



Making Futures: Crafting Futures Introduction

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Crafting Futures was a global programme conceived and delivered by the British Council which aimed to support a more sustainable future for crafts around the world and ensure that craft is appreciated for economic, social and environmental development. The programme first began in 2017 with a few parallel craft-focused programmes and was formally established by the British Council's Architecture Design and Fashion team in 2019 as a three-year programme running from 2019 through 2022.

Crafting Futures brought together craft practitioners, designers and organisations from around the world to explore possibilities for this future together. It provides education and training opportunities, connects artisans from rural communities with international designers, creates international partnerships and increases access to new markets and audiences.

The programme enabled designers and artisans to develop their practices (including with technology), empowers them to create their own businesses, and improve their abilities to shape local craft markets and sell their products locally and internationally. Activities included residencies, hands-on workshops, creation labs, exhibitions, and discussions on design, fashion, entrepreneurship, indigenous knowledge and cross-cultural creation. The programme investigated environmental impacts, resource efficiency, health and safety, intellectual property rights and other key considerations. Importantly, Crafting Futures was tailored to the needs of the local communities, and its inclusive approach means it is open to craft practitioners of any background in any location. Since 2019, the programme engaged with artisans and craft specialists in 35 countries and 70% of those engaged were women. The programme successfully supported them to develop their skills and boost their ability to earn more income. In its final year, 2021-22, the programme was active in 20 countries across East Asia, South Asia, Latin America and Wider Europe.

While the three-year programme ended in 2022, Crafting Futures lives on through the work of the craftspeople around the world who have received grants and developed their practice through collaboration as well as through the evolving Craft Toolkit. We very much hope that the toolkit will continue to be a useful resource for craftspeople who developing businesses to help with business goals, overall business planning, creating design concepts, developing products, sales and marketing, as well as budget management.

The British Council brought delegates to the Making Futures programme by sponsoring delegates from Asia to connect them in order to connect Asian craft leaders to the UK, bring key female Asian voices to the international debate on the sector and for the UK to learn more about contemporary issues and craft practice in Asia. The British Council is committed to continued collaboration and working with Making Futures in 2024 and beyond.