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**MASK's future is
where every young
person thrives as a
creator, innovator,
and changemaker.**

”

MASK Create

Annual Report 2024-2025

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Cover image: Blossom of garden, Simon Marui, Kenya

Quotation: MASK Create



“

Thank you, MASK, for being part of the experience that helped shape my creativity. Keep up the incredible work in sparking hope and creativity.

Felicity Mudis, Kenya, 2022

”

Introduction

At MASK Create, we believe that creativity is not a luxury—it is a necessity. It is the driving force behind thriving civilisations and prosperous economies, as echoed by leading thinkers from Joseph Schumpeter to Paul Romer. When nurtured, creativity empowers individuals to solve problems, innovate, and reimagine the future. When ignored, it marks the beginning of societal stagnation. Our mission is to ensure that creativity remains at the very heart of education and human development.

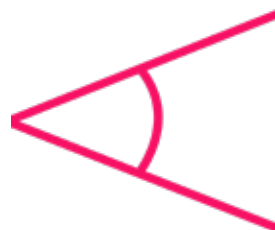
Nearly two decades ago, Alla Tkachuk MSc FRSA saw what others overlooked: the untapped potential of creativity to transform not just individuals, but entire communities and systems. From a chance encounter in a Kenyan classroom in 2007, MASK Create was born—an organisation founded on the belief that all young people deserve the opportunity to think creatively, lead confidently, and shape the world around them.

Since then, MASK has grown from grassroots school workshops to an internationally recognised force for education reform. Through Creativity Clubs, the Creativity for Entrepreneurship and Leadership (CEL) programmes, and the widely celebrated MASK Awards, we have reached over **21,500** young people directly, inspired more than **650,000** globally, and influenced educational policy in **63** countries. In 2017, our work contributed to creativity being recognised as a 'core competence' in Kenya's national curriculum—a milestone that speaks to the power of persistence and visionary leadership.

Today, the need for transformation is more urgent than ever. As the UK faces a widening skills gap and rising educational disengagement, and as the world navigates rapid technological and social change, creativity must become the foundation on which we build the future. At MASK, we don't just teach creativity—we ignite it. We empower the next generation to think boldly, act purposefully, and lead with imagination.

This annual report celebrates the achievements of our charity, beneficiaries, partners, and supporters over the past year. It reflects our unwavering commitment to expanding creativity education, and our belief in a future where every young person can thrive as a creator, innovator, and changemaker.

The golden age of creativity lies ahead.



Art shapes creativity.
Creativity shapes innovation.
Innovation shapes the world.

MASK Founder



Nearly two decades ago, Alla Tkachuk MSc FRSA embarked on a mission to change the landscape of education. An artist, educator, and relentless innovator, she saw what others overlooked: the vast potential of creativity as a driving force for personal success and societal progress. Where others saw barriers, she saw possibilities.

Tkachuk's journey began with a simple yet profound realisation. While on a painting trip to Kenya in 2007, she volunteered to lead art workshops in schools. What she discovered was deeply troubling—art education was virtually non-existent and creativity undervalued. Teachers, bound by rigid pedagogical traditions, believed creativity could not be taught.

Rather than accept this status quo, Tkachuk took action. In 2009, she founded MASK Create (formerly, Mobile Art School in Kenya) with a clear and ambitious goal: to reframe creativity as a fundamental skill for education and life. What began as a grassroots initiative quickly gained momentum. Within a year, MASK Creativity Clubs were thriving in over 25 schools, offering students and teachers a new way to engage with learning. By 2011, MASK had expanded to secondary schools, introducing Creativity for Entrepreneurship and Leadership (CEL) Clubs that empowered young minds to apply their creative thinking to real-world challenges.

Tkachuk's efforts did not stop at the classroom door. She understood that for real change to happen, creativity had to be recognised at the national level. In 2013, she pioneered the MASK Awards, partnering with leading media outlets and galleries to celebrate and encourage young innovators. Her persistence paid off—by 2017, after a decade of collaboration with the Kenyan government, creativity was officially recognised as a 'core competence' in Kenya's national curriculum, marking a transformative victory for education.

MASK's impact has been profound. Through the implementation of the MASK Creativity Education Model and its wide-reaching programmes, more than **21,500** young people and **300** schools have directly benefited, while a global audience of over **650,000** has been inspired. Today, MASK's influence spans **63** countries, reshaping policy and championing creativity as a vital force for the future.

Alla remains at the heart of MASK. Not just a strategist or a leader, she is a hands-on changemaker, continuously driving MASK's expansion, securing funding, and ensuring that creativity education reaches every corner of the world. Her vision is grounded in a fundamental belief: that nations flourish when they nurture creative minds, and decline when they fail to do so.

As technology and society evolve at an unprecedented pace, Tkachuk's work has never been more relevant. She has transformed what was once considered a luxury into an essential skill, proving that creativity is not just for artists and scientists—it is for everyone. It is the key to unlocking human potential, solving complex problems, and shaping a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

The journey of MASK is far from over. The mission continues—to inspire, to educate, and to ensure that creativity thrives in perpetuity. The golden age of creativity, with visionaries like Tkachuk leading the way, it is the promise of the future.

MASK's definitions

Over the years, we in MASK have deepened our understanding of 'creativity' and 'innovation'. In this report we use these terms interchangeably to highlight their intrinsic connection, both conceptually and in practice.

Our definitions are:

- **Creativity** is visual ideation—the process of generating novel ideas through visual connections.
- **Innovation** is the process of transforming ideas into practical solutions that drive progress and contribute to creating a better future.
- **Creativity Education (CE)** is about active knowledge production rather than passive knowledge reproduction. It emphasises learning by action, fostering visual thinking and the practical application of creativity. By nurturing innovation, enterprise, leadership, and ethical skills, CE empowers individuals to solve problems outside traditional paradigms and drive meaningful change.

Creativity is a skill that must be nurtured from an early age, as research shows that innate creativity declines if left unsupported. At five years old, 98% of children exhibit strong creativity. By age 10, this drops to 30%; by age 15, to 12%; and by age 30, only 2% retain high creative ability.¹ Once lost, creativity is difficult—if not impossible—to fully restore in adulthood.

Creativity is a unique cognitive process, not merely a by-product of high IQ.² It is 'analytical and systemic thinking',³ which Albert Einstein called 'true intelligence' and Edward de Bono described as 'the highest form of intelligence'.

Creativity is not limited to artistic expression; it spans all disciplines and aspects of life.

These words can be synonyms of creativity: improvement, resourcefulness, problem-solving, self-sufficiency, self-efficacy, thinking, inventiveness, imagination, ingenuity, discovery, hypothesis, intuition, independent thinking, excellence, intelligence, adaptivity, initiative, power, emancipation, change, value-creation, vision, individuality, risk-taking, personal effectiveness, genius, inspiration, talent, changing paradigm/status quo, design, 'eureka!', and 'aha! moment'.



¹ George Land and Beth Jarman, *Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future Today*, HarperBusiness, 1993.

² John S Allen, 'Creativity, the Brain, and Evolution. Creativity: Adaptation or a byproduct of increased intelligence?', *Psychology Today*, 2010.

³ Definition of creativity by The Global Skills Taxonomy, <https://www1.reskillingrevolution2030.org/skills-taxonomy/index.html>

“

Thank you, MASK, for your amazing work and great effort in nurturing creativity in Kenya. You are indeed the driver of change in our society.

”

Simon Kariuki, 24, a MASK participant

Report of the Trustees

The Trustees/Directors of the charitable company MASK Create for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006 present this report with the financial statements for the year ended 31 January 2025.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Objectives and activities

Purpose, vision, mission and goals

Purpose: Transform education by embedding creativity in mainstream education and broader society.

Vision: A world where creativity is the foundation for individual empowerment and societal advancement.

Mission (How we do it):

1. Unlock young people's creative potential to drive employment, social equity and mobility, and economic prosperity.
2. Embed the MASK Creativity Education Model in mainstream curricula.
3. Establish creativity education as a core societal value and a fundamental right.

Aims, goals & objectives (What we do):

1. Provide training and development opportunities for young people to unlock their creative problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills.
2. Disseminate the MASK learning and teaching resources.
3. Engage with and influence communities across sectors and regions through practical grassroots interventions, advocacy, research, and partnerships to raise awareness, change perceptions, and drive policy change.

Beneficiaries:

1. Young people aged under 25
2. Educators
3. Communities, including policymakers

MASK's Theory of Change

By placing creativity at the core of education and society, we can unlock humanity's full potential and drive a new era of advancement.

The MASK Theory of Change in the context of human evolution

According to Gene-Culture Coevolution Theory, creativity and innovation drive human evolution in a continuous cycle—people shape their environment, and the environment shapes people.

Three billion years ago, simple organisms developed sensitivity to light, leading to the evolution of a visual system that catalyzed the development of a nervous system.¹

Neurons specialising in visual information increased organisms' specialisation and therefore, their efficiency.² The brain-vision interaction improved survival: animals that recognised colors, faces, and movements were more successful in feeding, hunting, and mating.

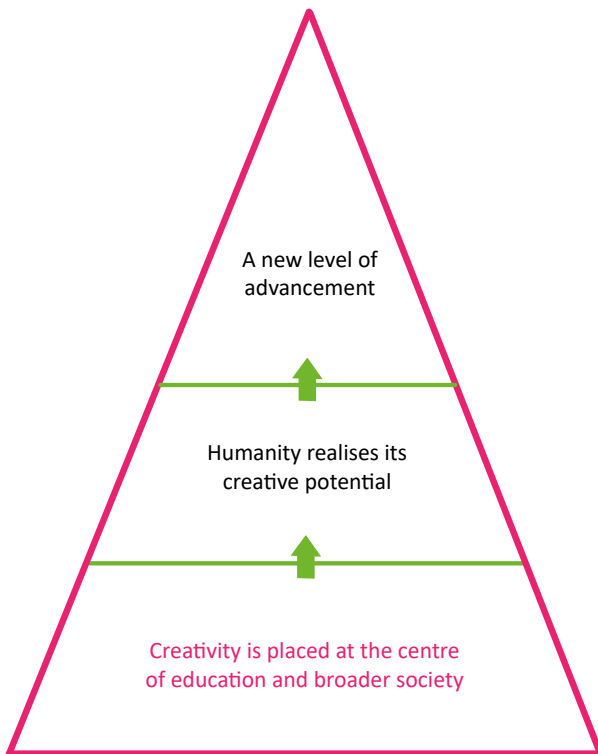
Two million years ago, early hominins, *Homo habilis*, marked the dawn of human creativity by creating Oldowan tools for cutting meat and bones. Their brain size increased to 700 cm³, double that of their ape predecessors.

One-and-a-half million years ago, *Homo erectus* consciously embraced creativity inventing more tools, growing their brain size to 900 cm³. Communities began to value creativity, ensuring its continuation in future generations.

Forty thousand years ago, *Homo sapiens* created even more diverse tools and art, with brain sizes reaching 1200-1500 cm³, similar to modern humans.

The human brain is still evolving. Over the last 100 years, there has been an increase in human intelligence: the average IQ has risen by 24 points. This increase is not due to biological evolution—the time span is too short for that— but to rising innovation, which has altered the ways people live and work.³

As innovation reshapes civilization⁴, education must transform to equip us with the creativity needed to navigate and shape our environments. This education must be universal—only when everyone is creative can humanity truly evolve.



1 Robert Arp, *Scenario Visualisation. An Evolutionary Account of Creative Problem Solving*, MIT, 2008.
 2 'Brain and Culture' lecture, U. Alexandrov, Russian Academy of Science. Kultura TV, 'Academia' series, 2015.
 3 Richard Restak, *The Naked Brain*, 2006.
 4 Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, 2006.



Danielle, 18, winner of the MASK Innovation Award, receives her prize, a fully paid internship at Unilever's Heroes of Change, Nairobi, 2019

Where we work

Founded in 2007 as a small mobile unit navigating dusty tracks to reach remote schools in Kenya, MASK expanded to **16** African countries by 2023 and to **56** countries globally in 2024, bringing the total to **63** across all continents.

The graph (on the opposite page) illustrates our journey, highlighting the growth from local roots in Kenya to the entire African continent and, ultimately, to a truly global initiative, reaching beneficiaries across all continents.

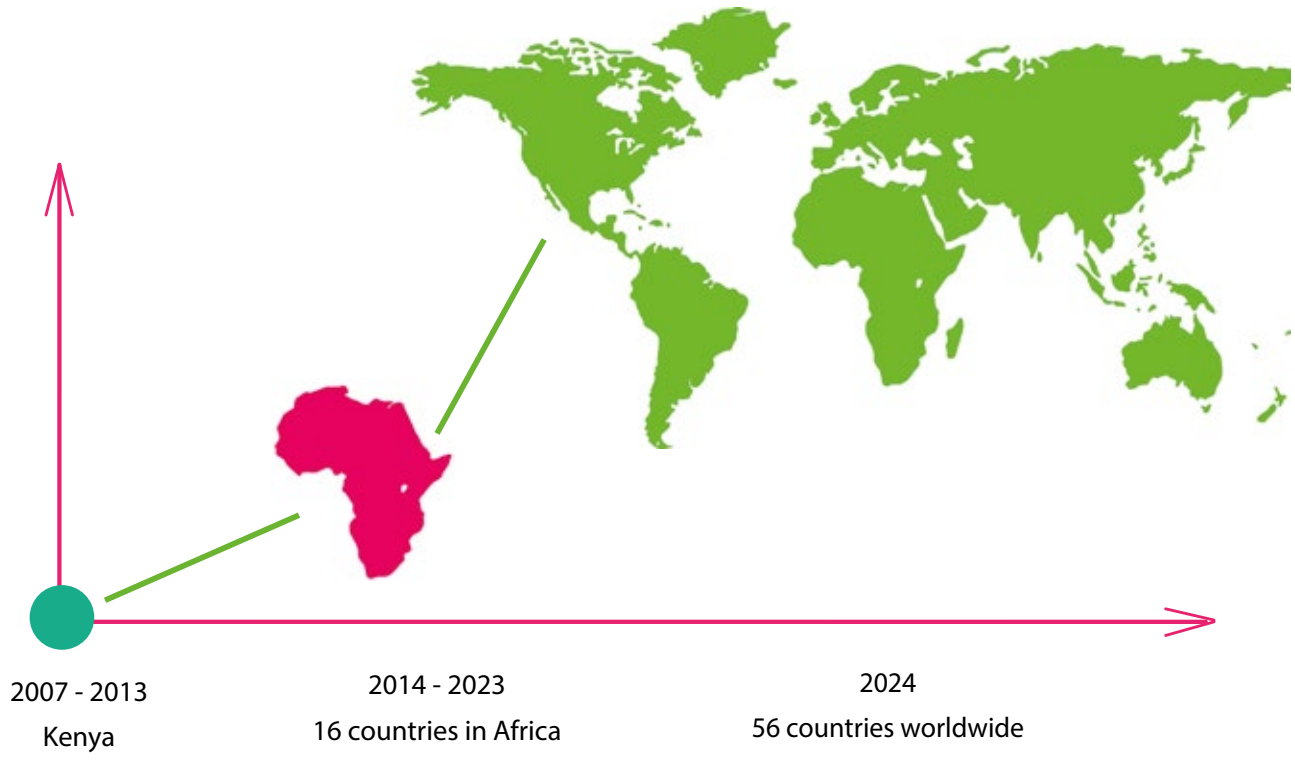
The illustration (below the graph) shows the countries where we reached our beneficiaries with:

Pink markers—indicating locations where we have reached young people, teachers, and communities:

- **Africa (18 countries):** Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- **Asia (28 countries):** Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, Georgia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam.
- **Europe (9 countries):** Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom.
- **North America (3 countries):** Canada, Mexico, United States.
- **Latin America (4 countries):** Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Peru.
- **Oceania (1 country):** Australia

Green markers—indicating main locations where we have reached education, policy, and business communities:

- **Kenya** – West Laikipia, Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Amboseli, Maasai, Nakuru, and Naivasha.
- **UK** – London, Margate, Edinburgh, Romford.
- **USA** – Washington DC, San Diego.
- **France** – Paris.
- **South Korea** – Seoul.





“

Working with MASK opened for me the whole new reality, art became a whole new concept! Brilliant!

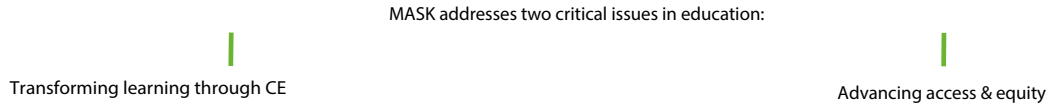
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Edwin Wainaina, 18, Kenya

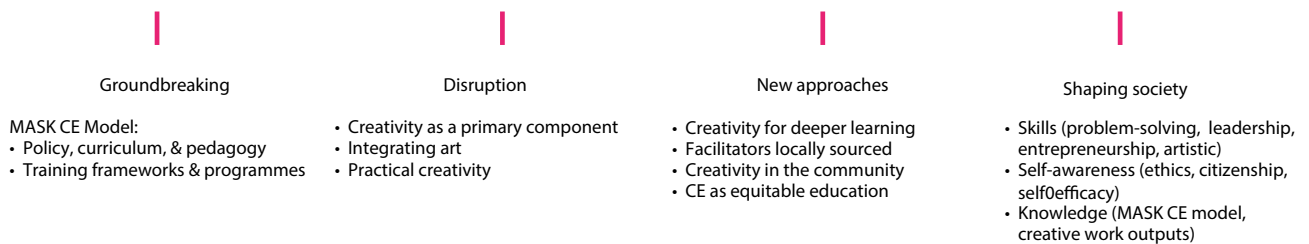
MASK's impact

The diagram below highlights MASK's impact, with further details on the following pages.

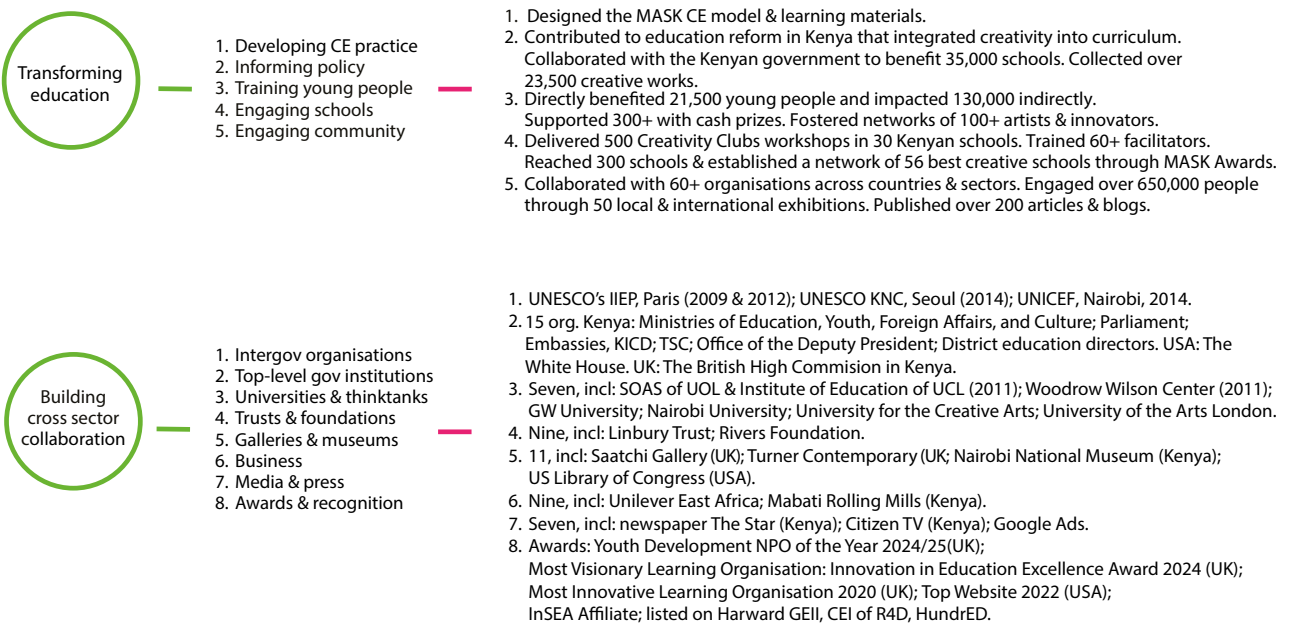
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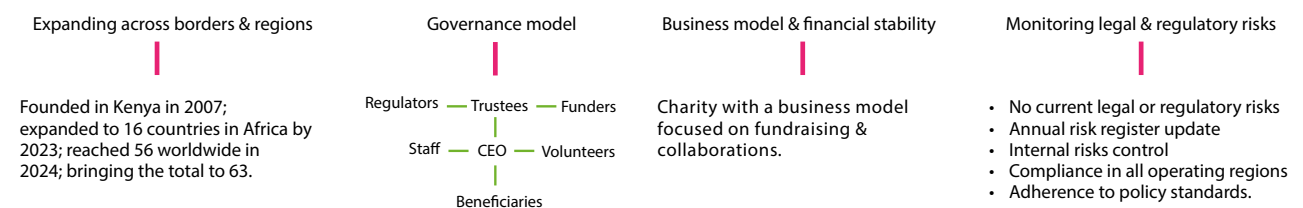
EDUCATION INNOVATIONS



TRANSFORMATION



SUSTAINABILITY



Impact highlights

18 years of dedicated work

**MASK alumni: entrepreneurs, social innovators, leaders,
artists, and high-performing professionals**

63 countries across all continents reached

58 regions in Kenya engaged

Unique learning resources developed

Over 21,500 young people directly impacted

300 schools participated

56 best creative African schools awarded

500 school workshops held

60 facilitators trained

50 exhibitions and events held

40 exhibitions across 11 global galleries

100+ emerging African artists supported

A collection of 23,500 creative works

350 cash prizes awarded

Over 650,000 people reached globally

60 partnerships formed across 7 sectors & 5 regions

Recognised with international accolades

Committed team of supporters, volunteers, and ambassadors

MASK's work has been impactful in two key ways:

- Transforming education through creativity.
- Strengthening international collaboration for sustainability.

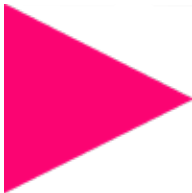
Below, we examine these developments in more detail.

1. Transforming education through creativity

We have been achieving this through the following actions:

Developing creativity education practice and resources:

- Developing operational knowledge: MASK Creativity Education (CE) Model (described on pages 41-66).
- Developing creative work outputs, including:
 - **'MASK Art Collection'**: a showcase of **23,500** creative works (**18,500** MASK Awards entries and **5,000** Creativity Clubs artworks), over **50** exhibitions (including online), and **100+** emerging global-quality artists offers insights into young creativity and serves as an educational and cultural research tool.
 - **'Resources for Artists'**: tips and templates to support artists and artistic excellence.
 - **'Dream It. Do It.'**: a showcase of the Global Goals solutions generated by MASK participants. This initiative provides ways to enhance youth civic engagement and foster informal collaboration with policymakers.
 - An archive of talks, seminars, publications, and case studies.



Informing policy

MASK's aim is to drive policy change through practical grassroots interventions, advocacy, research, and cross-sector partnerships.

- MASK has been working closely with the Kenyan government since 2007, contributing to education reforms in Kenya and its shift from knowledge reproduction to knowledge production—a fundamental principle of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). In 2014, creativity was officially recognised as a 'core competence' within CBC, with initial pilots commencing in 2017.
- In 2019 and 2022, MASK was invited by the Kenyan Ministry of Education to develop **a teacher-training framework** and **curriculum materials** (books, manuals) to support CBC. These resources have the potential to be distributed to 38,500 Kenyan schools and help train 150 tutors from all 30 colleges in Kenya, benefiting 12,000 graduates annually.

Creating training and development opportunities for young people (YP)

MASK alumni have become entrepreneurs, social innovators, leaders, artists, and high-performing professionals. Key achievements include:

- Directly training **21,500** YP (**15,000** through Creativity Clubs in Kenya and **6,500** through MASK Awards), indirectly impacting **130,000** as participants pass on their skills within their communities.

- Over **300** YP receiving MASK Awards cash prizes worth over £20,000, enabling them to launch their careers, along with **2** fully-paid internships at Unilever East Africa.
- MASK helps over **100** emerging artists and innovators elevate their careers and reinforce the value of art education.

Engaging schools

- MASK delivered **500** Creativity Clubs and CEL workshops in **30** schools in Kenya, training over **60** facilitators. The impact has been profound, with schools reporting increased student enthusiasm in creativity.
- Engaged with over **300** schools in MASK Awards.
- We recognised **56** African schools for achieving high standards in creativity education (CE) through MASK Awards. The network can be further leveraged through a biennial conference, sharing best practices and fostering a sustainable CE environment.

Engaging communities

MASK engages communities through the following:

- **MASK Awards:** By collaborating with local and national media, we have reached **58** regions in Kenya, **18** African countries, and **63** countries globally. Media campaigns alone reached an estimated nine million people in Kenya, with further expansion through the Google Ads Grant.
- **Exhibitions:** We have held over **50** public art exhibitions (including **40** MASK Awards and **10** online exhibitions), engaging global audiences of at least **650,000** people. Highlights include:
 - school exhibitions and district office showcases in Kenya attended by local leaders;
 - outdoor exhibitions, including a walking exhibition in Naivasha;
 - showcases at Kenyan embassies in London, Paris, and Washington DC;
 - exhibitions at UNESCO in France and South Korea;
 - shows at the world's leading art galleries, including the Nairobi National Museum, Saatchi Gallery, Turner Contemporary, and the U.S. Library of Congress.
- **Networks and ambassadors:** We developed a MASK Ambassadors network, a group of up to **40** young people based in Africa - to ensure long-term sustainability and broader impact.
- **Publications:** MASK has featured over **200** various articles, podcasts, and blogs in national and specialists press and media. Highlights include:
 - MASK Founder's 'How to Look at Art' column in *The Star* (Kenya);
 - *Private Sector* magazine of the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA);
 - Results for Development Institute (USA);
 - Royal Society for Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce (RSA, UK);
 - *A&D* magazine of the National Society for Education in Arts and Design (NSEAD, UK);
 - *Childhood Education: Innovations* magazine (USA);
 - The U.S. Library of Congress (USA);
 - UNESCO IIEP and UNESCO KNC reports.

2. Building international collaborations across sectors

MASK has partnered with over **60** organisations across **seven** sectors and **five** regions. Sectors and key institutions included:

1. **Intergovernmental organisations:** UNESCO's IIEP, Paris; UNESCO KNC, Seoul; UNICEF, Nairobi.
2. **Top-tier governmental institutions:**
 - Kenya: Kenya's Ministries of Education, Youth, Foreign Affairs, and Culture; Parliament; Embassies; Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD); Teachers Service Commission (TSC); The Office of the Deputy President; District Education Directors.
 - USA: The White House.
 - UK: The British High Commission in Kenya.
3. **Universities and thinktanks:** SOAS University of London; Institute of Education University of London; Woodrow Wilson Center; George Washington University; Nairobi University; University for the Creative Arts (UCA, UK); University of the Arts London (UAL, UK).
4. **Galleries and museums:** Saatchi Gallery (UK); Turner Contemporary (UK); Nairobi National Museum (Kenya); The U.S. Library of Congress (USA).
5. **Trusts and foundations:** The Linbury Trust; Rivers Foundation.
6. **Businesses:** Unilever East Africa; Mabati Rolling Mills (Kenya).
7. **Media and press:** *The Star* (Kenya); Citizen TV (Kenya); Google Ads.
8. **Awards and recognition:** See more details on page 23.

Below, we outline these partnerships in more detail.

Intergovernmental organisations

Fostering international collaborations helps MASK connect with policymakers, influence global education policies, and shape the education discourse.

- In 2009, a MASK exhibition was hosted by UNESCO IIEP (International Institute of Educational Planning) Summer School in Paris, attended by the Kenyan Ambassador to France, Ambassador E. Odembo.
- In October 2012, Tkachuk presented the report 'MASK: Engaging Young People for Development through Creativity Education' at the UNESCO IIEP Policy Forum on 'Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation', addressing delegates from over 200 countries. She also curated the MASK exhibition in the main hall of UNESCO HQ during the event. MASK engaged with the Permanent Secretary and Cabinet Secretary of Kenya's Ministry of Youth, A. Namwamba.
- In October 2014, Tkachuk presented the report 'MASK: Creativity Education as a Driving Force for Sustainable Development' at the UNESCO KNC (South Korea National Commission) 'International Forum on Development Cooperation in the Field of Culture' in Seoul. Audience feedback included:
 - *I have been involved in many development projects throughout the world. What you [Alla] have done in Kenya is very important for development to stimulate people's creativity.* - Professor Won-Gyu Hwang from Gangneung-Wonju National University.

- *Thank you for the inspiration you have given me through your MASK project. Your approach and success in empowering communities through building creativity greatly caught my attention.* - A forum participant.
- The Director of UNICEF's Talent Academies Programme in Nairobi opened the MASK Awards ceremony at the Nairobi National Museum in June 2013.

Top-tier governmental institutions

Since 2007, MASK has worked closely with government institutions. Highlight included:

Kenya:

- **Ministries:** The Ministry of Education (KMoE); Ministry of Youth, Sports, and the Arts; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Heritage and Culture.
 - Building relationships with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Dr. Belio Kipsang.
 - A 2011 meeting with the Minister for Heritage and Culture, W. Ole Ntimama.
 - In 2013-19, MASK Awards ceremonies were opened by: Director of Education at Nairobi City County; the Senior Assistant Director of Quality Assurance; Senior Assistant to Director of Education of KoME; and Nairobi Regional Director of Education.
- **Parliament:** Member of Parliament Stephen Kariuki opened the MASK Awards ceremony in 2015.
- **Embassies** in London, Paris, and Washington DC:
 - Exhibitions at the Kenya High Commission in London and Paris.
 - The Kenyan Embassy in USA helped organise and opened the MASK 'Creativity Education in Africa' exhibition-seminar at the Woodrow Wilson Center.
 - The Education Attaché at the Kenyan High Commission in the UK opened MASK's exhibitions in 2014 and 2015.
- **Educators:** Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and Teachers Service Commission (TSC).
 - Held displays of the MASK materials at KICD.
 - Suggested a peace-building education framework and a summative examination of art to KICD leadership in 2010.
 - Built relationships with the KICD Assistant Director of Creative Arts, Dr. Jennifer Wambugu, who served as a MASK Awards judge.
 - KICD hosted and officially opened the MASK Awards Ceremony in 2022.
 - KICD's Media Director attended the MASK Awards Ceremony in 2016, and broadcast it on the KICD's EDU CHANNEL TV.
 - Engaged in discussions with the TSC Directors, including its CEO Dr. N. Macharia.
 - Presented the MASK Facilitator Training framework to KICD's Head of Evaluation, J. Mukuhi.
- **Office of the Deputy President:** Held meetings with the Office, including the Second Lady, Madam Rachel Ruto (currently the First Lady). The Office's Inclusion Director acted as a MASK Awards judge and participated in the Awards Ceremony in 2022.
- **National, Regional and District Education offices:** Secured operational support and quality assurance letters from the KMoE Quality Assurance and district officials (Ngarua and Naivasha), authorising MASK's work.

United Kingdom

- The British High Commissioner, Dr. Chris Turner, officially opened the MASK Awards Ceremony at the Nairobi National Museum in June 2013.
- The Deputy Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea, Councillor Mohamed Bakhtiar, opened the MASK exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in London in 2021.

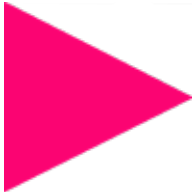
United States

- In April 2013, Tkachuk and the Kenyan Ambassador E. Odembo presented MASK's work to Grant Harris, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for African Affairs, at the White House in Washington, DC, gifting President Obama MASK students' paintings
- MASK's visit was followed by the official letter hand-signed by Michelle and Barack Obama recognising the MASK work, which can be seen [here](#).
- National Endowment for Democracy introduced MASK to KEPSA; Kenya Desk at the State Department introduced MASK to the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

Universities and thinktanks

MASK has engaged with academic research. Highlights included:

- **SOAS and Institute of Education, University College London.** In 2011, Tkachuk initiated and organised the 'Art Education in Kenya' seminar at the Brunei Gallery in collaboration with the Centre of African Studies. Speakers included Tkachuk (Founder, MASK), D. Maingi (Birkbeck College), M. Kagia (Kingston University), Dr. N. Addison (Institute of Education, UCL), with Professor C. Githiora (SOAS) as the Chair.
- **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWC), Washington, DC.** In 2011, Tkachuk organised the 'Creativity Education in Africa' exhibition-seminar in collaboration with its Africa Program and the Kenyan Embassy. The event was opened by Steve MacDonald (Director of Africa Program) and Nairimas Ole-Sein (First Secretary, Kenyan Embassy).
- **School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University.** In 2013, Tkachuk delivered a talk titled 'MASK: Engaging Creativity for Human Development'. 'An important policy and practice topic' - Dr. Maxine Freund (Associate Dean for Research and External Relations).
- **Nairobi University:**
 - In 2014, Tkachuk held the MASK Awards Ceremony at Nairobi University, with Dr. Manu Chandaria opening the event.
 - She gave two workshops to the **School of Art and Design** students, one commenting: *'You [Tkachuk] gave us an amazing talk on creativity that made me rethink my entire approach to my work.'*
- **University for the Creative Arts (UCA, UK):** the Executive Office, MA Curatorial, and MA Brand Management departments, 2016-18:
 - In 2016, Tkachuk and the Executive Office put on the 'Transformation/Mabadiliko' exhibition at Zandra Rhodes Gallery showcasing the potential of integrating ICT into creativity education (CE) and fostering cultural exchange through online spaces.
 - MA Curatorial Practice students curated interactive show at the Saatchi Gallery.
 - in 2018, MA Brand Management students designed MASK's current logo.
 - Students Union offered students volunteer opportunities with MASK.
- **University of the Arts London (UAL).** Tkachuk together with a MA Collection student, and Dean of Art created a virtual interactive experience of the MASK's retrospective show at Turner Contemporary, which can be seen [here](#).



Galleries and museums

MASK has collaborated with **11** galleries and museums, curating more than **50** exhibition, including **40** physical art exhibitions, to challenge the boundaries between art and curriculum, and position art as a core driver of learning and of empowerment. Highlight exhibitions included:

- **MASK website:** a series of 10 themed exhibitions 'Vibrant Visions: Unveiling Africa's Rising Artistic Stars', ongoing.
- **Saatchi Gallery**, UK (six exhibitions, 2013-2019), including the 'Best of MASK Awards and Early 21st Century Emerging Young Artists'.
- **Turner Contemporary**, UK (three exhibitions, 2016-2018), including the MASK retrospective 'All Art Should Be Social Art'.
- **Royal Over-Seas League**, UK (three exhibitions).
- **Brunei Gallery**, UK.
- **Doyle Wham Gallery**, UK (four exhibitions).
- **Zandra Rhodes Gallery**, UK, 'Transformation/Mabadiliko' multimedia show.
- **Michael Joseph Art Centre**, Kenya (five exhibitions, 2015-2019).
- **Nairobi National Museum**, Kenya (2013).
- **Rahimtulla Museum of Modern Art (RaMOMA)**, Kenya (2010).
- **U.S. Library of Congress**, USA (two exhibitions, 2013 and 2014).
- **Smithsonian Institution**, USA (2016).

The exhibition participants said:

- *"MASK gives young people their humanity back."* Ibrahim El Salahi, the Founder of African modern art.
- *"This is important work. It attracted very young people. I congratulate MASK Awards organisers."* - Michael Craig-Martin, renowned contemporary artist.
- *"Young people who come to the Saatchi Gallery say that the Kenyan young people's artwork is amazing. They are influenced by these artworks! It was great working with MASK."* - Francesca Wilson, Director of Education at Saatchi Gallery, UK
- *"Working with MASK opened for me the whole new reality, art became a whole new concept! Brilliant!"* - Edwin Wainaina, 18, Kenya, a MASK artist.

Trusts and foundations

MASK has partnered with these grant-making trusts and foundations to support MASK's work:

- Chandaria Foundation, Kenya
- Clore Duffield Foundation, UK
- Google for Nonprofits, USA
- JJ Charitable Trust, UK
- Linbury Trust, UK
- Nobility Project, USA
- Queen's Trust, UK
- Rivers Foundation, UK
- Swire Foundation, UK

Businesses

MASK has partnered with businesses to reinforce the link between CE and the productive workforce. We engaged with **six** companies in Kenya, including Commercial Bank of Africa, Unilever East Africa and Unilever's Heroes for Change, Mabati Rolling Mills, StoryMoja, Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), and the American Chamber of Commerce.

Despite creativity being recognised as a 'core skill across industries', the business sector remains one of the most challenging to engage. Many business leaders struggle to connect creativity education in schools with the development of an innovative workforce.

They often assume they can either recruit the most talented candidates—only to find that such individuals are scarce or difficult to retain—or train their existing staff to be more creative, only to realise that this approach rarely succeeds.

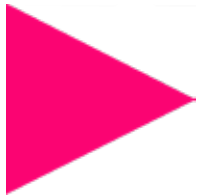
For example, the CEO of Unilever East Africa told Tkachuk that their efforts to train employees in creativity had been unsuccessful. This is unsurprising, as creativity, once diminished in childhood, becomes difficult to revive in adulthood.

Media and press

To amplify MASK's message and reach more users, MASK partners with national media and press. These included:

- *The Star*, Kenya
- Citizen TV, Kenya (number one TV channel). '*MASK is transforming the lives of young people through creativity education, and its impact is visible across communities. It's a story worth sharing with the world!*' — Citizen TV
- Kiss 100FM, Kenya
- NTV, Kenya
- KTN News, Kenya
- *The Standard*, Kenya

More details on MASK's partnerships can be viewed in the **Appendices** and on [MASK's website](#).

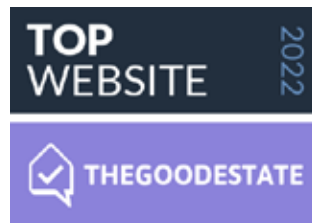


Awards and recognition

Over the years, MASK's work has earned us recognition from the Kenyan government as well as international institutions such as UNESCO. Our initiatives have also been noticed through these awards, affirming our role as a leader in creativity-centred education and our dedication to making a global impact.

The highlights include:

1. **Youth Development NPO of the Year 2024/25**, Corporate LiveWire Global Award (UK). This award recognises organisations for exceptional performance, highlighting MASK's commitment to empowering youth through education.
2. **Most Visionary Learning Organisation: Innovation in Education Excellence 2024**, Acquisition International Non-Profit Organisation Award (UK). This award recognises MASK's innovative approach to integrating creativity into education. [More](#)
3. **Most Innovative Learning Organisation 2020**, SME News Greater London Enterprise Award (UK). This award recognises MASK's methodologies in fostering innovation in learning. [More](#)
4. **Top Website 2022**, THEGOODESTATE Award (USA). This award recognises excellence in our website accessibility, design, and content, enabling our young people and educators to access and engage with our resources.
5. MASK has also been recognised through:
 - A letter of acknowledgement from Michelle and Barack Obama.
 - Affiliation with the International Society for Education through the Arts (InSEA).
 - Listings in Harvard University's Global Education Innovation Initiative, the Results for Development Institute's Center for Education Innovations, and HundrED.
 - Citations in academic dissertations.¹



¹ Including 'The impact of art education in the developing world: a case study of an NGO in Kenya' by B. Glen, Institute of Education, University of London, 2011.



CorporateLiveWire

**GLOBAL
AWARDS**

This is to certify that

MASK Create

has been awarded

**Youth Development
NPO of the Year**

in the Corporate LiveWire
Global Awards 2024/25

James Drakeford
Editor in Chief



Fenice Media



“

MASK gave me the opportunity and made me believe in my potential as a creator, innovator, and entrepreneur. MASK has changed how I think. I see myself now not only as an upcoming doctor, but as a medical entrepreneur. I have ideas that can potentially transform the medical sector in Kenya.

Danielle, 18, Kenya

”

MASK's impact on education: baseline and endline study

MASK tackles the two critical issues in education:

- Improving the quality of education.
- Advancing access, inclusion, and equity.

Below, we describe these in more detail.

Baseline study overview

From 2007 to 2009, we conducted a Baseline study to evaluate the scale of educational challenges and define MASK's priority areas and approaches.

This study:

- Aligned MASK's objectives with target audience and the services.
- Served as a benchmark for evaluating MASK's performance, progress, and milestones.
- Set the groundwork for our Endline study.

MASK employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including:

- **Questionnaires:** Distributed to gather insights from various stakeholders.
- **Focus groups:** Engaging with different community segments to understand diverse perspectives. Respondents included students, parents, teachers, local and national government officials, media organisations, business representatives, NGOs, and community members from Kenya, the USA, the UK, and France. All participants provided informed consent, fully understanding the study's purpose and how their data would be used.
- **Interviews:** Conducted with key individuals involved in the education sector.
- **Observational data:** Collected during our programs and events to assess real-time impact.
- **Secondary data analysis:** Reviewed reports from governments and international organisations. In some cases, obtaining accurate and up-to-date statistics posed challenges, and certain available data proved difficult to verify.



1. Improving the quality of education

Baseline

Many education systems struggle to adequately equip young people (YP) with creative skills. This prevents education from keeping pace with global changes, widening the skills gap, limiting YP's potential, and hindering communities' ability to build a sustainable future.

Overview

These challenges include:

1. **Low learning outcomes:** Learning outcomes for young people are alarmingly low. A vast number of YP around the world lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, with over half of school-age children failing to meet basic learning proficiency standards. Despite efforts to improve access, content delivery, and teaching quality, there have been few noticeable improvements in learning outcomes.
2. **High youth unemployment:** In Kenya, 67% of youth aged 15–34 are unemployed. Millions face poverty and limited opportunities due to outdated education systems.
3. **Limited entrepreneurship and leadership:** A lack of creativity hampers both.
4. **Creativity and economic growth:** A workforce lacking creativity struggles to drive economic development. CEOs highlight a shortage of employees with creative skills among new entrants. In the USA, only 24% of college graduates demonstrate strong innovation skills.
5. **The role of art in education remains marginalised:** The visual nature of creative thinking is often misunderstood. When art is included in school curricula, it is often taught in a rigid, technical manner—counterproductive to creativity education (CE).
6. **Creativity is misunderstood:** Creativity is often mistaken for artistic talent rather than recognised as a crucial, learnable skill that enhances productivity and drives innovation. Some authorities may perceive creativity as a threat to stability and intentionally restrict CE.
7. **Fractured CE pedagogy:** Education in creativity often depends on individual teacher initiative, leading to inconsistent implementation and leaving creative learning to chance.

The following sections explore these challenges in greater detail.

Low learning outcomes - 'a moral and economic crisis'¹

In Kenya, since independence in 1963, the education sector has expanded rapidly. The government introduced free Primary Education in 2003 and free Day Secondary Education in 2008. Kenya's education spending grew from 6.1% of GDP in 2005/06 to 6.4% by 2010. Although the number of schools and enrollment increased, this did not translate into improved learning outcomes, which remained low.² Seven out of 10 third-grade students could not read at a second-grade level.³

¹ A quotation attributed to Jim Yong Kim, former President of the World Bank.

² 'Aligning Education and Training to the Constitution of Kenya and Kenya Vision 2030 and beyond', Policy Framework for Education report, 2012.

³ Kenyan Uwezo survey, 2011.

In Africa, less than 50% of grade six students were able to go beyond simply deciphering words, and fewer than 40% reached beyond basic numeracy in 2007. Only 15% of adults aged 15 to 64 have attained secondary education or higher.

'They lack very basic literacy and numeracy skills, let alone the more advanced skills the labour market needs, such as creativity.' - The World Bank's STEP (Skills Towards Employability and Productivity) survey, 2014.

Worldwide, over 600 million school-aged children lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, with six in ten failing to achieve basic learning proficiency.¹ In the UK, half of young people leave education with a dislike for learning.²

The UN pledged to increase investment in education, while the EU committed 8% of its humanitarian budget to the sector. The Global Partnership for Education pledged \$2 billion (£1.5 billion) toward education projects by 2020.

Youth unemployment

Education systems have failed to keep pace with global changes, leaving YP unprepared for future jobs.³ Based on models that were put in place over a century ago, schools still taught students to be 'good workers' performing repetitive tasks, rather than 'good thinkers' generating original solutions.

Many policymakers did not believe that creativity is central to the success of STEM-related fields. Outdated traditions and institutional inertia created roadblocks to talent development.

Low learning outcomes trapped YP in low-paid and insecure jobs, thus perpetuating cycles of poverty.

In Kenya, unemployment rates were 67% for YP aged 15-34; annually, over one million YP entered the labour market without any skills.⁴

In Africa, YP aged 15-24 made up 40% of the workforce and 60% of unemployed labour.⁵

Although 57% of CEOs prioritise employing 'creative talent' to grow their companies and 'instil creativity throughout organisations,'⁶ they had difficulty finding applicants who are creative, as only 24% of new workforce entrants with college degrees have 'excellent' creativity/innovation skills.⁷

Teaching

In Kenya, teachers often lack the necessary skills or motivation. The teaching profession did not attract the most capable students. In 14 sub-Saharan countries, the average grade six teacher performed no better on reading tests than the highest-performing students in that grade.

¹ 'Learning to Realize Education's Promise' report, The World Bank, 2018.

² Member communication of The Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), July 2023.

³ 'Realizing Human Potential in the Fourth Industrial Revolution' report, World Economic Forum, 2017.

⁴ The Federation of Kenya Employers, <https://www.fke-kenya.org/policy-issues/youth-employment#:~:text=Although%20the%20overall%20unemployment%20in,unemployment%20rate%20of%2067%20percent>.

⁵ 'Learning to Realize Education's Promise' report, The World Bank, 2018, p.10.

⁶ IBM 2010 Global CEO Study surveyed more than 1,500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide.

⁷ 'Ready to Innovate' report, J. Lichtenberg, C. Wook, and M. Wright, The Conference Board, 2008.



The lecture-based teaching model remained dominant, leaving little time for practical work or creative problem-solving. The number of teachers was low, and teacher absenteeism was high.¹

In Kenya, there were 31 public teacher-training institutions in 2007. However, teacher education lagged behind that of most developed countries. The major challenges facing the profession were the relationship between teachers and learners - very important to CE - as well as teacher recruitment and career development.

In 2007, the pupil-to-teacher ratio for primary education was 42.9. Almost 80% of the government's education budget was allocated to teachers' salaries. Quality assurance and standards were ineffective, suffering from inadequate funding and authority. Schools were infrequently inspected.

Kenya Vision 2030 and New Constitution 2010

In 2008, Kenya adopted its Vision 2030, which placed greater emphasis on the link between education and the labour market, and the need to create entrepreneurial skills and competencies:

'All citizens will have to embrace entrepreneurship, perform more non-routine tasks, be capable of more complex problem-solving, be willing and able to take more decisions, and assume more responsibility.'²

It declared that education plays a fundamental role in driving the three key pillars: the economic pillar (to achieve a 10% GDP growth rate); the social pillar (to improve the quality of life for all Kenyans); and the political pillar (to move into the future as one nation and envision a democratic system).

In 2010, a new Kenyan Constitution was accepted that proclaimed a right to free education, and Kenya ratified a number of international conventions, including:

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 17;
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Article 11;
- International Convention on Social and Economic Rights, Article 13;
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 28, 29 and 30.

Kenya curriculum

In 2007, MASK identified a critical gap: creativity education (CE) was limited, and its pedagogy was fractured. Creativity was mistaken for art, seen as a luxury, irrelevant, and even 'idle,' and was considered impossible to teach. Tkachuk's London-based colleagues believed that 'creativity is not for Africa's reality'.

The Kenyan curriculum reviews of 2002, 2004, and 2007 found that the '8-4-4 education system'³ was disconnected from the job market, with minimal CE elements.

While 'Creative Arts' was part of the primary education curriculum, it was rarely taught due to its undervaluation. 'The value of the arts has not been recognised.'⁴

¹ 'Learning to Realize Education's Promise', World Development Report, World Bank, 2018.

² 'Aligning Education and Training to the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and Kenya Vision 2030 and beyond' report, 2012.

³ Eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education, and four years of basic university degree.

⁴ 'Summative Evaluation of the Primary and Secondary Education Curriculum' report, KICD, 2010.

Art lessons focused on technical skills, rather than fostering imagination and originality.

In 2009, the East African Community (EAC) called for a new curriculum to promote imaginative understanding, reinforcing the need for CE.

How MASK improves the quality of education

MASK places creativity education (CE) at the core of mainstream learning, prioritising creativity as a core skill that empowers young people (YP) to become innovative problem solvers, capable not just successfully navigating the world, but also actively shaping it.

In 2016, the WEF 'New Vision for Education' report stated: 'How effectively education fosters creativity is now at the centre of the relationship between education and future economic prosperity.'¹

MASK's approach resolves the following needs:

1. Futureness:

As technology rapidly transforms the world, CE is more urgent than ever. It addresses both immediate workforce demands and future job needs. Children starting school today will enter a job market that demands high-level of creative thinking.

Leading African industrialist and MASK's supporter Dr. Manu Chandaria said at a MASK event: "*Survival in the 21st century will be very, very difficult, and without creativity, it is not possible.*"

2. Deep learning:

MASK believes that low learning outcomes are exacerbated by the lack of creativity education in schools. Creativity, as the ability to connect knowledge, is essential for fostering deep learning. As Ken Robinson said, 'Schools educate children out of creativity, destroying 75% of their innate creativity, and universities eliminate the other 25%'.²

3. Impact on young people:

- Enhances problem-solving abilities, work-readiness skills, artistic excellence, self-awareness, empowerment, citizenship, self-efficacy, and self-sufficiency.
- Improves employability (fivefold).³
- Enhances entrepreneurship (as nine out of ten start-ups fail due to a lack of creative problem-solving skills⁴).
- Strengthens leadership (creativity drives leadership, as highlighted in the IBM 2010 Global CEO Study).
- Reduces youth frustration and disruptiveness, empowering them to grow into self-sufficient individuals.⁵

¹ WEF 2016 'New Vision for Education' report.

² Ken Robinson, 'Do Schools Kill Creativity?' video, TED, 2006.

³ Edward De Bono, *Why So Stupid?*, Blackhall, 2003.

⁴ E. Griffin, 'Why Start-ups Fail', *Fortune Magazine*, September 2014.

⁵ Gail Lewis, 'The need to create: constructive and destructive behaviour in creatively gifted children', Northwestern State University, *Gifted Education International*, Vol. 7, 1991.

4. Impact on educators and policymakers:

By developing operational knowledge (the MASK CE Model that includes facilitator training framework), MASK offers valuable educational and policy resources.

Today, MASK's work supports the Kenyan national curriculum that recognises creativity as a 'core competence'.

5. Impact on economy and community:

MASK's approach empowers entire communities by engaging them in creativity and nurturing an appreciation of creativity and innovation, fostering sustainability and long-term development.

2. Advancing access, inclusion, and equity

Baseline

Access, inclusion, and equity are the foundations of quality education, which every child should be able to access. Global Goal 4 is to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education.' Yet, access, gender, poverty and disability continue to limit education opportunities.

In Kenya, the government provided for inclusive and equitable education. Schools were not allowed to exclude or discriminate on the basis of difference. They were required to meet the needs of children regardless of gender, social class, ethnicity and ability level. They were asked to identify excluded children and to ensure their enrolment.

Access

Globally, one in five children are excluded from education. Three quarters of all primary age children may never set foot in school. More than half of the world's children who are not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Kenya, the education sector has experienced massive expansion in enrolment due to the introduction of free education and the growing number of schools.

Primary schools increased from 6,058 in 1963 to 27,489 in 2009; the number of secondary schools increased from 151 to 7,308 over the same period. In 2009 there were 818 technical, industrial, vocational, and entrepreneurial training institutions, and 32 universities.

Access to schooling in Kenya was as follows:

- primary education: in 2007, Gross Enrolment Rate¹ (GER) 59.3%, Net Enrolment Rate² (NER) 42.1%; in 2009, GER 115%, and NER 96.7%;
- secondary education: in 2009, GER 48.8%, NER 32.7%; enrolment grew from around 30,000 students in 1963 to 1.7 million students in 2009;
- despite free education, almost 4.7 million children were out of school in 2009 according to the Kenyan Census, as schools began charging various fees, including examination and boarding fees;

¹ Gross Enrolment Rate is the ratio between all students enrolled and the population of official primary education age. As over- and under-aged students are included this ratio, it can exceed 100%.

² Net Enrolment Rate is the number of boys and girls enrolled, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

- in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), such as Samburu, Turkana, Maasai and Pokot, and urban slums, education attainment levels were low for lack of schools, the costs, the perceived inappropriateness of the curriculum, as well as local ethnic conflicts, insecurity, migration and displacement challenges. For example, in Turkana the primary education NER was 25% compared to the national average;
- access for children with special needs was relatively low: there were 3,464 special needs educational institutions, with 734 in the eastern and 56 in the north-eastern regions. There were only 17 secondary schools for learners with disabilities. These children were two-and-a-half times more likely than their peers to never go to school. Globally, there are up to 150 million children living with a disability – 80% live in developing countries. The main challenges include cultural prejudice and attitudes, funding, facilities, and teachers.

Gender parity

Gender parity in Kenya was as follows:

- primary education: in 2007, the gender parity index¹ was 0.94; in 2009, it was 0.98; secondary education: in 2009, the gender parity index was 0.96, an increase from 0.75 in 1990;
- completion rates were better for boys: in 2009, 88.3% for boys and 78.2% for girls;
- transition rates from primary to secondary were better for girls: in 2007, were 56.5% for boys and 63.2% for girls; in 2009, 64.1% for boys and 69.1% for girls;
- secondary education enrolment: in 2007, 639,393 boys and 540,874 girls; in 2009, 914,971 boys and 786,530 girls; in 2007, GER: 50.9% boys / 46.3% girls and NER: 29.8 % boys / 27.9% girls;
- at university level: in 2006, 68,345 males and 43,884 females were enrolled; in 2009, 111,050 males and 69,928 females;
- over 23% of Kenyan girls (3% of boys) are married before their 18th birthday, and 4% are married before the age of 15.



Poverty

In 2017, 82% of the global wealth generated went to just 1% of the world's population.² According to Global Goal 10, 'Reduced Inequalities,' 'too much of the world's wealth was held by a very small group of people, leading to financial and social discrimination of the majority.'

In low-income countries, an average student performed worse than 95% of the students in high-income countries.³ Poverty undermined early childhood learning. Deprivations — in terms of nutrition, unhealthy environments, or lack of nurture by caregivers — had long-lasting effects and impaired infants' brain development. Even in a good school, deprived children learned less.

Poverty was the main reason why YP failed to complete schooling. In Kenya, in 2005-06, almost 46% of the population was poor.⁴ Children from those families underachieved due to malnutrition and ill health

¹ Quotient of the number of females to the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education.

² K. Hjelmgard, 'Vast majority of new wealth last year went to top 1%', *USA Today*, 2018, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/01/22/vast-majority-new-wealth-last-year-went-top-1/1051947001/>

³ According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

⁴ According to the Kenya Integrated Budget and Household Survey (KIHBS), 2005/06.

Attitude to creativity

Many communities neglected, stifled, or even discouraged young people's creative potential.

In 2009, the Kenyan Ministry of Education highlighted the need for strategies to engage communities in a unified approach, a challenge further emphasised in a key policy document released in 2012.¹

How MASK advances access, inclusion, and equity

MASK's approach to addressing this issue is to integrate creativity not only into education but also into society. MASK believes that creativity education (CE) should be universal—considered a fundamental right and societal standard that transcends socio-economic, geographical, and systemic barriers.

This approach goes beyond an ethical imperative. Improving access to CE is a strategic necessity: only when everyone is creative, does society prosper. This approach sets a new benchmark for equitable, future-proof education.

Key strategies include:

1. **Strategic advocacy and policy engagement:** MASK shifts societal mindsets by engaging policymakers, educators, business leaders, and communities to embrace creativity as a core educational principle. For example, the MASK Awards influence public discourse and mobilise stakeholders.
2. **Leveraging cross-sector partnerships:** MASK establishes collaborations with educators, government, and private sector to drive long-term policy reform. It positions creativity as an economic asset by linking CE to workforce development, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
3. **Empowering young people:** MASK shifts from passive learning to active agency, helping young people see themselves as changemakers, equipping them with work-ready skills like leadership and entrepreneurship. MASK youth have launched school arts and farming initiatives, established community gyms, and created recycling enterprises.
4. **Scalability and adaptation:** MASK's work is adaptable across diverse cultural, economic, and geographic contexts to ensure that communities can integrate CE with minimal resources.
5. **Gender and disability inclusion:** MASK ensures that gender biases and disability-related barriers do not exclude individuals. It has actively integrated its work into disability-focused schools.
6. **Cost-free access:** MASK offers free services, ensuring economic status does not determine access to skill development.
7. **Reaching remote and underserved schools.** MASK worked in geographically marginalised regions where traditional education infrastructure is limited, such as Laikipia, Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Amboseli, Narok, as well as Nakuru, Naivasha, and Nairobi in Kenya.
8. **Embedding cultural inclusion.** MASK recognises that CE thrives within cultural identity, and has incorporated local artistic practices in its work, ensuring learning remains culturally authentic and relevant.

¹ 'Aligning Education and Training to the Constitution of Kenya and Kenya Vision 2030 and beyond' report, the Kenyan Department of Education, 2012.

Endline study - a wider impact

World

From 2012 onward, creativity became recognised as an essential skill by key world organisations such as the UN, UNESCO, WEF¹, McKinsey Global Institute², Confederation of British Industry³, Kingston University⁴, LinkedIn, and others.

In 2012, the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) began assessing 'innovation', and in 2020, it introduced an assessment of 'creative thinking'.⁵

In 2015, the UN established the Global Goals for Sustainable Development challenges including Goal 4 'Quality Education', that states that education should 'unlock the imagination', which clearly aligns with MASK's vision and existing methods.

Find out how MASK contributes to the Global Goals agenda on <https://maskcreate.org/about/mask-global-goal>

UK

In the UK in 2013, the new National Curriculum put knowledge at the centre of schooling (and replaced the pupil-led ways of working with a teacher-centred educational culture), arguing that 'shared knowledge is the best way to achieve social justice in society', and 'a knowledge-rich education is a driver of true meritocracy'.

The government has clarified that a knowledge-rich curriculum considers the development of human creativity and appreciation of the arts a vital goal. In the Houses of Parliament in 2017, School Standards Minister Nick Gibbs said, in his speech titled 'The importance of knowledge-based education', and quoting Hywel Jones of West London Free School: "We believe that independence of mind, not compliance with socio-economic expectations, is the goal of a good education."

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Department for Education recommended developing 'programmes that celebrate each young person's creative achievements' and 'provide training and development for teachers'.

Kenya

Kenya Vision 2030 aspires to transform Kenya into a newly industrialising, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens.

In 2012, the Kenyan Department of Education drafted a new Policy Framework for Education.⁶

It stated that it should develop the child's ability in imaginative thinking, problem-solving, and self-expression, and develop teachers' appreciation of innovations in the field of education and an ability to utilise them.

In 2013, a new Kenyan Basic Education Act⁷ proclaimed that 'quality schooling is fundamental to human and economic development, elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance, and the standards of living', and should focus on solving challenges, including:

¹ 'The Future of Jobs' report, World Economic Forum, 2016.

² 'Skill Shift: Automation and the Future of the Workforce', McKinsey Global Institute, 2018.

³ 'Education and Skill' survey, The Confederation of British Industry, 2016.

⁴ 'The Future Skills League Table' report, Kingston University, June 2021.

⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/innovation/>

⁶ 'Aligning Education and Training to the Constitution of Kenya and Kenya Vision 2030 and beyond' report, The Kenyan Department of Education, 2012, <https://schoolsnetkenya.com/documents/education-policy-framework-of-kenya.pdf>

⁷ <http://ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/94495/117651/F-1505056566/KEN94495.pdf>



- a shift from knowledge reproduction to knowledge production;
- stimulation of enterprise and innovation;
- improvement of access to education and elimination of inequalities.¹

In 2014, the KICD developed the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) to encourage students' innovativeness. It includes:

- thinking skills (the ability to synthesise, evaluate, and apply information);
- observation and investigative skills (the ability to find and record information, observe, review, and assess);
- application and transferable skills (the ability to make and create things);
- social and ethical skills (the ability to understand, empathise, respond appropriately, and to make wise ethical decisions);
- entrepreneurial skills (the ability to take independent and productive action);
- talent potential development at all levels.

CBC's philosophy: 'Education in Kenya shall focus on the development of individual potential in a holistic and integrated manner.'

CBC's vision: 'All citizens embrace entrepreneurship and perform more non-routine tasks, are capable of more complex problem-solving and decision-making, deeper understanding of work tasks, require less supervision, and assume more responsibility.'

Mission: 'To create an education and training environment that equips learners with desired values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and competencies, particularly in technology, innovation and entrepreneurship.'

Guiding principles included: an education that prioritises innovation; focuses on entrepreneurship; and identifies and nurtures learners' talents and gifts.

National goals of education included: to promote skills for the country's development; individual development and self-fulfilment; moral values, social equality and responsibility; and development of cultures.

Objectives of primary education included: to acquire creativity and communication skills; develop aesthetic values and appreciate own and other people's cultures; develop individual talents; and promote social responsibility.

Objectives of secondary education included: to acquire knowledge/skills/attitudes for the development of the self and the nation; gain respect for own and other people's cultures; develop ability for inquiry, critical thinking and rational judgement; enhance enjoyment in learning; and identify and develop individual talents.

Performance targets included:

- improve the quality of education and training so that Kenya's measurable learning outcomes are in the upper quartile on recognised international standardized tests by 2017;
- ensure access and equity across all levels of Basic Education by 2020; and eliminate gender and regional disparities by 2017;
- in partnership with TSC, orient teachers to the new curriculum by 2014 and implement a continuing teacher professional development programme; ensure that all schools meet minimum quality standards of teaching and learning by 2017.

In 2017, the pilots of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), which recognises creativity as a core competence, were introduced in Kenyan pre-primary schools.

By 2018, the literacy rate had risen to 81.54%, marking a 2.8% increase from 2014 and a 9.54% increase from 2007.

¹ 'Aligning Education and Training to the Constitution of Kenya and Kenya Vision 2030 and beyond' report, The Kenyan Department of Education, 2012, p. 29.

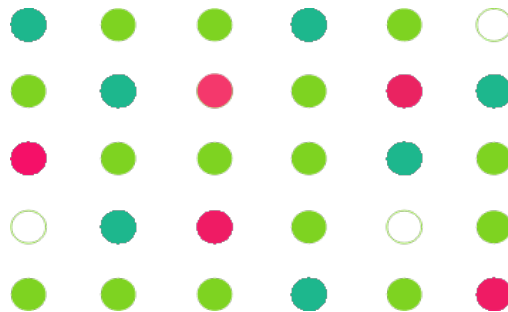
However, in 2020 the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) reports that further improvements are still needed.

In 2020, the results showed gaps in student performance:

- 44% of primary school children achieved minimum proficiency in reading, 29% in mathematics, 44% in English, 37% in Kiswahili, and 37% in science;
- with 47% of secondary school graduates scoring a D¹ or lower in 2013, rising to 70% in 2017; and then falling to 68% in 2018; 61% in 2019; and 55% in 2020.²

The reasons for these gaps in student performance could be lack of:

- effective CE pedagogy with a proper integration of art practices;
- appropriate training of school teachers and tutors of teaching colleges in CE delivery;
- CE reference books and teacher's manuals.



¹ KNEC uses a 12-point grading system for Secondary Education ranging from A to E (A, A-, B, B-, C, C-, D, D-, E).

² Table 5, 'Overall National Grade Summary for 2020 KCSE Examination', KNEC.

External, independent evaluation

In 2011, Brittany Glenn, a Master's student in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London, selected MASK as the focus of her dissertation research. She traveled to Kenya to interview teachers and students and wrote her dissertation titled **'The Impact of Arts Education in the Developing World: A Case Study of a NGO in Kenya'**.

'I have chosen MASK to work with because of its unique non-formal mobile format and its focus on arts education. They work with a wide variety of schools and children from different backgrounds.'

Below are some key quotations from her work. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Page 2: 'Numerous positive impacts of MASK are presented, which further justify the importance of arts education in developing creativity, empathy, and a wide range of skills important in the developing world.'

Page 3: 'My fieldwork in Kenya would not have been possible without Alla Tkachuk and John Githiri of Mobile Art School in Kenya (MASK) and their dedication and appreciation of the arts.'

'From the moment I met Alla she has been nothing but supportive and encouraging. Her optimism is endless and truly inspiring.'

Page 10: 'I found the organisation to be a unique and inspiring one and approached Alla with my research idea a month later. She was, and has continued to be, very supportive.'

Page 44: 'Not only does MASK give students the opportunity to learn skills they can use to make a living outside of school, evidence found it can also increase their confidence.'

Page 46: '...students and teachers... spoke of creativity, teamwork and bringing the community together as purpose of MASK and arts education.'

Page 47: 'One teacher believed that MASK had taught her students the ability to "improvise" ... and think outside the box... and use their imagination more 'thinking from a different angle' in their other classes as well.'

Page 48: 'Multiple teachers also spoke about the way MASK has made the students appreciate each other more.'

'... I found strong evidence of the positive relationship between MASK's art education and students' improvements in creative thinking, achievement motivation, cognitive engagement, self-confidence, and empathy for others.'

'Through the [MASK] workshops, I witnessed creative 'out of the box' thinking, such as the painting below by a student in primary school. This links with the research relating arts education to confidence and creativity (Deasy, 2002; Bamford, 2006).'

Page 49: 'One teacher did say that the students in the [MASK] arts club are the best students in the school, but this could be for many reasons and cannot be linked with art explicitly.'

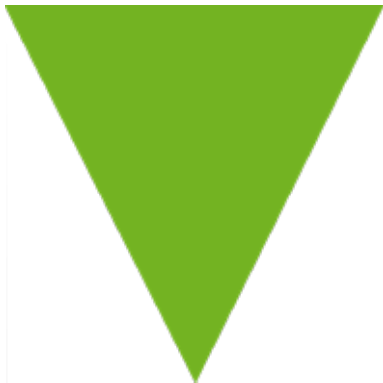
"MASK has changed our school in a very positive way. Simply because the learner's attitude, the learner's self image, the learner's future is also promised." – Head Teacher, Primary School, Laikipia.'

Page 53: 'For many students, MASK introduced them to art. One said, "Before MASK I did not know about art. What is painting, what is drawing, I did not know."

Page 54: 'One of the main benefits MASK has given many of the schools is the ability for students to express themselves, especially when done through the peace-building workshops put on by MASK.'

Page 65: 'MASK's impact on its participants was widespread, with benefits that corresponded with previous research on the subject in other areas of the world, as outlined in Chapter Two.'

'MASK was found to be influential and impactful... '



MASK Creativity Education Model

MASK's innovative work revolves around the **MASK Creativity Education (CE) Model**, a scalable education reform framework designed to address today's and tomorrow's socio-economic challenges by cultivating innovative thinkers and active changemakers.

Unlike traditional rote learning, the model places creativity at the heart of education. It integrates policy, curriculum, and pedagogy into actionable strategies for both educators and students, bridging art, practice, the classroom, and the community.

The model is the result of 18 years of practical research by Tkachuk, shaped through cycles of designing, testing, and refining solutions across diverse contexts.

The model disrupts traditional approaches by:

- embedding creativity as a core element of learning;
- teaching creativity directly through dedicated lessons;
- defining creativity as visual thinking and integrating visual art practices;
- fostering practical creativity.

It introduces new approaches, including:

- enhancing deep learning through creativity;
- sourcing facilitators locally, from diverse professional backgrounds, including former students;
- fostering creativity both in the classroom *and* in the community.

The approach has positively impacted the lives of many of our YP, as evidenced by some of their testimonials:

'Before I started with MASK, I did not know I was creative. MASK helped me to become an entrepreneur and a leader.' - Joel

'Thank you, MASK, for your amazing work and the great effort you put in to ensure the growth and nurturing of creativity in Kenya. You are indeed the driver of change in our society.' - Stephen

'The MASK experience is an absolute game-changer for my creative occupation.' - Agnes

'MASK gave me the opportunity and made me believe in my potential as a creator, innovator, and entrepreneur. MASK has changed how I think. I see myself now not only as an upcoming doctor, but as a medical entrepreneur. I have ideas that can potentially transform the medical sector in Kenya.' - Danielle

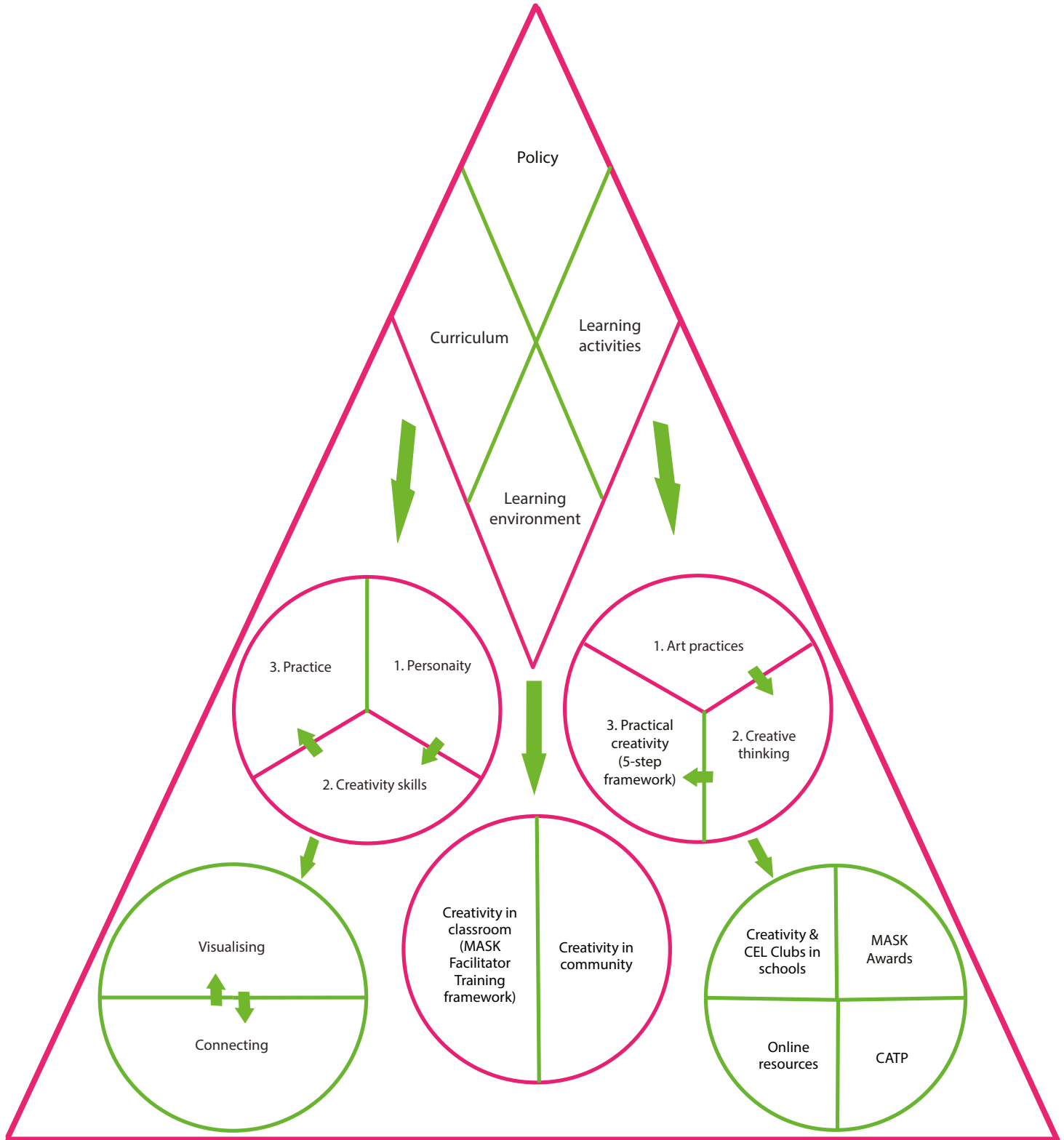
'MASK Awards make us more innovative and lead us to inventions that can make the world a better place.' - John

'MASK developed my habit for innovation and empowered me beyond my dreams.' - Hellen

'MASK inspires me to strive for excellence and contribute meaningfully in my field.' - Lee

The following section presents our model through descriptions and diagrams.

The diagram below provides a complete overview of our model.



Policy

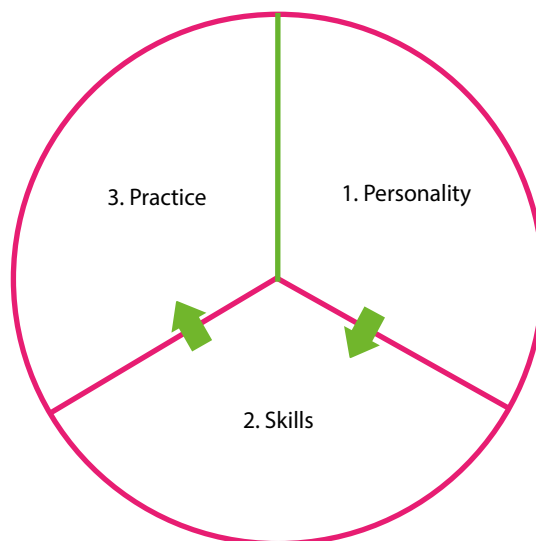
The foundational policy principles that underpin the model's methodology are as follows:

1. Creativity must be embedded at the core of mainstream education and society.
2. Creativity is visual thinking; art practices are essential for developing visualisation.
3. Creativity should be explicitly nurtured through dedicated lessons from an early age.
4. Ethics must be the foundation for innovation to ensure the best outcomes for everyone.
5. Creativity education must be universal. This is not just an ethical imperative but a strategic necessity: only when everyone is creative can humanity truly evolve.

Curriculum framework

The curriculum is structured around key dimensions:

1. **Personality:** Cultivating traits such as curiosity, perseverance, future-oriented thinking, and ethics.
2. **Skills:** Developing visualisation and idea generation skills.
3. **Practice:** Equipping students with hands-on, practical problem-solving skills and essential work-ready skills, including leadership, entrepreneurship, team-creativity, collaboration, and communication, while applying creativity to real-life challenges.





“

MASK sparks creativity. Education in Africa does not place as much emphasis on the arts and creativity as in the West. As a result, we see the differences between children raised here and those raised in the West. If we fail to nurture creativity and innovation, we will never reach our full potential.

”

Stephen Kariuki, Member of the Kenyan Parliament, 2015

Learning environment - MASK Facilitator Training framework

MASK learning environment integrates creativity both in the classroom *and* in the community.

Creativity in the classroom

We developed the **MASK Facilitator Training framework** and trained over **60** facilitators in Kenya.

Key principles of the framework:

1. We hire our facilitators from diverse professional backgrounds, including school teachers, artists, IT graduates, and more, which helps address facilitator shortages.
2. We recruit former MASK graduates as facilitators, with the peer-learning approach proving to be particularly effective. While training school teachers presented challenges, former MASK students brought a deep understanding of MASK's methods, first-hand experience, and a natural rapport with learners, fostering a strong learning environment.
3. We source facilitators locally, which helps tailor creativity education (CE) to meet local needs, ensuring its cultural relevance and maximising impact.

Key principles of facilitation:

1. **Facilitating experimentation and prototyping:** Facilitators inspire students to explore, challenge ideas, and take calculated risks. They ignite imagination by sharing stories of creative role models, demonstrating their own creative thinking, asking thought-provoking questions like 'What can be?' and 'What if?', and fostering a positive attitude toward 'half-baked' ideas. They facilitate prototyping to allow students to experiment and learn through trial and error. Art activities are an excellent way to engage in prototyping, visualising, and turning ideas into tangible forms.
2. **Ensuring a safe learning space—'praise and reward':** Facilitators create an open and inclusive environment where students feel safe and motivated. They build trust by ensuring the elimination of judgment or destructive criticism. They design learning experiences that are clear, challenging, culturally relevant, and visually engaging, and provide early opportunities for success to enhance confidence and self-esteem. Facilitators guide students in balancing creativity with conformity, encouraging them to articulate goals while offering thoughtful and constructive feedback.
3. **Cultivating enjoyment in the creative process:** Creativity flourishes in an engaging, fun, and enjoyable environment. Facilitators create a playful, friendly, and supportive atmosphere, encouraging collaboration, and incorporating humor. They celebrate effort, reward active participation, and empower students to take the lead in shaping learning activities. Free movement, open discussion, and ample time for creative exploration ensure students remain motivated and confident.

Facilitators record and report on learning through the following methods:

- Putting on exhibitions: They organise exhibitions and displays of the learned outcomes at the end of each workshop, either in the classroom or at school (recognising that creativity can be both 'taught and caught') to enable everyone to share and engage in learning.
- Setting success criteria: They track progress by working collaboratively with students to set success criteria and self-assessment methods, guiding them towards their next steps.
- Recording the learning process: Through photographic and video logs, and documentation, they help students reflect on their creative journeys.

Creativity in the community

The MASK CE Model fosters a multi-level, systemic approach: one that extends beyond the classroom to engage communities, institutions, and policymakers.

MASK believes that integrating creativity into the curriculum is not enough. The goal is to cultivate a broad ecosystem where creativity education is not just an option, but a societal standard—a fundamental right for all.

Through MASK’s local and national initiatives, such as exhibitions and MASK Awards, our charity fosters a national dialogue and encourages greater community engagement with creativity—driving long-term societal change to ensure that creativity thrives in perpetuity.

The diagram below outlines the **MASK Facilitator Training framework**.





“

Before I started with MASK, I did not know I was creative. MASK helped me to become an entrepreneur and a leader.

Joel

”

Learning activities

MASK learning activities include:

- **Art practices:** Focused on teaching visualization, experimentation, and prototyping.
- **Creative thinking exercises:** Focused on developing idea-generation skills.
- **Practical creativity:** Focused on applying creativity in practice (the MASK Practical Creativity framework).
- **Community engagement and advocacy events:** Focused on promoting the value of creativity education.



Illustration by MASK volunteer Yunhan Yang

1. Art practices: a core pillar of creativity learning

MASK art practices:

- include all arts, such as painting, designing, performing, dancing, singing, making music, storytelling, games, and digital art; and explore a wide range of techniques and materials, including recycled and found objects;
- focus on observation, visualisation, experimentation, and prototyping;
- employ exhibitions as learning tools, recognising that creativity can be 'taught and caught.'
- ensure early exposure to arts;
- exclude any form of imitation.

MASK defines creativity as *visual* thinking, characterised by abstract and dynamic *mental images* connecting into new ideas.¹ Surveying of 100 leading physicists, mathematician Jacques Hadamard found that creative thinking is deeply reliant on mental imagery.² Albert Einstein described his thought process as being made up of 'signs and images reproduced and combined.' Similarly, IDEO Founder Tom Kelley stated, 'Innovation begins with an eye.'

As a core pillar of CE, early exposure to rich visual arts is essential. Art serves as the philosopher's stone, transforming young minds into tomorrow's innovators. This philosophy is embodied in MASK's motto: **Art fosters creativity, creativity drives innovation, and innovation transforms the world.** Art is a fundamental force for technological, social, and economic advancement.

The creative process involves three intricately connected and continuously refined stages:

1. Observation: gathering information and forming mental images (visualisation stage).
2. Integration: selecting mental images based on specific goals and connecting them to generate ideas (idea generation stage).
3. Implementation: transforming ideas into practical results (innovation stage).

Within this process, art teaches students to:

1. understand visual complexity: students learn to observe the dynamics of shapes, texture, sizes, colors, and movement; discover how to discern patterns and structure and how to abstract; and practice to fuse images with meaning;
2. form, transform, and connect *mental images* into new ideas.

Research shows that art significantly improves academic results, and strengthens leadership, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy.^{3 4 5 6}

¹ Michael Michalko, *Cracking Creativity*, 2001. Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, 1969.

² Jacques Hadamard, *The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*, Dover Publications, 1945.

³ Adelma Roach, 'Living the Arts through Language + Learning: A Report on Community-Based Youth Organizations', Americans for the Arts, 1998.

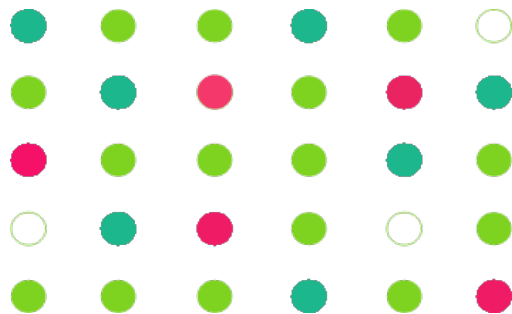
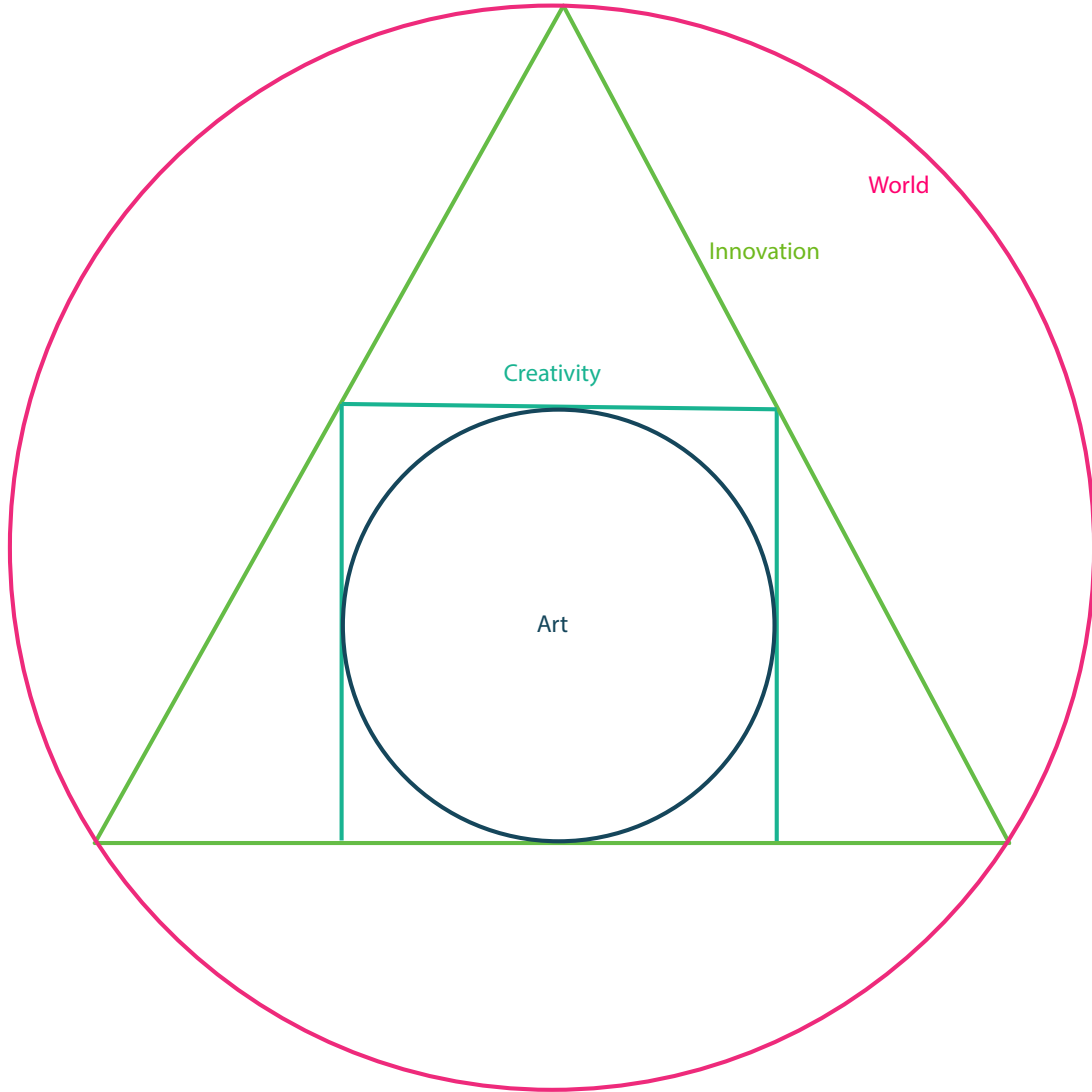
⁴ 'The Ready to Innovate' report, The Conference Board, 2008.

⁵ James Catterall, Susan Dumais, Gillian Hampden-Thompson, 'The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies Research Report', National Endowment of the Arts, 2012; Richard Deasy, 'Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development', Arts Education Partnership, 2002.

⁶ Dr Michael S. Gazzaniga, 'Learning, Arts, and the Brain' report, The Dana Foundation, 2008.

MASK philosophers' stone

Art shapes creativity, creativity shapes innovation, innovation shapes the world.



2. Creative thinking

Creative individuals deliberately challenge their thinking into new patterns using various 'provocation' tools and tactics to connect knowledge across different domains. This process is what Steve Jobs called "Think different." With practice, these new ways of thinking become second nature, allowing ideas to flow effortlessly.

Our students practise these creative thinking techniques:

- forming analogies and associations;
- making connections and combinations;
- reversing assumptions;
- resemblance thinking;
- collective thinking;
- Edward de Bono techniques (six hats technique).

3. Practical creativity: MASK Practical Creativity framework

MASK goes beyond fostering creativity—it equips students with practical tools to apply creativity in real-world contexts. Through the **MASK Practical Creativity framework**—a step-by-step guide to the innovation process—students tackle real-life challenges in their schools and communities. In doing so, they develop essential work-ready skills, including leadership, entrepreneurship, team-creativity (generating ideas in a team), collaboration, and communication.

MASK Practical Creativity framework

The framework follows five key steps:

1. Describe the problem: Define the challenge in a way that encourages innovative solutions.
2. Brainstorm: Set goals, determine innovation directions, and generate ideas using various creative thinking techniques.
3. Evaluate and plan: Assess solutions against defined goals and select the most viable options.
4. Communicate: Master the principles of effective visual communication and develop strategies to overcome resistance to change.
5. Implement: Apply solutions in real-world settings while improving organisational skills, building partnerships, and fostering collaboration.

MASK workshops structure

- Student grouping is flexible, based on age, grade, or activity.
- Learning extends beyond the classroom to outdoor spaces, galleries, and communities.

A typical 30 min to 1 hour workshop includes:

1. Displaying learning materials (posters).
2. Engaging in a learning activity.
3. Sharing learning outcomes (eg, exhibitions).
4. Reviewing skills learned and planning the next workshop's activity.



“

Governments in Africa don't support art as they should. MASK is giving young Africans their humanity back.

Ibrahim El-Salahi, renowned artist and MASK Patron, 2014

”



“

Without creativity, the world would come to a standstill and we humans would be unwell.

Regina Mwihaki, 17, Anne Njeri, 16

”



Programmes

MASK provides a range of interrelated programmes, each crafted to support and build upon the others:

1. **Creativity Clubs** nurture creativity.
2. **Creativity for Entrepreneurship and Leadership (CEL) Clubs** foster practical creativity.
3. **MASK Awards** rewards young creativity and innovation and promotes CE on a national scale.
4. **Creativity in Action Teachers Project (CATP)** supports teachers with training and resources.

MASK helps develop:

Skills:

1. **Innovative problem-solving** essential for unlocking new ways of learning, thinking, and doing.
2. **Work-ready skills** such as leadership, entrepreneurship, teamwork, and communication, all of which enhance employability and social equity and mobility.
3. **Artistic excellence** that enhances the status of art, artists, and arts education (education through the arts).

Self-awareness and empowerment:

Beyond skills, MASK instils a sense of purpose and meaning, cultivating:

1. **Ethics and responsibility:** Young people (YP) assess innovation for its long-term impact, ensuring that it is sustainable rather than driven by selfish or reckless pursuits.
2. **Active citizenship:** YP address Global Goals challenges, motivated to drive social change.
3. **Self-efficacy and self-sufficiency:** MASK empowers YP to recognise their creative potential. A quotation from a former beneficiary: *'Before MASK, I didn't know I was creative. MASK helped me become an entrepreneur, a leader, and think outside the box. I feel I make a difference.'*

Knowledge:

MASK has developed:

1. Operational knowledge (model, programmes, books, manuals).
2. Creative output (see page 72 for details).

Programmes are outlined on the following pages.

Case study 1

How MASK empowered Danielle's entrepreneurship

Danielle, 18, won MASK Awards 2019. She recollects her experience: 'I have been participating in MASK Awards since I was 15. MASK Awards motivated me to create entrepreneurial solutions that can transform the world.'

I submitted my first entry in 2017, an idea for a cupboard that I built out of styrofoam. Being nervous, not knowing what the judges would think of it, I gave it a shot, and before I knew it, I won a cash prize, 3,000 Ksh. The next year I was motivated to think even bigger and better, and entered an idea that earned me a bigger cash prize, 5,000 Ksh. The idea was called THE VITALACE. It was a necklace with a microchip that can detect health problem signs and connect patients to doctors, chemists or hospitals to help them avoid congestion in hospitals, minimise the risk of contagious diseases, and improve quality of care.

The following year, my entry was an idea for satellites that can improve internet connectivity and enable young people to act as mental therapists to each other. This idea earned me a prize – a three-month paid internship at the Heroes for Change, Unilever's social leadership programme. There, I was paid 90,000 Ksh in total and worked for their social media platform, teaching young people about community hygiene.

It never occurred to me that I would get a paid job at a top company without a university degree. The skills that I learned there now enable me to work as a marketing and social media consultant while I am studying for my medical degree at university. I have become confident in my writing skills, team work and leadership. My creativity has spiralled up.



I would like to share this message with my peers. I started from the bottom. I did not wait for a perfect moment to be creative. I just went for an opportunity. Because creativity activates and grows every time you use it.

Creativity is intelligence at play. And when it does, you innovate and make the world a better place. You lead and become successful.

I am grateful to MASK for giving me the opportunity and making me believe in my potential as a creator, innovator and entrepreneur.

MASK Awards has changed how I think. I see myself now not only as an upcoming doctor, but as a medical entrepreneur. I have ideas that can potentially transform the medical sector in Kenya.'

Danielle speaks at the MASK Awards Ceremony, KICD, Nairobi, October 2022

MASK Awards

MASK Awards is an international platform that celebrates young creativity in the arts and ideas, and promotes creativity education (CE) at scale.

Key features include:

1. All schools and young people (YP) under 25 can participate. They submit their entries in two categories: art (any medium) and innovation (solutions to Global Goals challenges). All entries are free and submitted online. A panel of judges selects the winners and awards prizes (titles, cash, or paid internships at companies) at a ceremony usually held in Nairobi or online.
2. The programme emphasises a vital role of art in shaping innovation.
3. The programme reaches its participants directly through national media partnerships, including *The Star* newspaper (Kenya), Citizen TV (Kenya), and Google Ads.
4. Shortlisted entries are exhibited at key venues and online. A participant emphasised the value of this feature: *"I enjoyed seeing art from all over the world because other competitions I've applied to don't display the work of other participants. I really loved looking at all the shortlisted pieces and seeing what everyone had to offer—it was truly fascinating."*

Key impact includes:

Rewarding young people:

1. Rewarding creativity is a key aspect of CE. The programme provides a safe and supportive space for YP to express their creativity, learn from one another, and build networks while collaborating.
2. Over **6,500** young people participated, submitting more than **18,500** creative works from **58** regions in Kenya and **63** countries.
3. A total of **350** prizes, valued at **£22,000**, were awarded to kickstart careers.

Motivating educators:

1. Close to **300** schools participated. A network of **56 Kenyan** schools was built, recognised for their excellence in CE. The Teacher Service Commission expressed an interest in acknowledging creative teachers through MASK Awards.
2. MASK Awards has created a substantial online archive of over **18,500** creative works, serving as both a cultural resource and a tool for educational and youth policy development.

Engaging communities:

1. The programme has fostered community involvement in CE, sparking a national conversation that raises awareness, changes perceptions, and ultimately establishes CE as a core societal value.
2. The initiative has built a network of over **100** world-class young artists and innovators.
3. The programme has held more than **40** exhibitions at leading platforms, reaching over **650,000** people globally.

Winners and alumni have gone on to achieve remarkable success, including:

- Exhibiting internationally, with artists such as Staiice Shitanda, Louis Nderi, Margaret Ngigi, Churchill Ongere, Onesmus Okamar, and Purity Mwede.
- Launching music careers, such as the Cr3w Teflon group.
- Making an impact as entrepreneurs, such as Danielle Wijenje (her story is on the opposite page).

Case study 2

Interview of Lydia, 16, winner of MASK Awards – Emerging Artist of the Year

By MASK Ambassadors Purity Mwende and Joshua Okwoyo, Kenya, January 2025

My name is Lydia, and I'm a Canadian citizen currently living in the USA. I attend high school, and I'm very passionate about art—it's been a big part of my life for as long as I can remember. I've been practicing for years, so receiving this award was an incredibly exciting and meaningful experience for me.

I actually found the MASK Create website through online research. I had been building my portfolio and was looking for opportunities to share my work. I came across the competition and decided to apply, though I never expected to receive any recognition—so it was a wonderful surprise! This was my first time entering the MASK Awards.

MASK Awards focus on creativity and innovation. What does creativity mean to you?

I'd say creativity is about taking ideas and turning them into something real—expressing yourself in ways you haven't explored before. Creativity can influence all areas of life, but it depends on how open a person is to it. For me, I try to incorporate creativity into different aspects of what I do. You have to embrace it for it to have an impact.

Do you believe creativity and innovation are important for our future and a better world?

Definitely! Creativity allows us to approach problems from new perspectives and come up with innovative solutions. To make progress, we need to look at things from different angles. So I think creativity and innovation are essential for driving change.

I submitted four pieces as part of my portfolio, each focusing on storytelling. Previously, my art didn't always carry a deeper meaning, but with these pieces, I wanted to be more intentional. For example, in 'Remembrance', I celebrate the people we care about, in another piece I speak about consumerism.

I primarily use acrylic paint, but to be honest, my materials are a mix-and-match of different paints—gouache, water-based oil paints, and whatever else I have on hand! It's probably not the best approach for longevity, but I enjoy experimenting with different mediums.

Who or what inspires your paintings and artistic journey?

A lot of different things inspire me. Sometimes, it's as simple as a photograph sparking an idea, like with my 'Pageant' painting. In general, when I get excited about an idea, I want to explore it artistically. In the past, I struggled with technique and would get frustrated when my work didn't turn out the way I envisioned. But those mistakes helped me grow. I want to keep improving and building my skills. I've mostly worked independently, but I've taken art classes at school and attended art camps whenever possible. So it's been a mix of personal passion and learning from others. Interestingly, my grandfather was an artist, though I never met him. My younger sister is also creative—she plays the violin.

Does your family support your artistic interests?

Yes, they've always been very supportive. They give me feedback when I ask for it, respect my space when I'm concentrating, and show appreciation for my work.

That's great to hear. In many parts of Africa, the arts aren't as widely supported—there's often a strong push to pursue careers in law, medicine, or engineering. That's something we're working to change at MASK. We aim to break the stigma around the arts. One step at a time, we're building a better story.

Do you think schools should focus more on developing students' creativity?

I think every school should incorporate creativity into education. Personally, I've had positive experiences with opportunities to pursue art, but for those who don't, there should be more options available.

Has creating art made you more creative and innovative in other subjects or areas of your life?

Yes, definitely. It changes how I see things. Even when I'm outside, I find myself viewing the world creatively. In school, it also helps me approach problem-solving differently, even in analytical or scientific subjects. Creativity isn't just about art—it influences how we think and solve problems in all areas of life.

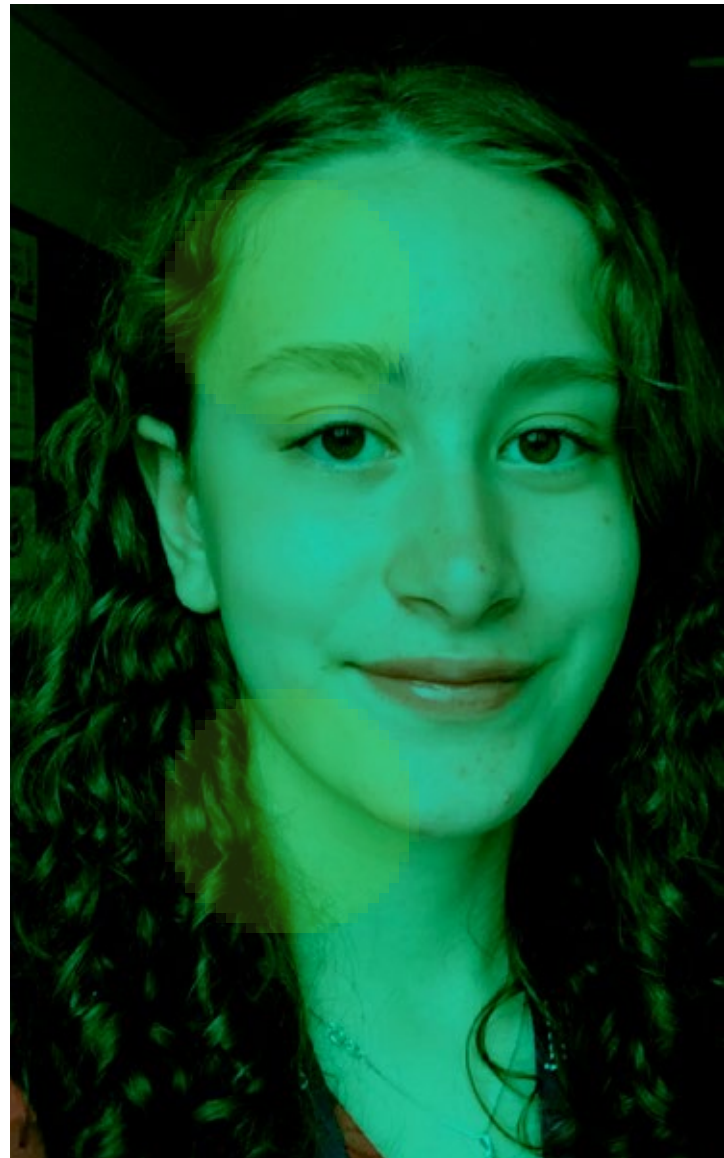
What would you like to say to MASK Awards?

I'm so grateful for the opportunity to be part of this MASK Awards platform. I never imagined I would win. One thing I really loved was seeing art from all over the world. Other competitions I've entered don't showcase the work of other participants, so being able to view all the shortlisted pieces was incredible. It's so valuable to have a platform that supports creativity—it's truly important.

And finally, what message would you like to share with other young people?

Just **try** to be creative! It doesn't have to be perfect to be meaningful. Sometimes, creativity can be discovered unexpectedly. Other times, it can feel intimidating to start with. But art is for everyone—there are no limits, even if you've never tried it before.

That's a beautiful message. MASK's vision is to amplify artistic, creative, and innovative voices. While we initially focused on Africa, we're now expanding, and it's incredible to see nominations from places like Japan and South Africa. Creativity is bringing people together. Congratulations! Keep creating—this makes the world a better place.





“

*We believe in art. Art shapes creativity.
When art flourishes, the future thrives.*

”

Creativity Clubs

MASK believes that creativity should be nurtured explicitly through dedicated lessons. Our Creativity Clubs are held in schools during the day or after school.

Target age: 4–12 years.

Location: Weekly or daily workshops in primary schools.

Duration: 30–60 minutes per session.

Learning activities: Art practice and creative thinking exercises.

Main learning objective: Strengthen students' innate creativity and problem-solving skills. Students develop observation, visual thinking, imagination, improvisation, and creative personality traits. They experiment with various materials and techniques to create models, prototypes, artworks, and designs.

Progression: After two to three years, students transition to the Creativity for Entrepreneurship and Leadership (CEL) Clubs.

Creativity for Entrepreneurship and Leadership (CEL) Clubs

Target age: 13–18 years.

Location: Weekly workshops in secondary schools.

Duration: One to one and a half hours per session.

Learning activities: Art practice, creative thinking exercises, and the **MASK Practical Creativity framework**.

Main learning objective: Enable students to apply creativity in real-world scenarios. Students tackle challenges in their schools and communities, developing innovative solutions and bringing them to life. This approach shifts learning from passive absorption to active engagement, empowering young people to see themselves as changemakers. It also equips them with essential work-ready skills, including leadership, entrepreneurship, team creativity, and communication, enhancing their future employability and social mobility. MASK youth have launched school arts and farming initiatives, established community gyms, and created recycling enterprises.

Creativity for Peacebuilding Clubs

Students develop empathy through art, reflect on cultural diversity, and foster multicultural understanding. They generate innovative solutions for peace and share them with their communities through exhibitions, art marches, and 'agents of peace' initiatives.

Voices of our Kenyan participants:

- *'Through peaceful pictures, we promote peace, exchange ideas, and resolve disagreements peacefully.'* - Patrick Mwaura, 15
- *'The workshops make me so happy. They enable us to maintain peace. I learned to communicate ideas visually.'* - Naftary Maina, 15
- *'MASK helped me express ideas and promote peace between different tribes in conflict.'* - Benson Kinyantui, 13
- *'Being creative can help me educate communities and lead them to peace.'* - Peter Kimani, 17

Case study 3

Githirwa School: How MASK CEL students apply creativity in practice

Githirwa Secondary School, located south of Lake Naivasha in Kenya, is a boarding school affiliated with a church. Like many secondary schools in Kenya, it operates as a boarding institution due to the vast distances students must travel to access education.

Githirwa was one of 30 schools where MASK ran Creativity Clubs, which provided students with a space to develop creative skills through the arts. For example, at a drum workshop 'Painting sounds,' students learned to construct abstract images—a key aspect of creative thinking. They also took part in creating a large textile mural of Lake Naivasha, facilitated by a MASK volunteer from the UK.

From Creativity Clubs to real-world innovation

In 2010, a curious parent asked Tkachuk, "How does creativity help young people in real life?" This question sparked the creation of **Creativity for Entrepreneurship and Leadership Clubs (CEL)** designed to teach students how to apply creativity to real-world challenges.

At Githirwa, 20 students—10 boys and 10 girls—joined the CEL programme, meeting weekly for hands-on sessions based on MASK's five-step Practical Creativity framework.

1. **Identifying a problem:** Students discussed pressing challenges at their school and identified one key issue: poor school lunches, which consisted only of rice and beans.
2. **Brainstorming solutions:** Splitting into groups of five, the students named their teams and designed logos. Under the guidance of MASK facilitators, they brainstormed possible solutions, listing them on the blackboard.
3. **Evaluating ideas and planning:** Out of multiple solutions, students identified a viable one—starting a school farm to grow tomatoes and raise chickens. Eggs could be sold to the nearby community, and the revenue would fund a more diverse school diet. One challenge identified was monkeys stealing tomatoes. The students proposed a fence made from recycled materials sourced from local flower farmers. Another issue was a wildlife path crossing the school grounds, used by animals at night. To avoid conflict, students decided to plant crops away from the wildlife path.
4. **Communication:** Each team prepared detailed farm plans on A1 paper, carefully mapping out essential elements such as water sources, irrigation, and fences. At this stage, students realised they needed permission to use the land for the farm, which belonged to the church. With MASK's support, students traveled to a nearby town, where they pitched their proposals. The church leaders approved a final plan and granted permission for the land's use.
5. **Implementation:** Back at school, students started developing the farm. They met with local farmers to source recycled fencing materials to bring their vision to life.

A couple of months later, the school's headteacher wrote to Tkachuk, saying that the students were still enthusiastic about developing their farm and working hard.

Learning leadership, entrepreneurship, team creativity, and effective communication

Throughout the CEL programme, MASK facilitators observed a remarkable shift in students' confidence and engagement. Initially unfamiliar with structured innovation, students quickly grasped the process and expressed excitement at how straightforward and effective the five-step method was.

"I never thought solving problems could be this easy," said one student. *"You just follow the steps, and every new challenge that comes up can be solved in the same way!"*

As they tackled real-world challenges, students redefined their understanding of leadership. Many had previously equated leadership with increased confidence, wealth, or social status. Through CEL, they discovered that true leaders are problem-solvers—those who create positive change for their communities.

"Before, I thought leaders were the loudest people in the room. Now I see that real leaders are those who solve problems," reflected one student. They embraced MASK's saying: 'People don't follow individuals, people follow ideas!'

Students also explored the difference between entrepreneurs and businessmen. They learned that entrepreneurs innovate whereas businessmen manage established enterprises. This realisation shifted their perspective on the role of creativity in economic progress.

They also discovered the power of teamwork in innovation. Contrary to the traditional view of innovation as a 'relay race', where a lone genius hands off ideas to a production or sales team, students experienced innovation as a collective process. Through CEL, they learned that successful innovation requires continuous collaboration, feedback, and shared ownership of ideas.

Additionally, they developed essential communication skills. They realised that visual communication is one of the most effective ways to convey ideas. The process of creating detailed A1 farm maps taught them how to communicate complex plans clearly to partners and stakeholders, making their vision more tangible and actionable.

Impact

Githirwa's CEL students left the programme with a newfound sense of self-efficacy and work-ready capacity. They saw firsthand how creativity, when structured into a process, can solve real problems and drive meaningful change.

The school farm they envisioned was just the beginning—many students left inspired to apply their creative thinking to broader community challenges. *"Now, we feel equipped to solve any problem,"* they shared.

MASK's CEL model, if scaled, has the potential to shape a generation of creative problem-solvers and changemakers.

Case studies 4

Jane — from student to mentor

Jane joined a MASK Club at her school in Naivasha, Kenya. Before then, she had never even held a paintbrush. With MASK, she learned the fundamentals and discovered a passion for art.

One day, a MASK teacher was stopped on the street by a young woman. It was Jane, eager to share her success story. She proudly explained how she now earns money by painting wildlife. "Thank you for introducing art into my life," she said. "You helped me develop my talents. I am very happy, and my parents are happy for me too!"

But her story did not stop there. After moving to a new school, she took the initiative to establish a Creativity Club there, teaching her peers the same skills she had learned at MASK. This is a remarkable example of how creativity can create a ripple effect, inspiring others.

In 2010, Kenya's leading national newspaper, *The Daily Nation*, published a feature on MASK titled 'Lessons from the Mobile Art School'. The article included a striking image of Jane painting on the floor—an enduring symbol of resilience and resourcefulness.



Jane's journey from an inexperienced student to a thriving artist and mentor is dear to MASK. It exemplifies our mission and highlights how creativity can unlock potential.

Jane is proof that when young minds are empowered to create, they can shape their own futures and uplift their communities.

Her life took an extraordinary turn when she discovered her talent, becoming not only a successful young artist but also an advocate for creativity, sharing her skills with others.

Esther — from silence to confidence

MASK Founder was establishing Creativity Clubs at Eburru Secondary School, a boarding school in a village in the hills of Lake Naivasha, bringing creativity education to young people who had never before been encouraged to explore their imagination or receive recognition for it. Tkachuk conducted workshops, selecting a group of 20 students and training facilitators (two local professionals) who would eventually take over running the Club once she returned to London. Esther, who was 14 or 15 at the time, was part of the selected group.

After a few workshops, a group of the school's teachers approached Tkachuk. They asked if they could sit in on the workshops and explained: "It's because of Esther. She always sat at the back of the class and never spoke. Now, she sits at the front, raises her hand, and actively participates. We never saw her smile before—now she looks happy. What are you doing with these children? We want to see." Tkachuk explained that facilitators encourage and reward students' experimentation.

Esther's transformation is a testament to the power of creativity education. In a judgment-free environment, she embraced learning, found her voice, gained confidence, and rediscovered joy. Once a passive presence, she became an engaged and motivated student.

This story highlights a powerful truth: creativity unlocks human potential, and creativity education is essential not only for developing practical skills but also for fostering personal empowerment.



Eburru School Creativity Club, 2016, with Esther fourth from the right in the front row.

Creativity in Action Teachers Project

In 2019 and 2022, the Kenya's Ministry of Education (KMoE), Kenyan Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), and Teachers Service Commission (TSC) requested Trachuk to develop a tutor-training framework and instructional materials to support Kenya's CBC reforms.

In response, MASK launched the **Creativity in Action Teachers Project (CATP)**, which addresses the request in stages.

Stage 1

MASK already developed the Facilitator Training framework, and is in the process of developing these resources:

1. **Creativity: How it works and why it matters** (working title)

This is a nonfiction book designed to guide educators policymakers, and individuals seeking to harness creativity for impact and innovation. It will explore:

- Science of creativity: How creativity works, including its cognitive mechanisms, with a focus on visual thinking and the role of the arts.
- Creative mindset: What defines creative individuals? Key personality traits such as curiosity, perseverance, future-thinking, emotions, ethics, and aesthetics.
- Creativity's impact on society: The relationship between creativity and workforce.
- Unlocking creativity: Practical, research-backed strategies for developing creative thinking, including associative thinking, pattern recognition, and idea synthesis.

2. **The creativity guide for educators**

A hands-on manual that equips teachers with tools to foster creativity in the classroom:

- Step-by-step lesson plans and exercises to cultivate creative problem-solving.
- Methods for integrating creativity into traditional subjects.
- Case studies showcasing creativity-driven success stories in education.

3. **The young creator's playbook** (working title)

Aimed at teenagers and young adults, this series will empower the next generation to recognise creativity as their most valuable asset for success. Often, young people associate creativity solely with artists, musicians, or inventors. This series will break down these misconceptions, illustrating that creativity is inherent in everyone, and equipping readers with the tools and insights to strengthen their creative abilities.

The series will feature:

- Interactive exercises and challenges to develop creative confidence.
- Real-life success stories from young creators, innovators, and changemakers.
- Practical applications of creativity for school, career paths, and personal growth.

Key milestones:

1. Consulting end-users (KICD, TSC, students, and teachers) to ensure alignment with CBC.
2. Securing accreditation from KICD and TSC to enable nationwide distribution to potentially 35,000 Kenyan schools, with potential expansion to the East African Community (EAC) as more countries in the EAC adopt Kenya's competency-based curriculum approach.
3. Collaborating with e-learning and social media specialists to create digital resources and adaptations for the MASK website, as well as for YouTube and Instagram channels.
4. Publishing 1,000 copies of each resource for distribution.
5. Distributing materials through KICD and TSC, and other platforms.

Stage 2

In collaboration with KICD and TSC, MASK can help train **150** tutors from **30** teacher-training colleges, along with **50** TSC staff members. Training these tutors will have a broader impact than training teachers directly, benefiting up to **20,000** teacher graduates annually.

This may also influence Kenya's teacher training curriculum and school inspection frameworks.





Alan Rivers presents an award to Felicity at KICD, Nairobi, 2022

Case study 5

How MASK helped a young poet

Felicity Mudis, a gifted young poet from Kenya, was awarded the 2022 MASK Award prize of KSH10,000 for her powerful poem on women's empowerment, 'The Revolution,' at a ceremony hosted by the Kenyan Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in Nairobi in October 2022. The award was presented by Alan Rivers, Rivers Foundation Founder, which has supported MASK Awards since its inception.

Winning MASK Award marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Felicity. Since then, she has released her first book and collaborated with several organisations. In a message to MASK in 2025, Felicity expressed her gratitude: *'I would like to say thank you to the MASK Awards team. Being part of that experience has had a huge impact on shaping my poetry. I released my first poetry album, and I've had the opportunity to work with many organisations using poetry for advocacy. Keep doing the incredible work you do at MASK, sparking hope and creativity among young creatives. I'm so glad you were part of my journey.'*

Felicity's story highlights how MASK Awards supports young people through recognition. We're proud of her achievements and excited to see what the future holds.

The Revolution

It was a woman who taught me that a woman's vocabulary includes only 3 words, yes, please and the famous I'm sorry.

They'd slip through my tongue like tales of old, stuck in my memory, like a leech, sucking me, blood, skin and bones, she silenced my voice, backed and buried in a tomb so deep.

No, no, I wasn't born mute, I become one, my vocal chords, hoarse from my silent screams clouded in despair and agony.

It was a woman who introduced me to patriarchy, she let chauvinism thrive in her hands, grumbling but feeding it, complaining but nursing it, fuelling it, misogyny flourished, consuming her whole, it destroyed her but she destroyed herself.

But maybe, maybe it was because she didn't know better and even if she did know better maybe it was because she was afraid to do better, to be better.

I dare say we can create a revolution. In fact, we can be the revolution and as beautiful as that sounds, it'll take work, on the inside before the out.

So I dare you, queen, to fight every single raging battle in the inside of you and win.

The ones against your self- esteem, your self-worth, your body image, your dreams and desires, the cultures around you, people's perceptions of you, the limitations set by society for you, your ideas on men, on fellow women, the traumas you've lived through, your insecurities and depression.

I hope you heal. I hope you learn to speak again even if you'll have to start with ABC.

I hope you learn to laugh again, with the abandon of a little girl whose known no darkness or gloom, like the great warrior you are, audaciously stepping into the battlefield, committed to victory, not just for you but so that your fellow sisters, your daughters, the generations coming after you never have to fight such wars ever again.

I hope you keep evolving every day and once you do, queen, you will be unstoppable, you will be the revolution and maybe, just maybe, we will all know how it feels to walk this world unafraid.

Case study 6

How creativity empowered Joel to transform his life and community

At age 15, Joel joined MASK's Creativity Club at his school in a remote village in West Laikipia, Kenya. What began as an after-school art workshop quickly became a transformative experience. During his first session, Joel painted a remarkable picture of wildlife and, in astonishment, exclaimed, *"I didn't know I could do this!"* That moment of self-discovery sparked a deep passion for creativity that would leave a lasting impact on his life.

As Joel's confidence grew, so did his involvement. He soon became an integral part of the Club, helping transition it into a student-led initiative. He managed the Club, set workshop themes, and maintained records, regularly sending updates on its progress. His leadership and determination ensured the Club's success, which eventually became almost entirely student-run.

In 2010, Joel attended MASK's two-week residential camp in Nairobi, where he and a dozen fellow MASK students painted, performed, and participated in competitions and discussions. The camp featured a masterclass by renowned Kenyan artist Kivuthi Mbuno, a visit to an exhibition at the Nairobi Gallery, and a meeting with Kenya's Minister for Culture, William Ole Ntimama. There, Joel and his peers showcased their paintings and explored the role of art in education.

Joel's creativity soon began to pay off. After the Camp, he shared the exciting news that he had painted a street mural of an elephant in Nairobi, which led to a local restaurateur commissioning him to create another mural for one of his fish establishments. The funds from these projects allowed Joel to rent a room outside Nairobi, where he lived and transformed the space into an art gallery, welcoming local children to view his paintings.

Joel eventually returned to his village to care for his mother. There, he noticed an unused borehole and land belonging to a local school. He proposed to the headmaster that they create a vegetable farm to provide fresh produce for the students' meals. The headteacher agreed, and Joel began earning a salary for his efforts.

While working at the school, Joel also initiated another important project—gathering the parents of his students to explain the "goodness of art" and its importance in their children's development. This was inspired by his own mother, who had not supported his involvement with the Creativity Club, as she didn't see the value of art. However, once she understood how the skills he developed were shaping his future, she became supportive and even encouraged him. Joel, seeing the potential in other parents, wanted to share this perspective with them. This valuable method of working with parents was later incorporated into MASK's work.

Joel's entrepreneurial spirit continued to flourish. Over the years, he started several ventures, including a gym where he crafted his own dumbbells and charged local youth a membership fee to use them. He also painted his bike in zebra stripes, proudly noticing the approval from villagers who saw him riding it. Of course, challenges arose—one day, his dumbbells were stolen—but Joel's resilience remained unshaken.

His creativity didn't go unnoticed. One day, village elders, typically reluctant to involve young people in local governance, invited Joel to their meeting to ask for "good ideas on how to improve the community." Joel was thrilled: *"I am respected now! I feel I make a difference."*

Joel's journey reached an international milestone in 2012 when he represented MASK at the UNESCO International Institute of Educational Planning's (IIEP) 'Planning With Youth' policy forum in Paris, France. Speaking to an audience of 200 global delegates, including the Kenyan Minister for Youth, Joel emphasised the importance of creativity and art in education. His powerful presentation was widely praised, with organisers noting his ability to engage with policymakers and academics.

Reflecting on his journey, Joel shared: *"MASK helped me become an entrepreneur, a leader, and to think outside the box. Creativity keeps my mind, spirit, and emotions always engaged."* He went on to add, *"Before I started with MASK, I didn't know I was creative."*

This statement has resonated profoundly with us—how many young people navigate through life without recognising their inherent creative potential, never realising its transformative power to shape success, to shape their futures?





Case study 7

From a remote village to Unilever: how creativity transformed Hellen's life

In the remote landscapes of Kenya, where innovation is rarely nurtured, Hellen discovered a spark that would ignite her future. At just 15, she joined our MASK Creativity Club at her school. What began as a weekly extracurricular activity over the course of three years ultimately shaped her academic and professional trajectory.

By the time she completed secondary school, Hellen's passion for innovation had already taken root. For a year, she volunteered to run MASK Creativity Clubs at a local school for deaf children. It was here that she first experienced the power of creativity and the leadership it cultivates. She was inspired, even learning sign language to connect with the students.

Her next step was higher education. Enrolling in analytical chemistry at a college in Nairobi, Hellen did more than just study—she invented. During her research, she developed a new pharmaceutical compound, a breakthrough so significant that her college planned to pursue a patent. It was early proof of the power of creative problem-solving, a skill she attributes directly to MASK.

Upon graduating, she entered the competitive world of pharmaceuticals in Nairobi, securing a job in record time. Within months, this young 22-year-old woman was promoted to a supervisory role, leading an all-male team who had been at the company for years—an achievement she credits to her ability to think differently. *"Coming into the job, I immediately suggested more effective ways of doing things,"* Hellen recalls. *"I was willing to challenge the norm—and that's what got me noticed."*

Her reputation for creative problem-solving grew, and before long, she was recruited by a larger firm, where she was given her own office and put in charge of designing new analytical procedures. Yet, Hellen's hunger for innovation extended beyond the lab. In her spare time, she invested in land, using it as an experimental ground for agricultural innovations. *"MASK developed in me a habit of innovation,"* she says. *"Now, I want to apply it to everything I do."*

A few years later, Hellen faced her biggest challenge yet—a competitive recruitment process for a position at Unilever, competing against over 200 candidates. The selection process was intense, but she quickly realised that creativity would once again be her greatest asset. *"Eighty percent of the questions were about problem-solving,"* she explains. *"They wanted to know how candidates approach challenges."* Her answers stood out, and she was shortlisted to the final nine. When she was offered the position, Unilever's Human Resources Manager remarked that her "creative attitude" had set her apart from the competition.

Today, Hellen, 35, is part of Unilever's global team, a role she once considered unattainable. Yet, her journey is not just about personal success—it's a blueprint for how creativity, when nurtured, can transform lives.

She has since returned to the MASK Award ceremonies, delivering inspirational speeches to young people and schools that participated in the programme—young minds searching for a way forward, just as she once was. *"MASK instilled in me a habit of innovation and empowered me beyond my dreams,"* she declared.

Hellen's story proves that creativity is a tool for survival, a mindset for success, and a pathway to the future.

Creative outputs

Mentorship and support

Our online platforms **MASK Artists** (<https://maskcreate.org/MASK-Artists>) and **MASK Innovators** (<https://maskcreate.org/MASK-Innovators>) support our young people by:

- promoting them on our website ('The Artist of the Month') and social media;
- building collectives of artists (currently, 63 artists) and innovators;
- organising exhibitions.

Case studies 8

How MASK empowered artists **Staiice Shitanda, Margaret Ngigi, and Purity Mwende**

MASK continues to champion artistic excellence and the vital role of art in education and society by elevating these emerging young artists—each a distinguished winner of our MASK Awards.

Staiice Shitanda, a photographer and multimedia artist from Kenya, exhibited his work in London at MASK's partner Doyle Wham Gallery in two prominent shows: 'New Faces in Contemporary African Portraiture' in October 2020, and '@ X 14 Cavendish' in August 2021. His work also gained significant attention, featuring in *The Guardian* (UK) in October 2020.

Margaret Ngigi, filmmaker and photographer, seized a remarkable opportunity as an emerging artist with her first solo exhibition, 'Murky Waters', at the Doyle Wham Gallery in London in December 2020.

Purity Mwende is a veterinary student at the University of Nairobi and MASK's Head of Ambassadors. In 2023, she featured a short video about her creative process of designing calligraphy on MASK's Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/maskcreativity>. Her work quickly gained attention, and on the same day, she received an invitation to participate in a show by the South African gallery LATITUDES. A few months later, working with a curator, Purity showcased five of her best calligraphy pieces. Although she is pursuing a career in veterinary medicine, she considers herself an artist.

Image by our artist Amos Kibet



Online resources:

'MASK Art Collection': **23,500** creative works (comprised of **18,500** MASK Awards entries and **5,000** Creativity Clubs artworks), **50** exhibitions, and **100+** global-quality emerging artists. The collection provides unique insights into young creativity as an educational, cultural, and policy research resource.

'Resources for Artists': A compilation of tips and templates to support the development of artists and artistic excellence.

'Dream It. Do It': A showcase of the Global Goals solutions generated by MASK Awards participants. It has the potential for youth civic engagement, enabling young people to participate in government policymaking through informal collaborations.

Seminars, talks, publications, and case studies. For more information, please refer to the **Appendices.**

Publications

MASK has published over 200 articles, blogs, podcasts, and reports, grouped into these themes:

- 'What is creativity?': about the nature of creativity and what it means to be creative.
- 'Art for creativity': about the essential role of the arts in creativity learning.
- 'Creativity and society': about creativity's positive outcomes for society.
- 'Creativity and business': about the role of creativity in the workplace.
- 'Young people – the creative nation': articles that promote MASK's creative youths as role models.



Case study 9

Interview of Saksham, 17, UAE, winner of MASK Awards - Innovator of the Year

By MASK Ambassadors Purity Mwendu and Joshua Okwoyo, Kenya, January 2025

Let's talk about you and your ideas. They truly make the world a better place, which is quite inspiring. Can you tell us how you approach things? How do you see your future?

Life is so unpredictable, but I'd love to see myself doing something on a bigger stage. Sometimes you have all these artworks and ideas, but if you don't bring them to the bigger stage, you don't know their worth. I want to share my ideas with others, get their feedback, and be acknowledged for them.

I want to work on amazing things, like saving the oceans, exploring fashion, literature, maybe even writing a book.

Were you always creative growing up?

Yes, I used to enter all sorts of art competitions and won a first and second place. I recited poems and was a good reader. But in terms of creativity, I wasn't doing anything on a big scale. You need to find yourself and push forward.

A lot of people don't even know they're creative. I didn't know I was either. I used to get jealous of people who were naturally gifted in things like math. But then I realised, you just need to change your perspective and keep pushing forward. I wasn't a prodigy; I just got passionate about something and gave it my all. Even if I failed, I was happy. That's what matters to me.

Given that we spend a lot of time in school, do you think schools should support creativity and innovation more?

Schools should definitely allow students to express their creativity. But, based on my experience, they really limit creativity and don't let students explore their full potential.

For example, a student might be passionate about art and very good at it, but they're pressured into taking science or something else. Teachers often say it's to "make money," but money shouldn't control you like a puppet.

Schools should encourage students to *balance* their passions with their careers, not force them to abandon their passions.

They could also offer after-school clubs where students can explore different areas, even if they're not particularly creative. It's all about exploring different paths to see which one could take you forward in life. Schools need to implement creativity much more.

What do you think about the MASK Awards?

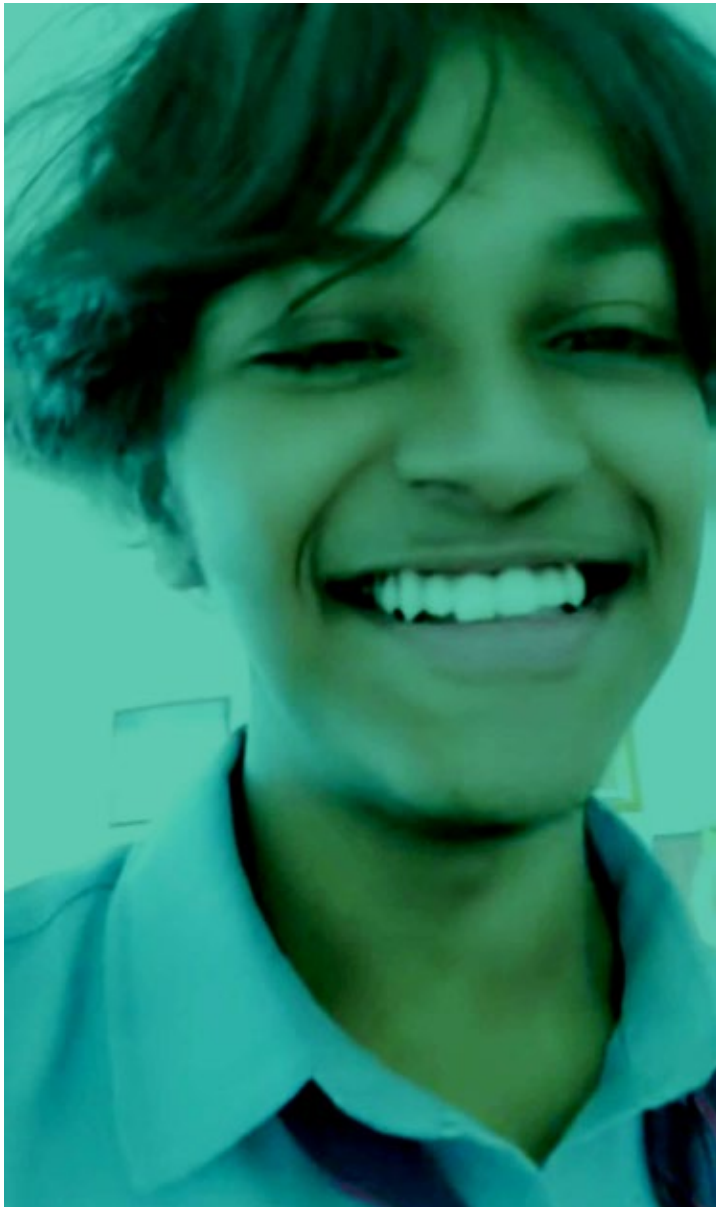
When I first came across MASK Awards, it really caught my eye. As I looked through the content, it inspired me. I was interested to see the previous winners, their artwork and innovative ideas. That really encouraged me, especially seeing people from all over the world expressing their ideas.

I feel like MASK Awards are empowering, not just for me but for everyone involved. It gives people a platform to showcase their ideas, which might otherwise go unnoticed. It gives them the confidence they need to keep going.

What advice would you give to other young people, especially 17-year-olds like yourself?

My advice is simple: **keep doing you**. No matter what you're doing in life, don't feel like you have to follow someone else's path. Listen to your heart and your mind, and just keep moving forward. That's it.

It's been a pleasure talking to you, Saksham. We love the way you think, and we know you're going to achieve great things. People like you are the reason we do what we do—to amplify young creativity, innovation, and different ways of thinking that are shaping this generation. You are a diamond in the rough, and this is only your first stage. There's so much more ahead for you!



Public benefit

MASK's purpose is to transform education by embedding creativity in mainstream education and society.

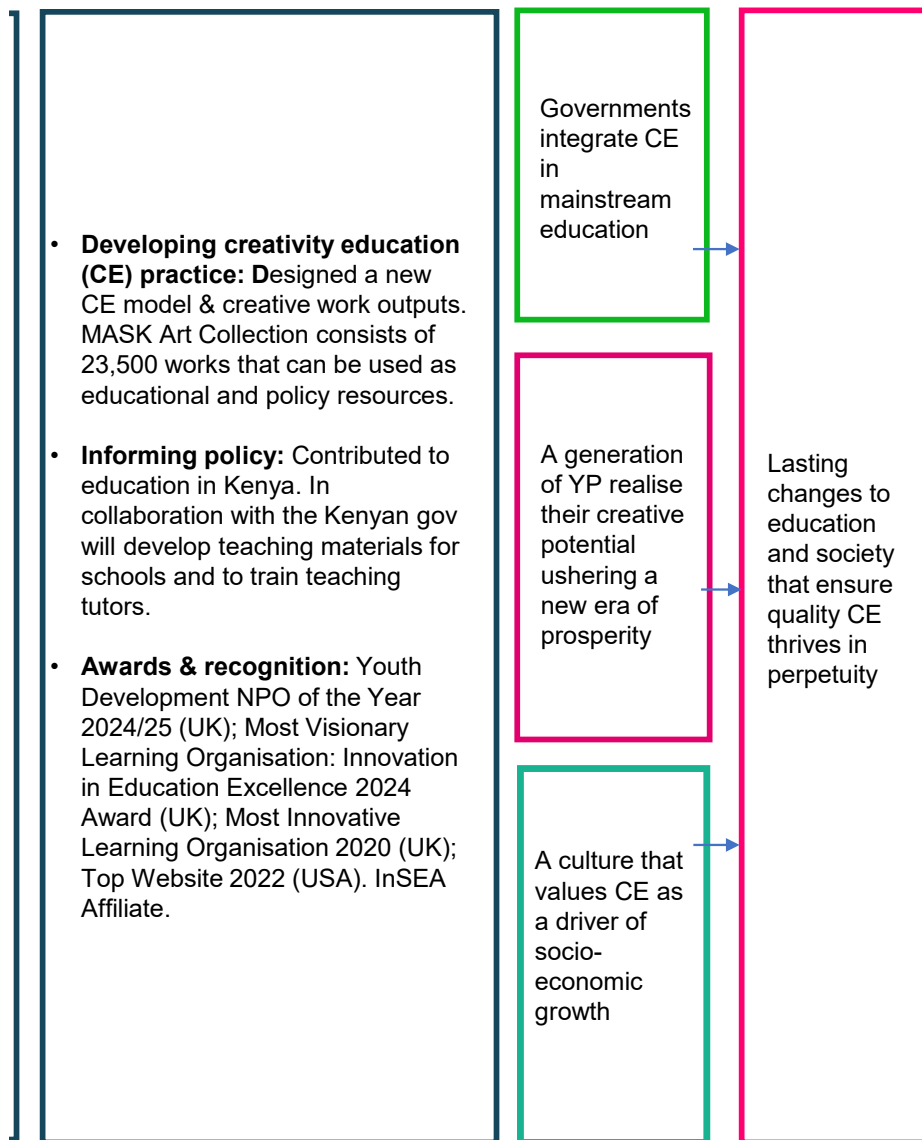
Problem	Beneficiaries	The problem	Aims/goals	Shorter-term outcomes: q
Inadequate education: teaching creativity is marginal or absent	Educators and education authorities	Prevents education from adapting to global change, leading to a skills gap	To disseminate MASK learning and teaching resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging schools: Delivered 500 workshops in 30 Kenyan schools, trained 60+ facilitators, reached 300 schools through MASK Awards, established a network of 56 best creative schools in Africa. • Training YP: Trained 21,500 YP directly and 130,000 indirectly. Supported 300+ with cash prizes, fostered 100+ network of artists & innovators. • Engaging broader community: Reached over 650,000 people through 50 exhibitions & 200 publications. • Collaborating across sectors: Partnered with over 60 organisations: inter-governmental organisations (UNESCO); top-level gov institutions (Kenya, UK, USA); universities; trusts & foundations; galleries & museums (Nairobi National Museum, Saatchi Gallery, Turner Contemporary, Library of Congress); businesses (Unilever); media & press (<i>The Star</i>, Citizen TV, Google)
	Children and young people (YP)	Prevents YP realising their potential	To deliver training & development to unlock creative potential	
	Communities (incl policy makers)	Hinders communities' ability to solve challenges & achieve prosperity	To engage and influence communities to embed the value of creativity and change policy	



quantitative & qualitative

Longer-term outcomes

Long-term impact



Scaling and replicating

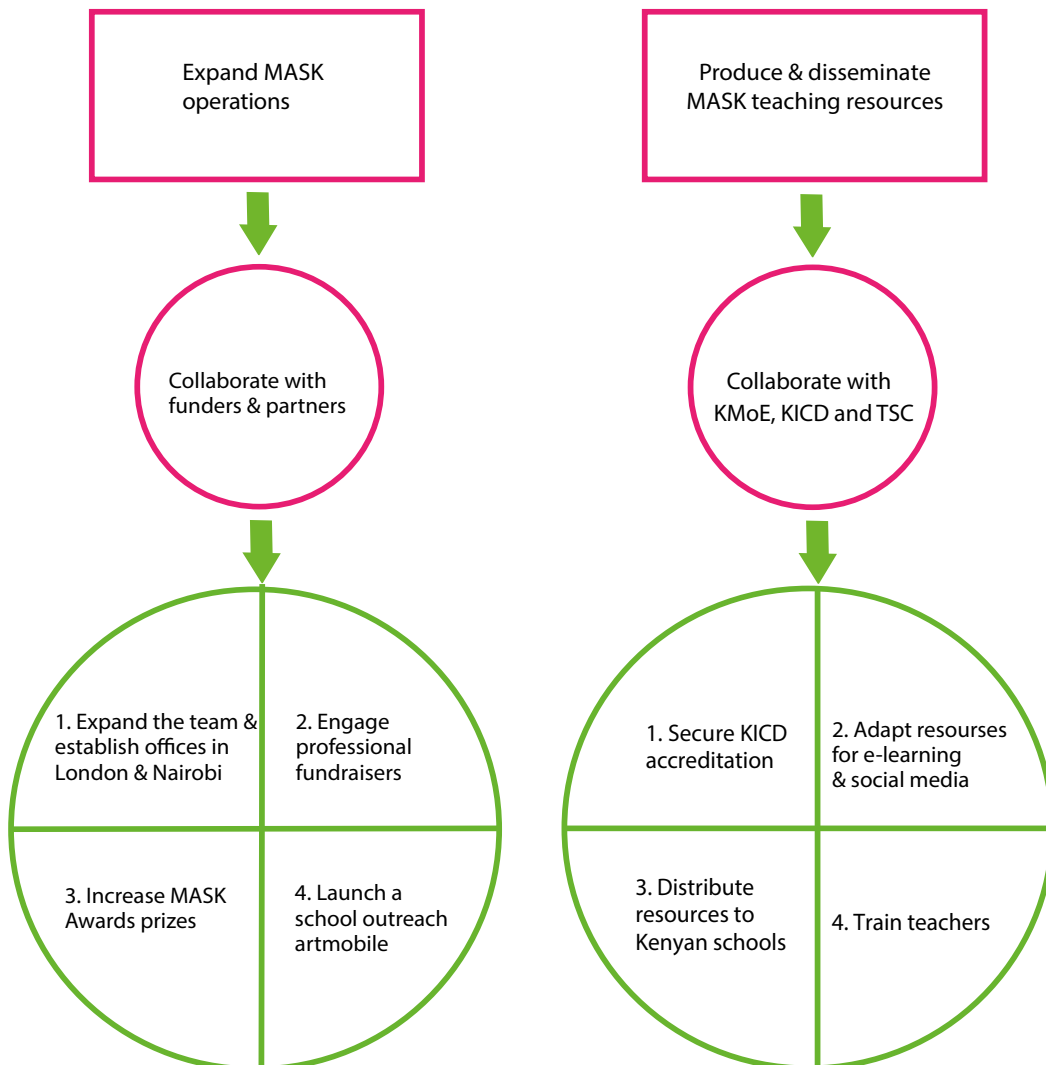
MASK has successfully scaled its work, demonstrating its ability to extend its influence and legacy across Africa and beyond. Founded in 2007 as a small mobile unit in Kenya, MASK has steadily grown its reach. By 2023, it was active in **16** African countries, and by 2024, it had grown to **56** countries worldwide, bringing its total presence to **63** nations across every continent.

Over the next five years (2025-2030), MASK will focus on these two areas to ensure long-term sustainability, depending on funding:

1. **Developing and disseminating content**, including books, manuals, and other educational resources. For more details, see the CATP section of this report.
2. **Expanding operations**. For more details, see the next page.

This will reach **50,000+** young people annually by 2030; engage up to **35,000** schools in Kenya; and benefit up to **20,000** teaching graduates annually.

This diagram summarises our priorities, partnerships, and expected outcomes.



Operation expansion plan

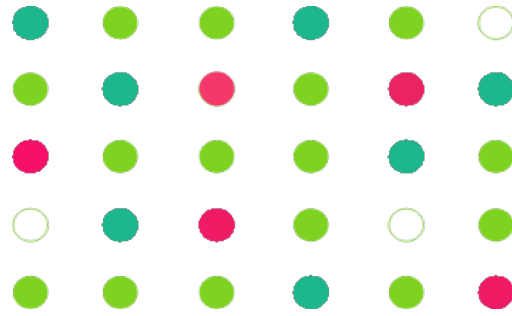
To scale its impact, MASK needs to strengthen its organisational capacity and operational infrastructure. The following strategic actions are required:

1. **Grow the dedicated team:** Recruit full-time team-members, based both in London and Nairobi, to oversee the implementation of MASK's work, including the creation and distribution of learning resources. MASK currently relies on part-time volunteers and consultants.
2. **Establish strategic centres:** Set up creativity centres in London and Nairobi to serve as hubs for engaging with the community and forming strategic collaborations.
3. **Enhance fundraising capabilities:** Engage professional fundraisers to diversify funding streams and secure grants.
4. **Leverage digital platforms:** Partner with e-learning and social media experts to develop digital adaptations of our learning resources, and to create and manage educational content on platforms like YouTube and Instagram. This will increase access to high-quality educational resources and promote equity in learning opportunities for all.
5. **Increase MASK Awards prizes:** Raise the total MASK Awards cash prizes to £15,000–£20,000 to position MASK Awards as a global platform for nurturing young creativity and innovation.
6. **Expand grassroots outreach:** Launch MASK artmobiles to deliver training directly to schools in Kenya. They will operate on a financially self-sustaining basis, reducing MASK's reliance on external funding, while expanding its reach and impact.



MASK school outreach artmobile





The business model diagram outlines how MASK generates and sustains value



Business model and financial stability

MASK is a charitable organisation. Its business model focuses on:

- fundraising;
- fostering value-driven collaborations.

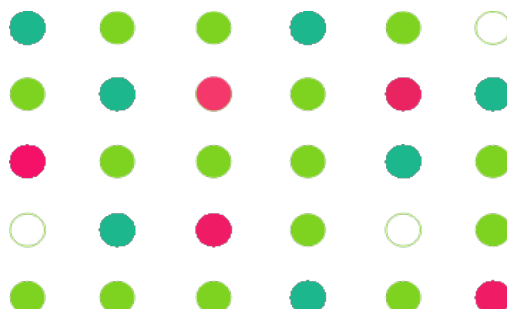
Since its registration in 2009, MASK has secured £298,680 in grants and donations, advancing its mission to expand its reach and impact. Through disciplined budgeting, cost management, and strategic resource allocation, MASK has consistently achieved year-over-year growth in funding. Looking ahead, our target is a 30% increase in diversified funding by 2028.

MASK has partnered with **60** organisations across sectors to leverage expertise, networks, and resources, enhancing operational capacity, scaling initiatives, and driving innovation in programme delivery. For a full list of organisations, see the **Appendices**.

Monitoring potential legal and regulatory threats

There are no current legal or regulatory threats to MASK. To monitor potential risks, the following systems have been established:

- Annual Independent Examination assessment/audit. MASK follows strong financial governance practices, with regular Independent Examiner audits and transparent reporting mechanisms to track income, expenditure, and overall financial health.
- Risk management: The charity is guided by the national policies of the countries in which it operates, insofar as they align with its objects.
- Risk management: Trustees conduct an annual risk review and update the risk register with mitigation procedures.
- Financial controls: Appropriate financial controls are reviewed annually to ensure that they are up to date and effective.
- External financial risks are addressed through a Strategic Plan to diversify funding and activities
- Internal control risks are minimized through authorization procedures.
- Ensuring compliance with all applicable laws and regulations in the regions where MASK operates.
- Adherence to national and international standards, especially regarding educational policy, intellectual property, and youth employment.



We can dream - MASK School of the Future

To transform the education system in Kenya and beyond, there is a growing need for a new vision of what the learning spaces of the future should look like. This need aligns with Kenya Vision 2030 ('Centres of Excellence for Skills Development') and Global Goals (Goals 4 and 11.4).

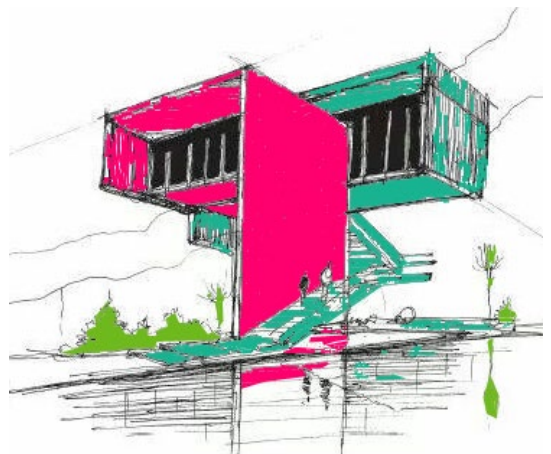
With this vision in mind, we challenged MASK's youth to imagine the School of the Future—a vibrant hub offering year-round training programmes for young people, communities, and educators, housed in a building that sparks innovation and ambition for generations to come.

We briefed them to include the following learning environments:

- An exhibition and conference space.
- Art and innovation training studios and residencies.
- An outdoor café and sculpture garden for networking.
- A dedicated area for our artmobiles.

This challenge resulted in a series of outstanding designs. Here are some of their inspiring concepts.

*Below: designs by Leonard Kimathi, 21, David Mwai, 23, and Mike Blake, Kenya
Opposite page: design by Lee Momanyi, Kenya*





Achievement and performance, 2024-2025

MASK Awards

<https://maskcreate.org/mask-awards/mask-awards-24/>

This year, with the support of the Google Ad Grant, which provided us free advertising on Google platforms, MASK Awards 2024 attracted participants from **56** countries: Africa – 11 countries; Asia – 28; Europe – 9; North America – 3; Latin America – 4; and Australia.

Schools: **34** schools—from primary to university level—in **12** countries (Australia, China, India, Kenya, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda, UK, Ukraine, USA, and Vietnam) participated.

Artists: Over **800** young people submitted artwork across a wide variety of mediums.

Innovators: More than **50** young innovators presented creative solutions to this year's key challenges: Reducing poverty, Creating your own job, and Saving marine life.

Press coverage: MASK Awards 2024 was featured in *The Star*, https://maskcreate.org/mask-awards/The_Star_2-3_Nov_2024.pdf

Winners:

ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2024 – Amon Kibet, Kenya

EMERGING ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2024 – Lydia Vaz, United States

INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR 2024 – Saksham Dixit, United Arab Emirates

CREATIVE SCHOOL OF THE YEAR 2024 – Nyumbani Children's Home (COGRI), Kenya

SPECIAL RECOGNITION – ARCHITECT 2024 – Lee Momanyi, Kenya

Learn more about each winner here: <https://maskcreate.org/mask-awards/mask-awards-24/>

Interviews with the winners can be viewed on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@maskcreate>

Exhibitions

Curated from over **16,500** artworks submitted from **16** African countries over the past decade, these online exhibitions celebrate the excellence of MASK Awards artists:

- **Vivid Voices: Unveiling Emerging Women Artists in Africa** - Spotighting **12** dynamic young women artists from Kenya. <https://maskcreate.org/MASK-Artists/past-exhibitions/vivid-voices>
- **Resonance of Voices: Activist Art in Africa** - A retrospective of work by **19** artists driving social change. <https://maskcreate.org/MASK-Artists/past-exhibitions/activist-art>
- **Faces of Africa: A Portrait Showcase** - Celebrating **32** diverse young African portrait artists. <https://maskcreate.org/MASK-Artists/past-exhibitions/faces-of-africa>
- **Digital Horizons: Exploring the Future of Art in Africa** - Exploring digital art by **19** African artists at the frontier of tech and creativity. <https://maskcreate.org/MASK-Artists/past-exhibitions/digital-art>

CATP

MASK has continued to develop learning and teaching materials in support of the Kenyan curriculum.

Social media publications

We continue to support and showcase our young creative talent through our two online platforms **MASK Artists** and **MASK innovators** and on **social media**: [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Other achievements

We published our **full Impact Report 2007–2025**, covering 18 years of MASK's achievements. https://maskcreate.org/About/policies-reports/MASK_IMPACT_REPORT_2007-2025.pdf

“

Schools should actively foster the creativity of young people.

”



Financial review

Financial review

Against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding, MASK has continued to plan and implement its services. With the aid of sound financial management and governance, MASK generated a positive financial outcome for the period with a net increase in funds of £3,967.

Income: £15,116

Expenditure: £11,149

In-kind donations worth: £127,000

Principal funding sources

Trusts and foundations:

The Linbury Trust, UK, £5,000 (2023/24 £10,000)

Rivers Foundation, UK, £10,000 (2023/24 £10,000)

Google Ad Grants, £10,000, in kind

The Star, (Kenya), \$75,000, in kind

Reserves policy

The Trustees have examined requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the charity. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should be between three and six months of the expenditure. Budgeted expenditure for 2025/26 is estimated at £50,000 and therefore the target is £25,000 in general funds. The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Trustees are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities in the event of a significant drop in funding and the present level of reserves available to the charity therefore meets this target level.

Future plans

The charity plans to continue the objectives and activities outlined above in the forthcoming year subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

Structure, governance and management

MASK's governance model ensures we are transparent and accountable to all stakeholders. This chapter details all aspects of the governance model.

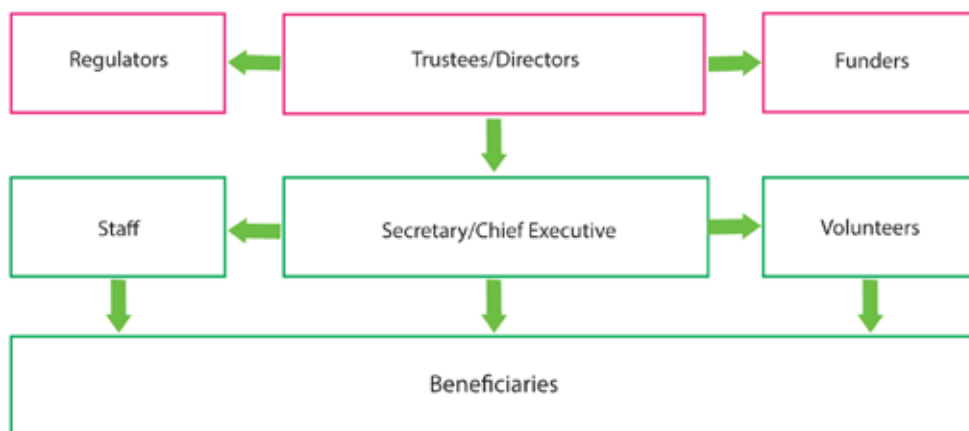
Governing document

MASK is a UK charitable company limited by guarantee. It was incorporated on 28 January 2008 and registered as a charity on 23 March 2009. It was established under a Memorandum of Association, which lists its objects and powers, and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the charity being wound up, members are required to contribute £1.

Governance structure

The Trustees/Directors serve as the governing body, overseeing operations, strategic direction, and policy implementation. They ensure compliance with the mission, submit regulatory reports, and build sustainable income streams and partnerships. The membership includes the Trustees and the non-governing Secretary/Chief Executive. Each member has one vote, with the Chairman holding a casting vote. The Secretary/Chief Executive leads strategic and operational management, setting objectives, meeting performance targets, overseeing operations, and advising Trustees on key decisions.

The diagram below shows MASK’s governance structure:



Appointment of Trustees

All Trustees/Directors give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits (financial or otherwise) from the charity. MASK seeks to ensure that the group of Trustees is diverse and reflects a wide range of skills. All new Trustees familiarise themselves with these documents:

- The governing documents, including the Memorandum and Articles;
- The Obligations of Trustees (The Charity Commission's 'The essential trustee');
- The MASK Code of Conduct for Trustees:
- MASK's organisational policies (Data Protection, Privacy, IP, Confidentiality, Expenses);
- The current financial position as set out in the latest published accounts;
- Future plans (Theory of Change, Public Benefit, Impact Report).
- Safeguarding. The charity obtains standard DBS check on all Trustees, employees and volunteers who are in roles that are eligible for these checks.

Related parties

In so far as it is complementary to the charity's objects, the charity is guided by the national policies of the countries in which it operates.

Risk management

The Trustees have conducted a review of the major risks the charity is exposed to. A risk register has been created and is updated annually. Where appropriate, procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of authorisation procedures. There are no current legal or regulatory threats to the charity.

Financial controls

The charity has appropriate financial controls in place which are reviewed annually to ensure that they are up to date and effective. The Trustees have reviewed the financial controls during the financial reporting period and are satisfied that the charity's risk management policies and procedures adequately covered activities and spending outside England and Wales.

Reference and administrative details

Registered with the UK Companies House No 06484985

Registered with the UK Charity Commission No 1128734

Registered for Gift Aid No XT17874

Registered with the Information Commissioner's Office No ZA936813

Registered office: 3A Alderney Street, London, SW1V 4ES, UK

Website: maskcreate.org

Trustees:

Mr T J Dann BA(Hons.) FRSA (Chair)

Prof J H Gruzelier

Secretary/Chief Executive Officer:

Ms A Tkachuk BSc MSc FRSA

Independent Examiner:

Ms M E Ryan FCCA Chartered Certified Accountant, Ark Accountancy, 31 Cheam Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 1QX, UK

Team:

MASK Secretary/Chief Executive Officer, and six volunteers based in the UK and Kenya.

Approved by order of the Board of Trustees on 9 April 2025 and signed on its behalf by T J Dann – Chair.

A young girl in a school uniform is celebrating on stage with her arms raised. She is surrounded by other students, some of whom are clapping. In the background, there is a banner for MASK with the text "Place creativity at the centre of education to transform the future".

“

Thank you, MASK, for your amazing work and great effort you put in to ensure growth and nurturing of creativity in Kenya. You are indeed the driver of change in our society.

Simon Kariuki, 24

”

A winner of the 'Under 15' category in Art receives her prize on the stage

Detailed statement of financial activities

for the year ended 31 January 2025

	Notes	31.1.25 Unrestricted funds £	31.1.24 Total funds £
Income and endowments from			
Donations and legacies		15,116	22,274
Investment income		-	-
Total income received		15,116	22,274
Expenditure			
Charitable activities:			
Programmes		10,549	12,523
Governance costs			
Independent examination		600	500
Total resources expended		11,149	13,023
Net Income		3,967	9,251

Balance Sheet

On 31 January 2025

	Notes	31.1.25 Unrestricted funds £	31.1.24 Total funds £
Current assets			
Cash at Bank		56,805	52,838
Net current assets		56,805	52,838
Total assets less current liabilities		56,805	52,838
Net assets		56,805	52,838
Funds	6		
Unrestricted funds		56,805	52,838
Total funds		56,805	52,838

MASK is the charitable company and entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 January 2025.

MASK is not required to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 January 2025 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees, authorised for issue on 9 April 2025, and signed on its behalf by T J Dann – Chair.

Notes to the financial statements

1. Accounting policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements: The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income: All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure: Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Taxation: The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting: Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Donated goods: Donated goods are measured at fair value (the amount for which the asset could be exchanged) unless impractical to do so.

2. Investment income

	31.1.25 £	31.1.24 £
Deposit account interest	-	-

3. Trustees' remuneration and benefits

There were no Trustees' remuneration, expenses, or other benefits for the year ended 31 January 2025 nor for the year ended 31 January 2024.

4. Donated goods, facilities and services

	2025 £	2024 £
Seconded staff members	42,000	42,000
Use of property	75,000	75,000
Other (media)	10,000	0
Total	127,000	117,000

Support us

MASK is a registered charitable company (No. 1128734). Our work relies entirely on donations, and your support can make a lasting impact.

You can help in these ways:

- **Make a donation** via our 'Get Involved' webpage maskcreate.org/get-involved to help us:
 - Grow the MASK Awards cash prizes to £15,000–£20,000, recognising young talent.
 - Produce and distribute our learning resources.
 - Acquire an artmobile for our school outreach in Kenya.
- **Corporate support:** Make us part of your Corporate Social Responsibility.
- **Donate a venue:** Offer us a venue for an exhibition or fundraising event.
- **Spread the word:** Follow and share our work on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).



"MASK does an important job in showing young people the joy of creativity."

Alan Rivers of Rivers Foundation

Acknowledgements

With deep gratitude, the MASK Trustees extend a heartfelt thank you to our incredible ambassadors and volunteers—Purity Mwede, Irog Olarou, Gelly Gryntaki, Cheryl Lanyon, Guna Freivalde—and the many others who generously give their time, energy, and passion. Your dedication fuels our mission, and we are endlessly grateful for your support.

A special thank you to our MASK Awards judges for their time, expertise, and commitment to celebrating young creativity.

We are also profoundly thankful to the organisations whose financial and in-kind support has made our work possible:

Rivers Foundation (UK)

The Linbury Trust (UK)

***The Star* (Kenya)**

Google Ad Grants (USA)

Your belief in our vision empowers young minds, nurtures creativity, and helps us make a lasting impact. Thank you for being part of this journey with us!



**RIVERS
FOUNDATION**



**THE
LINBURY
TRUST**

Appendices

This table details MASK’s main partnerships.

	Kenya
Kenyan schools	<p>We collaborated with these Kenyan schools in Sipili, Naivasha, Gilgil, Narok, Samburu, and Amboseli. They provided classrooms and teachers for our workshops and exhibitions.</p> <p>Baawa Nursery School Bishop Githirwa Secondary School Bishop Ndingi Secondary School Eburru Secondary School Elkong Narok Inchurra Primary School GG School for Mentally Challenged Children Green Park Nursery Hanne Howard Trust Kaharati Primary School Kekopey School Kio Primary School Kio Secondary School Kongoni Primary School Lake Naivasha High School Lariak Day Secondary School Lariak Primary School Makutano Primary School Mirera Primary School Mirera Secondary School Naivasha Children’s Shelter Naivasha Safe House Naivasha Unity School Rubiri Primary School Shining Stars Primary School Shompole Primary School Sipili Secondary School Sipili School for the Deaf Soysambu Primary School Unity Primary School Young Roses Primary School</p> <p>Exhibitions: January–February 2006 January–February 2007 January–March 2008 August 2008 October 2008 December 2008 March 2009 March 2010 June 2015 July 2016</p>



MASK at Githirwa Secondary School



MASK first art exhibition in a Masai village in Narok





MASK walking exhibition in Naivasha










District Education Authorities







From the outset, MASK collaborated with the Kenyan Ministry of Education and local education administrations, including the Ngarua Division (West Laikipia) and the Naivasha District Education Office, which provided MASK with authorisation and quality assurance letters.






Tkachuk addressed teachers and leaders at the West Laikipia Sipili Zone Education Day in 2008 and 2009







<p>NGO The Centre for Conflict Resolution-Kenya (CCRK), 2007-2012</p>	 <p><i>MASK exhibition on the walls of CCRK office in Sipili, West Laikipia</i></p>	<p>This collaboration was crucial in the early stages of our work, providing MASK with essential resources, information, and expertise. It enabled us to deliver training to schoolchildren and communities in Samburu, West Laikipia, and West Pokot. It also led to local exhibitions and valuable partnerships with schools, authorities, and the media.</p>
<p>Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>Kenyan Embassy in France</p> <p>Kenyan Embassy in the USA</p> <p>Kenyan High Commission in the UK</p>	<p>MASK held exhibitions at the Kenyan High Commission in the UK in 2008 and the Kenyan Embassy in France in 2010. In 2013 and 2014, the Education Attaché opened MASK exhibitions at Saatchi Gallery and ROSL in London. In 2011, the Kenyan Embassy in Washington, DC, and MASK organised an exhibition at the Woodrow Wilson Center, opened by the First Secretary of the Embassy.</p>  <p><i>Ambassador H.E. Elkanah Odembo opens the MASK exhibition at the Embassy in Paris</i></p>	
<p>Kenya Ministry of Education (KMoE), 2007 to the present</p>	 <p><i>KMoE's Senior Assistant Director of Quality Assurance, Majani Alex Tom, opens MASK Awards in Nairobi in 2017</i></p>	<p>MASK closely collaborated with KMoE throughout. KMoE accredited MASK's work. In 2017 and 2019, Mr. Majani Alex Tom, Senior Assistant Director of Quality Assurance at KMoE, and Mr. Obiero Jarred, Regional Director of Education – Nairobi, officially opened MASK Awards as representatives of the Cabinet Secretary and Permanent Secretary of KMoE.</p>
<p>Teachers Service Commission-Kenya (TSC)</p> <p>Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD)</p>	 <p><i>MASK presents its learning materials at KICD</i></p>	<p>MASK has been working closely with KICD and TSC. In 2010, MASK promoted its work at KICD and established strong ties with Dr. Jennifer Wambugu, Assistant Director of Creative Arts at KICD, who also served as a MASK Awards judge. In 2016, KICD's EDU CHANNEL TV broadcast the MASK Awards prize-giving ceremony. In 2022, KICD hosted the MASK Awards and MASK presented its learning materials to KICD's Head of Evaluation. In 2019 and 2022, TSC Directors and MASK held meetings to discuss the production of teacher manuals and training tutors.</p>

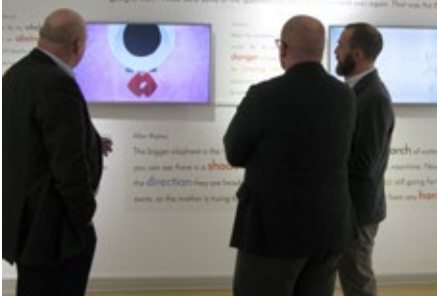




<p>School of Art and Design (SAD) of the Nairobi University</p>	<p>In 2015, Tkachuk conducted two workshops for SAD students. Brian Jangima, a student, wrote: <i>'You gave us an amazing talk on creativity that made me rethink my entire approach to my work.'</i></p>	 <p><i>Tkachuk with lecturers from SAD</i></p>
<p>Maasai community in the Amboseli National Park</p>	 <p><i>Tkachuk's tent in a Maasai village in Amboseli</i></p>  <p><i>Creating Maasai contemporary art</i></p>	 <p><i>Art workshop with Maasai ladies at the village</i></p>  <p><i>Building art gallery with the community in 2010-11</i></p>
<p>The Nairobi National Museum</p>	<p>In 2013, the MASK Awards ceremony and a month-long exhibition were held at the Nairobi National Museum, showcasing over 700 artworks from all over Kenya. It was opened by the British High Commissioner, the Museum's Director, and the Editor of <i>The Star</i>.</p>   <p><i>Winners James Kungu, Margarita Onyango, and Jaina Hitesh Shah with the UK High Commissioner; (right) Alan Rivers with students from the Children of God Relief Institute Art Club</i></p>  	


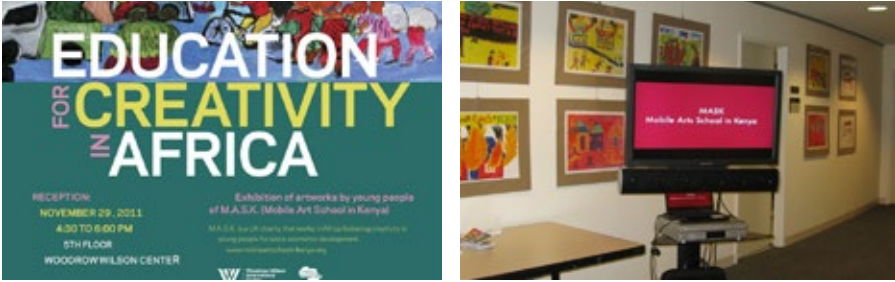


<p>Rahimullah Museum of Modern Art (RAMOMA), Nairobi</p>	 <p><i>MASK exhibition at RAMOMA</i></p>	<p>A retrospective exhibition of MASK's works was held at the Rahimtilla Museum of Modern Art (RAMOMA) in 2010, taking over the entire museum. It was well attended, with many MASK students traveling from their villages to view it.</p>
<p>Kenya Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Nairobi</p>	 <p><i>Minister William Ole Ntimama, Director of Culture Gladys Gatheru, Alla Tkachuk, and MASK students</i></p>	<p>In 2011, MASK students met with Minister William Ole Ntimama at the Ministry, where they presented their creative works and discussed the need for creative education in schools.</p>
<p>British High Commission in Nairobi</p>	<p>The Commissioner, Dr. C. Turner, opened the MASK Awards prize-giving ceremony at the Nairobi National Museum in 2013.</p>	
<p>Embassy of the Russian Federation in Kenya</p>		<p>MASK exhibition 'One Year After the Violence' was organised at the Russian Embassy and featured in KTN's youth programme, 'St8up', in 2008.</p>  <p><i>MASK exhibition at the Russian Embassy, with Tkachuk interviewed by KTN (Kenyan Television Network)</i></p>
<p>The U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Nairobi</p>	<p>In 2013, MASK delivered a talk on 'Creativity and Economic Growth' at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Nairobi.</p>	
<p>NTV (Kenyan National TV)</p>		<p>In 2011, Tkachuk gave an interview about art and creativity on NTV Live.</p> <p><i>Tkachuk interviewed by NTV (National TV)</i></p>
<p>Pokot community in the West Pokot</p>		<p>In 2009, community members helped facilitate the MASK workshops in their area.</p> <p><i>Carting art supplies up dusty tracks in Kenya</i></p>




<p>Kenyan Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) and their <i>Private Sector</i> magazine</p>	<p>In 2014, Tkachuk gave a talk for KEPSA staff members. <i>Private Sector</i> magazine featured six of her articles. 'Thank you for the great presentation. It was a very insightful reflection, and we all benefited from it. We look forward to continued collaboration.'— Ehud Gachugu, KEPSA</p> <p>MASK workshop at KEPSA</p>	
<p>Unilever East Africa and its social mobilisation programme Heroes for Change</p>	<p>In 2019, collaborating with Unilever, we secured two internships for MASK Awards winners.</p> <p>The CEO of Unilever's Heroes for Change and the ceremony's MC, Jeff Koinange, presented the award to John Gift, 20</p>	
<p>Mabati Rolling Mills</p>	<p>Our partnership with MRM has provided essential funding for our programmes over four years. The support from MRM's leadership has empowered us to make a meaningful impact in the community.</p>	
<p>The Royal Media Services, 2016-2022: Citizen TV Hot 96 Radio ViuSasa TV</p> <p>Radio Africa Group 2013-present: <i>The Star</i> Kiss FM</p>	<p>Partnerships with these Africa's leading media houses have been crucial to MASK's success.</p> <p>The founding partner of the MASK Awards, <i>The Star</i>, and Citizen TV, annually has provided in-kind advertising worth over £100,000.</p> <p>This support has helped MASK reach 58 regions in Kenya and 63 countries worldwide, amplified our message, and expanded our impact</p> <p>MASK Awards advert</p>	
<p>Nairobi University</p> <p>Dr. Manu Chandaria MBE</p> <p>Chandaria Foundation</p>	<p>In 2014, the MASK Awards ceremony took place at Nairobi University, with Africa's leading industrialist and true supporter of MASK, Dr. Manu Chandaria MBE, opening the event. "Survival in the 21st century will be very, very difficult, and without creativity, it is not possible," said Dr. Chandaria at the event.</p>  <p>Dr. Manu Chandaria awards prizes to Ben Vic (Music Prize winner) from Nairobi, and to Rubiry Primary School from Naivasha</p>	





<p>The Parliament of Kenya</p>	 <p>In 2015, Member of Parliament the Hon. Steve Kariuki opened the MASK Awards ceremony. In his opening remarks, the MP told the audience of children, their parents, and teachers that creativity empowers young people.</p> <p><i>MP Steve Kariuki and MASK Awards winner Alan Kipto, 4</i></p>
<p>Michael Joseph Centre at Safaricom, Nairobi</p>	<p>From 2015 to 2019, the Michael Joseph Centre hosted five of the MASK Awards' annual ceremonies and exhibitions free of charge. We are truly grateful to them for being such a welcoming and supportive partner.</p>  <p><i>The stage at the MASK Awards ceremony, with refreshments provided for the children and guests</i></p>
<p>Volunteers</p>	<p>Over the years, our work would not have been possible without the dedication and passion of our volunteers, whose selfless contributions have truly made a difference. We celebrate these heroes: Dr. Francis Appolos, Teresia Ngina, John Ngumo, Watson Mwangi, Mutisya Raymond, and Elsardt Kigen; 54 MASK Ambassadors; and many more.</p>  <p><i>MASK Ambassadors at the MASK Annual Meeting in Nairobi in 2019</i></p>

United Kingdom	
<p>Centre of African Studies (CEA), SOAS, University of London</p> <p>Institute of Education, University College London</p> <p>Brunei Gallery, London</p>	<p>In 2011, Tkachuk organised the 'Art Education in Kenya' seminar in collaboration with CEA and the Institute of Education, exploring the role of art in fostering creativity and development. Speakers included Alla Tkachuk, Donald Maingi (Birkbeck College), Mercy Kagia (Kingston University), Dr. Nicholas Addison (Institute of Education), with Prof. Chege Githiora (SOAS) as Chair.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image of the seminar</i></p>
<p>Saatchi Gallery, London</p>	<p>Between 2011 and 2019, MASK organised eight exhibitions at Saatchi Gallery, including the highly acclaimed 'Early 21st Century Young African Artists' show in 2019. The exhibitions were opened by celebrated artists Michael Craig-Martin and Ibrahim El-Salahi, Saatchi Gallery's Directors of Education, and the Kenyan Education Attache, and were visited by over 600,000.</p>   <p><i>MASK's 'Early 21st Century Young African Artists' exhibition was attended by Sotheby's Director of African Art, Hannah O'Leary; Vice-Chair of the African Centre, Oba Nsugbe QC; Founder of ArtLabAfrica, art collector Robert Devereux; and the Education Director of Saatchi Gallery, Nadine Wright</i></p> 
<p>Turner Contemporary, Margate</p>	<p>MASK held three major shows at Turner Contemporary, a leading UK public art gallery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016: A group show featuring the best MASK Awards artists. • 2017: 'Every Day is a New Day' group show, where MASK was one of four artists, alongside renowned artists Phyllida Barlow, Michael Armitage, and the Turner Contemporary's art competition 'Portfolio'. • 2018: MASK's five-year retrospective exhibition, 'All Art Should Be Social Art'.  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>'Every Day is a New Day' show</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>MASK retrospective exhibitions at Turner Contemporary, 2018</i></p>

<p>University for the Creative Arts (UCA)</p> <p>MA Curatorial Practice</p> <p>MA Design Innovation and Brand Management</p> <p>Zandra Rhodes Gallery, Rochester</p>		<p>In 2015-16, MASK collaborated with UCA on the 'Transformation/Mabadiliko' exhibition, where MASK artists and UCA graduates created a series of animations based on original paintings and photographs, while communicating through blogs. The blogs, paintings, and animations were showcased at the Zandra Rhodes Gallery (UK) and the Michael Joseph Centre (Kenya) in 2016.</p> <p>The project highlighted how art and ICT can be integrated into creativity education and demonstrated how digital and online platforms can foster cross-continental collaboration. In 2017, MASK and UCA curated an interactive iPad experience at Saatchi Gallery. UCA students also designed MASK's current logo.</p> <p><i>'Transformation/Mabadiliko' was opened by Vice Chancellor of UCA, Professor Simon Ofield-Kerr</i></p>
<p>University of the Arts London (UAL)</p> <p>Dean of Art at Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges</p> <p>MA Collection</p>		<p>In 2018-19, MASK and UAL created a virtual, interactive exhibition of MASK's retrospective show at Turner Contemporary, allowing our African participants to have a more meaningful art experience. The collaboration was facilitated by Sophia Phoca, UAL Dean of Art, and MA Collection student Jie Qiu.</p>
<p>Doyle Wham Gallery, London</p> <p>Afrikan Gallery</p> <p>The Viewing Room</p>	<p>In 2020, MASK collaborated on five exhibitions of MASK artists, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Visual Tapestry': A group art exhibition featuring Louis Nderi, Margaret Ngigi, and Staice Shitanda, held at Afrikan Gallery and The Viewing Room (online). • 'Murky Waters': A solo show by Margaret Ngigi, held at Doyle Wham Gallery. • 'New Faces in Contemporary African Portraiture': A group show featuring Staice Shitanda, held at Doyle Wham Gallery. 	
<p>Rivers Foundation</p>	<p>The partnership has been paramount to MASK's success. For over a decade, Rivers Foundation's regular and generous donations have been essential to sustaining our programmes. Alan Rivers supports the MASK Awards cash prizes and travels to Kenya to open its prize-giving ceremonies, while Susan Rivers serves as a MASK Awards judge. We extend our warmest thanks to Alan, Susan, and all the Trustees of Rivers Foundation for their unwavering support and belief in our mission.</p> 	 <p><i>Alan Rivers awards prizes to winners, Nairobi</i></p>
<p>The Linbury Trust</p> <p>Lord and Lady Sainsbury</p>		<p>This partnership lies at the heart of MASK. The generous support of Lord and Lady Sainsbury has been pivotal to MASK's impact. We are deeply grateful for their kindness, generosity, steadfast support, and friendship.</p> <p><i>Lady Anya Sainsbury and Alla Tkachuk at MASK exhibition at Saatchi Gallery, 2013</i></p>

<p>The Royal Overseas League (ROSL)</p>	<p>From 2013 to 2015, MASK held three exhibitions at ROSL in London and Edinburgh. The London exhibitions were opened by the ROSL Director, the Kenyan Education Attaché, and the Founder of the 1:54 African Art Fair. ROSL's <i>Overseas</i> magazine featured several articles about MASK and used an artwork by a MASK student for its cover.</p>  <p><i>The Attaché Margaret Lesuada, ROSL Director Roddy Porter, and 1:54 Founder Touria El Glaoui</i></p>
<p>United States</p>	
<p>Africa Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWC), Washington, DC</p> <p>Kenyan Embassy in Washington, DC</p>	<p>In 2011, MASK organised the 'Creativity Education in Africa' exhibition-seminar at WWC, in collaboration with WWC's Africa Program and the Kenyan Embassy. Opened by Steve MacDonal (Director, Africa Program) and Nairimas Ole-Sein (First Secretary, Kenyan Embassy), the event connected MASK with policymakers, fostering dialogue on the role of creativity in education.</p> 
<p>African Division of the U.S. Library of Congress, Washington, DC</p>	<p>In 2013 and 2014, Tkachuk presented the MASK project and MASK Awards, available on the Library's podcast. "<i>MASK is a fantastic programme that empowers young people to be creative, and it plays a crucial role in shaping the future of education in Africa,</i>" said Eve Ferguson, Director of the African Division.</p> <p><i>Tkachuk presents at the U.S. Library of Congress</i></p> 
<p>Kenyan Embassy in Washington, DC</p> <p>Kenya Desk at the U.S. State Department</p> <p>The White House in Washington, DC</p>	<p>In 2013, MASK engaged with the Kenya Desk at the U.S. State Department, which facilitated a connection with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi. The Kenyan Ambassador, H.E. E Odembo, and Tkachuk visited The White House to meet with Grant Harris, Special Assistant to the President on Africa. Tkachuk presented the President with artworks created by MASK students, followed by an official, hand-signed letter of acknowledgment from Michelle and Barack Obama in June 2013, recognising MASK's efforts in fostering young creativity and development.</p> 

<p>Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University (GWU), Washington, DC</p>	<p>In 2013, Tkachuk delivered a talk titled 'Engaging Creativity for Human Development' at the School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University (GWU). She highlighted the importance of embedding creativity at the core of education for growth and development.</p> <p>Tkachuk also introduced the MASK Creativity Education Model, a scalable approach to education reform designed to address both present and future socio-economic challenges.</p> <p>Dr. Maxine Freund, Associate Dean for Research and External Relations, praised the presentation, recognising education in creativity as '<i>an important policy and practice topic</i>' and expressing her appreciation for learning about MASK's impactful work.</p>  <p><i>Tkachuk presents at the School of Education at GWU</i></p>
<p>The Smithsonian Folklife Festival</p>	 <p>In 2014, Tkachuk and Preston Scott, Curator at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife, presented a workshop discussing the nature of creativity. Two musicians from Mongolia and Kenya improvised together, blending their distinct musical styles into new compositions of meaning and harmony, demonstrating the essence of creativity - connecting across domains.</p>
<p>NPO The Nobility Project, Austin, Texas</p>	<p>In 2014, filmmakers Turk and Christy Pipkin, founders of The Nobility Project, began supporting the MASK Awards and its School Prize. Over the course of a decade, they donated nearly \$30,000 to MASK, which funded prizes for 56 African schools, empowering them to enhance their creativity education. We are deeply grateful for their unwavering support, which has had a transformative impact on the lives of our beneficiaries across Kenya and beyond.</p>  <p><i>Turk Pipkin presents prizes to MASK Awards 2019 winners at Michael Joseph Center in Nairobi</i></p>
<p>NPO Global Education Elite, San Diego</p>	<p>In 2011, MASK partnered with this NPO for two online youth seminars titled 'UN Sustainable Development Goals: Quality Education' and 'UN Sustainable Development Goals: Gender Equity'. These seminars provided a valuable opportunity for MASK's young participants to develop their voices and leadership skills.</p>

	<h3>South Korea</h3>
<p>UNESCO, Korean National Commission (KNC)</p>	<p>In October 2014, Tkachuk presented MASK's report, 'MASK: Creativity Education is a Driving Force of Sustainable Development', at the UNESCO (KNC) International Forum on Development Cooperation in the Field of Culture in Seoul.</p> <p><i>'I have been involved in many development projects throughout the world. What you [Tkachuk] have done in Kenya is very important for development to stimulate people's creativity.'</i> Professor Won-Gyu Hwang, Professor of International Economics, Gangneung-Wonju National University.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The speakers at the conference</i></p>
	<h3>France</h3>
<p>UNESCO IIEP Summer School, Paris</p>	<p>In 2009, MASK exhibited at the Summer School of the UNESCO IIEP (International Institute of Educational Planning), opened by the Director of IIEP.</p>
	<p>In October 2012, Tkachuk and MASK youth Joe Gathua were invited to present at the UNESCO IIEP Policy Forum, 'Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation,' held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Tkachuk presented the report 'MASK: Engaging Young People for Development through Creativity Education,' and also installed a large MASK exhibition in the main hall of the conference. Gathua, traveling from a small Kenyan village, addressed delegates from over 200 countries, calling for the empowerment of youth through creativity.</p>   <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cabinet Secretary A. Namwamba of the Kenyan Ministry of Youth and Tkachuk at the UNESCO Policy Forum; and the MASK exhibition in the main conference hall at UNESCO Headquarters</i></p>
<p>Kenyan Embassy in France</p>	<p>Following MASK's exhibition at the UNESCO IIEP Summer School, the Kenyan Embassy in Washington, DC, hosted the showcase, officially inaugurated by Ambassador H.E. E. Odembo. This collaboration marked the launch of a strategic partnership, expanding MASK's reach and influence.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Exhibition's guests</i></p>

Contact us

contact@maskcreate.org

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/maskcreativity>

X: <https://x.com/MASKCreativity>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mask-create>

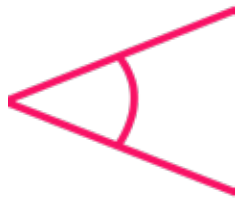
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Art shapes creativity.
Creativity shapes innovation.
Innovation shapes the world.