

ACTIVE CITIZENS

Globally connected,
locally engaged

2014

2015

Where we are

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

This has been delivered through a diverse network of 'globally connected, locally engaged' Active Citizens.



The Active Citizens content continues to be adapted to meet the needs of different individuals and diverse communities, helping to build trust and understanding, promote resilience and support sustainable development in our world today.

An excellent example of this is the DOSTI programme in Pakistan, which applies the Active Citizens methodology to strengthen communities and build bridges through the medium of football. This successful collaboration was recognised in November 2015, when DOSTI won a prestigious award at the Peace and Sport Award ceremony, organised by the International Association of Athletics Federations.

We've seen many successful examples of thematic innovation building on our core content, across social enterprise, youth, the arts, sport, and mainstreaming gender and disability. We have also been successful in broadening the range of partners and funders with whom we deliver and grow the programme across the globe, including civil society organisations, local and national governance structures and educational institutions.

Here we share some more inspirational stories and successes.

Andy Hansen OBE
Head of Society, British Council

Active Citizens in numbers



As of March 2015.

How Active Citizens works

Globally connected, locally engaged

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

Flexible yet relevant

At the heart of the programme is the Active Citizens 'learning journey', which is adapted to suit the needs of different audiences and communities. The learning journey has been experienced by a wide range of people, from academics to artists, from South Sudan to South London.

How the programme works

A global network of **partners** is responsible for delivering the programme locally. Partners are trusted organisations and institutions working with local communities.

Partners recruit **facilitators**, who then attend Active Citizens training. Facilitators are people with skills and experience in connecting and inspiring the community to learn, share and take action together.

Facilitators are responsible for delivering the learning journey to local participants, who are referred to as **Active Citizens**. They develop new skills, knowledge and motivation to work with their communities, building trust and taking meaningful social action.

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



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The learning journey of an Active Citizen

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



What Active Citizens say...

© British Council



**Nikolina
Talijan**
Bosnia and Herzegovina

'The training gave me exactly what I needed: a tool for sharing experiences and motivating people in my local community. I was amazed that there were so many other fantastic people who wanted the same thing – to learn how to motivate others. The commitment of these people to make something positive happen in our society motivates me to do more. Active Citizens simply keeps you moving forward!'

© Lebanese Center
for Active Citizenship



**Hiba
Shouaa**
Lebanon

'Active Citizens training has helped me accept people who have a different political or spiritual affiliation and to accept their different ways. It has given me effective techniques to use at work and has increased my skills on a personal level. All communities, whatever their characteristics, face several political and social problems. Active Citizens is unique because it is aimed at all categories in society and addresses social and national issues.'

© Le Xuan Dong



**Nguyen
Thi Trang**
Vietnam

'My heart says thanks for everything I learnt at the Active Citizens workshop. The experience helped us understand ourselves and each other and the relationship between global and local communities. It's also helped me realise what I can do to make the world around me a better place. I am now committed to making the most of any chance I have to improve where I live.'

© Christopher Symes



**Abiola
Abdurrazaaq**
Nigeria

'I've really harnessed the power of listening and learnt not to be too quick to judge others. I now look at the positive side of people and cultures, instead of focusing on the negative. If we can expend most of our energy on the positives, then together we will be able to build trust and understanding easily. By globally connecting, we can share our experiences and bring about sustainable development by engaging fellow Active Citizens locally to do what they know how to do best.'

What the facilitators say...

© Agnieszka Szydłowska



**Michał
Szydłowski**
Poland

'Active Citizens gave me a brand new perspective on what I was doing as a professional. I had the possibility to see that in spite of differences between communities, we all struggle with similar problems. The people I work with through the programme are starting to change their attitude; there is more energy to do something for the community. I have also started to see my community as part of a greater system and how it can influence other communities and in turn be influenced by them.'

© Maria Zaiets



**Maria
Zaiets**
Ukraine

'My first facilitator workshop was a personal challenge because of my shyness and introversion. Now, after six months of workshops and study visits, I've met over 200 participants, and I'm still in touch with over half of them. Active Citizens is about people, about culture, about responsibility and about communication. Nothing can go wrong when you have a dream to change the world for the better and you're not the only one.'

What our partners say...

© Shoreidich Trust



**Jacqui
Roberts**
United Kingdom

'Active Citizens partners embed the programme within the local context, bringing social action to life for participants living and working locally. We can connect participants with other local people and organisations, giving them access to networks already working towards a common goal. We help to share good practice, highlight unique examples of social change in the borough and offer a range of ways that individuals and communities can become actively involved.'

© Tanvir Murad Topu/
British Council



**Fatimatul
Botul**
Bangladesh

'Active Citizens promotes community-led social development and motivates young people to take responsibility to address and meet community needs using their knowledge, skills and experiences. The toolkit focuses on giving participants the skills to demonstrate their leadership capabilities to address local issues. This perfectly matches the Bangladesh context, where young people are working to encourage more civic participation in local government activities.'



Focus on:

SOUTH ASIA

In Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Active Citizens partners with a range of higher education institutions and other organisations to support people to play a bigger role in their communities.

Improving access to education

Communities in the Swat Valley in Pakistan have been working hard to rebuild their lives since Taliban control of the area ended in 2012.

As well as committing heinous crimes, the Taliban banned education for girls and, according to some estimates, blew up over 800 schools.

Since 2014, the ILMPOSSIBLE – Take a Child to School project has helped to boost school enrolment rates across the Swat Valley, especially for girls.

The project uses the Active Citizens model to engage and train young volunteers, who work together with community groups to promote the benefits of education and encourage school enrolment.

In the Swat Valley, 300 trained volunteers have enrolled 2,500 children into primary schools since the project began. Grants provided through the project have also been matched by contributions from local communities to help build six new classrooms in three primary schools.

Across Pakistan, ILMPOSSIBLE has enrolled over 110,000 children into schools in 60 districts. Using Active Citizens, the project is helping to create a sustainable system for promoting education by building strong community-based networks and is helping to encourage a spirit of volunteerism amongst Pakistan's youth.



Instead of hearing news of explosions in schools, people can now hear news about expansion in the number of schools, fresh classrooms and a growing number of girls being sent to school.

Leading member of the provincial parliament in Swat Jaffer Shah

Empowering citizens, increasing participation

The PRODIGY project in Bangladesh uses Active Citizens methodology and existing networks by empowering young people to increase civic engagement within their communities.

PRODIGY builds the knowledge and skills of young people and inspires them to take the lead on building trust between members of their communities and the government.

More than 500 young men and women, from a range of economic, social and religious backgrounds, have been trained using the Active Citizens learning journey. This has led to 75 social action projects being organised in local communities.

Facilitator spotlight: Shaukat Shekhi

The DOSTI programme in Karachi, Pakistan, uses the Active Citizens learning journey and the power of sport to give young people from deprived areas better life chances.

Shaukat Shekhi, a coach on the programme, trains girls and boys aged 12–18 to become young leaders and peace advocates within their own communities.

Shaukat uses his own experiences of growing up in a slum and suffering deprivation to connect with young people engaged in anti-social behaviour, mentoring and rehabilitating them through football.

Shaukat's own life was turned around when he had the opportunity to participate in Active Citizens training and become a full-time sport coach on DOSTI. He now has a position of respect within the community and wants to help more and more young people achieve the same.

Over two years, DOSTI has engaged more than 6,500 young people, using sports to promote social inclusion, community cohesion and conflict resolution.

Through these initiatives, young people are empowering citizens to hold the government to account, while also raising awareness of civil rights, such as the right to be respected regardless of race, religion or gender, and the importance of social inclusion.

PRODIGY is also working hard to engage young women in Bangladeshi communities, and more than half of those who receive training are female. Social action projects are helping to increase female participation in the decision-making process at the local and government levels.

By increasing the leadership capacity of young people to act as agents of social change, the Active Citizens learning journey is enabling sustainable impact in local communities.

Active Citizen spotlight: Ishan Jaleel

After attending Active Citizens training in Colombo, Ishan Jaleel has gone on to become a motivational speaker and trainer in Sri Lanka and overseas.

Born completely blind, Ishan conducts lectures in war-affected areas to young people left with disabilities as a result of conflict, working as adviser to the Ministry of National Reconciliation.

As youth adviser to the International Youth Alliance for Peace, Ishan has also jointly started the Ability Forum Campaign, which advocates for the sexual health and reproductive health rights of people with disabilities.

'Active Citizens works because it helps to connect participants with their target communities, not just locally, but globally, through study visits and social media networks,' says Ishan.

Focus on:

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Morocco and Iraq, Active Citizens is helping to deepen trust and understanding within and between communities.

Supporting women's empowerment

Women across the Middle East and North Africa face many obstacles when it comes to participating in public life. Active Citizens is helping to break down these barriers by building the capacity of women to increase their voice in society.

Delivered as part of the Women Participating in Public Life (WPIPL) programme, Active Citizens is helping to build women's skills and confidence, enabling them to have a more active role in community issues and the political process.

Active Citizens facilitators and partner organisations are acting as the gateway to local communities across the region, delivering training to community members to build their capacity for social action. They are also forming regional networks and coalitions working towards women's empowerment.

Over 4,600 individuals have been trained across Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, 80 per cent of whom are women. More than 40 social action projects have also been implemented, significantly impacting on communities and individuals.

In Morocco, for example, Active Citizen Naoul Hamouti delivered training to people in five different communities and organised an advocacy project to encourage women in Kenitra and Sidi Slimane to register to vote. This led to Naoul being awarded Kenitra's woman of the year and becoming the first woman to hold the post of Vice-Secretary General of the Istiqlal Youth Movement.

The Active Citizens approach is now being used by WPIPL in Jordan, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Coalitions involving Active Citizens partner organisations are gaining immense public support in these countries, such as the She Parliamentarian coalition in Jordan, which has reached one million people through advocacy activities.

Using Active Citizens to change the role and perception of women across the region, WPIPL is contributing to the global community of Active Citizens working towards social change.



Women Participating in Public Life uses Active Citizens training and networks to empower women across the region.

Improving education and changing perceptions

A social action project in a refugee camp in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is supporting the educational needs of students with learning disabilities and is helping to change perceptions amongst the wider student population.

Twenty Active Citizens participants at the Balata refugee camp in the Nablus governorate came together to tackle one of the main issues facing their community: a lack of effective education services for learners with disabilities.

Garnering support from the Yaffa Cultural Center and the camp services committee, they set up a dedicated learning space, equipped with specialised tools and run by education experts.

The centre has attracted more than 200 students, who now receive an effective education thanks to new interactive learning techniques and approaches. Performance is continually monitored by Palestinian partner the MA'AN Center.

Due to increased local demand, the centre is now looking to expand its services to take on more students. Community members have also noticed a considerable behaviour shift between students with disabilities and their friends, thanks to awareness raising activities.

Creating dialogue through the arts



The workshop empowered me to open dialogue with people, regardless of their background or culture.

Faisal Alawneh, workshop participant

A new way of delivering Active Citizens training is helping to give marginalised young people in northern Jordan a greater voice and increased participation in society.

Jordanian partner the National Centre for Culture and Arts (NCCA) enhances Active Citizens training by using artistic approaches to introduce participants to forms of self-expression and more creative ways of exploring issues.

Arts techniques such as interactive theatre are helping participants to discuss more difficult community issues and offer a more accepted way to open up dialogue about economic and social problems with the wider community.

The NCCA's network of professional artists is also providing ongoing support to participants as they deliver social action, through training in creative techniques such as rap music, storytelling and film-making.

Global connections

Each year, Active Citizens organises International Study Visits and workshops to bring together participants, facilitators and partners from across the world. These events give participants the opportunity to share ideas and get fresh inspiration for their own social action.

All images © Christopher



A life-changing experience

An International Study Visit in Uganda gave Active Citizens from 12 countries the opportunity to build new connections. Local visits offered the chance to see projects working to improve the lives of marginalised Ugandan communities, such as Mother To Mother, a group of women living with HIV/AIDS who are fighting against the stigma of the disease and generating income by re-using local materials.



'I had a life-changing experience. The social action projects we visited were inspirational and it has been a privilege to meet the other participants, who I believe will have a huge impact in the communities in which they work.' *Workshop participant*

Witnessing social action in action

Active Citizens from eight countries came together at an International Study Visit in Jordan to inspire and be inspired. Across seven days, participants shared skills and ideas, visited local community initiatives, and started to plan for the future. Powerful community projects, such as the Aqaba Film Club, which campaigns against domestic violence and gender inequality, gave the Active Citizens new inspiration to take forward ideas in their own communities.



'What I've seen is how empowering it is to have a community to work with and how coming together with like-minded people can create real change. It's about witnessing social action in action. I'm going back inspired!' *Workshop participant*

Exploring new themes

Active Citizens facilitators from across the globe joined British Council programme managers at a workshop to explore the future development of the Active Citizens toolkit. The workshop gave the facilitators the chance to test run new activities under the thematic focus of the arts and social enterprise and to feed into the integration of new content areas.

Active Citizens for social entrepreneurs

More than 45 social enterprise leaders from 20 countries participated in a pilot Active Citizens workshop in London. Using the Active Citizens toolkit, the leaders explored the role social enterprise can play in sustainable community development and the key elements of a successful social enterprise.

Training the next cohort of facilitators

A fresh batch of Active Citizens facilitators attended the 2015 International Facilitators Development Workshop in London to learn the approaches and techniques needed to cascade training within their communities.

You get goose bumps

In Pakistan, Active Citizens from six countries participated in an International Study Visit to strengthen their global connections and see how the programme is being used to improve the lives of local people. Visits to communities provided an opportunity to meet inspiring young female social entrepreneurs and volunteers working to ensure as many children as possible can benefit from a school education.



'I took my education for granted in the UK. When I come here and see how hard these children are having to fight to get a very basic education, it's humbling. You get goose bumps just thinking about it.' *Workshop participant*

You learn so much more from local people

Two International Study Visits in the UK – in England and Scotland – gave Active Citizens from across the world the chance to share experiences and exchange tools and techniques for organising social action. A 'marketplace' gave the Active Citizens the chance to share their experiences and provided a platform to explore similarities and differences between cultures.



'The marketplace was like a whistle stop tour around the world. You learn so much more from local people and everyone was so passionate about their own countries.' *Workshop participant*

Focus on:

UNITED KINGDOM

Across the UK, Active Citizens works with a wide range of local partner organisations to deliver the programme to all sections of society.



© Helen Clifton

Active Citizen spotlight: Deborah Taiwo

London-based Deborah Taiwo talks about her social action project that uses baking lessons to help victims of abuse explore culture, identity and relationships.

'In a world where everyone is busy focusing on their own personal aspirations, Active Citizens provides an opportunity to reflect and consider important issues that make up who we are.'

'The programme has given me a deeper sense of awareness and has ignited a greater passion within me to make a difference. The fact that people from different backgrounds can come together to explore sensitive aspects of their lives helps to identify similarities in beliefs and challenge our perceptions of others.'

'My project brings together women who have experienced domestic violence and sexual abuse. Through baking workshops, we explore how our culture and experiences form part of our identity and can affect our relationships with others.'

'The project has so far worked with 16 women. New relationships have been formed and a number of the women talk about how their confidence has been increased and how they plan to take more responsibility for their lives and their community. Some have also been encouraged to take courses to improve their chances of getting suitable employment.'

'Active Citizens inspired me to take the project forward and the training enabled me to clarify the idea and identify and engage key stakeholders in planning the social action. My new plan is to set up a baking social enterprise that will provide training and employment opportunities for women.'

'The managers of a local woman's refuge also plan to incorporate elements of the session into meetings for new residents due to its potential to reduce conflicts.'



Active Citizen spotlight: Eleri Williams

International Study Visit participant Eleri Williams speaks about how making new connections has been an unforgettable experience.

'My Active Citizens journey changed my life. As well as giving me new skills and knowledge, it gave me a network of friends and professional contacts across the world and a level of confidence and self-belief I never thought possible. It also helped me secure my dream job here in Wales.

'After my training, I got to attend an International Study Visit in the UK. There I met Thiru Kumar, founder of the International Youth Alliance for Peace (IYAP) in Sri Lanka. Both of us are firm believers in peace, and we formed a strong bond straight away, despite the huge differences we have experienced growing up in two very different continents.

'Thiru and I kept in regular contact and I offered advice on IYAP's constitution and governance structures. This led to me being the organisation's first international board member and now their International Youth Adviser.

'A year on from my ISV, and I regularly make use of the exercises I learnt at the workshop in my working life. It's an experience which no university degree, no job and no amount of research can prepare you for.

'The Active Citizens learning journey can apply to anyone, regardless of age, religion, race, social background or gender. It has a magical quality in that it creates lasting bonds and allows individuals to experience a deeply personal journey, whilst uniting them along common themes.

'Active Citizens works because the issues faced in one country and by one individual are not, cannot and will not be issues that only affect one individual in one country.'



Focus on:

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Active Citizens is helping to improve governance, accountability and citizen engagement in Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda.

Building youth-led community networks

Across Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia, the Active Citizens model is being used to give young people a greater voice in their country's future.

The HOLLA project trains young people and supports them to organise community initiatives that contribute to local and national development.

Over 30 youth leaders have been trained in collaborative leadership, while more young people are being trained to become role models within their communities. The project's aim is to train over 700 young people by 2016.

Together, these young agents of change are organising social action projects and forming youth coalitions to tackle some of the region's most sensitive social issues

Working through the Active Citizens model allows youth leaders to take ownership of social change by finding innovative ways to address the real issues they face. Young people are being empowered to play a significant role in the development of community cohesion networks.

In South Sudan, HOLLA youth leader Nunu Diana has initiated a campaign to help keep young women in school by donating sanitary towels. Through the campaign, she has garnered support from ten other youth leaders in South Sudan, demonstrating the power of collaborative leadership in action.

Ten youth leaders in Ethiopia are using creativity as a way to address the country's sensitive issues. Their cultural event, Empathy for Action, used poetry to explore views of immigration, following the death of a number of Ethiopian migrants who had recently lost their lives.

HOLLA is also connecting with existing Active Citizens networks, to amplify the impact of successful social action. Five young Active Citizens from Yei, South Sudan, have now become peer educators through HOLLA, using their experience of community-led projects to support new initiatives.

Funded by the European Union, HOLLA is giving young people across the Horn of Africa a platform to find creative solutions to issues they and their communities face. The projects illustrate how local action can be amplified through networks of like-minded people to have national and regional impact.

Active Citizen spotlight: Allen Nabukenya

A young artist and Active Citizen living in Uganda, Allen Nabukenya is running a social action project to upskill young people in her community and contribute to a cleaner environment.

'During my studies, I worked part time at a women's group that recycles used drinking straws. After taking part in Active Citizens training, I was inspired to start my own project to turn waste materials into new products.

'Fusion Art Workshop aims to build the skills of young people to use locally available resources to improve their own livelihoods. It has the potential to add value to anything we call 'waste'. We currently recycle polythene bags to create new products, including jewellery and footwear.

'The Active Citizens training motivated me to think about how I could make a real difference. I looked into the issue of poor waste management systems in our city, and the costly process of temporary waste management, which is hazardous to people living in the community.

'Using my new skills, I identified people and organisations that could help me make the project a success, such as Harnessing Talent Residence, which provides the space we work from. The project also involves other Active Citizens, volunteers and young people from the community.

'The youth in my community now know how to collect, clean and prepare polythene bags for recycling, and they have learnt how to curve and shape old car tyres to make them ready for use.

'We can pay those collecting the waste materials a small wage – enough to cover books and pens for school. The community is now also much cleaner, due to the amount of rubbish being collected, and people are beginning to realise their rubbish can actually have value.

'We're now in negotiations with organisations to showcase our products, and we're working towards our vision of creating a one-stop skills centre for all types of waste recycling.

'Through Active Citizens I've learnt things that are not taught at school or university, and I now know that I need to work with others in order to succeed.'

© Genaye Eshetu



HOLLA supports youth coalitions across the Horn of Africa

© Allen Nabukenya



Fusion Art Workshop produces products from recycled material

What's happening in...

Poland

In Poland, Active Citizens is supporting a city on the cusp of change, by providing Kraków City Council with a model to supplement its city revitalisation programme with local community development.

Through workshops and social action projects, Active Citizens is helping to bring about positive change and awaken the potential of Kraków's citizens to contribute to regeneration and community cohesion.

A project organised by facilitator Sławomir Drózdź is bringing together the residents of two neighbouring housing estates to improve their surrounding environment and explore ways of living better together.

The project has started to build bridges of trust between the two groups as they participate in joint activities. The residents are also starting to feel like important members of the community as the actions they take have an impact on issues that matter to them.

A project organised by Katarzyna Kiwała has brought together members of a housing estate in Azory to build an open-air chessboard, providing a place for their children to play. This success has encouraged neighbouring housing estates to make their own plans for revitalisation.

Other training participants are applying the skills they've learnt, such as appreciative inquiry, to build new relationships and connections to support their initiatives.

'Active Citizens has enabled me to make relationships with employees of Kraków City Council and borough councillors,' says participant Marcin Ornatowski. 'The workshops have made me realise more deeply what resources are available in the city I live in.'

Ukraine

Active Citizens facilitator Marta Tomakhiv believes Active Citizens can provide a solution to deal with some of Ukraine's toughest social issues.

'I believe the most painful question Ukraine currently faces is how to support people suffering from the conflict in the east of the country. I've been involved in two Active Citizens projects that support people involved in the conflict, and we've also gained support to set up a camp for children of Ukrainian soldiers.

'In Ukraine, the success of Active Citizens is boosted by the local support the programme receives. In my experience, all contributors, and authority representatives in particular, have eagerly supported the programme. Active Citizens brings together people of different ages and backgrounds, and creates a platform for them to communicate, exchange experiences and co-operate.

'The feedback I get from my workshops shows that participants are thinking about things they didn't before, like social change, social responsibility and intercultural dialogue. In Ukraine it really is the perfect time for Active Citizens, as the country needs a new generation of people who want to take responsibility for their own environment.'



Burma

A social action project in Burma is acting 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 120 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.

The students then had the opportunity to visit Burma's parliament to meet Aung San Suu Kyi and discuss with her the issues they had explored.

The participants have gone on to initiate different forms of social and political change in their communities, and their democratic practices are being valued by their fellow students.

Editorial

Editor: Alex Brighton

Active Citizens Global Programme Manager:

Monomita Nag-Chowdhury

Contact: active.citizens@britishcouncil.org

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



USA

In Nevada, Active Citizens is working with the Western Shoshone Native American tribe to deliver training and initiate social action. After attending workshops, where they were trained in the Active Citizens learning journey, participants have taken forward a number of community projects.

'Taking part in the programme was like someone turning on a light and telling you that you don't have to wait for state or federal government to be the panacea that's going to solve your ill. All you need to do is get together and work as a group,' says Active Citizen Keith Honaker.

Through projects such as 'hoop houses', which creates simple greenhouses where people can grow fruit and vegetables, participants have used new skills to get advertising and financial support and to encourage other people in their community to get involved.

Community member and Active Citizen April Negrette's project is an after-school initiative based on the ethos of the girl scout movement. She has set up a local group for girls to come together, make new friends, and learn about traditional Native American culture, customs and language.

Active Citizens has been delivered in the Americas in collaboration with Barrick Gold since 2014.

Active Citizens has worked in partnership
with a range of organisations, including:



The Arab Partnership
EU Non-State Actors