

By Minerva Rodríguez - Country Director

Online Trainings with British Council: Challenges and opportunities from an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion perspective.

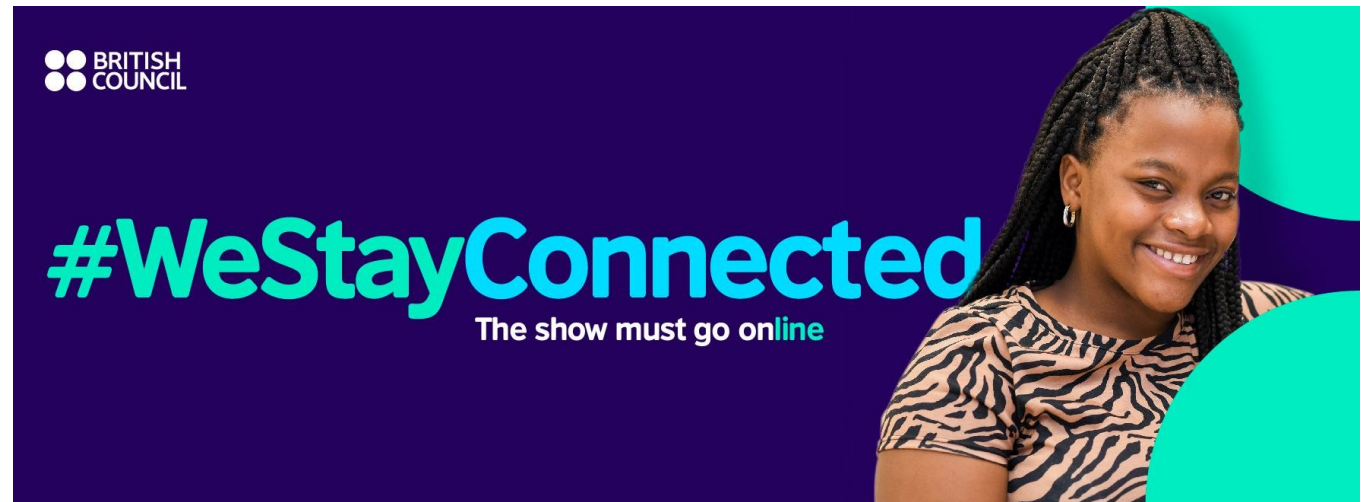
29 April 2021

About us

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities with offices in more than 100 countries. It is a United Kingdom Charity registered in 1934.

We launch our policies and behaviours both internally and externally which aim at promoting and sharing the best of the human values.

The rapid changes in our activity and delivery models for projects due to the limitations that Covi-19 has imposed on all of us has also made us think on how we keep supporting and putting into practice those policies, what else we should do, what to change to get better adapted to the digital era.



WHAT TO DO HERE...

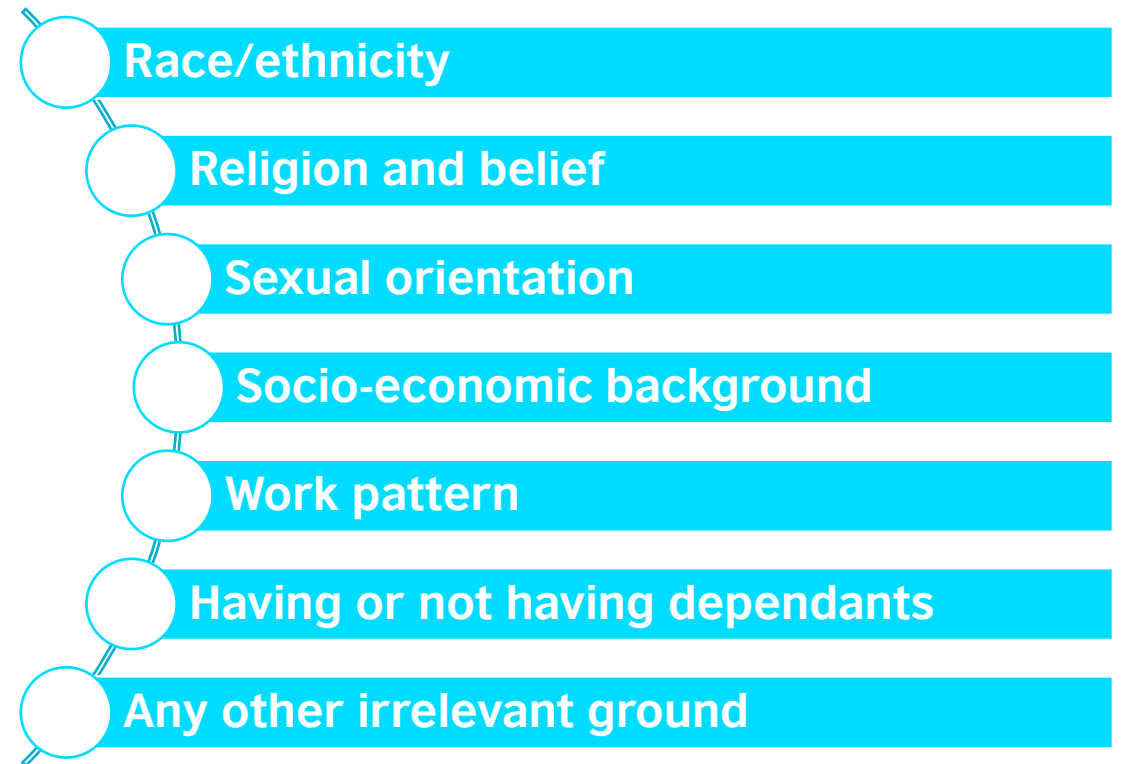
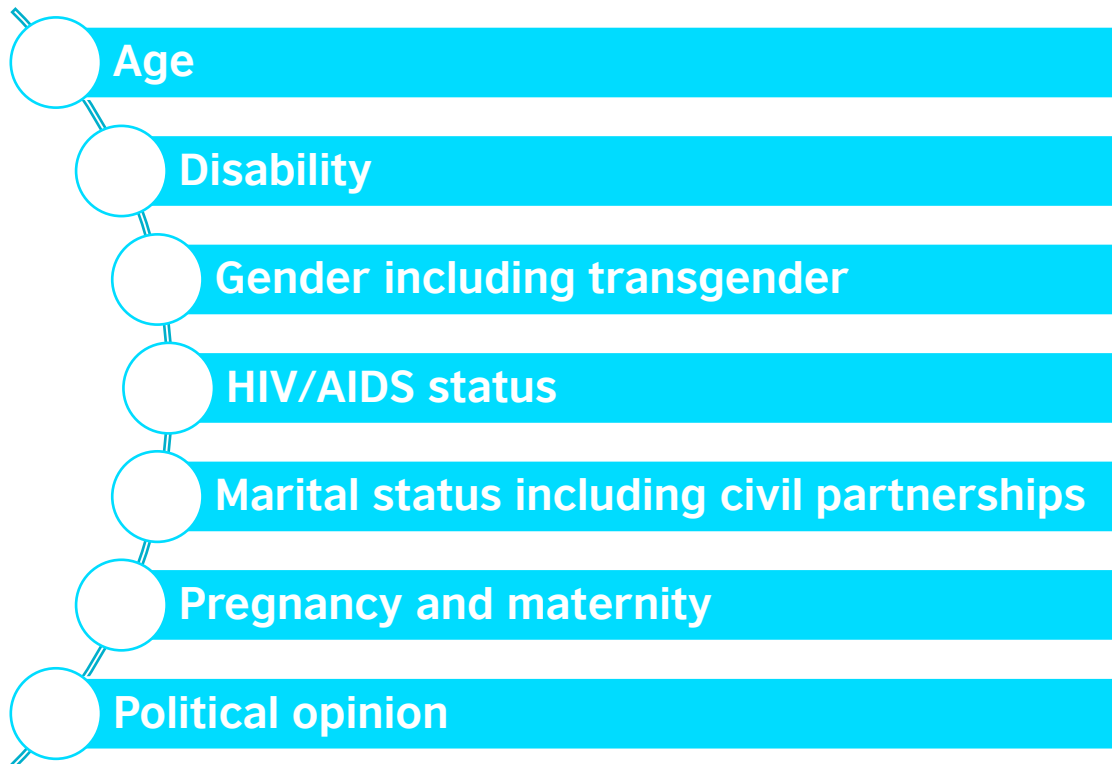
In this talk we would like to...

...mention the main elements we consider in our equality policy, enhancing the relevant ones for this event and the work we deliver in Cuba

... as well as local and universal challenges that we have to face and overcome all together

Equality policy statement

Working effectively with diversity is an essential part of our mission. We are committed to ensuring that there is no unjustified discrimination in the recruitment, retention, treatment, training and development of staff, consultants, partners and trainees based on:



We are committed to ...

- ☐ **understanding, valuing, and working with diversity to enable fair and full participation in its work and activities**
- ☐ **ensuring that there is no unjustified discrimination in its recruitment, selection, performance management or other processes**
- ☐ **promoting equality; this includes conducting equality screening and impact assessments of policies and functions**
- ☐ **treating individuals with whom it works with fairness, dignity and respect**
- ☐ **playing its part in removing barriers and redressing imbalances caused by inequality and unjustified discrimination.**

Tools we use to make easier the implementation of principles and policies:

- ❑ **DAF-** The diversity assessment framework is a set of guidelines to encourage engagement with, and progress against, the objectives in our equality, diversity and inclusion strategy.
(All parts of our organisation submit evidence and provide assurance of how set indicators have been met. Results are centrally reviewed and compiled into a score and a detailed feedback report, which helps us track and monitor progress over time).
- ❑ **EQUALITY MONITORING-** The data we collect in the UK and Cuba includes age, disability, ethnicity/race, gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation and working pattern. We compare the results against national and local populations to detect under- or over-representation, and take action to try to achieve a better balance.

DISABILITIES EQUALITY

It is very much aligned with this event to share ideas about how we could keep looking at ways to support disabilities equality.

About one in seven people are disabled. That's around 15 per cent of the global population, or an estimated one billion people worldwide (1000 millones).

MEANING that: you, someone in your family, or a close friend, are living as a disabled person.

Disability is not necessarily obvious or physically apparent and many disabled people are prevented from joining in wider society by a range of barriers – and are therefore effectively invisible.

DISABILITIES EQUALITY

Demographic change, as well as science and technology, are increasing life expectancies and leading to ageing populations. Alongside longstanding threats like natural disasters, wars, and disease, almost everywhere people are living longer – these factors often lead to disability.

As Bert Massie said when he was Chair of the UK's Disability Rights Commission: “Disability is an open club. Hang around for long enough and you'll become a member.”

The British Council supports and actively promotes use of the Social Model of disability.

The Social Model has been developed by disabled people and sees disability in terms of socially-imposed barriers that prevent people with impairments from participating fully and on an equal basis with others, in mainstream activities.

These barriers can be:

- physical ;
- cultural ;
- attitudinal .
- structural ;
- economic;

The social model focuses on identifying and trying to remove barriers, rather than trying to 'mend' the disabled

FOR OUR WORK IN CUBA-

**How could we show results of our work with disabilities?
Could it be a specific activity/training to develop skills
on those working with disabled people? Could it be a
workshop to exchange on experiences we have had?**

RACE EQUALITY

The UK and many other countries in which we operate are multi-ethnic and multicultural, or moving in that direction.

“All human beings belong to a single species and share a common origin. They are born equal in dignity and rights and all form an integral part of humanity. All peoples of the world possess equal faculties for attaining the highest level of intellectual, technical, social, economic, cultural and political development. The differences between achievements of the different people are entirely attributable to geographical, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors. Such differences can in no case serve as the pretext for any rank ordered classification of nations or people”.

(Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: Article 1, 1978.)

Our business case for race equality is consistent with our general business case for diversity.

We believe that:

- Race equality helps us foster mutually beneficial and respectful long term relationships worldwide with various individuals, groups and organisations. **This helps position us as a partner of choice and aides our reputation and standing as leaders in cultural relations.** It extends our reach and helps us to serve our audiences better, including by reflecting the ethnic diversity of the UK and elsewhere.
- **Race equality can help us access and use diverse talent pools.**
- **Racism and cultural relations are incompatible.** With a desire to create friendly knowledge and understanding as a bridge between the UK and other countries of the world, our work would be undermined if racism was suggested, or prevalent, or if we failed to take action in response to it.
- **Supporting and adopting an anti-racism approach helps us to combat racial prejudice, stereotyping, harassment, unjustified discrimination, undignified and culturally insensitive and offensive behaviour in our interactions with one another and in the delivery of our various activities.**

HOW WE SHOW ANTI-RACISM:

Cuba practices a policy of anti-racism as a country. This approach was taken for granted up to now and data was not collected to show evidence on ethnicity-racial representation in our activities.

HOWEVER, the recent events linked to BLACK LIVES MATTERS after the brutal assassination of George Floyd in USA have caused a need to look at any NGO from inside and to identify ways to show how anti-racism policies are considered and taken into practice. Statistical evidence is now needed to support our policy statements.

Any other idea to bring about a reflection on racism and its consequences, as well as proposals to actively unveil remaining racist behaviours on people would help to support anti-racism ?

INCLUSION PRIORITIES IN CUBA

British Council Cuba has been supporting inclusion all the way through.

It has been priorities to show how we take care of:

- Gender representation- This is easy to show as the sector has a female majority, but data has to be collected as proof/evidence for this kind of statements.
- Provincial representations- We encourage our partner to consider teachers from all the provinces in the trainings we support. Our main example is the Road Show in the way it gets organised/delivered. It allows teachers from all provinces to gather in 4 main locations to get trainings and then cascade those when they are back to their places.

This financial year Island wide representation has been set as a priority impact indicator for Cuba's work on ELT trainings

- Age (young teachers support)- Our initial trainings shown that most of the trainees were above 35 years old, reason why we created a specific trainings for younger teachers and teachers to be which has evolved to Mentors in Action as a project to focus, support trainings and monitor cascading

DIGITAL ERA-ONLINE TRAININGS-CHALLENGES

-ESIA (Equality Screening Impact Assessment) tool was used to identify issues and to propose the implementation of a new local policy to solve/mitigate problems.

The new policy :

-aimed at detailing all aspects involved in any digital delivery for the British Council Programs here from that moment on. Previously the activities planned were F2F (face to face) with almost no reference to digital contents due to telecom issues related to Cuba (we used to print materials and/or to save them in memory sticks to give away to trainees/participants in our joint events).

□ **British Council had to:**

- **get new agreements signed with our stakeholders (Ministries of Education, Higher Education and Culture) as they had to ensure some logistics and or time for the new activities and trainings.**
- work on forms and evidences to complete by using only digital platforms, as well as delivering some basic trainings with the principles of our organisation, plus special trainings according to the nature of each delivery.**
- evaluate which platform is best for what, we have to support our Cuban counterparts to look for options and we ourselves have to learn more about the possibilities we could offer to our partners and beneficiaries.**
- consider Plan A and Plan B, in case that the platform itself collapses (as we had seen in some regional events).**
- consider blending digital events, less time for joint connections (synchronic) and more time for individual checking on contents previously (free demand contents uploaded, emails received in advance).**
- **KEEP AS BASIC CONDITION that main procedures for the organisation had to be followed, including EDI, Data protection and Safeguarding.**

Connectivity risks

Apart from our internal agreements, it was a priority to define connectivity risks in the chain elements. A plan considering how to react to any inconvenience and how to make possible trainings had to be in place too.

Connectivity risks identified:

Platforms that are not allowed to operate in Cuba (Ex: Zoom google classroom)

Zones with no connectivity or bad quality signal (ADSL, 3G, 4G)

Intermittent connectivity

Data costs

Telephone devices specifications (some unable to be used for internet)

Training on technology usage for digital events

Training on digital delivery from trainers, British Council and partners

Our work during pandemic times

Together with our local counterparts we have managed to support around **15 direct training actions**, international exchanges and events linked to our EES project, connecting with a significant audience:



782 English language teachers and education leaders through virtual platforms



3,528 people through our virtual recorded events (mainly on social media platforms)



In addition, we were able to benefit around 780 people through cascading actions.

WHAT COMES NEXT...

The main challenges in terms of inclusion would be:

How to reach teachers that are located in silent zones?

How to reach teachers that have not a proper mobile device able to get access to internet for trainings?

How we would impact all teachers from all municipalities in the Basic education levels? How could we measure that?



Let's work together to show how inclusive we all are!

Many thanks!

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Thank you!!!