

**Exploring the Contribution of Art Programs on Positive Youth Development: Through  
the Eyes of Uweza Artists**

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### Abstract

This study explored the perspectives of 12 young artists (aged 23-29) from the Uweza Art Gallery to understand the contribution of art programs on positive youth development in underprivileged contexts like Kibera. Through semi-structured interviews, key themes linked to the external assets of the developmental assets framework emerged: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Results indicated that Uweza Art Gallery fosters development by providing acceptance, community engagement, reasonable regulations, mentorship, financial support, and growth opportunities. These findings highlight the potential of implementing the developmental assets framework in art programs to support positive youth development.

*Keywords:* Positive youth development, developmental assets framework, art programs, underprivileged contexts

### Samenvatting

Deze studie onderzocht de perspectieven van 12 jonge kunstenaars (23-29 jaar) van de Uweza Art Gallery om de bijdrage van kunstprogramma's aan positieve jeugdontwikkeling in gemarginaliseerde contexten zoals Kibera te begrijpen. Uit semigestructureerde interviews kwamen belangrijke thema's naar voren die verbonden zijn aan de external assets van het developmental assets framework: *support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations*, en *constructive use of time*. De resultaten gaven aan dat Uweza Art Gallery ontwikkeling bevordert door acceptatie, maatschappelijke betrokkenheid, acceptabele grenzen, mentorschap, financiële steun en ontwikkelingskansen te bieden. Deze bevindingen benadrukken het potentieel van het implementeren van het developmental asset framework in kunstprogramma's om positieve jeugdontwikkeling te ondersteunen.

*Trefwoorden:* Positieve jeugdontwikkeling, developmental assets framework, kunstprogramma's, gemarginaliseerde contexten

## **Exploring the Contribution of Art Programs on Positive Youth Development: Through the Eyes of Uweza Artists**

Engagement in arts, especially for youth, has been significantly linked to increased motivation, a flexible learning attitude, active class participation, and a sense of purpose (Martin et al., 2013). However, art engagement is less accessible for youth within underprivileged contexts, which raises challenges for social inclusion (OECD, 2022). This has led to a rise in interest and funding of art programs for at-risk youth (Martin et al., 2013; Miller & Rowe, 2009; Stinson, 2009). Unfortunately, however, little is known about which elements of art programs might contribute to the positive development of youth (Martin et al., 2013). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the perspectives of young artists on an art program, the Uweza Art Gallery (UAG) in Kibera to provide insight how such programs can contribute to positive development.

### **Background**

Formal culture, including art engagement, has been less accessible to low SES populations because of cultural distance and unfamiliarity (Ferrer-Fons et al., 2022). However, recent studies have proposed the idea of art engagement as a transformative actor in social mobility (Carrasco et al., 2016; Ferrer-Fons et al., 2022). This poses a new perspective for programs and policies to stimulate art as a catalyser for positive development.

Aligning this proposition, several studies have linked art engagement with positive development of youth (Martin et al., 2013; Miller & Rowe, 2009; Stinson, 2009). For example, art education, within the school curriculum, contributes to improved cognitive, social, and behavioural outcomes. Art students show decreased dropout rates, increased optimism about postsecondary education, and higher school attachment (Elpus, 2013). As adults, they are more likely to obtain a college degree and less likely to be involved with the criminal justice system (Elpus, 2013). Another study found art engagement in home, school,

and community settings, increased academic motivation, a flexible learning attitude, active class participation, and a sense of purpose (Martin et al., 2013). Overall, these studies indicate that art engagement has positive short- and long-term developmental outcomes for youth across different contexts.

Moreover, several studies have shown the benefits of art programs for vulnerable youth. Stinson (2009) found that art programs boost art skills, problem-solving abilities, self-esteem, and pro-social behaviours among youth at risk of delinquency behaviour.

Additionally, by participating in art programs youth from low-income communities improved in art and social skills, while their emotional and behavioural problems decreased (Wright et al., 2008). Furthermore, art programs offer a space for youth to create art that reflects their lives, helping them to engage with their cultural and social resources, which stimulates positive identity development (Halverson, 2010). These studies suggest that art programs meet the developmental needs of vulnerable youth, however which elements of art programs promote positive development remains unclear.

### **Positive youth development**

Positive youth development (PYD) is an important underlying theory in art programs. It became a counter paradigm to the deficit or at-risk paradigms, suggesting that opportunities should be the focus of youth development, instead of solely the risks they are exposed to (Benson & Saito, 2001; O'Dougherty Wright, 2013). PYD emphasizes the relationships between individuals and their ecological context, aligning the ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner (1979), and proposes that these relationships are the key in human development (Benson & Saito, 2001; Sesma et al., 2013). In these social and physical ecologies, such as in arts, sports, and school, lie developmental opportunities that foster the strengths of youth, which is the main focus of PYD (Sesma et al., 2013).

Such developmental opportunities have led to a key framework within PYD: the developmental assets framework (Benson et al., 1997). Developmental assets are defined as a composition of interrelated experiences, relationships, skills, and values, which contribute to the positive development of youth globally (Sesma et al., 2013). These assets are categorized as external assets and internal assets (see Appendix A). Unlike internal assets which evaluate individual characteristics within youth (e.g., skills and competencies), external assets can be used to evaluate the features of developmental ecologies in which youth interact, such as youth programs (Shek et al., 2019). Hence, similar to the most recent practices (e.g., de Mezerville-López, 2023), the current study adopts a community-based approach and focuses solely on the external assets of the developmental framework.

### **External Assets**

External assets involve four categories (Leffert et al., 1998; de Mezerville-López, 2023; Shek et al., 2019). The first category, *support*, is the affection, care, and acceptance provided by the youth's surroundings. Secondly, *empowerment* indicates the ways in which youth feel valued and contribute to the community. Third, the category *boundaries and expectations* refers to the rules and regulations in specific contexts, as well as modelling behaviour of adults to set an example. Lastly, *constructive use of time* describes the opportunities for youth to do activities that stimulate creativity, social interactions, and personal growth.

External assets can be used to identify what elements in art programs support PYD. This can help ensure a basis for effective implementation of those programs across different contexts (Miller & Rowe, 2009; Proctor et al., 2023) and prevent misallocation of resources (Miller & Rowe, 2009). Moreover, it can help develop theoretically sound programs to better tailor to the needs of youth (Lakin & Mahoney, 2006).

**Art programs in underprivileged contexts**

Understanding what elements support PYD is especially relevant for art programs that operate in underprivileged contexts. Youth in underprivileged contexts, many of colour and/or from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are often described as at-risk because they are marginalized from mainstream institutions, lack in opportunities, and likely to encounter developmental problems such as behaviour problems or mental health issues (O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013; Riele, 2006). Youth programs for this target population often use this deficit-approach in structuring their program, aiming to fulfil the developmental needs of these youth (Ballard et al., 2023). While it is important to acknowledge the developmental needs of youth in underprivileged contexts, this perspective lacks in recognizing the strengths, talents and possibilities that are present in youth (Halverson, 2010; Riele, 2006).

Unlike a deficit-approach, an asset-based approach acknowledges that youth, who are thought to be at risk for maladaptation, often show high levels of strength and competence that help them in adversity (O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013; Sesma et al., 2013). Art programs can promote the assets of youth to develop their skill and talents, which subsequently improves community development (Ballard et al., 2023). Halverson (2010) demonstrated that art programs have the potential to be especially effective in empowering youth in underprivileged areas, as art enables them to construct and express their identities positively in their community. Because enabling the assets of youth is crucial in underprivileged contexts, the current study adopts an asset-based approach in examining the elements in art programs that stimulate PYD.

**The Uweza Art Gallery and The Uweza Foundation**

In doing so, the current study focuses on an art program that operates within an underprivileged context: The Uweza Art Gallery (UAG). The UAG is a program organised by

the Uweza Foundation, which aims to contribute to the development of youth in Kibera, an informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya.

Kibera is considered as the largest slum areas on the African continent, with a population of 185,777, according to the Kenyan government (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Possibly because the government does not acknowledge the informal settlement, this results in a lack of basic services, schools, clinics, law enforcement, running water and lavatories (Mutisya & Yarime, 2011). In fact, over 50% of the population lives under the poverty line (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007). This causes several attempts by organisations and the government to improve the situation in Kibera (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007).

The Uweza Foundation, an NGO operating in Kibera, focuses on empowering children and youth. With the mission to facilitate a path to a better future for youth, Uweza runs five key programs, one of them being the UAG. Their approach is community-based, with programs designed and implemented by Kibera residents (Uweza Foundation, 2023). Additionally, Uweza aims to maintain a positive perspective, emphasizing the resilience and resourcefulness that is found within Kibera (Uweza Foundation, 2023). Uweza focuses on lasting impact, making long-term investments in youth, with the aim to create a new generation of changemakers (Uweza Foundation, 2023).

In Kibera there is a lack of opportunities for artistic expression and development. Therefore, the Uweza Foundation started the UAG to provide a safe space for artists to make a sell art and for children to follow art classes (Uweza Foundation, 2022). By providing free materials, exposure, and access to the market, the UAG has made it possible for young artists to pursue a career in art, generating an income for tuition and housing costs (Uweza Foundation, 2022). A case study of the UAG in Kibera, can therefore clarify whether and how elements of art programs provide support for PYD of youth in underprivileged contexts.

### Current research

The current study has formulated the following research question: What are the past and future perspectives of young artists on the Uweza Art Gallery and its contribution to their development? The term ‘past’ is used here to refer to the experiences of artists, while ‘future’ refers to the recommendations of artists for the further development of the UAG. In line with the external developmental assets (de Mezerville-López, 2023; Benson et al., 1997), the following sub questions have been formulated:

- (a) Support: What are artists’ past and future perspectives on the supporting elements (e.g., open communication) of the Uweza Art Gallery?
- (b) Empowerment: What are artists’ past and future perspectives on the empowering elements (e.g., giving back to community) of the Uweza Art Gallery?
- (c) Boundaries and expectations: What are artists’ past and future perspectives on the boundaries and expectations (e.g., rules and role models) of the Uweza Art Gallery?
- (d) Constructive use of time: What are artists’ past and future perspectives on the elements that stimulate constructive use of time (e.g., personal growth) at the Uweza Art Gallery?

By using the developmental assets framework, it can be expected that the UAG stimulates the positive development of young artists to the extent that external developmental assets are present in the program. The current study aims to provide insight into the elements of the program that artists find encouraging for their development and offers recommendations for further program improvement. By examining the UAG and its contribution to PYD in depth, this study seeks to enhance the development of scientific theories in art and youth development, providing a foundation for art programs to effectively contribute to PYD.

## Methods

### Type & structure of study

The perspectives of artists on the UAG and its contribution to PYD were central to the current study; therefore, a case study design was deemed most suitable. Case studies are useful in building practical knowledge (i.e., knowledge for program development), as a case is able to reflect complexity of the daily practices and struggles of practitioners (Longhofer et al., 2017). Furthermore, a case study is suitable to study the elements of the program in depth, which clarifies underlying factors and phenomena (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Lastly, as argued by Longhofer et al. (2017) a case study can be used to examine the things that matter to people the most. Hence, a case study can help gain a profound understanding of the perspectives of artists. The case study entailed semi-structured interviews, based on the external developmental assets (de Mezerville-López, 2023; Benson et al., 1997) with artists in order to explore the contribution of the UAG to their development and their recommendations.

### Participants

The sample consisted of young artists (23-29 years old,  $M = 26,08$ ) who are actively involved in the UAG program and who live(d) in the informal settlement of Kibera ( $N = 12$ ). Although the sample size was relatively small, saturation has been achieved, as further coding was no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Young artists were approached via the program coordinator and informed via an information letter (Appendix B). Of note, this program also offers art classes to children under 18, but they were excluded from the study due to feasibility issues. Obtaining consent from minors and their parents was expected to take more time than the study allowed.

### Ethical considerations

For the current research, approval was obtained from the Faculty Ethics Review Committee of Utrecht University (registration number 24-0644). Written consent for the

interviews and recordings was obtained through informed consent (Appendix C). Microsoft Teams was used for recording the interviews, allowing for secure storage on Utrecht University's database. After transcription, these recordings were deleted. All data was anonymized and stored in the secure database of Utrecht University.

### **Operationalization & research instruments**

Semi-structured interviews were used to gain in-depth insights into young artists' perspectives on the UAG program, offering a neutral space for sharing potentially conflicting opinions (Kallio et al., 2016). The interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. The interview protocol (Appendix D) was based on the developmental assets framework and the study of de Mezerville-López (2023) to ensure all relevant themes for PYD and community programs were covered. The interview questions were pilot tested with three individuals from the Uweza Foundation to ensure clarity and relevance (Kallio et al., 2016). Despite the small sample size, this pilot test was valuable given the cultural differences between the research context and the researcher's background (see Appendix D for a discussion on the researcher's positionality). Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the interview questions.

### **Data preparation & analysis**

Before data analysis, all interviews were transcribed and anonymized. Some recording failures resulted in minor gaps, which were clearly marked in the transcriptions and omitted from the final analysis, ensuring overall data integrity. NVivo 12 software facilitated a structured thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews (Hilal & Alabri, 2013), following six key steps: familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and reporting, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the data was transcribed, thoroughly read, and initial ideas were noted to ensure familiarity with the content. Next, an inductive approach was employed to generate initial codes based on participants' responses (Terry et al., 2017). These codes were then defined, organized, and grouped into themes.

Subsequently, the themes were reviewed to ensure they aligned with the coded extracts and the entire data set, which improved the internal validity of the study. The themes were then restructured and defined to fit within the external developmental assets framework, addressing the research questions. Themes that did not fit within this framework were defined based on the data itself. Finally, the results of the analysis were reported.

## Results

This study examined what the past and future perspectives of young artists on the UAG and its contribution to their development are. To assess the past and future perspectives of young artists on the UAG and its contribution to their development, interview findings are discussed using the developmental assets framework.

### External developmental assets

The results aligned with the external developmental assets: support, empowerment, boundaries and rules, and constructive use of time. Two additional themes emerged: practical contributions (past) and professionalizing (future), resulting in 26 subthemes (Appendix E provides operational definitions). An overview of the themes and their frequencies is provided for past perspectives (Table 1) and future perspectives (Table 2).

**Table 1**

*Past perspectives of artists.*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequencies	Participants
Support	Communication	21	12
	Atmosphere	14	8
	Being a family	12	10
Empowerment	Giving back to community	27	9
	Safe space	21	12
	Contributing to organisation	7	6

Boundaries and expectations	Role models	23	11
	Rules	22	11
Constructive use of time	Opportunities for growth	52	12
	Building network	22	10
	Creativity	11	9
	Social skills	8	7
	Parental relations	3	2
Practical contributions	Financial support	34	11
(newly discovered theme)	Materials, Facility and Market	33	12

**Table 2***Future perspectives of artists.*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequencies	Participants
Support	Teambuilding	9	7
	Communication	3	5
Empowerment	Struggles of female artists	9	5
	Interacting with community	8	5
	Empowering children	3	3
Boundaries and expectations	Rules and expectations	2	1
Constructive use of time	Professional development	6	4
Professionalising	Expanding	28	10
(newly discovered theme)	Providing materials	6	5
	Professionals	6	5

Table 1 shows a high prevalence of key concepts discussed in the interviews, with most themes mentioned by half or more of the participants (except parental relations). In contrast, Table 2 demonstrates a more varied frequency of future perspectives among the participants. The themes are discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections.

### ***Support***

#### *Past perspectives of artists on support*

Support refers to what extent youth considers the organization as caring and affectionate (Leffert et al., 1998; Shek et al., 2019). Regarding support, three subthemes surfaced from participants' past perspectives of the UAG and its developmental contributions: communication, atmosphere, and a sense of family.

As for communication, the majority of participants reported that the dialogue between UAG and artists is “clear,” “professional,” and “transparent.” Most of them mentioned that management informs artists about opportunities and that the organisation is approachable. One of the participants stated: “You are free to say what you feel. ... And the relevant people listen to you if you got an opinion about art or the organization.”

Further analysis showed that participants perceived the atmosphere at the UAG as “welcoming,” “warm,” “friendly,” and “peaceful.” Some participants indicated that the peaceful atmosphere supports them, because it enables them to focus on their artwork. One participant commented: “In Uweza it is an open house, so I feel free to work in the gallery.”

Lastly, an overwhelming majority of participants indicated that the UAG is like a family. As one participant put it: “When you have a problem, like you have lost a relative, it stems through, Uweza helps it. Uweza was part of a difficult time, so it is a family.” This view was echoed by another participant who indicated that the UAG forms a community, in which people take care of each other.

*Future perspectives of artists on support*

When participants were asked about future expectations of the UAG and its potential contributions, two subthemes emerged: team building and communication.

Several participants expressed a desire to improve teambuilding within the UAG and across other programs of Uweza. Possible suggestions were organising monthly meetings with artists or participate in artistic competitions as a team. To facilitate team spirit, one participant proposed: “Organize one big event for all the Uweza participants, to come and draw one beautiful piece as a group. Like we collect our potentials and our skills and make it a collaboration.”

Moreover, some participants suggested improvements in UAG's communication. For instance, one participant mentioned initial challenges due to unclear expectations and difficulties in knowing how to communicate with those in charge. Participants recommended improving orientation for new artists to help them understand communication standards and expectations at the UAG.

***Empowerment****Past perspectives of artists on empowerment*

Empowerment encompasses the sense of belonging of youth within a community (Leffert et al., 1998; Shek et al., 2019). Giving back to the community, safe space, and contributing to the UAG were the three subthemes related to empowerment.

The majority of participants indicated that the UAG provides them with resources, which facilitates their giving back to the community. Some participants referred to the community projects (e.g., tree planting or murals) led by Uweza. Others expressed that the UAG empowers them to give back to the community through art classes and mentoring for younger generations. One participant commented: “The aim of my painting is to also encourage kids, within the gallery, and make them aware that they can achieve anything, if

they put their mind to it.” When discussing community empowerment, some participants mentioned their ability to share stories about Kibera and its talents. One participant articulated: “So, it also gives a chance to the people in the community to see the kind of talent that is within the community. ... When they come in [the gallery] they see they [artists] come from within the local community.” Another participant remarked that the art pieces “speak to me,” portraying the daily struggles of people from Kibera.

The second subtheme was safety. With regard to their safety at the UAG, the participants described the UAG as “very safe,” “a good place,” and “a place of growth.” One participant stated: “people of my age, instead of making paintings, they are doing drugs. Because they don’t have anything to do. Because they don’t have work. Me, because I have a talent, I can come here, do art and be safe.” This view was echoed by other participants, stating that the UAG provides them with a safe space to express themselves.

Lastly, many participants expressed their ability to contribute to the UAG. Some participants mentioned creating paintings or promoting the organization, while others stated to assist with projects when needed. As one participant explained: “Also in case Uweza needs something from me, I do help ... in return for how Uweza has helped me and the others.”

#### *Future perspectives of artists on empowerment*

Concerning their expectations regarding the future, interviews with the participants yielded three subthemes: struggles of female artists, interacting with community, and empowering children.

All female participants in the UAG raised specific struggles they face as women and artists. As one participant put it: “if it were a safe space for everyone, I guess you would find more women in here, but they are not here.” Additionally, participants mentioned that men in the UAG are close together and that they, as female artists, wish to be closer together too. Suggestions, like providing a female counsellor at the UAG or doing bonding activities with

female artists, were given by participants for the UAG to improve their inclusion for female artists.

Furthermore, some concerns regarding interacting with the community were expressed, such that some participants stated the UAG is relatively unknown within the community. To improve the publicity of the UAG, one participant suggested: “Just any, any activity that brings people [of the community] together and that we use as platform to market ourselves as a gallery.”

Additionally, some participants expressed the desire to improve the ways of empowering children at the UAG. These participants stated that the art classes could be further improved. One participant compared the classes to how it used to be earlier: “we [older artists] are here still because we were so involved, ... like they [former teachers] were following up, asking how are you improving, and I think that now children remain unseen in the classes.” Participants suggested empowering children at the UAG by increasing opportunities for older artists to interact with them, involving them in activities like exhibitions, and providing personal guidance.

### ***Boundaries and expectations***

#### *Past perspectives of artists on the boundaries and expectations*

Boundaries and expectations include the rules and level of monitoring as well as modelling behaviour of adults (Leffert et al., 1998; Shek et al., 2019). Two subthemes were found regarding the past experiences of participants: role models and rules.

The majority of the participants stated that they do have role models at the UAG. Some commented that they look up to people key people in the management, while others indicated that they perceive the older artists as role models. As one participant put it: “My role model are the people that started before me, so I always look up to them.” Another response to the question of ‘who is your role model?’ was: “I would say the CEO of Uweza. She is

really hardworking, and she plays a really important role in manifesting through encouragement. ... When I grow up, I want to be like her.”

Additionally, participants mutually shared that there are some rules at the UAG, which are reasonable and fitting. For example, one participant stated: “Uweza has set rules in a way that it does not hurt us, or it does not limit us to do some things. It only limits when [your behaviour] negatively affects people or that negatively affects the organization.” Other participants agreed, noting less strict rules are logical, as most artists are now entering adulthood. Being artists, participants appreciated the freedom to express themselves without rigid constraints.

#### *Future perspectives of artists on the boundaries and expectations*

As stated above, rules and boundaries were perceived as clear by most participants. However, when asked about future recommendations one participant suggested clarifying them for newcomers, as reflected in the comment below:

Because by giving that information [rules], an artist or someone visiting the gallery, can be more comfortable, knowing it is allowed to do what they are doing. Because they know the boundaries set. So maybe having the rules or signs put up, that would help.

#### ***Constructive use of time***

##### *Past perspectives of artists on the constructive use of time*

Constructive use of time reflects the time youth spends on beneficial activities that stimulate creativity, social interactions, and personal growth (Leffert et al., 1998; Shek et al., 2019). The past experiences of participants yielded the following subthemes: opportunities for growth, building network, creativity, social skills, and parental relations.

When asked about opportunities for growth, participants unanimously agreed that UAG provided tools for professional and personal growth. Several participants highlighted

that the UAG had equipped them with various skills, including time management, client communication, group management, and art techniques. For example, one participant mentioned: “Through going to workshops, you can learn a lot, apart from art, because there are speakers there and they tell you a lot about how to do this, how to interact about art with people.” Apart from professional growth, some participants noted personal growth at UAG. One participant stated: “They let me think about what I really want to do with my life. ... That makes me put my priorities straight.”

The second subtheme emerged within constructive use of time is the network participants gained within the UAG. The majority of participants agreed that UAG facilitates interactions with diverse individuals, providing opportunities for learning and building connections. One participant indicated that: “we are able to interact with likeminded people, like they don’t judge you. They don’t find you weird. Because they come from same place you do.”

Moving to the next theme, creativity, most participants reported that UAG inspires them through activities, such as visiting galleries and meeting other artists. As one participant argued: “It makes me see what other artists are doing. And it can, not taking the ideas really, but just learning and creating your own ideas based on their ideas.” Some artists noted that they look for inspiration internally, for example one participant stated: “my inspiration stems from the experiences and the emotions I am feeling.”

Additionally, social skills are stimulated according to participants, as the UAG stimulates interactions with visitors, as well as teaching in front of diverse groups of people. For example, one participant stated: “I feel like it [the UAG] improves our social skills. Because artists from other gallery's visit and share ideas. We socialise and we learn from each other.”

Lastly, in constructive use of time there were a few participants who felt that the UAG has helped them in reducing the stereotypical opinions of their parents about art. One artist explained that: “some of us as artists, like personally, my family thinks I am lost, cause of I have decided to venture art. So, they think that art is not a career that you should be doing.” The participants indicated that the UAG has provided a space where they are taken seriously as artists, which, according to some participants, helps reduce their parents' perception that art is not a professional career.

#### *Future perspectives of artists on the constructive use of time*

Whilst all participants mentioned that the UAG provides opportunities for skill development, some expressed the desire that the UAG would introduce more options for professional development (e.g., classes for adult artists). One participant suggested: “they [management] can find online courses and videos that can help them [artists] improve on their specific styles of working, and then give feedback to them, telling them like [by watching] this video, you can improve your work.” Some participants added that they would like to learn more about how to approach clients and communicate effectively about their art works.

#### ***Additional themes***

##### *Practical contributions*

The additional theme that emerged from the past experiences of participants was ‘practical contributions,’ which relates to how the UAG has provided participants with practical assistance in pursuing an art career. This is reflected in the two subthemes ‘financial support’ and ‘materials, facility and market.’

Many participants mentioned that the UAG has supported them financially, as they earned from art sales and received advice regarding financial businesses. For example, a participant explained: “when we get our money from the sales, we are encouraged not to use it on the drugs and other things, but that we should save and do like good things.”

Concerning materials, facility and market, the majority agreed that the UAG provides a lot of support in providing materials, the space to paint and marketing the art pieces. As one participant puts it: “Uweza’s support comes in very different ways. For example, materials, the paint, the canvas, the cramps, have been provided by Uweza. Also, the marketing is done by Uweza.”

### *Professionalising*

The theme professionalising was found deductively within the future perspectives of participants on the UAG. A large number of participants agreed that the UAG should strive to expand its services, for example by opening facilities in other places within or outside Nairobi, increase marketing and grow in number of artists. Additionally, some participants mentioned that it would be beneficial for their development to provide more variety of materials in the UAG. As illustrated by this comment: “I would really appreciate it if the organization would embrace more artistic styles and ideas. So that we can like move from just art on canvas, to other types of art like sculptures” Moreover, regarding professionalising, some participants suggested that the UAG could invite professionals who can share their expertise on different topics, such as gallery management.

### **Conclusion of results**

The study's results indicated several key themes regarding the past and future perspectives of artists at the UAG, highlighting its role in fostering PYD. Past perspectives of participants showed that external developmental assets (i.e., support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time) are present within the UAG context. Future perspectives indicated a desire for continued growth and improvement, including enhancing team building and communication, addressing struggles faced by female artists, increasing community interaction, and expanding professional opportunities. Additional themes of practical contributions and professionalization underscore financial support, materials,

facilities, and aspirations for future growth of the UAG. Overall, the findings emphasized the UAG's role in fostering the positive development of young artists and provided recommendations for its future development.

### **Discussion**

The present study aimed to provide insight into how art programs contribute to PYD by examining artists' perspectives on the UAG. While prior research suggests a positive link between art programs and youth development (Halverson, 2010; Martin et al., 2013; Miller & Rowe, 2009; Stinson, 2009), specific aspects fostering PYD remain underexplored. Addressing this gap, this study utilized the external assets developmental framework (de Mezerville-López, 2023; Leffert et al., 1998; Shek et al., 2019) to examine the past and future perspectives of artists to understand how the UAG contributes to PYD. Results provided support for the hypothesis that the UAG stimulates young artists' positive development, as external developmental assets were found to be present in the program. In line with the research questions, the results are discussed focusing on the support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time, examining both past experiences and future recommendations from artists. Finally, the implications and recommendations for future research on stimulating PYD in art programs are specified.

#### **External developmental assets**

##### ***Support***

Regarding support, participants appreciated clear, professional, and transparent communication, enabling open expression of opinions at the UAG. The atmosphere was described as welcoming, warm, and peaceful, fostering a supportive work environment. Participants also likened the UAG to a family, highlighting mutual assistance and emotional support during challenging times. These findings align with prior research (Miller & Rowe, 2009; Montgomery, 2016), highlighting caring and acceptance in art programs that stimulate

PYD. Moreover, communication, atmosphere, and being a family connect to findings from Men and Yue (2019) indicating the contribution of symmetrical communication (i.e., valuing reciprocity, openness, trust, and feedback) to a positive emotional culture in corporations. This suggests that transparent communication contributes to a welcoming atmosphere and a familial sense within institutions like the UAG. The implication of this finding is that organizations aiming to promote PYD should prioritize these elements to create an environment where youth feel valued, supported, and emotionally secure (Miller & Rowe, 2009; Montgomery, 2016).

The fostering of a sense of family through clear communication is relevant for the future perspectives of participants, who expressed a desire for improved team building and communication. They suggested regular meetings, collaborative projects, and comprehensive orientation for new members to enhance their integration in the gallery. This supports the notion that a structured team building approach is essential for fostering a collective spirit and integrating new members in organisations (Mealiea & Baltazar, 2008). This finding suggests that by integrating a structured approach in fostering teambuilding, the UAG can strengthen its support for the PYD of young artists.

### ***Empowerment***

On the question of empowerment, this study found that in the past, participants appreciated the fact that the UAG facilitated community projects, art classes for kids, and storytelling about Kibera's talent. These findings align with previous research indicating that youth engagement in community activities and storytelling enhances their self-identity and awareness of their place in society (Ballard et al., 2023; Halverson, 2010). Furthermore, participants valued the UAG as a safe space that shielded them from negative influences and facilitated personal growth, consistent with findings of Montgomery (2016) on the importance of safe environments in effective art programs. These findings support the idea that

prioritizing youth involvement within the community, providing resources for expressing their voices, and establishing a safe space are essential for promoting PYD in art programs.

The results regarding future perspectives on PYD revealed that there are areas for improvement at the UAG, particularly concerning the struggles of female artists, increasing community interaction and enhancing the empowerment of children. It was striking that female participants commented on the UAG being a safe space for men only, indicating a need for the organization to address gender disparities and promote inclusivity. As indicated by Vokes et al. (2019) youth programs have the potential to be vital spaces for girls, yet effective programming should consider systemic factors influencing their active engagement. Suggestions by female participants, aligning the Gender Inclusion Toolkit (Vokes et al., 2019), entail to seek female counselors to provide girls with mentors and to actively involve female artists in program development. Participants also emphasized the importance of increasing community interaction to raise the UAG's visibility, potentially attracting more participants and resources. This supports the idea that embedding art programs within the community and involving young artists in community activities can enhance program impact in PYD (Ersing, 2009). Additionally, participants suggested enhancing the children's empowerment through improved art classes and greater involvement in activities. This accords with earlier observations (Ersing, 2009; Miller & Rowe, 2009; Montgomery, 2016), demonstrating that the active youth involvement in program development and improving the quality of skill teaching, promotes PYD. Thus, addressing these areas can enhance the UAG's role in fostering empowerment.

### ***Boundaries and expectations***

When asked about boundaries and expectations at the UAG, participants valued the presence of role models and the rules. Most participants indicated to be looking up to the key figures in management and older artists as role models, representing hard work and

empowerment. Role models for youth can stimulate norms and values, increase social interaction, promote healthy socioemotional development, provide mentoring, and improve skill development by setting an example (MacCallum & Beltman, 2002). Hence, the presence of strong role models can enhance art program's contribution to PYD (Ersing, 2009; Miller & Rowe, 2009; Montgomery, 2016).

Additionally, this research found that rules at the UAG were generally perceived as fair and designed to prevent negative impacts on individuals and the organization. Earlier studies (Hamilton et al., 2004; Patall et al., 2023) highlighted the importance of establishing structures that provide guidance for competent behaviour while supporting youth's psychological well-being. While most participants found the rules reasonable, one participant suggested clearer communication for new members to ensure understanding of expectations. This implies that clear guidelines, which support psychological well-being and autonomy, are crucial for fostering a safe environment and promoting PYD (Ballard et al., 2023; Hamilton et al., 2004).

### *Constructive use of time*

Concerning constructive use of time, this study found that participants unanimously praised the UAG for providing opportunities for both professional and personal growth through various activities, fostering skill development, time management, and communication skills. This is because, according to participants, the voices of youth are heard and taken seriously in the UAG. The ability for self-expression empowers youth to share their stories, which is an important developmental attribute in adolescence (Ballard et al., 2023; Halverson, 2010). Moreover, the UAG was recognized as a valuable platform for building networks and social interactions, particularly for introverted artists who found a supportive environment to connect with like-minded individuals. These connections stimulate the development of (pro)social skills and foster the sense of belongingness for youth, which is essential for PYD

(Ballard et al., 2023; Lerner et al., 2011). Additionally, participants stated that the UAG inspires them to be creative, through exposure to other artists' work, while others use internal reflection on emotions and experiences as inspiration. A possible explanation for this can be found in the social comparison perspective (Burlinson et al., 2005), which assumes that art programs offer a context for artists to compare themselves with others. When artists adopt an inspirational perspective (i.e., seeing themselves as equally talented as others), this comparison motivates them to develop themselves through learning from others (Burlinson et al., 2005).

Interestingly, this study found that the UAG also played a role in challenging stereotypical views about art careers held by the parents of some artists, by providing a space where their dedication to art were taken seriously. Forming healthy relations with family is an essential asset within constructive use of time for program evaluation (de Mezerville-López, 2023). Earlier studies have shown that parents play a crucial role in shaping youth's career and future prospects (Barnes et al., 2020; Jodl et al., 2001; Sawitri et al., 2013). This is relevant because this finding suggests that art programs for youth could help change parents' perspectives on art as a viable career, thereby facilitate future aspirations for young artists. Nevertheless, caution is needed when interpreting these results, as no other studies were found to support this relationship.

When discussing the future, participants expressed a desire for the UAG to expand its professional development offerings, highlighting the need for continued support and resources to advance their artistic careers. This aligns with the study of Ballard et al. (2023), suggesting that such expansion would boost young artists' autonomy and professionalism, key indicators of PYD. Enhancing professional development opportunities at the UAG could thus contribute to the long-term success of young artists and reinforce the program's effectiveness in promoting PYD.

**Additional themes**

This study contributed to the literature through discovering two additional themes: practical contributions (past) and professionalizing (future). Regarding practical contributions, participants valued the financial support from the UAG through art sales and the encouragement to be financially responsible. Xiao et al. (2014) found that economic self-efficacy, money management, and problem-solving abilities are central for the development of financial independence, a key aspect of becoming an adult. Therefore, by integrating financial support and money management skills into youth art programs, organizations like UAG can effectively contribute to PYD, preparing young artists for future financial responsibilities. Moreover, UAG's provision of materials, facilities, and marketing support was appreciated by participants, allowing them to focus on their creative process. These findings highlight the importance of giving attention to enabling components (i.e., essential elements to be able to participate) in art programs to boost their effectiveness (Miller & Rowe, 2009).

For future aspirations, participants expressed a desire for UAG to professionalize further by expanding its services and varying artistic styles and materials. Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) state that youth programs should offer a variety of activities that develop skills and broaden horizons. This suggests that by providing diverse activities and art materials, UAG can enhance the opportunities for young artists' professional development. Additionally, suggestions were made to invite professionals to share their expertise and improve gallery management practices. Kong (2018) has shown that guest speakers, as experts in cultural education, can provide first-hand information in a specific field, offer diverse perspectives, and stimulate critical thinking. Therefore, incorporating experts can further enhance the development of young artists by fostering a more dynamic and professional learning environment. Overall, this theme reveals that participants want to see the UAG thrive as a

professional art institution, indicating their shared connection and commitment to the community, the UAG and its future.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

Overall, the results indicate that the UAG contributes to PYD, however, the study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting these results. First, as a case study, it has a limited sample size and lacks diversity, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). This means that the findings are specific to the UAG, and when implemented in other youth art programs, cultural and context differences should be carefully considered to ensure the program fits in those specific contexts (Ghate, 2015). Secondly, while the study provides strong indications that art programs can stimulate PYD through the implementation of external developmental assets, the reliance on a single method of data collection limits its ability to quantify the impact and identify the most effective elements. Therefore, robust quantitative or mixed-method research is needed to measure the significance of each element and gain a clearer understanding of the specific components that drive PYD in art programs, as suggested by Miller and Rowe (2009) and Stinson (2009). Additionally, the data relies on self-reported experiences, which can be biased or inaccurate, as people may describe events differently from how they actually occur (Knott et al., 2022). This bias may be further intensified because participants might have been inclined to share positive views of the UAG due to the researcher's internship there, potentially withholding critical perspectives to provide socially desirable answers (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). It is also possible that, despite the pilot test, interview questions were interpreted differently, because of cultural differences (Kallio et al., 2016). Finally, as researcher my positionality regarding socioeconomic status and cultural background might have affected the power dynamics within the interview and the interpretation of results (Knott et al., 2022; Mehra, 2002).

Despite its limitations, the study certainly adds to our understanding of how art programs can contribute to PYD. Although the context as a case study is limited, this study provides in-depth insights into the perceptions of young artists within the UAG, offering valuable qualitative data for future initiatives and improvements (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018; Longhofer et al., 2017). This data is especially relevant because limited research has been conducted on youth art programs in underprivileged, non-Western contexts (Ersing, 2009; Martin et al., 2013; Montgomery, 2016; Stinson, 2009). These findings are therefore crucial for expanding the theoretical foundation of art programs and understanding their contributions to PYD in underrepresented areas. Additionally, incorporating feedback from artists ensures their voices are reflected in the ongoing development of the UAG, thereby reinforcing the community-based foundation of the program. Moreover, while my role as an intern may have influenced biases, it also brought familiarity with both the participants and the organization. This familiarity enabled researchers to build rapport with the participants, fostering a safe environment where sensitive topics can be addressed (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). Additionally, it allowed for contextualizing participants' responses within the organization.

### **Recommendations**

The present study has implications for both research and practice in the field of youth development and arts. For researchers, the study underscores addressing assets within art programs like the UAG to contribute to PYD. Similar to current research practices examining the key components of effective parenting interventions (Leijten et al., 2019; Leijten et al., 2022) future studies can extend the present study by focusing on exploring the key elements of various art programs, with the aim to design more impactful programs in the short and long term. Moreover, future studies can examine similar initiatives in different cultural or geographic contexts, such as de Mezerville-López (2023), to understand the universal and unique elements of effective youth art programs. Additionally, longitudinal studies can

provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts of such programs on young artists' careers and personal growth.

It is important to note that while theoretical frameworks like the developmental assets framework offer valuable insights, there is often a gap in translating these theories into practical program development and evaluation strategies (Lerner et al., 2011). By incorporating more practical elements in theoretical frameworks (e.g., specific metrics for assessing developmental assets or tailored evaluation tools), organizations like the UAG can better measure the impact of their programs on youth development. This approach would not only strengthen the effectiveness of existing programs but also provide valuable data for continuous improvement and consequently to meaningful outcomes for young artists.

For practitioners, this study stresses the necessity of nurturing, inclusive spaces for youth that offer clear communication, professional development opportunities, and community engagement. In stimulating PYD, art programs should consider incorporating elements that stimulate external developmental assets: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time (Ballard et al., 2023; de Mezerville-López, 2023). Additional aspects, such as practical contributions and professionalizing art spaces, should not be overlooked since these are enabling elements. By addressing these aspects, art programs can encourage young artists in their journey towards autonomy and professionalism, thereby contributing to their overall development and success.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, this study provides valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of artists at the UAG, reinforcing the theoretical foundation of how art programs can contribute to PYD. The findings support the hypothesis that external developmental assets (i.e., support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time), are integrated in the UAG and are perceived as crucial for fostering PYD. Practitioners and

researchers face the ongoing challenge of integrating theoretical models into practice, requiring a careful approach to implement evaluation tools for program development. In this challenge it is vital to remember the powerful voices of youth and their representation in research on PYD and art programs.

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### Appendix A: Developmental assets framework

**Table 3**

*Developmental assets framework by Search Institute.*

External assets	Support	1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support
		2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents
		3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults
		4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors
		5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment
		6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school
	Empowerment	7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth
		8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community
		9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community 1 h or more per week
		10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood
	Boundaries and expectations	11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts
		12. School boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences
		13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior
		14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior
		15. Positive peer influence—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior
		16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well
Constructive use of time	17. Creative activities—Young person spends 3 or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts	
	18. Youth programs—Young person spends 3 or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community	
	19. Religious community—Young person spends 1 or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution	
	20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week	
Internal assets	Commitment to learning	21. Achievement motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school
		22. School engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning
		23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day
		24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school
		25. Reading for pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure 3 or more hours per week
Internal assets	Social competencies	32. Planning and decision-making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices
		33. Interpersonal competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills
		34. Cultural competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds
		35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations
	Positive identity	36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently
		37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me"
		38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem
		39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose"
		40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future

*Note.* From "Positive Adaptation, Resilience and the developmental assets framework," by A. Sesma, M. Mannes, & P. S. Scales, 2013, In: S. Goldstein and R.B. Brooks (Eds). *Handbook of Resilience in Children*, p. 429-430 ([https://doi.org/10.1007/0-306-48572-9\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/0-306-48572-9_17)).

## Appendix B: Information Letter

**Subject:** Information letter for participating in a case study on the Uweza Art Gallery

**Title of research:** Exploring the Contribution of Art Programs on Positive Youth Development: Perspectives of Uweza Artists

**Name researcher:** Daniëlle Oegema

**Date:** 24-03-2024

### Introduction

In this letter, I kindly ask you to consider participating in my thesis research, as part of my master's program in Youth, Education, and Society at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. The research will take place entirely face-to-face. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty Ethical Review Board (FERB) of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University and complies with ethical guidelines. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without providing a reason. Before deciding whether to participate or not, I would like to inform you about the nature of the study and the questions you can expect. Please read this information carefully and feel free to contact me via the email address provided below if you have any questions.

### Design of the Study

You will participate in an interview with the researcher. The completion time is approximately 45 minutes.

### Background of the Study

I will investigate how the Uweza Art Gallery offers support to the development of artists (e.g., external developmental assets) and if there are possible improvements for the Uweza Art Gallery to consider. During the interview I will ask questions about your perspective as an artist at the Uweza Art Gallery. With the results I hope to find out whether and how the Uweza Art Gallery contributes to the development of artists and how this can be improved. This study is important for the development of Uweza Art Gallery, but it will also help with research on effective implementation of art gallery programs in underprivileged contexts.

### What is Expected from You as a Participant

You will be participating in an interview. The questions will be about your perspective on the Uweza Art Gallery and whether and how this program contributed to your development. There are no right or wrong answers, so please feel free to answer honestly. You are free to decline to answer questions or to change your answer at any time during the interview. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Afterwards you can state whether you would like to receive the general outcomes of the research or not.

### Potential Benefits and Risks of the Study

One advantage of participating in this study are that the results will help improve the Uweza Art Gallery program. Additionally, the research may provide beneficial insights and reflections on your own development. Lastly, the results of this research will add to the theoretical basis for effective implementation of art gallery programs in underprivileged contexts.

No substantial risk is expected. Yet, you are expected to commit time for the interview (45 minutes). It is not expected that the interview questions would trigger any distress; however, if you would perceive some interview questions as distressing, you are free to decline to answer the question or to withdraw at any time without consequences. You do not have to provide a reason for doing so.

### Compensation/Reward

No compensation or reward will be provided for participation in the study.

### **Confidentiality of Data Processing**

For this case study, I will use Microsoft Teams to record the interviews as this will allow me to save the recordings on a secured database of the University of Utrecht. I will transcribe the interviews ensuring that all personal data is coded anonymous. In order to contact you to share the results of the study, I ask for your contact information. These personal data will be stored on a different computer than the computer that involves research data itself (the so-called raw data) for as long as necessary for the research. The computer storing the personal data is secured according to the highest standards, and only relevant researchers have access to this data. The data itself is also secured by means of a security code. Data processing of the interviews will be according two legal bases: consent for making audio recordings of an interview and public interest for transcribing and analyzing the interview. The raw identifiable data will be stored for the duration of the research project to answer the research question, whereas the pseudonymized data will be stored for a minimum of 7 years, following the guidelines for thesis research of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU).

Please feel free to read additional information about the data processing on the following website:

<https://utrechtuniversity.github.io/dataprivacyhandbook/index.html>

### **Procedure for Incidental Findings**

The current study does not expect to find coincidental findings.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without adverse consequences for you.

You have rights that I want to make you aware of. You have the right to object or limit the processing of your personal data based on your specific situation. If you refuse to participate, it will not have any negative impact and that you can withdraw your consent at any point in time without any consequences. By withdrawing your consent, your personal data will be removed from the research.

You have the right to correct and complement the personal data. Furthermore, you have the right to be informed about the research. This information letter is provided to inform you about the research, and you can ask any questions about the research at any time. Additionally, you have the right to access a copy of the personal data and to know what I am doing with that personal data and why.

If you have any questions regarding your rights or the processing of your personal data, you can contact the ethical committee for questions about the set-up of your project:

<https://ferb.sites.uu.nl/contact-us/>

You can also contact me at any time, see the contact details below. If you wish to contact someone else, you can contact the UU's privacy department ([privacy@uu.nl](mailto:privacy@uu.nl)) or the Data Protection Officer of the UU ([fg@uu.nl](mailto:fg@uu.nl)) – in this order- for exercising your rights and for questions and complaints. You have the right to file an official complaint with the Data Protection Authority (<https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/>).

If you decide to participate after reading this information, you agree by signing the informed consent form provided.

For questions, you can contact:

Contact email address for inquiries: Daniëlle Oegema, [d.s.oegema@students.uu.nl](mailto:d.s.oegema@students.uu.nl)

Telephone number: +254114951515 (Kenyan number), +31633759779 (Dutch number)

Academic supervisor for questions and/or complaints: Çisem Gürel [C.gurel@uu.nl](mailto:C.gurel@uu.nl)

**Appendix C: Consent Form**

**Subject:** Consent form for research study on the Uweza Art Gallery

**Date of interview:**

**Research Title:** Perspectives of Artists on the contribution of the Uweza Art Gallery on Positive Youth Development

**Researcher Name:** Daniëlle Oegema

I hereby declare that I have read the information letter regarding the study "**Perspectives of artists on the contribution of the Uweza Art Gallery on Positive Youth Development.**" I was given the opportunity to ask questions about the study. Relatedly, my questions have been adequately answered. I was given sufficient time to decide whether I would like to participate or not.

I agree to (please select the answer that is applicable):

Participation in the study

- Yes
- No

Collection of contact information (name, address, telephone, email)

- Yes
- No

Making audio and/or video recordings for the purpose of transcription of the interviews

- Yes
- No

I understand that participation is voluntary. I also understand that I can decide at any time not to participate in the study and can withdraw. I do not have to explain why I want to withdraw.

- Yes
- No

Date of Signature:

Signature:

Signature Researcher present:

## Appendix D: Interview protocol

### 1. Introduction

My name is Daniëlle Oegema. I am an intern at the Uweza Foundation and perform research for my master thesis on the impact of the Uweza Art Gallery on the positive development of artists. I am 23 years old, and I am an artist myself.

Can you tell me a bit about yourself.

### 2. Explanation of the study and informed consent

I would like to inform you about my study. I will investigate how the Uweza Art Gallery offers support to the development of artists (e.g., external developmental assets) and if there are possible improvements for the Uweza Art Gallery to consider.

**Please read the information letter and consent form.**

**Answer possible questions.**

**Start recording after consent.**

### 3. Interview

#### **General development and participation in Uweza Art Gallery**

Can you tell me a little bit about your background?

Can you tell me more about the role of the Uweza Art Gallery in your development, personal and as an artist?

#### **External asset: Support**

In what ways did the Uweza Art Gallery support your development?

How would you describe the atmosphere of the Uweza Art Gallery?

How does the Uweza Art Gallery communicate with you?

Are there any points of improvement regarding the support you get from the Uweza Art Gallery?

#### **External asset: Empowerment**

In your opinion, does the Uweza Art Gallery provide resources for you to serve the community?

In what ways do you empower/contribute to Uweza Art Gallery?

How do you feel about your safety at the Uweza Art Gallery?

Are there any points of improvement regarding the empowering aspects of the Uweza Art Gallery?

#### **External assets: Boundaries and Expectations**

What are your thoughts about the clarity of rules and boundaries at the Uweza Art Gallery?

Can you describe any adult role models you encountered at the Uweza Art Gallery?

How does the Uweza Art Gallery challenge and encourage you to perform well?

Are there any points for improvement regarding boundaries and expectations for the Uweza Art Gallery?

#### **External assets: Constructive use of time**

How does the Uweza Art Gallery encourages your creativity?

How does the Uweza Art Gallery stimulate social skills?

How does the Uweza Art Gallery stimulate personal growth?

Are there any points for improvement regarding constructive use of time for the Uweza Art Gallery?

**Conclusions**

Are there any topics left about the Uweza Art Gallery that you think have contributed to your development?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your answers and if you have any questions left after this interview, please feel free to contact me.

**Stop the recording.**

**Share possible contact details.**

**Appendix E: Positionality as a researcher**

As a researcher and intern within the Uweza Art Gallery, my positionality was influenced by several factors, including colonial history, the interplay of Western and non-Western perspectives, and my role within the organization. The colonial history of Kenya, where the UAG operated, inevitably shaped the cultural and social contexts within which this research was situated. Being from a Western background, it was crucial to acknowledge the potential biases and power dynamics that could arise from this colonial legacy. This recognition was essential in ensuring that the voices and experiences of the local artists were represented authentically and respectfully. Additionally, as an intern, I occupied a unique position within the organization that allowed for close interaction with the participants but also required a careful balance between being part of the team and maintaining an objective research perspective. This dual role demanded critical awareness of my influence on the research process and the importance of fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding. By being mindful of these aspects, I aimed to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable research approach that valued both Western and non-Western perspectives and experiences.

## Appendix F: Operational definitions of the themes and subthemes

Table 4

*Definitions and examples of past perspectives of artists on the UAG and its contribution to their development.*

Themes	Subthemes	Operational definition	Examples
Support		The perspectives of participants on the affection, care, and acceptance provided by the UAG.	
	Communication	Experiences regarding how the UAG speaks and keeps in contact with the participants.	“You can talk your mind. If you want, to tell them what is wrong and what is not.”
	Atmosphere	Experiences regarding the vibe of the UAG, how participants feel in the environment.	“It is welcoming, one. Because there is such a nice warmth here.”
	Being a family	Experiences regarding the UAG forming a community or family, where people take care of each other.	“Like in this organization we live like a community, a community or a family.”
Empowerment		The perspectives of participants on feeling valued in the UAG and ways in which they contribute to others and the community.	

Giving back to community	Experiences of how the UAG helps to empower and serve people in the neighbourhood.	“Like Uweza is also empowering us to also give back to the community.”
Safe space	Experiences on feeling safe and having a platform to express yourself at the UAG.	“I would say, it is a safe environment. For me it is a place for growth.”
Contributing to organisation	Experience of what the participants have done within or give back to the UAG.	“And also, in case Uweza needs something from me, yeah, I do help.”
Boundaries and expectations	The perspectives of participants on the rules and level of monitoring, as well as modelling behaviour of adults to set an example of the norms and standards at the UAG.	
Role models	Experiences regarding adults in the UAG, whom participants look up too and set as an example.	“I get mentorship from Uweza. And that mentorship is something I have grown in here.”
Rules	Experiences regarding regulations and level of monitoring at the UAG.	“There are reasonable rules for us. It is a big organization, what you do, it is really personal to the artists, so boundaries are set,

and the rules are there to help us, and keep us secure.”

Constructive use of time

The perspectives of participants on the opportunities for them to do beneficial activities that stimulate creativity, social interactions, and personal growth.

Opportunities for growth

Experiences on how the UAG stimulated personal (i.e., mental health) and professional (i.e., business skills) development.

“Uweza has opened for me many doors and provided opportunities for me as an artist.”

Building network

Experiences on the connections participants gained through the UAG.

“I have gotten to meet with different people and get to learn more about them and the type of art they do and how it supports them in their day-to-day life.”

Creativity

Experiences on how participants of the UAG find inspiration.

“Uweza stimulates my creativity by allowing us artists to participate in other activities related to art.”

Social skills	Experiences on how participants develop or improve their social skills at the UAG in interacting with others (i.e., artists or clients).	“And then by doing this, it also helps you in developing skills to work together.”
Parental relations	Experiences on the role of the UAG in improving the relationship of participants with their parents.	“They say like you are wasting your time. So maybe the parents get to receive more knowledge about the art.”
Practical contributions (newly discovered theme)	The perspectives of participants on how the UAG has provided them with practical assistance in pursuing an art career, such as financial or materialistic support.	
Financial support	Experiences on how the UAG has supported and advised participants financially.	“They have taught me how to spend my money. Cause I started selling art at a very young age, so they have been with me from the start.”
Materials, Facility and Market	Experiences on the added value of the UAG for participants, in providing	“Uweza has been able to provide art materials, which are very expensive. And it

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space, materials and access to the art market. can also provide an art space, for us to be able to execute our art.”

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**Table 5**

*Definitions and examples of future perspectives of artists on the UAG and its contribution to their development.*

Themes	Subthemes	Operational definition	Examples
Support		The perspectives of participants on improving the affection, care, and acceptance by the UAG.	
	Team building	Suggestions to improve the group cohesion and team spirit at the UAG.	“Yes I feel like that once in a while they could create maybe teambuilding with the artists.”
	Communication	Suggestions to improve the communication between the UAG and participants.	“Maybe if there was a way that the head of the gallery would openly inform someone who is coming to the gallery for the very first time, about what the gallery does clearly.”
Empowerment		The perspectives of participants on improvement points regarding feeling valued in	

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	the UAG and ways in which they contribute to others and the community.	
Struggles of female artists	The perspectives of female participants on their struggles at the UAG and how this could be improved to feel more included in the UAG.	“The only thing that I would like is, like kind of like a platform for female artists and like tell them that they are free to join the art gallery.”
Interacting with community	Suggestions to cooperate better with the neighbourhood, by doing more community activities and marketing the UAG out there to get known.	“One thing that I have noticed is that people in the community do not actually know if they are allowed to come to the gallery. I have people asking if they are supposed to pay to view the art. So, I think maybe that should be made clear.”
Empowering children	Suggestions to improve the mentorship and classes for children at the UAG	“I also think us, as the older artists, I think we should also be involved with the kids more. Like it used to be previously.”
Boundaries and expectations	The perspectives of participants on improving the rules and level of monitoring at the UAG.	

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Rules and expectations	Suggestions to improve the clarity of rules and what is expected of participants at the UAG.	“So maybe having the rules, and also signs, in this new gallery there is the downstairs part and upstairs there is this part.”
Constructive use of time	The perspectives of participants on improving the opportunities for them to do beneficial activities that stimulate creativity, social interactions, and personal growth.	
Professional development	Suggestions on how the UAG could improve their support of professional development (i.e., business skills).	“And also, I feel, maybe teach some about how to talk to visitors and clients, how to talk about art with them.”
Professionalising (newly discovered theme)	The perspectives of participants on improving and expanding the UAG from a business point of view.	
Expanding	Suggestions on how the UAG can grow and expand the organisation (i.e.,	“And it would be really good if Uweza gets a lot of a good

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	multiple locations or exhibitions).	space for exploration and nurturing more talent.”
Providing materials	Suggestions on how the UAG can provide more diversity in art by introducing different types of art materials apart from paint (i.e., sculpture materials).	“Yes, like doing more art, more art supplies, for example, the people should learn, some of the artists want to learn about collage, like mixed media, they want to do sculpture.”
Professionals	Suggestions to involve experts to learn more about managing a gallery or advertising the UAG on social media.	“Probably we need like professionals. Professionals like at galleries.”

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