

10

ACTIVE

CITIZENS

YEARS

ACTIVE CITIZENS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD

The world is constantly changing, and with this comes new and varied challenges that communities must adapt to. But through this change, one thing remains certain; there will always be those who are committed to making a difference. People who are driven to take action on local issues, to improve lives in their communities and, ultimately, to make the world a better place.

Active Citizens was developed to empower such people. Over the last ten years, the programme has had a truly global impact. Ten years of committed and motivated individuals. Ten years of amazing stories of courage and inspiration. Ten years of communities taking the lead on creating positive change.

When the British Council delivered the first Active Citizens social leadership training workshops in 2009, little did we know that we were sparking a global movement. A movement that is now hundreds of thousands strong, reaches close to 80 countries and continues to address some of the biggest challenges of the 21st century.



ACTIVE CITIZENS IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR A BETTER WORLD.

Tilan Manula Wijesooriya, Active Citizen, Sri Lanka



Change in the community works best when it is led by the community. Active Citizens demonstrates just how powerful local action can be. As people address local issues through social action projects, the ripple effect can be felt regionally, nationally and globally. And the impact can be immense.

I'm often asked what makes Active Citizens as relevant today as when it first started. And the answer is simple. Active Citizens is an enabler. It empowers people, no matter where they are or what issues they face, to gain the skills and tools to take effective action. This adaptability, underpinned by a learning methodology that spans issues ranging from conflict and gender, to education and inclusiveness, means that no matter what new challenges today's world brings, Active Citizens are ready to act.

This publication is a celebration of the individuals and networks we call Active Citizens. These stories account for just a fraction of the impact the programme has had over the last ten years, but we hope they give you an insight into the power of this truly global community.

Sir Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive, British Council



TEN YEARS AND GROWING

For ten years, Active Citizens have tackled issues of local relevance and global significance, strengthening communities across the world.



ACTIVE CITIZENS ARE ONE MOTIVATED FORCE, TRAINED TO BECOME LIFELONG AGENTS OF CHANGE.

Waqar Ahmed, Active Citizens facilitator, Pakistan



Trindade, Brazil, was once a haven for disease-carrying mosquitoes, until Active Citizens mobilised their community to remove 20 trucks of waste and plant flowers to attract dragonflies, a predator to mosquitoes. Jardim Trindade is now improving life for residents and small businesses who benefit from a cleaner, greener environment.



THE LEARNING JOURNEY

Active Citizens training equips people with the social leadership skills to build trust and understanding within and between communities, bringing them together to address local challenges.

Through their training, they follow a powerful learning journey, which helps to build self-awareness and confidence, value the needs and perspectives of others, and deepen their understanding of the different systems that make up today's interdependent world. This process inspires them to engage peacefully with others and bring about lasting change.

This learning journey is known as the river.

The river

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

Me

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

Me and you

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

We

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

Social action

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



© Christopher Symes



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THE BEAUTY OF ACTIVE CITIZENS IS THAT YOU REALISE ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

Holly Keller-Cooper, Active Citizen, UK



© Juan Pablo Reyes/Inish Council

The power of social action

Change in the community works best when it is led by the community. Through their social action projects, Active Citizens empower a range of volunteers at the grassroots level, from civil society groups and students to business owners and local government, to work together to make the community a better place.

WHO ARE ACTIVE CITIZENS?

Partners

Our partners are the bridge to local communities. They are diverse, from civil society organisations, to universities, to local councils, and are all connected by a passion for positive change.

'Shoreditch Trust engages local people in activities that promote health and social inclusivity. Being an Active Citizens partner has strengthened our work in the community, opened new networking opportunities and unlocked a range of skills within our staff.' *Jacqui Roberts, Chief Executive of Shoreditch Trust, introduced Active Citizens into her organisation in 2012. They are now an Active Citizens strategic partner.*



© Shoreditch Trust

Facilitators

Facilitators are mentors. Nominated by our partners, they have a wealth of experience in connecting and working with local communities. They use Active Citizens training to connect with community members motivated to create change.

'I'm passionate about youth training and supporting reconciliation. I had an accident that left me severely injured as a youth, so have had to overcome many challenges. Active Citizens gives me the chance to be a role model and inspiration to others.' *Rashitha Delapola has been an Active Citizens facilitator in Sri Lanka since 2012, leading more than 50 training workshops.*



© Mahesh Fernando

Active Citizens

Those trained by our facilitators are empowered to become Active Citizens. They leave their training inspired and motivated to take on the role of change makers in their communities.

'I feel blessed and honoured to have been asked to be part of the transitional Sudanese government tasked with paving the way for change. Freedom, justice and peace were the words people chanted and it is what our revolution stands for. There have been some important turning points in my life to get me where I am today. One of these was joining this inspiring network – and family – known as Active Citizens. Thank you for being part of my journey.' *Lena Mahgoub, an Active Citizen from Sudan, was selected as one of four women to be a part of her country's new transitional government in August 2019.*



MILESTONES

Active Citizens was developed to promote intercultural dialogue and community cohesion around the world. We've done a lot over ten years. As well as training thousands of facilitators, who've gone on to train even more Active Citizens, we've broadened our reach through partnerships and projects that have connected us to diverse communities globally. Here's a look at some of our key milestones in that time.

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<p>We deliver our first social leadership training workshops in the UK, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.</p> <p>Our first partner organisations join the programme. Some, such as the Hunger Project in Bangladesh and ADAB in the UK, are still on board ten years later. Partner organisations become the cornerstone of the programme, providing a vital bridge to local communities.</p> <p>The Active Citizens toolkit is developed – the essential resource for facilitators. Over the next ten years, the toolkit is adapted to meet the needs of diverse communities, through themes such as social enterprise, art and peace-building, and is mainstreamed for gender and disability.</p>	<p>18,006 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>219 Social action projects launched</p> <p>We bring Active Citizens training to 29 new countries, reaching Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and East Asia. In Myanmar, the programme is first known as 'Connecting Communities', before officially adopting the name 'Active Citizens' in 2013.</p> <p>Inspiring social action projects begin to emerge. One example, from a Sudanese refugee camp, sees Active Citizens build a football pitch and develop new green spaces for inhabitants. Over the next ten years, Active Citizens launch thousands of social action projects worldwide, providing locally-led, sustainable solutions to community issues.</p> <p>At a workshop in Syria, a group of young Active Citizens spark the idea for Mobaderoon (Arabic for 'initiative takers'). The movement goes on to become a network of 5,000 activists working for peace.</p>	<p>27,561 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>740 Social action projects launched</p> <p>Active Citizens training is used as a core component of the European Union's Empowering European Citizens project, which builds trust and understanding within diverse communities in ten countries. This lays the foundation for future collaboration opportunities across Europe, such as the Empowering Communities in Europe project in 2016, to tackle negative stereotypes of migrants and refugees, and the Mutual Understanding, Respect and Learning project in 2017, to promote tolerance across different faiths, beliefs and ethnicities.</p>	<p>48,485 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>1,699 Social action projects launched</p> <p>The first International Study Visits happen in the UK, Pakistan, Kenya and Egypt, bringing together participants from 25 countries to build global networks. Over the next ten years, more than 800 International Study Visit participants gain new approaches to social action to share with their communities.</p> <p>In Lahore, Pakistan, Active Citizens training is delivered at a university for the first time, after being integrated into the curriculum. In just three years, an agreement is signed with the Higher Education Commission to deliver Active Citizens in every public university in the country. This leads to global university partnerships, as Active Citizens training is delivered in universities across 12 countries.</p>	<p>75,961 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>2,801 Social action projects launched</p> <p>Active Citizens training is adapted to support fragile and conflict-affected communities. Over the following years, this supports the efforts of Active Citizens working to rebuild communities after conflict in countries such as South Sudan, Ukraine and Colombia.</p>	<p>98,958 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>4,354 Social action projects launched</p> <p>Active Citizens training empowers young people across Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia to become leaders of change in their communities, as it underpins the European Union's Horn of Africa Learning for Leadership programme.</p> <p>Active Citizens is launched in the Americas, where in Nevada, USA, people of the Western Shoshone Native American tribe are inspired to start sustainable farming initiatives and educational clubs to preserve their native language and culture.</p>	<p>130,000 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>5,000 Social action projects launched</p> <p>The first Active Citizens social enterprise training is delivered to participants from around the world through an international workshop in the UK. Social enterprise training goes on to become a vital resource for diverse communities to unlock economic empowerment and support inclusion.</p> <p>The DOSTI programme in Pakistan, which uses Active Citizens training to strengthen communities through the medium of football, wins at the 2015 Peace and Sport Awards, organised by the International Association of Athletics Federations.</p>	<p>155,000 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>6,232 Social action projects launched</p> <p>In the Philippines, Active Citizens social enterprise training supports communities affected by years of conflict and extremism, through the European Union's CSO-SEED project. Meanwhile, in Fiji, the European Union's Valuing Voices project uses Active Citizens training to support indigenous communities to tackle issues related to education and mental health.</p>	<p>210,015 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>7,854 Social action projects launched</p> <p>In the Baltic states, Active Citizens is a key element of a project funded by the UK Government. Focusing on social cohesion, Active Citizens is used to bring together people from different linguistic communities to share experiences, co-learn and then co-create social actions that address common issues.</p> <p>Active Citizens training empowers young and emerging artists to use creative approaches to tackle community issues in Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia through the Artivism in the Horn of Africa project.</p>	<p>243,129 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>9,305 Social action projects launched</p> <p>Hull City Council becomes the first UK council to partner with Active Citizens. Connecting with people from diverse backgrounds inspires them to plan new projects and collaborations across the city, contributing to the sustainability of the partnership.</p>	<p>286,243 Active Citizens trained</p> <p>11,272 Social action projects launched</p> <p>Active Citizens arrives in Venezuela, where it begins to support at-risk young people and disadvantaged communities to build a culture of peace through art and creativity.</p>

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Active Citizens are one global community, and each year they come together to strengthen their global connections.

International Study Visits

These global events bring together Active Citizens from around the world, to share experiences and gain new ideas, to take back to their communities as they participate in workshops and see local projects in action. Since 2012, more than 800 Active Citizens have participated in International Study Visits in 14 countries.

Events for partners and facilitators

International Facilitator Development Workshops give facilitators the opportunity to build their skills alongside facilitators from other countries, while International Partner Networking events give Active Citizens partners the chance to connect and network with diverse organisations from across the globe.

Social Action Showcase

This annual event is a chance to celebrate social action, as Active Citizens from different countries come together to share inspiring projects from the past year. To mark ten years of Active Citizens, the 2019 Social Action Showcase is celebrating ten projects at an event in London. These projects are shown throughout this publication.



© Alex Brighton

LIVING IN SYRIA, DISCONNECTED FROM THE WORLD, THIS EVENT MADE ME BELIEVE AGAIN THAT WE ARE REALLY CONNECTED.

International Partner Networking Event participant



© Alex Brighton

MEETING LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS IN LONDON WAS LIFE-CHANGING. IT MADE US REALISE THERE IS A BIGGER WORLD OUT THERE.

International Facilitator Development Workshop participant



© Olesandra Pijunji

IT MADE ME THINK ABOUT HOW TO STRENGTHEN MY LOCAL COMMUNITIES FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.

International Study Visit participant



© Olesandra Pijunji

Social media competition

To mark ten years of Active Citizens, a social media competition was held in 2019 to showcase the power of social action. Five projects were put to the public vote on Facebook, receiving more than 11,000 votes. The winning project was Keep Clean, Keep Green and the Awakening of a Dream, from Pakistan.

Keep Clean, Keep Green and the Awakening of Dream

A group of Active Citizens at the University of Sindh, Pakistan, have been reinvigorating their campus and encouraging their fellow students to take more responsibility for their surrounding environment. After installing dustbins to tackle the growing issue of litter, and planting new trees to create more green spaces across the campus, they began to hold training sessions to raise awareness of environmental issues amongst the student body. To date, they have engaged 7,000 students and planted more than 1,000 trees.



© WAVE Foundation

Light to Life

In Bangladesh, a group of Active Citizens are raising awareness about mental health and well-being, as they look to find innovative ways to address mental health within universities, and urban and rural communities. Through awareness workshops, 120 Active Citizens and 625 volunteers have helped 1,200 young people learn about mental health and emotional intelligence issues.



© Dr. Amehade Temwo

Peace Ambassador Leadership Program

In Galle, south Sri Lanka, a group of 28 young Active Citizens, including some who are deaf and blind, have built a youth network representing the diverse ethnicities, religions and cultures in the area. In partnership with the International Youth Alliance for Peace, they have engaged with community members, volunteers and local government through religious festivities and community discussions, and have created a safe space where they can learn from each other and begin to build sustainable peace across the country.

CHAT21

This online platform, started by an Active Citizen in Brazil, provides 24/7 support for families with children diagnosed with Down's Syndrome. Many families in this situation are often excluded, as they have to fight for basic rights. The CHAT21 platform offers these families advice and guidance on topics related to child development, and has helped form an active network of 900 families, who previously had no way to connect and share experiences.

Tummy the Infant

In Gumel, northern Nigeria, Active Citizens have been supporting the families of infants suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and who can't afford ready-to-use therapeutic food, by developing a more affordable and accessible alternative from native fruit and crops. This new formula has so far improved the health of 20 infants, and five local women have gained employment as they produce and sell the natural formula to locals. These women have now taken on the role of educators in their community, teaching about the importance of proper sanitation, dental hygiene, healthy eating and breastfeeding.

CREATING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Katowice, Poland, 2015 – newly trained Active Citizen Majka Lipiak meets Artur Szaflik, who has spent the last 20 years confined to his bed after an accident left him paralysed.

Majka wants to help Artur enrich his life and connect him to the world outside. Using her improved leadership skills, Majka mobilises 30 volunteers to transform Artur’s bedroom into an accessible workspace, enabling him to learn new skills and start a career, all from his bed.



But they don’t stop there. Majka and Artur establish ‘Work from Bed’ – the world’s first marketing agency dedicated to providing jobs for people with physical disabilities. They are soon employing marketing specialists across Poland.



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

Majka, Active Citizen, Poland



Across Europe, Active Citizens are helping to build more inclusive communities. Through large-scale European-Union-funded projects, they are challenging negative stereotypes of refugees and migrants, tackling discrimination in relation to faith, religious belief and ethnicity, and bringing communities together to find shared solutions to common issues.



© Alex Brighton

Bridging access to mental health services in the UK

In Bury, Greater Manchester, Active Citizens are supporting people from local ethnic minority communities to overcome the stigma attached to mental health issues. In many communities, such issues are seen as taboo and a source of embarrassment, leading to many people suffering in silence and isolation.

Through daily group sessions, the Active Citizens speak to people about the barriers to identifying and addressing mental health issues, and help to raise awareness about the factors that contribute to positive mental health. They have also established partnerships with local National Health Service mental health branches, acting as a bridge to mainstream health services.



© Renata Kochuga-Hilensky

Inspiring migrant students in Poland

In Krakow, Poland, a group of Active Citizens have transformed a middle school dormitory into a consultation point for the growing number of students entering their community from migrant backgrounds.

Under the motto ‘Dreams don’t come true; you make your dreams come true’, the From a Dream to a Fulfilment project has helped the students overcome the challenges of integrating into a new community, by offering information and emotional support through group and individual counselling sessions.

As well as gaining a better understanding of the Polish education system, the students have increased their self-confidence and have developed new educational goals and a clear path of how to achieve them.

Promoting peace in Mexican communities

In Mexico, Active Citizens are supporting communities experiencing high levels of violence, largely due to extreme poverty and marginalisation, to bring about a new culture of peace and respect.

Through their project Constructores de Paz y No Violencia (Peace and Non-violence Builders), they have trained 130 students and 60 teachers about ways to promote peace. Through shared activities such as mural paintings, film screenings and debates, they are also strengthening community bonds and promoting social cohesion.

As a result, a wave of transformation has made its way through these communities, leading to more positive interactions. Schools have introduced new processes for identifying and dealing with cases of bullying and harassment, and painting workshops have been set up to empower local children.



© Nancy Lucero Padilla

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Marawi, Philippines, 2017 – hundreds of families flee when armed conflict breaks out between the ISIL-inspired Maute group and security forces. Leaving their homes and belongings, they now have no means of financial support.

A team of Active Citizens enters the scene, led by Rashid Bangcolongan. After providing emergency support with food and clothing, they work with the families to find a more long-term solution.

Inspired by their Active Citizens social enterprise training, they help 211 displaced families start new sustainable agricultural enterprises to sell products made from local produce, while garnering the support of local community members.

The enterprises bring economic activity back to an area ravaged by conflict and extremism, and help those displaced re-gain their confidence, self-worth and the financial means to support their families.

“ACTIVE CITIZENS CONSIDER DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES. IT'S ABOUT RECOGNISING AND APPRECIATING THE PERSPECTIVES OF OTHERS.”

Rashid, Active Citizen, Philippines

Active Citizens supports communities across East Asia to gain economic empowerment, tackle conflict, promote inclusion, empower women and strengthen civil society. Active Citizens social enterprise training supports people to address local needs through socially responsible businesses.

Strengthening social enterprises in East Africa

The Mvumilivu Women are an inspirational group of HIV+ women in Bungoma County, Kenya, who undergo a range of income-generating activities to benefit their community, including producing nutritious food products for other HIV+ people.

Thanks to the new resource utilisation and community planning skills they gained through Active Citizens social enterprise training, the women successfully put together a bid to secure World Bank funding to extend their impact even further. The training was delivered as part of a European-Union-funded project to build the capacity of 600 social enterprise leaders in East Africa.

Providing economic opportunities for women in Morocco

After her Active Citizens training in Morocco, English teacher Nouzha Halim had a renewed impetus, and the new tools and skills, to support women from Skoura, an isolated village close to her hometown. She started by introducing a small group of women, all of whom had no income but children to support, to the idea of starting a food co-operative, and helped them secure rent-free access to rooms in a small building from which they could bake their products.

As the women started making a small income from preparing varieties of couscous, they were inspired to branch out, and soon moved on to taking orders for cakes and sweet breads for feasts. Nouzha's support has given the women motivation to sustain the business into the future. They now also have a sense of freedom and self-worth, thanks to being more economically secure and from forming new friendships and networks.

Empowering marginalised communities in Egypt

Despite its high population, Ezbet Khairallah, an underprivileged slum area in Cairo, suffers from a severe shortage of public services and facilities. Through their El Ezba 2025 social enterprise, Active Citizens have been supporting the community since 2015 with a range of sustainable development projects.

Literacy classes are providing women who have faced issues such as domestic violence, forced marriage and limited access to education with new economic opportunities. While a new community school has helped to reduce drop-out rates amongst local children and provide them with the education they need to take the lead on the development of their neighbourhood in the future.



In Bali, Indonesia, a project to turn Nyambu into a sustainable eco-tourism village is using Active Citizens social enterprise training to enable local people to manage their own tourism enterprises and tackle increasing urbanisation.



“I AM NOT JUST A WOMAN AT HOME. I AM FREE. THEY THINK THAT WOMEN CAN'T DO ANYTHING, BUT NOW WE WORK AND DO MANY THINGS.”

Khadija Oukhlou, co-operative member, Morocco

BUILDING COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

Leeds and Bradford, UK, 2016 – Active Citizens from Jewish and Muslim communities go into schools and youth groups to discuss the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. For the first time, young people can talk openly about an issue that can be a cause of divide between the two communities.

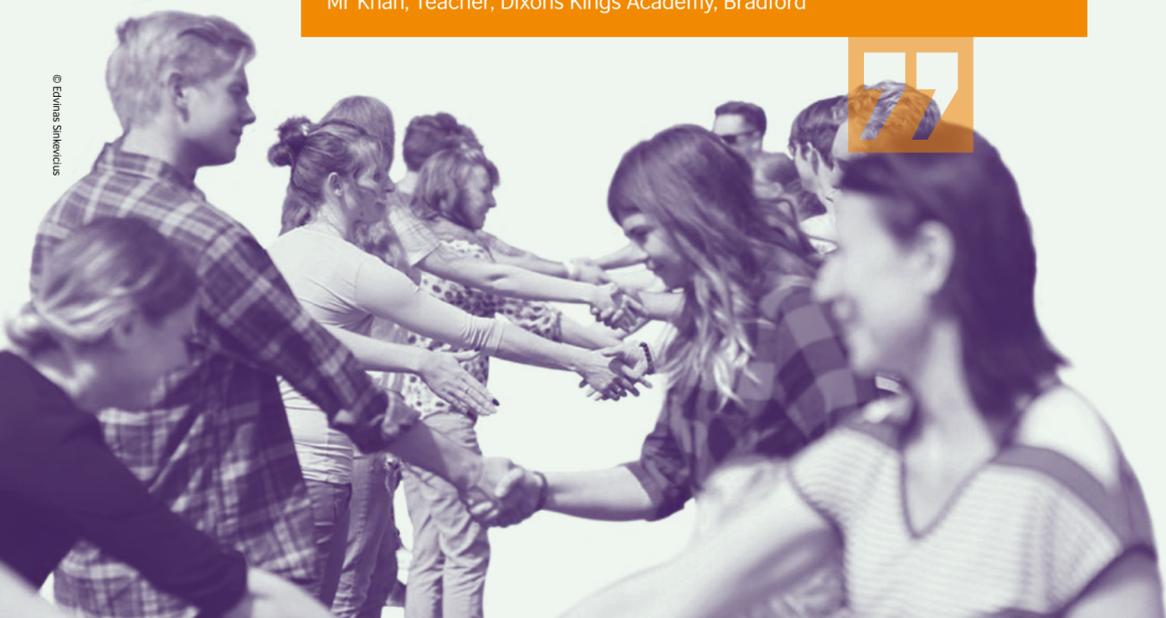
Using their deeper understanding of different perspectives on conflict resolution, the Active Citizens help the young people explore the conflict through their own identities. They show them how to hold strong beliefs without resorting to hateful viewpoints.

The project has a ripple effect in the UK, leading to a public statement of solidarity, which sees Muslim, Jewish and Christian representatives form a human chain around a North London mosque.

Across the UK, Active Citizens are strengthening community cohesion and addressing society's key challenges, such as supporting the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, increasing access for people with mental health issues, bolstering food banks and improving well-being for people with disabilities or suffering from social isolation.

“ THE FACILITATORS TOOK THE CLASS THROUGH A SERIES OF DIFFICULT, THOUGHT-PROVOKING ACTIVITIES THAT ALLOWED PUPILS TO SEE THAT JEWISH AND MUSLIM PEOPLE AREN'T REALLY SO DIFFERENT.

Mr Khan, Teacher, Dixons Kings Academy, Bradford



Empowering young people in Tunisia

Active Citizens training has given hundreds of young people across Tunisia the skills and awareness to become leaders of change in their communities. Through social action, the young people have mobilised their communities to address key social issues, reaching more than 2,000 people.

Iheb, from the Governorate of Bizerte, is strengthening social cohesion and youth participation in his community by re-appropriating public spaces for cultural and sports events, including the transformation of a burned-out bus into a public library. Like many, he has gained a renewed sense of responsibility, self-confidence and perseverance, as well as a sense that collective agency can lead to real change.

Meanwhile, Najda, an Active Citizen from the Governorate of Medenine, is helping young people understand the harmful effects of addictive substances and encouraging them to take a more active role in their communities.

Supporting community regeneration in Ukraine

In Chernivtsi, Ukraine, a group of Active Citizens have developed the town's first ever participative public space: Lighthouse at the Prut River. The space hosts cultural and educational events for the local community, to encourage dialogue and promote cohesion and environmental awareness.

Since opening in 2017, the Lighthouse has held more than 40 events and initiatives, with the support of local government, businesses and non-governmental organisations, and has attracted more than 50 media mentions.

It has also helped to rejuvenate the area, and community members, especially young people, now view the riverside as a positive space to meet up and spend time.

Raising awareness of mental health in the UK

When Active Citizens from London and Birmingham noticed similarities in the mental health initiatives they were working on, they decided to join forces and start The Delicate Mind. Beginning life as a small social action project, and now a registered charity, The Delicate Mind helps minority ethnic communities and many others explore how faith, masculinity and identity shape our understanding of mental health, and raises awareness of issues related to mental health and race equality.

Through workshops, research and advocacy, the charity helps to drive the national conversation about mental health, and recent research conducted on behalf of The Delicate Mind fed into a report for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the need for increased engagement with the South Asian diaspora in the UK.

By connecting with a diverse range of partners, from schools, faith groups and community organisations, to the YMCA Coventry and Warwickshire and HM Prison Stafford, The Delicate Mind has been able to reach an estimated 1,344 people from across numerous races, genders, faiths, ages and identities.

“ WITH THESE PROGRAMMES, WE ARE CONVINCED IT IS POSSIBLE TO MOVE MOUNTAINS.

Iheb, Active Citizen, Tunisia

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Ghour Al Safi, Jordan, 2016 – the forthcoming election is only months away. Sabah Al Shu'ar has run for parliament on three previous occasions, each time receiving just 300 votes, and she's not sure she can take another setback.

She is approached by a group of young women from the She Parliamentarian campaign – a national initiative that sees Active Citizens and young volunteers working together to bolster community support for female candidates.

They encourage Sabah to run again, and support her to change community mindsets about female candidates. Their commitment pays off. Sabah wins the election with 6,785 votes – an unprecedented result in the village's history.

Sabah's story isn't unique. After the She Parliamentarian campaign, Jordan elects its highest ever percentage of women members to parliament since 1989.



“WOMEN CAN SURVIVE IN TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES. THEY ARE CAPABLE OF FIGHTING AND STANDING. DO NOT HESITATE TO GO FOR IT.”

Sabah Al Shu'ar, Active Citizen, Jordan

Between 2012 and 2017, the Women Participating in Public Life programme used the Active Citizens learning journey to empower women in the Middle East and North Africa to increase their voice in society. Across the region, Active Citizens aims to deepen trust and understanding by working with civil society, schools, universities and government to address youth, gender and disability issues.

Helping sufferers of domestic abuse in the UK

In London, UK, Active Citizen Deborah Taiwo established a social action project to support women who have experienced domestic violence and sexual abuse. Through baking lessons, she helped the women explore how culture and experiences form part of our identity and can affect our relationships with others.

As they participated in the lessons, the women formed new relationships, and many spoke about their improved confidence and renewed sense of responsibility for their communities. Many were also encouraged to take courses to boost their employability. Deborah now has plans to establish a baking social enterprise to provide training and employment opportunities for even more women.

Campaigning against sexual harassment in Sri Lanka

In Colombo, Sri Lanka, a group of Active Citizens launched a project to respond to the finding that 90 per cent of females have experienced some form of sexual harassment on public transport. Using the tools and skills they acquired through their training, they designed activities to raise awareness, change mindsets and help prevent further cases of harassment.

Through an awareness campaign, they educated passengers, bus conductors and drivers about how to intervene in instances of harassment, and held workshops for drivers, conductors and bus stand officers on ways to minimise incidents. The success of the project, which culminated in a street march that attracted more than 1,500 volunteers, has encouraged the government to expand it to all nine provinces across Sri Lanka.



© Madhira Kumawala

“THE PROGRAMME HAS GIVEN ME A DEEPER SENSE OF AWARENESS AND HAS IGNITED A GREATER PASSION WITHIN ME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

Deborah Taiwo, Active Citizen, UK



© Alex Brighton



MOTIVATING LEARNERS

Swat Valley, Pakistan, 2014 – people are re-building their lives after Taliban control. As well as banning education for girls, the Taliban destroyed an estimated 800 schools in the area.

For children in the Swat Valley, a new hope emerges from the rubble: the ILMPOSSIBLE project.

Started by a small group of Active Citizens in 2011, ILMPOSSIBLE is now a national initiative, using the Active Citizens model to train volunteers to promote school enrolment and education in communities.

In Swat, the project trains 300 volunteers in one year, and supports the enrolment of 2,500 children. Inspiring stories start to emerge, such as that of Shahid Hussain, who has raised funds to build a five-classroom school – the first of its kind in his community.

Over the next five years, ILMPOSSIBLE recruits 15,000 volunteers and enrolls 295,000 children across Pakistan.

Active Citizens is inspiring thousands of learners across South Asia, as a core module in universities across Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Other Active Citizens projects in the region focus on inclusion and cohesion, as well as motivating young people to take the lead on advocating for more transparent local government.

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INSTEAD OF HEARING NEWS OF EXPLOSIONS IN SCHOOLS, PEOPLE CAN NOW HEAR NEWS ABOUT FRESH CLASSROOMS AND A GROWING NUMBER OF GIRLS BEING SENT TO SCHOOL.

Jafar Shah, Member of Provincial Parliament, Pakistan

”

Embedding Active Citizens in South Asian universities

In 2012, 900 students at Lahore College for Women University, in Pakistan, took Active Citizens training as part of their studies. This trial partnership, to introduce Active Citizens training into the university curriculum, aimed to tackle the country's growing social issues by teaching students about the concept of citizenship.

Amna Saeed, a 22-year-old pharmacy graduate at the time, saw the training as a life-changing experience. 'This was the first time I had thought about myself and my priorities in life,' she says. 'The training gave me confidence that I can bring positive change to my community.' Amna went on to recruit 1,000 volunteers to help her launch a kitchen gardening project that enabled people in poverty to grow their own food.

The positive effect on learners like Amna encouraged Pakistan's Higher Education Commission to make the landmark decision in 2015 to introduce Active Citizens into every public university in the country, making social action a fundamental part of every student's life.

Since then, Active Citizens has become a core part of education systems in countries across South Asia, including Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, inspiring thousands of students to take the lead on addressing key issues in their communities.



© Beehive Images



© Break Free: Women's Reconstruction of Self

Providing new education opportunities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

In Balata refugee camp, in the Nablus governorate of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, twenty Active Citizens participants came together to tackle a key issue: a lack of effective education for learners with disabilities.

They set up a dedicated education centre to provide hundreds of students with a more specialised learning experience, drawing upon interactive techniques and approaches. The centre also conducted awareness-raising activities, which led to a noticeable behavioural shift between students with disabilities and their friends.

Exploring democratic values in Myanmar

A social action project in Myanmar has acted as the spark for students across the country to initiate new democratic practices and political public debates in their communities. Organised by Active Citizens partner organisation Edulife, the project brought together student leaders to participate in a workshop and debate tournament on issues relating to politics and democracy.

Participants explored topics such as media literacy and freedom, how the state works, voter education and electoral systems. They then had the opportunity to visit parliament to discuss the issues they had explored. Since then, the participants have gone on to initiate social and political change in their communities, while sharing their democratic values with their fellow students.

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Kampala, Uganda, 2016 – local football coach Kazibwe Bright is troubled by the number of children living on the street and wants to make a difference.

He joins a locally designed Premier Skills initiative*, which teaches him how to use football to change the lives of young people through adapted training incorporating the Active Citizens learning journey.

He starts running football clinics for children in a local slum area, using the sessions to boost their confidence and self-esteem. He shows them how to make craft pieces they can sell and inspires them to participate in community cleaning activities.

As a result, the children from the slum improve their leadership and employability skills – and begin to live happier and healthier lives.

*Premier Skills is an international partnership between the British Council and the Premier League, which uses football to build brighter futures for young people around the world. In Uganda, Premier Skills legacy funding helped bring together stakeholders to deliver an innovation of the Premier Skills approach, incorporating Active Citizens.



Across Sub-Saharan Africa, Active Citizens training is underpinning innovative approaches to community development through art, sport and social enterprise, while social action projects continue to support marginalised communities, connect people across religious divides and improve education opportunities.

I BECAME HOMELESS WHEN I WAS NINE, AND FOOTBALL HELPED ME SURVIVE. I'M NOW CONNECTING WITH STREET CHILDREN AND GIVING THEM THE MOTIVATION TO AIM FOR A DECENT LIFE.

Kazibwe Bright, community coach, Uganda

Empowering artists to become change makers

The Artivism in the Horn of Africa project has inspired young and emerging artists from Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia to become leaders and change makers in their communities. Bridging the link between arts and social impact, the project empowered the artists to harness their creativity to advocate for important issues, and to use their artistic practices for local development.

Through their training, participants followed the Active Citizens learning journey, which gave them the skills, tools and knowledge to tackle local issues, improve livelihoods and strengthen community cohesion. After their training, they worked together to establish eight social action projects.

One such project is Step Up, which engaged a range of community volunteers to restore and protect a neglected historical stairway in Addis Ababa, used by hundreds of pedestrians every day. The positive effect on local businesses and the environment has been so significant, the local government is now rolling out the initiative to other public spaces in the city.

In Sudan, the Art Clinic project has helped medical students and doctors cope with community tensions and their stressful work environment by exploring their creativity and learning new artistic processes. The project has created a platform for them to change the public's perception of healthcare providers, and has led to a reduction in instances of violence towards health workers in hospitals.



“MINE IS A STORY OF TRANSFORMATION, FROM AN ARTIST TO AN ACTIVE CITIZEN, TO SOMEONE WHO TAKES PART AND ENGAGES WITHIN SOCIETY AND LOOKS AT THINGS FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW.”

Kpoyo Charles Julu Kpoyo, Artist, Sudan



REBUILDING AFTER CONFLICT

Ukraine, 2014 – people across the country want to help their communities respond to the ongoing conflict in the east.

Active Citizens training offers a fresh hope – a space to connect with others, approach issues from new perspectives and find shared solutions. Those trained are motivated to launch community-based projects that directly address the conflict.

Some establish youth camps for the children of Ukrainian soldiers. Others gain funding for universities that have relocated from conflict-affected areas to the west. One group works directly in the conflict zone, transforming school buildings into spaces for after-school activities for learners and families.

In the midst of conflict, Ukraine is inspired by a new wave of social change – started by Active Citizens.



I NOW FEEL THAT I'M PART OF SOMETHING BIG, AND THAT I CAN HAVE AN IMPACT.

Zahar Tkachuk, Active Citizen, Ukraine



IT'S WONDERFUL TO SEE NEW, DIVERSE PROJECTS ALL AROUND UKRAINE. YOU COULD SAY IT'S A 'BABY BOOM' OF SOCIAL ACTIVITY.

Bogdan Dubylyovskyy, Active Citizen, Ukraine



Across Ukraine, thousands of Active Citizens are receiving training to contribute to conflict resolution and community cohesion. They are also forging stronger networks across Wider Europe, as new Active Citizens initiatives spring up in Moldova, Kazakhstan and the Western Balkans.

© Yuriy Vereshko



I WANTED TO SUPPORT THE IDEA OF BEING ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR COUNTRY, REGARDLESS OF WHO WE ARE. I WANT SYRIA TO BE A BETTER PLACE THAN IT WAS BEFORE THE CONFLICT.

Rahaf, Active Citizen, Syria



Building hope through conflict in Syria

The idea behind Mobaderoon, Arabic for the 'initiative takers', was born in 2010, during an Active Citizens training workshop in Syria. The group of young people who sparked the movement wanted to promote peace by building trust and understanding within and between communities suffering through conflict.

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

Throughout the ongoing conflict, Mobaderoon continues to connect like-minded individuals and organisations, with the aim of strengthening the network and contributing to positive change in more communities.

© MAA World

ACTIVE CITIZENS ARE LEADERS

Caquiona, Colombia, 2018 – Ana Maria Jessie Serna has her first meeting with women at the Yanakona reservation, deep in the Andes. It's a community that's suffered conflict and occupation for over 50 years, and women here are bound by cultural stereotypes that perpetuate the dominating role of men.

Over four months, she works with 183 women, helping them recognise their rights and importance in the community. She sets out to rebuild their historic memory, using photography to help the women talk about themselves and their history.

The women are inspired to lead their people to a brighter future. The community elect their second ever female governor and many women join government-certified training to learn new skills to improve their lives.

Active Citizens in Colombia first started supporting conflict-affected communities through the UNDP's Manos a La Paz (Hands of Peace) project, and are continuing their support through new partnerships with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Colombian government. They join hundreds more newly-empowered leaders of change across the Americas – from social enterprise leaders in Canada, to leaders for preserving native American culture in the US, to leaders for community development in Mexico and Brazil.



I UNDERSTOOD THEN THAT BEING A LEADER IMPLIED MAKING LEADERS OUT OF OTHERS. I AM AN ACTIVE CITIZEN. I AM PART OF THE LAST GENERATION OF WAR AND THE FIRST GENERATION OF PEACE.

María José Cabra, Active Citizen, Colombia



© Pablo Quejar Bedoya

Fighting for disability rights in Uganda
For Doreen Nimungu and the members of her group, the Nebbi Association of Women with Disabilities, Active Citizens training provided a way to break free from the restrictions society had placed upon them.

Living in Nebbi, a district of northern Uganda where disability is seen as a curse, they faced discrimination and a lack of educational opportunities, until they were approached by a local Active Citizens facilitator who suggested they take part in training.

'After the training, the way we looked at ourselves changed. We felt we could contribute to society,' says Doreen.

The women no longer felt bound by stereotypes, and they used their new skills and confidence to start an arts and crafts business and savings scheme, giving them the opportunity to generate their own income. Since then, Doreen has become a local district councillor, and continues the fight for disability rights in her area.



ACTIVE CITIZENS HAS CHANGED THE LIVES OF DISABLED WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NEBBI.

Doreen Nimungu, Active Citizen, Uganda



© Zengjueh Girma



© Zengjueh Girma

ACTIVE CITIZENS ARE HAVING REAL IMPACT

How do we know that Active Citizens empowers people and communities to improve well-being and contribute to more open, inclusive societies?

Our approach

We assess Active Citizens impact at the individual, partner and community levels.

Each travels along a transformational 'change pathway'. Individuals can become community leaders or gain new employment opportunities. Partners can develop new networks or strengthen community ties. Communities can become more cohesive, inclusive and fairer places to live.

Our tools

We measure impact through a range of tools and in-depth evaluations, underpinned by the Active Citizens theory of change and evaluation framework.

'Active Citizens is an important capacity building opportunity for many of its partners.'
Research agency INTRAC on the impact of Active Citizens across the Middle East and North Africa

'The influence of Active Citizens is so strong and fundamental, that it would be hard to imagine the Mobaderoon network without the programme – the two are indivisible.'
INTRAC on the Syrian activist network Mobaderoon

'Through the Artivism experience, participants have become more confident about using their creative talent to motivate change in their communities, and they now feel they have the agency to achieve that change.'
Independent evaluation of Artivism in the Horn of Africa



I WILL TAKE THE IDEA OF ART AS A WAY OF HELPING PEOPLE. IT'S SOMETHING I WILL BE USING IN MY COMMUNITY BECAUSE WE DON'T USE ART AS A TOOL FOR APPROACHING THESE KINDS OF PROBLEMS.

International Study Visit participant

WE MAY DRESS DIFFERENTLY, SPEAK DIFFERENTLY AND LOOK DIFFERENT, BUT WE'RE ALL THE SAME UNDERNEATH, AND WE ALL WANT TO MAKE A POSITIVE CHANGE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

International Study Visit participant

ACTIVE CITIZENS: THE TENTH YEAR

Take a look at some of the highlights from the past year of Active Citizens.

Global connections

A total of 99 participants attended International Study Visits in the UK, Ukraine and Indonesia.

In the UK, participants explored how creative approaches can be used to address mental health issues. They also witnessed the power of volunteerism in action across a diverse range of community initiatives, such as the Comfrey Project in Gateshead, which provides a welcoming place for asylum seekers and refugees to socialise, learn new skills and carry out horticultural projects.

In Lutsk, Ukraine, participants were inspired by how young people are bringing about change in communities affected by conflict. While in Bali, Indonesia, participants witnessed how social enterprise can have a big effect on community development and how fair trade based on dialogue, transparency and respect can provide access to new international markets.



© Alex Brighton

Evaluating Artivism in the Horn of Africa

An external evaluation of the Artivism in the Horn of Africa project demonstrated just how impactful the Active Citizens learning journey can be for artists and their communities. The evaluation showed how young and emerging artists across Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia have created new spaces and opportunities for expression within communities, and have improved inclusion, social cohesion and collaboration. In total, the project trained 70 Artivists, who went on to engage close to 2,000 people.

Active Citizens in action

In Lebanon, the European-Union-funded DARWIC (Direct Action for Women: Reform, Inclusion and Confidence) project is using Active Citizens training to empower Lebanese women and encourage their participation in public life.

In Egypt, the Active Citizens Virtuous Alley initiative has inspired a host of social action projects to help restore a slum area in Cairo.

In Narva, an Estonian town on the Russian border, an Active Citizen has opened a café club that holds film screenings and musical performances, followed by group discussions. The project aims to bring Russian and Estonian-speaking youth in Narva together over their interest in music and film.

In Afghanistan, Active Citizens have been going into high schools across their region to inspire girls to follow a path into higher education and to show them that education is one of their basic rights.

Active Citizens reaches Venezuela

In 2019, Active Citizens arrived in Venezuela for the first time. Working to enrich the lives of at-risk young people and others in disadvantaged communities, the programme is helping to generate a culture of peace, and promote personal development through art and creativity.



© Odekerdt Brighton

WE SAW JUST HOW MANY PEOPLE EMBRACE EACH OTHER'S BACKGROUNDS AND CULTURES. EMBRACING THEM, WHILE LEARNING FROM THEM.

International Study Visit participant

GLOBALLY CONNECTED, LOCALLY ENGAGED

Since 2009, Active Citizens has been delivered in the following countries:

AFGHANISTAN ALBANIA ALGERIA
ARMENIA AZERBAIJAN BANGLADESH
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA BRAZIL
BULGARIA CANADA COLOMBIA CROATIA
CZECH REPUBLIC EGYPT ETHIOPIA
ESTONIA FIJI FINLAND GEORGIA
GERMANY GHANA GREECE HONG KONG
HUNGARY INDIA INDONESIA IRAQ
ISRAEL JORDAN KAZAKHSTAN KENYA
KOSOVO LATVIA LEBANON LIBYA
LITHUANIA MACEDONIA MALAYSIA
MEXICO MOLDOVA MONTENEGRO
MOROCCO MYANMAR NETHERLANDS
NEPAL NEW ZEALAND NIGERIA
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES
PAKISTAN PAPUA NEW GUINEA
PHILIPPINES POLAND PORTUGAL
ROMANIA RWANDA SAMOA
SAUDI ARABIA SENEGAL SERBIA
SLOVAKIA SOLOMON ISLANDS
SOUTH AFRICA SOUTH KOREA
SOUTH SUDAN SRI LANKA SUDAN
SWEDEN SYRIA TONGA TUNISIA
UGANDA UK UKRAINE USA VANUATU
VENEZUELA VIETNAM YEMEN

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

Active Citizens has worked in partnership with and been funded by a range of organisations, including:



The Arab Partnership
EU Non-State Actor