

Creating Ground

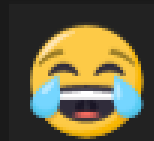
IMPACT REPORT

2020-2021





There is
no other
way...



... to
sum up
the year!

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Founder's Foreword

A year in lockdown, a year of sudden changes, a year of new perspectives, a year of turning difficulties into opportunities, a year of seeing the potential where there were limits, a year of us coming together to support each other, a year of us getting stronger together.

It is strange to say this, as this has been the year of working online, but our links and relationship with the women, with other organisations, with our partners have become tighter and more robust throughout lockdown.

This year has brought the best out of everyone I have met at Creating Ground and through Creating Ground, showing how creative, resilient, caring and innovative we can all be in difficult times.

What I wish for all of us for the future is to keep nurturing those relationships, to remember what it has meant to be together in this difficult year and how important it has been for us to feel part of a community, to feel that we had someone to lift us up, encourage us and make us feel better.

I wish for the organisation to keep planting seeds of collaboration, empathy and solidarity and I wish all of us to come out of lockdown, as Felicia said, as beautiful butterflies.

My sincere thanks go to all the women from Creating Ground's activities, our core leaders, all our partners, our funders and supporters for being with us and believing in our work.

You gave us strength, courage, inspiration and motivation to continue and to grow.



Laura Marziale

Who We Are

About Us

Creating Ground CIC is a not for profit organisation that works with women from migrant backgrounds to promote cross-cultural awareness, learning and sharing across different communities in South East London through collaborative arts and educational projects.

Aims

- To improve individual and collective wellbeing using the arts as an educational and therapeutic tool
- To create a space where different people in different contexts and communities can share and utilise their skills, knowledge, expertise and talents to realise their potential
- To build community cohesion and justice through social action, leadership and training
- To promote dialogue, cultural awareness and understanding among different cultures

The Year In Numbers

32

new participants engaged with our regular projects; My Creative Skills, Stronger Together, and Yoga

8

Stronger Together Leaders progressed to Stronger Together Trainers

548

people attended screenings of our film Finding Strength: Our Stories of the UK Hostile Environment

124

participants across all activities

146

online sessions delivered over Zoom

Awards and Recognitions



South London Citizens Award

Thanks to South London Citizens for awarding us Best Organising Institution of 2020. We feel so proud and honoured. We have achieved this in our first year of organising and in a year where it has seemed impossible to organise.

Thanks to the support of all the Greenwich Citizens members and our organiser, Paulina Tamborrel who have taught us so much about how we can take action together to bring hope to our lives and make the world a better and fairer place.



Near Neighbours Wellbeing and Connection Recognition

It really means a lot to all of us at Creating Ground to receive this recognition in what was such a difficult time.


A special thank you to Marzena Cichon Balcerowicz for nominating us and for always believing in our work. Near Neighbours has been the seeds for most of our work. Thank you so much.

Connecting in Lockdown

Lockdown came as a shock to all of us, as our work is very much about creating connections, sharing and being in a physical space together. After a few days of uncertainty where we sent video messages to each other via whatsapp, we decided to resort to digital sessions via Zoom. We learnt a new way of being together.

During lockdown, we welcomed more than 30 new women to our activities thanks to our partner English for Action.

What has supported our group has been to be able to continue to meet via Zoom, to have been able to share and learn together, have someone to talk to, to know that we were not alone, that we were there for each other, to have had a common purpose. It was a combination of emotional and practical support. This has been essential for our mental health.



The solution is around the corner
Life has its ups and downs
We will be like a beautiful
butterfly
coming out of its cocoon

"Creating Ground has been a virtual bridge of hope between different women during this hard time. It managed to make virtual links into real ones to make our life and our feelings better."

Highlights

April 2020

Lockdown!
Switched to
doing
**My Creative
Skills**
and
**Stronger
Together**
projects online
supported by
University of
Greenwich

May 2020

Held our first
online event -
**Creatively
Together**
virtual exhibition

June 2020

Started
Yoga
with Sylwia

July 2020

Started delivering
materials to
**My Creative
Skills**
participants

August 2020

New project -
Creative Families
funded by Arts
Council

September 2020

Started delivering
**Teaching
Through Drama**
course online

Highlights

October 2020

Launched our film **Finding Strength: Our Stories of the UK Hostile Environment**

Laura became co-chair of Greenwich Citizens and a committee member of GWest Community & Arts Centre

November 2020

Recognition for Wellbeing and Connection at Near Neighbours' Celebrating Communities event

December 2020

Launched **Toolkit** and new course - **Inclusive Practices for Community Work & Teaching**

Joined Greenwich Borough of Sanctuary

January 2021

10

Awarded Best Organising Institution of 2020 at South London Citizens AGM

Stronger Together leaders formed training team and started to co-design and co-deliver **Community Organising Training**

February 2021

Welcomed new women to our **Stronger Together** group

March 2021

Started Strategy Planning meetings with **Advisory Steering Group**

New online course - **Drama Games for Online Facilitation**

Our Projects and Courses



My Creative Skills

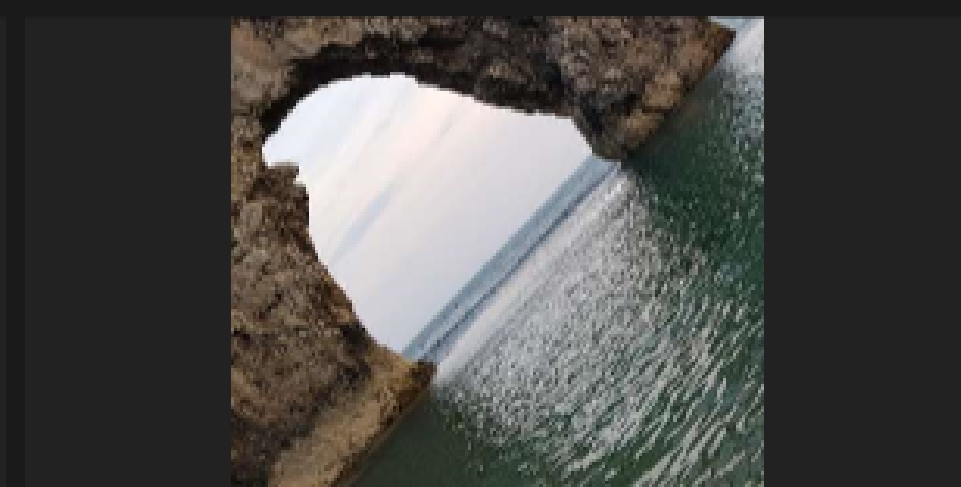
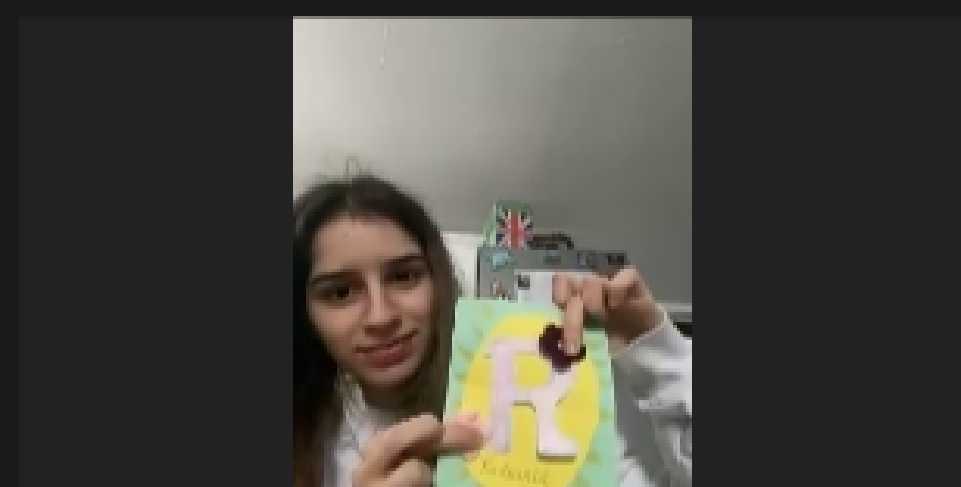
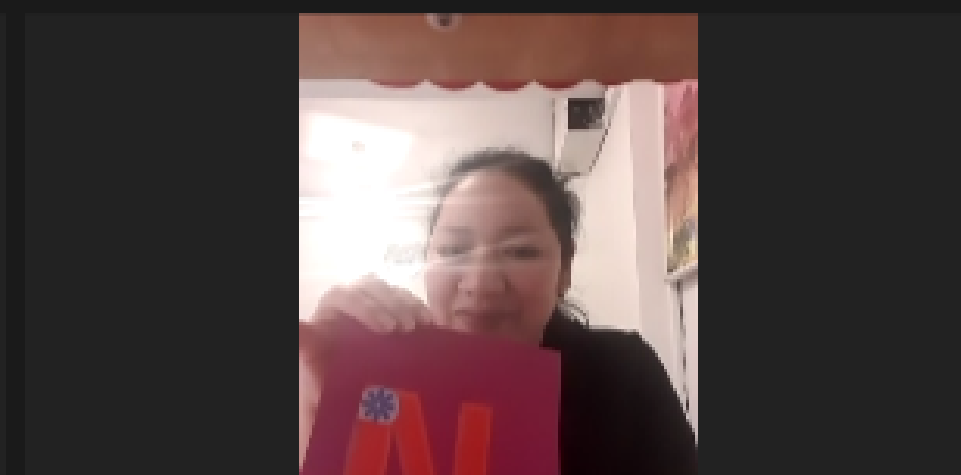
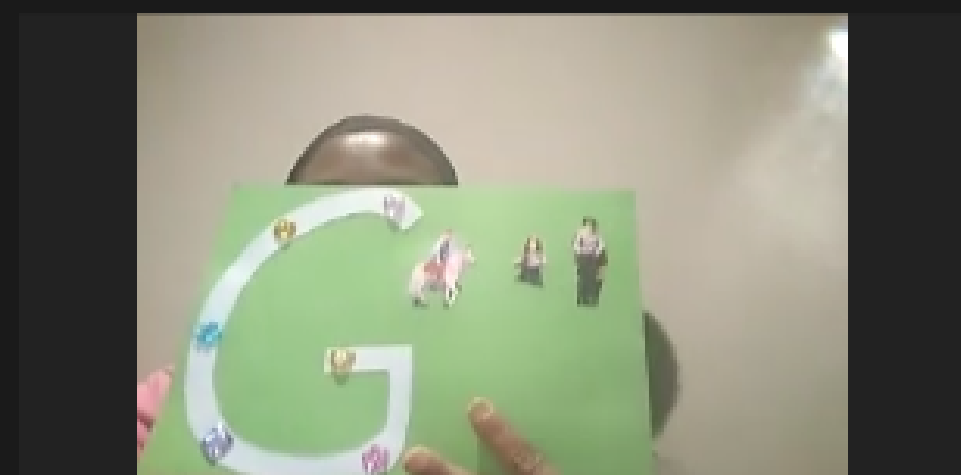
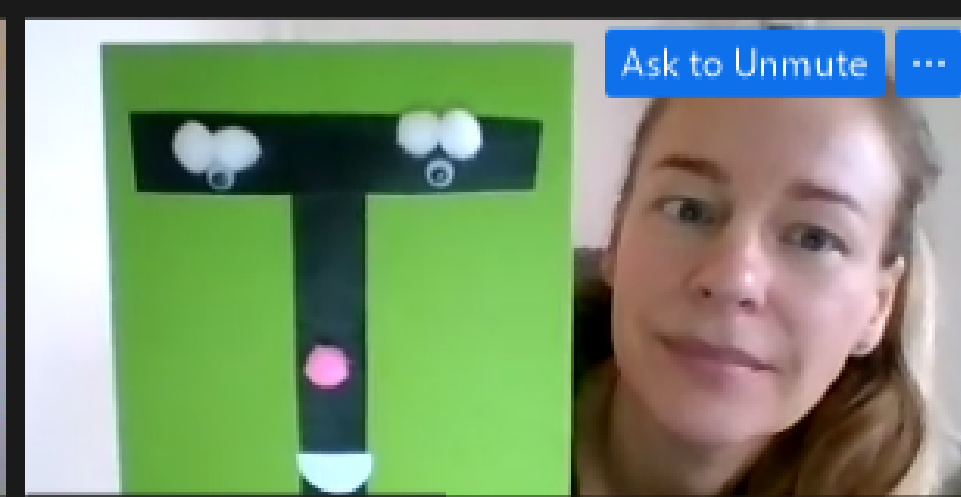
Creative Families

Stronger Together

Discovering Stories

Community-led Courses

Professional Development Courses



My Creative Skills

Creating Ground has been running My Creative Skills workshops since September 2016 and thanks to Near Neighbours, CAF Resilience Fund and University of Greenwich we were able to continue throughout lockdown.

These participant-led workshops unite women from migrant backgrounds to develop their skills, share their creative strengths and provides a space to talk and create strong connections.

We had up to 24 women attending these online sessions and delivered materials by post, bike, and car to make sure everyone was able to do the activities!

In May 2020 we showcased the group's work in our first ever online event, a virtual exhibition Creatively Together.



Creatively Together Online Exhibition

We were joined by 45 guests to launch our virtual exhibition space, which you can still see on our [website](#).

It was a monumental moment for us as a group after a tricky transition into relying on technology to connect.

"A beautifully inspired interactive exhibition showing a great sense of community and togetherness."

"This was such a lovely exhibition that really showcased the spirit of collaboration and trust that infuses all of Creating Ground's work. The pieces were all so moving and you could feel the heart and warmth that had gone into creating them, even online."



Creative Families



Thanks to funding from the Arts Council we were able to run Creative Families, a new project for migrant mothers, about creative ways to engage with children during lockdown.

During this project, we talked about education, child development and parenting. We reached 25 women and 15 children.

"I have enjoyed the lesson, which change my life a lot, during the lockdown I was very bored and worry a lot, but in the project I have met a lot of nice people, we have discussed many different subjects, I have learned new skills and I also learned how do I became a good mother. I think my son and I relationship improve a lot."

Stronger Together



With our Stronger Together group, and thanks to the ongoing support from the University of Greenwich and our organiser from Citizens UK, we co-produced a short film on the UK hostile environment called Finding Strength: Stories of the UK Hostile Environment and organised a launch in mid-October with more than 70 attendees. Since the launch, the film has been showed in different avenues and platforms reaching more than 770 people.

The aim of the film is to tell our stories of the “world as it is”, to show the true reality affecting people in the immigration system to people and policy makers in order to create awareness, and evoke and stimulate a response that will bring about policies rooted in humanity, equality and dignity for all that will bring us closer to the “world as it should be”.

We continue to meet online to work on a Temporary Accommodation campaign.

Eight of the Stronger Together Leaders have formed our Training Team, who are co-designing, co-developing and co-delivering Community Organising training to different community and corporate groups.

Discovering Stories

We partnered with Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL) on this very special project. The pandemic, and lockdown, were very difficult for those using AFRIL's services. Making this book has provided a space to connect virtually to explore their experiences of home here and abroad, their feelings about their complex identities, and their understanding of their own migration journeys.

We are so grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, AFRIL and all the parents and children who contributed to the making of the book, 'Remember The Child of Whom You Are'.

"I just discovered now that I can draw"

Through the making of this book one of the mothers discovered that she had an incredible talent for drawing after drawing her childhood home completely from memory.



Read the full book here: <https://www.theground.org.uk/migrantstories>

Comments From Project Participants

"Creating Ground is the most benefit therapy that you can never have anywhere else, it's your own space, you are respected, they listen to you, you are never judged, you don't stop laughing".

"The project has helped me to bond with my kids in a creative way."

"I feel that I belong more to the local community - even though it's all online now."

"I've learnt to express myself better"

"I become stress free"

"It is great fun, you can meet new people, make new friends, discuss anything that worries you in a safe and non-judgemental environment, find support and of course it is an opportunity to be creative and learn plenty of new skills and art & craft techniques"

Community-led Courses



This last year a group of our Stronger Together Leaders have gone on to become Stronger Together Trainers. They have taken all the knowledge of community organising gained from truly enlightening sessions with Paulina Tamborrel at Citizens UK, and have co-designed, co-developed and co-delivered courses on community organising and on the issues affecting migrants in London.

After delivering the first course to 14 participants, we had three new members join our Stronger Together group. The more we deliver the more we grow as individuals and in numbers!

"In the short time of attending I have learned how what we are dissatisfied about in our world can be our anger and by working collectively with others we can have one voice and this gives us the power to act together to bring about positive changes to make our world a better place."

"Women can empower other women to make changes when we work together, it's powerful."

Felicia's Story

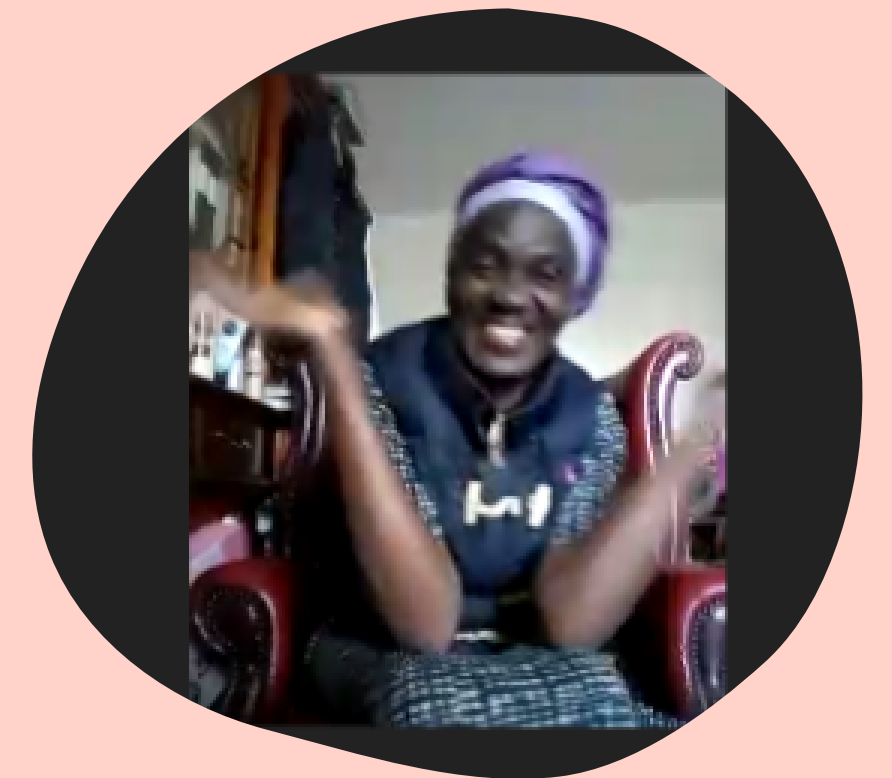


Felicia has been with us since the beginning and is often described as the pillar of our group.

Felicia has come a long way from training to be a community leader with Citizens UK to now being a trainer delivering courses in community leadership and action. She has also been attending various online courses and training sessions with Citizens UK and other organisations to further her knowledge.

Felicia has a wonderful way with words and at a Near Neighbours Awards ceremony said,

"we are a group of women with different faiths who all came together to share a common vision of hope, togetherness and positivity. We were able to use the lockdown as an opportunity to be positive and inventive. We did not allow ourselves to become weighed down by misery that can cause mental health problems. We made art, we made face coverings, we taught each other how to bake and some many other new skills useful for the family. These skills made us active and gave us merry hearts. Thereby defeating the gloom and doom of the pandemic. A merry heart stays alert and alive through true love, unity and sharing each other's burden."



Lian's Story

Lian joined us in lockdown for our My Creative Skills online sessions after being referred from English For Action ESOL classes. She has gone on to join Stronger Together and has become an integral part of both groups. Although she is one of the newer members, she has already led a session teaching us to make Chinese lanterns.

She said she felt extremely empowered being part of the group.

"In every class everyone is always warm, and I feel like I can be the same for other people."

Lian said that since joining Creating Ground she has seen lots of improvement in her health and wellbeing.

"Before I didn't have anyone to open up to but now I can even cry in front of the group."

Taking part in these sessions has made her feel younger, which means she can still achieve her goal of learning new things and be more confident to use her English skills. She feels more ambitious to meet new people.



Professional Development Courses



We adapted our Professional Development Courses to suit the new online environment and in the process created two new courses, 'Drama Games for Online Facilitation and Teaching' and 'Inclusive and Creative Practices for Community Work and Teaching'.

We have been able to explore different methods of creatively engaging students and participants in a virtual space. The courses have provided an opportunity for education and community work professionals to connect with others, which has been especially important for those who have felt very isolated and nervous about using online platforms.

We have also produced a Toolkit with University of Greenwich, which focuses on creative and inclusive session planning and ideas. To get the tools enrol on one of our courses or email info@theground.org.uk to find out more.

Comments From Course Participants

"It was perfect, I wish i could do it again in the future"

"Every time the course ended I asked myself if it's really time to stop. Time flew, due to the engagement of both facilitators and the really creative and useful activities"

"A wonderful course to improve the way you approach teaching in your classroom"

"Thank you for your generosity in sharing what works in your community engagement strategies, it is inspirational work that really makes a change for everyone involved"

"It was wonderful not only learning new things, but having the opportunity to interact, receive advice and talk with people from different nations"

Advisory Steering Group

In March 2021 we formed an Advisory Steering Group to help with the strategy and future direction of the organisation.

The steering group is made of 11 women, mostly with migration experience and with different skills and expertise. All the women have been and are involved actively in the work of the organisation. The women are current and old project participants (core Stronger Together Leaders), team members, colleagues from key partner organisations and our key supporters.

We are thankful to these wonderful women who are dedicating their time to the growth of the organisation.

With them, we feel stronger.



Partners



Main Supporters



LOTTERY FUNDED



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



UNIVERSITY of
GREENWICH

CAF

Charities Aid Foundation

**NEAR
NEIGHBOURS**

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Without them we would have not been able to achieve so much,
so from all of us a big thank you for your trust and support

Comfort's Poem

This poem written by one of our participants, Comfort, is a poetic response to one of the activities we did during the lockdown, which was Stone Painting:

**This is who we are,
we are Earth, we are the Stones
Upon which the world's foundation is built.
This is who we are; we are Stones!
Our colors might be different,
some may be dull while some may be bright,
As long as you have your stone, the color can
change,
All you have to do is not losing it.**

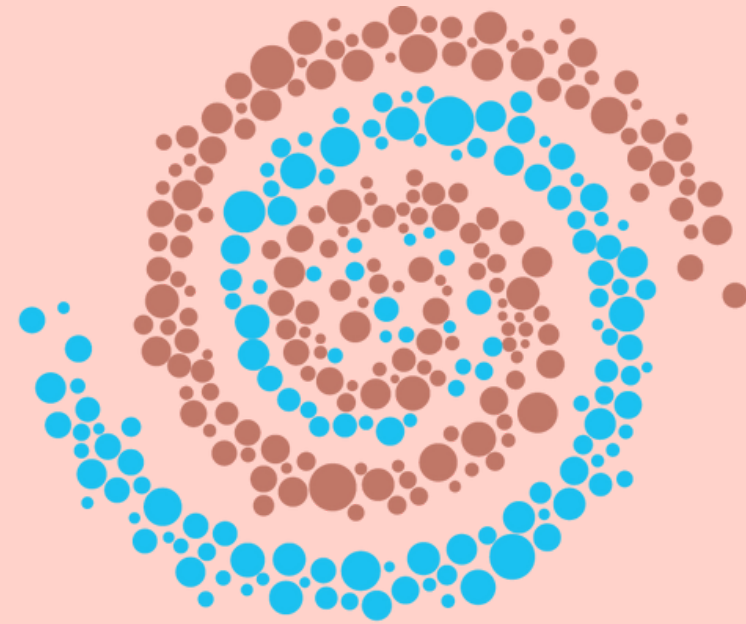
**This is who we are; we are Stones!
We are strong, we give hope,
To those who are sands and cannot stand on their
own,
We are the strength that gives every perfect
structure the best pillar to stand.**

**This is who we are; we are Stones!
Whatever the color of your stone, hold and keep it
in your heart
Remember that what color your stone is today
doesn't matter,
What matters is the fact that we have a stone
which stands for strength, strong and solid
foundation.**

**This is who we are; we are Stones!
However we are, either a rock or a pebble, the fact
remains that we are the Stones that gives strength
to all.**

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