

IMPACT

TRANSFORMING
CONFLICT WITH ARTS
AND CULTURE



Gaza Monologues (2010)



Performing Gaza Monologues at the UN

ACTIVITY REPORT



2024

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INTRO DUC TION

ABOUT IMPACT

IMPACT is a diverse global organization advocating for arts and culture to transform conflict and build more creative, inclusive societies.

We bring people together and raise awareness of diverse voices and contexts through events and programs. We support those delivering impactful work through capacity building, making connections, and sharing their practice and learning. We learn from existing knowledge to develop useful resources, and explore cross-cutting and systemic issues linked to past and ongoing conflicts. We collaborate with partners and networks, and reach wide audiences, to make a lasting difference to people's lives and experiences.

Registered as a not-for-profit in the US, with an international Board of Directors, IMPACT is currently receiving support from Humanity United and private donors. Past funders include the Fresh Sound Foundation, Community Arts Lab of Porticus and the Mellon Foundation.

Find out more: www.impactart.org



IMPACT Members at the International Community Arts Festival, Rotterdam, 2023

**“TRUE CHANGE IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT. IT REQUIRES THE
RESILIENCE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT, FUELED BY THE COLLECTIVE HOPE
FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.”**

John Paul Lederach

WHO DOES IMPACT WORK WITH?

We work with a range of actors to deliver our mission:

Who?

How?

Doers



Artists, cultural workers, peacebuilders, practitioners, activists, civil society actors, cultural organizations, community centers

We support those on the ground delivering impactful work through capacity building, making connections and sharing practice and learning.

Thinkers



Academics, researchers, thought leaders, academic institutions, think tanks

We learn from existing knowledge to develop advocacy tools, explore cross-cutting issues and connect diverse thinkers from different disciplines to our network to strengthen theory and praxis.

Influencers



policymakers, funders, advocates, intermediaries, role models, community leaders

We advocate by organizing and attending events and platforms, producing and sharing useful resources, working with partners and networks, and reaching wide audiences.

WHERE DOES IMPACT WORK?

Thanks to our international network, IMPACT has experience working with artists, peacebuilders, and communities in challenging contexts around the world. In 2024, we continued to expand our global audience through two key initiatives: the *Creating Hope Together* Virtual Event Series and the AHA! Arts for Humanity Autobiographies Project.

Creating Hope Together



AHA!



WHY ARTS AND CULTURE IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION?

Conflict, whether geopolitical or societal, can stem from notions of place, identity, beliefs, and power imbalances. Responses to conflict are not always rational and can come from deep-rooted feelings of hatred, revenge, and superiority that can escalate and erupt over time, leading to violence and marginalisation. If addressed from a place of respect, empathy, and justice, conflict can have a generative power that leads to more inclusive and peaceful societies. **Conflict transformation therefore requires a people-centered approach and cultural solutions to ensure long-lasting impact.**

Conflict can take many forms and operates at various levels: from the micro / individual level, to mezzo / community level, to macro / local or national, and mega / global. On the international stage, conflict is generally addressed from a political and economic perspective, involving peace negotiations, sanctions, and sometimes military intervention. The humanitarian response from INGOs can feel exploitative and short-sighted, with people portrayed as victims in need of immediate assistance rather than people with agency and emotional needs. The effect of this top-down response and parachuting approach can lead to many citizens feeling unheard and powerless, trapped in challenging contexts with limited capacity to engage with each other in a constructive and collaborative way. They are disconnected from those who hold power and dependent on external influences to survive rather than thrive. **Often, locally-led initiatives better respond to needs on the ground through a deep understanding of place and community, and a focus on long-term recovery.**

At IMPACT, we know that arts and culture can offer human and creative ways of seeing and understanding conflict. Creative practice enables people to honor and remember the past, reflect on present feelings and emotions, and imagine alternative realities. Arts and culture can open spaces for dialogue and participation within communities, and can raise voices that are usually less visible. Engaging in cultural activity has the power to awaken feelings of empathy and hope, and inspire people to take action to improve livelihoods and wellbeing. **Arts and culture hold an important place in conflict transformation for more just and peaceful societies through creativity and human connection.**

PRO GRAMS

CREATING HOPE TOGETHER VIRTUAL SERIES



Creating Hope Together - a dynamic virtual event series, brings together artists, cultural practitioners, peacebuilders, and community organizers from across the globe to explore how creative practices can generate hope, solidarity, and systemic change in times of uncertainty and upheaval. Rooted in the belief that the arts hold unique power to foster dialogue, resilience, and collective healing, the series invites participants into thoughtful conversations, participatory workshops, and embodied reflection.

Spanning multiple sessions over the year, the series highlights stories of courage and connection from diverse contexts—featuring practitioners working in conflict zones, post-authoritarian societies, diasporic communities, and movements for justice. *Creating Hope Together* offers a space where deep listening and creative exchange become acts of resistance and renewal. This series is not just about learning from others—it's about imagining and building new ways of being together.



Creating Hope Together

2024 In Numbers

SPEAKERS



PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



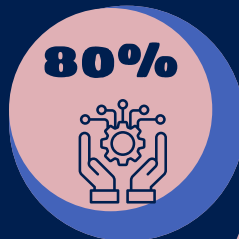
COUNTRIES (ALL REGIONS)



REGISTERED



DOERS



THINKERS



PARTICIPATED



COUNTRIES



NEW TO IMPACT



INFLUENCERS



BREAKOUT SESSIONS



FACILITATORS



NOTETAKERS



CREATING HOPE TOGETHER INAUGURAL EVENT



January 19, 2024



Amid global upheaval, IMPACT launched with *inaugural virtual gathering Creating Hope Together* featuring renowned peacebuilder John Paul Lederach and 38 speakers from 24 countries engaged nearly 200 artists, thinkers, and changemakers from 55 countries, exploring how arts and culture can drive systemic change, foster trust, and confront injustice.

The online event provided a space to connect, share, learn, and find hope and creative inspiration together.

**“The sense of
community and
shared purpose-
are so needed
these days !
Creativity,
energy...Hope !”**

– Event Participant–



READ THE EVENT REPORT

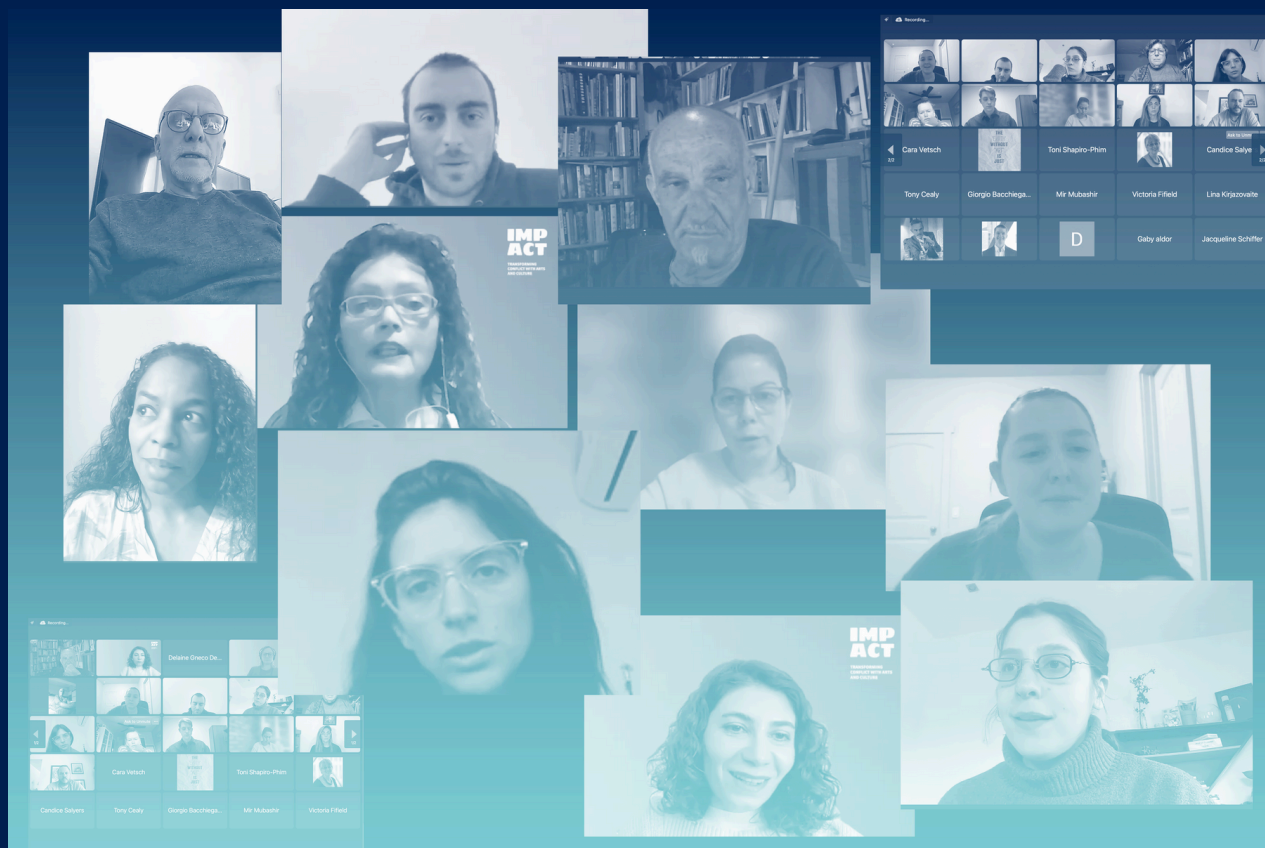


WATCH THE RECORDING OF THE SESSIONS ON YOUTUBE

CREATING HOPE TOGETHER - IN TIMES OF CRISES



March 22, 2024



In a time of global crisis, artists and cultural workers from Ukraine, South Sudan, Israel, Lebanon, and the South Caucasus came together in a powerful virtual forum to explore the role of art in navigating turmoil. Through deeply personal reflections, they unpacked the challenges of dialogue, the weight of historical and ongoing oppression, and the power of creative practice to foster empathy, connection, and transformative exchange.

“The importance of art creating spaces for multiple meanings, fluidity. The importance of creating spaces beside the violence. This space for artists to connect across regions is really important, really appreciated. Conversations will continue to deepen.”

– Event Participant –



READ THE CONVERSATION SUMMARY

CREATING HOPE TOGETHER - ARTS FOR INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY



June 25, 2024



The "Arts for Inclusive Democracy" event highlighted the interconnectedness of global authoritarian trends and the critical role of artists and cultural workers in building resilient communities. Through insightful presentations by speakers from Argentina, Kenya, Iran, Serbia, Turkey, Philippines, and the United States, and dynamic discussions, participants shared experiences and strategies to counter authoritarianism and promote inclusive democracies. The event underscored the importance of learning from diverse global experiences and the unique contributions of arts and cultural work in fostering community resilience and dialogue.

This was an introductory session. Now that we see how authoritarianism forms and legitimizes itself across countries, we can build future sessions around specific questions to learn from each other in more depth.

– Event Participant–



READ THE EVENT REPORT

CREATING HOPE TOGETHER - THE ART OF COLLABORATION



September 20, 2024



Illustration by an Event Participant

The Art of Collaboration was a dynamic gathering exploring collaboration as a mindful, transformative practice. Through stories, creative sessions, and reflection, participants experienced the power of diverse, inclusive spaces.

Co-hosted with Unrival Network and Artists with Elbows as part of the Arts for the Future Festival, the event highlighted IMPACT's commitment to fostering courageous encounters and building a resilient global arts community.

**breathe in breathe out each one
birthing each one dying each
breath a possibility for
transformation a heart bursting
from its shell ready to bask in
the radiance of the sun soak in
the pool of rain, with joyous
recognition of other seeds
sprouting in the midst of a multi-
colored garden all exude beauty
all demand respect with courage
and authenticity, shape what we
imagine**

– Poem by an Event
Participant–



READ THE EVENT REPORT

CREATING HOPE TOGETHER - PROLOGUE TO ARTS AND HR FESTIVAL



December 10, 2024



IMPACT partners with DAH Theater on their Prologue to Arts and Human Rights Festival “Thinking Peace”, marking International Human Rights Day!

The event featured screenings of two poignant short films—*Gaza Monologues* by Iman Aoun (Palestine) and *Jogging* by Hanane Hajj Ali (Lebanon)—before opening into a rich conversation with the acclaimed artists, moderated by Dijana Milošević and Jadranka Anđelić of DAH Teatar.

Through their stories, the discussion explored the intersections of art, resistance, and the role of women in confronting crisis and oppression, highlighting performance as a force for truth-telling, solidarity, and social change.

AHA! STORIES

ARTS FOR HUMANITY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

In October, IMPACT launched the AHA! Project, unpacking the stories and AHA! moments of IMPACT community. Through personal stories, members of the IMPACT community recount their journeys connecting arts and culture to conflict transformation, in diverse contexts around the world.

AHA!



AHA! STORIES



Dessa Quesada Palm | IMPACT Board Member
Philippines



Dessa and YATTA members
Philippines

"My name is Dessa Quesada Palm from Dumaguete, Philippines. I've been involved in theatre since I was 13. I now mentor with YATTA, teach at Silliman University's College of Performing and Visual Arts, and advocate for peace and social transformation."

DESSA'S FULL STORY

"I still remember my first protest in high school—against a law that would privatize education. When police violently broke up the rally, we scattered in fear, shaken by the brutality. Then someone began singing a beloved protest song, and slowly, we all joined in. That moment showed me the power of the arts to lift spirits, awaken stubborn hope, and affirm our shared humanity—even in the darkest times."

"This might date me, but in the '70s and '80s, I was deeply influenced by thinkers like Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed broke the boundary between artist and audience, showing how theatre could be a platform for dialogue and a rehearsal for change—an idea that gave me a powerful sense of creative agency."



Armine Avetisyan | IMPACT Program Manager
Armenia/USA



Art performance of Armenian artists in a train depot in Kars
(Eastern Turkey bordering Armenia)



"I'm Armine Avetisyan, IMPACT's programme manager, originally from Gyumri, Armenia, with roots in Kars, across the closed border in Turkey. My family's stories of genocide, denial, and displacement have deeply shaped my sense of identity and purpose."

ARMINE'S FULL STORY

"One project, Haven't We Shared Much Salt and Bread?, brought together women from both sides of the border in a shared kitchen. They navigated painful histories and deep divides with remarkable grace and kindness. Watching them work together was a powerful learning experience for me."

"John Paul Lederach's The Moral Imagination is a book I return to often. It shows how creativity is central to peacebuilding, rooted in risk-taking, embracing complexity, and recognizing our deep interdependence. It's a powerful reminder that lasting change begins with imagination and a shared sense of humanity."

AHA! STORIES



Bonface Beti | Artist-Peacebuilder
Kenya

"My name is Bonface Beti, and I'm a Kenyan artist-peacebuilder. I use theatre as a language for peacebuilding with grassroots communities in Nairobi, across Africa, and beyond. My work draws on participatory methods—especially improvisational theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, and indigenous African storytelling."

BONFACE'S FULL STORY



"I was recently invited to run a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop with about 15 young people, using games to explore conflict in their community. By the end of the week, they created and performed a scripted play in Sheng—a slang mix of Kiswahili and English often used as a language of resistance. The play surfaced themes like unemployment, gang violence, and poverty."



"I believe the best way to address the roots of conflict is by truly understanding identity. Issues like historical trauma involve fear, suspicion, and perception—deeply emotional experiences that can't be resolved through rational processes alone. While tools like mediation and dialogue are vital, the arts offer a humanistic approach that speaks to the emotional and relational dimensions of conflict, which are just as critical."



Seba Kourani | Theatre maker, Performer & Puppeteer
Syria/Lebanon

"My name is Seba Kourani, and I'm half-Syrian, half-Lebanese, currently living in Istanbul but born and raised in Beirut. I'm a theatre-maker, performer, and puppeteer who uses theatre as a tool for mediation and social transformation, especially with young people."

SEBA'S FULL STORY



"The first project I worked on taught me a lot the hard way. It explored the duality of sound—its presence and absence—while bringing together 12 young people from Shatila of diverse nationalities and backgrounds. On the first day, they split into small groups, and I was terrified. But by the end, they were mingling, connecting, and breaking barriers in ways I never imagined."



"When the invasion of Lebanon began, I was in Mardin, Turkey, directing at the Flying Carpet Festival. I felt homesick and worried for my family, but also deeply held by a new kind of family. In that moment, I experienced the magic of art—its power to create connection, love, and safety, even in times of crisis."

AHA! STORIES



Iman Aoun | Actor, Director, Playwright, Executive Director of Ashtar Theatre
Palestine



Gaza Monologues (2010)



Performing Gaza Monologues at the UN

"My name is Iman, and I've been a theatre-maker since 1984, mainly as an actress. In 1991, I co-founded ASHTAR Theatre and over time, I grew into directing and playwriting. Now as executive director, I help run our small, independent, nonprofit company—driven by passion, urgency, and a deep sense of responsibility to our society."

IMAN'S FULL STORY

"Since 1948, movement across Palestine has been restricted, making connection—and performance work—difficult. A planned program in the Jordan Valley had to be moved to Ramallah after years of blocked access. The daily oppression fuels deep frustration, often misread as violence. Through Theatre of the Oppressed, we focus on root causes, using theatre to express, confront, and begin to heal."

"We presented the *Gaza Monologues* at the UN General Assembly, and for a moment, it felt like we'd reached the top. But when war returned to Gaza just two years later—and again after that—I realized how naïve I'd been to believe politicians truly cared. They cried, clapped, and hugged us, but in the end, it was just another performance."



Emile Saba | Actor and Artistic Director of Ashtar Theatre
Palestine



Performance of Gaza Monologues in Gaza (2010)



Gaza Monologues (2023)

"I'm Emile Saba, artistic director at ASHTAR Theatre. I began as a student and returned after my master's to continue the work. In Ramallah, I've seen how theatre offers youth a safe space for expression. Through Theatre of the Oppressed, we engage diverse communities in addressing socio-political issues."

EMILE'S FULL STORY

"Ashtar offers a rare safe space where young people from across Palestine can express themselves freely, despite daily danger and instability. During our 30-day summer camp, we saw real transformation in our students. Theatre is our resistance—we exist because we make theatre, and we make theatre because we exist."

"The *Gaza Monologues* had a big impact on me—I performed in them and felt a deep sense of responsibility. I saw international audiences connect emotionally and begin to see us as human. Even now, in such difficult times, people still come to the theatre. That gives me life. As Palestinians, we love life and resist through many forms—one of them is simply gathering to watch a play during war."

**OUT
REACH**

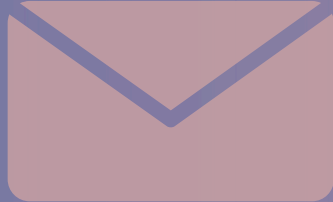
OUTREACH



In 2024, IMPACT strengthened its connection with a global community of artists, peacebuilders, and cultural practitioners. Through our newsletter reaching over 1,400 subscribers, we shared stories of creativity and resilience across borders. Our social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube expanded our audience with a combined over 15,000 impressions and interactions, while video content on YouTube drew 1.1K views and 42 hours of watch time, sparking meaningful engagement around arts-based peacebuilding.

Rather than focusing solely on volume, our strategy emphasized quality connections—nurturing a network of individuals and organizations committed to collaborative social change.

Newsletter



1.4K+
subscribers
50%
open rate

YouTube



1.1K
views
42+
hours

Facebook



2.600
page visits

Instagram



2.800
profile visits

LinkedIn



8.000
impressions



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JOIN THE IMPACT COMMUNITY

- Partner with Us: we are looking for like-minded individuals, networks and organizations to work collaboratively with in the space of arts, culture and conflict transformation
- Take part in our upcoming events: sign up to our newsletter to receive news about our in-depth event series on the key themes from IMPACT: Creating Hope Together
- Join the IMPACT community: sign up to our newsletter, follow us on social media: @impactartorg
- Find out more about our programs: read our report and check out the videos on our YouTube channel
- Donate to IMPACT, so that we can support our growing IMPACT community by advocating to policymakers, funders and leaders for arts, culture and conflict transformation
- Get in touch: info@impactart.org

