



2) Do migrants have access to the cultural services and institutions of the host society? How about undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees? How is such access ensured?

It has been observed that migrants do have access to limited cultural services and institutions of the host country the UK in this case, however, ARTconnects has noticed that cultural services and institutions are not fully catering towards the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These services are often short-lived and lacking continuity which hinders progress in terms of the migrants' integration. Furthermore, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are able to get access through councils, for example, however it is evident that there is lack of understanding concerning their cultural needs and outreach is extremely poor. One major problem concerning access to cultural services and institutions is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Councils stopped offering these services due to the pandemic, and it has been noted that very few services have resumed and this needs to be addressed on an urgent basis. Moreover, it is important to be aware that undocumented asylum seekers face the most limitations when it comes to accessing these cultural services and institutions, as many live in fear, have language barriers, mental health concerns and are living in hiding.

8) How do the different sectors of the population learn about the cultures of the migrants, especially new and forced migrants? Please provide information about existing spaces, including media spaces, and opportunities for the host society to encounter and engage with cultural resources of migrants.

ARTconnects brings the host community together with migrants in order to promote engagement, integration and education while improving mental health. Migrants learn through joint activities, art exhibitions, and exchanges during events and workshops as noted through our work. We recognise the problem of migrants and refugees not being encouraged to and therefore not able to mix with host societies, therefore we created this project to overcome this problem. Alarming in the UK, as in other European countries, hate crimes against different cultures and LGBTQ+ people have doubled, which is why there needs to be more spaces and opportunities for the host society to integrate with migrants to provide a more tolerant and positive community. Unfortunately, one of the only spaces in the UK for this seems to be church/religious based spaces which offer great support, however, migrants don't particularly connect with these spaces and therefore don't want to access them due to their own cultural and religious beliefs. Again, it is important to have more inclusive spaces which are

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not labelled with religion in host societies and our project offers an environment free of race and religion, as well as mental health support.

9) What challenges do migrants face currently in practicing, maintaining and transmitting their culture, especially when they are new and/or forced migrants?

ARTconnects have noted that migrants face challenges in the following areas...

- Language barriers.
- Poor mental health.
- Finding a balance between their culture and the new culture that they are living in.
- The allocation of new migrants in isolated and rural village areas where they cannot integrate easily due to language, lack of knowledge or support.

In particular, language barriers are the biggest challenge migrants face. Moreover, the allocation of migrants in isolated and rural village areas is an important issue to highlight because it is difficult for them to integrate in a cultural society when they are in a quieter community. Migrants sometimes even have to walk for miles to go somewhere or be part of a cultural society. This is due to not having access to good public transport or enough funds especially if they are new migrants and searching for work in a global recession.

10) Please share good practices in protecting the cultural rights of migrants to access cultural resources and services, to enjoy their heritage and that of others, to use their language in private and in public, to participate in cultural life, to freedom of artistic expression and to take part in decisions that impact their cultural life. Please focus more on new and/or forced migrants.

ARTconnects is an example of these good practices. Our work focuses specifically on the most vulnerable migrant and refugee women across the globe empowering them and helping them to access cultural resources. We run high impact workshops to teach creative skills and co create works with migrants and refugees. The workshops are led by award winning artist and human rights activist, Salma Zulfiqar.

Even if migrants aren't artists, ARTconnects encourages artistic freedom of expression through our art and educational workshops, and our factsheets/evaluations demonstrate that this has led to significant improvements in migrants' cultural expression as well as their mental health, connection to communities and understanding other cultures in their community. Please see statistics on our website www.artconnects.co.uk

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As a result, ARTconnects helps migrants to make decisions in their cultural life, such as how to interact with others, how they present their cultures to others and knowing their human and cultural rights. Moreover, for new and forced migrants this is even more helpful as they are encouraged to engage with the newfound culture that they live in and how to embrace this, leading to an overall greater understanding while improving creative and language skills. Our work is offered on a continuous project basis, such as The Migration Blanket. However we have faced many challenges with funding, due to the lack of funding received which is especially a problem in the arts. Additionally, we have been faced with many challenges due to the pandemic, as well as racism and sexism experienced from art gallery managers, curators and art agents. Despite this, we have co created artworks/films through ARTconnects workshops and exhibited twice during the Venice Biennale 2019/2022.

ARTconnects founder, Salma Zulfiqar, has great understanding and awareness of cultural knowledge for migrants and refugees, as well as a higher level of awareness of its importance than most people. This is due to her migrant background and also her work as an international human rights activist and artist. Zulfiqar's own migrant background, coming from a Pakistani family living in the UK, means that she is extremely aware of the needs of migrants, especially women migrants, and what needs to be done to improve their cultural life. Furthermore, Zulfiqar's human rights work in the countries that these very migrants have come from means she has first-hand experience of what these migrants need and want. Zulfiqar's short film The Migration Blanket features many migrant women and their artwork to raise awareness of climate change and its impact on women, as well as teaching migrant women about culture and giving them an opportunity to participate in cultural life.

ARTconnects was awarded the UK National Rising Star Award in 2019.

ARTconnects was showcased as a best practice project for protection at the global refugee forum in 2019.

Salma Zulfiqar was appointed a UNESCO affiliate artist in 2021.

ARTconnects was awarded the UK Prime Minister's Point of Light Award in 2022 for excellence in service.

11) Please advise how cultural rights of vulnerable and marginalised sections of migrants are protected

ARTconnects works with vulnerable migrant women and has helped protect their cultural rights. We target undocumented migrants in particular. These migrants are

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given resources through our workshops which educate and empower them on their rights, helping them to improve their confidence, some are given training and the opportunity to work with us on projects, they understand the positive benefit for them of accessing culture and thus protecting their cultural rights. Unfortunately, many migrants don't participate in arts or value it, but after taking part in ARTconnects workshops they have a greater understanding of their cultural rights and how they can benefit from them. They are encouraged to become cultural changemakers in their communities and this newfound engagement with their cultural rights allows them to connect better with others, access jobs and integrate into creative spaces that they normally wouldn't come across. As a result of this protection of their cultural rights, migrants' lives are enriched and they exhibit more confidence and feel empowered to make their own informed decisions in their community.