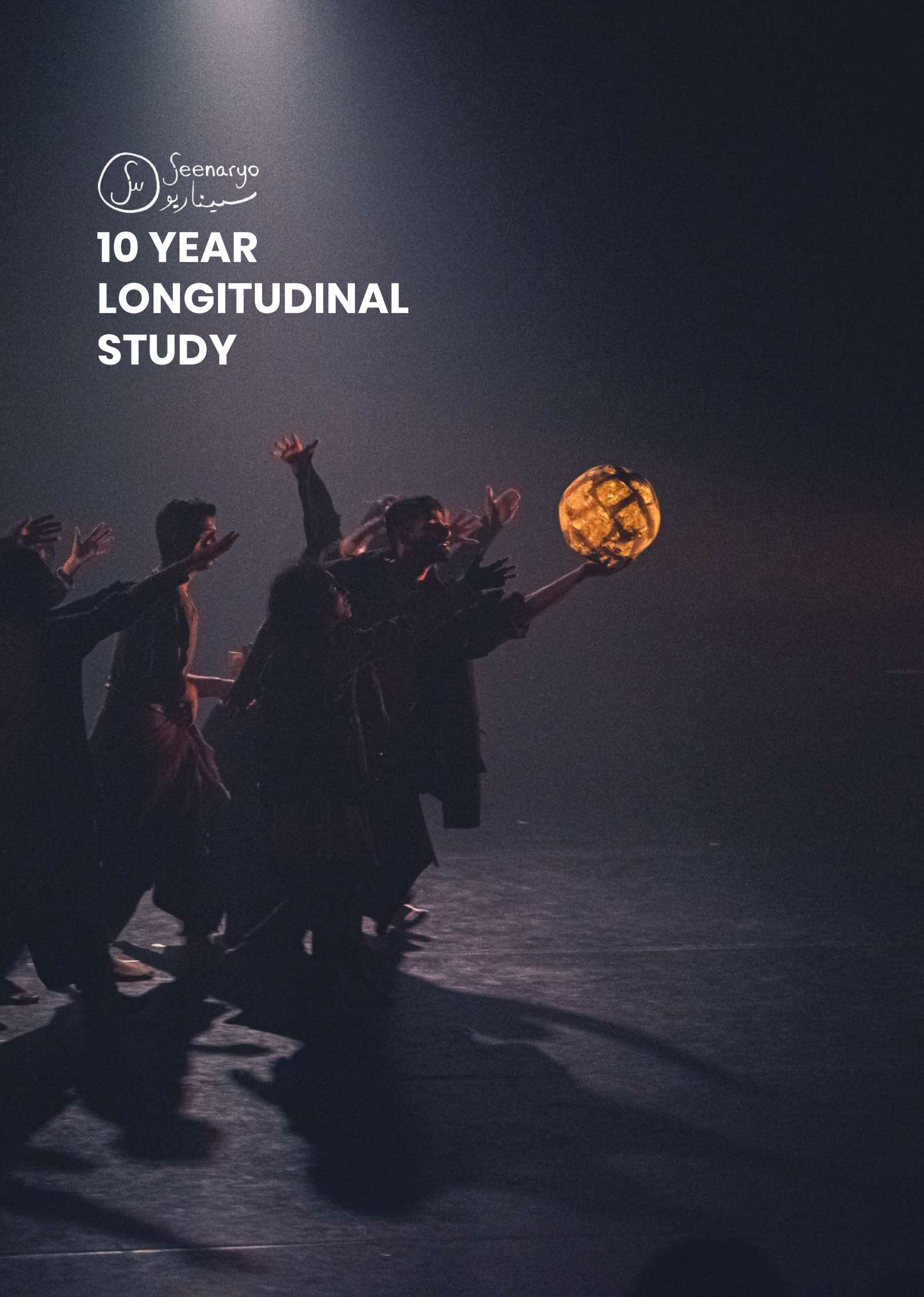
Seenaryo
سینا ریو

10 YEAR LONGITUDINAL STUDY



10 YEAR
LONGITUDINAL STUDY

An external study tracing the lasting impact
of theatre and play across a decade of
Seenaryo's work in the Arab region

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INTRODUCTION

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A note from the founders

Seenaryo began with Showbuilds in two small communities, creating all-singing, all-dancing theatre shows about exiled dinosaurs and lonely moons. After that, we didn't grow in response to the abstract priorities of donors. We grew because there was demand for our work – from teachers, parents and young people coming up to us after a show and asking: "Can we have more of this? What if you trained us to lead it?"

While the carnival of Seenaryo might turn people's heads initially, it's the care that they remember and comment on. 'Care' in both senses.

We care deeply, fussily, even annoyingly, about the quality of work: getting a note in tune, ensuring every step of a lesson is perfectly executed. But that is because we care fundamentally about the dignity of the communities we work with. They do not deserve any less than a full-scale physical theatre production created from their ideas, or a play-based lesson that delivers its learning objectives through – not in spite of – the joyful anarchy unfolding in the classroom.

Victoria Lupton & Oscar Wood
Co-founders



Foreword

A Syrian child born in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan in 2015 would be 11 years old today; they will never have known life outside a refugee camp. A child born in 2015 in Lebanon will already have lived through two wars. A child born in Syria in 2015 will have been displaced multiple times. A child born in Gaza in 2015, if still alive, will not have been to school – at least not in a school building – for three years.

The decade since Seenaryo was founded in 2015 has been one of the most brutal and tumultuous in the history of the Arab region. Children, women and those most vulnerable have borne the highest cost.

Seenaryo was founded to respond to a then humanitarian refugee crisis with creative tools and insistence on access to cultural rights. We believed in theatre then, as we do now, because of its unique ability to make space for expression and healing; to foster deep and meaningful connection; to build people's life skills and social capital; and, critically, to enable our communities to tell their stories, on their terms.

"There's a lot of chaos in my life, but in theatre, there's freedom and stability. I take this freedom and stability into my life."

Ahmad, Seenaryo participant since 2015

The ability for communities to control their own narrative is as critical to human development as meeting basic needs. Yet cultural rights and investment in the arts continue to be squeezed out of development priorities, making it ever more crucial to insist on the evidence. This longitudinal tracer study – the first to track Seenaryo's long-term impact across our core programmes – seeks to do just that.

We drew on 7,346 data points collected over the decade and engaged 222 participants across three countries, alongside 11 partner organisations and six donors. Together, this evidence helps us answer: what does sustained engagement with theatre and play really add up to?



The story is one of transformation, rippling out from the individual to the community. Participants across all ages gained skills for life: stress management, confidence, communication, leadership. Teachers shifted to a more inclusive, student-centred practice, and maintained this long after our input ended. Communities built lasting trust and friendship across nationalities, gender and background. And alumni became leaders themselves, stepping into facilitation and mentorship, carrying Seenaryo's approach forward well beyond any grant cycle.

The study also allowed us to confront challenges and reflect on a decade of learning. Barriers such as travel costs and family permissions, especially for women, will always be something we need to resource effectively. Meeting participants at the point of their needs, and listening to what those needs are, cannot be compromised. Partners and schools called for longer-term collaboration and institutional support, shifting from stand-alone programmes towards theatre and play becoming part of the fabric of what they do.

Whilst we have navigated political and economic instability, multiple wars and the persistent challenge of mainstreaming arts-based methods into public education systems – the next few years must focus on sustainability. Ultimately we need longer funding cycles, stronger institutional partnerships and systems built to outlast any single project. This learning directly informs our 2026-2028 strategic priorities: embedding for systemic change, investing in local leadership and strengthening our fundraising base.

Most importantly, the evidence shows that theatre and play have provided a practical source of resilience and optimism, while supporting women, youth and children to develop greater agency to shape their own lives. The findings make the case for theatre and play not as optional luxuries, but as essential tools in development and crisis response. A generation of leaders has emerged from these programmes – people who continue to shape their communities and will carry these skills forward.

Naqiya Ebrahim & Lara McIvor
Joint-CEOs





10 years in numbers

205,262

LIVES IMPACTED

285 THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

2,471 LEADERS TRAINED

6,072 TEACHERS TRAINED

2015

KEY

● = 500 PEOPLE

1
COUNTRY

393
LIVES IMPACTED

2020

2
COUNTRIES

29,536
LIVES IMPACTED

2025

4
COUNTRIES

205,262
LIVES IMPACTED

About Seenaryo

Working in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Syria, Seenaryo uses theatre and play to support mental health, shape futures, and drive social justice. What began in community spaces in 2015, has moved into classrooms, onto stages and toured to international festivals. Over ten years, Seenaryo has developed a unique and radically participatory approach to theatre and learning. This approach is rooted in the understanding that participatory theatre and play-based learning can transform an individual's sense of agency, where they gain the power to shape their own narrative and expand what is possible, on both an individual and a collective level.







Making theatre

Seenaryo co-creates collaborative, powerful and imaginative theatre in partnership with organisations deeply rooted in the communities they serve. The original plays put participants at the heart of the creative process, giving them a space to collectively share and explore their stories.

Training future leaders

Seenaryo trains youth and women to become creative leaders in their communities. They are currently doing this through the Theatre Leadership Training and Scenechangers programmes. Their training aims to create wider and alternative employment pathways, equipping young people with vital professional skills.

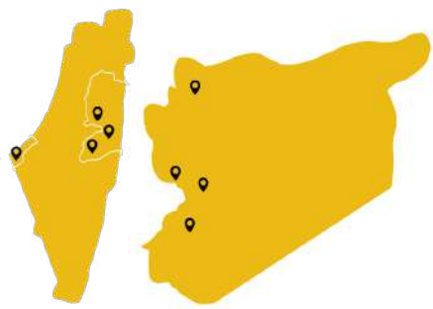
Bringing play to classrooms

Seenaryo trains teachers to use the tools of theatre and play to help children engage with learning in under-resourced settings. Seenaryo has developed a range of high level resources, including the Seenaryo Playkit, I Learn From Home, and Stories with Sally & Samer – all of which bring learning to life through music, story and play.

The context of the work







Lebanon
Over the past decade, Lebanon has faced overlapping crises. The World Bank described the post-2019 economic collapse as one of the worst globally since the 1850s, with the currency losing over 90% of its value. The latest available household data shows poverty more than tripled over a decade, from 12% in 2012 to 44% in 2022. Lebanon hosts one of the highest numbers of refugees per capita worldwide, with around one in four people a refugee – primarily Syrians displaced since 2011, alongside a long-standing Palestinian population. Deepening sectarian divisions, restrictive policies affecting refugees, political dysfunction, the 2020 Beirut port explosion and Israel's 2024 and 2026 wars have all strained services and driven instability and displacement.

Jordan
Jordan has maintained relative political stability but faces significant socio-economic pressure. It hosts one of the highest numbers of refugees per capita, with Syrian refugees making up 6% of the population. Supporting a large displaced population alongside existing needs has placed additional pressure on already stretched public services and the labour market. Youth unemployment remains high at 42% (2025), while female workforce participation is among the lowest globally at 14%, with ongoing barriers to women's public engagement. Severe water scarcity and limited resources constrain service expansion, despite strong cooperation with international donors.

Palestine & Syria
Evaluation data is only beginning to emerge from Seenaryo's more recent work in Palestine and Syria, therefore this study focuses primarily on long-term impact in Lebanon and Jordan. However, Seenaryo's work is intertwined with the wider regional context. In Palestine, Seenaryo works in the West Bank and Gaza with communities living through ongoing war, occupation and siege. In Syria, it engages with individuals and organisations rebuilding after years of war and dictatorship. The experiences of Palestinian and Syrian refugees – as well as those from Sudan, Somalia, Iraq and beyond – continue to shape Seenaryo's work and community across the region.

A 10 year history













2015 | The first Showbuilds
In response to the mass displacement of Syrian refugees to Lebanon, Seenaryo began with two theatre projects: one with Syrian children in the Bekaa Valley and one with historically displaced Palestinian children in Shatila refugee camp. These were all-singing, all-dancing Showbuilds – plays created and performed in the space of just one week by the participants themselves.

2016 | Establishing Cycles
Following the success of the first projects, Seenaryo's grassroots partners requested longer-term engagements in their communities. In response, Seenaryo launched their first Cycles: weekly children's theatre workshops and performances embedding their participatory approach within communities.

2017 | The Playkit is born
As their reputation grew, Seenaryo were invited into schools to adapt their participatory theatre techniques for the classroom. This led them to create the Seenaryo Playkit, a training and resource that equips early years teachers to bring their curriculum to life through play. Meanwhile, they launched Aswat Seenaryo, a network of community choirs, and expanded beyond refugee children to work with women and children in care.

2018 | First projects in Jordan
Building on their foundation in Lebanon, Seenaryo expanded into Jordan, launching their first theatre Cycle with children in Amman's Citadel community. This year also saw the birth of Studios, Seenaryo's strand of professionally-directed theatre productions reaching broader audiences. *The Metamorphosis After Franz Kafka* showcased this new model for high-quality participatory theatre.

2019 | Connecting across borders
Seenaryo's work took on a cross-continental dimension with *What's Far Is Near*, a women's theatre production linking refugee communities in Lebanon and the UK via Zoom. The project culminated in performances at Beirut's Aresco Palace and London's Southbank Centre.

2020 | Crisis response
In an unprecedented year, Seenaryo responded to both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Beirut port explosion. They launched I Learn From Home, supporting 9,500 parents and caregivers to continue their children's education during lockdown, and launched the Playkit mobile phone app. They created a cross-country music video, *Little Bird*, which reached more than 123,000 viewers. In the aftermath of the port explosion, they delivered 13 theatre projects with affected communities, providing spaces for healing and connection.











2021 | New formats
Seenaryo's first production in Jordan was adapted into a children's storybook, *The Queendom of Colours*. The Seenaryo Playkit was featured at Expo Dubai, selected as one of 38 global organisations working towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. They produced their first short film, *House of Hope*, with the Sudanese community in Jordan and for the first time, worked inside Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp.

2022 | Touring internationally
The Playkit reached Lebanon's public schools, embedding play-based learning in state classrooms. Seenaryo ran their first theatre project in Palestine. Their Studio production *I See My Ghost Coming From Afar* toured to Germany, offering a rare opportunity for Palestinian participants in Lebanon to travel for the first time. They also launched Satellites, supporting Seenaryo trainees to facilitate plays within their communities.

2023 | From stage to screen
Seenaryo launched Scenechangers, an ambitious employment pathways programme training 100 young people across Lebanon and Jordan to lead participatory theatre workshops in schools, shelters and community centres. They also released *TILKA*, their award-winning documentary showcasing the courage of a group of women as they create a play amid crisis.

2024 | Emergency response
Amid the atrocities unfolding across the region, Seenaryo continued to reach those most affected. The Playkit reached teachers in the West Bank for the first time. In Lebanon, as war displaced 1.2 million people, Seenaryo launched an emergency response, delivering 83 theatre and play projects for over 1,500 people in displacement centres, supporting both mental health and continued learning. They also began their first project in Syria, supporting teachers delivering remedial education to teenagers in four cities affected by the crisis.

2025 | Expanding across the region
With 97% of school buildings in Gaza damaged or destroyed, Seenaryo delivered their first training programme for teachers in Gaza's temporary learning spaces. They launched *Ibn Battuta Travels*, an ambitious six-part theatre epic co-created by hundreds of community members. It began with a production in London, as part of Shubbak Festival, and continued across Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Syria. They continued to build deeper partnerships with the Ministries of Education in Lebanon and Jordan to embed their training models and participatory approaches into national curricula.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Research overview

Research framing

Key findings



Research overview

Seenaryo commissioned this study to understand, assess and evidence the long-term impact of Seenaryo's programmes over the last decade. They wanted to know: what happens to people after the project ends? The participating sample intentionally focused on people who have had sustained engagement with Seenaryo over multiple years or activities.

Evaluator & methodology

This study was designed and led by Pamela Maaz, a MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) specialist with an MSc in Computer Science specialising in Big Data Analytics. She has nine years of expertise in designing and leading MEAL systems and mixed-methods evaluations across humanitarian, rule of law, cultural heritage and education projects across the Middle East, Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan and Europe. Her work spans results-based M&E frameworks, longitudinal tracer studies, impact assessments and evaluations as well as research design, and data visualisation.

Pamela used a mix of random and targeted participant selection, prioritising depth and quality of evidence over scale. She designed the study's surveys and discussion tools, brought together quantitative data and participants' experiences, and analysed the findings against Seenaryo's Theory of Change. She then drew this evidence together into the final report.

Evidence sources

The evidence draws on two complementary sources:

1. **Longitudinal tracer study data:**
   A dedicated tracer study combining surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs) with 222 previous and current participants across three countries, as well as 11 partner organisations and six donor representatives. The study was designed to assess Seenaryo's impact over time.

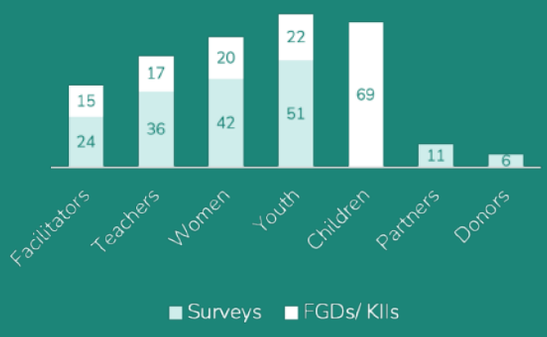
2. **Historical programme data:**
   7,346 data points from Seenaryo's own evaluation records collected over the decade. Survey and focus group data was analysed using thematic coding, then set against long-term trends from Seenaryo's project evaluations.

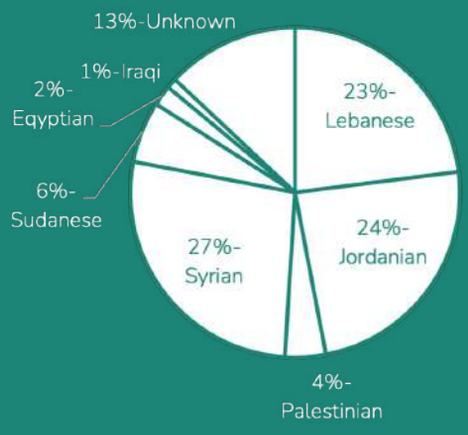
A note on limitations

For the longitudinal study, the sample size was smaller than planned due to a strategic focus on repeat participants which explored the impact of sustained rather than short-term engagement.

With regards to historical programme data, Seenaryo only conducted monitoring data collection with a small number of participants in its early programme years (2015-2017). This data was triangulated with qualitative narratives and with more comprehensive monitoring data from later years.

Composition of participants in the longitudinal tracer study



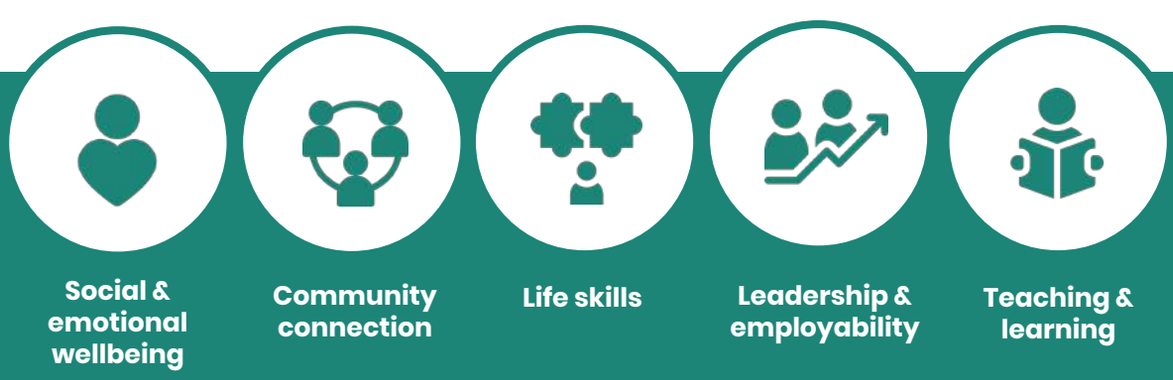


Research framing

Seenaryo's Theory of Change starts by acknowledging that people, both individuals and communities, from under-served backgrounds in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Syria, lack proper access to opportunities to be heard and to thrive. This drives Seenaryo's activities and the vision for systemic transformation – a mission to enable individuals to become change-makers who build more equitable, vibrant, and sustainable communities.

PROBLEM	ACTIVITIES	IMPACT
Mental health crisis, social tensions and limited access to arts	**Making theatre** Children, youth & women create and perform original theatre	**Wellbeing, life skills & community connection** • More people have access to creative outlets from childhood to adulthood, building confidence and agency through self-expression • Children, youth & women develop the life skills they need to reach their potential • Communities from different backgrounds increase positive, meaningful interactions and mutual understanding
Lack of creative jobs & decent work	**Training future leaders** Training & mentoring youth & women as theatre facilitators & leaders	**Increased employability and leadership development** • Youth & women are equipped with transferable life skills including leadership & critical thinking • Youth and women enhance their professional potential and access a wider range of employment opportunities • Youth & women actively participate in and shape their communities
Overstretched schools & under-trained teachers	**Bringing play to classrooms** Supporting teachers through developing play-based resources, training and peer-networks	**Inspired and fulfilled teachers; engaged children** • Teachers create opportunities for all children to participate more actively in class, through theatre and play-based methods • Children learn in an environment that is inclusive, child-centred and promotes their wellbeing • Children develop the life skills they need to reach their potential
Limited support of theatre and play, narrow global narratives about the region, lack of access for communities to influence change	**Advocating with and for the region** Using public engagement to influence funders and decision-makers, shift global narratives, and platform community voices	**Shifted perspectives, locally and globally** • Increased recognition and investment in theatre and play from international donors and local ministries • More nuanced, human-centred global narratives about the region • Communities have greater visibility, voice and influence in shaping discourse and driving change

Thematic pillars



This research was designed not just to validate impact in line with Theory of Change outcomes but also sought to capture unintended outcomes – patterns of change that go beyond Seenaryo's stated Theory of Change. As such, findings were organised across five thematic pillars.



Key findings

This study investigates how people were changed by Seenaryo's work beyond the numbers reached. Ten years of evidence across Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria points to a clear conclusion: Seenaryo's theatre and play-based education model delivers consistent, meaningful change at the individual, classroom, and community level.

Life skills

Participants across all ages reported significant gains in **confidence, stress management, communication, and leadership** skills – sustained well beyond the end of individual projects.

Beyond the project

Alumni stepped into **facilitation and mentorship roles**, and partners continued applying Seenaryo's approach **beyond grant cycles**, demonstrating that impact outlasts the project.

Transformed classrooms

Teachers shifted towards **more inclusive, child-centred** practice; children's **engagement and relationships** visibly improved; and teachers continued to use and share approaches independently after training ended.

Resilience in crisis

In the challenging contexts of Lebanon and Jordan, marked by financial crisis, refugee displacement, and regional conflict, Seenaryo's methods acted as a **practical source of resilience and optimism** for vulnerable communities.

Community connection

Mixed groups that rarely interact elsewhere built **lasting trust and friendship** through collaborative performance – **across nationalities, genders, and social backgrounds** – pointing to theatre as a powerful tool for social cohesion.

Voice & agency

Women, youth, and children reported **greater agency to shape their own lives**, particularly in settings where such possibilities are typically constrained.

Throughout this study, you will see citations from the creative arts and wellbeing field, as well as ideas from applied theatre practitioners (⚑). This places Seenaryo's findings within a wider body of evidence showing how theatre and play can create meaningful change. Our findings add a decade of practical, local experience to this evidence, showing how long-term investment in participatory and play-based approaches can strengthen belonging, agency and collective wellbeing.

⚑ *"Creative activity has been observed to stimulate an understanding of the process of making, giving rise to a greater sense of responsibility and self reflection, increased confidence and self-esteem, and better mental health."*

Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing (Report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health & Wellbeing, 2017)

THEMATIC FINDINGS

Social & emotional wellbeing

Community connection

Life skills

Leadership & employability

Teaching & learning



THEATRE & PLAY FOR

Social & emotional wellbeing

⚑ *"Among the benefits of using the arts in working with young people is that there are increased levels of motivation, sense of self-efficacy and achievement, an enhanced ability to cope with diversity, uncertainty and change, as well as the enhancement of social skills and emotional development"*

Research from Dundee University (Vettraino et al., 2017)

What is wellbeing?

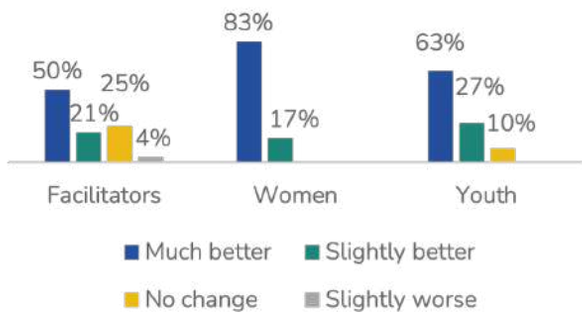
For Seenaryo, being 'well' means feeling satisfied with life, emotionally resilient, able to express yourself, and connected to others. Drawing on the WHO-5 Well-Being [sic] Index and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) Seenaryo measures wellbeing across emotional and social dimensions, including: **confidence, self-expression, stress management, self-regulation, and a sense of safety and belonging**. The findings show how theatre and play help people feel more positive, connected, and empowered in their daily lives.

"My self-confidence increased, and I gained the ability to share community issues and challenges through theatre. The barrier of shyness or fear of society's judgements was broken."

Syrian woman participant, Lebanon

Perceptions of wellness

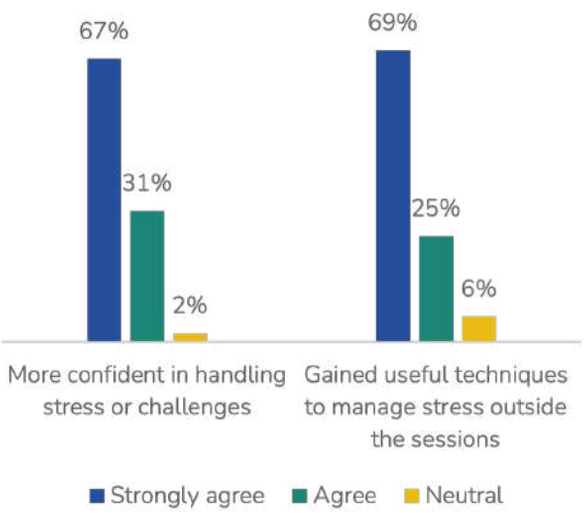
Source: Historical programme data (2015-2025)





Confidence in handling stress

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)



Safety & belonging

Participants described Seenaryo as a genuinely safe space. For women, Seenaryo offered a space to speak, move, and express themselves without judgement - a stark contrast to their wider social environment. Children described sessions as places of trust and belonging. They built friendships that lasted beyond the workshops, and brought the games home to siblings and neighbours. For recently displaced children, this mattered deeply. It reduced isolation and helped them to feel more hopeful about the future.

These findings show that wellbeing at Seenaryo goes beyond emotional resilience to include a sense of community, trust, and belonging. Feeling safe and valued within these creative spaces became the foundation for wider change. The words below indicate responses from focus group discussions when participants were asked what they got out of Seenaryo projects. The size of the word is proportional to how prevalent that response was - confidence, joy and resilience stand out as the most frequent responses.

Thematic codes from focus group discussions |
Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)



"I felt like Seenaryo was like my second home, like a family."

Child participant, Jordan



Wellbeing has been a key outcome for Samer who grew up in Beirut's Islamic Orphanage, Dar Al Aytam. Not knowing his heritage, parentage and exploring his sexuality against the backdrop of a conservative society, shaped his early life. Theatre gave him a sense of freedom to be himself.

Samer's Story ▷

"Our grandfathers carried burdens they never had space to process…this kind of work [theatre] helps us confront those traumas together. It gives us tools to feel, to heal, and to grow – collectively."

Samer spent his first rehearsal with Seenaryo embodying a cockroach: how it moves, how it thinks, how it feels. He was part of an ensemble that came together to co-create *The Metamorphosis After Franz Kafka* in 2018. He remembers "chaos, joy and playfulness." The play asked participants to share their own stories and Samer found the experience to be transformative. "When the spotlight hit me, I felt completely exposed – almost naked – yet fully present." He adds, "There was a profound sense of freedom: the freedom to be myself, without concealing my background or sexual orientation."

Since that project, he has gone on to become a facilitator and has led theatre in Tripoli, Beirut and the Bekaa. His role took on deeper urgency during the Israeli war in 2024, when he facilitated theatre projects with displaced communities. "It was a real challenge to get people to enter a space where they could forget the negativity…We created a sense of togetherness that helped us get through that difficult period."

Samer sees a generational difference in how people deal with trauma in Lebanon and he believes that theatre and movement is helping the next generation to process experiences in a different way.





Samer on stage in Beirut in *I See My Ghost Coming From Afar*



Samer in rehearsals in Tripoli, North Lebanon



Samer in rehearsals for *The Metamorphosis After Franz Kafka*



Samer facilitating a workshop with a group of youth

THEATRE & PLAY FOR

Community connection

Theatre's unique capacity for peacebuilding lies in its embodied, non-cognitive approach to building trust. Theatre scholars Murray and Keefe, in their work on physical theatre, argue that humans are fundamentally "hard-wired for empathy," noting that "we recognise and identify with others because of common ground in reciprocity and mutuality of behaviour, feelings and ideas" (2007). They suggest that physical theatre, which plays a fundamental role in Seenaryo's approach to theatre with communities, is particularly positioned to activate this innate capacity by engaging participants visually, physically, and affectively – creating connections that bypass purely cognitive processing.

Peacebuilding, communities and theatre

Seenaryo's programmes actively seek to bring people together, across social, religious and political divides, and across the division of 'refugee' and 'non-refugee' in host communities. Through theatre, Seenaryo has strengthened relationships between people who might otherwise have never met, built trust among communities divided by mistrust and polarisation, and nurtured collaboration and empathy in the face of isolation. For Seenaryo, peacebuilding is about creating spaces where differences can exist with acceptance and collaboration. And peacebuilders are people able to take those skills into their communities, to foster understanding and challenge division.

Women as community connectors

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)

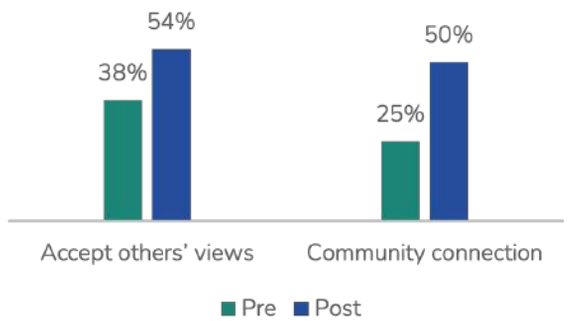
What stood out from the study findings was how Seenaryo's programme strengthened women's roles as community leaders and peacebuilders.

95% of women reported feeling **more connected** to their communities through Seenaryo.

97% of women reported that Seenaryo supported them to **build strong relationships** with women from **different backgrounds**.

Changes in levels of acceptance and community connection

Source: Historical programme data (2015-2025)

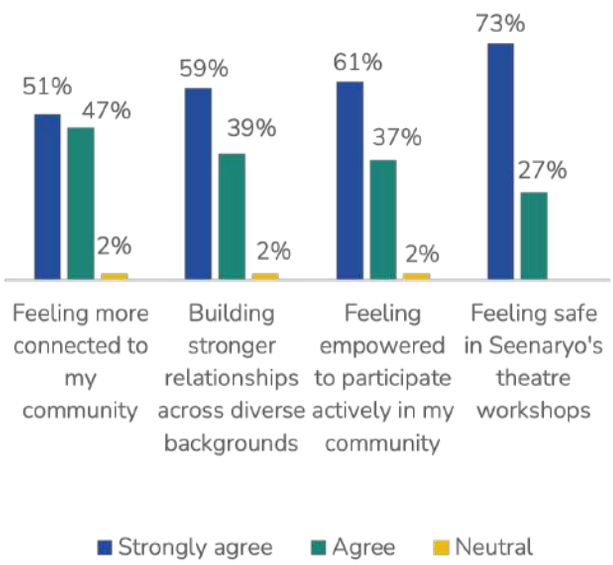




Youth as community connectors

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)

Youth described forming deep and lifelong friendships that were often 'like family,' building networks across various geographical areas, sects, and backgrounds. Projects created new cross-community connections, where many said they felt that there were common values and comfort in their differences. For some, Seenaryo provided a first meaningful experience of cross-cultural collaboration, while for others, it enriched and extended previous ties, transforming them into lasting friendships.



"One of the unexpected positive effects was my ability to understand different perspectives and build relationships with people from backgrounds I never expected to connect with. I also noticed a change in the way I think. I started listening and engaging more, not just responding."

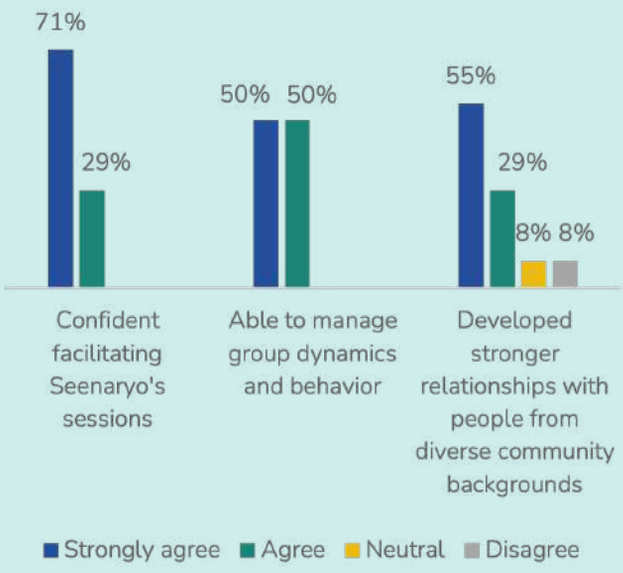
Palestinian youth participant, Jordan

Facilitators as community connectors

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)

Facilitators play a critical role in ensuring genuine connections can be formed in the space they hold. Facilitators reported that sessions were designed so all participants felt respected and supported. Participation was adapted to the needs of each group, accommodating personal cultures. Adjustments, such as modifying exercises for children with physical limitations also created a stronger sense of inclusion and community. Storytelling, movement, and group work were used to make inclusion feel natural, so that different perspectives could be included and represented. The results below confirm that facilitators were not only able to create safe and inclusive environments but also experienced personal growth and deeper cross-community bonds themselves.





Seenaryo's work creates space for meaningful connection between individuals from different walks of life. Often the connections made in the rehearsal room deepen into genuine friendships. These friendships ripple out and create social networks across friendship groups and families. This has been particularly true for Saif.

Saif's Story ▷

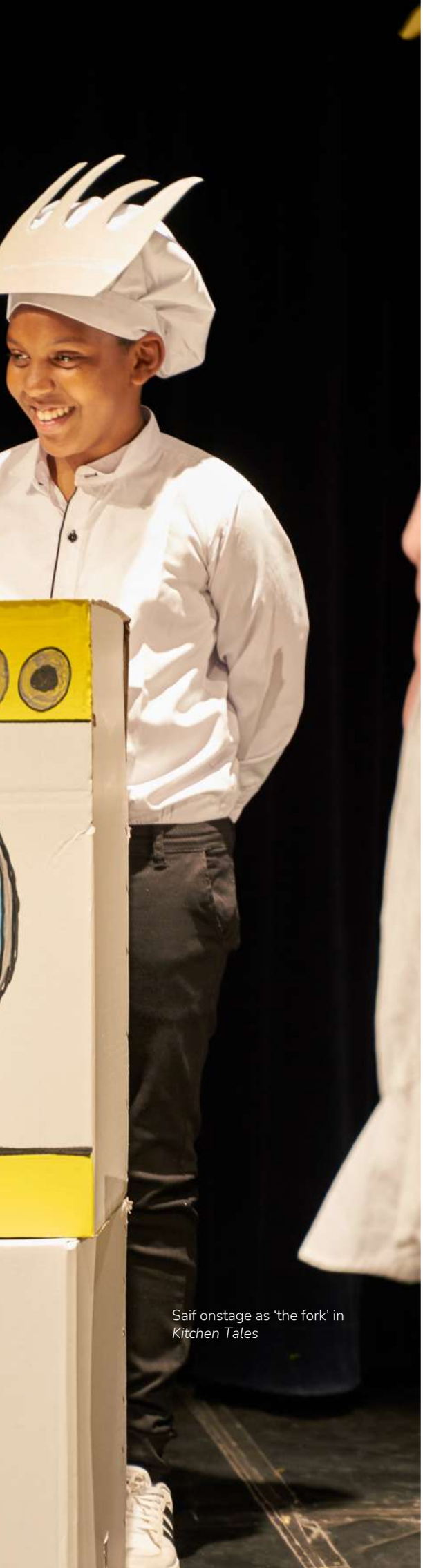
"Art is a way to bring us together as a community. Sometimes the plays and their topics can solve problems we are facing."

Saif is one of several thousand Sudanese refugees living in Amman. As a minority refugee group in Jordan, their community faces huge barriers accessing work and education. Through the first play Saif did with Seenaryo, as 'the fork' in *Kitchen Tales*, and others that have followed, Saif describes a growing sense of family within the Seenaryo community. He has made friends with people who he would never have come across otherwise. He mentions Faisal, a Syrian boy who he met on the set of *Cats* in 2024, who has become a close friend.

Saif's presence in Seenaryo projects has now opened doors for other members of the Sudanese community to join in. Louay, Senaryo's Head of Arts in Jordan explains, "Saif talks about what he does with Seenaryo and is visible in the community. This has removed barriers for others, so many Sudanese children now sign up for projects - they trust Saif and now they trust us."

Saif's mother, Thanaa, who lives alone with Saif in Amman, was inspired by her son to take part in a Seenaryo women's theatre project. For Thanaa, this opened up new connections with women from different nationalities she wouldn't otherwise have met, building her social network outside of the Sudanese community.





Saif onstage as 'the fork' in *Kitchen Tales*



Saif in rehearsals for *Cats*



Saif taking Seenaryo's Theatre Leadership Training



Saif on stage in *Laundry Off the Line*

THEATRE & PLAY FOR

Life skills

Aligned with the World Health Organisation's 1999 definition, Seenaryo defines life skills as a group of social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathise with others, and manage their lives in a healthy, productive manner. Seenaryo participants build these skills through theatre and play. Creating and performing develops the skills as a by product of the process, rather than teaching them as an add-on lesson.

Seenaryo's programmes strengthened a wide set of transferrable life skills that participants continue to apply across personal, community and professional pathways. Participants reported:

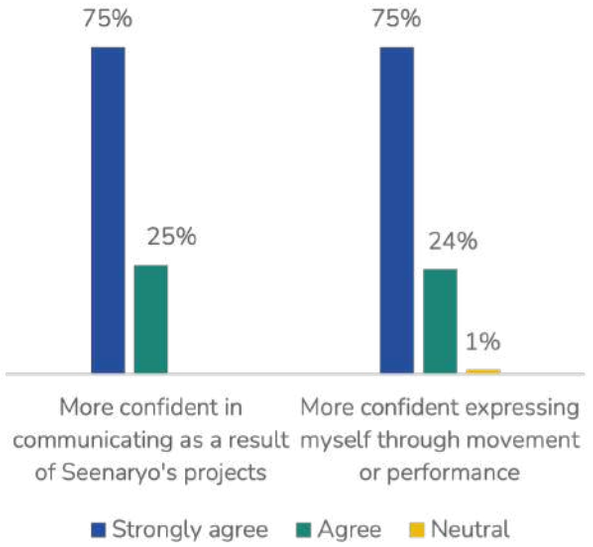
- Stronger teamwork and communication skills, describing more interactions and collaboration across groups.
- Sharpened critical thinking, self-expression, and empathy.
- Using new skills to navigate challenges more constructively in their families, workplaces and wider communities.

"My confidence grew, and I became able to express my opinion boldly. I learned how to deal with people with confidence and awareness, and made my voice heard in society."

Syrian youth participant, Jordan

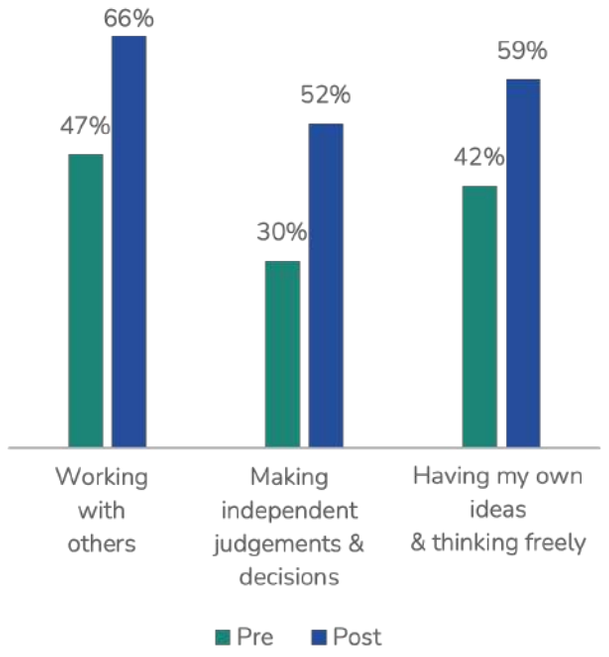
Confidence levels in communication and expression

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)



Improvements in life skills over time

Source: Historical programme data (2015-2025)



How do life skills lead to change?
Women described gaining practical problem-solving tools they now use in everyday life. They spoke about applying facilitation and communication skills at home and in their communities, advocating for other women to participate and claiming space to express themselves freely. Many shared how they now use theatre techniques to open up dialogue within their families, nurture their children's creativity, and strengthen connections across generations. What began on stage is now shaping homes: building empathy, unity and confidence far beyond the workshop walls.

"I broke the barrier that says women's roles are stereotypical and I proved that women can assert themselves anywhere and anytime."
Syrian woman participant, Lebanon

For many youth participants the skills gained through Seenaryo projects were the start of a new beginning: life skills translated directly into professional skills. Through Seenaryo projects they learnt to plan and coordinate, manage timelines, network with partner agencies, and launch community initiatives. Many youth reported that they took on facilitation and training roles, some leading sessions within the organisation as Seenaryo's trainers, while others went on to design and direct their own independent projects.

⚑ Borisenko's (2016) research across theatre-based peacebuilding projects found consistent increases in confidence, self-esteem and positive identity among participants, contributing to greater resilience and stronger relationships.



THEATRE & PLAY FOR

Leadership & employability

The World Economic Forum notes that emotional intelligence, creativity, and people management are now the most critical workplace skills, and 'theatre is one medium that has all these as built-in mechanisms' through its requirement for repeated practice and extensive feedback (Mittal, 2018).

From participation to facilitation

One of the clearest demonstrations of Seenaryo's long-term impact is the progression of participants into facilitator and trainer roles. Alumni described their leadership development with Seenaryo as fundamental: taking on more responsibility, learning new tools to help them better manage groups from different backgrounds, and learning to listen, adapt, and value new ideas. Many facilitators expressed that peer exchange and networking were an important part of their growth, helping them refine group management, strengthen adaptability, and balance empathy with clear boundaries. They characterised Seenaryo's development pathway as hands-on and supportive, equipping them with technical tools and interpersonal skills that continue to positively influence their work and personal lives.

"I became a facilitator, feeling responsible, more confident and prepared for what comes next."

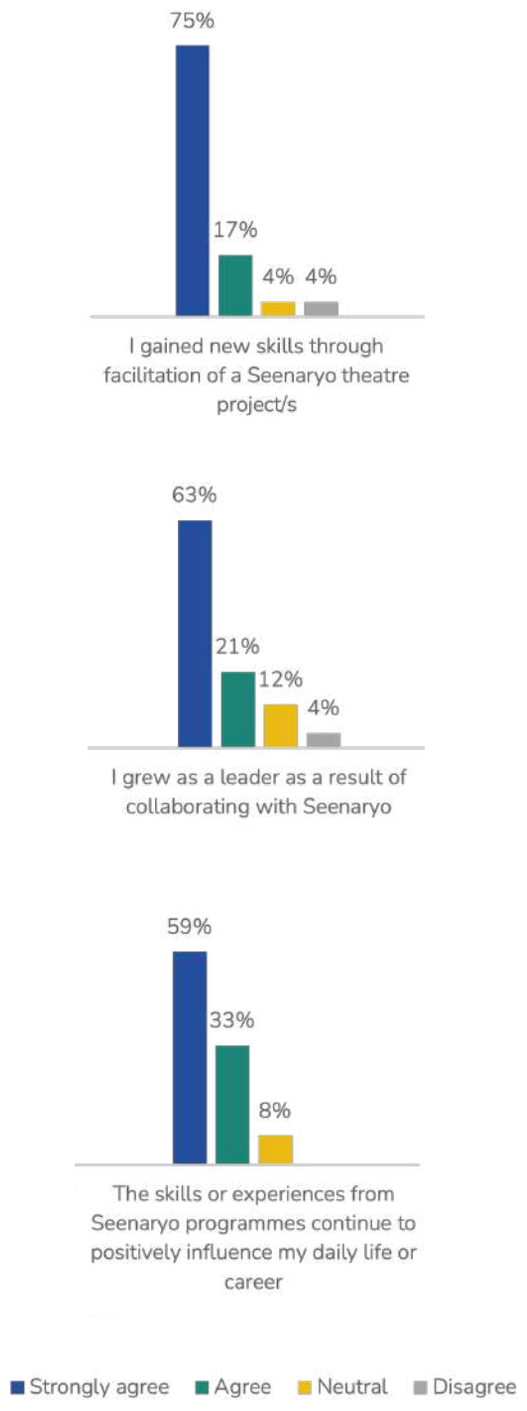
Syrian youth participant, Lebanon

Facilitator experience of skills gained

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)

84% of facilitators **grew as leaders** as result of collaborating with Seenaryo.

92% gained skills that remain relevant across their **careers**.



From facilitation to leadership & employment pathways

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)

A significant proportion of alumni progressed into Seenaryo's own leadership pipeline, with **43% of youth and 36% of women becoming trained facilitators** between 2019 and 2025, each going on to lead between one and 15 projects.

Alumni reported the first time they felt professionally legitimate was when they facilitated a small group, delivered an activity on time, and received audience and partner feedback, which they attributed to opportunities provided through Seenaryo's programming. That **credibility unlocked referrals and created paid roles such as, facilitator, assistant director, and festival coordinator**. For women, a stipend or short contract also shifted dynamics at home, where several reported **greater say in household decisions and increased their ability to contribute ideas in local community centres**. For youth, mentoring and training new peers proved a pivotal step from performing to leading.



"The reassuring idea of having a job in Seenaryo taught me many things, such as independence, the importance of time, expanding my circle and building connections, behaviour management, and the ability to manage any session I attend."

Lebanese youth participant, Lebanon

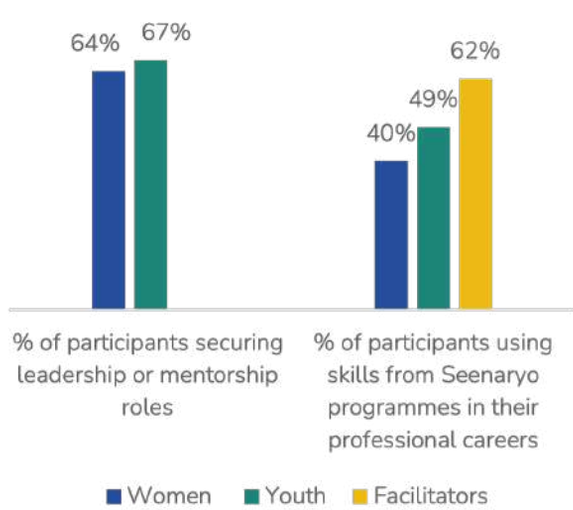
From leadership to financial independence

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)

Crucially, leadership progression has translated into **tangible economic impact**: **35% of youth and 36% of women reported increased financial independence directly linked to their involvement in Seenaryo**, with many women identifying this as their first ever paid employment, often through facilitator roles. 37% youth alumni reported finding new economic opportunities as a result of having completed the programme and applying their gained creative and soft skills across these professional settings. And, 26% of women alumni reported securing new job opportunities post-programme.

"I discovered new skills within myself that help me grow in my work and opened new doors for me."

Jordanian facilitator, Jordan



Now in his early twenties, Ahmad is just one example of an individual whose journey has come full circle with Seenaryo, from participant, to trainee, to facilitator. While his journey is special to Seenaryo because he took part in our first project in 2015, it is not unique. More than 43% of youth have gone on to become facilitators with Seenaryo.

Ahmad's Story ▷

A decade ago, thirteen-year-old Ahmad was among 30 children who created the first ever Seenaryo Showbuild – *Be Careful What You Wish For* – in Shatila refugee camp, writing and performing the character of the phone seller. Over the course of one week, the ensemble created the story, wrote the songs, painted the set and shared their original play with family and friends. Since 2015, Ahmad has participated in three more Showbuilds and three flagship Studio productions, performing on stages across Lebanon and touring the play *I see my ghost coming from afar* to Germany twice.

Growing up as a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, Ahmad had never been able to travel before as Lebanese law denies Palestinians the right to citizenship. Reflecting on the tour to Germany, Ahmad said, "I learnt from the process how to be free and feel this freedom on stage." Adding, "It's beautiful to express using movement rather than always having to rely on words."

After various years as a participant, Ahmad took training with Seenaryo to become a theatre facilitator. He describes it as a "give and take" – he is now able to give back to the children in his community what he has learnt himself over the past decade. Ahmad is now regularly employed as a freelance children's theatre facilitator with Seenaryo.





Ahmad onstage in *I See My Ghost Coming From Afar*



Ahmad onstage in *All About the Banana*



Ahmad onstage as the phone seller in *Be Careful What You Wish For*



Ahmad onstage in *Does It Matter? It Matters*

THEATRE & PLAY FOR

Teaching & learning

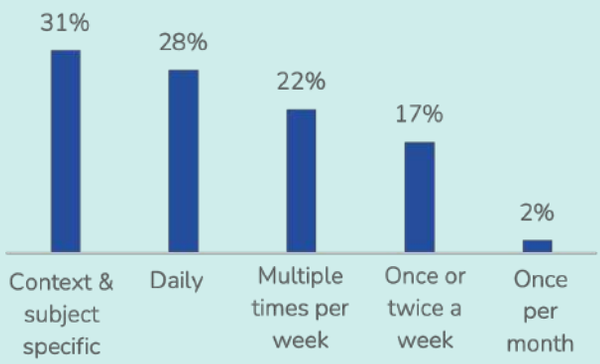
Research shows that children learn best when learning is “active, engaging, meaningful, socially interactive, iterative and joyful” (Zosh et al., 2018).

Behaviour change in teachers

Over the last decade, the Seenaryo Playkit app and training has shifted teachers’ methods and attitudes. Teachers reported how they were able to bring interactive, joyful and creative learning into their classrooms and transform routine learning. Teachers using Playkit methods in their daily practice – which involves the use of games, songs and interactive storytelling – became more lively, inclusive and student-centred. They also reported that they now plan differently for their lessons as a result of Seenaryo’s support.

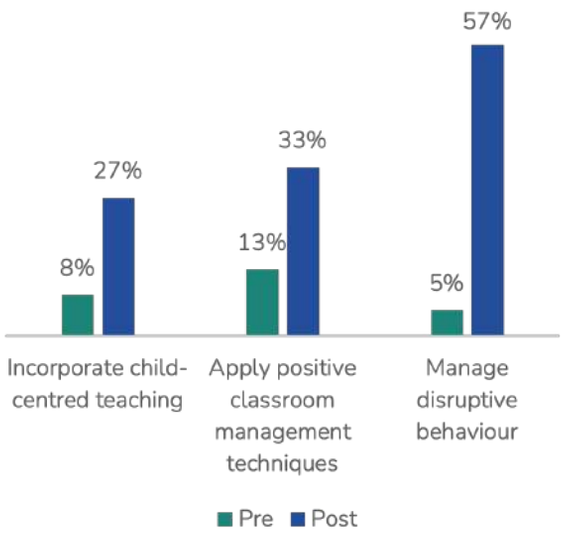
Teachers reported application of Playkit activities in the classroom

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)



Teacher reported change in practice

Source: Historical programme data (2015-2025)



Student engagement & learning outcomes

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)

Teachers reported that play-based methods supported improvements in students’ confidence, interaction, expression, and learning.

97% reported a greater level of **confidence and expression** among students.

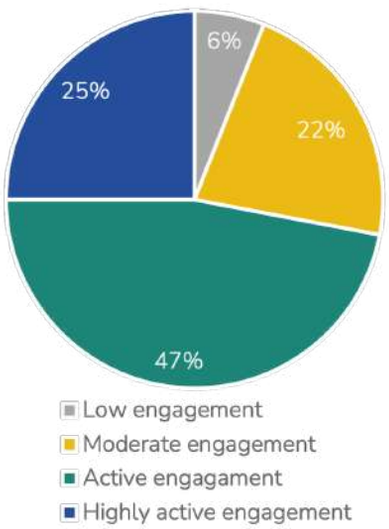
89% reported increased **peer interaction and inclusion**.

Classroom engagement increased noticeably after teachers began using Seenaryo’s play-based methods. Teachers reported higher levels of motivation and active involvement, with children often asking to repeat interactive activities.



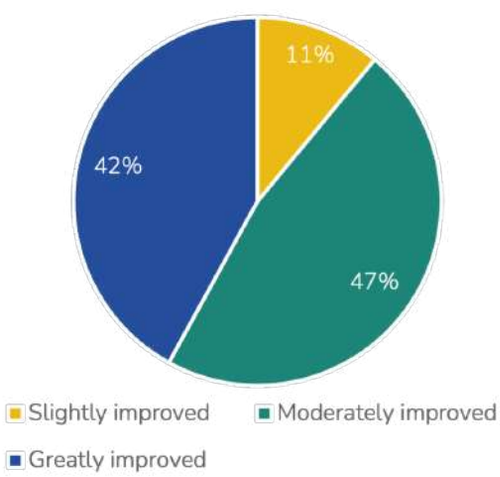
Levels of student engagement in the classroom

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)



Teacher reported improvement in academic levels in the classroom

Source: Longitudinal tracer study (2025)



"In mathematics, my students improved a lot because it is an abstract subject, and it became the most interactive and tangible subject for them."

Jordanian teacher, Jordan

Fostering inclusion and equity through play

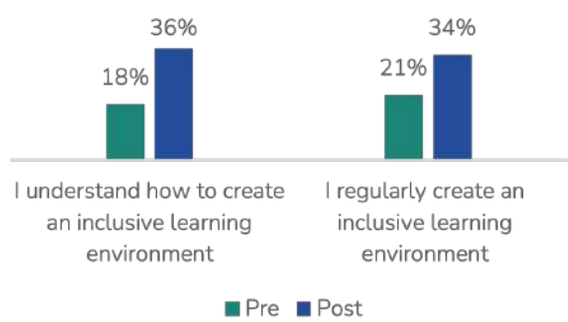
Teachers highlighted that they found play-based approaches to be powerful tools for fostering inclusion among children, regardless of their ability, background or gender.

Teachers reported that:

- Children made **new friendships** and created **deeper connections with teachers**
- Quiet or **disruptive children became more engaged** through non-graded interactive activities
- Students with **speech or language difficulties grew more confident** in speaking out
- Pretend play strategies **promoted peer support and collaboration, reduced bullying** and encouraged children to support one another, no matter their differences
- Children with **diverse needs were able to participate fully** in class because Seenaryo's activities catered for diversity

Teacher reported inclusive learning environments

Source: Historical programme data (2015-2025)





CONCLUSION

Sustainability beyond the project

The next 10 years & beyond

Sustainability beyond the project

For Seenaryo, sustainability means lasting change, both for people and for systems. They asked two simple questions: Is there meaningful impact in the lives of participants, beyond the end of a project or training? And is Seenaryo supporting the structures that will allow this work to continue in communities? This study shows that sustainability is tied to life transformation, evidenced in the lasting, positive changes in participants' skills, attitudes, and futures: children who turned playful exploration into everyday resilience, women who found their voice on stage and beyond, and young people who moved from participation to facilitation.

Many described Seenaryo as a turning point that broadened what they believe is possible for themselves and their communities.

Change beyond projects





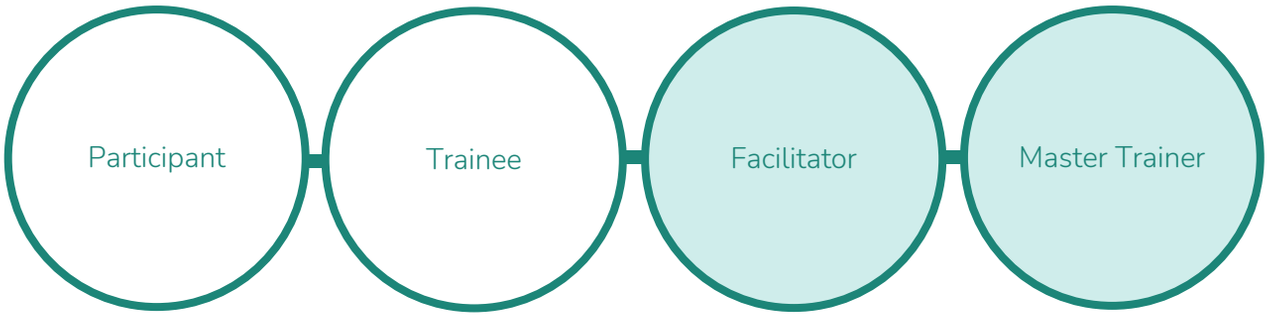


Teachers
87% of teachers trained 1–3 years ago still use play-based methods weekly in their classrooms. Teachers carry the Seenaryo approach with them when they change schools, multiplying reach organically. Nearly all have shared Seenaryo's activities with colleagues, and more than half report colleagues using the methods themselves. Some have even sought to formalise this practice through conferences and events, showing how the approach is spreading beyond individual classrooms into wider school practice.

Young people
63% of youth reported that they stayed active in their communities and joined creative projects after taking part in Seenaryo's initiatives. Several said they had used and integrated Seenaryo's play-based methods in their own initiatives to empower younger peers, raise mental-health awareness, or support education. Others took on other leadership roles as scout leaders, and assistant festival directors, indicating a shift from one-off participation to active community contribution.

Women
Women described the personal battles they fought to overcome family opposition or even community stigma in order to participate with Seenaryo. Over time, many felt their courage recognised, as communities shifted from judging them to admiring them. They became braver in expressing their emotions, building support networks with their peers, and becoming role models for other women in their communities. Seenaryo provided skills, confidence, and opportunities for personal and economic growth, as well as a space to challenge gender norms.

A self-sustaining model



Seenaryo develops its own future leaders. Participants progress into trainees, facilitators, and master trainers, who train future cohorts and continually strengthen the programmes by feeding into design. This creates a self-sustaining cycle of local leadership and ownership.



Seba's Story ▷

Seba Nasser was part of the first youth theatre project in Jordan and is now a Master Trainer, employed regularly to lead projects in both Playkit and Theatre.

"My journey with Seenaryo transformed my career, and set me on a new path."

Seba grew up in Al-Wehdat Palestinian camp and completed most of her education at schools run by UNRWA, the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees. It is places like Al-Wehdat where she believes theatre is needed the most, yet the reality is "the people who need it don't have access to it." The first Seenaryo production she took part in was *Up to the Light* in 2019. It was the first time she'd done theatre since she was a young child and she says, "it brought me back to the place that I love."

Since then she hasn't stopped doing theatre. After taking part in and later leading many Seenaryo theatre productions, Seba set up her own theatre company: Art Vision. Through her regular work as a Master Trainer with Seenaryo and leading Art Vision, Seba is transforming the artistic landscape in Amman – opening up creative spaces for communities who rarely have the opportunity to tell their stories in this way.

Sustainability in partnership

Meaningful partnerships are the backbone to how Seenaryo works: an intentional approach that ensures implementation is driven by community needs and realities and focused on future sustainability. Interviews with 11 partner organisations across Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria, and six donors, painted a consistent picture: Seenaryo's work delivers lasting change at both the individual and community level. Partners reported noticeable gains in confidence, communication, and self-expression among children, youth, and women, alongside the creation of safe, inclusive spaces for creative experimentation and trust-building.

73% of partners continue applying Seenaryo's approaches beyond project cycles, for example integrating Playkit techniques into their broader education programmes, training caregivers, and adapting methodology so that graduates train others. In Mafraq, Jordan, theatre was entirely new to the community – yet after initial training, the local team was independently running children's theatre with visible change in self-expression and collaboration. Elsewhere, partners working with families of the missing highlighted theatre as a safe space for sensitive dialogue, especially for women and children. In Syria, a partner shared Seenaryo's training and materials across different country programmes within their organisation in order to standardise practice and maximise reach.

Partners universally described Seenaryo's approach as both distinctive and deeply complementary to their missions: strengthening credibility, expanding into psychosocial support, youth leadership, and women's empowerment, and making their own programmes more inclusive and participatory in the process.

"Working with Seenaryo introduced a different, creative, and participatory approach that was unlike any previous project. Many of the current facilitators were originally youth participants trained by Seenaryo, now leading sessions and giving back to their community. Sama Al Badea is the only community-based organisation in the area implementing theatre programming. Theatre has brought a new, expressive outlet for youth and children, fostering confidence, dialogue, and a sense of ownership, something truly new and meaningful for the community."

Sama Al Badea, a community based organisation in Mafraq (Jordan) who Seenaryo have partnered with since 2019.



The next 10 years & beyond

Ten years of evidence show that play and participatory theatre have relevance beyond a project's end. The question of how to address the barriers and continue to embed theatre and play across the Arab region is one that Seenaryo sets out to answer. To turn this impact into wider change, the following recommendations can guide national policy, donor priorities, and sector planning, ensuring Seenaryo's impact is sustained in the long term

RECOMMENDATION #1

Integrate play-based learning into national curricula and teacher training

Seenaryo calls for policy-makers to embed creative approaches – theatre and play – into formal teacher education, and issue practical guidance for play-based learning. Policy endorsement by ministries of education would help scale what has worked in pilot settings, aligning with international best practice on child-centered learning, especially valuable in crowded, under-resourced classrooms.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Support community-based psychosocial initiatives

Theatre and play are not add-ons; they are effective tools for psychosocial support and social-emotional learning. Seenaryo calls for national child protection and mental-health strategies in the Arab region to formally include creative spaces as part of trauma relief and resilience. Training community facilitators in participatory theatre can complement formal services and reach those unlikely to access adequate care.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Institutionalise the value of arts for strengthening communities

As countries across the Arab region continue to face violence, instability, sectarian divisions and a need to rebuild, Seenaryo believes that arts and culture have a vital role to play. Structured creative collaboration fosters individual agency, gives space to challenge mistrust and collaborate through difference, laying the foundation for community connection and re-building. Embedding theatre and play practices in peacebuilding frameworks and education reforms, such as national cohesion plans or refugee response strategies, not only amplifies their impact, it ensures that the work of rebuilding is shaped and led by the communities most affected.



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Naya Community Network
Questscope
Sama Al Badea
SEEDS for Legal Initiatives

Participating donors
DROSOS
Educational Opportunity Foundation
The Linbury Trust
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UN Women

"Seenaryo consistently bring hope, energy, and motivation, not just to participants but to everyone around them. Their impact runs deeper than even they may realise, and their presence is a source of inspiration."
Porticus, donors since 2017

A note from Seenaryo
The injustices of the last decade required an extraordinary amount from ordinary people, and still do. Our communities are trying to 'recover' from cycles of trauma that persist and meanwhile, live a life not defined by that trauma. Our teams in Lebanon and Jordan – who live through the same crises they work within – are the ones who ask "what now, what next?" and come back with the plan. This report is dedicated to them, and to the tens of thousands of children, youth, women and teachers who have given their time, love and energy to Seenaryo's programmes over ten years.

None of this work would have happened without the allyship of our local partners and the support of our donors who choose to believe in our work. We want to thank each and every one of you. In particular, our enduring thanks goes out to The Linbury Trust, who have faithfully believed in Seenaryo and supported our work since 2017, and who funded 100% of this research and publication. And finally, thank you Pamela Maaz, for your rigorous research and endless patience.

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