Fortune Project Report

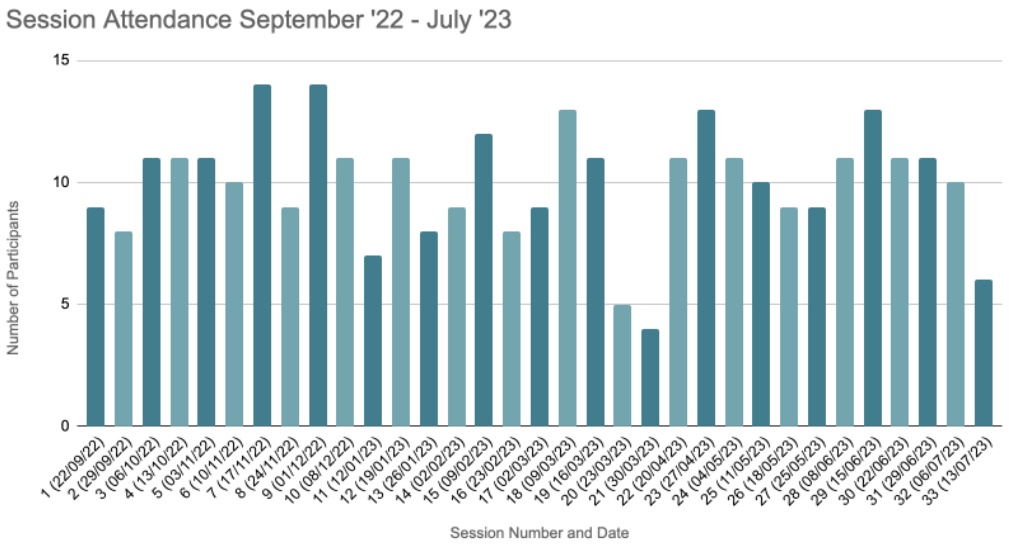
September 2022 to July 2023

Thursdays 6-8pm 22/09/22 - 13/07/23

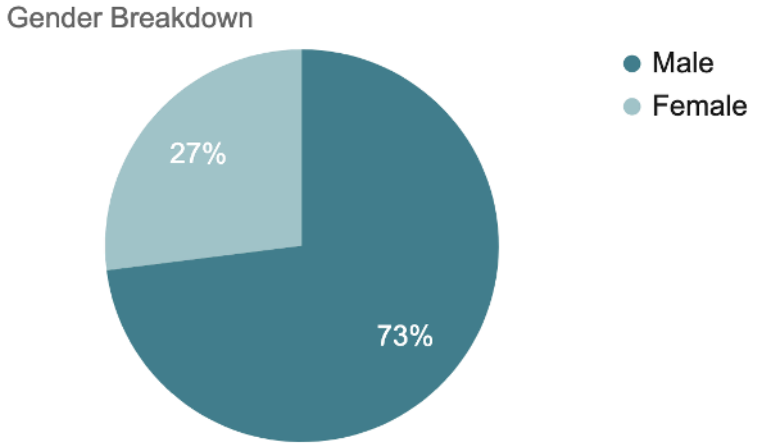
Fortune is a weekly creative session for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers under 25 years old. The sessions provide a comfortable and non-judgmental space for the young people to explore their creativity, build their confidence, improve their English and find community. Each session provides an opportunity for them to grow and reach a stage where they can confidently create and deliver performances to the general public and mentor new members who join the group.

Throughout the year:

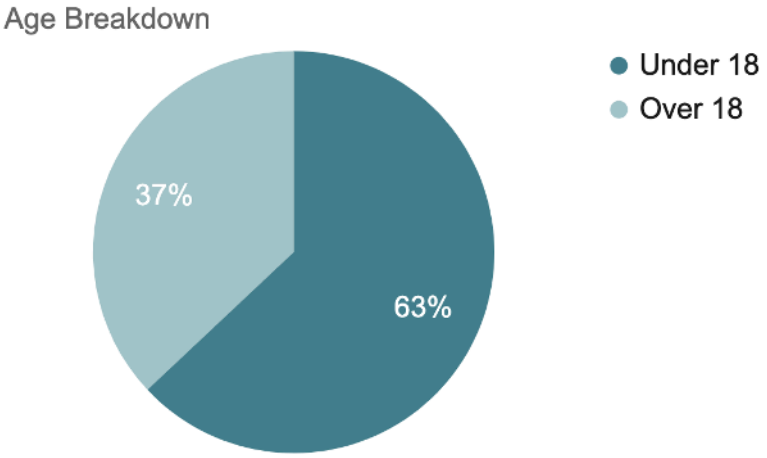
- Fortune retained participants from the previous year, so that the participants had the opportunity to participate in a full year of sessions, not disrupted by Covid.
- Fortune was able to recruit participants from Pan's other project Building Bridges once it came to an end.
- Fortune held a taster session in collaboration with Freedom from Torture for the new term.
- We delivered 33 regular sessions, once a week during term time (22/09/22 to 13/07/23), on Thursdays between 6 and 9pm.
- We provided creative sessions for a total of 30 participants, with over 60% of these participants attending 5 or more sessions.



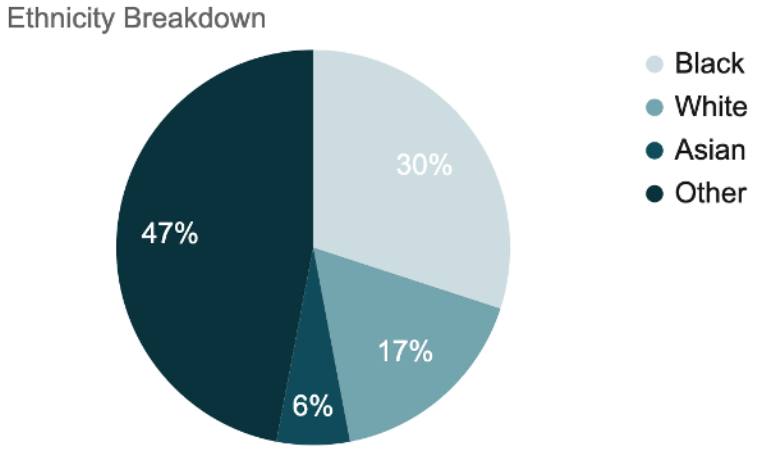
- The majority of the participants are male (73%), which reflects the demographic of young migrants coming to the UK.



- Many of the participants are in college, with a little over 60% being under 18.



- The ethnic breakdown of the groups is 30% Black, 17% White, 6% Asian with the remaining 47% being other ethnicities, but majoritively South American.



- Many of the participants are friends outside of the sessions, and they have brought friends along who have become regular participants. I believe this contributes to the majoritively male and South American group.
- In all we delivered 775 participant hours of workshops.

The previous year of the project faced disruptions due to Covid-19, this influenced our approach to this year's project. The majority of the participants continued on, along with our focus on the theme of 'love'. This continuation allowed the participants to start from a more confident and collaborative state, meaning we were able to start the creation of a play from earlier sessions in the year.

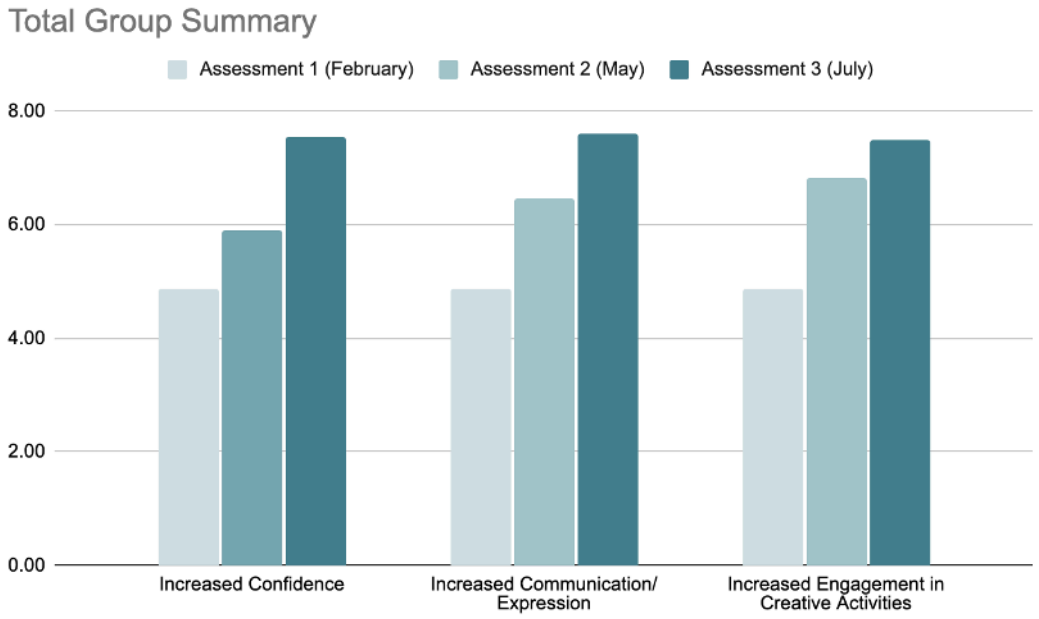
The participants embraced the development stages of the play, with more shy members of the group stepping up in the creating and performing of scenes. The participants were thriving in the creative elements of the process, with their willingness to share showing their growth of confidence and trust. One participant in particular, R, wrote poems outside of sessions and then brought them to the group to share. These poems formed the foundation of the play.

The participants were initially less engaged with the process of pulling the play together, especially when scenes had to be redone in an effort to fine-tune them. The repetition did lead to a lack of focus, however, the participants were eager to contribute when it came to scenes not looking or feeling right. Patience did need to be worked on, but it was clear that the participants were engaged with the creative process and felt ownership and pride over what they were creating. Focus did improve once elements like costume and sound were introduced, helping the participants to visualise a final production. Within this process the participants learnt to play different roles, take on other people's roles if need be, and apply improv skills to adapt to any changes in the play.

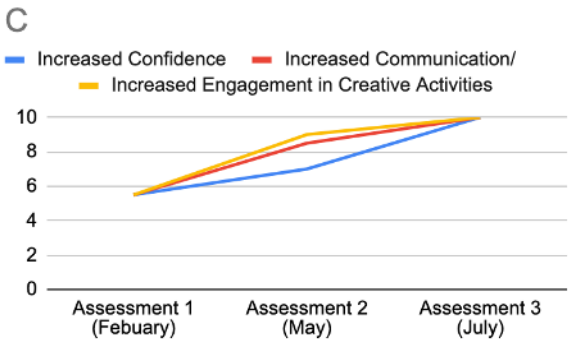
At the end of the term the group put on their performance of 'The Shape of Love', the culmination of all the work they had done across the year. The play was a showcase of scenes built upon poems written by the participant 'R', focusing on different ideas and experiences of love. This was held at the Little Angel Theatre to an audience of Pan staff, trustees and friends and family of the participants. A participant described the process as "a really good experience".

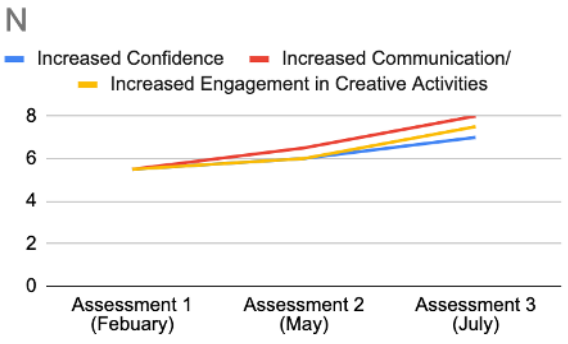
To complete the year, Pan took the Fortune participants on a trip to see a musical performance from Tinariwen, a collective of Tuareg musicians from Mali, at Somerset House. The participants fedback that they were uncomfortable with there being no chairs and that the performance was a little too late for them, as the music started at 8pm, which is when the sessions usually end. They did enjoy the experience overall, but we will take note of this for any future trips.

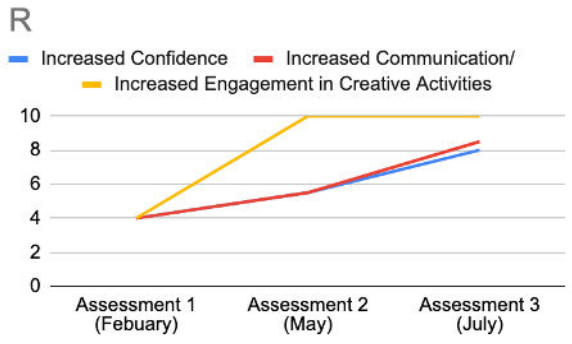
The group showed an overall improvement across all three key outcomes that we measure; confidence, communication/expression and engagement in creative activities.

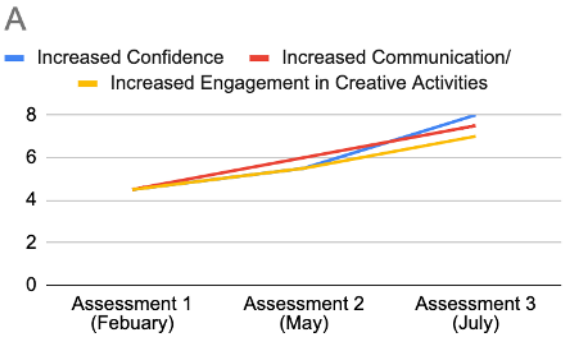


Below is a sample of the participant growth in our key areas across the year.









All participants increased in all three areas across the year.

The year started with E directing the project, with facilitation from a former participant, Rosa and formalising Kavyan's role as a peer facilitator. In January, Rosa left the project to travel, so Sheyda stepped into the role of co-project director alongside E. Sheyda had to step away due to her commitment to Pan's Papillon project, so John, Pan's Artistic Director, facilitated the project alongside E. From May, Brie, a participant of WoC, turned peer facilitator, started as a peer facilitator for Fortune. Despite the shifting in the team, E has kept the work consistent, with the current team being strong.

This year introduced two former participants as peer facilitators; Kavyan who was a participant of Fortune and Brie who was a participant of Weapon of Choice. Both have a passion for acting and confidently stepped into their new roles.

Kavyan started peer facilitating the project at the start of the year, building on his pre-existing relationship with the group. He started by leading games and activities within the sessions, then leading full sessions. He also featured significantly in the play, stepping into roles when other participants were missing, and leading the group with his confidence and acting abilities. He has fully embraced his role as a peer facilitator, and has grown a lot within it. We will further develop and train him in the next year so he can take on the role of facilitator.

Brie joined the project in May. She originally joined sessions to help build her skills, but gelled so well with the group that she joined permanently as a peer facilitator. She immediately had a great connection with the participants and the other facilitators, with the participants trusting her and being confident and comfortable around her. She has led games within the sessions, but there was not the opportunity for her to lead a session completely, due to the time constraints. Like with Kavyan, her skills will be further developed with the aim of becoming a facilitator.

When speaking to the participants at the end of year, they were positive about the experience of the sessions and the final performance. They enjoy the games in the sessions, saying that it has helped them grow closer as a group and has built their confidence. They were also proud of creating and performing a play, with the most common feedback being that they wished there was a bigger audience for the final show, which shows how confident they are with their work. Multiple participants want to pursue acting, with another participant wanting to continue writing poetry. The group clearly enjoys the creative process and wants to continue with it.

We asked the participants how they found the process of devising the play, they said the following:

- "When we started it was lots of playing games but we were not concentrated. Then a few months ago we started to work together really well. We built a team and managed to come together to make scenes and, look, we have made a performance and shown it to other people."
- "We take it more seriously, especially when we moved [from the previous session venue]."
- "The consistency made us better."
- "I mean it was a bit boring, but at the end, the hard work made us do a good performance."
- "We used to blame each other, now we work as a team, supporting each other."

We then asked the participants what the experience of the final performance was like and what they learned from it:

- "Even when we arrived late for the last rehearsal everyone told us exactly what was happening and helped us get into the performance really well."
- "Teamwork is important."
- "Now to do another performance would be much easier."
- "In terms of teamwork, was excellent!"

Some final reflections from the participants:

- "[I'm] proud of our work and the final product."
- "I didn't get scared because [the other participants] were with me."
- "We became a family, more caring and welcoming, even to newcomers."
- "We improvised really good and we try our best."

We measured these outcomes through weekly observations, individual interviews with participants, written feedback using prompts and a final group evaluation session.

The following are a few case studies of participants, mapping their progress across the year.

'R', a refugee from Peru, has been attending the group for over three years. At first he had very poor English and his body language was stiff and withdrawn. Although he attended - even by Zoom during Covid - it was very rare that he expressed an opinion, suggested an idea or led in an exercise. Progress was slow but the fact that he attended constantly showed he wanted to be with us.

About 5 months ago we noticed a change. He was always the first to arrive, he quietly told us he had been writing poetry, his body language relaxed and he became more expressive in face and gesture. In groups he started to bring new ideas and in a recent development he conceived a scene (a meeting of two poets; one open, one private) and performed in it. He also tells us he has started a course to become a sports coach. And he smiles a lot.

'N' has grown from strength to strength. In group work situations she will go the extra mile to find clarity even if it means finding answers outside of her immediate group.

Even though 'A' has only recently joined us he does not shy away from being vocal when needed, he would prefer not to, but if prompted, he will share his ideas. He seems to come alive in small groups, most likely because he feels more seen and heard.

It has been a joyful and successful year for Fortune. The group has moved past the limitations caused by the previous year's Covid-19 restrictions and staff changes of this year. The group are supportive and very comfortable being creative with and around each other. There was a worry that as this group has been with each other for a while with not many changes to the makeup of participants that their confidence may not extend beyond the group. But with their final performance they proved that the connection they have only bolsters their confidence and does not detract from it. They very quickly adjusted to the new environment of a theatre and were comfortable taking on other people's roles if they had not arrived yet. They were happy adapting to everything that was thrown at them, leading to a wonderful final performance.

The participants were engaged with both the creation process and the acting and performance elements. Moving forward it would be good to identify the strengths of each participant, so they can better thrive in the process of creating a play.

With the team now being firm for next year, we can properly set up the goals for the year ahead, with a performance date set far in future so we can get an audience size that the participants will be happy with. There was also not a huge opportunity for trips and experiences this year, so that is something that we will be focusing on going forward.

One of the downsides of such a close knit group is that the majority of the participants are from a similar background, leading to a lot of Spanish speaking, meaning less focus on the activities. We will be focusing on recruitment at the beginning of the year, hoping that having a more diverse group will disincentivize Spanish speaking so as to not exclude new members. Having a wider range of experiences from participants will also hopefully add to the creative process.

We look forward to another year of Fortune and the joy and development it can bring to young migrants living in London.