshop in Guapamacataro, Guyana*

In Guyana, the workshops also led to a more trusting and collaborative atmosphere within the participant group, which allowed them to freely explore and develop their crafts in creative ways:

*“By the end of the workshop, the potters were much more a collective, discussing and sharing ideas, browsing each other’s sketchbooks. They also had many discussions about their traditions and knowledge, especially during refreshments or lunch breaks, sparked by what they were making or decorating. For example, there is a stand of the kokerite tree adjacent to the pottery, which [name redacted] was sketching in his book, and which started a conversation on how the leaves were used as a container when grating cassava. This stimulated [name redacted] to decorate a plate he was making with imagery of grating cassava using a kokerite leaf”* – Project Lead, Indigenous empowerment through ceramic craft-making in the North Rupununi, Guyana

A few projects focused on creating safe spaces for women to exchange and develop their craft. For example, the West Yorkshire West Java Cooperative Movement supported projects with two collectives of young women in Java and Yorkshire and looked into the types of ceramic projects that

could be created by these young women to confront social, cultural and economic challenges and their potential to create new craft traditions in the face of globalisation.

In Nicaragua, the project was developed in partnership with the AMCC (Asociación Mujeres Constructoras de Condega (AMCC) – Association of Women Builders of Condega), an organisation with extensive experience in women’s rights. Project partners found that when opportunities to exchange and share knowledge about building skills between women were created, women had the potential to become key actors in maintaining their homes. The project lead also spoke about the importance of creating such safe spaces:

*“The evidence reinforces that women need models, favourable conditions to access education and particularly for technical trades, with support from their family, communities and in society as a whole. Women benefit from safe spaces in which to train and practice skills but also to share knowledge and information about their/our rights and gender awareness, and form a critical analysis of roles and traditions”* – Project Lead, Women’s participation in teaching, learning, and promoting earth building revival in rural communities in northern Nicaragua

#### **Outcome 4: Children and young people were provided with an opportunity to engage in crafts**

Children and young people were provided with a number of opportunities to engage in crafts. Through the Cultivating an Earth-based Practice project, children participated in clay-based collaborative workshops in a specially designed space in their village. Some of the children had not had such an opportunity before and were very eager and enthusiastically engaged with the project activities:

*“For the majority of the children at the workshops, this was their first experience handling wild clay. Some of them said what they liked most was simply the way the clay felt, how cool and sticky it was. Some of them most enjoyed going to the river to get it and filling up our wheelbarrow, others said the best part was making the fire and seeing their pieces glow red”* – Project Lead, Cultivating an Earth-based Practice

However, the project lead also noted that children across rural communities might often experience an inconsistency in their general education already, and it is important not to lose the momentum created by the project. They advise that a more sustainable approach would be needed in developing such projects moving forward:

*“To provide meaningful educational opportunities and not exacerbate an existing problem, an ongoing learning programme needs adequate resourcing - long-term funding, capital investment and an experienced team or network of supporters. This is a work in progress, but it’s important to ensure that any momentum sparked by a pilot project isn’t subsequently lost”* – Project Lead, Cultivating an Earth-based Practice

#### **Outcome 5: Craft artisans exchanged ideas for sustainable practices**

A number of projects funded through the Grant Scheme saw promoting sustainability as one of the key elements of their work.

The project that took place in Greenland recognised the impact climate change is having on the country as well as its craft landscape and promoted field research as a catalyst for change among the local communities.

In Sicily, the project looked at the sustainability of the fashion industry and presented printmaking as a lens for building new paradigms for the production and distribution of fashion products.

Finally, in Mexico, the “Cultivating an Earth-based Practice” project revolved around a series of clay workshops onsite with children from the local school and the community, using an environmental arts approach to education. The wide range and the success of different approaches to integrating



sustainability considerations in craft-related projects continues to prove that sustainability and crafts are inter-related areas that can both take inspiration from one another.

#### 4.2.b. Outcome area: Institutions and partners

##### **Outcome 1: Project leads documented craft practices across project locations**

Across project locations, craft practices were documented in a methodical and systemic way. Some of the project leads even took innovative and personal approaches to craft documentation. As part of the Guyana project, the project lead and partners recorded different traditional ceramic forms and visual representations/motifs/petroglyphs in the area, as well as their uses, meanings and stories and links to Indigenous identity. This was done through participatory exercises focused on specific livelihood activities including fishing, farming, hunting and food preparation. These were then shared in a community exhibition, as shown below.



Image 8: Exhibition of the finished pieces realised during the workshops in North Rupununi, Guyana

*“I am currently working with a designer on the collaborative sketchbook, the major output from this project. We aim for the sketchbook to be completed by the end of June, and I hope it will stimulate more interest in the pottery and Wabbani within Indigenous communities in the region, nationally in Guyana, and also internationally. I also hope to use it to leverage more funding to continue working with the potters” – Project Lead, Indigenous empowerment through ceramic craft-making in the North Rupununi, Guyana*

#### 4.2.c. Outcome area: International Collaboration

##### **Outcome 1: UK-based and local craft practitioners exchanged knowledge**

All of the eight Grant Scheme projects revolved around collaborations between cultures, particularly between the UK and other countries. While UK-based project leads attended the countries and brought in their own expertise, they were able to learn from the local experts and bring that knowledge back home. The project lead from the Cultivating an Earth-based Practice describes that partnership with the local artisans was a key element in the success of the project:

*“Thanks to [name redacted] years of experience and excellent clay source, I was able to learn the basics whilst working with a beautiful type of clay. [...] We were able to use this clay in the workshops whilst waiting for our own dug clay to be processed, which also meant the children in the workshops got to*

*see a great example of workable clay. Since returning to the UK and running my own experiments, I know that finding a good source and knowing how to work with it is a process that takes a lot of trial and error” – Project Lead, Cultivating an Earth-based Practice*

## 5. Learnings

This section captures the learnings from the evaluation, across six areas of interest to Crafting Futures team.

### 5.1 The impact of COVID-19 on Crafting Futures

The global pandemic had a disruptive effect on Crafting Futures projects, causing delays in delivery and sudden changes in project designs. Part of the challenges linked to data collection can be explained by constraints due to the pandemic.

However, data collected from projects also show us that the disruptions brought about by COVID-19 led to surprising but welcomed and positive changes in project design and perhaps in the sector more widely. In most cases, country projects were impressively quick to adapt their delivery methods and move workshops, events and activities online.

In Armenia, for example, the project manager observed that moving delivery online ended up being a successful strategy as it enabled them to engage with a much wider audience. She did not expect such high level of engagement with online events and the project reach exceeded expectations, ultimately attracting praise from the Ministry of Culture. In the context of budget cuts and restructuring at the British Council, she considered this experience as an extremely useful preparation for a future in which a growing part of projects will be delivered online.

Partners in Central Asia also noted that COVID-19 had accelerated the digitalization process within the programme and increased the importance of activities linked to digital tools, such as the documentation of craft artefacts and techniques on social media.



*Image 9: Slow designers using environmentally-conscious practices and social media to reinterpret the heritage of Uzbekistan*

In India, the pandemic offered an invaluable opportunity to introduce digital tools to craft practitioners and accelerate the pace of adoption. As the project manager said: *“What was formerly a far-fetched notion of breaking away from physical spaces to virtual rooms has become a reality today*

*and among artisan communities – they have begun relying more on these virtual platforms to receive and disseminate information.”*

Given these examples, it appears that online delivery has its merits. Moving forward, British Council may consider the adoption of hybrid approaches in the face of expanding reach and financial constraints to support project aims.

## 5.2 The role of environmental sustainability

Although it was not a central theme of Crafting Futures at the time of starting the evaluation, environmental sustainability seems to have taken more importance in the years that followed, with many projects integrating sustainability considerations into their workshops and placing the connection between nature-based solutions to climate change and traditional craft (e.g. Grant Scheme, Thailand, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan). Even though data from Nepal was not submitted for this evaluation, the project was closely connected to the COP 26 conference that took place in Glasgow in November 2021.

As one of the project managers observed, sustainability is particularly important in certain contexts – for example in countries most affected by climate change. It needs to be embedded into the local context and respond to local craft practices in order to be more than a “buzzword”.

Another interesting observation by a project manager was the fact British Council has already built a vast network of experts, artists and designers active on the topic of sustainability, through programmes such as the Climate Connection or its activities around fashion. Crafting Futures projects should make sure to leverage on this network. Two project managers indicated that there was potential in bringing together experts and practitioners from different disciplines (craft, design, science), and other British Council projects, such as the Climate Connections, have confirmed this.

Moving forward, Crafting Futures may wish to strengthen its focus on environmental sustainability, and British Council may also consider integrating environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting element into programmes.

## 5.3 Need for long-term programme design and funding

In this evaluation, we saw that there was great potential for “future impact” in most of the countries, especially around system change and collaborations.

Project managers noted that to realise the impact they envisioned, another year or more of engagement with participants and stakeholders could be needed. Change at policy level is notoriously difficult to achieve in the short and medium term, but this also applies to outcomes linked to building capacity and skills. Without a plan to support long-term capacity development and opportunities, there is no guarantee that participants will be able to use the knowledge and skills they gained. So far, there seems to be limited understanding of the long-term impact of the programme, and, crucially, what could hinder the realization of long-term impact for participants and the craft sector in general.

While some projects were able to establish a strong legacy (e.g. embedding the Craft Toolkit into the vocational education curriculum), it seems that for most projects under Crafting Futures, follow-up or sustained efforts from the British Council or partners are needed to avoid losing momentum.

Long-term planning and funding are particularly important in educational settings, and even more so in regions with limited access to quality education. As one partner noted:

*“To provide meaningful educational opportunities and not exacerbate an existing problem, an ongoing learning programme needs adequate resourcing - long-term funding, capital investment and an experienced team or network of supporters. This is a work in progress, but it’s important to ensure that any momentum sparked by a pilot project isn’t subsequently lost” – Project Lead, Cultivating an Earth-based Practice*

This suggests that future programme should be designed for a period that could go beyond two or three years, with stages of engagement that build on the achievements of the previous stage, or on achievements of previous programmes.

#### 5.4 Approaches to power imbalance implemented through the project

In the context of growing reflections on the power dynamics involved between the UK and other countries (such as the live debates on decolonisation), many programmes tested approaches based on co-production and participatory research methods. Crafting Futures contains many examples of projects that have sought to address challenging questions around power and built equal and trusting partnerships. Some examples include:

- In Chile, the team first found that local partners were reluctant to engage with UK designers, as they perceived them as outsiders who did not understand their craft and traditions. The project managed to overcome initial fears by having UK designers actively engage with the carpenters, showing them her abilities and her openness to new learning. It is worth noting that the focus on crafting skills and moving away from a “foreign expert” discourse was key to mutual learning.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the Royal College of Arts School of Communication recognised the power imbalance between themselves and the partners and took a ground-up, collaborative and post-colonial action research approach which included co-learning and critically reflective forms of listening, sharing, making and documenting.

Amid a world more attuned to conversations about decolonisation, reflections on the role of British Council as a cultural relations agency will continue to grow, and these practices on participatory methods could serve as examples for future projects within Crafting Futures and beyond.

#### 5.5 Challenges linked to M&E

In some respects, the quality of the final evaluation – in terms of breadth, quality and reliability of data – did not meet initial expectations, and we should draw learnings from this discrepancy. We identified potential explanations for the limitations found in the data, although this list is certainly not exhaustive:

- Implementing a top-down approach in the evaluation on projects that were not originally conceived in this way led to greater challenges than we initially anticipated. Outcomes ended up being too ambitious or did not necessarily align with country-level priorities. Some project managers have shared that some outcomes ended up being irrelevant to their project.
- The complexity of the framework, with a high number of outcomes (and therefore, indicators) did not fulfil its mission, which was to provide a simple and common “vision” to bring a wide range of projects together. The complexity might have blurred the understanding of “collective impact”. Most outcomes from the Arts Theory of Change might work well at a strategic level within the British Council, but their complexity and the use of abstract concepts do not translate easily into what is actually happening as a result of Crafting Futures projects.
- This leads us to another challenge linked to the implementation of an overarching framework over multiple years: the lack of flexibility of the framework. Two project managers shared that their projects evolved significantly over the course of two years, and that it is therefore difficult to track the same outcomes over the length of the project. The framework did not – and could not - reflect their changing objectives.
- Further challenges involved in using a top-down approach were mentioned by two country managers, who noticed that most surveys were too complicated for some participants, such as those coming from rural areas and without formal education. As they were tailored to measure the impact against outcomes from the Theory of Change, many indicators and questions were not adapted to the variety of contexts in which they would be use, and in which heritage, culture and craft can take on very different meanings. Country managers were



expected to amend survey questions in a way that would make them accessible to their audiences, but that might have proven more difficult than anticipated.

- Although the framework included a mix of data collection tools and methods – from surveys to interviews and case studies – it is interesting to note that project managers made almost exclusively use of surveys to collect data against the framework. However, when considering the small numbers of participants in some programme and nature of the changes, it appears that qualitative data would have been a better data collection strategy.
- The top-down approach of impact evaluation is also problematic in the sense that it perpetuates power dynamics between end users and the British Council, and country-level projects and the centralised processes of the organisation.
- There is an obvious tension between the country projects’ adaptations to local context and their independence in delivery on one hand, and the need for data and insights at the global level. Challenge with this approach in the context of power dynamics between end users and the British Council.

Potential solutions to these challenges are proposed in section 6.2.

## 6. Recommendations

This section summarises our overall recommendations for Crafting Futures and M&E at British Council.

Category	Recommendation	Time horizon
6.1 Programme	6.1.1 Review the programme centralisation approach	Short-term
	6.1.2 Review impact expectations for Crafting Futures	Medium-term
	6.1.3 Implement other improvements to the programme, including hybrid approaches to implementation, focus on environmental sustainability and participatory methods, and longer programme design periods	Short to medium-term
6.2 M&E	6.2.1 Take a more flexible, bottom-up approach to M&E	Medium-term
	6.2.2 Build on strengths of M&E – continue to integrate M&E into ways of working and resource central teams	Short-term
	6.2.3 Integrate qualitative, participatory M&E methods	Medium-term
	6.2.4 Continue to invest in M&E capacity for British Council staff	Short-term
	6.2.5 Streamline collection of demographic data	Short-term
	6.2.6 Align M&E expectations with partners	Short-term
	6.2.7 Commission a long-term evaluation for Crafting Futures focused on systems change	Medium-term
	6.2.8 Evolve Crafting Futures’ Theory of Change and Global Framework through a review	Short-term

*Table 3: overview of recommendations*

### 6.1. Programme recommendations

#### 6.1.1 Review the programme centralisation approach

This evaluation uncovered the challenges involved in evaluating a programme that was not originally designed as a coherent and unified model. While it is in theory possible to agree on a set of outcomes and indicators for all projects to report on, a programme with a high degree of diversity in delivery models and audiences will pose challenges for cross-programme evaluations.

We recommend deciding at the outset whether a programme should be centralised, with common outcomes from which programme design flows, or whether it should allow each country to deliver based on a much looser blueprint. If the latter option is chosen, expectations for cross-programme evaluations should be reduced. If the former is chosen, expectations for M&E need to be very clear and should ideally be tied to funding arrangements for country programmes.

### *6.1.2 Review impact expectations for Crafting Futures*

Despite the limitations of the evidence base, this report serves as the first time collating evidence from the wide range of projects and programmes delivered under the Crafting Futures banner, and can serve as a point for Crafting Futures to reflect where impact can be expected.

- Pillar 1 (individual enterprises, practitioners, students and teachers): It appears that most of the projects have been able to achieve a degree of impact, when it comes to design and artistic outcomes. However, the evidence on economic empowerment and wider development outcomes is weak.
- Pillar 2 (partners and institutions), it seems most of the projects have not been actively collecting data in this area, so it may be that Crafting Futures needs to strengthen its focus on partnerships, learning from the handful of projects that have been able to influence partners.
- Pillar 3 (systems change), this report shows that there are promising starts in projects that can yield long-term systems change, but it is not possible yet to collect data on the long-term change. It may also be worth reflecting, for country programmes that are planning for programmes on an annual basis, how much of the long-term systems change thinking can be embedded into the planning? For cross-programme activities, such as the Grant Scheme, how much of the long-term systems change can be achieved with relatively small grants?
- Pillar 4 (International collaboration), it seems that some projects are strong on this element but not all, and it may be that not all Crafting Futures projects have actively thought about this element before starting the project.

At the same time, throughout the course of the evaluation, various world events including COVID-19 and political instabilities in countries have affected the progress of Crafting Futures. The Theory of Change for Crafting Futures needs to highlight more explicitly the assumptions underpinning progress, and externalities which may hinder progress, which links to recommendation 6.2.8.

### *6.1.3 Implement other improvements to the programme*

Section 5 has described a few areas of learnings that can be considered by Crafting Futures, including:

- adoption of hybrid approaches in the face of expanding reach and financial constraints to support project aims.
- strengthen its focus on environmental sustainability
- lengthen programme design periods, beyond two or three years, to capture long-term impact
- implement more practices on participatory methods.

## 6.2. M&E recommendations

Given this is the British Council's first time commissioning a long-term project to support a global programme on M&E, there are a lot of learnings that will support Crafting Futures' ongoing M&E as well as considerations more broadly for the British Council.

### 6.2.1 Take a more flexible, bottom-up approach to M&E

As mentioned in the evaluation methodology section, the lack of data collected against the global impact framework was the main and most important of the research limitations. Our understanding is that the Theory of Change, especially the illustrated version, was welcomed by country programmes but the uptake of the impact framework was limited. This may be due to the impact framework being too complex (with over 100 indicators) and not reflective of their local and programmatic realities. Given the diversity of projects under Crafting Futures, and the varied geographical and cultural contexts, while it is possible to come up with shared outcomes, it is very difficult to come up with shared indicators and tools. Instead of this top-down framework approach, British Council may consider more flexible, bottom-up approaches to M&E.

#### Example of a more flexible approach to M&E on a global level: Outcomes harvesting

Outcome Harvesting is an evaluation approach to help identify, formulate, verify, analyse and interpret 'outcomes' in programming contexts where relations of cause and effect are not fully understood. Unlike some evaluation approaches, Outcome Harvesting does not measure progress towards predetermined objectives or outcomes, but rather, collects evidence of what has changed and, then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention contributed to these changes. While it is less rigorous than other evaluation approaches, this may be more appropriate for Crafting Futures on a global level.

This will require British Council to provide more in-country support to teams to allow them to design their own tools and frameworks to measure that are relevant to the context. Once country teams build their tools, there can be a repository of indicators and tools being used so that countries can learn from each other.

### 6.2.2 Build on strengths of M&E at Crafting Futures

As mentioned in 6.1.2, Pillar 1 has captured quite holistic data across projects, and the Digital Craft Toolkit also shows an example of pre- and post-intervention data collection tools being embedded seamlessly into the programme. There are also a few country programmes, notably Malaysia and India, that have strong M&E processes and systems built - i.e. collection of pre- and post-intervention data, consistent tools applied across various projects, that can be learnt from. The central team has also shown a lot of interest and commitment to M&E, with support from a cross-section of British Council staff forming the evaluation advisory board. The richness of data and stories conveyed in this report is testament to some countries' commitment to implementing new M&E processes amid Covid-19 restrictions and other constraints. These are strengths to be built on and celebrated, through team meetings and continuously integrating M&E into the ways of working. Moreover, central teams should be adequately resourced to allow them to effectively coordinate programmes and ensure they are maintaining the essence and measuring the work happening within their portfolio.

### 6.2.3 Integrate qualitative, participatory M&E methods that are more aligned with ethos of Crafting Futures

Given the nature of many Crafting Futures projects, which have small sample sizes and work with artisans with informal education, survey-based tools (which are the main tools recommended by the Impact framework) may not be the most appropriate. Crafting Futures may consider exploring a range of qualitative, participatory M&E methods that the teams can use – especially under the pillar of systems change. This also comes with a recognition of the value of qualitative data. Qualitative data,

in forms of pictures, which have been lacking, would particularly be valuable to show visually the impact of Crafting Futures.

#### Examples of qualitative, participatory M&E methods

In the M&E briefing for Crafting Futures India and partners, there were participatory techniques mentioned by partners. Curiously, the data from these methods have not been submitted to TSIC for evaluation.

- Applied Arts Scotland mentioned the use of video diaries for Crafting Futures Mexico. They made use of the same three questions for all the participating artisans for consistency.
- Manchester Metropolitan University mentioned the use of case studies and interviews with film-makers for Crafting Futures Thailand, for the production of films of both social media length and 20 minutes.
- Unbox Cultural Futures and Dundee University, outside of Crafting Futures, previously partnered to conduct research with farming communities on hopeful futures. People from grassroots organisations worked as advisors, and they went back regularly with the farming communities and helped with the evaluation, in the role of “cultural guides”

In the M&E briefing, partners also expressed interest in the use of photovoice and participatory video. Most Significant Change was also mentioned as a methodology.

#### *6.2.4 Continue to invest in M&E capacity for British Council staff*

This evaluation has identified some major capacity and skills gaps in relation to M&E among British Council staff, and it is recommended that British Council staff be trained on topics including:

- Expected levels of evidence and requirements for sample sizes
- Transparency required in terms of cataloguing how data is collected
- Adapting tools and processes
- Storing of data and building of M&E systems
- Analysing data
- Building learning culture

The regional advisers structure is important to support British Council staff on day-to-day M&E tasks and challenges, and to quality assure their M&E activities. For Crafting Futures, we are aware that regional advisers were not in post for the whole duration of the evaluation in some regions, which may have led to some countries being able to collect more M&E data than others.

#### *6.2.5 Streamline collection of demographic data*

British Council may also consider issuing guidance in relation to collection of demographic information, covering gender but also disability status, as demographic information has not been collected systematically.

#### *6.2.6 Align M&E expectations with partners*

It is important to align M&E expectations with country programmes, but also with partners. The India programme has been able to capture the most extensive pre- and post-survey data, across all the Crafting Futures projects. In that example, M&E expectations and tools were shared with the partners before commencement of their projects, and as part of fulfilling their contracts, they needed to share M&E data. M&E training may also be provided to partners. This contrasted with experiences with some other partners, who were not able or interested in supporting with M&E requirements. This report could potentially be a starting point for discussions with the partners in aligning M&E



expectations. We understand that this approach has already been taken by other global programmes at British Council.

#### *6.2.7 Commission a long-term evaluation for Crafting Futures focused on systems change*

A few projects have shown promise in systems change but due to the lack of long-term M&E capacity present in-country, it is currently not possible to capture their long-term impact. It is recommended that Crafting Futures commission a separate independent evaluation focused on the systems change dimension, working closely with the projects cited in section 3.4.

#### *6.2.8 Evolve Crafting Futures' Theory of Change and Global Framework through a review*

Crafting Futures is one example of a global programme translating the Arts Theory of Change and indicators, into the programmatic level. It may be helpful for the British Council to reflect on the useability of the Arts Theory of Change and indicators, by comparing Crafting Futures' experience with other global programmes, as the compare and contrast may help British Council's Arts team determine any changes necessary or helpful to the Arts Theory of Change. This review will help determine changes that may be necessary for Crafting Futures' Theory of Change and Global Framework.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: Country Case Studies

Separate

### Annex 2: Digital Craft Toolkit

The Digital Craft Toolkit is part of the British Council's Crafting Futures project, helping to expand crafting business learning opportunities through online platforms.

The toolkit was first implemented in Thailand, as an e-learning platform in Thai and English. In it, 20 designers and craftspersons from Scotland and Thailand present their experiences through movies and interview videos.

The development process for the Digital Craft Toolkit consisted of two parts: content and website construction from March 2018 to July 2019, and a workshop on the use of the toolkit. In August 2019, the workshop was presented to 120 craftspersons and others interested in the arts supported by the Pentland Group; a leading fashion company in the UK.

The second phase in the Digital Craft Toolkit's development (November 2020 – June 2021) saw the toolkit fully translated and accessible across four of the Crafting Futures regions and six different languages: Azerbaijani, English, Indonesian, Malaysian, Spanish and Thai. New languages will be added in early 2022 including Armenian, Arabic, Dari, Hindi, Nepali and Pashto.

The toolkit comprises four modules, each with interactive exercises:

- 1. The Bigger Picture**
  - Goal Setting
  - Relationship Mapping
- 2. Planning the Details**
  - Developing products & services
- 3. Selling and Marketing**
  - Getting Inspiration
  - Checklists for business development
  - Creating Customers

- Telling a Story
- Ways of Selling
- Costing and Pricing
- Cashflow

#### 4. Managing Money

The Craft Toolkit is free of access, all content is licenced under Creative Commons, and it is available on multiple devices (smartphone, tablet, laptop/desktop computer). Crafting Futures projects in several countries have implemented this tool with local partners, such as Indonesia and Thailand.

The following list outlines the locations of the users that have completed the Digital Craft Toolkit's platform questionnaire as of January 11th, 2022.

Afghanistan	2	1%
Albania	1	1%
Algeria	1	1%
Angola	1	1%
Argentina	2	1%
Australia	1	1%
Azerbaijan	1	1%
Bolivia	1	1%
Chile	42	23%
Costa Rica	1	1%
Great Britain	2	1%
India	2	1%
Indonesia	68	37%
Italy	2	1%
Malaysia	23	12%
Norway	1	1%
Philippines	2	1%
Singapore	1	1%
Spain	1	1%
Thailand	4	2%
United Kingdom	26	14%
Vietnam	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Annex 3: Stakeholder engagement and research ethics

The document outlines measures that the evaluator, The Social Investment Consultancy (TSIC), will take to ensure that the development of impact measurement tools is conducted in consultation with local teams, in the respect of users' data and in an ethical manner. The evaluation aims at balancing the need for systematic and coherent impact measurement across programmes, aligned with the British Council's objectives, with the necessity to put local teams and users at the heart of the evaluation. TSIC's approach was informed by the methodology developed by the agency in 2019 ([USERS](#)), which provides guidance on engaging a wide range of stakeholders in evaluation.

### 1. Including stakeholders

The participation of stakeholders will take the form of calls with local teams and country managers. The Global Theory of Change will be based on British Council's latest Arts Theory of Change, but there will be flexibility for local teams to select only outcomes that they find relevant. Indicators will be adapted to the local context whenever necessary. Country teams will be involved in the development of the final outputs at different stages in the process:

- (a) **At the evaluability assessment stage:** after receiving documentation from a range of countries, we will conduct interviews with country teams for which we require more information. This will enable those teams to share valuable information that they did not have the time to write down. Country teams will also complete a survey with questions regarding their objectives and motivation to undertake impact evaluation.
- (b) **At the framework development stage (for countries selected):** the first step of the local framework development will be to organise an online (or in-person) workshop with the local team. During this session, the teams will select outcomes from the Global Theory of Change relevant to their programme and provide feedback on the Theory of Change. They will also be asked to think about possible ways of measuring the outcomes they selected and mention any difficulties that could arise from data collection.
- (c) **At validation stage (for countries selected):** validation workshops will be organised with local teams to gather their feedback on the final version of their local impact framework.
- (d) **Before and during implementation:** local teams will be responsible for data collection and analysis, but TSIC will be available to support local teams. Webinars will also be organised to support staff on specific aspects of impact evaluation.
- (e) **After evaluation:** after analysis, TSIC will share the final report with local teams and discuss the findings. TSIC will support local teams in disseminating findings with stakeholders, including their partners and beneficiaries, in order to facilitate an inclusive learning process.

### 2. Building a flexible framework

The result of the process outlined above (point a, b and c) will be a flexible framework in which:

- Local stakeholders are able to select the outcomes that are relevant to their programmes, and indicate outcomes that they would like to add;
- Local stakeholders can shape indicators and data collection tools to better reflect their activities and local context;
- Indicators are based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative collection tools. Qualitative research methods are especially useful for programmes that are in pilot phase, as they help capture impact on small samples and allow the team to gain insights on how change occurs.

### **3. Data protection and privacy**

For this project, data will be collected and analysed by local teams using data collection tools developed as part of the framework. TSIC will provide support at the data collection and analysis stage when necessary, but the goal is to empower local teams to conduct their own evaluation. It is clear that collecting data from users entails risks, and TSIC will provide guidance (as part of the Webinars and data collection guide) on how avoid causing any harm to users. More specifically:

- TSIC will provide advice for local teams to manage the data they collect on users, for example by encouraging them to anonymise personal data when possible.
- TSIC will also encourage them to respect the principles of necessity and proportionality (whereby only personal data which is adequate and relevant for the purposes of the processing is collected and processed).

### **4. Research ethics and values**

On top of the practicalities of stakeholder engagement in developing the monitoring and evaluation framework for Crafting Futures, we want to ensure that monitoring and evaluation will be conducted in an ethical manner, where all stakeholders – including us as the evaluator -- subscribe to a set of values.

1. **Accessibility:** There needs to be an active sharing of power - people who lack power and influence can gain it through working together in groups. Also use of easy language to avoid jargon, and recognition of different languages and non-verbal communication.
2. **Trust:** a culture of trust; including the creation of a safe space to make mistakes and learn.
3. **Flexibility:** ability to respond to needs of country programmes, so that it can be effective in leading to adaptations of programmes and changed ways of doing things
4. **Simplicity:** Use simple processes to achieve goals of evaluation and learning
5. **Learning:** actively learning from ourselves and others all through the process. Everyone should be trained in the benefits of coproduction, supported in positive risk-taking and encouraged to identify new opportunities for collaboration with people who use services.
6. **Intersectionality:** Intersectionality is a sociological theory describing multiple threats of discrimination when an individual's identities overlap with a number of minority classes — such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, health and other characteristics. Ensure participation in the programme and projects reflect the diversity of the communities
7. **Openness:** Ability to express an opinion and to be challenged.
8. **Respect:** respectful of the culture of the places in which the organisations work and live.
9. **Reciprocity:** Ensure that people receive something back for putting something in, and building on people's desire to feel valued
10. **Transparency:** Maintain transparency over use of resources and activities to ensure open participation