**Call for submissions on cultural rights   
and sustainable Development**

In her first report to be presented to the General Assembly, to be presented in October 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Alexandra Xanthaki, will consider the role of culture in sustainable development, including cultures of development.

Adopted in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development provides an ambitious universal agenda for all countries to work towards, aiming at reducing poverty and hunger, protecting the planet by adapting the consumption, production and management of natural resources, ensuring that economic, social and technological progresses contribute to prosperity for all, and at fostering peace, justice and inclusiveness.[[1]](#footnote-1) As the Agenda is firmly anchored in human rights, achieving the sustainable development goals should be done in a manner that both contributes to the exercise of human rights and refrains from having negative impact on their full realization. Cultural rights, as an inherent part of the human rights system, should be considered in this process to leverage the implementation of the SDGs, and processes to achieve any of the SDG should not have negative impact on the realization of cultural rights.

Cultural rights protect the rights for each person, individually and in community with others, as well as groups of people, to develop and express their humanity, their world view and the meanings they give to their existence and their development through, inter alia, values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, institutions and ways of life. They are also considered as protecting access to cultural heritage and resources that allow such identification and development processes to take place.

1. **The cultures of development**

This first part aims at gathering information about the vision, values and aims of development, and about those who are involved in defining the strategies and evaluating progress in their achievement.

* + 1. **What is your understanding of what “development” should aspire to?**

The British Council is committed to exploring alternative approaches to the applied, top-down solutions that are often seen in traditional international development practice.

Taking a cultural relations approach to development shifts the focus from a formulaic approach to development to an emphasis on mutual processes based on local contexts. Both formulas and processes lead to outcomes, however cultural processes are more attuned to the values, beliefs and practices of participants with an understanding of needs and opportunities, than formulas that operate at a high-level of abstraction.

Culture and Development is an area of work in which we advocate for the value of arts, culture, creativity and heritage for inclusive and sustainable development.

We do this through:

* developing and delivering a global portfolio of programmes in collaboration with individuals and organisations in the UK and overseas;
* hosting events and activity to share our learning and understanding, and make connections for further collaboration;
* working in partnership with other international organisations such as EUNIC, EU Practitioners Network, EU Institutions, International Cultural Relations Research Alliance, UNESCO headquarters, national commissions and field offices, United Cities and Local Governments Culture Committee;
* developing research and resources to share our methodology and evidence.

We believe that to create sustainable and inclusive development, it's important that the challenges that are being addressed are mutually identified by the people facing them, and any subsequent solutions are co-created and delivered. This promotes individual agency, and ensures that socially and politically excluded groups/individuals have the opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the decisions and changes that affect their lives.

This approach creates opportunities for sustainable development, and helps to build more inclusive, stable and prosperous societies. Arts, culture, creativity and heritage are powerful tools for this approach. We have already seen how arts can foster social inclusion and change lives in the UK and overseas, addressing global challenges in a sustainable way, for example, through the [Women of the World Programme (WOW).](https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/wow2021) Amid the many challenges of the Covid pandemic, WOW has found new ways to unite women and girls across the world and make sure their voices remain at the top of the cultural agenda. This year’s activity involved over 300 artists, cultural organisations, policy makers and academicians from the UK, South Asia and Wider Europe. WOW Festivals highlight the impact of women creatives in initiating new collaborations to address women and girls’ issues. The events take inspiration from the power of the arts to create new ways of seeing the world and inclusive forums for reflection and dialogue.

Another example is our [Crafting Futures](https://design.britishcouncil.org/projects/crafting-futures/) global programme which aims for a sustainable future through making and collaboration – supporting a future for craft by understanding its value in our history, culture and world today. The programme brings together craft practitioners, designers and organisations from around the world to explore possibilities for this future together. Crafting Futures is tailored to the need of the local communities, and our inclusive approach means it is open to craft practitioners of any background in any location. The programme is currently active in East Asia, South Asia, Latin America and Wider Europe.

Please refer to: -

* The British Council’s Report *The Missing Pillar:* *Culture’s Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2020)*. The report aims to highlight the value of arts and culture – as a sector and in its widest sense – for sustainable development. It provides case studies of 11 of our programmes around the world, tackling a variety of issues and cutting across sectors, such as sustainable fashion, creative and inclusive economies, and the protection of cultural heritage in communities and fragile contexts. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_missing_pillar.pdf>
* The Missing Pillar Talks series: [*https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/our-stories/missing-pillar-talks*](https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/our-stories/missing-pillar-talks)
* *Culture and International Development: Towards an Interdisciplinary Methodology (2019)* [*https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/our-stories/culture-and-development-review*](https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/our-stories/culture-and-development-review)
* Our joint report with EUNIC and IfA *The Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development: Opportunities for National Cultural Institutes (2020)* <https://eunicglobal.eu/media/site/2896187722-1635852951/eunic-sdg-ksw-report-2021.pdf>
* Examples of our British Council’s culture and development programmes <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/current-projects>
* **Arts, Culture and Development – The Tricky Balancing Act (2018)** to explore the links between UK arts and international development from a practitioner’s point of view. This paper sets out the changing landscape in the arts and development sectors and presents ways in which large-scale organisations can find new ways of working to shift the balance towards a more flexible, mutual and sustainable model.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/our-stories/tricky-balancing-act>

* + 1. **How is development defined in your country?**

**If it exists, please provide the definition of development used in your Government’s / organizations’ strategies or policies towards (sustainable) development.**

The UK is currently reviewing its International Development Strategy and is expected to publish its new Strategy in 2022.

The International Development Strategy will set out the UK government’s approach to international development over the next decade. It will ensure close alignment of UK development activity with the objectives in the [Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy).

* + 1. **Has your country developed and adopted a (sustainable) development strategy?   
       If so, please indicate what the main development model is, the aims that are communicated and monitored.**
* The UK is committed to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. The most effective way to do this is by ensuring that the Goals are fully embedded in planned activity of each Government department. The most effective mechanism for coordinating implementation is the **departmental planning process**. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-the-sustainable-development-goals/implementing-the-sustainable-development-goals--2>
* The UK Government published **a Voluntary National Review** reporting on the UK’s progress so far on delivering the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in June 2019. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818212/UKVNR-web-accessible1.pdf>
* **G20** Minister for Digital and Culture reaffirmed the UK’s commitment to strengthen the role of culture in addressing the climate crisis at G20 Culture Ministers Meeting, held in Rome, 2021. The Minister opened the second session, and delivered a keynote speech outlining the UK’s approach to addressing the climate crisis through culture and reiterated the importance of the UKs commitment to diversity, inclusion & human rights in our cultural agenda and international cultural heritage protection programmes.

**See also:**

* Local National Reviews for [Bristol](https://city2city.network/bristol-and-sdgs-voluntary-local-review-vlr-progress-2019?msclkid=cecdc3b6c25011eca8fcdaafdcdddc26), [Liverpool](https://www.iges.or.jp/en/vlr/liverpool?msclkid=2100d9e6c25111ecb30bc3b29bb30252), Basildon (in progress)
* [Global Goals Week in Liverpool](https://globalgoalsweek.org/)
* [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Wales](https://gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales?msclkid=75b3f94ac25111eca7626332ad5d1465)
* [SDG Global Goals Network, Scotland](https://globalgoals.scot/)
  + 1. Who are the main stakeholders defining, driving and monitoring the (sustainable) development process?   
       Please provide information on the various levels or sectors of stakeholders involved.
    2. **Are there participatory processes influencing and informing the definition and evaluation of (sustainable) development policies? If so, how?**
* Please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-voluntary-national-review-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-lessons-learnt-and-next-steps>
* [BOND](https://www.bond.org.uk/), the UK’s international development network, has reviewed the UK’s progress against the SDGs and produced a report in 2019. They have working groups on SDGs, Disability Development, Civic Space, and caste. They are currently drafting an update report for 2022. <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2022/02/global-progress-on-implementing-the-sdgs-how-does-the-uk-stack-up>
  + 1. Have the development priorities or the assistance provided by international organisations impacted negatively on some aspects of your country’s (sustainable) development policies?

1. **The cultural rights dimension of the sustainable development goals**

This part of the questionnaire aims to gather experiences on how cultural resources and cultural rights have been considered in the strategies and programs aiming to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) generally as well as for specific goals.

* + 1. **In designing the strategy to achieve the SDGs, what consideration has been given to their cultural dimensions and to cultural rights? Which aspects have been considered?**

The British Council’s strategy and approach highlight understanding, celebrating and protecting each other’s culture as an essential part of building positive cultural relations for trust and understanding. Freedom of expression through arts and culture is an important means by which people make more sense of their lives, can envisage better futures, gain awareness of collective challenges and enhance their own agency for positive change. Appreciation of that is the starting point for British Council’s work in Arts and Culture.

Our cultural relations approach and way of working through arts and culture supports values of openness, tolerance and mutual respect, and lends itself to a people-centred approach. Through our arts and culture work harnessing our global network of offices and the connection to embedded civil society organisations we are able to work directly with the local cultural infrastructure in a way that other international organisations and governments cannot. This cultural relations approach recognizes local contexts and needs, and values arts, culture and heritage for sustainable development.

There is an acknowledged need for culture to be better integrated as part of the drive to sustainability locally, nationally, and internationally. It is vital as part of supporting ecosystems and environments that truly reflect and support the people and places they serve. People need to act together. This requires a change through culture.

* Please refer to Professor Singh’s (George Mason University) paper for the British Council  *The Cultural Relations of Negotiating Development: Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies at the British Council.* <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_cultural_relations_of_negotiating_development_dice_at_the_british_council_webfinal.pdf>
* The British Council’s report *Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth: A catalyst for change* <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-heritage>

The SDGs are seen as a framework for our Arts and Culture strand in our Strategy 2025. This includes the global programme on Culture Responds to Global Challenges, with a focus on cultural heritage, inclusion, climate and gender equality. The contribution of arts and culture is embedded in the development and delivery of programmes, as well as in our research, monitoring, evaluation and learning. Case studies from the Missing Pillar report include Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth, the Cultural Protection Fund, Crafting Futures, Women of the World, Tfanen.

The recommendations from the Missing Pillar report advocate for the SDGs to be more accessible to cultural actors, for the goals to be embedded in the delivery of cultural initiatives based on local needs, and for their impact to be measured accordingly. The report recommends taking an inclusive approach, involving communities and local actors to understand cross-cutting challenges and ecosystems to ensure sustainability. It also calls for a focus on digital technologies as part of the solution and a clearer response to the climate emergency from the cultural sector.

This report is a tool to increase understanding of the link between arts and culture and sustainable development. It is a first step at framing the impact of our British Council programmes alongside the SDGs. British Council is currently preparing for a follow up piece of research on culture and sustainable development. This will build on the initial Missing Pillar report and Talks series, featuring case studies from invited speakers and partners. British Council also plans to host a side event of the UNESCO Mondiacult 2022 in Mexico later this year on International Dialogue and Cultural Cooperation (tbc).

**Missing Pillar Talks**

The Missing Pillar Talks are a series of events on culture's contribution to Sustainable Development. The Talks respond to the recommendations of our recent report on advocacy, evidence and access, and consider the gap between policy and the practice. Through each event, we explored where these connections are being made, who the different stakeholders are, as well as where the opportunities lie for arts, heritage and culture to play a role in shaping a sustainable future, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The SDGs provide a framework that can support and enrich these sectors and encourage local action through shared global goals.

The first talk on 'Heritage and sustainable development – learning from the past, shaping the future' took place in March 2021 and looked through a heritage lens to current thinking and practice, inclusive and holistic approaches, Covid-19 recovery and climate action.

The second talk on 'Working together – culture, place and partnership for sustainable development' took place in May 2021 and focused in on the connections between cultural practice and policymaking at local, regional and national levels.

The third talk is took place 9-10 March 2022 on ‘Common Sense and The Community’. Cultural practices and the creative economy have incredible potential to shape a greener, fairer, safer, more inclusive world for everyone. Over two half days participants from around the world will look at how culture can inspire us, change our way of thinking and bring us together.

The Missing Pillar Talks are commissioned by the British Council in association with the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) and the Culture Committee of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). The third Missing Pillar Talk is programmed by Barker Langham.

Watch the talks here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdiB3YQ6fPnkiVEp1AaDQDf5XVALoEr6p>

* + 1. How was the planning, implementation and monitoring of the strategy adapted to the cultural values, world views, practices and identities of the concerned persons? How was respect for diversity integrated in the process?
    2. **How were the persons concerned involved? Their diverse cultural resources, knowledge and capacities in various contexts capitalized? Has the strategy to achieve the SDGs been designed in a way that is culturally adequate and inclusive?**
* As an example, see Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth reports and programme websites in Colombia, Vietnam and Kenya: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-heritage>
  + 1. Have international development and financial agencies taken into account cultural rights in sustainable development initiatives?
    2. **Where cultural resources and creative capacities were leveraged in achieving the SDGs, what were in your experience the results, successes, weaknesses, or lessons learned?**

**Case Study: Joint DCMS and British Council Cultural Protection Fund**

The Cultural Protection Fund is a £50 million ODA fund that supports efforts to protect cultural heritage at risk. The fund aims to help to create sustainable opportunities for economic and social development through building capacity to foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage. Grants are available to applicants working with local partners in one or more of the fund’s ODA target countries.

Since 2016: -

* over 45,000 people across the Middle East and North Africa have participated in cultural heritage protection activities via the CPF.
* Over 280,000 actions to protect heritage at risk have taken place through CPF funded projects.
* Over 16,000 people trained in heritage protection.
* Over 20 management plans have been created to project heritage at risk.
* A range of built heritage assets have been restored, some of which are now safer, more secure & being used by communities in a range of ways that they were not previously;
* Physical & digital outputs have increased ability to raise awareness of heritage & reach new audiences;
* Projects have contributed towards countering illicit trade of artefacts; and,
* Intangible cultural heritage has been recorded, in a number of cases prior to stories & traditions being lost as elders pass on.
* Increased employability & employment-related outcomes, such as gaining jobs or promotion.
* Upskilling & employment of under-represented groups within particular heritage professions & institutions.
* Wider impacts include community empowerment and leadership and networking benefits to grantees.

Recognising the urgent need to protect cultural heritage from climate change, in 2020 DCMS and the British Council launched a new climate programme as part of the CPF, the Disaster and Climate Change Mitigation funding round. Funds were awarded to five global heritage projects that respond to the risk of climate change to heritage in East Africa. The projects aim to advance regional cultural protection by supporting knowledge exchange between experts and empowering local organisations with the skills to protect their cultural heritage.

The projects supported by the fund are co-created with local organisations and communities in the countries they are based in. This ensures that the interventions are responsive to the most pressing issues that society is facing. Where capacity building is part of the project, we work to ensure that the knowledge and skills being developed are relevant to the local context and are retained in that country for future generations.

The fund supports the UK Government’s commitment to realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by helping to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage. We support this activity at a community level which complements government action at World Heritage Site level.

Other contributions to the SDGs include access to affordable housing, participatory management, access to public spaces and indirectly supporting the least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, and in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials. Other relevant SDGs are 4,5,8,10,16 and most significantly SDG 17, strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.

The SDGs are built into our Theory of Change and our evaluation approaches / frameworks for the Cultural Protection Fund and will be the focus on the new UK government funded What Works Centre for International Heritage Protection exploring the evidence base, capacity building for evidence generation and informing policy around heritage protection and sustainable development.

The research and external evaluation reports from the Cultural Protection Fund are available online here <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/evaluating-impact-cultural-protection-fund>

**Lessons learned**

* The cultural dimension of sustainable development has yet to be fully assimilated into the priorities of countries.
* Advocate for specific outcomes that respond to individual SDGs through arts and culture
* Evaluation: Building on the UNESCO 2030 Indicators, select key targets and indicators to mainstream throughout projects. The need for longitudinal evaluations, building evaluation capacity in the cultural sector around the SDGs. offering training, mentoring and capacity building on M&E, culture and sustainable development.
* Ensuring better access to the SDGs: by becoming more familiar with the SDGs, organisations like the British Council can align our work with the goals and find common language to demonstrate the relevance and shared values of our global cultural engagement. This approach requires an understanding of the different contexts in which we work, and engagement with local stakeholders to develop solutions that are inclusive and sustainable gathering better evidence: whilst thematic alignment to the SDGs may seem obvious, more can be done to measure the value of cultural relations for social, economic and environmental wellbeing, especially in light of the COVID-19 recovery.

You are invited to provide information only on the questions and the goals relevant to your work.

1. See preamble of the Agenda at this page: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)