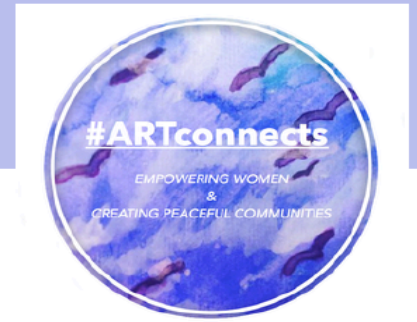


# ARTconnects

FOUNDED BY SALMA ZULFIQAR



**January 30th 2024**

## **ARTconnects Submission Loss And Damage**

In 2021 ARTconnects workshops based social enterprise undertook the Migration Blanket - Climate Solidarity film project with 150 young women in the following Commonwealth Countries and the UK: Participating countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Greece, Jordan, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, UK, Zambia. Students and young women aged between 10 and 25 participated.

We undertook this project because statistics show 8 in 10 people displaced by climate change are women and women and children are 14 times more likely to die in a natural disaster.

Women in camps, orphanages and other temporary accommodation in 17 countries globally participated in workshops in 2021 to produce the artwork for the film, supported by the UK. The project helped them learn about climate change, inspired them to take action and helped to improve mental health. ARTconnects collaborated with 15 local, national and international organisations schools and colleges to create the film, including Unfpa, UNWomen, Unhcr, Fridays for Future, Girls Rising, Centre for Girls Education, Centre to stop Violence Against Women, Girls Not Brides, Schools and colleges among others. Please see statements from female participants below and while this is a small scale sample they are a common occurrence in each of the countries we worked in. Therefore we ascertained that the human rights situation for these women and their peers is extremely poor.

"There is no clean drinking water where I live in Balouchistan because of climate change, we are struggling for everything" Maria in Pakistan said.

"The pollution is making us sick, I'm coughing and get ill from it," Hadiqa, Afghan Refugee in India explained.

"We couldn't go to college due to the storms in the UK and homes were destroyed a few months ago and now houses are on fire in the UK due to hot weather. I didn't know how climate change was affecting women and I learned that it's stopping girls from going to school. And in other countries it's forcing them to get married when they are 10 or 12 years old.," Molika, College student UK said.

Molika is one of 150 young refugee and marginalised women from 15 Commonwealth nations and the UK who have participated in The Migration Blanket - Climate Solidarity film project which educated them on climate change.

The film shows how climate change is destroying women's lives, causing early marriage, preventing access to education, causing hunger and leading to violence against women and calls for action. Please watch film trailer which shows personal accounts of how women are being affected.

Watch the Film Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ayn9XAL6Jlw>

"The film gives vulnerable refugee and marginalised women a voice, empowers them with knowledge on climate change, encourages them to take action, as well as improving mental health," Salma Zulfiqar BEM, Founder/Director ARTconnects.

"This film is a call to ensure that women's rights are protected in climate policy making," she added.

### **Evidence from ARTconnects International Group Participants**

#### **MALAWI**

"The mudslides are getting more frequent - we are already seeing increasing early marriages in our villages, maybe 15-20 percent more due to financial pressures," ARTconnects member and Malawi Girls Rising, "More than half a million people are displaced in northern Malawi in Blantyre, Phalombe and Mulanje districts".

#### **TANZANIA**

"We are seeing more reports about people going hungry. The prices in the market have doubled due to loss of agriculture and we are seeing more rainstorms keeping children out of school, it's causing huge health concerns with people dying from waterborne disease. In April 2023 due to flash floods in Chalinze communities lost everything. Its destroying homes and livelihoods and I hear many people talking about going to Europe" ARTconnects Member Tanzania said.

"The climate change affected much us as women, in the past we had at least continuous rain season, but in the past few year, we experienced drought there was no water at all, there is no stream of water flowing around due to the drought. So before they fixed water pipes, we used to get up early to go find water in the other village far away, and when we get there we find a queue so you have to sit and wait in order to return home with water because of the queue. When you gate late at home, the husband do not understand then the quarrel starts and even you end up getting a divorce, Tanzanian woman facing violence due to climate change impact. Women in areas invaded by industries have been more affected until they have decided to migrate and fall economically. the business areas and what they were cultivating have been taken over by industrialists, the smoke coming from the factories has affected women and children more healthily and they have failed to continue their activities to earn income.

## KENYA

“One of the girls we rescued was trafficked after moving to another town to find better living conditions after the severe drought in her village. Food prices increased by 100%, hunger is worse in communities. The north eastern areas of Isiolo and Turkana have been badly affected,” Fatuma Orphanage participant, Kenya.

2. Please describe any relevant quantitative and qualitative data as well as mechanisms and tools to measure, monitor, report on, and evaluate the impacts of loss and damage, including from extreme weather and slow-onset events, on the full enjoyment of human rights. Please take into account, inter alia, the disproportionate effects on women and girls, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, persons living in poverty and others in vulnerable situations.

Statistics from the Migration Blanket film project 2022:

96% better informed about consequences of climate change and the impact on women informing them about their rights.

98% of respondents stated social cohesion is important for their life. 98% of respondents learnt creative skills and creative expression to assist them with their mental wellbeing. 95% of respondents felt less stressed.

96% of respondents felt more confident following workshops.

We have faced a number of challenges in implementing our projects and our work in the UK in particular experiencing verbal abuse, sabotage and lack of continued financial support and lack of respect for women’s rights from leading community figures and Non Government Organisations who are ill informed about the need to implement and enforce human rights in their community work. These same problems are faced by our project partners in Africa, Asia and The Middle East.

3. Please describe any specific measures, including public policies, legislation, practices, strategies, or institutional arrangements that your Government has undertaken or plans to undertake at a national, sectoral or sub-national level, in compliance with applicable international human rights law, to avert, minimize and address loss and damage, including equity-based approaches and solutions. Please also identify any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability, including means of implementation.

There is an urgent need for many countries to improve their public policies to support vulnerable and marginalised communities. With continued support and feedback mechanisms in place in remote villages there is a way to track human rights and ensure that the most vulnerable are being supported and their rights are being protected. We have found that some non profit organisations are blocking access to resources for marginalised communities leading to further disempowerment and there needs to be more accountability for this. We have also experienced abuse of our work from individuals working in the humanitarian and political field trying to take advantage of our work. We have however, successfully managed to meet with world leaders to influence them to help better protect

the rights of the marginalised in the climate crisis. Our work at Cop28 was particularly significant.

4. Please identify and share examples of promising practices and critical challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the full enjoyment of human rights in the context of loss and damage, including examples that highlight multilateral cooperation and approaches, at global and regional levels, including equity-based approaches and solutions.

ARTconnects is a multi award-winning project based social enterprise which promotes social cohesion, equality and diversity through creative learning. It was founded by Director Salma Zulfiqar BEM in the UK in 2017, starting with projects such as The Migration Blanket.

ARTconnects offers a grassroots, holistic and balanced approach and activities include artwork creation and creative education on pressing issues such as climate change, biodiversity and gender equality. Community climate change makers and peacemakers are created through our high impact educational workshops, connecting people from different cultures and in different countries around the world to make positive change and provide participants with a rich learning experience which motivates them to make a difference in their communities.

Our work has already changed the arts landscape in the UK - promoting diversity within arts organisations, reform of some UN communication departments, changing extreme attitudes, training politicians and in turn influencing their political agendas with protection of human rights. The impact of our work has been described as 'powerful and life changing' by leading politicians. "Fantastic Work" David Cameron UK Foreign Minister and former UK Prime Minister.

ARTconnects projects have spurred campaigns on protecting women's rights in the climate change context, which was a main feature in COP28 and heavily influenced by our work in this area.

Launched in the UK in 2017, ARTconnects expanded online during the global pandemic by welcoming participants based in 20+ different countries with creative workshops to continue one of our impactful projects called The Migration Blanket with related artworks and films across the country and reaching marginalised people. Over 300,000 people have benefitted from in person and online educational workshops, exhibitions, film screenings and events across the UK and abroad Venice Biennale in Italy, Geneva, United States, Tanzania, Dubai and Sweden among other countries, with millions reached through our online advocacy online via social media and placement of media articles.

ARTconnects work features regularly in the media, for example; The BBC, The Guardian Newspaper, Vanity Fair, Skynews, Euronews, Voice of America among others as a positive solution for climate education and empowerment on human rights and giving the marginalised a voice to express themselves and improve mental wellbeing. Project evaluations are ongoing and post workshop feedback from The Migration

Blanket project shows that over 95 percent of participants wanted to meet others from different cultures, improved their wellbeing in workshops, learned about climate change and their rights would be more inclined to take positive climate action for their community. 96% Agreed that they learned about climate change and were motivated to take community action as well about learning about gender equality.  
100% of surveyed participants agreed that they learned creative skills  
100% said they felt more confident after the workshop  
96% Agreed that they learned more about tolerance and importance of other cultures

Hailed as a “best practice ground breaking” project by civil society organisations - The Migration Blanket challenges stereotypes and gives marginalised and isolated men and women a voice. While many migrant and refugee participants are from Muslim backgrounds, participants from host communities are invited from different cultures, races/ religions and genders in order to create a cohesive environment. We believe people also have the power to create peaceful communities if equipped with the correct knowledge and through cultural education. In the past we have organised events in Westminster (House of Lords 2019) and included representatives from UKIP and the 3 main political parties to inform them of our work to move a step closer to finding common ground and changing extreme attitudes as well as engaging with women and representatives from conservative Muslim families. As well as improving national security, social cohesion can also help bolster a sluggish post pandemic economy - as cited in a pre Brexit UK Government report. The above in the context of the climate change challenges of loss and damage that we face are severely compounded with urgent action required.

Feedback from ARTconnects workshops: “I really enjoyed being able to meet people online living in the developing world as I had never experienced anything like this, I believe that it’s an experience that would benefit so many people to feel like they need to do more for the planet to help groups

directly affected. It opened my mind up to so much more, thank you. I also found the experience very calming, it felt like a positive thing for my mental health.”Amelia, Student UK living with Epilepsy.

“I really enjoyed this session and I met amazing people from all over the world though art and had great discussion about our cultures. Many thanks I will come again”. Nimbi migrant from Gambia

“What an insight! Amazing stories and very skilfully facilitated and guided by Salma and colleagues. Great cross cultural friendships created!” Mark, non migrant British participant.

“What a great opportunity to chat and discuss challenges and opportunities, achievements together in a friendly environment, I would come again.” Dave, non migrant British participant

“It was really exciting and interesting experience and it helped us get away from our daily stress. If you continue this it will be a great help for us . It helped me feel part of the community” Milan, Iranian refugee

“The workshop is amazing and I have learned so much about refugees and migrant

and it helped me understand them better” Kaja, Austrian participant  
“It was really great to create art and hear everyone speak about their culture and problems and understand more,” Susi, French participant  
“This is the first time I’ve been in a room with so many different people from different cultures so it was an educational experience for me.” Laila, Spanish participant  
“The workshop helped me connect with different people and learn more about other cultures and help improve my confidence and learn more about art,” Bano, Pakistani migrant.  
“The workshops help me discuss my cultural issues and was a great environment to exchange different cultural issues in the community, Tayiba, Bangladeshi  
“I would like to thank Salma for great organising and a friendly environment where we can discuss cultural issues” Mohammed, Iranian refugee

An ARTconnects License to Empower is available for a six month or one year period to deliver unlimited number of ARTconnects workshops within that time frame.

### **Biography**

Salma Zulfiqar is a British Artist and Women's Rights Campaigner. As a multi-disciplinary visual artist, her work focusses on migration, climate change and women and has exhibited her work during the Venice Biennale in Italy twice (2019/22) and in London, Paris Geneva, Greece and Dubai among other cities. In 2023, Salma Zulfiqar was appointed a British Empire Medal in King Charles III Birthday Honours for services to The Arts and Education. She also received the prestigious British Citizen Award, dubbed the ‘People’s Honour Award’, at the Palace of Westminster for her exceptional contribution to the Arts. Salma Zulfiqar is also the Creative Director of ARTconnects In 2019 she was awarded the National Rising Star Diversity Award We Are the City powered by the Sunday Times, in 2020 she was appointed a UNESCO affiliate Artist, in 2021 ARTconnects was awarded The U.K Prime Minister’s Points of Light for exceptional service. Salma Zulfiqar is also a Consultant for the United Nations and has worked on humanitarian communications for over a decade.

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