

WOW Karachi 2019

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# How to put together a Green Event 101

30 January 2020

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## WOW...Let's go green!



The British Council in partnership with WOW Foundation held the third **Women of the World Festival Karachi** on 14 and 15 December 2019. WOW is a festival that celebrates women and girls and takes a frank look at the obstacles they face across the world. This year in Karachi it was attended by **over 16,000 people** with the overall **921,667** social media reach.

With the theme of *Resilience, Transformation and Return*, the festival's programming including panel discussions, bites, performances, mentoring sessions, workshops and marketplace activities.

Climate change was a core feature in the programming and in the running of the festival. It was identified as a key theme for future festival at WOW Karachi Thinkin' in December 2018.

To make green practices the core of our programming and delivery, we worked with Maheen Zia, our environment advisor for the Thinkin 2018, Rahim Artani, the British Council Pakistan's Green Champion and our partners to create an action plan. Of course, there were areas where we could not mitigate the environmental impact completely for which we put in guidelines and ways we could off-set them in the future.



## Green Intent Statement

- Detailed green statements and guidelines were published on the website. Green tips like the one below were added in the programme and speeches. *“Bring your own tote bags and (non-plastic) water bottle from home, water dispensers will be placed throughout the venue. Carpool for a low carbon footprint. Do not litter. Let’s make this a zero-waste event.”*
- Our green policy was made a part of our tenders and RFPs (Request for quotes) from vendors. These were also shared with participants of the festival.
- Dedicated social media posts were created to promote the festival as an environmentally friendly festival.
- Our Green Intent was also amplified through speeches and media interviews by the British Council staff as well as our curators.

## Venue

- We worked with the venue’s management to reduce food and plastic waste by providing water stations and glasses as oppose to single-use plastic bottles throughout the festival.
- The venue also provided plates and cutlery for the food stalls that significantly reduced the plastic and paper cutlery usage.

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## Transport Management

- We encouraged attendees to carpool which reduced carbon emissions and worked with partners to provide a shuttle service for audience members from underserved communities. The shuttle service transported over 700 people to and from the festival in the two days.
- We partnered with car-sharing company *Careem* for a promocode for the festival that gave the visitors a discount to and from the venue.

## Waste Management

- Waste on site was managed and recycled or composted with the support of two recycling initiatives *Garbage Can* and *Trashit*.
- Food left over from the event was donated to needy individuals via the initiative *Robinhood Army*. On day-one, 30 and on day-two, 300 meals were collected.



## Event Branding

- We worked with our suppliers to reduce the use of panaflex to zero and encouraged vendors to donate used panaflexes for recycling to Project *Kamyabi* where they were turned into tote bags.
- The programme was mainly shared through online platforms (website, WhatsApp, social media channels). Keeping in mind the EDI policy, we printed just enough material to make it accessible for people with limited access to social media.

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- SMD screens were used instead of panaflex backdrops throughout the venue.
  - Instead of handbook with profiles, dedicated social media posts was used to promote the speakers and performers.
  - #WOWKarachi and #WOWKhiGoesGreen were used to promote the festival and green practices.



## Green Market Place

- The marketplace was set up using recyclable bamboo structure instead of non-recyclable and toxic materials.
- We discouraged the use of one-time use printed banners and encouraged vendors to use eco-friendly signage.
- Organisations and small-scale recyclable product businesses that were working with greener practices were preferred and guidance was provided to reduce waste.



## Programming

- Senator Sherry Rehman, Chairperson for Climate Change Caucus, in the opening ceremony key note speech stated *“Women, whose lives are deeply entangled with access to natural resources, like water and firewood to complete their daily chores, are harder hit by climate enhanced burdens and frustrations. They have been thrust to the forefront in dealing with the harsh realities of this rapidly changing environment. As we celebrate women, we must continue to push back, disrupt and defy emerging challenges, risks and problems women face at multiple levels.”*
- Our children’s workshops including: WOW JUNIOR Kaghaz Kay Karnamay. A workshop for children to make handmade paper using recycled or natural material. The children’s workshop on youth environmental and climate change awareness was a full house!
- We worked with Dawood foundation to screen their film on Mangroves and climate change, including a Q&A after.
- Talks including Biology & the Environment: Understanding the Female Brain with Dr Maheen Mausoo Adamson, followed by Q&A, Sustainable Practices in the Apparel & Crafts Industries & the Role of Women by Kendall Robbins, followed by Q&A.
- BAFTA-winning digital UK artist Dan Hett collaborated with *tabla* player Yousuf Kerai to create a striking visual map of the critical climate emergency we’re all facing, synched to the beat of the *tabla*. Dan also produced artworks live at the festival which were inspired by climate change.
- Italian artist Giuseppe Percivati, an Italian mural artist, created a mural within the venue during the festival. Giuseppe uses environmentally friendly paints and has suitability at the heart of his practice.



## Offsetting Carbon Footprint

We worked closely with our [Green Champion Rahim Artani](#) to implement the [Carbon footprint calculator](#) to gauge the impact that could not be avoided. We are currently evaluating our footprint which we will offset with a tree planting drive in Karachi in the coming months.

## Key learnings

One of the key learnings that came out from our efforts was that organisations and people are aware of the severity of climate change, but they don't necessarily know where the improvements can be made. By restricting the use of paper and plastic, we made our partners think out of the box and come up with creative marketing solutions instead of the traditional practices that are usually not environmentally friendly. An important factor is to communicate the green agenda from the early stage, making it a part of the core strategy, giving the audience a chance to explore options, making them partners in the journey.

An area of improvement for the British Council is the need for better and more supportive systems to implement these practices. Procurement and Marketing teams should be taken on board from the start so that they can deliver the agenda successfully. It would also be useful to have a roster of suppliers that support our environment friendly ambitions. The practices carried out at WOW should not be an exception but a rule for the British Council, even if it means a little more effort.

It was also interesting to see the audience response. The audience was willing to use glass utensils and steel cutlery. Moreover, the recyclable tote bags were seen throughout the festival. After the event, management at the venue mentioned that it was one of the cleanest events they had managed in a long time.

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To find out more about the festival, please contact:

[Chantal Harrison-Lee, Director Arts, Pakistan](#)

To find out more about the British Council's Green practices, visit:

<https://britishcouncil.sharepoint.com/Site/Green/Pages/Default.aspx>

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<sup>i</sup> The WOW Thinkins are a chance to have your say on what and who you would like to see represented, what ideas can be developed into the programme, what in your opinion are the most relevant topics for women today, and what can we build on from previous WOW festivals.