

# **Culture Responds to Global Challenges, Arts, Nepal**

# **Impact Evaluation Report - In Our Hands**

## **Programme Year 2021-2024**

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# List of Abbreviations

5 Ps	Planet, People, Profit, Purpose and Place
CGE	Creative Green Economy
COP	Conference of Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ENU	Edinburgh Napier University's Creative Informatics
GRD	Gyanbodh Research and Development Services Pvt. Ltd.
HCD	Human centred Design
IDI	In Depth Interviews
IOH	In Our Hands
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KU	Kathmandu University
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer Plus
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOFE	Ministry of Forest and Environment
NIIDR	National Institute for Development and Research
R&D	Research and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UK	United Kingdom

# Executive summary

## Programme Overview

The British Council's [\*In Our Hands\*](#) (IOH) Programme, in collaboration with partners Applied Arts Scotland, Edinburgh Napier University, Kathmandu University, Nepal Art Village, Story Cycle, and the National Innovation Center, aimed to foster sustainable, youth-led enterprises in Nepal. As part of the British Council's Culture Responds to Global Challenges global programme and aligned with COP26 and COP27 climate goals, the IOH Programme (2021-2024) focused on promoting creative green economy (CGE) principles. Through capacity building, mentorship, and innovation grants, the programme empowered 88 young entrepreneurs, preserved cultural heritage, and addressed climate challenges. In total, 10 research grants and 17 prototype development grants were awarded to these youth entrepreneurs.

## Key Achievements and Impact

### 1. Incubation and Grants:

From 2021-2023, the IOH Programme incubated 88 youth-led projects:

**Grants Distribution:** Out of the 88 projects, 10 youth-led enterprises received research grants, and 17 were awarded prototype development grants. A total of GBP 63,056 in grants was provided through the programme, with GBP 1,852 allocated for research grants and GBP 61,204 for prototype development grants.

**Sustainable Creative Enterprises:** The projects produced sustainable products such as biodegradable sanitary pads, bamboo crafts, and upcycled furniture, directly contributing to SDGs related to environmental conservation, poverty reduction, and gender equality. These products, developed through IOH prototype grants and support, serve as alternatives to plastic or non-biodegradable products, embodying the ethos of the IOH Programme.

**Entrepreneurial Success Stories:** Twelve enterprises have scaled up post-incubation, demonstrating significant growth and impact. For instance, [Kleanit Upcyclers](#), a plastic waste recycling company, expanded its operations and now plans to diversify into electric vehicle battery recycling.

*"This programme has helped me refine and realise my project idea. My team was in the process of making a sanitary pad out of banana fibre after the Covid Lockdown. At that time, I stumbled upon the Road to COP 26 opportunity and thought this was the right platform to guide me in the process of making an environment-friendly product. The grant was very much helpful for me and my team. I received grants in two phases. Initially, the grant was used for R&D. Second phase of the grant was utilised for the Refinement of the product and was also available for market sale. It has helped to expand my social enterprise 'Tekka'. I feel like my work has created a small impact on*

*the ground level, which I am happy about. Since my previous works were mostly research oriented, I am happy that I am able to support positive change. I am happy that my work has been contributing to the community."*

- Tekka Eco Pad, Founder

[Learn more about Tekka here](#)

## 2. Capacity Building and Skills Development

The programme's six-month incubation phase provided youth participants with structured learning opportunities, including workshops on:

**Business Development:** Training on finance, marketing, branding, and the Business Model Canvas helped participants develop robust business plans.

**Cultural Heritage Integration:** Emphasis on preserving traditional crafts and local knowledge encouraged entrepreneurs to create products that reflect Nepal's rich cultural heritage.

## 3. Youth Empowerment and Community Engagement

The IOH Programme emphasised community-centred approaches, enabling entrepreneurs to connect with local communities and integrate indigenous knowledge into their business models.

**Community Impact:** Nine enterprises supported marginalised and underserved communities by providing skill development opportunities. For instance, TEKKA, a social enterprise, trained women in rural areas to produce biodegradable sanitary pads, promoting both economic empowerment and environmental sustainability.

**Cultural Preservation:** Projects documented and revitalised traditional practices. For example:

The [Thunlam](#) team highlighted the struggles of nomads in Upper Mustang and the impact of climate change on their community. [Khariko Kaaga](#) showcased works by Chepang artisans, their crafts, and cultures.

The [Pyang](#) team emphasised the economic significance of [Pyangaun](#), supporting the reestablishment of nearly extinct skills through innovation. The community's voices and craft skills were promoted through the innovation grant.

*"People of Pyangaun used to barter bamboo craft items with food and grains in the past. Their livelihood depended on it, so they refined their skills over time to make better products. The art of extracting flexible material called *Hapa* - a sheet from bamboo to make the products - is the main feature of this folk craft. It is on the verge of extinction. The village is on the verge of losing its unique identity."*

— Pyang Team

[Learn more about Pyang here](#)

## 4. Policy Influence and Stakeholder Engagement

The IOH symposium, 'Youth and Climate 2024: Towards Creative Green Economy and Climate Action,' marked a significant milestone:

- **Policy Advocacy:** The National Youth Policy 2015 emphasised the crucial role of young people in addressing climate change and advancing sustainable development. It encourages youth participation in ecosystem protection, climate change mitigation, and broader sustainable development programmes, aiming to instil a sense of ownership and responsibility among Nepali youth.
- **Research and Advocacy:** The symposium launched a policy brief on the creative green economy and a research report titled 'Creative Green Economy in Nepal.' These publications amplified youth voices and contributed to shaping national climate policies.
- **Collaborative Networks:** The event facilitated networking between government representatives, civil society organisations, educators, and creative professionals, creating a platform for dialogue on critical climate issues.

An Associate Professor at the School of Arts at Kathmandu University asserts that the Road to COP initiative has offered a significant platform for coordinated advocacy efforts on climate change. They said, "In Our Hands, utilised arts and crafts as a powerful tool for storytelling, creating a unique and captivating approach. The project integrates art and craft into efforts to promote sustainability and the green economy. It also acknowledges the potential for these practices to reinforce communal values."

## 5. Diversity and Inclusion

IOH demonstrated a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion:

- **Women's Participation:** The programme saw significant involvement from women entrepreneurs. 70% of grant projects were led or co-led by women.
- **Cultural Representation:** Participants from diverse cultural backgrounds and demographics contributed to a rich, collaborative learning environment, promoting cross-cultural exchange and broadening perspectives on sustainability. 68.58% of the grant recipients were from indigenous, Madhesi, Dalit and other minority backgrounds.

# Key Findings and Insights

## 1. Programme Alignment and Relevance:

The IOH Programme aligns effectively with the British Council's *Culture Responds to Global Challenges* global programme and Nepal's strategic climate goals. By contributing to the pressing issue of climate change through youth entrepreneurship and cultural preservation, IOH has contributed to developing sustainable business models that have the potential to significantly advance the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). With the right investment to scale these businesses, the programme's model has the potential to be replicable in other contexts, driving impactful and inclusive growth on a broader scale.

## **2. Impact on Youth-Led Businesses:**

Youth-led businesses successfully prototyped and launched products, turning their ideas into market-ready solutions. The ideas generated and the products produced through the IOH programme are examples of models that focus on the creative green economy. They support the sustainable development of Nepal's economy. The products developed by youth-led businesses also support the broader community by promoting access to sustainable and biodegradable products such as biodegradable *Dhau* (yogurt) pots, paper made from *Amriso*, *Pyang* (bamboo household utensils), and biodegradable sanitary napkins. Through innovation and creativity, the youths have been successful in producing nature-friendly products while promoting the skills and crafts of local communities. This also highlights the contributions of the community and local artisans in the creative green economy. The significance of a creative green economy lies in the integration of voices of the community and sustainable products which the grantees have succeeded in.

## **3. Mentorship Effectiveness:**

Twenty-four mentors, both national and international, provided guidance to the participating youth. International mentors introduced global best practices on creative green economy, while local mentors offered context-specific insights on product-market fit and design, including the needs of the community to have better insights on availability and acceptability of products. The combination of international and local mentorship provided a balanced learning experience. However, participants suggested that more tailored support and localised research data would enhance the mentorship's relevance.

## **4. Challenges and Recommendations:**

- **Contextual adaptation:** Tailoring international mentorship to local contexts and providing individualised support based on participants' specific needs. International mentorship should be better contextualised and tailored to address local challenges, ensuring guidance is relevant, practical, and aligned with the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of Nepal and South Asia. This may involve:
  - engaging international mentors with a deep understanding of the region
  - incorporating local expertise
  - customising training materials to regional contexts
  - utilising relevant case studies

- technical matching with mentees' needs
- establishing feedback mechanisms to address practical, cultural, and socio-economic challenges effectively.
- **Enhanced outreach:** Expanding the programme beyond Kathmandu and incorporating more in-person sessions could increase accessibility and impact.
- **Legal guidance:** Providing training on legal aspects of business operations would address a key gap identified by participants.
- **Enhance partnerships:** Foster deeper collaboration with government bodies and civil society organisations to support policy advocacy and entrepreneurial ecosystem development.
- **Promote sustainability:** Develop long-term strategies to reduce grant dependency and foster self-sustaining business models.
- **Improve learning resources:** Provide additional educational tools focused on green and circular economy principles to address knowledge gaps of the participants.

## Conclusion

The *In Our Hands* Programme has significantly contributed to fostering youth-led sustainable enterprises in Nepal. By integrating cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and innovative entrepreneurship, IOH has created a robust framework for addressing climate challenges. Moving forward, the programme can build on its successes and address identified challenges to amplify its impact, driving meaningful change across Nepal's creative green economy.

# 1. Introduction to In Our Hands (IOH)

The British Council, in collaboration with a consortium of partners, led the design of a programme focused on fostering sustainable enterprises in Nepal through cultural preservation and community empowerment. After extensive discussions, the consortium recognised the vital role that culture and art play in this development process, emphasising the importance of preserving and promoting local crafts while supporting sustainable entrepreneurship.

In this context, '[The Missing Pillar](#)' report provided a crucial framework, demonstrating how culture intersects with sustainable development and can be embedded into SDG strategies. It highlights examples from 11 British Council programmes that address issues such as sustainable fashion, creative inclusion, and cultural heritage protection. It reinforced the need to measure cultural impact, integrate community-driven approaches, and leverage digital technologies to address sustainability challenges. The report reinforced this by illustrating how culture drives sustainable development through policy, practice, and community engagement. It advocates for integrating cultural initiatives into SDG frameworks, ensuring their impact is measurable and inclusive. The report provided a crucial framework, illustrating how culture intersects with sustainable development.

The British Council's Culture Responds to Global Challenges programme's theory of change has informed the IOH programme, reinforcing the need to embed cultural initiatives within SDG strategies and measure their impact effectively. This programme placed Nepali youth at its core, empowering young people to drive change and build a more sustainable future for their communities.

Nepali youth are eager to address climate change but often face barriers in accessing the necessary resources to move forward. Influenced by globalisation and local conditions, young people in Nepal demonstrate a deep commitment to their communities and traditional knowledge systems, as seen in the growing number of youth-led, heritage-based businesses. In Our Hands (IOH) recognised youth entrepreneurship as crucial to inclusive development, offering significant value to communities across Nepal when driven by goals that extend beyond mere profit.

IOH was introduced as the Innovation Grant award as part of the [Road to COP26](#) campaign (2020-2022), supported by UK Aid. The first iteration was based on activities conducted since 2018 as a part of the British Council's Crafting Futures (2018 – 2022) programme which was supported by UK AID. The Innovation Grant programme was renewed for another two years in the form of IOH.

## 1.1. Introduction to Road to COP 26/27

The UK hosted the 26<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow from 1–12 November 2021, followed by COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from 6–18 November 2022. These summits brought together world leaders, experts, and advocates to collaborate on accelerating the transition to a zero-carbon economy. The outcomes of COP26 and COP27 highlighted critical issues and outlined paths forward in the global climate response. In support of these efforts, the British Council, launched the "Road to COP" programme, which ran until February 2023, with campaign like 'Road to

COP26 aimed at amplifying the voices of those most affected by climate change, especially within Nepal, to engage both national and international stakeholders effectively.

The British Council collaborated with a network of partners across education, arts, media, civil society, and the private sector, focusing on inspiring and mobilising actions ahead of the COP conferences. The primary objective was to support the Government of Nepal's long-term climate inclusion goals through youth engagement and climate communication, establishing the UK as a strategic leader in addressing climate change. This initiative fostered creative responses to climate challenges in Nepal, enhancing awareness and capacity-building to meet the country's climate goals.

With these objectives in mind, the British Council designed the Road to COP campaign which focused on 4 thematic areas:

- a) Gender
- b) Youth
- c) Innovation
- d) Carbon offsetting

The Innovation Grant was one of six programmes under the British Council's Road to COP26 campaign, which promoted youth engagement and creative responses to climate change through UK-Nepal exchanges. Building on the success of the Innovation Grant and the broader campaign, the British Council launched *In Our Hands* in 2022, continuing its focus on youth, creativity, and green innovation.

## 1.2. Introduction to Innovation Grant

The Innovation Grant programme aimed at supporting the development of innovative ideas for sustainable businesses in Nepal that harness nature-based and craft-related solutions to promote positive environmental impact and climate resilience. In the second iteration with changes in the delivery model the grant was then renamed In Our Hands (IOH) programme.

Through the British Council's Innovation Grant and IOH programme, marginalised and indigenous Nepali communities have been empowered to promote their cultural heritage while raising awareness of climate change. Participants, including youth from diverse communities across Nepal, engaged in projects that showcased traditional crafts and brought attention to climate challenges faced by these groups. The grant not only amplified the voices of these communities but also allowed them to participate in global conversations on sustainability.

The Innovation Grant has supported the establishment of a circular economy mindset in local enterprises, focusing on environment-friendly, sustainable products and initiatives. Participants created products like bamboo household utensils, biodegradable sanitary pads, and recycled paper, which contribute to a more sustainable economy in Nepal. These enterprises have become models for a circular economy by producing biodegradable, community-driven products, while fostering economic growth at the local level. Through workshops, mentorship, exhibitions and a symposium, participants were able to gain skills in business development and connect with government bodies, markets, and investors, which are crucial for the sustainability of their enterprises. For many youth participants, this

was a rare opportunity to bring their ideas to life, obtain seed funding, and build lasting connections to support their social enterprises.

Overall, the British Council's Innovation Grant programme served as a catalyst for empowering youth, driving sustainable local enterprises, and connecting marginalised communities with broader networks and markets in Nepal through the IOH programme.

## 2. In Our Hands Programme Activities and Outcomes

In Our Hands programme included an incubator programme followed by grants to research and prototype ideas leading up to showcase opportunities. The details of the activities are provided in the below sections.

### 2.1. In Our Hands Activities

In its planning stage, the British Council built an ecosystem of national and international partners to implement the IOH programme. Following an open call and selection process, the programme was co-designed and delivered by the British Council in Nepal, Kathmandu University (KU), Applied Arts Scotland, Edinburgh Napier University's Creative Informatics (ENU), and Nepal Art Village, with Story Cycle joining as a partner in the second year.

The IOH programme offered comprehensive support through capacity-building, resources, and networking opportunities, fostering a creative green economy aligned with Nepal's long-term climate goals. Participants engaged in structured learning that included business planning, research opportunities, and prototype or pilot project development. The curriculum was anchored in the Quintuple Bottom Line—People, Planet, Profit, Place, and Purpose. After incubation, participants competed for grants that provided financial support and tailored mentoring from UK and Nepali experts. Their outputs were showcased to industry and climate change stakeholders in Nepal and the UK through presentations and exhibitions.

In addition, the British Council hosted Youth and Climate 2024: Towards Creative Green Economy and Climate Action from 3–10 June 2024 at Taragaon Next, Boudha. The eight-day event brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss climate challenges and opportunities, highlighting youth leadership in advancing a creative green economy.

Since its inception, IOH has been implemented in three iterations.

#### Year 1

In 2021, IOH was supported by UKAid as part of the Road to COP 26 Campaign. Forty project ideas were incubated out of which 6 grants were awarded.

## Grant projects

- Tekka: A community business model that trained women to produce biodegradable sanitary pads using banana farm waste.
- Pyang: A design, documentation, and training programme aimed at reviving the endangered craft tradition of Pyangaun.
- Aauzar: An engineering project that developed an upcycled loom, supporting home-based artisans with cost-effective weaving upgrades while addressing issues at the intersection of gender and climate change.
- Thun-Lam: A community engagement project involving the nomadic Drokpa people of Upper Mustang to create innovative contemporary goods from yak wool.
- Dhau: A design project focused on fostering a more sustainable relationship between people and materials by rethinking how Bhaktapur's popular Juju Dhau (yogurt) can be repackaged and marketed.
- Mehendo Play: A product design project exploring how natural materials and traditional cultural motifs can be used to create plastic-free alternatives to children's toys, instilling eco-friendly habits and values from an early age

[Learn more about the programme here](https://cop26.kuart.edu.np/) (<https://cop26.kuart.edu.np/>)

## Year 2

In 2022, The British Council renewed the programme wherein six projects were provided prototyping grants.

## Grant projects

- Khoriya ko Kagaj: A project that empowered the Chepang community in Makwanpur by upcycling discarded amriso stalks (used in natural brooms) into handmade paper.
- Bhwom: A project that revitalized Nepal's traditional lokta paper production, reducing industrial dependency through new materials and a climate-resilient circular approach to mitigate environmental impact.
- Gitta: A project that developed natural dried bricks made from cow dung, rice husk ash, and calcium hydroxide, creating a net-zero carbon building material. These blocks match traditional kiln-fired bricks in strength, weight, and cost.
- Green Gold: A project that explored the potential of hemp as a sustainable and eco-friendly material for production.

- Wetlands for Nepal: A project that sought community-based solutions to the invasion of water hyacinths in Nag Dahal, engaging youth in producing bio-fertilizer from agro-waste generated through the manual removal of the plant.
- Kattran: A project that supported women in Nepalganj by building their capacity to produce artisanal goods through upcycling textile waste.

[Learn more about the projects here](http://www.britishcouncil.org.np/selected-grantees) ([www.britishcouncil.org.np/selected-grantees](http://www.britishcouncil.org.np/selected-grantees))

## Year 3

A number of changes were introduced during the third edition of the project. Research grants to refine project ideas were introduced after which incubation participants would be eligible for prototyping grants. Out of 168 applications, 28 projects were selected for incubation. Ten research grants were provided after which 5 prototyping grants were awarded.

### Grant projects

- Project Uddeshya: A community engagement initiative that brought together women to produce handmade incense from waste marigold flowers collected at the Manakamana Temple.
- Jewellery from Each Journey: A design project inspired by travellers across Nepal, employing local artisans to craft jewellery using recycled materials.
- Kleanit Upcyclers: A recycling project that recognized the potential of waste plastic as raw material for creating both craft and functional products.
- Old Souls: A fashion project that repurposed old sari textiles into contemporary designer wear.
- Sidra: A sustainable food business that drew on indigenous Tharu knowledge, empowering local producers and promoting environmentally responsible production practices.

Learn more about the grant projects here ([www.britishcouncil.org.np/past-grantees-2023](http://www.britishcouncil.org.np/past-grantees-2023))

Over three years, the IOH incubation programme supported 88 projects, awarding 10 research grants and 17 prototyping grants, with guidance from 24 mentors. Participants gained skills in research, sustainable entrepreneurship, and product prototyping, enabling them to refine innovations, gather market feedback, and attract investors. Training and mentorship from international and local experts expanded networks, strengthened business plans, and enhanced products for broader market appeal.

A major highlight was the Youth and Climate 2024: Towards Creative Green Economy and Climate Action symposium. This eight-day event convened diverse stakeholders—academics, entrepreneurs, researchers, and youth—to explore sustainable development and climate action. Activities included a media mixer with 20+ Kathmandu-based journalists, the launch of the policy brief Creative Green Economy introducing the Quintuple Bottom Line (People, Planet, Profit, Place, Purpose), and the release of the study Nepalese Youth and Climate Action – Perceptions, Aspirations and Understandings. Both

publications received strong recognition and offered valuable insights into youth perspectives and sustainable enterprise.

Collectively, the programme fostered interdisciplinary collaboration, promoted innovative practices within Nepal's green economy, and highlighted recovery solutions rooted in informal craft-making sectors that engage marginalized communities. It also led to the integration of accredited courses in Craft and Fine Art at Kathmandu University, linking product grants with academic credits and establishing a pathway for innovative, self-driven education.

# Evaluation Approach

The Evaluation approach is based on the **Quintuple Bottomline** that the IOH programme is modelled around. It highlights and reflects a holistic framework that considers the interrelations between People, Planet, Profit, Place and Purpose (5 Ps). This approach also evaluated the financial aspects of the programme as well as its social, environmental, cultural, and mission-driven impacts. By highlighting these interconnections, the evaluation provides a comprehensive overview of the functionality, effectiveness, strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities of the programme. It ensures that the programme is aligned with national, and global level goals.

## Objective

The main objective of the evaluation is to:

1. Assess how well the programme's objectives are aligned with the needs of the target population and stakeholders.
2. Evaluate the programme's success or hindrances in achieving its goal.
3. Analyse the use of resources and identify areas for improvement.
4. Determine the broader effects on the participants and communities.
5. Evaluate the potential for continued benefits post programme.
6. Document successes and areas of improvement.
7. Engage stakeholders at all levels to evaluate the IOH programme and set new priorities for the fourth edition of IOH.
8. Evaluate how the programme addresses equality and includes marginalised groups.

## 2.2. Methodology

For this impact evaluation study GRD used mixed methods to bring forward qualitative data. Likewise, the data sets were collected using primary and secondary data. The primary data is acquired using key informant interviews (KII), in-depth interviews (IDI) and observation notes. Likewise, the secondary data is collected through the desk review of the documents provided by the British Council. The methodology approaches and tools have been presented in detail in the below section of the report.

### 1. Approaches

There were various evaluation approaches which played a key role in providing essential information for decision making, accountability, and continuous improvement of the programme. Based on the context of the overall IOH programme and objectives following approaches have been adopted to ensure a comprehensive and effective evaluation process.

- **Result based:** It focused on measuring the outcomes and impacts rather than just outputs and activities. This approach employed logical frameworks and result frameworks to link activities to desired outcome ensuring that the programme's objectives were clearly met.
- **Participatory approach:** This approach involved stakeholders and beneficiaries in the evaluation process. This collaborative approach ensured that diverse perspectives are considered, enhancing the relevance and accuracy of the evaluation.

- **Most significant change:** This approach involved collecting and analysing significant change stories from the participants especially from the incubation beneficiaries. This qualitative approach will support us in selecting case studies that were most significant stories, providing deep insights into the programme's impact.
- **Intersectionality approach:** Intersectionality offers a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of context, particularly in analysing how different factors intersect to influence individual decision-making and behaviour. Originally integral to women, gender, and sexuality studies, intersectional frameworks consider various aspects of identity as mutually constitutive. For example, gender interpretations are influenced by race, and vice versa.

## 2. Data Collection tool

The methodology for the impact evaluation involved a systematic process of data collection, analysis and reporting to assess the performance and impact. The chosen evaluation approach and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (as mentioned below) has helped outline the following steps including the measures that brought forward the outcome and impact of the programme.

### Key Performance Indicator

#### Programme alignment and relevance

- KPI 1: Alignment with the British Council's "Culture Responds" global programme and the country's strategic plan.
- KPI 2: Effectiveness in meeting the target population's needs in promoting a Creative Green Economy.

#### Impact on CGE youth-led businesses

- KPI 1: Impact of the incubation programme on youth-led businesses.
- KPI 2: Success in helping grantees and youth entrepreneurs develop marketable products or services that celebrate Nepal's natural and cultural heritage.
- KPI 3: Increase in youth entrepreneurs' understanding and confidence in Creative Green Economy activities.

#### Collaboration, mentorship, and skills development

- KPI 1: Partner satisfaction and impact assessments.
- KPI 2: Effectiveness of collaboration with partners and advisory committee members from Nepal and the UK.
- KPI 3: Satisfaction with mentorship and suggestions for improvement.
- KPI 4: New skills, knowledge, and network access gained by youths through incubation sessions, pitch events, exhibitions, UK-delivered workshops, and symposiums.

#### Stakeholder engagement and policy influence

- KPI 1: Awareness of the CGE opportunity in Nepal and youth's role in climate action through their CGE business ideas.
- KPI 2: Influence on policy recommendations to the MOFE through CGE research and policy brief dissemination.
- KPI 3: Effectiveness of media workshops in awareness generation and policy influence.

#### Diversity and inclusion

- KPI 1: Effectiveness in promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the IOH programme not just in the grantee's project.

#### Sustainability and future directions

- KPI 1: Success in addressing youth challenges, including skills, agency, and brain drain.

- KPI 2: Likely long-term benefits of the programme for supporting youth-led CGE businesses, its sustainability, and policy influence.
- KPI 3: Effective strategies for ensuring the continuity of the IOH programme.

### Step 1: Data Collection

A qualitative method has been utilised to gather data. Qualitative data explored individual stories, challenges, and success.

Following tools has been used:

- **Desk review:** Reviewed reports, feedback, and research findings and studies to assess progress and outcomes. The reports and documents provided by the British Council have been reviewed by the GRD team and the secondary data has been added to the qualitative data procured from primary data.
- **Key informant interview (KII):** Conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the perceptions of programme relevance and effectiveness from key stakeholders. Below is the list which provides the total number of informants for this study. Likewise, the first draft of the questionnaire can be found in the ANNEX section of this report.
- **In-depth interviews (IDI):** Used open-ended questions to explore experiences, challenges, and benefits from Grantees. Out of the total 5 clustered groups of participants provided in the KII section from the cluster groups 3 informants have been identified for the in-depth interview.
- **Thematic stories:** 3 thematic stories have been developed from the selected IDI, each story represents the 3 thematic areas.

Stakeholders	Key contact	Total Participants
Implementing partners	Lynne Hocking, Applied Arts Scotland	
	Helen Voce, Applied Arts Scotland	2
	Rosha Bajracharya, Nepal Art Village	1
	Dishebh Raj Shrestha, Kathmandu University	1
	Sagar Manandhar, Kathmandu University	1
British Council team	Saurav Dhakal, Story Cycle	1
	Nhooja Tuladhar, Head of Arts	1
	Nischal Oli, Former Head of Arts	1
Department of Forests and Soil Conservation, MOFE	Sadiksha Chaudhary, Project Manager (2023-2024)	1
Media reporters	Dhananjaya Lamichhane	1
	Pushpa Raj Acharya, Advisor , the HRM Nepal	1
Advisory board	Arpana Ale Magar, Reporter, Techpana Media	1
	Pashupati Nath Koirala	1
Advisory board	Anil Chitrakar	1

Stakeholders	Key contact	Total Participants
	Pratima Thakali, Kathmandu University	1
	Maya Rai	1
<b>Research partner</b>	Rajesh Kumar Rai	1
<b>Exhibition curation partner</b>	Kirti Man Shakya & Pratima Thakali, Kathmandu University	2
<b>IOH 2023 mentor</b>	Prina Bajracharya, Kathmandu University	1
<b>First Edition IOH participants</b>	Incubates and development grantees	6
<b>Second Edition of IOH participants</b>	Incubates and development grantees	6
<b>Third Edition of IOH participants</b>	Incubates, research and development grantees	9
	<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>41</b>

## Step 2: Data Analysis

- **Qualitative analysis:** Identified common insights from interviews and observations.
- **Human centred design workshop (HCD):** The HCD workshop focused on the following things for a more interactive, participatory approach focused on integrating HCD principles to make evaluation processes more user-centric and responsive to the needs of stakeholders. Below are the principles used:
  - human-centred (solving complex problems that create value for those at the center of the problem),
  - systems (focusing on the way a system's constituent parts interrelate to enable problem solving),
  - emergent (existence or formation of collective behaviours — what parts of a system do together that they would not do alone), and
  - futures thinking (helping analyse emerging issues and understand the futures landscape to enable anticipation and creation of alternative futures)

For this HCD workshop, the process began with a Pulse phase through interviews with all the stakeholders involved in the IOH programme. Through this, the needs, challenges, and goals of key stakeholders were identified. This HCD process has helped us to identify and prioritise the existing gaps and challenges along with innovative solutions and possible tools. This workshop was led by Samanata Thapa with support from Rohan Shrestha.

# 3. Finding and Analysis

To derive the findings an HCD workshop was conducted by Samanata Thapa. Individual KII recordings were transcribed through which the findings have been derived. The findings and analysis section focus on the 6 main Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which were developed in collaboration with the British Council . The KPIs provided in the above section provided a framework for the data collection and established focused indicators. The below section provides detailed qualitative findings from the KIIs conducted. The analysis has been devised on the basis of these findings.

## 3.1. Programme Alignment and Relevance

### 3.1.1. Alignment with British Council's "Culture Responds" Global Programme

Culture Responds to Global Challenges (CR) is a British Council global programme that highlights culture's role in sustainable development, aligning with the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme focuses on cultural values driving development, emphasising community-led progress rather than GDP-driven growth. It aims to address key issues like education, gender equality, sustainability, and social inclusion, using arts and culture to support these goals.

The programme enhances the UK's global reputation by promoting impactful, socially relevant cultural work. It collaborates with local governments and cultural organisations to tackle challenges like inequality, youth employment, and sustainability.

CR is structured around two main themes:

Theme	Description	SDGs Contributed	Relevant Targets	Quote
Cultural Diversity	Supports underrepresented groups (e.g., women, LGBTQIA+, disabled artists, youth, rural communities) through residencies, training, grants, and showcasing.	SDG 5: Gender Equality	5.1 End discrimination against women and girls; 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation in leadership.	"I have been able to look into the issues using scientific methods. I have become more aware about scientific aspects of climate change and climate-gender issues." - KII Informant

		SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	10.2 Empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all; 10.3 Ensure equal opportunities for all.	
<b>Sustainability &amp; Climate</b>	Supports the arts' response to climate change through creative commissions, sustainable practices in the sector, and exploring sustainable materials in design and fashion.	SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	8.3 Promote entrepreneurship and creativity; 8.4 Improve global resource efficiency in consumption and production.	
	(The IOH project addresses climate change through art, promoting awareness, and encouraging action.)	SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	12.5 Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, and recycling.	
		SDG 13: Climate Action	13.3 Improve education, awareness, and capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and impact reduction.	

The table effectively illustrates how the IOH programme aligns with the CR framework through its support for cultural diversity and sustainability-focused climate action. Under the Cultural Diversity theme, the programme advances inclusive participation by engaging underrepresented groups—such as women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, persons with disabilities, youth, and rural communities—through artistic residencies, training, funding, and showcasing opportunities. This directly contributes to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), supporting leadership, inclusion, and equal opportunities. The accompanying quote from a Key Informant Interview (KII) underscores how these interventions build awareness of gender-climate links through a scientific lens.

In the Sustainability & Climate theme, IOH supports climate-focused artistic expression and sustainable practices across the creative sector. From eco-conscious design to waste reduction and resource-efficient production, the programme aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Through creative commissions and public engagement, it amplifies environmental awareness and advocacy, positioning art as a transformative tool for climate education and action. This integration demonstrates a strong, actionable alignment between IOH's objectives and the British Council's broader CR priorities.

### 3.1.2. Effectiveness in Meeting the Target Population's needs in Promoting Creative Green Economy

Supporting SMEs to grow will boost economic growth, create jobs, foster innovation, promote sustainable industrialisation and contribute to economic diversification and resilience (OECD 2017). The SMEs in Nepal have a low capital base, poor access to technology, and inadequate knowledge and information regarding business opportunities and marketing (Pandey 2004). Similarly, SMEs in Nepal also suffer from poor access to finance brought about by high interest rates, large collateral requirements, inconveniences associated with the process, a lack of information, and inadequate institutional capacity, among other things (NRB 2019).

Hence, programmes like IOH are essential to the economic growth of Nepal along with promoting a creative and sustainable economy. To reach the target population's IOH programme has used social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.) as well as through networking sessions and partnership with leading institutions. Using such platforms which are highly used by the youths, IOH programme has received more than 400 applications for the incubation programme. Likewise, the informants have expressed that they were looking for programmes which focus on Creative Green Economy and that they found IOH programme to align with their entrepreneurial needs.

*"After COVID, my team and I started developing eco-friendly sanitary pads from banana fibre. The IOH programme provided the guidance and platform we needed to turn our idea into a sustainable product. It aligned our purpose with a creative green economy, focusing on people, planet, and place."*

- IOH Programme Participant

*"The term 'creative green economy' drew me to the IOH programme. While focused on arts and crafts, I applied for a project focused on agriculture, with a belief that sustainability is important across sectors. IOH helped me connect my purpose to actionable goals, benefiting both people and the planet."*

- IOH Programme Participant

Similarly, a majority of the informants from all the three editions of IOH programme have informed that they are well versed with Creative Green Economy and circular economy after completing their 6 months incubation programme. Apart from the incubation programme, through networking sessions, mentorship, symposium and exhibitions, the informants have been able to gain deeper insights and knowledge which has further supported them in sustaining their businesses. Some businesses have also moved towards the acceleration phase.

## 3.2. Impact on CGE Youth-Led Businesses

### 3.2.1. IOH Programmes Impact on Youth-Led Businesses, from Researching to Scaling their Business

The KII findings show that great impact has been made through the IOH programme. The youth-led businesses have informed that through the incubation programme the youth leaders were able to prototype their products and introduce it to the market. We found that the youth-led businesses' visions

and ideas came to life through the IOH programme. The British Council developed Craft Toolkit – which was used during incubation - has supported the youth-led businesses to streamline their business strategy and few of the informants have informed that the toolkit is still useful to them.

- **Empowering youth-led businesses:** Youth-led businesses successfully prototyped and launched products, turning their ideas into market-ready solutions. All of the ideas and products produced through the IOH programme have developed a business module that focuses on the creative green economy which supports the economy of Nepal along with sustainable development.  
**Many of the projects have prioritised zero-waste products. Sustainably packaged Dhau (yogurt) produce, paper made out of Amriso plant waste from broom production, sanitary pads produced from banana waste and biodegradable bamboo craft that replaces plastic Tupperware are good examples of this.**
- Through innovation, the youths have been successful in producing nature-friendly products by bringing forward the skills and crafts of local communities. They have succeeded in bringing the local artisans on the map by supporting and empowering the local community. The Thunlam and Sidra projects that have worked closely with communities in Upper Mustang and the Tharu community respectively are good examples. The significance of a creative green economy lies in the integration of voices of the community and sustainable products which the grantees have succeeded through innovation.
- **Sustained impact and Networking:** The programme fostered long-term support through valuable networking opportunities, helping businesses grow and adapt. Through the IOH grant and incubation programme the grantees and participants have attained access to network, market, collaborators, local government, professors and investors. It is not just enough to establish an enterprise; such enterprises are in constant need of financial support and investments. Through this platform the grantees and participants have not just been able to learn skills and attain knowledge but they also have been able to connect with the wider community, they have been able to access the markets, showcase their journey and products through exhibitions and other programmes conducted by the British Council. Also, since the majority of the participants and grantees are youths, usually they do not have access to such platforms but this programme has supported them to sustain their enterprises through mentorships and exhibitions.
- **Fostering business growth:** The programme provided supportive space for youth-led businesses to shape and grow their enterprises. They were able to develop products by leveraging grants for research and development.
- **Scaling and building confidence:** The programme helped build confidence, enabling participating youths to address climate change through innovation and sustainable solutions while they scale up their businesses. One of the other major finding was that having prototyping as a part of the intervention within the innovation grant and incubation programme had a huge impact on the grantees as they were able to develop their products, test them in the market and get critical feedbacks which has supported in developing more user-friendly products and sustainable business model. The British Council emphasised on the entrepreneurship aspect of the project where they were provided incentives such as grant, training and mentorship to prototype a product that created direct impact in mitigating climate issues. Prototyping will benefit the businesses to find more investors as they now have tangible outputs. There is an opportunity of marketing and creating market demand. This has not just supported the grantees with access

to market but has also aided the grantees to transition from the prototyping stage to penetrating the market.

*“Through the IOH programme, we also undertook research after discovering that broom-making was generating waste. To address this, we explored ways to utilise the waste from Amriso broom production, which led to the development of Khoriya Kagaj—paper made from Amriso waste.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

*“We first received a research grant, followed by another grant for prototyping. Accessing these grants was straightforward. For me, this programme was not just about funding—it was about the IOH initiative as a whole, which truly supported us in shaping our startup and helped us learn many essential things for the journey ahead.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

*“Our company, Kleanit Upcyclers, creates products from plastic waste. During the IOH programme, we began by producing eco-boards made from recycled plastic, which were initially used as notebook covers. Today, we also manufacture customised products, and demand for recycled and upcycled items is growing. We are working to scale up production and expand beyond Kathmandu to districts like Pokhara and Gorkha. In the long term, we aim to focus on EV battery waste. We plan to conduct research in this area and hope to develop solutions within the next four years.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

### 3.2.2. IOH: A platform for Youth Entrepreneurs

The IOH programme helped youth entrepreneurs hone their skills and capacities, directly impacting their business sustainability. Training on finance, Business Model Canvas, arts and crafts of Nepal, business development, scaling up, marketing, branding, networking, and business plan development were given to the participants. The training had a ripple effect, supporting youth entrepreneurs in small but significant ways.

*“We streamlined our accounts and finance systems to ensure the grants were utilised effectively.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Tailored support for entrepreneurs' needs:** The programme catered to the diverse needs of youth entrepreneurs through various specialised training sessions focused on integrating culture, art, and heritage into business models. Participants engaged with sector-wise mentors for technical and systematic assistance.

*“The IOH programme provided us with both systemic and technical assistance, along with valuable guidance. They taught us how to work effectively within the craft sector, and learning tools were readily available and accessible. We gained exposure to enterprise-building and learned how to*

engage with the community. The learning process was excellent and helped us significantly reduce our research time.”

- IOH Programme Participant

**Workshops on business fundamentals and using the craft toolkit:** The workshops covered key topics like business operations, scaling up, marketing, branding, networking, and business model development. The Craft Toolkit provided practical knowledge for implementing business ideas.

*“The workshops focused on key areas such as business operations, scaling up, marketing, branding, networking, business model canvas, business plan development, and turning ideas into action. These topics were also covered in the craft toolkit, which proved to be highly informative.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Need for legal awareness:** Some informants highlighted the need for sessions on legal aspects of business. Many entrepreneurs struggled with understanding legal compliance, taxation, audits, and business registration.

*“We gained comprehensive knowledge on business development. However, it would have been even more helpful to include additional information on the legal aspects of running a business.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Networking and collaboration opportunities:** Participants valued the opportunity to connect with professionals from diverse backgrounds, including arts, crafts, and environmental engineering. Sessions were mostly conducted online, with only the last two focused on research grant presentations and showcases.

*“The sessions were insightful. I learned a great deal about arts and crafts and the business aspects surrounding them, and I had the opportunity to network with people from diverse backgrounds—ranging from arts and crafts practitioners to those working with plastic waste and even environmental engineers. It was an excellent platform for connection and collaboration. While the sessions were conducted online, it would have been great to have a few in-person sessions. Only the last two sessions focused on research grant presentations and showcases.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Easy-to-grasp and practical information:** Informants found the sessions informative, well-structured, and applicable to their businesses. The knowledge gained helped them shape their business vision.

*“I was the only member of my team, and this project was entirely my responsibility. I was able to absorb all the information, perspectives, and insights that were most relevant to my work.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Community, Culture and Sustainable Development:** One of the major findings from the KII was that the informants were able to align their businesses with the SDGs such as ending poverty, promoting

equality, and protecting the environment. Initially, when they envisioned their product and their business, they mentioned that they were not able to see the connection between their business and the SDGs, but after completing their incubation programme, they were able to see which SDG they were contributing to.

*“Through the IOH programme, we were able to align our business with the Sustainable Development Goals, such as ending poverty, promoting equality, and protecting the environment. We focused on preserving natural heritage by using raw materials like Amriso, which are grown in landslide-prone areas to help prevent natural disasters.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Integration of the Quintuple Bottom Line (5 Ps: Planet, People, Profit, Purpose, Place):** A few informants mentioned that since Nepal has adopted all the SDGs into its National Development Frameworks, they were able to connect their business with the Quintuple Bottomline's 5 Ps (Planet, People, Profit, Purpose, and Place). While developing their product, they interlinked with the 5 Ps, showcasing the effectiveness of the incubation programme, as these principles were at the core of the programme.

*“We recover waste from the environment and transform it into valuable products. Since our business focuses on recycling and upcycling, we also raise awareness through our products by extending their lifespan and promoting sustainable practices. This approach allows us to contribute to sustainability while generating profit. Our products align with the five Ps—the IOH model—and with the Sustainable Development Goals, as we recover waste materials, upcycle or recycle them, and ensure no harm to the environment.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Engaging with local communities & preserving cultural significance:** Through the IOH programme, youth entrepreneurs were provided the opportunity to engage with the local community, gain insights, and establish cultural significance through innovation and research. Informants also mentioned that through their research and products, they have been able to document the indigenous culture and local communities' cultural significance, which has helped bring their voices forward.

*“My product aims to preserve the time-honoured tradition of juju dhau (king's yogurt). Traditionally crafted with khuwa, misri, and honey, juju dhau once embodied our cultural heritage. Today, with increasing commercialisation and the trend of using 100 grams of sugar per litre, I felt it was important to honour and maintain the authentic recipe rather than reinvent it.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

*“Many indigenous practices in Nepal are inherently sustainable. For example, the broom-making tradition of the Chepang community supports sustainability in multiple ways. They use the Amriso plant to craft brooms, and planting Amriso is an effective method for preventing landslides in Nepal's hilly regions. This cycle of planting, growing, and crafting is a strong example of a circular, green economy.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

### 3.2.3. Impact of IOH Platform

The IOH programme has successfully created a platform for youth-led entrepreneurs to connect with local community artists and craft pioneers. This engagement has effectively influenced their entrepreneurial outlook, integrating the 5 Ps—People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership—at the core of their businesses. Some participants have shifted from traditional business models to community-centred approaches, where the community drives both the business's purpose and its profits or products.

*“Currently, Teka Eco Pad is in a transitional phase—we've moved from prototyping to launching our product. Initially, we focused on a profit-driven model, but we realised that if the community benefits economically from our business, that too is a form of profit. As a result, we have established Teka as a social enterprise, helping women learn new skills.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Building robust networks & facilitating stakeholder engagement:** The IOH programme has played a pivotal role in enabling youth-led entrepreneurs to build robust networks and engage with a wide range of stakeholders. This network-building has facilitated collaborations spanning from the local to the federal level of Nepal's government. Many participants highlighted that through the programme, they have established connections with civil society organisations (CSOs), fostering partnerships that promote deeper engagement with local community members and enhance community-driven initiatives.

*“As a company, we collect waste from individuals and communities. We have partnered with several municipalities and wards for waste collection. Beyond the IOH programme, we are now working on another project—with support from Kirtipur Municipality—to install a trash barrier in the river and collect plastic waste. The main objective of this project is to prevent plastic waste from leaching into the river.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Shifting narratives in business and job creation:** Another significant finding was the transformation of the business narrative through the IOH programme. Participants were able to change perceptions and shift the narrative around traditional practices, such as incense production, by turning them into honourable, award-winning businesses. This shift allowed them to create sustainable livelihoods and engage with municipalities for further community impact.

*“Project Uddeshya is an initiative that is not registered as a company. There were discussions about merging with an NGO, but that did not materialise. The co-founders of this project have since pursued their own careers. However, we managed to shift the narrative from a business or job focus to incense production. As the project received two awards from UNESCO and the British Council, we were able to position it as an honourable, award-winning enterprise. My family is now involved in the incense production business, and a team in Chitwan is collaborating with a local municipality to provide training on incense-making.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Empowering participants as mentors:** The IOH programme has empowered participants to grow not just as youth-led entrepreneurs but also as mentors in renewed editions of the programme. This opportunity has allowed them to cascade their learnings of being a participant and give back by supporting others.

*"I was a pitch participant in IOH 2022, which gave me the opportunity to work with the Story Cycle team after completing the programme. Recently in 2023, I was involved in the third edition of IOH as a mentor."*

- IOH Programme Past Participant

**Building confidence, support systems, and community awareness:** Lastly, the IOH programme has provided a platform for youth-led entrepreneurs to gain confidence through various workshops, networking sessions, and exhibitions. Participants have also built their own support systems through engagement in the programme and have used the platform to raise awareness about their products within the community.

*"I am still in touch with participants from my batch and with my mentee. They have continued their work, and I consider them successful in doing so. The connections established with mentors and relevant stakeholders also provided participants with valuable opportunities to build networks."*

- IOH Programme Mentor

### 3.2.4. Incubation Programmes Such as IOH are important for the country's creative economy.

Many informants emphasized that curated incubation programmes like IOH are crucial for the development of Nepal. The youth in Nepal are eager to invest their time and money to establish themselves, but they need the support and learning opportunities that incubation programmes offer. Through the IOH programme, youth-led entrepreneurs have gained valuable knowledge in business development, community engagement, and creative green and circular economies. The mentorship and networking opportunities provided during the six-month workshop have helped them establish their products and build brands within Nepal.

*"Although many participants did not come from a business background, mentors helped them understand business development models. During the sessions, they developed business plans and learned about product development, which enabled them to focus on improving their products."*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Support for youth entrepreneurs in building brands and networks:** The IOH programme has played an instrumental role in supporting youth entrepreneurs to build their brands and networks within Nepal. The comprehensive content and formats of the programme have helped them develop solid business plans and establish themselves in the local market

*"Initially, we were a bit uncertain about our business plan, as we do not come from a business background. However, after completing the six-month incubation programme, we learned how a business should function and what elements are essential for long-term sustainability. In addition to developing our business plan, we gained knowledge about the Creative Green Economy, which helped us create products from waste—such as those made from Amriso waste. We also applied the Quintuple Bottom Line, ensuring that our product development process empowers the community, supports them economically, and benefits the planet. This approach has enabled us to establish a brand and strengthen our business plan."*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Flexible and effective online sessions for aspiring entrepreneurs:** The online format of the IOH programme, while catering to a wide range of participants, has been appreciated for its flexibility and effectiveness. Despite being an online format, the sessions were interactive and provided opportunities for participants to ask questions and engage in discussions. This flexible learning approach has been beneficial for participants from various parts of the country.

*"The sessions were conducted online, and given that it was a six-month programme, in-person sessions might not have been feasible for everyone. I did not face any difficulties attending. Each session was followed by Q&A and discussions. With online sessions, I believe it is important for participants to be proactive—raising questions and sharing perspectives—to make the experience more rewarding."*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Leadership skills:** For many participants, the IOH programme has been a significant catalyst for career growth and development of leadership skills. One informant, who gained a managerial position at a privately owned art museum, after completing the programme, attributes part of their success to the valuable networking and leadership-building opportunities that the programme provided.

*"The programme has played a significant role in my career. While enrolled in IOH's incubation programme, I also applied for a manager position at an art museum—and I got the job. I attribute this success to the IOH programme, as it helped me develop leadership skills and build a strong network."*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Learning and refining ideas through expert sessions:** Expert-led sessions, particularly those from Kathmandu University School of Management, helped informants refine their ideas and modify them for better execution. These insights, particularly through online sessions, contributed significantly to the participants' ability to improve their products and business strategies.

*"The sessions delivered by experts from Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) provided me with entirely new knowledge. They helped me refine and shape my ideas."*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Need for more incubation programmes for aspiring entrepreneurs:** The necessity of incubation programmes like IOH, which provide critical support for startups and aspiring entrepreneurs, was a

recurring theme. Participants emphasised how such programmes are vital for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in Nepal.

*“One thing I would like to mention is that incubation programmes providing support to start-ups and aspiring entrepreneurs are greatly needed.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

## 3.3. Collaboration, Mentorship and Skills Development

### 3.3.1. Strengthening Partnerships, International Collaboration and its Impact

Partnerships and learning exchanges have been central to the IOH programme's success, establishing a foundation for substantial learning and development. Effective collaboration requires understanding and integrating local contexts and knowledge, shifting from top-down solutions to more localised, inclusive approaches. Leveraging tools like the craft toolkit and adopting a quintuple bottom-line approach has successfully connected crafts with land relationships, enhancing the impact of the programme.

By bringing together arts organisations and design education institutions from the UK and Nepal, IOH has been successful in creating a space where partners can share their expertise and contextual knowledge. ENU introduced the quintuple bottom-line to the consortium, which has greatly benefitted how Nepali organisations look at creative enterprise. On the other hand, examples of sustainable practices and indigenous knowledge shared by Nepali partners have been important case studies for their UK counterparts.

*“Reflecting on the partnership element, there is much we need to take back to the UK, along with the learning we have evolved and developed through our participation in In Our Hands. Partly through the craft toolkit, we are also introducing the concept of the quintuple bottom line, while aligning with our broader international initiatives that explore the intersection of craft, art, and collaborative global practice.”*

- IOH Programme Partner

**Differentiating between collaborators and vendors for effective execution:** It is critical to distinguish between long-term collaborators and vendors to ensure the programme's effectiveness. Revisiting the mission and goals of collaborators ensures that partnerships stay aligned and impactful. This iterative process began with the second series of the IOH programme, emphasising the importance of strategic alignment and adapting to local contexts.

*“As every organisation has its own mission and focus area, it is essential to understand how each partner contributes to the programme’s outcome areas. There was a need to revisit alignments within*

*the consortium of partners and clarify how they intend to move forward. We began this exercise with the second edition.”*

*- IOH Programme Partner*

**Partnerships as platforms for learning, adapting, and sustaining growth:** Partnerships within the IOH programme are not just about roles and responsibilities; they also provide a platform for continuous learning, adaptation, and sustainability. The core implementing team has observed a growing awareness among young participants about the importance of sustainability and meaningful outcomes beyond financial incentives. This shift has led to changes in the programme framework, ensuring grants are more impactful and that mentorship and partnership-building are prioritised.

*“This time, two recycling companies performed exceptionally well—one even won a grant award. We have also helped them form partnerships, which is part of our role: connecting people. We are strong in that area. We support practical learning and guide them in building partnerships. Even when participants do not receive grants, we help them connect with mentors, and I believe this makes them feel supported. We have ensured that all participants gain something from their involvement. One of the consortium’s key strengths is its network. We were able to guide participants towards the right people to collaborate with and also provided mentorship opportunities.”*

*- IOH Programme Partner*

### **Tracking outputs and outcomes to strengthen long-term collaborations**

The programme has developed a system for tracking both immediate outputs (such as successful partnerships and grant applications) and long-term outcomes (such as sustained collaboration and local engagement). This approach has been key to strengthening and sustaining partnerships and ensuring the programme’s long-term impact.

### **Role of Partnership for Effective Implementation of Programme**

The other significant finding was, the collaborative efforts of partner organisations have significantly contributed to the programme's success and learning outcomes. The collective contributions of all partners have reinforced the programme's emphasis on sustainability, knowledge-sharing. Through collaboration, the programme has fostered a deeper understanding of innovative approaches and the importance of creating meaningful practices for future stakeholders.

**Fostering innovation and inclusivity through collaboration:** The collaboration among partner organizations, mentors, and stakeholders fostered an environment of inclusivity and knowledge-sharing, catalyzing innovation. Youth involvement was particularly crucial, as their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives helped bridge generational gaps. Through art and innovation, they connected the ideas of older generations with the aspirations of younger ones, preserving valuable traditions while addressing contemporary challenges. This collaborative approach demonstrated the power of collective action in fostering innovation and intergenerational dialogue.

**Leveraging local and international expertise to address challenges:** The programme's success was largely due to the collective efforts of local and international partners who brought diverse perspectives and expertise. While international partners specialized in craft sector knowledge, Nepali partners played an essential role in helping participants localize these ideas. This collaboration ensured that the

participants had access to local networks and contextual knowledge, empowering them to further research and apply the lessons learned.

The members of the consortium of partners were selected by the British Council, strategically, considering the strengths and expertise each partner brings into the mix. For example, Applied Arts Scotland had been working with the British Council prior to In Our Hands where they developed the Crafts Toolkit which was rolled out in South-East Asia and South Asia. The Craft Toolkit was put to use as a primary component during the incubation process which helped participants develop their entrepreneurial ideas.

There were two academic partners from the UK and Nepal – Edinburgh Napier University and Kathmandu University – working together to refine the syllabus for the incubation. Their expertise in course design has been integral in the success of the programme.

Story Cycle and Nepal Art Village, who have been actively engaging the creative and cultural industry, and youth, through their work added value to the programme through their expertise in working with creative professionals, documentation and archival. Their network in the industry has also been integral in supporting the programme, connecting participants with prospective collaborators and partners.

**The impact of the sustainable business model canvas in collaboration:** The inclusion of tools like the sustainable business model canvas has been a key achievement of the programme. It helped participants ask critical questions about their offerings, target audiences, and operational strategies, fostering a structured approach to building sustainable business ideas. The collaboration between local and international partners ensured that these tools were relevant and applicable to various contexts, helping participants think strategically about their business growth.

*"We recognise that craft and design are diverse fields. Depending on individual interests, people may approach them from a material, product, social-community, or environmental science perspective. One of the great strengths of our Nepali colleagues was their local connections and knowledge of Nepal and neighbouring countries, which supported our further research. We realised we had a strong foundation for exploring ideas such as the sustainable business model canvas. We are still considering key aspects within projects and business concepts to help participants—whatever their product, service, or space—reflect on the critical questions they need to ask themselves, their teams, and about their offering: what it is, who it is for, and how to start building."*

- IOH Programme Partner

### 3.3.2. Effectiveness and Impact of Mentorship in the IOH Programme

The mentorship provided by both international and Nepali experts was a key factor in the success of the IOH programme, fostering growth, innovation, and a deeper understanding of sustainable practices. International mentors, particularly from the UK, offered fresh perspectives on product planning, market execution, and sustainability. However, some participants found the UK-based knowledge challenging to adapt to Nepal's local context. While the international mentorship introduced valuable global approaches, more localised research and tailored feedback would have made the insights more applicable.

*“International mentors mainly guided us on developing product plans and executing them for national and international markets. It would have been helpful to receive context-specific examples as well.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

*“The mentors from the UK brought fresh perspectives and valuable knowledge to the sessions. While Nepali mentors provided a more local context, a blend of both would be highly appreciated. UK mentors often shared insights based on a European or global context; if these had been supplemented with Nepali examples, the sessions would have been even more effective.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

**Local mentors as a source of practical guidance:** Nepali mentors were highly valued for their contextual knowledge and practical support. Their deep understanding of the local market and cultural practices made their guidance particularly relatable and actionable for participants. This balance of local expertise with international insights created a comprehensive learning experience.

*“Nepali mentors were approachable and supportive, contributing positively to our experience. We did not really collaborate hands-on with international mentors.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

**Mentorship and collaboration for enriching learning experiences:** The involvement of national and international mentors significantly enriched the learning journey for participants. The mentors provided valuable guidance, being approachable and offering detailed feedback when needed. While online sessions were helpful, meeting international mentors in person gave participants a broader perspective on expanding opportunities. The collaboration between local and international mentors ensured that participants received diverse insights, empowering them to think critically about their future opportunities.

*“The sessions facilitated by Anil Chitrakar were captivating. The mentors were approachable; if I did not understand something, I would contact them. They always took my calls and addressed my queries. Whenever I struggled to grasp certain points, I asked, and they responded—guiding me on how to move forward, explaining what I had done wrong and what I should have done differently. They were extremely helpful and friendly. Initially, during the online sessions, I felt that a national mentor would have been sufficient. However, after meeting the international mentors in person and speaking with them, I understood their ideas on expansion and the opportunities available. I now appreciate the need for guidance from them.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

**Need for individualised mentorship and research:** Participants suggested that a more individualised approach to mentorship, focusing on each participant's specific ideas and market needs, would have enhanced the effectiveness of the mentorship. Tailored research that addresses each participant's project or business context would allow them to connect better with their target market and understand material sourcing.

*“We had a UK-based mentor who was very supportive and guided us well. She even told us we could reach out to her beyond the programme for any support or guidance we might need.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

*“UK-based mentors are just as essential as Nepali mentors. Nepali mentors offer deeper insights into local knowledge, while UK mentors contribute expertise on sustainability and sustainable practices. In terms of research, it provided guidance on identifying markets, building them, and sourcing required materials. However, if the research had focused on each participant’s specific ideas, it would have helped them connect directly to the markets they need to engage with.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

**Overall balance of mentorship perspectives:** While both local and international mentors played important roles, the combination of their expertise created a valuable learning environment. Greater contextual adaptation of international mentorship and a more individualised approach would significantly enhance the programme’s impact, ensuring participants benefit fully from the diverse perspectives.

### **Increased Engagement of Youths in Creative Green Economy**

The IOH programme provided a transformative platform for participants to explore nature-based and sustainable business ideas, equipping them with a solid understanding of circular economy principles. Participants worked on projects that utilised byproducts and waste, such as paper production and naturally-dyed wool products, integrating sustainability and cultural preservation. However, a gap in understanding green economic principles was identified, signalling the need for more educational resources to further support participants.

*“One of my mentees mentioned that she was pleased to find the right platform to learn more about creating nature-based products.”*

*- IOH Programme Mentor*

*“IOH helped me understand and identify green businesses. The programme also provided knowledge on circular and green economic principles.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

*“Yes, I did learn about the green economy—green skills, green earning, and green opportunities.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

**Challenges and educational gaps:** Some participants noted a limited understanding of the circular economy and expressed the need for additional educational resources to better grasp green economy principles. Scheduling conflicts also posed challenges for some, making it difficult to fully participate in sessions. Despite these challenges, the programme effectively bridged gaps between personal aspirations and sustainability goals, creating an environment for knowledge sharing and collaboration.

*“The limited understanding of the creative green economy among participants highlighted the need for more educational resources.”*

- IOH Programme Partner

*“I find self-paced learning programmes beneficial for individual skill development, but less effective due to limited opportunities for group discussions, networking, and collaboration.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Inclusive and engaging workshops:** The programme included workshops on various topics such as finance, marketing, branding, and networking, with high participation of women. Constructive feedback helped participants refine their ideas and create business plans. Engagement with peers and influential figures like Mahabir Pun expanded participants' horizons and inspired them to grow their ideas further. Despite some individual preferences for different types of exposure such as learning how to run their businesses and networking, the collaborative environment helped strengthen their business development skills.

*“The themed workshops covered finance, marketing, branding, and networking. The sessions were inclusive, with high participation from women.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

*“The sessions were excellent and provided constructive feedback, which helped me revisit and restructure my idea. I also had the opportunity to meet Mahabir Pun, as well as connect with new people and hear their ideas. One challenge for me was scheduling my academic classes, as the programme’s sessions were held on the same day. However, since the sessions were conducted virtually once a week, I was able to attend without disrupting my academic timetable.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Encouraging innovation and addressing misconceptions:** The programme was successful in fostering innovation. As an example, a project idea combined mental well-being and empowerment, such as teaching knitting and crochet as therapeutic art forms. Participants also explored sustainable practices like natural dyeing, reflecting on common misconceptions about the authenticity of sustainable products. The incorporation of social impact alongside sustainability was emphasised.

*“The company’s idea was to broaden the theme of the creative green economy by integrating mental well-being and empowering people to learn and earn through knitting and crochet as sustainable craft practices.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

*“Products in the market labelled as sustainably sourced may not always give us the full picture. For example, many cotton products still involve the use of chemicals. Through IOH, I learned how we can produce using wool dyed naturally. This approach promotes environmental conservation, sustainable products, and cultural preservation.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Empowering participants to develop sustainable ideas:** The programme - through its focus on practical, nature-based solutions - aligned with sustainability goals and encouraged participants to pursue green businesses. The use of the Crafts Toolkit alongside support in business planning has helped the participants think about how they can make their existing business ideas more eco-friendly and sustainable.

*“During the session, I developed a business plan, even though I do not come from a business background. With guidance from mentors, I worked through a business development module step by step. We explored business development together, engaging in class discussions, sharing ideas individually and as a group—building knowledge, connections, and inspiration. Environmental sustainability was embedded throughout the activities and discussions.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Programme’s potential for expanding impact:** The IOH programme demonstrated significant potential in empowering youth to pursue creative green business and circular economy initiatives. By addressing gaps in education, offering more collaborative opportunities, and focusing on specific business needs, the programme can enhance its impact in driving sustainable practices and innovation for positive social and environmental change.

## 3.4. Stakeholder Engagement and Policy Influence

### 3.4.1. Collective Efforts Driving Sustainability, Innovation, and Cultural Preservation

The IOH programme catalysed diverse initiatives that promote sustainability, innovation, and cultural preservation, demonstrating the power of collective action. Collaborative contributions from organisations, mentors, and participants highlighted the interconnectedness of the green economy, environmental advocacy, and community-centric development. Projects embraced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the IOH programme’s 5Ps theme, incorporating recycling, upcycling, and localised research and development (R&D).

**Innovative projects promoting sustainability:** Several participants developed innovative approaches to sustainability, including projects focused on waste recovery, recycling, and eco-tourism. One initiative recycled environmental waste into valuable products, while another promoted cycling as a means of reducing fossil fuel consumption and conserving heritage areas. The Cycle to Work project promoted innovation by targeting office commuters as possible off-setters of carbon, for example. These projects emphasised behavior change and community involvement in driving sustainability.

*“Our project Cycle to Work focuses on behavioural change. People generally prefer to use private vehicles such as motorbikes and cars. The main aim of this project is to encourage a reduction in fossil fuel consumption, which helps protect heritage and nature.”*

*- IOH Programme Participant*

**Cultural preservation - reimagining traditions:** Cultural preservation was a recurring theme, with participants reinventing traditional practices to align with contemporary values. One initiative restored traditional yogurt recipes while promoting the product through sustainable packaging and transporting. Another project promoted indigenous knowledge of the Chepang people which makes use of Amriso plan to produce craft. This benefits the environment through landslide prevention, but also makes use of the waste to produce utilitarian craft. These efforts highlighted the significance of cultural identity in the context of sustainability and innovation.

### **3.4.2. Enhancing Support System for Entrepreneurs and Locally Produced Sustainable Products**

*“I was not able to be directly involved in the field with participants. The media should support participants and the IOH management team by facilitating connections to raise brand awareness and bridge the gap between production, market, and consumers. Storytelling can also be an effective medium.”*

*- IOH Programme Partner*

Also, the other finding was that the locally made goods require greater promotion, focusing on their unique value propositions compared to mass-produced alternatives. Advocacy for sustainable consumption practices can help build demand for these products. Entrepreneurs need to conduct thorough market research before commercialising their products to ensure alignment with consumer needs and preferences, thus increasing their chances of success. Media can play a pivotal role in promoting local entrepreneurs by bridging gaps between production, markets, and consumers. Storytelling serves as a powerful medium to highlight the journey, challenges, and achievements of entrepreneurs, fostering emotional connections and raising public awareness. Sharing ongoing sustainable practices and success stories can inspire others and attract potential investors or collaborators.

**Digital storytelling for sustainability and cultural narratives:** Digital storytelling emerged as a powerful tool for promoting creative green economy ideas and to bridge themes including agriculture, eco-tourism, sustainable practices, and local arts. The use of technology through app-based platforms highlighted the potential for amplifying sustainability and cultural narratives, with a focus on contextual innovation and R&D to tailor products to local needs. These initiatives demonstrated the critical role of skill development in fostering sustainability.

*“The main idea behind my company is to share knowledge through storytelling on digital platforms, connecting themes such as agriculture, ecotourism, sustainable practices, local arts and crafts, and*

*soil regeneration. The next step is to build an app and sell products related to these themes through a common digital platform.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

**Media as a promoter of Creative Green Economy:** One of the findings was that media and storytelling were identified as critical tools for raising brand awareness and connecting participants with potential markets. By sharing success stories, sustainable practices, and business innovations, awareness can be expanded, and market reach widened. Establishing stronger consumer relationships for locally produced goods is essential. Efforts should emphasise not only the quality of products but also their sustainable and conscious production processes, fostering trust and long-term loyalty among consumers.

During KIIs, a number of participants also stressed that state support and market understanding is integral in promoting products.

*“Locally produced products should be promoted more among consumers—not only focusing on mass production, but also on sustainable and conscious production. Building strong relationships with customers is essential for locally made goods. The government should support locally growing businesses to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Market research should be conducted before commercialising products.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

The government should actively support entrepreneurial ecosystem development by providing technical assistance and capacity-building programmes tailored to the needs of emerging entrepreneurs. For instance, policies encouraging locally produced goods, such as tax incentives, grants, or promotional campaigns, can further motivate businesses and enhance market visibility. To support entrepreneurs and promote locally produced sustainable products, a multi-pronged approach is required. Media, government support, and market research are key components in building an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

*“The government should provide technical support and capacity-building opportunities for upcoming entrepreneurs and organisations that foster entrepreneurial growth.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

*“Maximising the promotion of success stories, ongoing sustainable practices, and emerging business innovations to raise awareness and expand market reach.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

## 3.5. Diversity and Inclusion

### 3.5.1. Increased Participation of Women

The programme demonstrated strong inclusivity by fostering significant participation from women-led businesses and business ideas. This reflects the programme's commitment to gender equality and empowerment. In the latest edition, IOH received 146 applications. Out of the total applications 59 were of women led and owned businesses. Likewise, seven out of 10 research grant teams were led (or co-led) by women. Three out of five prototype grantees were led (or co-led) by women. and in 2022 all the six prototype grants were led by women or had active women members in the team.

*"The sessions were inclusive, with a strong presence of women-led businesses and business ideas."*

- IOH Programme Participant

### 3.5.2. Diverse Cultural Representation

The sessions included participants from various cultural backgrounds, creating a rich, diverse learning environment. This not only promoted cross-cultural exchange but also ensured that the programme's benefits reached a wide range of communities. In 2024, IOH engaged 52% Brahmin/Chettri, 30% Indigenous, 7% Madhesi and 2% Dalit peoples. While its numbers need to be improved in future editions, a considerable participation of indigenous, Madhesi and Dalit people show that the programme is more inclusive than other national level programmes in the country.

*"The sessions were inclusive, with participants mostly women and from diverse cultural backgrounds."*

- IOH Programme Participant

These insights reinforce the IOH programme's role in promoting gender and inclusion, setting a strong foundation for future initiatives to continue building on this success.

Likewise, the IOH programme has inspired a significant shift in perspective, encouraging even university partners to move beyond centralised, Kathmandu-focused approaches in pursuit of deeper exposure and meaningful learning.

*"Education is not merely about obtaining a degree; it is about gaining skills, knowledge and practical insights. To truly tackle challenges such as those faced by farmers in their daily lives, we must move beyond our centralised approach and work within the communities we seek to support."*

- IOH Programme Participant

### 3.5.3. Transformative Role in Broadening Understanding and Inclusivity within the Creative Green Economy

A key finding from the IOH programme is its transformative role in broadening understanding and inclusivity within the creative green economy. A media professional with extensive field experience admitted they previously lacked awareness of existing policies and the interconnectedness of individuals contributing to this economy.

*"I had no idea what was happening in either the government or non-government sectors. Through the programme, I met people and uncovered stories that revealed the unseen contributors to the green economy — such as thrift shop owners and artisans who upcycle materials like plastic or bamboo, often without realising the significance of their efforts."*

- IOH Programme Participant

This revelation underscores the importance of expanding workshops, seminars, and training beyond those already established in the sector. Nepal's diversity demands a more inclusive approach, ensuring people from all walks of life, including those unaware of their roles in the creative green economy, are involved. By integrating perspectives from outside traditional sectors, the programme enhances its sustainability and value, fostering a comprehensive network of contributors. Such inclusivity not only enriches the discourse but also strengthens the creative green economy's foundation for future growth, demonstrating that its success hinges on involving diverse and often-overlooked stakeholders.

## 3.6. Sustainability and Future Directions

### 3.6.1. IOH Demonstrated Self-Driven Learning and Interdisciplinary Collaboration

**Integration of practical outcomes with academic incentives:** The IOH programme has reshaped how Kathmandu University School of Arts designs and adapts accredited courses by incorporating practical outcomes alongside academic incentives. By linking product grants with additional academic credits, the programme provides students with both tangible rewards and academic progression. This approach motivates students to engage deeply with their projects, enhancing their learning experience beyond traditional classroom settings. Participants of the third edition of the incubation programme who were selected for the research and prototyping phase were offered three and six credits respectively by Kathmandu University. The opportunity to earn academic accreditation encouraged a deeper commitment to creative work and academic growth. This balance of real-world rewards and academic recognition fosters a more holistic educational experience. This also provides participants a pathway to higher education, especially for those who have not enrolled in university programmes.

**Encouraging self-assessment and personal growth:** The interdisciplinary approach of the IOH programme places a strong emphasis on self-reflection, qualifications, and self-assessment. Students are encouraged to evaluate their own work critically, allowing them to better understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This self-assessment process empowers students to refine their ideas and exhibit their projects in ways that align with professional standards. As a result, students not only gain practical skills but also develop the confidence to present their work effectively, an essential skill for their professional careers.

### **Fostering self-driven learning and interdisciplinary collaboration:**

By integrating opportunities for practical application, self-assessment, and academic progression, the IOH programme demonstrates how academic institutions can cultivate a culture of self-driven learning. Students are not just recipients of knowledge; they actively contribute to the development of their field through interdisciplinary collaboration and personal initiative. The programme underscores the importance of integrating academic learning with real-world applications, thereby fostering a dynamic educational environment that encourages innovation, creativity, and practical skills development.

*“As part of this partnership, I have been involved in developing a sustainable syllabus for the Bachelor of Craft and Design programme. Academic collaboration has been crucial, and offering credit-bearing courses has greatly motivated students. I have also had the opportunity to mentor them and oversee the accreditation process — an experience I have found truly rewarding.”*

- IOH Programme Partner

### **3.6.2. Sustainability Through Traditional Skills, Contemporary Knowledge and practice**

The IOH programme has shown its potential to push participants beyond the boundaries of individual projects by integrating traditional skills with contemporary knowledge and fostering meaningful community partnerships. By combining traditional practices with modern technology and pedagogical innovation, the programme nurtures creative and sustainable entrepreneurship. This approach not only preserves indigenous and community identities but also adapts them to global market needs. As one partner reflected, the importance of revisiting ancestral techniques and adapting them for the modern market led to the creation of the circular economy model which was attributed to modern needs.

*“Our aim was to revive ancestral techniques and adapt them for contemporary markets, creating a circular economy model that reflects local identities while meeting global demands.”*

- IOH Programme Partner

A key finding of the programme is the emphasis on engaging with local communities, exemplified through its partnership with Nepal Art Village, Kathmandu University and Story Cycle. Participants learned the importance of involving community members in their initiatives to build trust and foster a sense of ownership. One facilitator observed, this human-centred approach has encouraged participants to create spaces that resonate with local people, ensuring cultural authenticity and community empowerment. KU has curated and hosted IOH exhibitions that have supported grantees to interact with the local creative/cultural sector and other visitors. By prioritising collaboration and inclusivity, IOH has enabled participants to expand their projects into sustainable and socially grounded ventures.

*“Working with the community enriches any project. Placing people at the heart of your work is essential.”*

- IOH Programme Participant

### 3.6.3. IOH Programme's Evolution - Cultivating Professional Mindset for Youth Entrepreneurs

IOH has been successful in introducing research grants as a pivotal element, supporting participants in making informed decisions regarding their ventures and what they need to pursue. The participants mentioned that their approach to their business has changed with the insights they gained through field research. Entrepreneurs also mentioned that they were able to connect better with the community as they explored their area of work through research. The partnership with Nepal Art Village proved instrumental in blending academic and practical approaches, offering participants not only theoretical insights but also hands-on experiences that reinforced their commitment to their projects. This integration allowed partners to observe a noticeable shift in participant engagement, as the participants treated the programme as a stepping stone for their careers rather than a temporary project.

One partner noted that the inclusion of research grants added significant value, motivating participants to approach their work with a sense of purpose and accountability. This contrasted sharply with the typical pattern of students hopping from one programme to another without a long-term vision. By cultivating a professional mindset and aligning academic rigor with practical application, the programme has demonstrated how targeted interventions like research grants can elevate both the quality of participation and the sustainability of outcomes.

This realisation highlights the need for immersive, community-centred education that prioritises hands-on experiences and collaboration with diverse regions. By encouraging participants to engage directly with communities across Nepal's seven states, the programme has underscored the value of decentralised learning for creating impactful and sustainable solutions.

# 5. Learnings and Recommendations

## 5.1. Key Learnings from the IOH Programme

The learnings are based on thematic KPIs developed in collaboration with the British Council Nepal team. They highlight the strengths and challenges of the IOH programme, offering valuable insights for improving future initiatives. By addressing these areas, the programme can better support sustainable, youth-led enterprises and help foster a thriving creative green economy in Nepal.

### 5.1.1. Importance of Community-centred Approaches

- **Community integration matters:** Projects designed without early engagement of local communities often faced resistance. Successful initiatives emphasised collaboration with local artisans and craftspeople, demonstrating that involving communities from the planning stage enhances acceptance and sustainability.
  - Example: Engagement with Bhaktapur's curd producers highlighted the importance of collaborating rather than competing with traditional industries.
- **Cultural sustainability as a strength:** Bridging traditional skills with contemporary practices has shown significant potential. Combining ancestral techniques and indigenous knowledge with modern business concepts resonates strongly with local identities while appealing to global markets.

### 5.1.2. Mentorship's Role in Long-Term Impact

- **Extended mentorship needed:** Short-term mentoring programmes tend to have limited impact. Extended and structured mentorship provides continuous support, helping young entrepreneurs overcome challenges and sustain their businesses beyond the incubation phase.

*Insight:* Participants highlighted the need for longer mentorship, particularly in areas such as marketing, business planning, visibility, and more peer-to-peer learning among mentees

- **Quality over quantity:** Mentorship from experienced professionals in relevant fields — beyond the creative sector — is crucial. Mapping and engaging mentors with business and industry expertise can lead to more impactful outcomes.

### 5.1.3. Balancing Creative Focus with Business Acumen

- **Creativity vs. sustainability:** The programme excelled in fostering creativity but faced challenges in translating creative ideas into sustainable business models. Future iterations need to balance creative empowerment with practical business skills.
  - *Issue:* The programme placed a strong emphasis on creativity, culture, and heritage, but lacked sufficient focus on the economic and business sustainability aspects.
  - *Observation:* Many enterprises were more art-focused and struggled with business sustainability.

- *Impact:* Many enterprises struggled to sustain themselves beyond the initial funding phase. Participants highlighted the need for more support in business planning, marketing, and financial management.
- **Practical business training:** Providing training in areas such as marketing, financial planning, and resource management is essential to complement creative skills. This holistic approach will empower youth entrepreneurs to build resilient businesses.

#### 5.1.4. Need for Clear Communication and Structure

- **Role clarity among partners:** Ambiguities in partner roles and expectations led to confusion. Clearly defined structures and consistent communication are essential for smooth collaboration and effective programme delivery.
  - *Issue:* Partners and mentors were often unclear about their specific roles and responsibilities, leading to gaps in communication and coordination.
- **Expectations management:** Establishing a clear structure and roadmap helps participants align their expectations with programme goals. This improves engagement and commitment levels among entrepreneurs.
  - *Impact:* This ambiguity created challenges in programme implementation and hindered the delivery of cohesive support to participants.

#### 5.1.5. Hybrid Learning Potential

- **Blending digital and in-person learning:** While digital platforms offer flexibility, Nepal's readiness for fully digital engagement remains limited. A hybrid model combining online resources with in-person sessions can bridge this gap.
  - *Insight:* Many informants highlighted the need for hybrid learning due to accessibility challenges. Some of the informants mentioned that due to prior commitments like work and study, they had to miss some session. Hybrid sessions would work best for them. A few participants mentioned that they need to travel to difficult geographies of Nepal - where internet access is limited – making it difficult for them to join online sessions. So, in-person sessions – planned in advance - are helpful as they are able to plan their travels accordingly.

#### 5.1.6. Expanding Beyond Kathmandu

- **Decentralisation for inclusion:** The programme's strong focus on Kathmandu limited participation from diverse regions. Expanding activities to rural and remote areas will ensure broader representation and inclusivity.
  - *Issue:* The programme was heavily focused on Kathmandu, limiting participation and impact in rural and remote areas.
  - *Impact:* This geographical concentration excluded many potential youth entrepreneurs and communities from accessing the programme's benefits.
  - *Recommendation:* Traveling exhibitions and regional workshops can extend the programme's impact nationwide.

### 5.1.7. Grant Dependency VS. Sustainability

- **Beyond initial funding:** Many enterprises struggled with sustainability after the grant period. Encouraging self-sufficiency through business development training and alternative funding strategies is crucial.
  - *Issue:* Some participants were overly reliant on grant funding, with limited motivation or strategies to transition toward self-sustaining models.
  - *Impact:* This dependency reduced long-term commitment, and several projects became inactive once funding ended.
  - *Learning:* Reducing grant amounts and focusing on genuine, long-term learning outcomes can foster more sustainable enterprises.
- **Support for fund management:** Providing grants to individuals is only the first step in driving impactful change. Grantees often require continued support beyond the financial award to manage funds effectively and efficiently. Capacity-building initiatives, such as mentoring on financial planning, impact measurement, and operational efficiency, are crucial. Without such support, grantees may struggle to demonstrate the desired outcomes, limiting the overall impact of the grant. Supporting grantees post-award ensures that resources are utilised optimally and that their initiatives achieve and sustain meaningful results.

### 5.1.8. Policy Engagement and Advocacy

- **Youth voice in policy:** Engaging policy makers through platforms like the “Youth and Climate 2024” symposium effectively amplified youth voices. Continuous dialogue between youth, creative sectors, and policymakers is essential for meaningful policy integration.
  - *Success:* The introduction of the **Quintuple Bottom Line framework** into local policy demonstrates the power of strategic advocacy.

### 5.1.9. Holistic, Interdisciplinary Education Works

- **Experiential learning impact:** Combining applied and studio arts with disciplines like engineering provided a well-rounded educational experience. Interdisciplinary approaches fostered creative thinking and problem-solving skills among participants.
  - *Example:* Practical sessions with community artisans enriched the learning process by blending traditional knowledge with modern techniques.
  - *Issue:* While the programme covered practical and community-based learning, participants indicated a need for more hands-on, real-world experiences.
  - *Impact:* Enhancing experiential learning could better equip participants with the skills needed to apply their knowledge in practical settings.

## 5.2. Recommendations

Here is a detailed set of recommendations based on the findings:

### 5.2.1. Strengthen Internal Coordination and Structure

- **Regular internal meetings:** Allocate a specific budget for regular internal meetings among British Council teams to enhance coordination and ensure that all roles and responsibilities are clear.
- **Define partner roles more effectively:** Clearly outline the roles and expectations of all IOH partners. This will improve collaboration and ensure that each partner understands their contributions toward achieving programme objectives.

### 5.2.2. Enhance Incubation and Mentorship Programmes

- **Focused partnerships:** Collaborate with organisations that specialise in incubation programmes, particularly those experienced in circular economy models. This will ensure that the incubation support is well-aligned with local needs and global standards.
- **Experienced mentorship pool:** Invest in building a network of experienced mentors who can provide targeted guidance in areas such as business planning, marketing, and sustainability. Ensure financial resources are allocated for extended mentorship to support long-term business growth.
- **Expand the network of delivery partners:** The partnership must include organisations and initiatives focused on entrepreneurship support programmes and ecosystem enablers. Currently, the partnership portfolio leans heavily towards academic and arts-focused entities, which limits the integration of a business-oriented lens. Collaborating with entrepreneurship enablers can bridge this gap, ensuring a more holistic approach to programme delivery. This integration would also help create a robust pipeline for initiatives that extend beyond IOH, fostering sustainability and scalability for future programmes.

### 5.2.3. Improve Programme Design and Delivery

- **Redesign programme structure:** Consider revising the IOH programme's structure to provide a more comprehensive framework. Incorporate feedback from participants and stakeholders to address any gaps and enhance programme impact.
- **Hybrid learning model:** Introduce a hybrid learning approach that blends in-person and digital sessions. This will make learning more accessible, especially in remote areas, while addressing concerns about Nepal's readiness for fully digital platforms.

### 5.2.4. Expand Outreach and Engagement

- **Decentralise programme activities:** Reduce the Kathmandu-centric focus by conducting more activities and exhibitions in other regions of Nepal. This will ensure wider participation and inclusion of diverse communities.
- **Community integration:** Strengthen engagement with local communities by designing projects that incorporate community needs and knowledge from the outset. This will build trust and reduce resistance from local artisans or practitioners.

### 5.2.5. Enhance Impact Monitoring and Sustainability

- **Post-programme monitoring:** Develop a robust follow-up system to track the progress of enterprises after they complete the incubation programme. This will help measure long-term (from 3 - 5 years) impact and identify ongoing support needs.
- **Promote self-sustainability:** Encourage enterprises to move beyond grant dependency by focusing on sustainable business models and partnerships. Provide training on securing investments and forming collaborations that foster growth beyond initial funding.

### 5.2.6. Focus on Policy and Strategic Advocacy

- **Engage policymakers continuously:** Build on the success of initiatives like the 'Youth and Climate 2024' symposium by creating regular platforms for youth and policymakers to collaborate. Advocate for integrating the **Quintuple Bottom Line framework** into broader national policies.
- **Policy implementation support:** Support government agencies and policymakers in implementing insights from the **Creative Green Economy** policy brief and the **Youth and Climate Action** research report.

### 5.2.7. Enhance Visibility and Marketing Support

- **Marketing and branding training:** Offer focused training sessions on marketing, branding, and visibility for enterprises. This will help youth entrepreneurs effectively promote their sustainable products and services.
- **Showcase success stories:** Promote success stories from the IOH programme on national and international platforms. Highlight case studies that demonstrate sustainable practices and community impact to inspire future participants and stakeholders.

# Appendix

IOH Beneficiaries		
Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
	Was it through social media?	
	Was it through someone?	
How did you hear about this programme?	Was it through email chains?	
What made you join the programme?	What was that particular thing that attracted you? Was it the posters? advertisement? The person who referred it to you? Current situation? Experience?	
When you applied for the programme what expectations did you have from it?	In terms of learning, knowledge, experience?	
	How were the sessions?	
	What were the workshops on? What kind of information was provided?	
After getting selected, can you provide in detail what all were taught?	How was the facilitator and trainers?	
You were provided with certain grants and training materials; how did that support you and your idea/company?		
Did you learn of the green economy?	Can you provide us with a bit of your understanding of the green economy?	
How do you think your company or your idea added to the creative green economy?	Can you provide us a bit in detail	
How are you sustaining your company?		
What did you take away from this programme?		
How has this programme supported you and your career?		
How do you think you have been able to contribute within this field? Is this programme supported in any way?	Do you think you have made an impact in the community? What kind of impact?	
How was the management?		
If you have to provide feedback, what feedback would you give?		

What are the things that they could incorporate within the programme to make it more effective and efficient?		
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Advisors		
Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
How did you and the British Council collaborate?		
Who approached you for the programme?		
What was your role in the programme?		
How did you contribute to the programme?		
What did you observe during the programme?	Do you think the participants learned or took anything from your sessions?	
What systems (physical and thought processes) are required for a green economy?		
In your opinion, how can education support be introducing the concept of a green economy?		
Adding to this, through education how can we build the sense of importance of being an entrepreneur and build the entrepreneur ecosystem?		
What other kind of training is required for entrepreneurs which will help them to grow their business and support them further to grow as an entrepreneur?		
Have you been in touch with any of them lately?	Did you observe any impact on the participant after completing the programme?	
What do you think should have been done for a more effective impact of the programme?		
Do you think the programme was successful?	What makes you think that way?	

Partners
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Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
How did you and the British Council collaborate?		
Who approached you for the programme?		
What was your role in the programme?		
How did you contribute to the programme?		
What did you observe during the programme?	Do you think the participants learned or took anything from your sessions?	
What systems (physical and thought processes) are required for a green economy?		
From your perception, what do you understand about the creative green economy?	Can you elaborate a bit on it?	
How do you think this partnership with the IOH programme has contributed to the creative green economy?	Any indicators or best practices that you have come across which you think is an outcome of the partnership?	
In your opinion, how can education support be introducing the concept of a green economy?		
Adding to this, through education how can we build the sense of importance of being an entrepreneur and build the entrepreneur ecosystem?		
What other kind of training is required for entrepreneurs which will help them to grow their business and support them further to grow as an entrepreneur?		
Have you been in touch with any of them lately?	Did you observe any impact on the participant after completing the programme?	
What do you think should have been done for a more effective impact of the programme?		
Do you think the programme was successful?	What makes you think that way?	