

Ramallah City of Resilience through Culture and Education Report



EDUCATION RESILIENCE
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK **CULTURAL** PLANNING
STRATEGY COOPERATION **ARTS**

1. CONTEXT

Ramallah, with its various organisations, endeavours to highlight the importance of culture in Palestine. It is both attracting audiences from the West Bank and beyond and its artistic community is increasing in visibility.

Ramallah currently hosts many important Palestinian cultural organisations. These include two theatres, two public libraries (including one for children), and studios for visual artists, a City Museum and a City Archive in development.

The city allocates funds annually for projects within public spaces, with a focus on integration and access for all, many of which take place in partnership with cultural institutions from Ramallah and beyond.

At present these interventions form an unwritten cultural policy. As the social and cultural context changes it feels timely to make these commitments more systemic.

The municipality recognises the need for its arts and cultural organisations to develop more collaborative, cross-disciplinary and inclusive approaches, which move beyond individual art forms.

2. RAMALLAH AND CULTURE

Ramallah released its resilience strategy in November 2017. It focuses on three strategic directions: regaining control; responsive governance, and realising potential. The 2050 vision for resilient Ramallah is that, 'We are optimistic, sustainable, inclusive, and proud of our culture and in control of our own destiny.'

Ramallah is also clear about the challenges that it faces, including increasingly 'constrained mobility and access to resources', 'limited space to develop' and a 'unique and complex' governance resulting from 'rapid growth as an urban conurbation' as well as the ongoing constraints of occupation.

Goal 10 of the Ramallah Resilience Strategy 2050 looks at building intellectual and cultural capital and, in Actions 31–33, at Integrating cultural awareness across organisations, the educational curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Given the British Council's long-standing presence in Ramallah and its focus on culture and education, it was decided to support the city's resilience strategy through this report.

AT PRESENT, CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS FORM AN UNWRITTEN CULTURAL POLICY. AS THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT CHANGE, IT FEELS TIMELY TO MAKE THESE COMMITMENTS MORE SYSTEMIC.

3. GOALS AND PROJECT

1.1. Main aim and specific goals

In partnership with 100 Resilient Cities and collaboration with the city of Ramallah, the British Council commissioned a study to examine the Ramallah City Resilience Strategy 2050 and to support the achievement of the city's resilience goals through increased attention to culture and the arts within formal and non-formal education.

1.2. Development of the project

Main actions carried out

The methodology for the study included an examination of the Ramallah City Resilience Strategy 2050. This particularly focused on Strategic Direction 3 within the strategy, "We will build prosperity by making the most of our city's unique mix of cultural, intellectual, physical and natural assets", and Goal 10: "Document and celebrate our culture, heritage and commitment to welcoming all."

The work included a study of documentation and research through interviews and focus group discussions in Ramallah, including representatives from the government, municipality, the British Council, and the education and cultural sectors.



Discussions acknowledged the need for cultural organisations to develop more inclusive approaches and establish partnerships with the education sector, and the role that arts and culture can play in developing confidence and a sense of identity.

Despite willingness in both the educational and culture sector for arts and culture to play a role in young people's learning, the study identified key challenges. These include the impact of occupation, the current skills-based approach to arts education, and a lack of capacity to build opportunities for teachers and artists to work across disciplines.

There were many recommendations from the study. These included developing an expanded definition of arts and culture in learning with a focus on the role of creativity. A pilot scheme is suggested that would establish a curriculum, developed with artists and cultural institutions, with culture and creativity at its centre. The study also recommends capacity building for teachers and artists in cross-disciplinary approaches.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH 100 RESILIENT CITIES AND COLLABORATION WITH THE CITY OF RAMALLAH, THE BRITISH COUNCIL COMMISSIONED A STUDY TO EXAMINE THE RAMALLAH CITY RESILIENCE STRATEGY 2050 AND SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CITY'S RESILIENCE THROUGH INCREASED ATTENTION TO CULTURE AND THE ARTS.

Main actors

The study was commissioned by the British Council in partnership with 100 Resilient Cities. It was developed, in partnership with the Municipality of Ramallah and British Council offices in both London and Ramallah, by external consultant Chrissie Tiller. She is a writer, thinker, advisor and former director of the MA in Participatory and Community Arts at Goldsmiths.

The British Council is the UK's cultural relations organisation and advocates for creative responses to global challenges. It makes a positive contribution to the UK and the countries it works with – changing

lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. It has been present in Palestine since 1943.

100 Resilient Cities, pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation, works with cities around the world to enable them to become more resilient to economic, social and environmental challenges. They advocate for an integrated approach to urban resilience by strengthening all of a city's core systems.

4. EVALUATION

Impacts

The study consulted 44 individuals from the government, municipality, the British Council, and the education and cultural sectors. 16 organisations were engaged with the study.

The British Council are exploring the recommendations. This could include facilitating exchange between Ramallah and Athens. This will include cooperation with municipalities, ministries, 100 Resilient Cities and the educational and cultural sectors.

The Mayor of Ramallah has expressed the urgency of implementing the report's recommendations and will continue to partner with the British Council "on making [the] city resilient and sustainable, promoting accessibility to resilient education and fostering socially responsible citizens, through culture and arts."

THE MUNICIPALITY RECOGNISES THE NEED FOR ITS ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS TO DEVELOP MORE COLLABORATIVE, CROSS-DISCIPLINARY AND INCLUSIVE APPROACHES, WHICH MOVE BEYOND INDIVIDUAL ART FORMS.

Recommendations

Learning and exchange should be encouraged between cities with resilience strategies that have a focus or relevance to culture. This will allow for building of more exchange and connections in this area. These collaborations could demonstrate how culture can be used to develop the creative economy, promote cohesion, encourage creativity, and foster diversity.

An expanded definition of arts and culture should be used to broaden the perception of arts in education. This will also influence the view of the arts and culture so they can be perceived as having an equal role in contributing to learning across a curriculum.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

This article was written by Thomas Louis, Culture and Development Programme Manager, British Council, Edinburgh.

Contact: [thomas.louis \(at\) britishcouncil.org](mailto:thomas.louis@britishcouncil.org), [CultureAndDevelopment \(at\) britishcouncil.org](mailto:CultureAndDevelopment@britishcouncil.org).

Twitter: [@BritishCouncil](https://twitter.com/BritishCouncil)