Fifty Cultural Projects for Social Impact

In the inaugural edition of AFAC’s Arab Creativity and Entrepreneurship Fund (ACEF) in 2014, we supported 50 projects that are contributing to positive social impact in the Arab region.

Social change refers to the alterations and adjustments that occur in measuring social change. It is conceptual, not a scientific approach, a society’s belief systems, values and behavioral patterns. There is a strong relationship between art and social change, and there have been numerous attempts by academics and experts to both define and capture the social impact of artistic and cultural projects.

Each of the 50 projects featured in this book is contributing to social change in the Arab region, each in its own way. It was important for us when developing this publication to come up with a method that highlights why these projects are creating change – and how.

Measuring social impact is a highly debated and in many ways a subjective issue. What we are presenting here is an intuitive approach for measuring social change. It is a conceptual, not a scientific approach, and it is based on the research that has been produced on this topic in recent years.

Initially we set out to categorize the 50 projects in three different sections, with each section corresponding to one integral component of social change: raise awareness (Uncover), shift perspectives (Discover), or inspire action (Recover). We then weighed each project against 14 different dimensions of social change. By doing so, we have critically examined the social impact of each of the 50 ACEF-supported projects, and uncovered how these projects are contributing to social change in the Arab region.

Un—cover
The first step of change is awareness: about our rights, about how these rights are being violated and who is violating them; awareness about the obstacles standing in the way of our progress and the ways in which we can overcome these obstacles. The projects in this section open our eyes to social problems, political injustices, and different forms of oppression in various parts of the Arab region with the aim of documenting and raising awareness about them.

Dis—cover
Imagination is a very powerful tool. It helps us discover new perspectives, it inspires creation, and it provides a space for a group of people to imagine a better world. By doing so, it offers us a glimpse of, or at least a hope for, a more inspiring future. The projects in this section propose alternative solutions to existing problems and provide a space for different points of view to come together and imagine a better future.

Re—cover
Participatory projects are important because they bring people together in order to tackle existing problems and think about solutions for them. It offers platforms that encourage various stakeholders to take part in engaging activities and lead them to take action. The projects in this section focus on bringing people together and providing them with a space to think freely, speak out, create new projects, and make the world a better place.

Number of projects

4
3
2
1

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Spur Critical Thinking—by offering alternative points of view and improving the intellectual and cognitive skills of people and communities

Inform Public Opinion—by documenting what is happening and what has happened, and shedding light on injustices, abuses, corruption, and stagnation

Personal Development—by providing the tools for young people, especially in volatile and vulnerable environments, to grow and succeed

Community Development—by improving safety, stability, independence, and quality of life for various local communities

Participation—by providing spaces for different groups of people to come together and work towards a more sustainable future

Promote Diversity and Mutual Understanding—by encouraging debate and promoting reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual understanding

Foster Dialogue—by enabling freedom of assembly and protecting freedoms of expression

Civic Engagement—by promoting cultural democracy, stemming from the belief that culture is a human right

Conflict Resolution—by promoting empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity, and building peace

Identity Construction—by improving creative, emotional, and intellectual capacities and helping advance personal and collective identity formation and values

Preserve Heritage & Traditions—by providing support for the preservation of cultural traditions, heritage, production, and languages

Heal Trauma—by supporting the health of communities and improving health, healing, diversity, and identity

Enhance Gender Equality & Fight Stigmatization—by supporting communication and raising awareness on issues like sexuality, abuse, poverty, war, drugs, and marginalization

Boost Economy—by creating jobs and generating resources for local communities

NOTE

The information on this poster is based on a subjective analysis conducted by the AFAC team.