

Heritage of Future Past

Community Cultural Heritage Challenge (2021–2023)

Executive Summary



During the period of 2021-2023, two initiatives known as Heritage Story Telling (HST) and Community Cultural Heritage Challenge (CCHC) were carried out as part of the Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth or Heritage of Future Past programme in Viet Nam. The primary objectives of these initiatives were to empower communities to generate creative ideas, receive assistance, design and implement actions to protect and promote their own cultural heritage. Specifically, these are grant initiatives for projects led by the community, aimed at assisting marginalised communities of local ethnic groups in the provinces of Ninh Thuan and Gia Lai to actively engage in the preservation of their cultural heritage.

All the projects that received funding have achieved success by accomplishing their goals. A wide range of locally-led activities were implemented, encompassing research, documentation, conservation, education, capacity building, experimentation, innovation, and the revitalization of cultural heritage assets through contemporary practices. As a result, numerous valuable and endangered cultural heritages have been safeguarded and promoted. The participation in these projects has empowered and equally benefited all sectors of the community.

It is worth noting that the funded projects have collectively raised local communities' awareness regarding the significance and values of shared cultural heritage, while encouraging responsible ways of thinking and acting towards securing a better future for heritage. Importantly, many of the funded projects have enabled the people in targeted communities to establish a connection between the preservation and promotion of their living cultural heritage and the potential improvement of their livelihoods and living conditions. Additionally, these projects have had a positive impact on the policies of local authorities concerning the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.



A training course for weavers as part of 'Preserving Cham weaving traditions' project © British Council

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A Bahnar man from Mo Hra village and his wooden statue work
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1 Introduction

1.1 The British Council's Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth programme in Viet Nam

Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth (CH4IG) is a global programme by the British Council that explores the utilisation of cultural heritage for the benefit of all levels of society. Viet Nam, alongside Colombia and Kenya, has been chosen as one of the locales to implement this pilot programme. In Viet Nam, the initiative was launched in 2018 under the name Heritage of Future Past, with the overarching goal of harnessing cultural heritage to foster inclusive growth. The country programme consists of two main components: Community Cultural Heritage (CCH) and Film, Archive, and Music Lab (FAMLAB). The CCH component focuses on capacity building and facilitating opportunities for all members of targeted communities to engage in researching, devising plans, and executing activities that preserve and promote their cultural heritage. On the other hand, FAMLAB aims to connect Viet Nam's music and film heritage with artists, creative practitioners, and other stakeholders in the cultural and creative industries.

From 2018 to 2023, the CCH component underwent two phases. The initial phase, labelled as the pilot programme, concluded by 2020. Subsequently, the second and third phases, spanning 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, are implemented through two distinct schemes: Heritage Storytelling and Community Cultural Heritage Challenge. The objectives of these schemes are to facilitate research, knowledge sharing, and a profound comprehension of the significance of indigenous cultural heritage among the targeted communities. Additionally, the schemes seek to assist local communities in leveraging these values to create new opportunities, such as improving their livelihoods and living standards. In essence, these are grant schemes that empower community-led projects, providing grantees with the necessary backing to design and implement measures for the preservation and promotion of their cultural heritage.

Following three years of close collaboration with local communities in Gia Lai, Ninh Thuan, and Ho Chi Minh City, both directly and via delivery partners, the British Council Viet Nam made the strategic decision to allocate project budgets to prioritized supporting community-led initiatives. This grant scheme involves a substantial portion of the annual programme budget being directed towards remunerating individuals, procuring goods, and enlisting services from these local communities. It also serves as an opportunity for communities previously trained to apply their newfound skills through practical actions. Following extensive engagement with key members of the target communities and consultations with local heritage and development professionals, two open calls for project proposals were initiated. These calls were specifically aimed at local communities, heritage practitioners, and professionals in Ninh Thuan and Gia Lai in 2021 and 2022, respectively. As a result, 13 proposals were approved and received funding.

Moreover, in order to enhance opportunities for ethnic minorities in Ninh Thuan and Gia Lai to propose initiatives and carry out activities pertaining to local cultural heritage, the British Council introduced a new programme known as Living Cultural Heritage Grant Programme 2022-2023. Another call for proposals was conducted, resulting in the approval of funding of 13 community-led projects.

In total, 26 projects across the provinces of Gia Lai and Ninh received funding through these three open calls spanning from 2021-2023. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic during the implementation of these projects, as of the time of writing this report, 22 projects have been successfully completed, while the remaining 4 have been granted extensions until the end of 2023.



The hair-cutting ceremony of the Cham Bani in Ninh Thuan province
© Kieu Mai Ly



Participant of SU-UK (question and answer) about Cham cuisine project
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1.2 About the grants and the beneficiaries

The funded projects were implemented within communities inhabited by ethnic minorities in Gia Lai and Ninh Thuan. Gia Lai is situated in the northern region of the Central Highlands, adjacent to the central part of Viet Nam. This province, the largest in the Central Highlands, is home to numerous ethnic groups, with the Kinh, Bahnar, and Jarai constituting the majority. Ninh Thuan is a small province located in the southern central part of Viet Nam, with its population primarily comprised of the Kinh, Cham, and Raglai ethnicities.

Both provinces share a climate characterised by sunny, hot, and windy conditions, particularly throughout the dry season. In these areas, many individuals belonging to ethnic minorities face diverse challenges in their lives. A portion of these socially marginalised groups continues to undergo multidimensional poverty, including monetary deprivation, decreasing land ownership, limited access to education, training, employment opportunities, infrastructure services, and information. Owing to the emphasis on poverty alleviation, cultural heritage is often neglected. Consequently, various tangible and intangible heritages have been disregarded, abandoned, or even lost. Moreover, the extensive interactions with the predominant Kinh population and rapid modernisation have put many aspects of their rich cultural life at risk of disappearing. The number of highly skilled artisans is dwindling, traditional crafts are being replaced, collective cultural performances are becoming less frequent, and numerous forms of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, are in danger of being undermined and lost. This poses a significant challenge for the elders who seek to transmit the wisdom and expertise of traditional culture to the younger generation, who are increasingly enchanted by modern culture.

Furthermore, for several decades since the economic reforms in 1986, both central and local governments have implemented programmes predominantly reliant on state funds to safeguard the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. However, due to diverse factors, these initiatives have achieved only constrained outcomes. Remarkably, cultural heritage remains unincorporated within the state's agendas for social and economic advancement.

In this context, the British Council in Viet Nam has taken innovative approaches and provided financial support for the preservation of cultural heritage. The cultural initiatives instigated by the British Council have garnered favourable responses and enthusiastic participation from the people in the targeted local communities.

1.3 Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to present a comprehensive evaluation of the CCH programme during its second and third phases, spanning from 2021 to 2023. It assesses and succinctly summarises the outcomes and impacts of the funded projects, extracts invaluable lessons from the experience, and provides recommendations for monitoring and evaluating the programme in Viet Nam.



2 Evaluation Methodology

2.1 The questions for evaluations

This report aims to evaluate the outcomes and impacts of the funded projects by addressing four pivotal questions agreed upon by the team at the British Council Viet Nam:

- (i) How have different forms of cultural heritage been safeguarded and promoted in the targeted communities? How has the people-centred approach been implemented during project implementation?
- (ii) Have heritage elements become more accessible through capacity building, education and training, and digitalization?
- (iii) In what ways have the outcomes of the funded projects contributed to inclusive and sustainable growth in the targeted communities?
- (iv) What lessons have been learned? What is the potential for long-term growth beyond the funding period? And what recommendations can be made for the CCH programme in Viet Nam?

2.2 Data collection analysis

The evaluation was conducted from April to May 2023. The author collected both quantitative and qualitative data for this report. Initially, the author reviewed existing documents from global and country cultural programmes under the British Council's overarching agenda. Then, documents provided by project leaders (grantees) were examined to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project aims, designated activities, and achievements. Fieldwork was also carried out to further explore and assess the tangible outcomes and impacts of the funded projects. Through on-the-spot investigations in communities where the projects were implemented, five case studies (two in Gia Lai and three in Ninh Thuan) were developed. The author conducted 11 in-depth, face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire with project leaders and participants. Each interview lasted from 45 to 60 minutes and focused on exploring their motivations, goals, achievements, challenges, reflections on the outcomes, and interactions with the British Council Viet Nam and local governmental institutions. These case studies were selected to provide a diverse sample encompassing various cultural heritage types, scope of activities, geographic traits, cultural areas, as well as the ethnic and social backgrounds of the interviewees. The findings derived from these case studies serve to exemplify the evaluated criteria throughout the report.

This report is based on the evaluation criteria of the CH4IG programme, which emphasises cultural relations, a people-centred approach, and the theory of change. The author has also drawn insights from previous global and national reports, including the Culture Heritage for Inclusive Growth report (2018), the Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth Impact Evaluation Report (2022), and the Report on the progress of Heritage of Future Past phase 3 in Viet Nam (2022). The report employs concepts and their meanings as presented in the British Council’s report on Culture Heritage for Inclusive Growth. The target groups expected to benefit from the projects, as outlined in the 2018 report, include individuals and communities, practitioners and professionals, organisations and institutions, and policy and decision-makers. This evaluation examines key project activities, including research, valuation, protection, learning, and sharing.

2.3 Criteria for evaluation

Based on the Community Cultural Heritage programme’s stated purposes and expected outcomes for project investment, this report assesses the extent of achievement of the projects across several focal areas. Those areas include the implementation of the programme’s approach, actual outcomes, impacts on heritage, contribution to inclusive and sustainable community development, as well as the influence on policy direction.



Ariya singing masters working together on ‘Preserving Ariya storytelling in Cham culture’ project © British Council

2.4 The structure of the evaluation report

The report is divided into six sections:

Section 1 introduces the Heritage of Future Past initiative as a country programme in Viet Nam.

Section 2 explains the evaluation methodology, including data collection, data analysis, and the limitations of the evaluation.

Section 3 presents the key findings, supported by evidence from case studies and interviews.

Section 4 summarizes the challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for the CCH programme.

Section 5 presents film stories about Community Cultural Heritage Challenge.

Section 6 includes appendices.



A Bahnar weaver adjusting the cloth on her loom
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2.5 Limitations

The report has several limitations:

Inconsistent data

The data provided by community project managers in their reports, such as statistics on the number of participants and beneficiaries, are not consistently available. Some reports provide all the required details, including participant numbers, gender, roles, and positions, while others do not. This limits the ability to evaluate the outcomes of all projects in greater detail.

Difficulty in applying a single set of evaluation criteria

Grantees, especially individuals from minor ethnicities, require time to fully understand and align with the programme's vision and expectations. Additionally, different forms of heritage necessitate different approaches to safeguarding and promotion. Therefore, this report focuses more on identifying similar results and observable outcomes among funded projects.

Emphasis on evaluation rather than monitoring

By the time of data collection, most projects have already been completed, limiting the author's direct observation of projects' activities. The evaluation heavily relies on the assessment of data generated during the project implementation.

Timing of the evaluation

At the time of writing this report, many projects have recently concluded. Further time is needed to observe and provide a more accurate evaluation of the projects' impacts on the targeted communities.

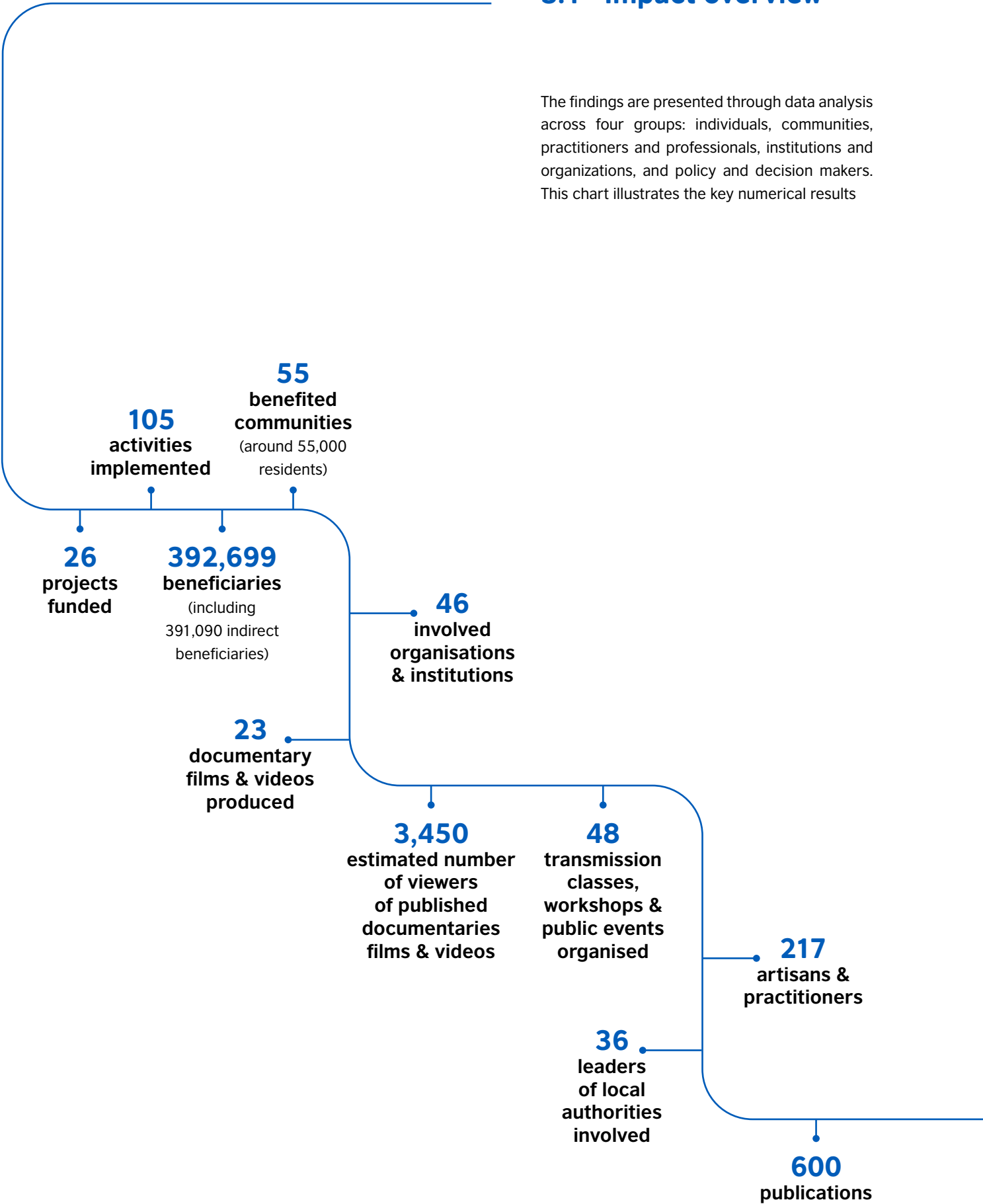
3 Evaluation of Impacts



A master practicing the ritual music of Cham culture
© British Council

3.1 Impact overview

The findings are presented through data analysis across four groups: individuals, communities, practitioners and professionals, institutions and organizations, and policy and decision makers. This chart illustrates the key numerical results



Funded projects have successfully attracted a large number of participants from the targeted communities, with a majority belonging to ethnic minorities, including the Bahnar, Jarai, and Cham. Among the 22 funded projects, 17 have directly contributed to the preservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritages, with a significant focus (77%) on intangible heritage. Additionally, five projects have concentrated on the development of community-based heritage tourism.

A diverse range of heritages, encompassing tangible and intangible aspects, have been studied, documented, preserved, and authentically digitised. The value of these heritages has been recognised, emphasised, and promoted, instilling a sense of pride and deepening the affection for cultural heritage among the people. Moreover, these projects have raised and enriched people's awareness of the importance and significance of their cultural heritage. Completed initiatives have nurtured a collective sense of collaboration and dedication in preserving and promoting cultural heritages, ensuring a more secure future for them. Community-led projects have also strengthened solidarity and cultivated a spirit of sharing, collaboration, and contentment within the communities.

These community-led projects have involved five main types of activities: (i) Research, documentation, and digital sharing of cultural heritage, which include highlighting typical types of heritage, organising community events to showcase heritage through storytelling, short plays, and folk dancing, textualising and publishing ethnic folklore, religious texts, and indigenous knowledge of herbs, as well as producing short films, videos, news reports, and podcasts on cultural heritage. (ii) Revitalisation of cultural heritage, such as restoring traditional handicrafts like pottery production and weaving clothes or brocades, and promoting the profession of making herbal medicine through the collection and cultivation of rare and precious herbs. (iii) Teaching and training about cultural heritage, involving conducting open classes to teach ethnic languages, singing traditional songs, recreating brocade patterns, fine-tuning gongs, repairing dugout boats, and crafting wooden statues. (iv) Development of heritage-based tourism, including revitalising cultural festivals to boost local tourism, developing homestay models that focus on providing unique experiences of community cultural life, revitalising ethnic and indigenous cuisines, and commercialising heritage-based products. (v) Utilising multimedia to communicate project activities and inspire the community in preserving cultural heritages. Project leaders have created videos and audio works to share on virtual social networks, spreading awareness about heritage and actions taken to protect them.

Both governmental and non-governmental institutions have played supportive roles without intervening in the implementation of these projects. State-funded organisations engaged in the projects include the Viet Nam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS), the Television and Radio of Ia Grai district (Gia Lai), the Department for Culture, Sports and Tourism under the Ninh Thuan People's Committee, the Ninh Thuan Centre for Studies of Cham Culture, and the People's Committees of the districts and communes where projects are invested. Non-governmental institutions, including civic organisations established to promote cultural and tourist activities such as Bau Truc Village Culture House, Ninh Phuoc Association of Herbalists and the Hau Sanh Village Culture House (Ninh Thuan), as well as the Vietnam Network of Research on Tourism, have also participated in these projects.



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3.2 Impact via key outcome indicators

Outcome Indicator 1
Various valuable forms of cultural heritage in targeted communities are safeguarded and promoted, and the people-centred approach has been well applied.

All funded projects have made distinctive contributions to preserving and promoting valuable and endangered cultural heritage within the targeted communities. These selected forms of heritage represent the unique aspects of the community's cultural life and encompass a diverse range of elements such as arts, crafts, legends, folklore, religious texts, traditional food recipes, dugout boats, herbs, working tools, and musical instruments.

In terms of intangible heritage, traditional crafts and professions, oral stories, folk songs, traditional dances, and indigenous knowledge of herbs have been chosen for revitalisation. Forms of intangible heritage that necessitate collective participation have been reintroduced into community life. Among the Bahnar and Jarai communities in Gia Lai, classes on Gong playing and Xoang dancing have enabled the younger generation to learn and actively participate alongside their elders. Similarly, the tradition of dugout boat racing in Ia O and Bi villages of the Ia Grai District (Gia Lai) has experienced a revival through the project, which involved the repair of abandoned dugout boats, thereby allowing their return to racing on the Po Ko river. In Ninh Thuan, Cham elders have been invited to share heritage stories and teach the youth traditional songs and the beauty of folk dances.

Significant tangible heritage of these communities has also been safeguarded through creative and caring activities. For instance, the Ba-la-mon religious community in Ninh Thuan has long been divided by disagreements and conflicts over ritual procedures. To address this, the project led by Luu Sanh Thanh in Ninh Thuan brought together the best minds of the Cham community to collect, compile, translate, and create a comprehensive document that serves as a shared point of reference. This handbook has been well-received by clergy serving the Ba-la-mon religious community in Viet Nam. Another example is the establishment of a herbal farm dedicated to preserving and cultivating rare and precious herbs, as demonstrated in this case study.

Case Study 1. Creation of a herbal farm in Pablap

AIMS: To sustainably preserve the Cham traditional profession of making herbal medicine

LOCATION: Pablap, Phuoc Trung commune, Bac Ai district, Ninh Thuan province

ACTIVITIES:

- Create a list of rare herbs that are in the danger of distinction;
- Renovate and turn a home farm into a modern farm with suitable conditions for preservation of traditional herbs;
- Collect, cultivate, multiple and share the herbal seedlings with 10 households

“When tourists visit, they will listen to herb-related stories, have the opportunity to witness the process of making herbal medicine, and even savor dishes prepared using herbs cultivated in our home gardens. This approach not only preserves the herbalist profession but also provides avenues for community growth.” — The project leader

“I have emphasized to the villagers that our herbs are unique and precious. This village is renowned for its Cham herbal traditions, yet many households do not have herbs in their own gardens. This paradox is unacceptable. It is imperative that we cultivate and nurture herbs to uphold our profession.” — Participant, traditional Cham herbalist



The project leader and his herbal farm
© British Council

The people-centred approach to cultural heritage has been gradually implemented. Through the organisation of capacity building workshops, effective communication between the British Council and project recipients, and active participation in project activities, the connection between the people and cultural heritage in the targeted communities has been strengthened. Importantly, they now recognise their dual role as creators and integral constituents of cultural heritage. With the support from the projects, they have become more proactive in managing cultural heritage, rather than relying solely on the state’s interventions. Furthermore, they have been encouraged to collaborate and work together in all aspects related to cultural heritage. This recognition of the power of community cooperation has helped them appreciate the value of collective efforts in safeguarding and preserving heritage as shared assets passed down by their ancestors.

Outcome Indicator 2

Enablement of community-led activities for safeguarding cultural heritage

Community members have been provided with support to conduct research, generate initiatives, define objectives, anticipate outcomes, and implement activities. The involvement of adults in heritage preservation has increased significantly, particularly through capacity building, teaching, and training. Simultaneously, younger generations have become more engaged in various roles to ensure the continuity of cultural practices. People are now at the forefront of actions for cultural heritage in many facets.

The majority of project grantees belong to minor ethnic groups and reside within the targeted communities. As leaders, they mobilise and inspire their fellow community members to work collectively in preserving heritage. Their shared ethnic and cultural backgrounds serve as an advantage in gaining trust and support from the community. A grantee who conducted a project on community storytelling of Cham cultural heritage in Bau Truc village (Ninh Thuan) expressed their satisfaction, stating, “What

truly brings me joy is witnessing people empowered to tell stories of their own heritage, in their own unique way, to their very own audience.”

The individuals involved in the funded projects, including practitioners, performers, and activities participants primarily come from the targeted communities. They play a crucial role in these projects and share in the enjoyment of the resulting outcomes. In projects focused on tangible heritage preservation, artisans are given the opportunity to showcase their craftsmanship before an audience. The recognition and appreciation they received from observers serve as their rewards. They view themselves as significant custodians of community heritage, thus becoming more active and responsible in heritage-related activities. Motivated by this sense of purpose, many activities continue even after the conclusion of the projects. For instance, Luu Sanh Thanh and his disciple are currently working on producing additional handbooks of Ba-la-mon rituals without external funding. In the subsequent case study, an artisan has continued to provide pottery-making classes beyond the project’s financial support.

Case Study 2. Renovation of a Cham traditional pottery workshop

AIMS: To facilitate the revitalization and development of the traditional pottery craft

LOCATION: Bau Truc craft village, Phuoc Dan ward, Ninh Phuoc district, Ninh Thuan province

ACTIVITIES:

- Support the repair and improvement of household pottery workshops
- Open classes to teach about making advanced-art pottery
- Develop a pilot tour to Bau Truc craft village

“I applied for funding from the British Council because I wanted to contribute to the development of community tourism and improve the working conditions in the pottery craft village. My goal was to preserve and promote the heritage values that have been passed down to us by our ancestors.” — The project leader

“In my family, there has always been a tradition of making pottery from clay. My mother trained me in this craft, and I have been practicing it for over 30 years. With the support of the British Council’s funding, I was able to open my first pottery class to pass on this skill. I have been training 10 individuals, including some elders, in the making of artistic pottery.” — Participant, a state-recognized Cham artisan.



A pottery item from Bau Truc Village
© British Council

Elders and artisans often express concerns about the future of heritage, as the younger generations show diminishing interest in traditional aspects of their culture. Despite their desire to engage the youth in heritage preservation, the elders find themselves uncertain about the means to achieve this. However, with the support of the British Council, they have seized the opportunity to involve young people in the preservation of living heritage. They are highly motivated to participate in transmitting knowledge of heritage and providing training in cultural craftsmanship. A respected member of the community and consultant for some projects in My Nghiep village (Ninh Thuan province) shared their excitement about the British Council's program called "Heritage of Future Past": "I was thrilled when the British Council introduced the Heritage of Future Past program because it meant that we could revive our living heritage within its authentic cultural environment, and the villagers would benefit and collaborate together." The idea of collective efforts for the sake of heritage is further exemplified in the following case.

Case Study 3. Bringing Life to Wooden Statues

AIMS: Promote values of folk wooden statues of the Bahnar and Jarai

LOCATION: Gia Lai province

- ACTIVITIES:**
- Gather and support the Bahnar and Jarai artisans to make full-sized and miniatures wooden statues
 - Open class to train participants the techniques to make miniatures wooden statues
 - Exhibit the products at private and public spaces
 - Connect artisans with tourists and traders who are interested in wooden statues
 - Develop a pilot tour to Bau Truc craft village

"The artisans are the first to benefit from this project, as they receive guidance from professionals to enhance their skills and utilize their craft as a means of livelihood. Additionally, the Bahnar and Jarai communities also reap the benefits. Through the project's activities, this art form has gained wider recognition and is now regarded as a captivating cultural heritage. As a result, the Bahnar and Jarai communities can leverage this heritage as a new resource for developing tourism in their own homelands, ultimately improving their long-term livelihoods." — The project leader.



A project participant and a miniatures wooden statue
© British Council

"I was overjoyed when the training class was initiated because it provided an opportunity to enhance my skills and preserve our cultural heritage. Without such initiatives, our craft would undoubtedly diminish. We must take action to safeguard our traditions. I hope that in the future, more new projects focusing on heritage will emerge, enabling me to encourage the participation of younger generations." — A participant, also a Jarai artisan.

Outcome Indicator 3

Heritage elements are made more accessible through capacity building, education and training, and digitalization.

The activities carried out in the funded projects have not only allowed people to witness the living heritage but also actively participate in its preservation. In the pottery-making project in Bau Truc village, Hoa, an accomplished trainer and artisan, transformed her own pottery workshop into a classroom, where learners could actively engage in the process of crafting pottery items. The workshop remained accessible, welcoming anyone to drop by during working hours.

In another project led by Luu Sanh Thanh, a respected master of the Cham Ba-la-mon rituals, ancient Brahmanical sutras were carefully selected, documented, standardised, and shared without any charge. Previously, the sutras used by the clergy of the Cham Ba-la-mon religious community existed in various versions, and some had been irrevocably lost. The lack of a standardised and reliable version posed challenges for the clergy in training their disciples. With the support from the British Council's funding, Thanh was able to make a meaningful contribution to his community.

Case Study 4. The making of Danak as The Cham Handbook of Rituals

AIMS: To make and share a handbook of standardized ancient sutras that is essential for the Cham who follow Ba-la-mon religion (ancient Brahmanism)

LOCATION: Phuoc Thai commune, Ninh Phuoc district, Ninh Thuan province

- ACTIVITIES:**
- Establish a group of Cham intellectuals and ritual masters to collect the five most important Danak sutra in Cham scripts belonging to the ancient Brahmanical religion
 - Proofread and translate the collection into Latin-based language with detailed notes
 - Publish the collection as a handbook in three languages that is useful for all clergies when they master a ritual or train their disciples.

"I have compiled this handbook of standardised sutras for three important ceremonies: clergy ordination, funerals, and burial rites. It serves as a guide for the clergy to perform these rituals uniformly"—The project leader, who is also a respected Cham ritual master.

"The creation of this handbook will benefit all the Cham ritual masters. They will no longer make mistakes that may arise during the performance of the rituals. However, I can confidently say that it will also benefit the entire Cham community adhering the Ba-la-mon religion".—A participant, also an elite of the Cham in My Nghiep village.



The project leader, who is also a Cham ritual master
© British Council

Grantees and participants have the opportunity to authentically record, creatively represent in digitalized forms, and widely share their own works of cultural heritage. Videos, news reports, and images created are valuable materials since they were captured as lived heritage at the present time. It is also meaningful when the local people are helped and trained to produce photos and films of cultural heritage through their own eyes and in their own ways.



Preserving boat and gong heritage of Jarai people in Gia Lai
© British Council

Outcome Indicator 4

Funded projects have made significant contributions to inclusive and sustainable growth in the target communities.

The funding allocated to the projects was carefully designed to promote inclusive growth by providing opportunities for all members of the community who wished to be involved. Both men and women, particularly those from minority ethnic groups were encouraged to apply for funding and take leadership roles in the projects. As a result, nearly 50% of the funded projects (10 out of 22) were led by women, with six of them coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, women were actively encouraged to participate in various project activities, not just as artisans, teachers, trainers, or actresses, but also as performers. Based on the collected data, it is estimated that over 50% of the total participants across all projects were female. In projects such as weaving techniques training, pottery making, traditional dancing, and old song singing, women from the villages played vital roles as educators and trainers. In the same vein, children were given opportunities to contribute to heritage preservation. For instance, a project in Ninh Thuan focused on collecting and teaching the proper way to sing Cham old songs, with a specific emphasis on school children. Similarly, in another project in Bau Truc focused on heritage storytelling, featuring a competition where

children competed to become the best cultural heritage tour guide.

The funded projects have made both direct and indirect contributions to positive changes in livelihoods associated with heritage. Several grantees and participants reported an increase in product sales since the project's implementation. Notably, Hoa, a renowned artisan from Bau Truc craft village, known for her pottery-making techniques, used to face difficulties working when it rained. However, with the project's support, her open-air workshop was equipped with a high and large roof, enabling her to take more orders and hire local labour to work throughout the day. As a result of increased product sales, incomes for both Hoa and the local labour force have improved.

Moreover, many projects integrated activities to support community tourism. Six projects (two in Gia Lai and four in Ninh Thuan) focused on developing local tourism through the implementation of experimental models. These projects utilised community cultural heritage as key tourist attractions. Activities included conducting surveys to

evaluate potential tourism resources, developing community tourism products, providing start-up consultations for community tourism, offering skills training for villagers to develop community tourism, designing short and long tours centred around cultural heritage, training village children as tour guides, and establishing heritage-based homestays. In the case of the revival of the ethnic cultural festival featuring the racing of dugout boats on the Po Ko river, the locale witnessed the visitation of over a thousand tourists within a span of two years.

Overall, the funded projects have played a significant role in fostering inclusive and sustainable growth within the target communities, empowering women, engaging children, improving livelihoods, and promoting community-based tourism initiatives.

Case Study 5. Revitalizing the Jarai's heritage of Dugout boat and Gong cultural space

AIMS: To preserve and promote the values of the Jarai's cultural heritage of dugout boat and gong cultural space

LOCATION: Ia O and Bi villages, Ia Grai district, Gia Lai province

- ACTIVITIES:**
- Open classes to train the young people to fine-tune gongs, and perform gong (men) and Xoang dancing (women) episodes
 - Revitalize and energize the community festival of racing dugout boats
 - Open classes to train the young people to make, repair and use the traditional dugout boats
 - Digitalize and share the Jarai's cultural heritages

"The most remarkable outcome was that the repaired boats were not simply stored or left at the wharf but instead actively used for the festival of dugout boats racing on the Po Ko river. This unique festival, once revitalised, holds great potential for tourism development. Through the reorganisation of this festival in the past two years, we have attracted thousands of tourists to the region," — The project leader.

"A noticeable change that we have observed since the project funded by the British Council is the formation of a team of performers. Now, when local restaurant owners request it, they perform Gong playing and Xoang dancing for domestic and international tourists. Previously, they only performed at community ceremonies. This change allows them to earn additional income"—A participant, also the vice-chairman of the People's Committee of the Ia O commune, Ia Grai district.

Local officials have also benefited from the projects. The manager of Ia Grai district's Television and Radio, who is also a project leader, disclosed that this project marked her first involvement in cultural heritage initiatives. Throughout the project's implementation, she received timely guidance and support from the British Council staff and gained valuable insights and solutions for each step. Similarly, a project leader who aimed to promote the telling of stories related to Cham cultural heritage in Ninh Thuan shared, "The targeted communities warmly embraced my project, and people actively participated in the training sessions. The local authorities recognised the project as a new avenue to provide advice and solutions for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage."

4 Challenges, Lessons learned and Recommendations

Based on reports from funded projects, as well as discussions with leaders and participants in case studies, the author has identified the following main challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations to the program.



A master practicing in a ritual ceremony of Cham culture
© British Council

1 How to effectively connect the preservation of cultural heritage with inclusive and sustainable growth in practice

Lesson learned
Individuals within the targeted communities were provided with opportunities to engage in various components of the projects, including valuing, learning, protecting, and sharing cultural heritage. The active involvement of a larger number of people within a community contributes to the enhanced preservation of cultural heritage.

Project activities that had the potential to generate income or to improve livelihood were encouraged by the British Council Viet Nam's grant schemes.

Our Recommendations
Anyone has the ability to contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, but collaboration is often recognised as the effective approach for safeguarding and promoting its values. Therefore, it is crucial to support initiatives that engage multiple sectors in heritage conservation and enable them to collaborate effectively.

Working models that not only well preserve cultural heritage but also provide income opportunities for practitioners should be recommended to the targeted communities. These successful models, derived from experimental projects, should be communicated to the communities through various means such as organising community meetings or seminars.

2 The institutional factor
Grantees have reported facing challenges with complex application procedures when seeking permission from local authorities to implement their projects, and many have experienced delays in receiving payment.

Lesson learned
The process of obtaining approval from local authorities for projects funded by international organisations will always take a significant amount of time.

For projects managed and funded through local partner, more complaints about delayed payments were noted.

Our Recommendations
It is important to provide additional capacity building to potential applicants on how to properly complete the necessary paperwork according to the government's requirements. Furthermore, there is a need for increased communication initiatives to ensure that both the government and the public are well-informed about the cultural programmes in Viet Nam that are being implemented by the British Council and other non-governmental organisations.

3 The contrast between socially constructed passivity and voluntarism

Lesson learned

Without certain allowances in the form of cash, the likelihood of local residents participating in project activities diminishes.

If the elders or elites within a village refused to participate in a given project, it is more likely the rest of the targeted community will do the same.

There is still a prevailing belief among many locals that the preservation of cultural heritage is primarily the responsibility of external entities such as government organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Our Recommendations

The elders, ethnic elites, or heads of the village are the influencers in a given community. They should be the people who are initial approached when implementing a project.

Further initiatives are required to actively encourage and promote voluntarism among the local community in action for cultural heritage. For example, priority should be given to proposals submitted by local individuals and those belonging to the same ethnic group. Another solution is to enhance communication of the important roles and capacity of the local people in safeguarding their own cultural heritage.

4 Small grants and short duration vs. expected long-term impacts

Lesson learned

Short-duration and limited fundings tend to create short-term rather than long-term effects on cultural heritage.

Our Recommendations

It is advisable to support projects that include initiatives enabling participants to sustain their activities even after the project's completion. The British Council should consider expanding the scope and duration of its grants to facilitate the implementation of larger projects.

Establishing community-based 'mini museums', showcasing traditional costumes, working tools, ritual objects, musical instruments, homemade products, etc., can be a viable solution to create lasting impacts.

5 Lack of linkages among funded projects: There is a lack of connection among funded projects within a locality. Many project leaders are unaware of or indifferent towards other projects.

Lesson learned

A project's creative ideas and experiences in organising activities to preserve and promote cultural heritages within a community can provide valuable references and lessons for other projects.

If all project leaders within a community are collaborated, people can explore much more of cultural heritage through various forms of preservation and promotion.

Our Recommendations

Conferences, seminars, and meetings are helpful because they provide project owners with the opportunity to openly share the outcomes and lessons learned from their projects throughout the entire project duration.

Project leaders and participants should be empowered to engage in online or offline discussions to explore what can be done and how to enhance the effectivity of the preservation of cultural heritage more effectively.

Project leaders and participants from different funded projects should be facilitated to connect with and expand their social networks, which can be beneficial for improving their livelihoods.



Community gathering at Mo Hra village
© British Council



Mo Hra villagers using the daily life objects
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5 Film Story



Community Cultural Heritage Challenge (2021-2023)

The video highlights Community Cultural Heritage Challenge, a new initiative by the British Council's Heritage of Future Past to enable local communities to come up with ideas and receive support to design and deliver actions that aim to safeguard and promote their cultural heritage. The initiative also aims to directly engage with and benefit local communities in the safeguarding and promotion of their cultural heritage.



Community Cultural Heritage Challenge Testimonials (2021 – 2023)

Hear from community members across Viet Nam about their participation in Community Cultural Heritage Challenge. Through the grant scheme, they are offered financial support and project management assistance to deliver initiatives safeguarding local cultural heritage via directly engaging with and benefiting local people.



6 Appendix

Appendix 1	Complete summary of data review and analysis
Appendix 2	Complete summary of qualitative data from interviews
Appendix 3	Full case studies
Appendix 4	An interview plan and interview transcription of all interviews conducted (audio files stored in internet links)

Kindly note that the materials are in Vietnamese only.



Acknowledgement



A weaver adjusting the cloth on her loom
© British Council

It has been a great pleasure for us to work on this final evaluation report. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who shared their experiences and stories while running their own British Council-funded projects. Without the openness and generosity of these project leaders whom we met and spoke to during the data collection process, the creation of this evaluation report would not have been possible. We hope that this report, along with the accompanying short film, will prove to be valuable for evaluating the overall outcomes of the Cultural program invested by the British Council in Viet Nam from 2018. We also aim for this report to raise awareness about the value of cultural heritage and its transformative potential. In particular, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Phạm Minh Hồng and Phan Thu Nga at the British Council in Viet Nam for their timely support and invaluable advice.

Hoàng Văn Chung

Hoàng Văn Chung is a researcher in Sociology, currently the Head of Department for Theories and policy on religion at the Institute for Religious Studies, Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS). Since 1999, Chung has focused his investigation on new religious phenomena, folk religion, Buddhism, and state-religion relationship in Viet Nam and carried out a lot of ethnographic fieldwork among diverse religious-ethnic communities. His major publications include *New Religions and State's Response to Religious Diversification in Contemporary Viet Nam* (Springer 2017), an edited book *Major values and functions of Buddhism in contemporary Vietnam* (Social Sciences publishing house 2019), and a book chapter entitled "The double-layered religious diversification in post-Renovation Vietnam" in *Religious Diversity in Asia* (Brill 2019). In regard to the field of cultural heritage, Chung has published a co-authored book entitled *Heritage of Future Past* (British Council Viet Nam 2020).

Nông Nhật Quang

Nông Nhật Quang is a documentary filmmaker based in Hanoi. He started out making short documentaries on queer experience, creative industry and cultural heritage. His films have been streamed on Apple TV and Amazon Prime and used in impact campaigns for marriage equality. Quang is currently working on his debut feature film, and has gathered support from Cannes Docs, the IDFA Bertha Fund (Netherlands), DMZ Docs Pitch (Korea), Docs by the Sea (Indonesia), and SGIFF (Singapore). He is an alumni of American Film Showcase and currently works as a program officer at Doc Cicada, a Vietnamese documentary development initiative.





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