the audience agency

International, Online Peer & Collaborative Learning Programme

Blueprint

BRITISH COUNCIL

In partnership with

Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Cultural Protection Fund

Contents

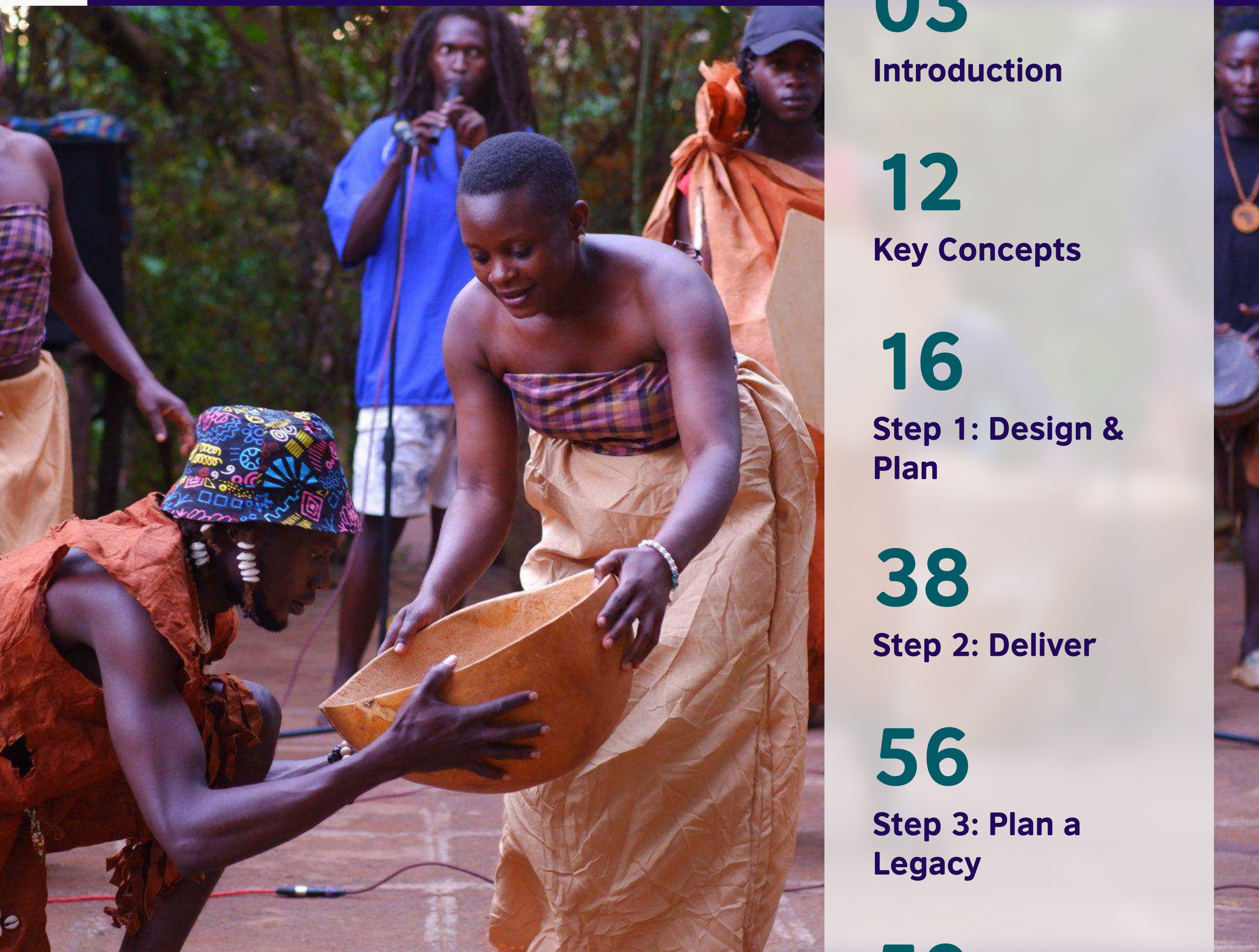

Image credit: Solomy

Image courtesy of Nilotika Cultural Ensemble, a participant in the Connecting Cultural Heritage Peer & Collaborative Learning programme

Introduction

The Purpose of this *Blueprint*

This resource comes out of ‘Connecting Cultural Heritage’ (CCH), a programme commissioned by the British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund. The idea was to find a way for people working in cultural heritage who share similar challenges all over the world to come together, learn from each other and form a supportive network.

We trialled an approach with 30 great participants from Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Palestine, Nepal, Syria, and Uganda. Together, we have created this *Blueprint* to share our experience of creating and managing a programme like this.

A blueprint is a design plan, and we hope it will be a useful guide for others who would like to create something similar. We see it as a practical, flexible framework to use as a starting point.

There's nothing new about professional networks or peer learning of course, but this programme was trying to find a solution to three particular challenges:

1. Many people working in culture and heritage in their local communities are discovering amazing new ways of working, often in challenging circumstances. There is much to learn from their real-life experience. How can this experience be shared? **How do we make the experience of participants the essential content?**

2. How can people working in very different places around the world connect with each other in an environmentally sustainable way? **How could a digitally-enabled network help?**

3. International capacity-development programmes are often provided by Western organisations which therefore preference certain modes of working and outlooks. How can professionals in the Global South or post-colonial contexts set the agenda for their own learning and development in these international settings? **How could participants co-create their own programme?**

In this resource, we share the approach we developed with others who are asking similar questions. We share it in the knowledge that it can and will be improved by others.

Who is the *Blueprint* for?

The short answer: anyone who is interested.

The longer answer: anyone who is interested in creating an opportunity for people around the world with a shared professional interest to learn from each another.

The *Blueprint* mostly ‘talks’ to someone who wants to establish such a mutual learning programme. You might be an expert, or someone trying something like this for the first time. You might be an experienced facilitator or educationalist, or a network enthusiast with no experience, someone who just wants to connect with colleagues internationally. The *Blueprint* is made with organisers like you directly in mind. But it should also make a useful read for participants, funders and other stakeholders too.

CCH was designed with and for cultural professionals working to protect heritage where it is at risk. Although they had very different practices and worked in different places, they had some professional knowledge and situational challenges in common. The design was for a group of professional peers of wide-ranging experience but from diverse regions, disconnected by geography. There is little about it, however, that is specific to the cultural or heritage sectors, apart from the conversations and content that were decided by participants.

Is this the right blueprint for you?

Choose A or B for each:

I am looking for a programme which..

A	Is taught by an expert, using textbook information and guest speakers
B	Is led by participants' interests and experience

A	Is based on a curriculum that can be repeated
B	Follows a process that can be repeated but with no curriculum

A	Involves learning through listening, reading and making notes
B	Involves learning through contributing, asking and answering questions, discussing

A	Is an informal network which people can join as and when they can
B	Is structured and requires a commitment of up to a day a month for a longer period of time

A	Is set-up and run on a fully voluntary basis
B	Funds participants and is managed by a paid team

A	Takes place in a face-to-face setting
B	Takes place entirely/ or mostly online

A	Can involve practitioners in the same place or even organisation
B	Is specifically about international exchange

If you chose mostly option B, then this *Blueprint* is probably right for you. There's nothing wrong with the As! They are just the characteristics of a different kind of programme.

How to use the *Blueprint*: A flexible framework

CCH was developed through a small prototype which was then rolled out as a year-long programme. In this resource, we share what seem the important aspects of the design and approach. We think these can be adapted and used in different ways, depending on the context. Our *Blueprint* is not a rigid structure, more a starting point from which to build. It includes:

Introduction & Key Concepts

Introducing CCH and the *Blueprint*, where they came from and what they are for. We also define some of the terms used and explore the design principles and approaches that were identified in the evaluation as being critical to CCH's success.

Step 1: Design & Plan

This section covers first steps, including getting started, co-designing the programme, making the invitation and setting expectations.

Step 2: Deliver

This section explores putting your plan into action. We look at the programme launch, delivery logistics, language, content, facilitation, what roles are needed to deliver a programme like this, how to maximise reflection and learning and evaluating the programme.

Step 3: Planning a Legacy

We recommend planning what will happen after the programme in good time – how can relationships, exchange and learning continue into the future.

Top Tips

Look out for ‘top tips’ - that is, simple suggestions or advice drawn directly from our experience.

Our Story

The Audience Agency was commissioned by the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund to develop 'Connecting Cultural Heritage' (CCH). This programme was offered virtually to individuals actively involved in cultural heritage protection in countries across the Middle East, North Africa, East Africa, and South Asia. It was conceived as an opportunity to build longer-term relationships, share best practice, learn from each other, exchange ideas, address challenges, and increase confidence and action on what works (and what doesn't) in the field of cultural heritage protection.

CCH was developed and delivered from July 2023 to May 2024 by The Audience Agency and associates Sarah Boiling and Amanda Smethurst, with the support of partner organisations Bayimba, Asia-Europe Foundation and Culture Resource.

the audience agency

Culture Resource
المورد الثقافي

ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION

BAYIMBA

'Connecting Cultural Heritage' (CCH) was commissioned by the Cultural Protection Fund, led by The British Council as part of the work to help develop the confidence, knowledge, and networks of practitioners. The Cultural Protection Fund (CPF) is led by the British Council in partnership with the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

In 2022, the Cultural Protection Fund launched a new approach to gathering and sharing evidence and learning. One of the aims of this *What Works approach* is to improve access to high quality usable evidence & learning in cultural heritage protection. The CCH programme was created as a learning tool and the Cultural Protection Fund is committed to sharing all learning from it with the culture and heritage sectors and more widely. The *Blueprint* will also enable the Cultural Protection Fund and our partners to deliver a similar programme with new cohorts in the future.

Funded by the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund in partnership with the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport

BRITISH COUNCIL

In partnership with

Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Cultural Protection Fund

Key Concepts

Peer & Collaborative Learning

These are terms used quite often these days. Here, we mean practice-based professional learning programmes set up to enable 'peers' – or people that work in similar fields - to learn from each other's experience. Importantly, this usually involves peers forming supportive relationships where members of the group coach each other. Collaborative learning is about organised professional development which is not expert-led or top-down but is shaped and organised by a collective.

This form of learning and capacity-building is distinctive, bringing different benefits than expert-led 'training'. These include building confidence and developing leadership qualities over technical skills. Recent research also suggested that it helps create the right conditions for inclusive and mutually respectful discussion and equitable international exchange.

In 2021, the British Council commissioned research into the potential of 'peer and collaborative learning' to support the further development of their Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth programme. In their Report, Sarah Boiling and Amanda Smethurst defined peer and collaborative learning as:

> **a process which enables people who are in similar or different circumstances to share, learn, and collaborate with and from each other in a way that is best suited to their needs, and grows and develops over time**
>
> *Boiling, S. and Smethurst, A. 2021. Peer and Collaborative Learning Research Final Report. Commissioned by the British Council for Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth*

According to the research, the following principles sit at the heart of peer and collaborative learning:

1. **Mutuality & exchange**
2. **Everyone is an expert**
3. **Respectful of different cultures**
4. **Shared vision**
5. **Personal responsibility for learning**
6. **Honesty & trust**
7. **Confidentiality (in some contexts)**
8. **Listening**
9. **Supportive challenge**
10. **Accessible for all**

Programme Design Features

These are some of the features of the programme design which emerged as important.

People-Centred

This just means being flexible and adaptable around individuals' interests and needs. Be ready to change content or practicalities if its's not working, or if people's needs change. In a group setting, this may take some negotiation – ask people to vote if a way forward is not clear. It helps to have a regular review of the process: we built this into the schedule. It is one of the main reasons for making evaluation and integral part of the programme.

Co-designed

This included opportunities to make decisions together about the content and format of the programme. It helped us to be people-centred. We used simple co-design techniques to generate a lot of ideas – e.g. for subjects to discuss, or the format of sessions - and then online voting mechanisms to make decisions.

A Safe Space

Obviously, it's important to create a space where people can build trust and have an honest exchange, where they feel free to voice their opinions and can be vulnerable. It is even more important where a group come from different cultures and don't necessarily fully understand each other's context. Agree some ground rules together – like not repeating what is discussed outside the group, what can and can’t be recorded. Agree too what values the groups should operate by: e.g. honesty, trying not to be judgemental, etc. Check in about any particular sensitivities. It's important that other stakeholders - including organisers and funders - are transparent and open too.

A Supportive Digital Space

Creating the right environment is more challenging in a digital environment. Good relationships are critical and they take more time to form online. Build in as much time as possible for people to talk to each other early on, while respecting that long online sessions are not ideal. Try to make introductions interactive - perhaps ask people to present their work on a digital whiteboard or with a video in advance – but make time for questions, answers and discussion about it.

Reflective Practice

Much of the value of peer learning comes from standing back to think about our own work, or see it through the eyes of others. This process is what is meant by ‘reflective practice’. The idea is that we need deliberate reflection to learn the lessons of our experiences. So we looked for mechanisms by which participants could make this process conscious. Asking people to tell their stories, or explain challenges and solutions was valued. We also asked people to keep a private ‘learning log’ - a written, video- or voice-diary - to capture new insight and record any changes they might make as a result. Our evaluation was designed to help people reflect on their own learning too.

Step 1

Design & Plan

Getting Started: Aims

Start by clearly defining programme aims. This will help you with designing the programme, recruiting participants, and managing the expectations of all stakeholders. Ask yourself:

→ **What difference should the programme make?**

→ **Who is it for?**

→ **What benefit will they gain?**

→ **What will success look like?**

→ **What will the legacy be?**

→ **Anything it should NOT be?**

To be people-centred, be ready to revisit and adapt aims and intentions with participants at the start of the programme. It's useful to ask questions like: what would success look like for you, what would it look like for the group?

Top Tip

Revisit your first draft aims with participants to ensure they align.

Objectives of 'Connecting Cultural Heritage'

1. To develop the capacity of cultural heritage practitioners - through developing understanding, knowledge and confidence
2. To establish co-designed and intercultural programme model, based on peer and collaborative learning
3. To make it relevant to a diverse range of professionals involved in Cultural Heritage Protection.
4. To provide a safe space for sharing practice and ideas
5. To enable new connections, enhance mutual understanding and a supportive network for the future
6. To evaluate and blueprint the process against these aims
7. To create assets to extend the value of the the programme in future

Getting Started: Resources

Your programme will need to fit certain parameters, including those of any funders or stakeholders.

Be transparent with participants about any constraints or limitations.

Overall Timescales – how long is your programme going to be?

This form of professional development is based on supportive relationships which take time to grow, especially in a virtual space. We recommend a longer period of time, with a minimum of 3 months and an optimum period of 6 – 18 months, with regular meetings no further apart than 4 weeks.

What worked for us

CCH was 11 months long, with 3 cycles of weekly meetings and a 3-week holiday in between. This was based on advice from participants, and we made small adjustments over time.

> **Because it wasn't just a two-day programme, the length allowed us to go into detail.**
>
> *'Connecting Cultural Heritage' Participant*

Resourcing – what resources might you need?

The main overheads are time for programme design, programme set-up and ongoing management including communicating with participants, session facilitation, and evaluation, plus licences for digital tools, translation costs if required, and fees for participation if included (see Setting Expectations). Leave ample time for managing communications and facilitating between meetings.

What worked for us

Although we had a fixed budget, we redrafted and readjusted it in the light of our process reviews to make sure we were using resources in a people-centred way.

Location – hybrid or delivered online only?

We felt that a few face-to-face sessions could help establish relationships and amplify learning.

What worked for us

CCH was delivered entirely online which made it sustainable and meant our budget could stretch to include participants from East Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East & North Africa. Participants would have preferred a hybrid model – perhaps meeting towards the start and end.

Top Tip

Allocate ample programme management time, as this is a crucial part of making things run smoothly!

Who to involve

Define the professional profile of your intended participants.

- **Role:** is the programme likely to be more suitable for some roles and not others?
- **Sector:** how would you define the the discipline or sector to be involved?
- **Age or experience:** is more relevant to early, mid or late career professionals - or all?
- **Location:** is your programme for individuals based in a particular country or region?
- **Ability to participate:** what technology will they need? How much time will they need? Will they be able to afford to participate.
- **What are the priorities?**

Because this is peer learning, it makes a difference to all participants to get a good mix. We learned that participants benefit from having common professional interests but really value diversity of professional and lived experience.

Optimum participants numbers?

We recommend a cohort size between 20 – 40.

What worked for us

We had 30 people in CCH. This was small enough to get to know each other but offered many perspectives and experiences.

> **The diversity of the Group was so important – it was great to draw on different styles and approaches - and to be able to find your own.**
>
> *'Connecting Cultural Heritage' Participant*

Co-designing the programme

Shaping the Programme with participants

By this point, you have established the basic framework and have a good sense of overall aims, who the programme is for and any major resource considerations. Our approach suggests that the next level of detail is designed as much as possible with participants, or a representative group of them.

Online Co-design Sessions

As with all online sessions, these should be a maximum of 2 hours with a short break. Use the session/s to check in on:

- Your **assumptions** about the programme, its aims and participant profile: How might these land?
- **Content:** Challenges, issues and other thing participants might want to tackle. What are the implications for programme design?
- **Format and framework:** How should learning take place? For instance, online sessions, online platform, across the timeframe.
- **Logistics:** All the practicalities, including timings, language, tech, paying for the programme, covering the costs of participants' time

The optimum group size for a co-design session is 6 - 8 to get a good mix of views but with some depth.

Top Tips

Co-designing always starts by generating a lot of ideas – get everyone involved, and have fun with this bit!

Once you have a good list, ask people to select or upvote their preferences.

Doing this online will be much easier with a good digital whiteboard or online collaboration tool

What worked for us

We wanted to develop the programme before recruiting participants, so we invited (and paid) 8 co-designers representative of the practitioners we hoped to involve in the full programme to work with us.

We worked on the model between sessions so everyone could see it coming together – we reviewed the draft at every session.

We then invited them all to take part in the final programme. 6 out of 8 did – and they really helped steer the programme over its course, especially in getting the group established.

Co-design techniques online

The key idea in co-design is to make the most of the all the perspectives and expertise around the table. As a facilitator, you have 2 main jobs: to make everyone feel welcome, comfortable and valued (see Peer & Collaborative Learning), and to create a framework for the productive generation and selection of ideas. Co-design techniques usually follow a similar pattern: part one is to encourage 'divergent thinking' – that is getting as many different view or ideas as possible. Part two is to enable 'convergent thinking' that is focussing in on priorities or selecting the best ideas for the job. So, an example in this context:

1. **Divergent:** how might we introduce participants to each other?

2. **Convergent:** which of these ideas should we select, given the constraints of time and the profile of participants?

Online, you will need a whiteboard/ collaboration app to help you collect ideas.

Divergent mode: pose a good open question to start. Then encourage people to respond with lots of ideas, views or possibilities. Get them to write them on the whiteboard or in the meeting Chat function. Work quickly, don't get too stuck on one or two subjects. No ideas are bad – sometime the most bizarre are the best. It does not matter at this point if no one agrees.

Convergent mode: now it's time to prioritise the ideas, approaches or issues that are most important – and in this case that will shape the programme. Ask participants to say which 3 factors or approaches they think are the best or most important. Get people to 'vote' on the Whiteboard. Discuss why people voted and gradually move towards a consensus – or as much consensus as you can achieve.

Search online for 'co-design' and you'll find lots more advice and creative techniques to help you!

Co-design throughout

Use these techniques to adapt and develop the programme with participants throughout the programme. We recommend building in moments to review and adapt as you will see in our programme model – the divergent/ convergent approach is really helpful.

Areas to Co-Design

Session types and agendas

What will you do in your sessions?

Think about providing a menu of formats (see Facilitation) that you can choose from for the programme sessions. Without being too prescriptive, think about potential agenda formats in the sessions and things you may want to include throughout the programme.

Select channels and tools

How will you connect participants inside and outside of sessions? What tools are people already using?

Think about what you need the channels and tools to do and create criteria for selecting the right tool. The co-design group is important for selecting tools that individuals already know and use (see Digitally Enabled).

Timescales

What is the rhythm of the programme? When does the programme take place?

Think about how frequent sessions will be and whether your programme will be broken up in different cycles or sections. Think about what times and days of the week work best for participants.

Time commitment

How much time could (and should) participants commit to the programme?

With your co-design group, think about the amount of time that participants can realistically commit. As your co-design group should include participants, they will have a good idea of what is possible in terms of capacity.

Language/accessibility

What language will the programme be in? What accessibility features can you offer?

Think about how you can 'meet people where they are' and consider the different ways that individuals may interact and participate (see Language).

Creating Equality of Contribution

How can you create conditions that enable participants to contribute and participate equally?

Think about the wide range of potential challenges and areas of interest that could emerge and create a flexible, coherent and simple programme structure. How can people afford the time or any fee? Should you charge or not, offer discount, offer to pay for people's time to participate?

Evaluation approach

How will the outcomes and impacts of the programme be evaluated?

Think about how you will collect data about the programme. For instance, we asked our co-design group about evaluation preferences and received a resounding call for a light-touch, qualitative evaluation approach that was embedded throughout the programme (see Evaluating the programme).

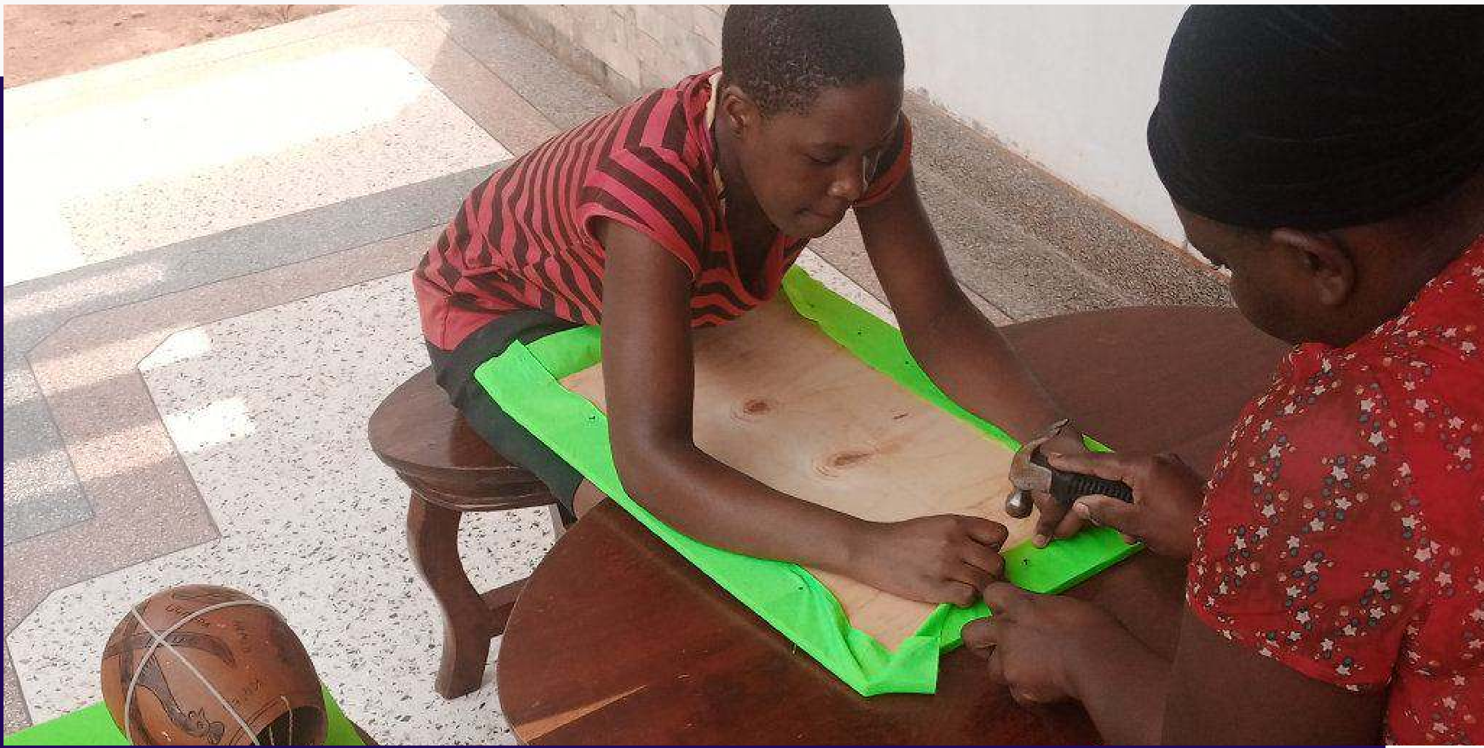

Image courtesy of Solomy Nansubuga Nabukalu, curator at the Kabale Museum in Uganda and a participant in the Connecting Cultural Heritage Peer & Collaborative Learning programme

Language

The whole concept of peer learning is based on communication and building understanding, so the language question is important in international contexts.

We concluded that using one main language was very important to support multidimensional communication and relationships. This can mean that you are excluding the people you most want to reach. It might be worth considering using interpretation if you have the budget and the group includes a maximum of 4 – 6 languages.

Supporting Those Participating in a Second Language

Facilitators need to factor in differences in participants' capacity and confidence in the language used. Apart from speaking slowly and clearly, this might also involve more repetition, checking in that everyone has understood, make space for less confident speakers.

Importantly, we discovered a range of ways participants and facilitators can support each other:

→ **Scribing and taking notes – second language speakers can find writing harder**

→ **Using a digital platform with full language localisation to translate messages between participants**

- **Circulating notes or a transcript after a session that can be translated**
- **Translating all written materials and resources**
- **Enabling live captions in the sessions**

What worked for us

CCH had participants from 12 countries and from the design phase we wrestled with the question of language. The consensus from our co-design group was that the main group sessions should be held in English to encourage mutuality, and it was felt that the multidirectional interpretation would disrupt the flow and impede the aims of the programme.

As it was vital to us that the connections and networks created within the programme could be self-sustaining beyond the programme, we found that having a shared, single language was the best solution for the participants.

CCH Programme Outline

This programme is made up of a a number of different types of session. We included:

- Induction Session (at the beginning): what we need to know to get started
- Introduction sessions: who are we, and what do we do. What do we want to talk about and why
- Small group sessions: going deeper into themes
- Summary sessions: what are the key points from our discussions, what can we share
- Group reflective discussions: what are we learning, what should we change
- Final Legacy & Learning Session (at the end): what did we learn, how will we take this learning forward into our practice?

Digital Platform Walkthrough
45 minutes

Host an interactive demonstration of any digital platforms and/or tools that you will be using in the programme.

Induction Session
2 hours

Take time to get to know each other! Hold space for individuals to introduce themselves and ask questions.

Co-design two-way terms of engagement with the participants, building on the expectations set during recruitment. Encourage participants to co-manage these expectations throughout the programme.

Cycle 1: Practice

8 weeks: July to September 2023

Introductory Session
2 hours

Small Group
1 - 1.5 hours

Small Group
1 - 1.5 hours

Small Group
1 - 1.5 hours

Co-create content with the participants. We held introduction sessions at the start of each cycle to decide the topics of small groups.

Small Group
1 - 1.5 hours

Small Group
1 - 1.5 hours

Small Group
1 - 1.5 hours

Small groups and breakout rooms give people a chance to go deeper into specific topics or ideas. An optimum group size 4 - 8. We found it was useful to have a dedicated facilitator.

Summary Session
2 hours

Update Learning Logs

Group Reflective Discussion
1.5 hours

What happens in the space between sessions? Consider having short gaps to maintain momentum.

Cycle 2: Management & Mechanics
8 weeks: October to December 2023

Structured as Cycle 1

Think about the rhythm of the programme and how to sustain momentum. We found it useful to structure CCH into three cycles, following the same format in each cycle.

Cycle 3: Advocacy
8 weeks: February to April 2024

Structured as Cycle 1

Final Session
2 hours

Build in time together to plan the legacy of the programme and how (and if) the network can be sustained

Update Learning Logs

Weave in time for individual and collective reflection throughout the programme.

Final Group Reflective Discussion
1.5 hours

Making the Invitation

How you recruit participants will depend on many factors, including if you already have a network. We wanted to build a new community so recruited through an open call. Here are some recommendations from our own experience:

→ **A simple, accessible application form** with questions that directly address the selection criteria. Focus on a few open questions that get to the heart of applicants' experience and motivations. Think about if you can accept different media for applications, such as videos or audio, to support access requirements.

→ **Advertising the opportunity.** We created a landing page on a website and included a description of the programme, selection criteria, applicant guidance and expectations of participants.

→ **A briefing session** for applicants to learn more about the opportunity, including plenty of time for questions. Share notes from the session.

Selecting participants on the basis of the selection criteria. You might want to use a weighted scoring system if you have a lot of applicants, and a balancing exercise ensure a diversity of professional and lived experience and address any inequalities – like gender.

Take your time! Allow ample time for recruitment and selection, especially leaving at least 4 – 6 weeks for word to get out and for people to apply. This will help the increase the diversity of the applicants.

Honorariums: Paying for people's time

To support equality of access, offering a fee to compensate for people's time may be important - especially if participants are freelancers or artists or organisations have limited resources. However, if you are working internationally, it is important to consider exchange rates and creating responsive fees – e.g. a sliding scale.

Setting Expectations

Make sure participants understand exactly what they are committing to.

Share and discuss what participants should expect - and what is expected of them, such as:

- Roles and responsibilities of participants
- Any preparations that they should make
- Simple structure of the programme with key dates and times
- Purpose of the programme: what it will do and what it will not do
- Time commitment – it is better to over-estimate than underestimate!
- Identify and address any access requirements other potential barriers

- Explain the evaluation of the programme and capture any permissions required
- Provide detail about payments and participation fees

Top Tip

Be ready to adapt and develop these expectations with the group

Step 2

Deliver

Programme Launch

Welcome Pack & Orientation

Develop a **Welcome Pack** to include all information that participants need: introductions, structure, objectives, dates, expectations, payment details, instructions for using digital tools and learning agreements. The **Welcome Pack** is a resource that participants can refer to throughout the programme.

Getting to know you

Encourage ‘getting to know you’ sessions at the beginning to establish connections and build a foundation for the programme. Consider ‘buddying’ participants up and creating breakout rooms so participants can get to know one another better.

Channels & Tools

Ensure all participants are familiar and comfortable using the digital tools by providing clear guidance and demonstrations. Arrange an interactive workshop with a hands-on demonstration early in the programme.

Co-designing and co-managing terms of engagement

As mentioned in Co-designing the programme, consider co-creating the terms of engagement at the start of the programme with participants. Have the participants review and/ or set their own principles, behaviours and culture, and encourage them to co-manage expectations.

Top Tip

Don't skip or shorten the time for introductions – its an important foundation stage

Delivery Logistics and Approach

Evaluation Integrated

Holding regular reviews will help the delivery team be responsive, flexible and adaptive to the needs of participants. Be ready to adapt content and/or process based on active participant feedback. See Group Reflection & Learning for more about ongoing reflection.

Adaptability within a clear framework

We found that a having clear, consistent programme structure made being adaptable easier. A reassuringly stable schedule, including review points, offered clarity but room for change.

Scheduling

Schedule all sessions in advance and make sure that all participants have the session dates and invite links in their calendars so they can plan around these. We tried to have polls to find the best time for everyone, but this was heavy on resources and administration time. We found that setting sessions in advance worked just as well, if not better!

Communications

A clear communications plan is a must-have. We found that keeping busy participants informed with frequent updates, summaries of sessions and next steps and reminders of upcoming sessions was vital to their getting full benefit.

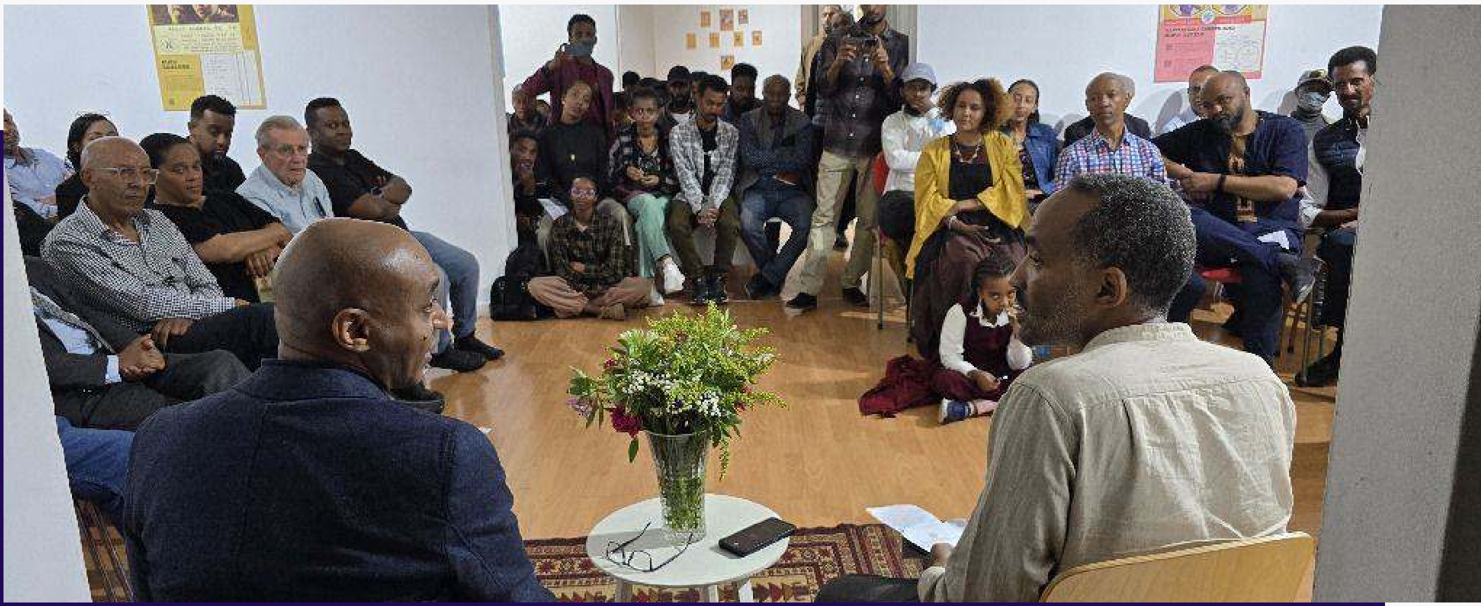

Image courtesy of Girum Mezmur, a musician from Ethiopia and a participant in the Connecting Cultural Heritage Peer & Collaborative Learning programme

Facilitation and Content

Facilitation

Although we tried self-facilitation for some sessions, we found that participants really valued having a dedicated facilitator. It meant everyone else could participate fully and think about their own practice. Having the same facilitator for each small group helps with consistency. Facilitators hold the space for participants to explore and learn, model and uphold the principles of peer learning, keep the conversation on track and ensure everyone has the chance to contribute. It can be useful if the facilitator takes notes too.

Session Formats

We found a number of formats to aid exchange, including:

- **Round Table Exchange** - in which several people simply share their experience of a particular practice/ challenge.
- **Case Study** – a more in-depth presentation and exploration of one participant's experience.
- **Masterclass** – more of a how-to session from a participant who is a specialist.

Provocation – a session that starts with a big open question or provocative statement.

Read & Review – in which participants agree to read an article or case study ahead of the session and discuss their responses to it in the session.

Recipe Book – in which participants share tested processes an create joint ‘recipes for success’ based on their experience.

Toolkit - sharing a collection of ‘how-to’s and top tips

Manifesto – a chance to discuss and build consensus on matters of principle or potential activism

> **The facilitators were one of the main pillars for the discussion to be fruitful.**
>
> *‘Connecting Cultural Heritage’ Participant*

Top Tip

It’s more difficult online to include everyone in the conversation. As a facilitator, try to get everyone involved in the session early on – even if it’s just a quick update from each person.

Digitally Enabled

Using digital tools and platforms for delivery

Digital tools help maintain momentum, develop connections and manage time. Essential tools include:

- A stable, easy to use meeting platform
- An admin platform for sharing files and information
- A messaging platform to communicate
- A whiteboard – for capturing ideas and stories and building on them over time
- Polling tools: upvoting, electing options, agreeing dates

You might look for tools that integrate some or all of this functionality, although cost and familiarity might make that less desirable.

As discussed in Co-Designing the Programme, we recommend that you use digital tools for online collaboration both in session and outside of sessions.

Try to integrate the digital tools into activities as much as possible – as preparation for sessions, in-session and as follow-up, encouraging everyone to participate and engage with the platforms.

Key Roles – Defining roles and responsibilities

A peer and collaborative learning programme can be delivered by just one organisation, or it can be done by a partnership of organisations as we did.

One role does not necessarily equate one person, and you can double up (i.e., the programme/co-design lead and programme manager could be facilitators).

Programme Manager

- Act as central point of contact for participants and main source of information
- Keep everyone up to date: frequent reminders and updates about the programme
- Support the programme lead with design of the programme
- Administer the programme – from scheduling to payments
- Coordinate participant recruitment
- Set up and manage digital channels and tools
- Maintain attention to detail and take a people-centred approach to programme management
- Document the process from start to finish

Programme Designer / Co-design Lead

- Set the aims and objectives of the programme
- Design the programme and lead the co-design process, developing a dynamic programme plan.
- Work with the programme manager and funder/commissioner to recruit participants
- Responsively adapt and modify the programme based on feedback from the delivery team and participants.

Facilitator/s

- Hold the space for participants to explore and learn, keeping the conversation on theme or topic
- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to be heard and share their views, keeping the discussion balanced amongst group members
- Support the group with identifying actions or next steps
- Do a temperature check at the start of every session, checking in on everyone's technology, set up and situation for the day

Participant

- As participants are at the heart of a peer and collaborative learning programme, they should have an interest and commitment to engaging, sharing and learning with peers in the programme.

- Can be any experience or skill level for the relevant topic. Having a mix of lived experience in the group is beneficial to everyone in the programme.
- Should be an active part of the cohort, attend all sessions and come prepared to share own experiences and listen to those of others.
- Take responsibility of own learning and reflection and contribute to group learning and reflection.
- Share and cascade learnings from the programme to individual networks and incorporate learnings into practice.

Programme evaluator

- Work in and with the delivery team and with any external stakeholder (e.g. funder/commissioner).
- Embed evaluation throughout the programme, weaving in moments for individual and group reflection.
- Set up light-touch monitoring tools to use throughout the programme based on recommendations from the co-design process.
- Facilitate and document review sessions wth participants, encourage reflection and frame learning.
- Bring the delivery team together at key moments to reflect on their experiences and learnings.
- Produce an evaluation at the end of the programme.

Funder / initiator / commissioner

- Set clear objectives and expectations for the programme and the delivery team.
- Work with the delivery team to develop and sign off on a dynamic programme plan.
- Embrace transparency, honesty and visibility.
- Maintain an arms-length distance from the delivery of the programme with regular check in and support points.
- Co-develop a set of criteria for recruitment of both the co-design group and the final programme.
- Support with recruitment through the advertisement of the opportunity to existing networks as well as the selection process of the final programme participants through a selection panel.
- Feedback on the process to the programme evaluator.

Evaluating the programme

Consider why and how you will evaluate your programme in the design and planning stage, so you can embed evaluation across it, rather than it feeling like an 'add on'.

What will evaluation help you do: improve your work, create a legacy, increase impact/s, capture individual or collective learning, make a case for your work, help you get funding, or build the network. What is the priority? Your answer to these questions will shape the evaluation purpose – the themes you want to explore and the data you collect.

Things to think about:

→ Identify the resources you have for evaluation (financial, people and tech) and what that will enable you to do.

→ Will you appoint an external evaluator or do it yourselves?

→ Identify your hoped-for outcomes for the programme, and listen to what participants expect, and evaluate the programme against these aims

Build in both formative and summative evaluation

- **Formative** (during the programme): What is working? What isn't? What changes can we make?
- **Summative** (at the end): Did we achieve our aims? How and why? What impact did the programme make? For different stakeholders? What did we learn? How will we do it better next time?

Think about ways to capture evidence that will be both easy for participants and provide you with the evidence you need.

You can collect qualitative data - opinions and thoughts - through feedback forms, group or individual discussions. If you want to know how many people experience these things, you should also consider a quantitative method, like a survey where you ask everyone the same questions in the same way.

Top Tip

Build in evaluation moments into the programme delivery, so it feels like part of the overall learning

What worked for us

Our evaluation was co-designed with the co-design group, and we took a qualitative approach. The evaluator was part of the delivery team; they facilitated the group discussions but didn't take part in the programme sessions. Qualitative feedback we collected through structure review sessions and insights were taken from learning logs completed by participants. Together this information helped us to adapt the programme, understand impact, and make case for the future use of this approach.

The evaluation provided a rich story of the programme and was a key mechanism for co-design. Both participants and the delivery team were positive about the experience; however, the analysis of such a large amount of qualitative data took considerable time.

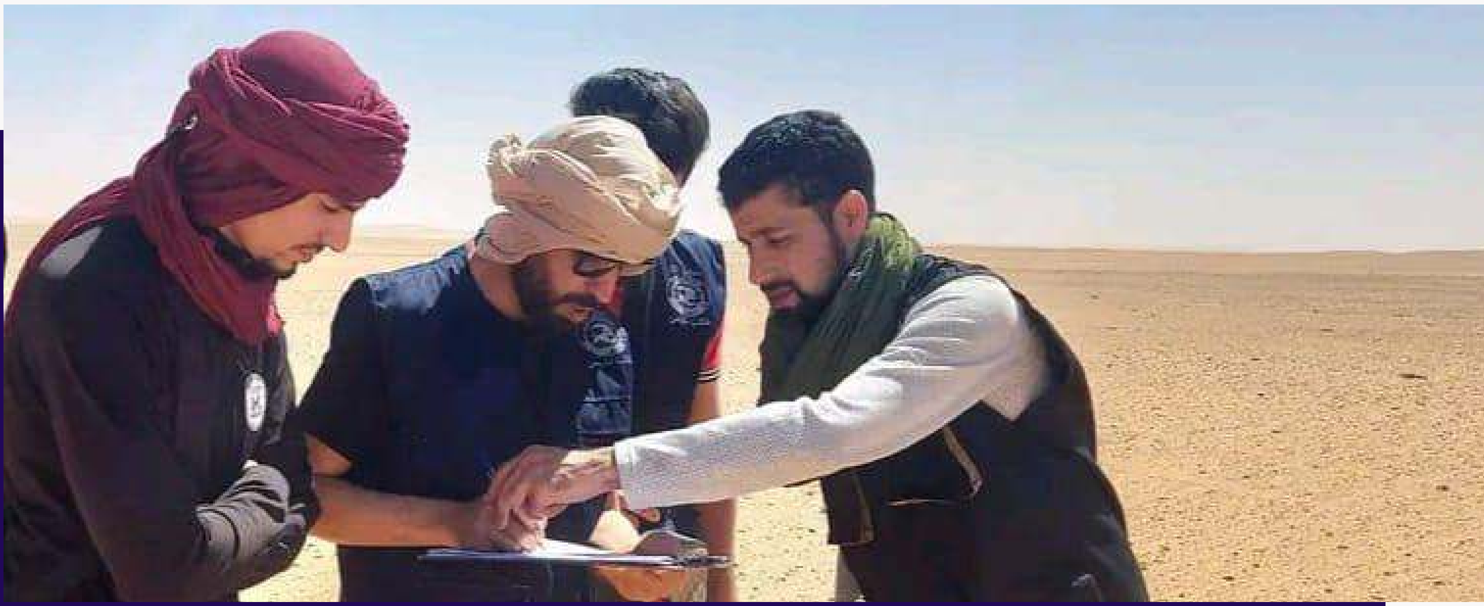

Image courtesy of Benkacir Boubaker, an archaeologist from Algeria and a participant in the Connecting Cultural Heritage Peer & Collaborative Learning programme

Group reflection & learning

Leave moments for reflection, both individually and collectively, throughout the programme.

This creates an opportunity to share learning and serves as an organic pause in the programme to help recentre and refocus.

The delivery team should also take part in reflection at key moments in the programme to look at what's working, what's not working, and plan to adapt the programme plan accordingly.

The group reflection sessions are useful for evaluation of the programme, but they are also a great tool to share and crystallise learning for participants at key moments in the programme.

Set the expectation from the beginning of the programme that participants should be prepared to feedback and reflect on their experience throughout the programme.

Top Tip

Don't skip the collective reflection time!

Individual reflection & learning

Learning Logs or Journals

Create a tool for participants to keep track of their individual learning throughout the programme. These can be very simple and informal and can be written, verbal or video, whatever participants find easiest! Encourage participants to reflect on their individual learnings at key moments in the programme and put this into the schedule. If participants are asked to complete their learning logs ahead of the group reflection sessions, ask them to bring one or two things they learned to share with the group.

What worked for us

At the start of CCH, we asked participants to think about what they wanted to get from taking part, and to create a 'Learning Question' that they wanted to explore in the programme. The participants self-monitored their learning question throughout the programme using a learning log template provided, completing their learning logs after each cycle.

Top Tip

Weave individual learning into the group reflection sessions where possible to connect individual and group learning.

Example questions to include in the learning log

- What is your learning question?
- What has changed for you in terms of your learning question?
- You might want to think about: What you have learnt? What is still to happen? Does your question still feel relevant and useful?
- What else have you gained from being in the programme?
- You might want to think about: Other things you have learnt beyond your learning question, connections and relationships, new ideas, potential solutions to challenges.
- [At the end of the programme] Reflecting on your learning question, to what degree have you achieved your aims? What enabled these achievements? What made the most difference? What got in the way?

Step 3

Plan a legacy

Planning a legacy

The key legacy for a programme like this is probably a combination of personal learning and the connections that participants make.

We learnt however that it is also important for participants to shape a legacy and exit plan for their work together.

From the outset, you might consider agreeing some kind of output to share ideas, learning or other impact more widely.

Towards the end of the programme, dedicate time to co-design an exit plan together with the group. During this conversation, you should think about:

→ What if any output/s might you want to share more widely: a book, a whitepaper, an action plan etc.

→ Will the digital tools and channels that were used during the programme remain available and accessible after the programme ends?

→ How will participants stay in touch with one another and continue the conversation beyond the programme?

→ How and where will you share the files and resources that were developed or shared in the programme?

The Group should also consider who and how any follow-up work might be delivered.

Top Tip

Co-design the legacy and exit plan with your participants!

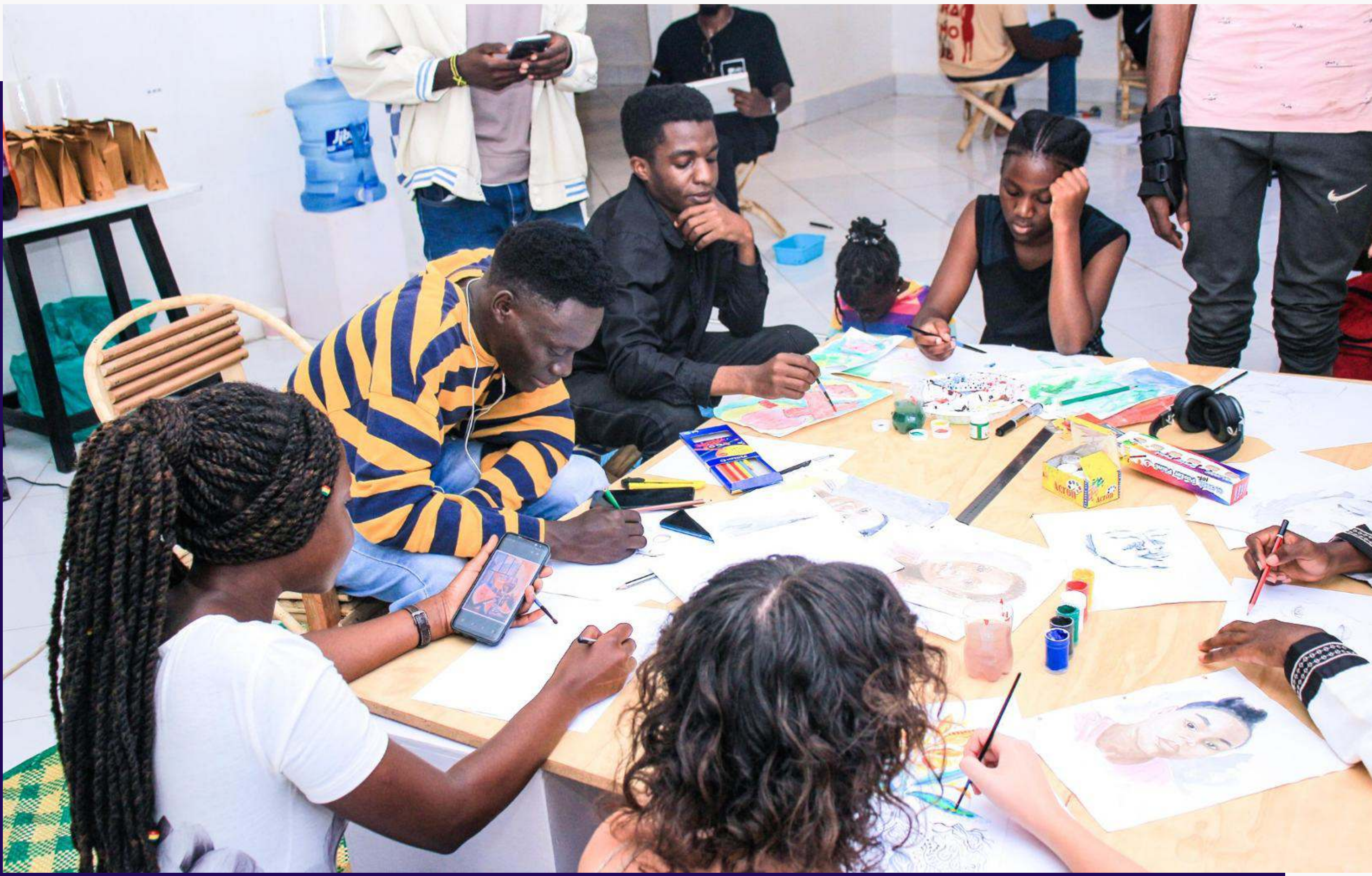

Image courtesy of Kiggundu Rodney Erismas, an artist and cultural practitioner from Uganda and a participant in the Connecting Cultural Heritage Peer & Collaborative Learning programme

Summary

Key questions to ask throughout the programme

1 **Design & Plan**

Set aims & parameters

- Why do you want to create and deliver a peer & collaborative learning programme?
- What do you want to achieve?
- Who is the programme for and what benefit will they gain from taking part?
- What difference should the programme make?
- What will success look like?
- What will the legacy be?

Anything it should NOT be?

How long will it be?

What resources will you have to develop and deliver your programme?

Will the programme be hybrid or online only?

Co-design the programme

What will you do in your programme?

What digital channels or tools will you use to connect participants inside and outside of sessions?

What is the rhythm of the programme?

How much time should participants commit to the programme?

What language will the programme be in?

How can you create conditions that enable participants to contribute and participate equally?

How will the outcomes and impacts of the programme be evaluated?

Make the invitation

How will you invite participants to the programme?

Where and how will you advertise the opportunity?

What criteria will you use to select participants?

What are the terms of engagement and expectations of participant?

Will you offer a participation fee?

2 Deliver

Deliver the programme

How will you orient participants to the programme?

Have you set up ample time for introductions?

Will sessions be facilitated by the delivery team or self-facilitated?

Are you co-designing the programme throughout delivery? How have you baked in adaptability and flexibility?

How will you communicate with participants?

What are the key roles for delivering the programme?

How will the programme be evaluated?

How do the participants and delivery team reflect on the programme?

3 Plan a legacy

Planning a legacy

What do participants want the legacy and exit plan for the programme to be?

Will the digital tools and channels that were used during the programme remain available and accessible after the programme ends?

How will participants stay in touch with one another and continue the conversation beyond the programme?

How and where will you share the files and resources that were developed or shared in the programme?

Thanks

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