



*I want peace. Peace can be built on a foundation of trust.
And you? Do you want the same thing as me? Mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence?
Indeed, I do. I want peace.*

(Excerpt from a poem titled 'The Mash Up', authored by a Participant from Kachin State)

CULTURE FOR PEACE (C4P) PROJECT

Everyone wants to feel that they belong – that they are included and respected – despite (or because) of different genders, identities, traditions, heritage, experiences, opinions and interests. Societies that embrace their diversity and leverage the benefits that come from that diversity tend to be more socially cohesive, and therefore more resilient in the face of adversity, crisis or conflict. Civil society organisations and artists are well-placed to convene diverse groups to find common ground.

The European Union (EU) co-funded the **Culture for Peace (C4P)** project, 2020-2023, which had the **specific objective** to, 'contribute to a pluralistic, inclusive, and peaceful society in Myanmar by supporting civil society organisations to play a prominent role in fostering intercultural dialogue, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity.'

To achieve this objective, HELVETAS in Myanmar, together with partners, the Local Resource Center (LRC), and Religions for Peace Myanmar (RfP-M), worked with artists, interfaith groups, civil society organisations, and communities in Kayin, Shan, Kachin, Rakhine states and the Mandalay region.

After four years of several noteworthy planned (and unplanned) results, outcomes and learnings, this **Capitalization of Experiences (CAPEX)**, aims to highlight and understand the most significant changes facilitated by promoting the arts and leveraging Myanmar's rich cultural diversity for peace. Evidencing the transformative potential of art and culture for social cohesion and peace, remains unique in the Myanmar context, as in many countries around the world.

In a global context of increasing fragility, where crises are more frequent, overlapping, and multi-dimensional, it is opportune and timely to reflect on and learn from the Culture for Peace project experiences and tap into the healing powers of arts and culture for peace, be it at the individual level, for more *power within*, the societal level for more *power with*, and the structural level for more *power to*.

PLURALISM

CULTURE

PEACE

ABOUT C4P

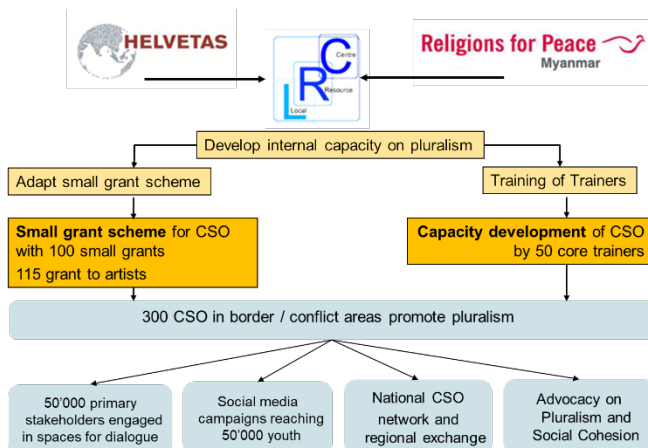
The Culture for Peace project, draws on the theory of change that,

If artists and civil society organizations (CSOs) increase i. their awareness of each other, ii. their understanding of shared interests in pluralism and social cohesion, iii. their collaboration in promoting social cohesion and pluralism, and are resourced to co-implement artistic and cultural initiatives which promote the respect for diversity, pluralism and peaceful co-existence, **then**, mutual understanding and acceptance increase, collaboration across social divides becomes possible, the social fabric and contract in communities and the society is strengthened and steps towards (re)building and maintaining trust, solidarity and peace together can be taken.

To co-facilitate desired changes in minds, attitudes, norms, and practices, the partners focused on four key interconnected outcomes:

- 1. Capacity Development:** 300 local CSOs and their umbrella organisations have greater capacity to use arts and culture for peace and social cohesion building in their local communities. A Pluralism Toolbox was created at an early stage and comprised the foundation for all capacity development efforts.
- 2. Grants Programme:** 100 local CSOs received financial support, supplemented by coaching, to facilitate 100 safe and neutral spaces for dialogue or joint action. 115 local artists received financial support to develop 115 artworks that promoted pluralism and social cohesion.
- 3. Knowledge Sharing** – Together with academic and media partners, ten audio-visual documentaries on pluralism and small documentations of artworks were produced and broadcasted via different media channels, including social media.
- 4. Networking and advocacy for a pluralistic society** – A network of likeminded ‘pluralistic’ actors was created and supported to address discriminatory social and cultural norms that disadvantage women, ethnic, religious and other minorities including women (double discrimination).

ABOUT THE SET UP



ABOUT THE PARTNERS

The partners are complementary, and have an extended history of partnership in project and strategic initiatives in Myanmar. All partners are non-political and are committed to pluralistic, inclusive and equitable sustainable development.



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Local Resource Centre

was launched on May 15, 2008 and registered as a national NGO in 2012. The Local

Resource Center (LRC) aims to empower civil society organizations (CSOs) by promoting institutional development through skills development and information sharing. At the societal level, the LRC creates space and opportunities for CSOs to engage and collaborate together with other public and private stakeholders. Through broad-based dialogue and research-based advocacy, LRC strives to realize a more enabling policy environment for civil society engagement and contribute to a vibrant collective culture among CSOs in Myanmar.

<https://www.youtube.com/@localresourcecentre8989>



was formed in June 2012, when religious communities in Myanmar came together to form Religions for Peace - Myanmar (RfP-M) as the country's first full-fledged representative and action-oriented interreligious body for reconciliation, peace and development. RfP-M brings together all of the four major religions of Myanmar; Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism and was officially inaugurated in September 2012. RfP-M works at the national, regional and local levels and offers a platform for religious leaders & local communities to cooperate around issues of public concern and for channeling resources through local congregations and other faith groups.

<https://www.rfpmm.org/>



is an international development and humanitarian aid organization, working in Myanmar since 2014. HELVETAS is committed to a just world in which all people determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner. It enhances capacities and resources in the areas of skills, jobs and income; water, food and climate; and voice, inclusion and cohesion, mainstreaming gender and social equity, policy dialogue, and rights based approaches. HELVETAS forges multi-stakeholder partnerships across sectors with an aim to strengthen the social contract between duty bearers, service providers, and rights holders, at national, local and regional levels, for more systemic and sustainable impact.

<https://www.helvetas.org/en/myanmar>

ABOUT THE CONTEXT IN BRIEF

Myanmar is a Southeast Asian country home to more than 100 ethnic groups and the world's major religions, and boasts a rich cultural diversity and natural resource heritage. The underlying economic, political and environmental fragility of the country was exacerbated by a series of overlapping protracted crises starting with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, just when the C4P project was starting. This fragility shaped and shifted C4P, triggering innovation and adaptation and challenging its implementation. C4P remained resilient, despite unfolding and overlapping crises. This evidences the relevance and added-value of projects like C4P, in times of strife and peace, or in between.



LEARNING ABOUT AND LEARNING FROM EACH OUTCOME

This Capitalization of Experiences (CapEx) focuses on learning about and learning from the key results, the most significant changes and main lessons learnt. These learnings serve to further inform and inspire beyond the project, it's immediate stakeholders and/or context, with a view that the aims and benefits of arts and culture and peaceful co-existence are universal, perhaps now more than ever before in our recent human and global history.

OUTCOME 1

Capacity Development: greater capacity to use arts and culture for peace and social cohesion building in local communities.



WHAT

"The toolbox was a "key tool", which had been used extensively by CSOs and others". Moreover, what is very encouraging is that many people who were interviewed on different occasions shared that they are motivated to continue using the pluralism toolbox after the project ended".

Excerpt from the C4P Mid-term evaluation in January 2022

ACTORS

"Overall, the toolbox is practical to prevent fueling conflict as it is an excellent tool to promote understanding of different religions and networks as it encourages working with youth. Social cohesion tools that work around different topics are relevant to conflict, while the art tools are most suited for psychosocial support and trauma healing".

Excerpt from an interview with a participant in Kayin

- 50 Core trainers alongside project/partner staff.
- 300 local CSOs and their umbrella organizations, including interfaith groups.
- Artists in the localities and communities of the CSOs.



KEY RESULTS

- CSOs and artists forged links, built trust and collaborations which were new to them, but had multiple individual, mutual and communal benefits.
- A multi-lingual and gender sensitive Pluralism Toolbox containing 7 training packages was co-created and served as the foundation for all capacity development.
- 35 C4P project and partner staff trained on all 7 training packages.
- 61 core trainers trained, and then further trained another 301 CSOs, of which 50% were women 30% were youth trainees, and 30% were from interfaith groups.

BASELINE

- Cooperation between local CSOs and artists was not a common practice.
- Broader understanding of the potential to leverage arts and culture for social cohesion was very limited
- Resources, tools, and networks for promoting arts and culture for social cohesion and peace were not readily available, and not in native languages, including ethnic.
- Capacity to use arts and culture for social cohesion and peace among CSOs and artists was limited.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

- CSOs reported their new learning and capacity to leverage art and culture for advocacy and social change.
- Artists reported their new learning and capacity for conflict sensitivity and advocacy.
- Artists together with CSOs became joint advocates of pluralism and for peace, using the arts and culture in their communities.
- The local ownership of the Pluralism toolbox, evidenced by several instances of adaptation and re-use in other initiatives and projects of the CSOs and artists.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNT

Trust and collaboration

- Ensure shared vision, common priorities, a mutually accountable code of conduct, joint training for trust and team building, on cultural, gender and conflict sensitivity for and between all project partners' staff. Monitor and refresh as needed, annually or more, especially in fragile contexts.

Representation

- When identifying and selecting trainers and trainees, it was important that they were representational of the communities where the C4P initiatives were carried out, not only in terms of gender, but also linguistic, ethnic, religious and other notable diversity.

Capacity development

- Having a toolbox, which is multi-lingual and adaptable was fundamental, however having a toolbox is not enough. Developing modules and organizing trainings on how to facilitate initiatives on the topics in the toolbox, in tandem with an orientation for what and how to use the toolbox, was key to make it more user friendly, accessible, and relevant.
- Capacity development to facilitate not only in person events, but also virtual or hybrid events was provided and necessary to continue activities despite prolonged crises.
- Ensure refresher and/or upgrading training opportunities throughout the project cycle.
- Capacity development activities, be they physical and/or virtual, also offer a safe space and opportunity for peer and psychosocial support, which become even more important in times of prolonged isolation due to crises or mobility restrictions, where staying connected to the outside world becomes more difficult, but crucial.

Adaptive management

- From the outset, have jointly developed contingency plans between the partners, including agreements with donor on rapid budget re-allocation and activity adaptations which foresee different types of disruptions, both acute or protracted, especially in fragile contexts.
- From the outset, have jointly developed contingency plans with primary stakeholders, service providers, and trainers, ensuring individuals and groups have a say and have ownership over their own safety and risk management.

Outreach and open access to information

- The Pluralism Toolbox was launched using different channels and platforms, at different moments, throughout the project cycle. This ensured it reached different audiences, and awareness of it was broader, than if it were limited to a launching event at the beginning of the project.
- In addition to the toolbox being available in different languages relevant to the project locations and the Myanmar context, it was uploaded to different websites and social media channels as an open source knowledge product, making the information and resource more accessible and usable, beyond the project scope, for more social benefit and sustainability of the project's investments and results.
- Treat the toolbox as 'living', revisiting it, adding to, improving it, as users adapt and innovate, and it is applied in different contexts and sectors, and with different actors.

OUTCOME 2



Grants Programme:

Local CSOs received financial support, supplemented by coaching, to facilitate safe and neutral spaces for dialogue or joint action, together with local artists who received financial support to develop artworks that promoted pluralism and social cohesion.

ACTORS

"We have participated in project activities of food and cultural festivals. I was impressed to see the different cultures and customs, which are not so often seen. We have to prepare a lot for the event, gender balance, rehearsal, and dealing with parents concerned about their children as we have to take responsibility for participant's safety. As a benefit for participants, the children learn from others, and parents are proud of them. Bringing children to perform and participate in public spaces builds their self-esteem".

Participant from the Hindu community

- 100 local CSOs, including interfaith groups
- 115 local artists
- Communities where the local CSOs and artists implemented the grant supported initiatives

BASELINE

- Local CSOs and local artists rarely receive financial support for arts and culture initiatives.
- Without these resources, their individual initiatives risk never being realized, and this is even more probable in case of joint initiatives considering such collaborations were already not very common.
- Local communities, especially more rural, ethnic and/or remote rarely can enjoy or benefit from arts and culture initiatives which also serve to enhance communities ties, cohesion, and resilience.

WHAT

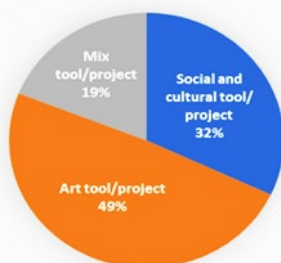
"We created tools ourselves and worked with the community on peace education topics. In the frame of C4P, working with artists on this topic was different from the past and was new to us".

From a member of a participating CSO women's group

KEY RESULTS

- 100 grants of which 80 small (3,000 euros), and 20 large (13,000 euros) were awarded to applicant local CSOs, considering gender and other pluralism, inclusion criteria.
- 114 grants supported artists to produce as many works of art (creative).
- 1,326,090 primary stakeholders participated in different initiatives. 24,067 were able to join in person, while 1,303,023 joined virtual events.
- 924,309, meaning 77%, were youth.

Grant project per categories



Region	Social and cultural tool/project	Art tool/project	Mix tool/project	Total
Kachin	8	4	2	14
Shan	7	7	5	19
Mandalay	6	14	4	24
Kayin	4	15	3	22
Rakhine	7	9	5	21
Total	32	49	19	100

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

- While the initiatives focused on social, artistic and cultural initiatives and benefits, the processes supported also strengthened the organizational development, governance and resilience of participating local CSOs, while also skilling artists with business know how that was new but remains useful to them.
- The role of women and youth in contributing to interpersonal relationship and trust building, social cohesion and sustaining peace was enhanced, and in turn is more recognized in the participating communities.
- Hundreds of local CSOs and artists now have tools and resources they can use for their own purposes, beyond the project scope, be it for organizational and business purposes, or for operational and creative objectives.



MAIN LESSONS LEARNT

Do No Harm

- The grant manual and grant managers require timely revision and refreshers, especially in a fragile context where traditional ways of grant management and disbursement may be disrupted due to an onset of any type of crisis.
- It is essential for grantees, local CSOs together with local artists to be well trained and coached throughout the implementation of their initiatives, to assure accountable and successful grant implementation, alongside conflict, gender and cultural sensitivity to do no harm.
- A downward accountability and feedback mechanism enhanced good governance, mutual accountability and legitimacy. This included a grants review and advisory committee and an Artists' Board.

Gender and social inclusion

- Groups are not homogenous, and intersectionality needs to be considered and integrated into who we work with, and how we work with them.
- Considering that women and youth tend to be disproportionately impacted by crisis, it is essential for their wellbeing and future prospects to be meaningfully and actively engaged, contributing and benefitting in such initiatives which provide a sense of connection, purpose, relief and safety.
- Training on and embedding gender and social inclusion in the grants mechanism as a pre-condition for eligibility is an important instrument for promoting women and youth's participation, representation and recognition.

Bottom up and localized

- Outreach through different CSO networks, especially local ones proved of high added value.
- Invest in team building between local CSOs and local Artists, valuing each as experts in their respective fields, and leveraging those complementarities.
- Bottom up and local peacebuilding initiatives proved more relevant and effective, and this is in line with the UN Sustaining Peace Agenda.
- The more local approach led to more in kind contribution and ownership by not only the grantees but also by the communities participating in and benefiting from the initiatives, which in turn had an additional positive ripple effect on re(building) community spirit, solidarity and resilience.

Innovation begets innovation

- While the Pluralism toolbox was in of itself new and innovative, it also triggered and inspired more innovation, with CSOs and artists through their supported initiatives adapting and/or creating new tools and resources in the frame of using the toolbox.

OUTCOME 3

Knowledge Sharing: Together with academic and media partners, audio-visual documentaries on pluralism and documentations of artworks produced and broadcasted via different media channels, including social media.

ACTORS

"Art is what everyone can feel, no matter the race or language. When it comes to art for example, painting, we all see and feel equally. Also film, the descriptive technique is felt equally".

From a participating music curator

- Participating local CSOs, interfaith groups, and local artists
- Participating communities
- Participating media , journalists, videographers, social media reporters
- Academia, universities
- General public

BASELINE

- Platforms for CSOs, artists, the public and media, to exchange and share knowledge on the topics of pluralism, art and culture for peace were very limited and/or not known.
- Inter-state and region exchange was even less common
- Documentation of knowledge, and experiences on these topics, using interactive or audio-visual means for transferring and sharing these were not common.

WHAT

"Culture, history, traditions are each part of the existence of a nation, but art is worldwide, it is something that belongs to all of us (...) Only if we are free to create, we can introduce art between communities. If we can document and are free to design, we can have unity. (...) The freedom to create is a very important part of making art (...)".

Various participating artists

KEY RESULTS

- 20 exchange visits between participants in and across target states and region.
- 2 studies focusing on applying a gender lens.
- 5 videos, of which two focused on gender equality.
- 14 videos produced and published on Facebook, YouTube and other media channels.
- 1 video documented one of the physical exhibitions .
- 1 social media campaign reached overall,267,000 viewers, and also received 28,242 'likes'. of which 50% of viewers were women and 30% were from underserved groups.
- 2 virtual events showcasing knowledge and art products



MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

- Local CSOs and artists from across state and region lines became aware of each other, and forged new connections and alliances around topics they did not necessarily realize they had in common.
- General public/audience gained access to artists, local CSOs, and knowledge products in ways that they never had before.
- Tolerance towards different groups increased from 5.7 in 2020 to 6.3 in 2023. Half of the respondents in the baseline survey expressed high acceptance of different groups. This figure increased to 68.18% in the subsequent end-line survey.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNT (GOOD PRACTICES)

Unlikely partnerships around unlikely topics

- Restrictions or barriers can give way to new opportunities with unlikely partners and allies, when those we would normally collaborate with are no longer available.
- Bringing together and connecting people from different sectors around topics or issues they do not seemingly have in common, to realize how much they do share, is one of the key added values of projects like C4P.

Communication vision

- Co-developing and co-implementing a joint communication plan helped broaden C4P outreach and impact, considering target audience, content and best channels for dissemination.
- Using multi-media formats and channels ensures broader visibility, access and therefore sustainability of different knowledge and creative products.

Navigating between real and virtual realities

- Being able to adapt and navigate between physical, virtual and hybrid spaces minimized disruptions while safeguarding opportunities for knowledge sharing and exchange.
- Reminding and maintaining safe and inclusive spaces for open knowledge and experience sharing is key, especially where and when context may be under pressure and fragile.

Fragility sensitivity

- Topics and/or ways of communicating during a crisis may become more or less sensitive to discuss or address; as part of the communication plan, it is good to integrate options and adjustments for communication during a crisis.

OUTCOME 4

Networking and advocacy for a pluralistic society: A network of likeminded ‘pluralistic’ actors was created and supported to address discriminatory social and cultural norms that disadvantage women, ethnic, religious and other minorities including women (double discrimination).

ACTORS

“I am multiplying the toolbox knowledge via my network. A private school approached me to teach about GBV, the toolbox, and the concept of pluralism. I am going to do this on my own”.

Participant and trainer

- Local CSOs, interfaith groups and artists in Myanmar
- Regional networks in the Mekong, southeast Asian region
- Organizations and professionals, experts on related topics from within Asia

BASELINE

- Networks in Myanmar and the Mekong region which brought together civil society, artists, interfaith leaders and professionals are not common.
- Having such networks, unite to deliberate and address human rights and other social, cultural and civic rights is uncommon.

WHAT

“Freelance youth, CSOs who don’t recognize themselves as CSO, could still be other actors in promoting pluralism. Faith groups have the most opportunities to expand the toolbox experience and incorporation. The business sector includes education, sports, gyms, and studios, which may be the second sector of interest to cooperate with”.

Participating grant recipient

KEY RESULTS

- 2 research products focusing on the role and value of arts and culture in promoting pluralism and social cohesion.
- An advocacy training and module was developed, organized, and integrated into the Pluralism Toolbox
- An advocacy strategy was co-developed, integrating a gender equality lens.
- Partnership and exchange with the Mekong Culture Hub resulting in important new connection building at the regional cross-border level.
- A virtual conference brought together Interfaith groups, artists and CSOs from Myanmar with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, and Religions for Peace Asia, included 80 participants and panel discussions with professionals and experts from the region including the Philippines.

“I hear greetings in Rakhine language. Tha. Li. Swa. Ba. The youth do not know each other but they still greet. It is good to hear this. I feel happy to hear more greetings in different languages. Mingalabar. Assalamu alaikum. Tha Li Saw Ba. Knowledge will be shared here.

This place is safe for the young people. We can talk openly. This is a place where we can build trust. I hope that there can be safe places for young people to visit in every state and region. Enduringly safe.”.

Excerpt from a poem authored by a participant in Sittwe

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

- End-line surveys, revealed that youth are consistently perceived to be important in connecting arts and culture activities to address complex social issues.
- The importance of the role of women in the context of the power of arts and culture activities to resolve difficult social issues of diverse groups is regarded as highly important.
- Leaders from diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, faith, and gender) engaging in spaces between baseline and endline surveys increased.
- New ‘pluralistic’ inter-networks formed and maintained, resulting in new awareness and knowledge related to human rights based issues and engagement options among a broader and more diverse stakeholder group.



MAIN LESSONS LEARNT (GOOD PRACTICES)

Evidenced based

- Cooperating with academia, and research professionals helps ground discussions and debates, which otherwise may be dismissed, especially if advocating for topics like art and culture in promoting and sustaining peace.

Networking of networks

- Rather than creating new networks, leveraging and connecting existing networks which normally do not collaborate adds value and is more sustainable.
- When convening such a diverse group, important to carefully curate and facilitate, ensuring a foundation of shared interests, priorities, values, and a code of conduct to constructively, effectively, and strategically engage on the topics of pluralism, gender, diversity, inclusion and peace among others.

Digital space can be an inclusive, participatory, meaningful and safe space

- In absence of access to physical and secure places, when responsibly organized, professionally facilitated, digitally smart and secure, online venues can serve as an important if not the only alternative when mobility and/or access become limited. Important is to ensure gender and conflict sensitivity, in support of equal opportunity, equal voice, and equal participation.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Resources from the C4P project

The Pluralism Toolbox



[Kachin, Shan, East Pwo / Karen, Myanmar, English](#)

<https://www.helvetas.org/en/myanmar/what-we-do/how-we-work/our-projects/Asia/Myanmar/myanmar-cultureforpeace>



Resources from other HELVETAS implemented arts and culture projects in Myanmar

Open History – Arts for Peace



<https://www.helvetas.org/helvetas.de/en/what-we-do/how-we-work/all-helvetas-network-projects/Asia/Myanmar/myanmar-arts-for-peace>



Additional HELVETAS resources related to social cohesion and peace

You Project : Tune In Approach



https://www.helvetas.org/en/switzerland/what-we-do/how-we-work/our-projects/asia/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyzstan_you



MORE INFORMATION

- <https://www.helvetas.org/en/myanmar/what-we-do/how-we-work/our-projects/Asia/Myanmar/myanmar-cultureforpeace>
- YouTube C4P Arts and Culture Hub (119) Arts And Culture Hub - YouTube
- C4P Video ; C4P CSO Grants Video ; C4P Artist Grants Video ; C4P Interfaith Grants Video
- <https://www.helvetas.org/en/myanmar/what-we-do/our-topics/voice-inclusion-cohesion/conflict-transformation>
- <https://www.helvetas.org/en/myanmar/what-we-do/our-topics/gender-social-equity>
- <https://www.mekongculturalhub.org/>
- <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org>

CONTACT US

HELVETAS Myanmar
 No. 587, Unit (B),
 6th Floor, The Regency Offices,
 Pyay Road, Kamayut Township,
 Yangon, Myanmar
 Phone: + +95 (0) 997 914 0158
 E-Mail: myanmar@helvetas.org
 Website: www.helvetas.org/en/myanmar

