

# ACTIVE CITIZENS

Globally connected,  
locally engaged.



**2015 — 2016**

[www.britishcouncil.org/active-citizens](http://www.britishcouncil.org/active-citizens)

# WHERE WE ARE

In a recent interview, I was asked to reflect on my most inspiring experience as Chief Executive of the British Council. While there are many to choose from, I talked about an Active Citizens project in Uganda, which is empowering communities by training future leaders. It was my first time seeing Active Citizens 'in action', and what struck me was how people were using their new skills to lead change. They were making a real and positive contribution and bringing together people from different backgrounds, including district councils, young people and village elders. Whether it was farmers starting projects to sell produce, or women affected by HIV/AIDS building a local school, everyone was working towards creating a sustainable future for themselves and each other.

*Sir Ciarán Devane visiting an Active Citizens bee keeping project in Uganda.*



Since then, I've had the opportunity to experience Active Citizens in many countries. In Pakistan, I went to the Lahore College for Women — the first university to embed Active Citizens into the curriculum — and met students who were working on social action projects. I've come to realise that this commitment to making a positive impact in the community is the special ingredient that connects Active Citizens the world over. The programme's ethos 'globally connected, locally engaged' really does ring true.

I'm extremely proud that we can offer this great programme to so many around the world. Through our training, we're helping to develop leadership capacity in societies that need it the most. I recently spent time with Active Citizens working to strengthen civil society in Syria and within the diaspora created by the war. They are showing how leadership and resilience can work even when facing the most extreme challenges. They are also testament to the adaptability of Active Citizens. It really can work anywhere. And there has never been more of a need in our world for dialogue and working towards positive change.

*Sir Ciarán Devane  
Chief Executive, British Council*



# ACTIVE CITIZENS AT A GLANCE

**1 GLOBAL PROGRAMME  
CONNECTING OVER 46 COUNTRIES  
AND MORE THAN 525 PARTNER  
ORGANISATIONS WHO HAVE  
TRAINED 4,688 FACILITATORS  
WHO IN TURN HAVE TRAINED  
155,000 ACTIVE CITIZENS  
HELPING THEM LAUNCH 6,232  
SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS  
TO BENEFIT COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE.**

# HOW ACTIVE CITIZENS WORKS

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

### The Active Citizens vision

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

### How Active Citizens works

At the heart of the programme is the Active Citizens 'learning journey', which is adapted to suit the needs of different audiences and communities. This learning journey consists of four core modules (Me: Identity and Culture; Me and You: Intercultural Dialogue; We together: Local and global communities; and Social Action Planning) with a clear set of learning outcomes.



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



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



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



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

### Reaching diverse audiences

Active Citizens content continues to be adapted to meet the needs of different individuals and diverse communities. There have been successful examples of thematic innovation building on Active Citizens core content across social enterprise, youth, the arts, sport and mainstreaming gender and disability. This new content will soon be available as part of an interactive digital toolkit. New partners and funders are also being engaged to increase Active Citizens' reach across the globe, including civil society organisations, local and national governance structures and educational institutions.



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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.



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# UNITED KINGDOM

We work with a number of local partners, ranging from community organisations to universities to deliver the programme across the UK. Together, we work towards building more inclusive and resilient communities.



“ By combining the methodology of Active Citizens with our own creative arts practices, we have further developed our skills in the development of flexible and holistic programming. ”

*Helen Ward, Jack Drum Arts, UK*

“ It provided us with an opportunity to engage with the local community — without which, I would have left university without ever making a connection beyond the student world. ”

*Orli Goldberg, Active Citizen, UK*

## TACKLING FOOD POVERTY IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

**Struck by recent statistics showing the number of people relying on food banks in the area surrounding their university housing in Birmingham, five students set out to provide some much needed support to the local volunteers.**

Between 2015 and 2016, more than 100,000 three-day packs of emergency food supplies were given out by food banks across the West Midlands, while in the same year this number reached more than 1 million nationally.

As part of the Active Citizens programme at partner organisation 3FF, a multi-faith team of students initiated the Outnumber Hunger social action project at their university campus and in the wider community, to encourage people to donate vital food resources for the local food bank.

‘We were overwhelmed by the amount of families using the food bank and the sheer level of organisation required by its dedicated volunteers. A food drive was a simple and effective way to collect all of the essentials they needed,’ says team member Hana Begum.



The team applied skills they had learnt through Active Citizens, such as collaborative leadership, volunteer recruitment and publicity. Thanks to awareness raising through flyers and social media, as well as direct canvassing at the university and local supermarkets, they collected a staggering 690kg of food in just two days.

‘It was an extremely proud moment discovering we had collected so many food donations. The food bank manager said she couldn’t believe a group of students had achieved so much in such a short space of time,’ says team member Grace Louisy.

By tackling food poverty, the team not only strengthened their bonds with each other through effective team working, but also built connections with people in the local community.

‘I was able to see the local area around our university in a brand new light. I was exposed to the poverty and food wastage that was happening almost literally on our doorstep. I also learnt a lot from our group, about different faiths and outlooks. I probably would never have met the people in my team otherwise,’ says team member Orli Goldberg.

**BUILDING THE CAPACITY  
OF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

**Helen Ward from Jack Drum Arts describes how using Active Citizens methodology has helped build her organisation’s capacity and connect some of the North East’s most isolated communities with the rest of the world.**

**Why did Jack Drum Arts decide to get involved in Active Citizens?**  
Being part of this global initiative has enabled us to connect some very isolated communities with the rest of the world through the expansive network of Active Citizens partners. It has also inspired our participants to deliver local social action projects that are meaningful and sustainable.

**How has being an Active Citizens partner supported your work?**  
Through our participation in the programme we have been able to support and inspire groups and individuals to dream big and implement some very innovative and ambitious projects.



For example, after returning from an International Study Visit, one Active Citizens participant began to support our youth sessions. We could see her passion and motivation, and we supported her plan to develop a community choir by giving her the opportunity to pilot her approach by running a short term community learning course for adults with learning disabilities. This has helped her to progress into employment in her field and she has also expressed interest in becoming an Active Citizens facilitator to further share her learning and experience.

**What have been the results?**  
Being part of Active Citizens has had a huge impact on our organisation. We’ve been developing exciting new models and methodologies, adapting resources from the toolkit, and trying new methods of recruitment and course structures. The learning from this will enable us to further engage, inspire and support future participants across all our provisions.

“ **Through our participation in the programme we have been able to support and inspire groups and individuals to dream big and implement some very innovative and ambitious projects.** ”  
*Helen Ward, Jack Drum Arts, UK*

**BUILDING CONFIDENCE,  
SHARING PERSPECTIVES**

**Partner organisations ADAB and Oblong have been using Active Citizens to reach some of the UK’s most disadvantaged communities, helping them increase their confidence and nurture their ideas into social action.**

In Bury, Greater Manchester, ADAB has been using the Active Citizens training to reach some of the town’s most deprived communities. The organisation works mainly with people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, many of whom live in Bury’s poorest neighbourhoods and experience multiple layers of deprivation, including poverty, unemployment and poor English language skills.

By becoming Active Citizens, these individuals have been able to increase their confidence by taking part in workshops and participating actively in their community through social action projects.

‘Active Citizens allows us to bring in young people who may otherwise not have engaged with us. It acts as a catalyst to bring the elements of our training together, offering people the opportunity to broaden their horizons and build different perspectives,’ explains Tan Ahmed, Active Citizens co-ordinator at ADAB.

In 2015, Leeds-based organisation Oblong also used the Active Citizens learning journey to help build confidence among participants, many of whom struggle with the interlinked problems of a lack of skills, social isolation and low engagement in their community.

‘The biggest success has been the impact on the individual participants. Some people join us with very little confidence, feeling disempowered and isolated. By the end of the project they have grown in confidence and are fully engaged in working together to make their ideas a reality,’ explains Duncan Millard, Active Citizens co-ordinator at Oblong.

By partnering with local organisations, Active Citizens is giving hard-to-reach participants a unique opportunity to work with like-minded people who can support their aspirations, provide resources and nurture their ideas into action.



“ **For many of those involved, it was the first time that they had truly felt connected to their community and empowered to make changes. It started many people on a journey of involvement and action that will carry on for years.** ”  
*Duncan Millard, Oblong, UK*

**FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS**

- New UK partners join the programme.
- Active Citizens Social Leadership Programme enables wider UK participation.

# MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Active Citizens works through civil society, schools, universities and government ministries to provide opportunities for youth and women in mainly marginalised communities to create positive social change across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Morocco and Iraq.



“ I learned that having different opinions is not wrong. We see things differently but ... the most important thing is a shared purpose to achieve our goals. ”

*Active Citizen, Iraq*

“ It goes beyond training people. It influences curriculums and school policies. It improves relationships between students, students and teachers, teachers and teachers, and the wider community itself. ”

*Wissam Samhat,  
British Council, Lebanon*

## INTRODUCING ACTIVE CITIZENS IN SCHOOLS ACROSS LEBANON

**Wissam Samhat, from the Active Citizens pilot programme in Lebanon, talks about introducing Active Citizens into schools and the remarkable success this has achieved.**

### Why schools?

We've seen Active Citizens really take off among young people in Lebanon, and we wanted to offer the opportunity to youth outside the catchment zones of our partner NGOs, who may otherwise not get to experience Active Citizens. Schools were the best way to reach young people in new communities, thereby increasing the sustainability of the programme in Lebanon.

### What was the approach?

We ran a pilot project with the Lebanese Maronite Order school network, who became our entry point for bringing Active Citizens to the school setting. Because we were entering new territory, we wanted to play to the strengths of Active Citizens. Instead of trying to introduce a completely new version of the programme, we took an adaptive approach. We selected teachers to help us adapt the content and methodology to suit the school environment and sit in sync with the curriculum. They were terrific at helping to bridge the gaps between Active Citizens and the school context.



© Youth for Peace

### What was the reaction?

As soon as the first social action project came to life, more and more students and teachers were inspired to get involved in Active Citizens. This acted as a cascade, with school after school joining the programme. The first pilot school became a model to help new schools take it forward.

### What's the result?

Our implementing partner is Youth for Peace, an NGO set up by the teachers who worked on the pilot phase. The organisation shifted from being a faith-based organisation to a secular one, making it more inclusive and appealing to schools across the country. Through them, we've reached more than 3,000 students, 100 teachers and 10,000 parents and community stakeholders, and Active Citizens is now successfully being taught as part of the curriculum.

The students have initiated some really great social action projects, such as building a roundabout and traffic lights next to a school to create a safer environment for students, and working to bring a diverse village together through the teaching of cultural traditions. It's been truly life-changing for all involved, as one student remarked recently: 'My friends and I were able to sit and talk to a bank manager and raised US\$1,000 for our park. Active Citizens taught us what we never learn at school, but in our school.'





### EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE

**Since arriving in Iraq in 2015, Active Citizens has trained more than 180 young people, who have reached a further 4,000 marginalised people through projects focusing on health awareness, employability and economic empowerment.**

Through two local NGOs in Baghdad, Iraq's first Active Citizens facilitators trained a host of young people from local communities. With an emphasis on youth voice, the training achieved high levels of participation from girls and had a profound effect on attendees, with some calling it a turning point in their lives.

'On day one, when I joined the workshop, I thought I would have nothing to give. By the last day, I discovered I have buried skills, and how I can be of great value to help others and change their lives positively,' says one.

Through the training, the young Active Citizens were introduced to different ways of creating change and learned the important role dialogue plays in instigating change within communities. The training prepared them to take the first important steps towards making a positive difference in people's lives.

“ On day one, when I joined the workshop, I thought I would have nothing to give. By the last day, I discovered I have buried skills, and how I can be of great value to help others and change their lives positively. ”

*Active Citizen, Iraq*

The young Active Citizens have so far initiated 16 social action projects, working with women's groups, schools and communities within internally displaced person (IDP) camps.

Projects run by participants from Al Ethar Humanitarian Foundation dealt with the important issue of health awareness by visiting schools and families in IDP camps.

The Active Citizens delivered campaigns and seminars dealing with how to tackle communicable diseases, such as cholera, which were spreading throughout the camps. The projects were boosted by the participation of local healthcare professionals, who volunteered their time for the good cause.

A project by participants from the Baghdad Women Association has delivered employability skills training to 55 young women looking for work. After learning new IT and interview skills and receiving support to create CVs, five of the participants found jobs directly after the training. The women are also being encouraged to cascade their new skills to other young women seeking employment in their communities.

These are just two examples of the significant impact Iraq's first Active Citizens have achieved in just a short space of time, and as word spreads and new skills and knowledge are cascaded throughout communities, we can look forward to greater impact on the horizon.

“ We came together from different parts of the world only to find we share very similar challenges ... we also share a strong conviction of the value of creating positive change through the Active Citizens programme. ”

*Rania Kamhawi, Deputy Director,  
The National Centre for Culture  
and Arts, Jordan*

### BUILDING MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE ARTS

**Through the Artivism project, Active Citizens has used the arts and development sectors to engage with young people and increase their social participation.**

By training more than 150 young people, 80 per cent of them women, in the Active Citizens learning journey, Artivism has provided invaluable opportunities to participants from a range of backgrounds to increase their social networks, develop their leadership skills, and acquire a deeper understanding of how art can be used to address social issues.

'The workshop empowered me with new management techniques to efficiently implement community service projects and open dialogue with people, regardless of their background or culture,' explains Faisal Alawneh, a student at Al Yarmouk University.

Participants applied their learning by planning and implementing six arts-based social action projects. One project promoted young women's participation in public life, by encouraging them to produce and sell artworks made from recycled materials. Another used documentary film to shed light on the issue of refugees, focusing on themes such as social cohesion and valuing difference.



By using these methods to explore social issues, participants had the opportunity to discuss and challenge social norms. The arts-based approach also created a safe space for potentially contentious issues to be explored and solutions put forward.

'Photography says things that you can't say in words, and people can make sense of it in ways they cannot with words,' explains one participant. 'Using art we can see things in a different perspective. We understand each other's society.'

By providing this safe space, Active Citizens is helping individuals to reframe their place in society and deepen their understanding of how to relate to others, paving the way for greater trust and understanding between different communities and individuals.

### FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Active Citizens introduced in Yemen and Tunisia and reintroduced in Libya.
- Active Citizens features in three projects funded by the British Council and EU focused on strengthening resilience in the region, building the capacity of young social leaders in Syria and neighbouring countries, and promoting gender equality in Lebanon.

# GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Through Active Citizens, participants cultivate a strong understanding of how decisions and actions at local level impact on global development, and have the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge through the global network of Active Citizens. Each year, International Study Visits (ISVs) and workshops are held to bring together participants, facilitators and partners from all over the world, enabling them to share ideas and get fresh inspiration for their community-based social action.

## 1 UNITED KINGDOM

Two ISVs in the UK allowed Active Citizens participants from 11 countries to share their experiences and exchange tools and ideas on organising social action in their communities. Through local visits with partner organisations, participants were able to explore specific issues related to the arts, gender and social enterprise in greater depth. They also had the chance to experience the UK political system in action during a visit to the Houses of Parliament, where they took part in a panel discussion with MPs from four political parties.

### TRAINING THE NEXT COHORT OF FACILITATORS

A group of 39 Active Citizens facilitators flew in from all over the globe to attend an International Facilitator Development Workshop in London. This was an invaluable opportunity for facilitators to strengthen their understanding of the Active Citizens ethos and learn new skills for reaching participants.

## PILOTING NEW THEMES

Active Citizens facilitators and British Council programme managers worked with specialists in social enterprise, conflict resolution, disability and inclusion, the arts for development and gender equality to develop new content for the Active Citizens toolkit. This new content is being used by facilitators to deliver training with a particular thematic focus and adapted to their community.

### STRENGTHENING WORK AROUND DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

The inclusion of disabled people has been a key theme for social action and local advocacy. Disabled Active Citizens participants and disability organisations from six countries joined the British Council and Active Citizens facilitators to find ways of increasing their involvement in the programme and to make recommendations as to how disability and inclusion can be embedded into the delivery of Active Citizens.

“ It doesn’t matter how a country is, sometimes you may face the same problems. It was very interesting to learn how these problems are being tackled in the UK. ”

*Active Citizen participating in the UK ISV*

“ The workshop was an unforgettable experience. We look forward to completing what we started last week, by making Active Citizens as inclusive as possible. ”

*Active Citizens Project Officer from Uganda participating in the workshop on disability and inclusion*

## 2 MOROCCO

Active Citizens participants from eight countries came together for an ISV in Morocco where, in addition to workshop activities, they visited social action projects in urban and rural settings. Participants were inspired by the resourcefulness of the groups they visited, such as the Moustakbal Draa Women’s Cooperative, which provides a livelihood for local women who have never previously worked.

## 3 BANGLADESH

An ISV in Bangladesh gave 25 Active Citizens insight into the country’s diverse culture and burgeoning enthusiasm for social action. The group were amazed by the intergenerational participation as they visited projects that touched a wide range of themes, from adult literacy and education for underprivileged children to preventing underage marriage.

“ This new knowledge will empower me to engage peacefully and effectively with others in the sustainable development of their communities. ”

*Active Citizen participating in the Morocco ISV*

### FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- ISVs take place in the UK, Egypt, Pakistan and the USA.
- Ukraine hosts an International Facilitator Development Workshop.
- Active Citizens participate in the Social Enterprise World Forum in Hong Kong and United Nations’ World Merit Summit for Sustainable Development Goals.



# SOUTH ASIA

In Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Active Citizens works through civil society organisations, government ministries and universities to engage local volunteers and deepen trust and understanding within and between communities. In India, social entrepreneurs have been learning new skills from the Active Citizens training to benefit the communities they work with.



“Active Citizens empowers young people to identify local problems and work with their community to develop solutions to these problems.”

*Shahid Hussain, Active Citizen and ILMBASSADOR, Pakistan*

## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH ACTIVE CITIZENS

**Shahid Hussain's journey from Active Citizen to ILMBASSADOR has seen him improve education opportunities for children in his and neighbouring villages — including the construction of the first properly-built school in the community.**

Shahid's story takes place in Larkana, Sindh, where after completing his Active Citizens training, he started running a free tuition centre for out-of-school children as a social action project.

While also volunteering for other Active Citizens initiatives in his community, Shahid took exams to become a qualified teacher, and got a job at his local primary school. At the time, the school had no proper building, and the students were taught under makeshift awnings to shield them from the heat.

The school's lack of suitable facilities was causing extremely low enrolment rates. Shahid saw an opportunity to tackle this problem through the ILMPOSSIBLE Take a Child to School Programme, which uses the Active Citizens model to mobilise communities to increase the number of children in education across Pakistan. It is delivered by a partnership between the British Council and Qatar's Educate a Child programme.

As an ILMBASSADOR, Shahid joined his local Mohalla Committee (Community Committee) and used his negotiating, dialogue and leadership skills to secure funding from local government to build a new school. He also gained funding from landowners and shopkeepers.



The first of its kind in the community, the new five-classroom school can house 250 students. The new facility has helped Shahid directly enrol 30 previously out-of-school children, and many more have been encouraged to enrol through community campaigns. The school is also attracting children from nearby communities, and Shahid recently secured additional funding to build a new two-classroom school in his neighbouring village. This will provide another 110 children with adequate shelter and space for learning.

'I believe that my and my community's development depends on embracing education. I will ensure that as I grow, so does the educational landscape and educational awareness in my community. And hopefully this effect will transgress into neighbouring communities,' says Shahid.

Overall, the ILMPOSSIBLE programme has enrolled over 215,000 children into primary schools in 65 districts across Pakistan. More than 167,000 of these children are girls. A total of 15,000 ILMBASSADORS like Shahid have been trained, and 300 Mohalla Committees have been formed.

Shahid now wants to take the next step in his Active Citizens journey and become a trained facilitator to help mobilise even more young people in his community.

**STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN  
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**In Bangladesh, the PRODIGY project has used Active Citizens methodology to empower young people to become agents of positive social change and increase civic engagement in their communities.**

Working in 15 Union Parishads (the smallest administrative government unit) across Bangladesh, PRODIGY has given young people from a wide range of social backgrounds the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of local governance through a new internship programme.

A total of 15 interns, eight of them women, completed placements in different local government offices. This allowed them to gain practical knowledge around the role of local governments in community development, while exploring how services can be made more effective and inclusive.

Mita, a PRODIGY intern, affirms: ‘Now that I am empowered with enhanced knowledge in local government, transparency, accountability and inclusivity, I will be able to use this knowledge in my professional and personal life.’

The programme has been a great success, with many local governments opting to extend their intern’s placements beyond the designated three-month term, covering the required costs from their own funds.

Over the course of the year, PRODIGY trained 540 young men and women using the Active Citizens learning journey, resulting in more than 75 social action projects. These have all aimed to build trusting relationships between communities and local governments and empower citizens to hold government to account.

One project has supported citizens to advocate for their local government to create a citizen’s charter (a document outlining the public services they provide). The Active Citizens engaged their community by organising peaceful demonstrations, courtyard meetings and concerts, and they held a series of negotiations with local government officials. Their efforts were not only rewarded by a citizen’s charter being established, but in a 25 per cent increase in citizens’ uptake of local government services, such as birth and death registration and agricultural advice and information.

Over the course of the year, more than 31,000 stakeholders were reached through PRODIGY’s social action projects, and 45 of these projects have since been awarded grants to continue activities.

By increasing the leadership capacity of young people to mobilise citizens, the Active Citizens learning journey is effecting sustainable impact at the community level.



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**“ It has supported us to become more accountable and transparent in terms of delivering services to the people. ”**

*Chairman of local government office, Bangladesh*

**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH GRASSROOTS LEADERS**

**By engaging volunteers at the grassroots level, Active Citizens are helping to transform local communities in Sri Lanka.**

In Velanai and Sandilipay, two villages in Jaffna, a group of newly trained Active Citizens visited local drop-in centres to engage with members of communities affected by years of conflict. Through training and support, volunteers of all ages were empowered to take leadership roles in addressing longstanding community issues.

With support from partner organisation the Jaffna Social Action Centre, this successful model has now been replicated in five more communities, reaching 210 local volunteers. These volunteers have been trained in how to better understand local issues and approach the correct authorities. They now take the lead on tackling issues like domestic violence and child abuse, and 75 cases involving women and children have been referred and solved with the support of local authorities.

Mr Saparatnam, a volunteer from Tellippalai trained as an Active Citizen, says: ‘I am now able to educate my community on how we can minimise gender issues in the household. As a man, I am proud that I work for women. Through this programme I was able to understand myself and define my role and responsibility as an Active Citizen in my community.’

Mrs Saraswathy, another volunteer and Active Citizen from Vasavilan, plays a key role for women in her community thanks to the strong relationships she has developed with relevant government officials. ‘I called the Women Development Officer and informed them about abuse cases happening in my village. I am not afraid now because it is my duty to save people,’ she says.



© Jaffna Social Action Centre

**“ This support has motivated, encouraged and equipped us to engage and contribute to the development of our communities. ”**

*Annalingam, community leader, Sri Lanka*

**FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS**

- Active Citizens attracts new funding opportunities.
- More universities in South Asia embed Active Citizens.
- India explores Active Citizens partnerships.



# SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Active Citizens is helping to improve governance, accountability and citizen engagement in Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Rwanda, and it supports social enterprises in Ghana, Ethiopia and Kenya.



“ It has given me the confidence to speak to people, the confidence to approach people, and I can even talk about what is wrong and good in our community. ”

*Female beneficiary of Active Citizens social action project, Uganda*

## INCREASING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

**Research from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) demonstrates how Active Citizens social action projects are helping to improve young women's economic opportunities in Uganda.**

In an effort to counteract Uganda's high levels of youth unemployment, Active Citizens have been delivering social action projects to promote the development of social enterprises.

Focused on encouraging community-led social development and working with underprivileged communities, the projects are also helping to improve young women's economic opportunities.

Many women in Uganda still find themselves assigned to traditional domestic tasks, giving them limited time to develop their skills beyond this scope. ODI's research in the country's northern Apac district evidenced how social action projects are providing women with practical skills in business development and finance.

A commercial tree-planting project delivered by Active Citizens participants, for example, gave 30 male and female community members the opportunity to grow and sell fruit for a profit.



'The knowledge and skills we got on business development was really important. Before, we were waiting for external support, but after getting knowledge from Active Citizens we started a nursery bed with our own resources,' explains one female beneficiary.

The project has since gone on to receive additional funding from the government's Youth Livelihood Programme, which has enabled the group to set up a piggery that they hope will generate more employment and income.

The ODI's research showcased how these projects have empowered young women to become more active members in their communities. As one female beneficiary in the Apac district says: 'We now have the ability to do things the community can also appreciate, such as planting trees in schools. When the community sees that this group of women are the ones doing it, it makes us feel that the project has empowered us.'

The projects have also enabled female beneficiaries to mix with women from other districts and learn from each other, as another Apac beneficiary affirms: 'They have taught us how to build trust and to understand our friends, to understand how things can start and how things can get developed. Things like forming a group, how to manage the group and how you can make the group known outside of your community.'





### HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME CHANGE AGENTS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

**The HOLLA project has been using the Active Citizens model to support young people in Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia to find innovative ways of tackling social issues within their communities and beyond.**

Working through a network of 13 civil society organisations, HOLLA has been training young people to develop key leadership qualities and become change agents in their communities.

A group of 30 ambitious national youth leaders have been trained in collaborative leadership and sustainable development, while 97 peer educators from the project's target communities now have the tools to cascade Active Citizens training, already reaching more than 600 young community actors and supervising a wide range of social action projects.

Some of these projects have helped to tackle poverty and unemployment. For example, 35 Active Citizens delivered handicraft and vocational training to men and women in their community. In addition to providing economic opportunities, the project helped female beneficiaries in particular to gain more confidence and realise their potential to take on more active roles in their communities.

“ I've learned how important art can be for communities and how it can affect things far and wide. ”

*Active Citizens participant, Sudan*

Other projects have motivated people to make their communities safer and more pleasant places to live. In Ethiopia, Active Citizens mobilised communities to help clean up schools, bus stations and homes for the elderly, while in Sudan an entire community helped dig a canal to redirect stagnant rainwater.

HOLLA is also using the Active Citizens methodology to help young people build networks on a regional level.

All of the programme's 30 youth leaders came together to plan the two-day Festival of the Nile in Khartoum, enabling them to learn from one another and develop a deeper understanding of how art can be used to impact on social issues in their communities and beyond.

‘The workshop has helped me to widen my network — I now know new people, people from other cultures, from other parts of Sudan and elsewhere. For me, as a filmmaker, this is brilliant,’ one participant from Sudan affirms.

Funded by the European Union, HOLLA is giving young people across the Horn of Africa a platform to find innovative solutions to issues they and their communities face.

### SUPPORTING ACCESS TO EDUCATION

**Active Citizen Khadija Sanusi Gumbi has been campaigning in northern Nigeria on the importance of education, particularly for girls.**

Approximately 34 per cent of children in Nigeria are currently failing to attend school. Attendance levels are at the lowest in the northern part of the country, and girls are more likely to be kept at home than boys.

‘There is the need for us to be able to convince parents and children of the benefits of going to school, especially those living in the rural communities,’ Khadija explains. ‘I interviewed parents and children in the districts of Zaria and Kano. Most parents acknowledged the fact that there are so many negative risks involved in sending their children, mostly the girls, to school.’

Through her Active Citizens social action project, Khadija, a PhD student and Lecturer at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, conducted an inclusive education campaign in communities in northern Nigeria to show parents that education brings ‘virtues, not vice’. Her work has also received recognition in the UK newspaper the Evening Standard.

‘The core campaign activities included debates and round-table discussions on whether sending a child to school had more virtues than vices. We also identified who the key role models and influencers were in a child's development and examined parents' and society's fears, especially in relation to girls,’ Khadija explains.

‘We have to have positive examples to send them to school. Most girls go to primary school but later stop because they want to get married. Parents are also not allowing girls to go to mixed secondary schools because they worry that if they send girls to school then something will happen. So girls drop out at 14.’

‘What is being anticipated are the vices of education, not the virtues,’ says Khadija. ‘We tell them that if a girl is educated, she is more independent and can have a better impact on her children. Convincing parents is key.’



“ Basic education is a right for every child irrespective of gender. We should promote the virtues of education as it is the basic foundation for any meaningful development. ”

*Khadija Sanusi Gumbi,  
Active Citizen, Nigeria*

### FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Active Citizens to be incorporated into the second phase of HOLLA and a new African Voices culture and development project.
- Active Citizens features in a social enterprise project in East Africa jointly funded by the British Council and the EU.
- Active Citizens integrated into workshops for community football coaches as part of the Premier Skills legacy project in Uganda.

# EUROPEAN UNION

Active Citizens is currently being delivered in Poland, and will be soon be reintroduced in Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia and expanded to Romania and Bulgaria. The programme focuses on youth activism and works to effect positive social change in communities, reinforcing a strong sense of local culture and identity.



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## TACKLING STIGMATISATION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**The British Council’s Mariola Ambroziak talks about how Active Citizens will be at the heart of a new project to address growing xenophobia aimed at migrants and refugees in Europe.**

### What is the Empowering Communities in Europe project about?

We will work with communities in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Slovakia to overcome negative stereotypes and change perceptions of migrants and refugees. We’ll be using Active Citizens methodology to train participants from the most affected communities to become change agents, who will go on to train others and encourage social action. There will be a strong focus on addressing misperceptions, misinformation and propaganda in relation to incoming migrants, while promoting tolerance and respect for common values.

### Why Active Citizens?

Active Citizens methodology works beautifully in different contexts and is flexible enough to deliver outcomes across a range of topics — but especially when dealing with difference. It’s the perfect fit for this project because of its focus on Appreciative Inquiry, Systems Thinking and Passion about Europe.

The participants will also benefit from being part of the Active Citizens online community, where they will have the opportunity to share their experiences, promote their activities and connect with like-minded people across the globe.

### What is the goal?

The project will create a Europe-wide network of young activists, who are emerging leaders in their organisations, communities and municipalities, and who have ambitions to actively combat stigmatisation of incoming migrants and build counter narratives to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

### How did the project come about?

It’s funded through the EU’s Europe for Citizens programme. Our project proposal drew on the networks and experience we’ve built through years of using Active Citizens to connect and empower communities in Europe. We involved a selection of countries most affected by the recent high levels of migration into Europe, and put together a strong consortium of partners. We start the project in 2017 and are extremely excited about seeing what it can lead to.

## ACTIVE CITIZENS IS A HIT WITH POLISH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

**The first Active Citizens training for social enterprises in Poland brought together existing and aspiring entrepreneurs from across the country to learn new skills and gain networking opportunities.**

Engaging 31 social entrepreneurs from a range of different sectors, the training used an adapted version of Active Citizens to help participants strengthen their existing enterprises or prepare them to launch their business plans.

The social entrepreneurs focused on ways to boost local development, support sustainable growth and increase the involvement of citizens in social change. They also took the opportunity to build new connections with other social enterprises and share their experiences.

Across the six days, the social entrepreneurs discussed joint project ideas to take forward after the training. Visits to Warsaw-based social enterprises also gave them practical insights into how other businesses were positively affecting the local community.

The first cohort of Polish Active Citizen social entrepreneurs are now ready to put their action plans into practice to boost their impact and empower community members to become key instigators of social change.



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“Active Citizens methodology works beautifully in different contexts and is flexible enough to deliver outcomes across a range of topics.”

*Mariola Ambroziak,  
British Council, Poland*

## FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Active Citizens introduced to more countries through projects jointly funded by the British Council and the EU.

# WIDER EUROPE

Active Citizens is currently delivered in Ukraine, while in the past it has been delivered in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Israel and Serbia. The programme focuses on supporting young people to promote intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution.



© Mykola Chornobryvenko

## PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

**Hear from Active Citizens facilitator Olena Chornobryvenko, who is using the programme to provide opportunities for people with disabilities.**

### Why is Active Citizens important?

It's an opportunity to attract people with disabilities to community development, to truly change their status from a consumer to someone who changes the world around them. It's inclusive, so any person, irrespective of his or her experience in social activities and their physical capacity, can contribute to the revitalisation of the community. Take me — when I first saw the advertisement to be a training facilitator, I was doubtful about whether I could do it. But Active Citizens is structured in such a perfect way that every aspect is accessible to anyone. The training sessions we hold are attended by people with a range of different disabilities, and they create and implement projects with other people on an equal level.

### What Active Citizens projects are you particularly proud of?

We organised an inclusive summer camp called Connection. When designing the project, we considered the fact that young people, regardless of their physical condition, are interested in the same things: education, an active lifestyle, and the opportunity to have fun.

So, we took these aspects into consideration. In the camp, young people with and without disabilities prepared food, had fun, and participated in the training sessions together. By living together, people got to know each other, which led to them getting rid of stereotypes and coming up with joint projects.

Through the project Inclusive Marathon, we conducted a mobile street campaign to raise awareness of accessibility and inclusivity. Activities were held for adults and children, including a 'living book', where characters were successful people with disabilities, information posters focusing on 'what is accessibility?', and lessons to teach songs in sign language. We now have requests to replicate the events in other districts.

### What do you value most about Active Citizens?

It enables human sincerity and an openness to various points of view. It gives people without prior experience a chance to implement projects. I appreciate the trust between all of the participants, the understanding, the joint action, and the change we have made. You can see real results from the programme.

“ **Anyone can influence the development of their community and their neighbourhood.**

*Olena Chornobryvenko,  
Active Citizens facilitator, Ukraine*

”

## PROMOTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMMUNITY COHESION

**Active Citizens was re-launched in Ukraine in the midst of the conflict in 2014 and supports people from all over the country to promote intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution.**

Through Active Citizens training workshops, people from across Ukraine have had the chance to share their experiences and exchange tools and ideas on delivering community-based social action projects.

‘Through the workshop we figured out our motivation for working in civil society — what our goal was, what our vision was,’ explains Zahar Tkachuk. ‘I now feel that I’m part of something big and that I can have an impact on it.’

Training people like Zahar has led to a variety of social action projects being delivered, resulting in, among other things, new community spaces, veteran rehabilitation programmes, and even a renovated plane offering ‘virtual flights’ to children.

‘It’s wonderful to see over 200 new diverse projects all around Ukraine. You can say it’s an “explosion” or a “baby boom” of social activity,’ affirms Active Citizen Bogdan Dubylyovskyy.

Students and teachers from 16 universities who had to relocate from areas affected by the conflict in East Ukraine have also been trained as Active Citizens, which has helped to build bridges and understanding between different communities.

In 2015, the students came together for a five-day National Study Visit in Sumy, providing an opportunity for students from all over the country to come together and learn from one another in a supportive, inclusive space, enabling them to understand the broader context and significance of their social action.

‘I saw real youth engagement there. In other words, young people are already changing their city and doing practical things,’ said Daniil Gaviley, an Active Citizen from Donetsk Gorky National University.



© Oleksandra Bilyaze

“ **Active Citizens are able to influence the issue in the east of our country, and come together to persuade society that we need peace and that we don’t need any war.**

*Natalia Kropyvna,  
Active Citizen, Ukraine*

”

## FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- New partnerships and expansion of the programme in Ukraine.



# EAST ASIA

In East Asia, Active Citizens works with different partners across the region to build social leadership skills and have a positive impact in communities — from training young deputies in Vietnam, to strengthening civil society networks in Burma, to supporting social enterprises in Indonesia, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

## BOOSTING THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

**Social enterprises are becoming an effective model for addressing social, economic and environmental issues. Active Citizens is supporting social enterprises in East Asia to boost their impact in local communities.**

In the Philippines, Messy Bessy provides education, employment and rehabilitation for formerly abused, trafficked, incarcerated and impoverished young people. They have so far given employment and education opportunities to more than 260 disadvantaged youths.

Since attending an Active Citizens International Facilitator Development Workshop in the UK, which used an adapted version of the training methodology for social entrepreneurs, Messy Bessy have used the programme to reach out to young aspiring business leaders.

Through training and workshops, the organisation teaches budding enterprises how to move beyond the initial growth stage of a business and achieve self-sustenance, while also tackling community-specific issues. Learning outcomes of the core Active Citizens training include becoming more self-aware and confident as leaders, valuing different perspectives and improving their understanding of communities.

“Active Citizens will play a powerful and transformative role in bringing together like-minded, young entrepreneurs to drive lasting social change and impact.”

*Marge Defensor, Co-Founder, Messy Bessy social enterprise, Philippines*

‘Messy Bessy has long dreamt of revolutionising how enterprises can do good. We’re proud to play a part in enabling these enterprises to take shape and firm up their social impact and sustainability plans,’ says Marge Defensor, Co-Founder.

Through Active Citizens, Messy Bessy has also gained a more global outlook and new perspectives to take forward in their own business, as Marge says: ‘Meeting like-minded individuals in London was life-changing; it made us realise there is a bigger world out there. We learnt from other participants about social innovation and measuring impact, which has helped us look at business differently.’

Meanwhile, in Bali, Indonesia, a project to turn Nyambu into a sustainable eco-tourism village is building the capacity of community members to manage their own tourism businesses and tackle increasing urbanisation. The inclusion of Active Citizens methodology, which focuses on understanding identity and culture, plays a crucial role in this process. The eco-tourism project not only supports residents to protect their land and the local environment, but enables them to preserve and maintain local traditions and practices.

A truly unique village, Nyambu offers tourists rice field and cycling tours, as well as classes in local cultural traditions.

## INCREASING ACCESS TO ENGLISH

Nguyen Anh Thu, Active Citizen and Co-Founder of the Green Seeds project, talks about how Active Citizens is helping to improve access to English in rural parts of Vietnam.

### What is Green Seeds?

Green Seeds is a social action project born out of my Active Citizens training, which motivated me and the other participants to take responsibility for our communities’ needs. Students’ English language learning opportunities differ depending on whether they come from rural or urban parts of Vietnam — our mission was to bring English to students living in rural areas.

### Who is involved in the project?

I started the project with four others, and we are proud to work with a number of different change makers. 80 Green Seeds members deliver our educational activities to more than 800 students, and we also collaborate with committed schools and NGOs.

### Why English?

English is much more than a language — it is the key that opens up the world for us, especially for disadvantaged students living in more remote areas. This belief brought us together to start up the Green Seeds family. We have been working steadfastly to deliver educational activities to students in rural areas for more than two years now.



© Nguyen Thi Minh Hue

“Active Citizens motivates community members to take responsibility for their social needs and gives them the knowledge, skills and experience to address them.”

*Nguyen Anh Thu, Active Citizen, Vietnam*

### What has been the impact?

Students really enjoy the active approach to learning English in Green Seeds classrooms. After just four months, more than 80 per cent of students in Phuong Trung secondary school increased at least one score in their final English exam. The project has also given its members the chance to run an educational social project and learn to be better educators in the future, and many volunteers have gone on to become leaders of other community initiatives.

### Why do you think Active Citizens works?

Active Citizens works so well in so many different contexts because it is such a human programme and strives to make changes in a sustainable way by promoting community-led social development. The programme also gives participants the skills to identify and engage networks to achieve goals, as well as the skills to plan and implement projects.

## FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Active Citizens features in two projects jointly funded by the British Council and the EU. One is using the arts to engage young people on freedom of expression in Fiji, while the other focuses on strengthening civil society organisations and integrating social enterprise leadership in conflict-affected parts of the Philippines.
- New partnership with Sunway University in Malaysia to enhance student community engagement.

# AMERICAS

Active Citizens works with Native American communities in the USA, hard-to-reach communities and young activists in Brazil, and aspiring social entrepreneurs in Canada.



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## PRESERVING NATIVE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

**Two Active Citizens from the Western Shoshone tribes in Nevada are helping to preserve their native language through social action projects within the community.**

Native American languages in the USA have been in decline for decades, with many on the verge of extinction. While acts passed in Congress have recognised the importance of these languages and the need for revitalisation programmes, many Native American languages have very few speakers left, especially from younger generations.

Active Citizen and trained facilitator Sam Broncho is working hard to preserve his native Shoshone language, which is oral rather than written. As well as teaching Shoshone language classes to native and non-native students at the local college, Sam runs monthly Shoshone Language Immersion Dinners within the community. The events bring people together to learn new Shoshone words and phrases and practice dialogue, all while preparing and eating a shared meal, often using native ingredients and culinary traditions.

Sam's involvement in Active Citizens has enabled him to travel abroad for the first time to participate in a facilitators workshop in the UK. He was instrumental in hosting an International Study Visit to Nevada for Active Citizens from across the globe, during which a UK participant helped Sam start a crowdfunding page to raise money for future language learning events.

“It’s urgent that our girls connect with their culture before it disappears.”  
*April Negrette, Active Citizen, USA*

Active Citizen April Negrette teaches leadership and personal skills to girls aged between eight and 11 within the Western Shoshone community. Her group, the Newe Numeechees, is based on the USA's Girl Scouts model, but focuses on Shoshone Native American culture.

‘Our language is dying; our traditions are being lost with every elder that passes away. The history of our people, and why we live on a reservation, isn’t covered in classes at school,’ says April.

‘I tell the girls: the fact that we’re sitting here and I have to talk to you in English and not Shoshone, that should tell you something about what has happened to us.’

The group comes together every week to practise speaking Shoshone and to learn about traditional foods and arts and crafts practices. They also bring in community elders to pass on the knowledge from previous generations.

## ACTIVE CITIZENS REACHES BRAZIL

**Hear from the partner organisations gearing up to deliver Active Citizens to communities in Brazil for the first time.**

### RECODE

#### Who are you?

We’re a social organisation that focuses on digital empowerment, by training independent young people to ‘reprogram’ the system in which they belong by using technology. We train multipliers by partnering with community institutions, libraries and public schools. Founded in Brazil, we’re now based in seven countries in the Americas and Europe.

#### Who do you work with?

Through Active Citizens we will reach vulnerable youth who are out of work and education in low-income areas in Rio de Janeiro. In Brazil, 75 per cent of the youth in this situation are women, and one third of them have at least one child.

#### Why Active Citizens?

Active Citizens will give us the possibility to bring social leadership training to low-income neighbourhoods as a way to effectively contribute to their development. Active Citizens has a lot in common with our other work by also focusing on economic empowerment and entrepreneurship to boost gender, racial and ethnic equality.

### SINAL DO VALE

#### Who are you?

Sinal do Vale is a vibrant living laboratory where students, social entrepreneurs, and local change-makers can develop and evolve their skills as emerging leaders in the field of sustainability. Located in the Atlantic Rainforest, we run an organic farm, a reforestation and community resilience project, and an education centre.

#### Who do you work with?

Young people from around the world come to be immersed in our living laboratory and to work side-by-side with the local community to develop projects around recycling, environmental education, sustainable agriculture, bio-construction and reforestation.

#### Why Active Citizens?

Our mission to empower local change-makers through cross-cultural experiences is aligned with Active Citizens. We will use the Active Citizens methodology to catalyse community involvement around sustainability, valuing the rich local culture of the region, and improving community spaces.



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## FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Mexico explores Active Citizens partnerships

“ The programme can make useful contributions to changing the environment to support girls and young women, and can help increase girls’ awareness and agency. ”

*Study by the Overseas Development Institute on the British Council’s work with women and girls.*

“ The influence of the programme is so strong, and fundamental, that it would be hard to imagine the Mobaderoon network without the Active Citizens programme — the two are indivisible. ”

*Research conducted by INTRAC on the legacy of Active Citizens in Syria and its role in the formation of the Mobaderoon network of activists.*

“ Active Citizens could help artists see the potential of their work for directly impacting social transformation — at a personal, community and wider social/political level. ”

*Active Citizens workshop leader interviewed as part of a BOP Consultancy evaluation of the ‘Golden Thread’ culture and development programme.*

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



The Arab Partnership  
EU Non-State Actors

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