



**BUILDING
COLLECTIVE
RESILIENCE**

Endline Evaluation

Theatre & Performing Arts for Young Audiences:
Building Collective Resilience (TPAYABCR)

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Summary

The present document presents the Endline Evaluation of the *Building Collective Resilience* project. The report is made by the external evaluators Dr. Richard Johnson Sallis, B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD, The University of Melbourne (Australia) and Dr. Jennifer Andersen, B.A. (Hons), Grad. Dip. (Ed), PhD, The University of Melbourne (Australia).

This Endline Report is the third report of a three-year evaluation project. The key findings and recommendations relate to the following topics:

- Access
- Artistic exchange and networking
- Inclusion
- Sustainability
- Advocacy and representation
- Engagement of the performing arts community

In addition, the Endline Evaluation provides feedback on the research streams of *Building Collective Resilience* and on how, going forward, ASSITEJ can develop the evaluation including developing an evaluative culture.

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Contents

1.0 Introduction:	... 5
1.1 Acknowledgements and affirmation	... 5
1.2 Biography of the evaluators	... 5
1.3 Background, focus and scope of the evaluation	... 6
1.3.1 Scope of this report	... 6
1.4 A Historical Perspective of ASSITEJ International: drivers and movers	... 7
1.5 Connections to the 'BABEL' project	... 9
1.6 Updated Focus & Scope of the External Evaluation	... 10
2. Endline Evaluation Methodology	... 11
2.1 Focus	... 12
2.2 Methodology and methods	... 13
2.2.1 Data collection: Quantitative	... 13
2.2.2 Data collection: Qualitative	... 13
2.2.3 Data Analysis	... 14
2.3 Limitations	... 15
3.0 Baseline and Midline Reports: recommendations and response	... 15
3.1 The recommendations from the 2022 Baseline report and actions taken	... 11
3.2 The recommendations from the 2023 Midline report	... 18
4.0 Key Findings from the Evaluation Project (2022-2024)	... 21
4.1 Access and Inclusion	... 21
4.1.1 Access: Barriers and facilitators	... 23
4.1.2 Access: Finances	... 23
4.1.3 Access: Online Access	... 26
4.1.4 Access: Politics and Geography	... 27
4.1.5 Access: Language	... 30

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4.2 Stimulate artistic exchange and networking	... 32
4.2.1 Exchange	... 33
4.2.2 Communication	... 34
4.2.3 Internationalism	... 37
4.2.3.1 Internationalism: Regional networks & exchanges	... 38
4.2.3.2 Internationalism: Artistic exchanges	... 39
4.2.3.3 Internationalism: Governance	... 39
4.3 Inclusion	... 41
4.4 Sustainability	... 43
4.5 Represent the sector and advocate for TYA	... 49
4.6 Engagement of the performing arts community	... 50
4.6.1 Collective action	... 51
4.6.2 The Role of 'Champions'	... 51
5.0 Feedback from the researchers of the BCR research projects	... 53
5.1 Funding	... 54
5.2 Communication	... 54
5.3 Research findings and outputs	... 55
6.0 Moving Forward – Reflections on the Three-year Evaluation Project	... 55
6.1 Reflections on the process	... 55
6.1.1 Surveying and interviewing	... 56
6.1.2 Attendance at International events	... 57
6.1.3 Communication between the External Evaluators and the ASSITEJ EC	... 57
6.2 Developing an evaluative culture	... 58
6.2.1 Background	... 58
6.2.2 A culture of evaluation	... 59
7.0 Final Comments	... 61
8.0 Recommendations	... 61
References	... 65
Appendices – Summary of content	... 66

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Acknowledgements and affirmation

This document, referred to as the Endline Evaluation report, has been written by the External Evaluators, Associate Professor, Richard Johnson Sallis, B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD, The Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne (Australia) and Dr. Jennifer Andersen, B.A (Hons), Grad. Dip (Ed), PhD, The Faculty of Education, at the University of Melbourne (Australia). This report has been written solely by its authors, A/Prof Richard Johnson Sallis and Dr. Jennifer Andersen. Feedback was sought from ASSITEJ International staff; however, this was only for suggested corrections of minor factual inaccuracies and stylistic conventions. The authors wish to thank the members of the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee and Secretariat for the provision of the additional data required to complete this report. Data collected for, and shared within this report remains the property of ASSITEJ International and has been used with its consent.

1.2 Biography of the evaluators

Associate Professor, Richard Johnson Sallis, B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD began his career in theatre for young audiences as a writer, director, and actor with the FM-Live Theatre Company in Victoria, Australia. He then went into education and headed up the drama department in two schools in Melbourne, Australia. During this time, he was elected President of Drama Victoria, the local drama education association, and subsequently Drama Australia, the national equivalent. He was on the Executive of IDEA (International Drama/Theatre and Education Association) for three terms. He is currently Leader of Drama Education at The University of Melbourne's Faculty of Education. For 10 years he was on the Board of the Arena Theatre Company, one of Australia's leading companies producing theatre for young audiences. He is also a co-director of the University of Melbourne, Faculty of Education, Research-based Theatre Laboratory. His research areas include Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA), Research-based Theatre (RbT), arts-based research (ABR), and diversity and inclusion in education and theatre.

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Jennifer Andersen, B.A.(Hons), Grad. Dip. (Ed.), PhD is a theatre maker, teacher and researcher specialising in early years arts creation and education. She was a co-founder and performer with the independent theatre company ONE TOE, which created acclaimed physical and visual theatre productions throughout the 1990s. Working as part of the collective Pocketfool, she has made numerous innovative non-verbal in-theatre and outdoor experiences for young children. Jennifer was the founder of La Mama Theatre's children's program, La Mama for Kids. She has been dedicated to developing the capacity of artists and teachers to work with children in formal and informal education contexts through her previous role as Artist Learning Coordinator at ArtPlay and her ongoing research and tertiary teaching. Her PhD research explored the role of care in the practice of actors who create theatre with and for children. Jennifer is currently teaching in a community kindergarten with a Bush Kinder program and developing a theatre work for babies.

1.3 Background, focus and scope of the evaluation

This is the third report presented to ASSITEJ International by the External Evaluators. The first, the Baseline Report, was presented in 2022 and the Midline Report in 2023. At the time of preparing this document, the External Evaluation is nearing completion. The Baseline and Midline Reports have contributed in part to the Endline Report – this will be explained later in this report. Overall, it is anticipated by the External Evaluators that the ASSITEJ International Building Collective Resilience project (*Theatre and Performing Arts for Young Audiences: Building Collective Resilience*), of which this evaluation is a part, will strengthen the Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) sector to realise the goal of children and young people's universal access to high quality theatre, hence its focus on practitioners rather than children.

1.3.1 Scope of this report

This Endline Report is the third report of a three-year evaluation project. Across the three years the External Evaluators were given the freedom (by the ASSITEJ Executive Committee) to focus on areas they determined were most relevant to ASSITEJ International over this period of time; there was no prescribed content that had to be evaluated. Primarily, the primary aim of the project was to

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evaluate how the goals of the *Building Collective Resilience* (BCR) project have been realised. According to ASSITEJ International, the *Building Collective Resilience* project is “designed to build collective resilience across the network of cultural and creative organisations working in the theatre and performing arts for young audiences (TYA)”. That is, to better link and provide support to cultural and creative organisations working in the theatre and performing arts for young audiences (TYA) sector in Europe and beyond. To some degree the impetus for the project was COVID-19 which had an extremely detrimental effect on the sector. For ASSITEJ International the BCR project is intended to “build back stronger” its network of members and the TYA industry more broadly.

By implication, the ASSITEJ International *Building Collective Resilience* project is an acknowledgement by the association that, at the present time, networking across the TYA sector needs improvement and that there is a need for more opportunities for TYA art-makers to come together to discuss their art and work together to produce and present it.

1.4 A Historical Perspective of ASSITEJ International: drivers and movers

In addition to the primary data that were collected as part of this evaluation, the External Evaluators had access to the three documented histories of ASSITEJ (see publication details below). These proved to be extremely important in providing a context and a historical perspective for the External Evaluation.

Eek, N., Shaw, A. M., Krzys, K. (2008). *Discovering A New Audience for Theatre* (1964 –1975)

Eek, N., Shaw, A. M., Krzys, K. (2011). *Expanding The New Audience for Theatre* (1976- 1990)

Eek, N., Kovac, P., Krzys, K. (2011a). *Maintaining The New Audience for Theatre* (1991 –2005).

These publicly available historical volumes reveal that some themes regarding ASSITEJ International and its affairs are enduring and are borne out in this report:

- Financial barriers to members' access to events;

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- Barriers to travel to ASSITEJ events and meetings due to political conditions;
- The tension between access and diversity regarding the payment of membership dues (i.e., some countries struggling to pay the full amount) and access to decision-making;
- Transparency of decision-making e.g. In the early modern era (1976-1990) the ASSITEJ Executive Committee (EC) made a commitment to make its meetings open to anyone, however, during this same period, this was countered by a resistance by some EC members to decentralizing power (Eek et al. 2011).

Interestingly, in the ‘history’ publications there is relatively little mention of theatre performances which perhaps is a reflection that few EC members at that time were practicing artists. It appears that the question of who ASSITEJ International *is for* (rather than what it *stood for*) was rarely asked. This, no doubt, contributed to its historically low and largely inactive membership. This is an issue that the BCR project has been actively addressing, as reflected in this report. The push for greater membership diversity has been long. At the 1984 EC meeting:

Hennessey (Great Britain) commented that ASSITEJ was past the point of just handling administrative details. It must change radically in the next 3-5 years in order to survive. There must be further concepts of interchange; there must be new traditions, not just European. There are 167 countries in the world; all future potential of ASSITEJ is away from Europe. ITI had begun breaking with its European image ten years ago ASSITEJ should be prepared to have 50% of the EXCOM non-European (2011, p. 191).

As evidence of how ASSITEJ International sees the state of the TYA sector at present, in its funding application for this project (2022-2024) it uses words and phrases such as “resilience”, “galvanise the possibilities”, “sustainability”, “access”, and “representation”. ASSITEJ International does not appear to be implying that such things do not currently exist in the TYA community, but instead that there is *room for improvement* when it comes to building its “collective resilience”.

According to the ASSITEJ International website, the BCR project includes a range of priorities and aims to:

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- Increase the sector's ability to expand cultural access and participation through research, data collection, and involvement of children and youth;
- Stimulate artistic exchange and networking through developing the ASSITEJ International Artistic Gatherings and World Congress, Coffee Sessions, and more;
- Qualify the conversations and strategic work on inclusion and sustainability;
- Represent the sector and advocate for the value of theatre and performing arts for children and young people together with [ASSITEJ International members];
- Continue to develop the engagement of the theatre and performing arts community in the life and mission of ASSITEJ International.

Further, the nature of the initiatives that were to be implemented across the three years, from January 2022 to the end of 2024 included (paraphrased by the authors):

- Advocacy;
- Development and implementation of a digital strategy including a multimedia repository, enhancements to the ASSITEJ International website, improved use of social media;
- Generation of materials (e.g., toolkits, e-Newsletters) for members and others;
- Goal setting;
- Leadership demographic survey;
- Marketing;
- Meetings - large and small, formal and informal;
- Research projects investigating (for example) audiences of children and young people, the value of the TYA sector, producing work for the TYA sector; and
- Running of conferences, workshops, meetings, and other professional learning events.

1.5 Connections to the 'BABEL' project

A separate, but associated project, of which ASSITEJ International is a partner, is entitled BABEL or *The Art of Listening in Theatre for Young Audiences*. It has

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been funded by another strand in Creative Europe Program, European Cooperation Projects. ASSITEJ International views this project as one which complements the *Building Collective Resilience* one. Whilst the Babel project is not the primary focus of this report the evaluators contend that there is a synergy which exists between the two (projects).

The TYA sector is highly active worldwide, providing children and young people with creative and imaginative, artful, and cultural theatrical experiences, as well as delivering positive social impact to the next generation. As the key international association for this sector, ASSITEJ International has a responsibility to advocate for, support, guide, foster, and lead it. As this Endline Report will show, there is evidence that over the course of the last three years ASSITEJ International is meeting the core aims and objectives it set itself for both of these projects.

1.6 Updated Focus and Scope of the External Evaluation

Throughout the course of the evaluation period, it has become evident that ASSITEJ International has developed thorough internal processes to monitor the outcomes of individual programs of the *Building Collective Resilience* project.

For example:

- Robust reporting on the *Building Collective Resilience* deliverables;
- Monitoring online access and engagement;
- Reporting of on-ground attendance numbers;
- Tracking of international airline carbon expenditures.

This Endline Report (2024) continues to report on the evaluation of the BCR project. However, the External Evaluators invited the ASSITEJ International staff and its Executive Committee members to propose additional aspects of the work of the association on which to report. The following additional foci were proposed:

- The creation of a productive and regular structure for the monitoring of the project that can involve the ASSITEJ EC, Secretariat, and the External Evaluators.

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- A need for good and streamlined tools for the EC to follow the work, gain clarity and qualify participation and feedback.
- Exploring ways in which the Theory of Change method can be used as a more active tool for monitoring, and/or proposing other suggestions for what could be implemented.

Accordingly, a potential focus for this evaluation has emerged. Broadly speaking, the evaluation offers a qualitative analysis of ASSITEJ International members' experience of *Building Collective Resilience* initiatives. This can point to the 'glowing points' and 'pressure points' of the project and indicate what the potential implications of these are for shaping the organisation as a whole. Aligning with the aims of *Building Collective Resilience*, the Endline Report and third year of the External Evaluation has used the main goals of the project to progressively explore the following themes:

- Member and other stakeholder access to ASSITEJ International activities;
- Member engagement with ASSITEJ International activities;
- Member experience of artistic exchange and communities of practice;
- Member and other stakeholder experience of ASSITEJ International's research and advocacy work;
- Member, staff and organisational experience of financial, economic and environmental sustainability; and
- Involvement of children and young people in ASSITEJ International processes and activities.

Additionally, this Endline Report considers how, and to what extent the recommendations from the Baseline and Midline reports have been addressed and will inform the work of ASSITEJ International going forward.

2. Endline Evaluation Methodology

Throughout this project, including for preparation of the Endline Evaluation Report, the evaluators employed a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. The evaluators also employed techniques and processes aligned with Theory of Change which ASSITEJ International has been applying to monitor its projects since 2022. This is discussed and analysed later in this report.

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2.1 Focus

The External Evaluators identified for themselves the following priorities for the preparation of the Endline Report and welcomed the involvement of the ASSITEJ International EC in refining these throughout 2024.

- Focus on how the *Building Collective Resilience* project has engaged children and young people;
- Capture more member and stakeholder voices;
- Conduct in-depth interviews to create rich case studies of a range of member experiences (see Appendices);
- Attendance at, and observation of, World Congress: Cuba (May 2024); and
- Evaluate how the *Building Collective Resilience* project research stream outcomes are being used to achieve the goals of the project overall.

This stage of the evaluation was focused on seeking to understand the experiences of members, a decision that had flow-on effects for the type and volume of data that could be generated within the *Building Collective Resilience* evaluation budget. For example, it was not within the scope of the evaluation to examine individual programs so if participants in the evaluation did not have experience of a program, no data were generated about it. This was most notable regarding the *Voices of Children and Teenagers*. The ways that ASSITEJ International has engaged children and young people could be an area to focus on in future evaluations.

The evaluators' online and in-person attendance at the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2023: Turning Point (Serbia)* demonstrated the value of direct experience of major ASSITEJ International events, through gaining valuable contextual information to inform member feedback, and by understanding the nuances of the organisation's activities and processes. Unfortunately, various practical impediments, including budget restrictions, prevented the evaluators from attending *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. The evaluators acknowledge that there would have been value in being 'on the ground' at this event and are confident that, if attendance at future events is a priority for ASSITEJ International,

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processes for doing so can be developed. This is discussed in greater detail in the final section of this report.

2.2 Methodology and Methods

Consistent with the participatory philosophy and practices of ASSITEJ International, the evaluators took a constructivist approach to methodology, using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Members' contributions have been de-identified in this report.

2.2.1 Data collection: Quantitative

Surveys: Two surveys were conducted for this evaluation. They were generated on Qualtrics (survey software program) and were guided by input from the Executive Committee. A Midline survey was sent to members after the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2023: Turning Point (Serbia)* and had 123 respondents. An Endline survey was sent after *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. 63 people started the survey but there was a big drop off throughout and 34 completed it. The sample sizes were small, so any statistical outcomes need to be considered with caution. Nevertheless, the surveys add much useful 'wide lens' and 'close-up' information.

The surveys included a number of common questions, which allowed for comparison and confirmation of results. These questions related mainly to demographics and respondents' knowledge of, participation in and views about ASSITEJ International's activities. In each survey there were also questions specific to the major events that they followed.

2.2.2 Data collection: Qualitative

Surveys: The surveys contained a number of open questions that offered respondents an opportunity to express their views in an expansive and personalised way. This has provided ASSITEJ International with some rich data about members' experiences of the organisation and suggestions for its future.

Document analysis: This included reading the three-volume ASSITEJ International history books, ASSITEJ Newsletters and websites, and some

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literature related to Theory of Change. Most of this was background for the evaluation rather than data.

Observations: Assoc. Prof. Sallis attended the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2023: Turning Point (Serbia)* in person and Dr. Andersen attended online. Both attended some of the General Assembly online at *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*.

Interviews: The largest data set was eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with members from a representative range of geographical areas. Each interview was approximately an hour long and was recorded on Zoom. Automatically generated transcripts were checked against the recordings.

The interviews provided rich information about what members from diverse geographic, artistic and economic backgrounds understand of ASSITEJ International and their relationship to the organisation. Another interview was conducted with one of the *Building Collective Resilience* researchers, offering valuable insights into the project's research streams and informal discussions were had with other researchers. Interview questions related to the major themes of the *Building Collective Resilience* project and allowed space for interviewees to raise issues important to them.

2.2.3 Data Analysis

Survey results were automatically generated by Qualtrics and were analysed using the major themes of the *Building Collective Resilience* project, noting any relevant emerging themes. The interviews were analysed primarily through thematic inductive analysis. Emerging and sub-themes were noted. A table was created of all themes, and a separate document of quotes relating to each theme was created.

The ASSITEJ International Secretariat has access to the Qualtrics survey data and results, and the Midline and Endline survey analyses are attached as appendices to this report. The raw interview data and interview analysis documents are available to the Executive Committee upon request.

In summary, to collect data for the Endline Evaluation, the following methods (and data collection tools) were used by the External Evaluators:

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- Surveying of ASSITEJ International members: a survey was launched in December 2023, post the *Artistic Gathering* in Serbia and this was followed by a second survey in June 2024, post the World Congress in Cuba;
- Attendance at meetings at the invitation of the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee and Secretariat;
- Interviews with members of the ASSITEJ International 'Research Advisory group';
- Interviews with, or feedback from, some of the researchers of the five research projects;
- Targeted interviews with a range of ASSITEJ International members;
- Document analysis (hardcopy and digital) such as the reports written by the ASSITEJ International project team about the project; and
- Observation of key activities covered by the project's funding, with a particular focus on the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2023: Turning Point (Serbia)*.

2.3 Limitations

The External Evaluators were unable to attend the *Voices of a New World: Cuba* event. However, data were collected about the event via surveys and interviews, the results of which have informed this Endline Report.

The consolidated focus of the External Evaluation is not only appropriate for its modest budget and timeframe, it is hoped that it will offer the EC and ASSITEJ International more broadly meaningful information that will complement its internal quantitative data generation and analysis.

3.0 Baseline and Midline Reports: recommendations and response

Contained within the two previous reports (Baseline and Midline), as written by the External Evaluators, were a series of recommendations. These were intended for the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee (EC). The understanding between the evaluators and the Executive Committee was that

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the recommendations made in the reports would guide its (the EC's) work as it continues to roll out the *Building Collective Resilience* program and associated projects.

3.1 The recommendations from the 2022 Baseline report and the actions taken

NB: For a more detailed discussion please refer to the Midline report (December,2023)

The 2022 Baseline Report recommended that ASSITEJ International:

1. *Maintains contact with the External Evaluators over the life of the project*

Over the course of the past two years (2023 and 2024) purposeful contact has been maintained between the Evaluators and the ASSITEJ International Secretariat, primarily for the purpose of gathering data for the Midline and Endline Reports. Additionally, at the invitation of the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee, the Evaluators were invited to attend in person and/or online the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering in Belgrade/ Novi Sad, Serbia in November 2023 (*Turning Point: Serbia*) and the World Congress in Havana, Cuba in May 2024. These invitations provided the Evaluators with the opportunity to observe key on-ground and online ASSITEJ International programs and the facilitation associated with *Building Collective Resilience* as well as to conduct follow up surveys and interviews with participants after these events.

2. *Helps to ensure that the External Evaluators have access to all relevant data as they become available, including notification of key meetings and other significant events linked to the project*

The External Evaluators have been suitably informed by ASSITEJ of its activities linked with the *Building Collective Resilience* project. The ASSITEJ International Secretariat, in particular, has provided regular and up-to-date information. The evaluators were given access to key reports, artefacts and documents which have been compiled for the purposes of the evaluation. Additionally, the Evaluators have been given an open invitation to attend any Executive Committee meetings associated with the *Building Collective Resilience* project.

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3. Ensures that it closely monitors its established timeline and adjusts it if needed

From discussions with the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee and its Secretariat, these branches of the association have ensured that timelines associated with its various EC-funded activities have been appropriately maintained. However, at times external forces adversely impacted on the timing of the program delivery.

4. Regularly revisits the aims and objectives of the project to help confirm that it is meeting its targets and will reach its envisaged outcomes and impacts

Building Collective Resilience is guided by a [theory of change approach](#) which involves:

- Identification of goals;
- Mapping of activities to achieve the goals;
- Reflection on how change will happen as a result of the activities; and
- Analysis of the extent to which the goals have been achieved.

Concurrent with this Evaluation, ASSITEJ International is conducting a series of small-scale research projects run by external providers. These projects are either directly or indirectly connected to the Theory of Change approach. This undertaking is reported on later in this report.

5. Is open to change and willing to modify facets of the project as required, whilst ensuring its overall goals and objectives will still be met, in accordance with its grant application(s).

It has been evident that ASSITEJ International has been adaptable to differing circumstances, however, the External Evaluators have not always been privy to the associated decision-making.

6. Ensures that its members are consulted and involved throughout the project and are given the opportunity to provide feedback and advice

Over the course of this Evaluation, the External Evaluators have developed and distributed surveys and run a series of interviews to enable members to provide feedback and advice regarding the BCR project and ASSITEJ International

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activities and programs more broadly. As reported in the Midline Report and this Endline one, this has proved to be immensely useful to the Evaluators and the ASSITEJ Executive Committee.

In the Midline Report the External Evaluators suggested that ASSITEJ International could inform members about the progress of Building Collective Resilience through its redeveloped website, magazine and newsletters, however, the challenge remains as to how best inform members of how the EC is responding to their feedback and advice.

7. That the ASSITEJ International 'Policies and Protocols Handbook' and any associated documentation and materials are updated as a result of any changes in its operations that emanate from the project and that members are suitably informed.

Although the External Evaluators are aware that the ASSITEJ International EC intends to adopt this recommendation, they have not been informed of the specific details of how this has been actioned.

3.2 The recommendations from the 2023 Midline report

The 2023 Midline Report contained more detailed and nuanced recommendations (compared to the Baseline one). This was largely due to the data that External Evaluators had collected, which were not available at the time of the Baseline report. Significantly, the wording of the recommendations in the Midline report implied the findings that were emerging from the data. Relatedly, in the Midline Report, the evaluators suggested that the recommendations provided were not intended to be actioned necessarily in the short term (i.e. between the Midline and Endline Reports) but would guide the association as it continues to implement its *Building Collective Resilience* program/projects in future years.

The Midline report recommendations are reproduced below and, where relevant, any actions taken over the past year are discussed later in this report.

Recommendation #1: Communication

That ASSITEJ International:

- continues to acknowledge the barriers to access posed by language, and to encourage language diversity and equity where possible;

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- considers devoting greater resources to communicating with members the options the organisation has made available for live and post-production translations of events;
- share the findings of *BABEL: The Art of Listening* with members and explore how the creative techniques developed in this project can be used to facilitate practitioner access in non-theatrical ASSITEJ International events; and
- prioritise translations of World Congress website and online communication. This recommendation acknowledges that there may be unique challenges delivering online content for the 2024 World Congress, given official and technical internet restrictions.

Recommendation #2: Membership

That ASSITEJ International:

- directs some of its resources for collecting and disseminating data, information, practices, ideas and solutions to compiling and sharing ideas about how members are addressing the challenges of mobility in different regions and contexts;
- implements processes to reduce the workload involved in providing rich, highly functioning online offerings;
- continues to monitor member engagement with online events and resources, to determine if resources could be employed more effectively elsewhere, and
- Make members more aware of its Archive facility (both physical and digital) and investigates ways to encourage better use of the resources that are housed there (e.g., by offering creative fellowships that draw on the archive's collections).

Recommendation #3: Networks

That ASSITEJ International:

- explores ways to support greater communication and collaborations between the various Professional and Regional Networks and between Networks and ASSITEJ International;

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- finds ways to document and share the processes and structures of Networks that lead to successful artistic exchanges and networking between members.

Recommendation #4: Budgets and funding

That ASSITEJ International:

- continues to discuss the costs and contributions to sustainability in all its forms of ASSITEJ International activities, and to prioritise them accordingly;
- continues to revise budgets so they reflect realistic workload forecasts;
- seeks additional funding to support ASSITEJ International staff (i.e. Secretariat) to deliver high quality activities and resources in a socially and economically sustainable way; and
- investigates further funding to better support the work of the research teams.

Recommendation #5: Building Collective Resilience priorities

That ASSITEJ International:

- facilitates the External Evaluators' access to Building Collective Resilience programs involving children and young people;
- monitors and reports on inclusion throughout the remainder of the Building Collective Resilience project, to identify gaps in and opportunities for inclusion.

Recommendation #6: Dissemination of research findings

That ASSITEJ International:

- put in place a long-term strategy for conducting, using and communicating with members the value of research.

Recommendation #7: Members

That ASSITEJ International:

- continues to support members to run activities;
- continues to encourage members to join the Executive Committee by communicating the commitment and potential rewards of such involvement, and

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- consults members about ASSITEJ International's research plan.

4.0 Key Findings from the Evaluation Project (2022-2024)

Below are the findings and discussion from the ASSITEJ International “Theatre & Performing Arts for Young Audiences: Building Collective Resilience (TPAYABCR)” Evaluation project (2022-2024). The equivalent sections in the Baseline and Midline Reports have informed what is contained herein. For this report, the evaluators have taken a thematic approach, and this is reflected in the sub-headings and sub-sections that follow. Interspersed in this findings section are recommendations that the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee may wish to implement having considered the content of this report. The recommendations are also grouped together in a separate section at the end of this report.

4.1 Access and Inclusion

‘Inclusion’ is discussed in greater detail later in this report (see 4.3). This section will focus on the ASSITEJ International activities and resources that members access, and what facilitates or inhibits this access. Two important aspects of ‘access’ are the actual and perceived opportunities for everyone to be involved. ‘Inclusion’ is related to but distinct from ‘access’ in that it is associated with a sense of welcome and invitation to take part in an organisation’s processes and practices. In contrast, access refers more specifically to the *opportunity* to participate. A member from North America highlighted this difference by explaining that some Canadian TYA practitioners of Middle Eastern backgrounds may avoid European-based ASSITEJ International events to which they are invited because they are unsure how culturally safe, they will feel at them.

Participation rates offer a reflection of access because people need access to take part in events or use resources. The two concepts are not completely aligned, though, because, as illustrated by the comment above, not everyone with access will choose to participate. The Midline and Endline surveys both

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asked respondents what ASSITEJ International activities they had participated in throughout the previous six months. The top five responses for the Midline survey are listed below:

Monthly newsletter	67%
ASSITEJ International website	60%
World Day of Theatre for children & young people	48%
Coffee sessions	37%
Umbrella sessions/Artistic Gathering 2023	30%

The results of the same question in the Endline survey were:

Monthly newsletter	82%
Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)	68%
ASSITEJ International website	62%
World Day of Theatre for children & young people	56%
ASSITEJ International Awards	32%

These results suggest that, despite members indicating elsewhere in the surveys and interviews that they prefer live, face-to-face engagement, their primary involvement with ASSITEJ International is via free, online, local events and resources that can be accessed at any time. The exception to this finding is the high participation of Endline survey respondents in the 21st World Congress which can be explained by the fact that Congress delegates received a direct invitation to complete the Endline survey so may be overrepresented as a proportion of the membership.

It is notable that over 60% of respondents to both the Midline and Endline surveys were from Europe. This may be significant in regard to access because this cohort is likely to have greater access to ASSITEJ International activities and may also be more likely to be able to access the survey in a language they understand. They may therefore not be representative of the feelings of the wider international membership.

Only 28% of respondents to the Endline survey were aware of the ASSITEJ International Access Committee (compared with 10% in the Midline survey) and only 6% nominated the Access Committee as one of their top five membership priorities (1% in the Midline survey).

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4.1.1 Access: Barriers and facilitators

As one interviewee perceptively noted, while there are textbook definitions of what excludes people, 'everything is overlapping' and 'these things can't be looked at in isolation.' The surveys and interviews undertaken for this evaluation offered a valuable opportunity to understand the nuances and intersections of factors that restrict or facilitate access to ASSITEJ International membership and activities.

The main barriers to access ASSITEJ International activities emerging in the Endline evaluation align with those noted in the Midline evaluation. They are: inadequate financial means, impediments to travel (which include distance, cost and difficulties obtaining visas), political restrictions, language, and a lack of communication and information. The Endline evaluation survey also found that time was a significant barrier to participation in ASSITEJ events and was the equal highest response along with 'I can't travel to them.' Members' experience of these barriers will be discussed separately below, but the following examples illustrate how they may intersect.

One interviewee stated that it can be difficult to follow up with international peers after a gathering because 'sometimes it's hard to catch the full name, especially if it's not in our own language.' She suggests that sharing formal contact lists at the end of each session would overcome this barrier to networking when members return to their separate home countries.

A member from Africa explained that the 'lengthy, expensive and discriminatory' visa application processes he has experienced when trying to attend ASSITEJ International events in Europe in previous years discouraged him from applying for a visa to Cuba. He said, 'It costs a lot for artists to apply (for visas). I'm a freelancer. I practice, I self-fund my projects ... and if I'm going to travel it's going to be a self-funded trip. So, if I'm making those kind of moves and I get discouraged with visa denial, I'm going to stop.'

4.1.2 Access: Finances

ASSITEJ International is largely a volunteer-run organisation and is mostly funded through membership dues. As such, it does not have the capacity to pay presenters at international gatherings. One respondent to the Endline survey noted that this excludes many artists. They wrote, 'Guest performances,

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workshops, etc. should be financially remunerated, as otherwise those who cannot afford to pay are excluded and the accessibility of all members is not guaranteed.' Given the financial structure and resources of the organisation, it is unlikely that presenters can be paid for their efforts, but other ideas put forward by members in this evaluation such as providing greater support for regional activities may help to address this issue.

A recurring point made in the Endline evaluation interviews was that a lack of money restricts both the practice of TYA in many countries and participation in ASSITEJ International activities. 17 of 123 respondents to the Midline survey (14%), and 4 of 55 respondents to the Endline survey (7%) were not ASSITEJ International members. When asked to explain why they are not members, three respondents to the Midline survey, and two respondents to the Endline survey nominated the cost of membership. While both these data sets are small, they are significant because they are consistent with each other and with interview data that cited the difficulty that National Centres have promoting the *value* of membership to national TYA cohorts.

Regarding the financial barrier to membership, an interviewee from South America explained that although their National Centre's membership fees are lower than in many countries, they are still significant for local companies. The reason that finances are a common barrier to access even in more affluent countries is that TYA practitioners tend to earn comparatively low wages in their home countries. As one national Secretary explained, when he tried to promote *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)* to his centre's members, they responded, 'We'd like to go to Cuba, but the air ticket and hotel [are] really, really expensive.'

National Centres are looking for innovative ways to overcome financial barriers to access. For example, ASSITEJ Japan has initiated a new category of 'support' membership that is about one third of the full membership fee. Support members can observe but not vote in assemblies. They also receive all the same communications as full members. One artist who does not have a National Centre in her country also expressed interest in alternative ways for TYA practitioners in countries that do not yet have the financial means to run a National Centre to become involved in ASSITEJ International, saying, 'I heard there is a new scheme that we can be a member of the [*Small Size*] network and then become a member with ASSITEJ. I think this is very important and

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very helpful for us so we could be part of it in a certain way.' While there is, of course, a risk that such arrangements reduce the organisation's short-term income at both national and international levels, they may result in greater long-term engagement of members and these issues have no doubt informed ASSITEJ International's recent review of membership dues.

Several interviewees noted that the low value placed on TYA by their respective governments is reflected in poor funding which, in turn, further restricts access to ASSITEJ International activities. This situation is reflected in the data for the Endline survey that relates to how members were funded to attend *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. 77% of survey respondents received external financial assistance but personal contributions were still significant even for those who received help. Grants were received from Europe, Australia and North America suggesting that while most members experience some degree of financial stress, those from countries with developing economies encounter additional financial barriers to participating in live ASSITEJ International events because they have less access to cultural grants. Several interview participants noted the positive relationship between funding and advocacy, offering support for this strand of the Building Collective Resilience project. Advocacy is discussed in greater detail below.

ASSITEJ International has several programs to promote wider access for members and associated members including issuing Strategic Invitations to attend events. An artist who received one such invitation to participate in the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2023: Turning Point (Serbia)* explained that this targeted opportunity was one of several that has supported her practice and given her momentum to grow a local network of TYA artists in her home country. Noting the success of initiatives such as the *Next Generation* and *Strategic Invitation* programs, several interviewees raised the possibility of similar programs for the administrators of National Centres as outlined here by a member from South America:

We are a recent group and a Latin American country with few resources, so I believe that one form of support is to show us how organisations that have been around a long time work and how they have been able to manage practices and resources ... I always have the feeling that it would be important to have a kind of internship where we

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can go to understand how the organisation works from within ... that allows us to understand logistics from the inside and see how they work, how they manage, how they delegate ... in effect it is like a kind of management internship, but really of the organisation.

Such programs are not only about access, but also about the mutual benefits of exchange. As a member from Africa explained, 'We need to understand how they are succeeding with these programs abroad. And they need to understand what we are doing here ... They could learn from us, and we could learn from them.'

4.1.3 Access: Online Access

The majority of members consulted for the evaluation expressed a preference for live interactions over online experiences but acknowledged that ASSITEJ International's online offerings are an important facilitator of access. For example, a respondent to the Endline survey said:

It is wonderful that ASSITEJ works on the accessibility of the congresses for those who cannot attend in person (because of visa, health, economical, ecological, political or other reasons). However, I feel that it is difficult to bridge the gap between those who are present 'live' and those who are 'only virtually' present. Also, an ASSITEJ gathering is so special and unforgettable as an experience, that you cannot transfer this into an 'online version'. You actually want to be there, to exchange, see shows, [and] discover.

Echoing this, one interviewee said that although members in her country prefer in-person encounters, 'We have to find ways to communicate and if technology helps us that's fine.'

A North American member expanded on this idea, saying that online engagement can be a gateway for members' future involvement:

I'm very impressed that ASSITEJ international continues to make some programming available online for people for a variety of reasons, including the economic factors ... I think this is a big way in which we're going to stay together ... it's a way of ensuring that diverse artists are part of the conversation [because] there's also artists that are going to be in crisis that can't attend physically ... I think the online chapter ...

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even if it's just small amount of programming, I would love to see continue. And I also think that's another way where people will consider joining in-person, or trying to gather enough funding and resources to be able to go to more world meets if they have that chance.

Asynchronous events such as the ASSITEJ Awards and World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People, and online resources such as the ASSITEJ International website and the monthly newsletter are very popular with members. They were in the top five results for activities or resources accessed by members in both the Midline and Endline surveys. Their value to members may be related to the fact that they can be accessed at any time.

One comment to Question 35 of the Endline survey summarised members' appreciation of the efforts that ASSITEJ International has made to increase access through online events. The respondent wrote:

I think the work that ASSITEJ International has been doing in the past three years has been much more available and accessible for people not living in Europe. I commend all the organizers of Umbrella sessions and other online events that allow people around the globe to participate. It's especially helpful to have online events repeated for different time zones, when possible. I hope that we can continue to gather, virtually or in person, as these moments of connection are vital.

4.1.4 Access: Politics and Geography

The main political and geographical barriers to access mentioned by the Endline evaluation participants included trouble accessing visas, and the time and cost associated with travelling long distances to ASSITEJ International events. One interviewee characterised the financial and political obstructions to obtaining visas as barriers to 'cross border mobility'. Another interviewee summarised the problem of travelling long distances without pay by saying of *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*, 'I will check out the (online) Cuba events because I couldn't be physically there. It's just too far away. It takes three days to go there and three days to come back. I can't stay that long.' She advocated strengthening regional networks to 'better allocate our regional resources' and explore local issues. She explained,

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Maybe we may start with a regional network [and] when we are stronger enough, or when we've done more things we can connect with the international network. Or, like daily, more closely work with the regional network but, yearly, or every two years, we can work with the international network. So we can have this kind of layer to collaboration.'

This view was shared by another interviewee from an Asian National Centre who said in favour of the idea of replacing every second Artistic Gathering with regional gatherings, 'It's very good: we have some regional common programs or mutual concerns and of course a ticket fee is not so expensive.'

Global politics also plays a role in practitioners' access to ASSITEJ International membership, activities and communication with some places not being able to join or create formal National Centres. For a practitioner living in one such region, access to ASSITEJ International's events and networks has been provided through the *Strategic Invitation* program and through direct engagement with ASSITEJ International members such as President Sue Giles and members of the Small Size Network.

Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba) represented a unique opportunity for ASSITEJ International to address some political, financial and geographical barriers to access by locating the Congress in a part of the world that is often excluded from participating in the organisation's international events. Survey and interview data from the Endline evaluation suggest that the majority of members from a range of countries appreciated the inclusive intent of this decision, even while the distance to travel there and the significant practical challenges created by political/economic embargoes on the country created barriers to access for many of them. Some of these conflicting perspectives are outlined in the Survey Analysis: Cuba Data (See Appendices). They include comments such as:

From World Congresses before I knew that the performances would be very diverse and different from my daily practice. I also knew about Cuba, that the situation would be difficult. So, I did not expect an easy-going time with a perfectly organized Congress in a huge Congress centre. I got what I expected, and a lot more in terms of very

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heartwarming meetings with people of the South (American) hemisphere.

One of the Endline Evaluation interviewees was a key driver of *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. She said that the event was very important for Cuba because it brought together people from all over the world, allowed members from across the region to meet, and resulted in much dialogue and professional exchange. This view was supported by the post-Congress evaluation undertaken by the Ibero-American Network (See Appendices) and the Endline Evaluation survey. Question 27 of the survey asked respondents to rate their experience of the Congress in 12 different terms. The option 'How would you rate your experience of *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)* in terms of being an event: 'Which offered space to meet and connect with other international professionals' had the highest rating unweighted score (14) and the second highest weighted score (91). The option 'In which you felt included' gained the third highest weighted score (87) and the fourth highest unweighted score (10).

Significantly, *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)* showcased access and inclusion by, in the words of one of the event organisers, 'demonstrating how a country with limited resources prioritises and fights for children and the arts.' This finding was echoed in the results of Question 27 of the Endline survey, in which the option, 'Which increased your understanding of other cultural contexts producing TYA' had the highest weighted and third highest non-weighted scores (92 and 12 respectively). This is significant because an understanding of other cultures can inform and motivate people to work towards improved access in future events.

The economic embargoes on Cuba also affected access to the Congress by Cuban nationals. For example, the same interviewee (quoted earlier) speculated that Havana artists may have been prevented from participating by fears that petrol shortages would leave them stranded at remote venues at night. The lack of Cuban participants and the barriers to international delegates participating as fully as they would have liked were noted in both the Ibero-American Network post-Congress evaluation and in the Endline survey. These

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included the difficulty of travelling long distances between venues, simultaneous timing of events, and language barriers.

4.1.5 Access: Language

Language emerged as a significant theme related to access in the Midline evaluation and it was anticipated that this would be an important issue at *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. Language did play a role in the event in multiple ways. On the positive side, a member from the Asia-Pacific region observed that having a Congress in a largely non-English speaking country created language equity. He said, 'Placing the Congress in a Spanish speaking country, it just forces everything to be much more bilingual. If it was just in Australia, I think that there would have been less effort for that.' In contrast, the Ibero-American Network reflection on the Congress noted language as a barrier to their members' full participation in the Congress, but it is not clear from that report why this was so. It could have been that, with both Portuguese and Spanish speakers attending, many Ibero-American members did not have a common language. One respondent to the Endline survey noted in relation to the Congress that, 'If we want to include everybody, we need more translation. I know it is a question of money, but hopefully the technical tools are developing and making things easier in the future.' This is indeed the case as discussed below.

Taking note of early evaluation findings about the need for language equity in ASSITEJ International activities, the Midline and Endline surveys were translated from English into three languages (Portuguese, Spanish and French) and a small number of respondents accessed these versions. Language did not emerge as a significant theme in the Endline survey results, perhaps because the majority of respondents were English speakers and/or because members who do not speak any of the four survey languages were not able to complete it. Efforts were made to interview members whose first language is not English, and the External Evaluators wish to thank the ASSITEJ International Secretariat (especially Marissa Garay) for their assistance with translations. It is also notable that parts of the ASSITEJ International website are now translated and that there is an audio version of the text on the *Building Collective Resilience*

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webpage. The time and effort involved in these initiatives is a positive reflection of the organisation's commitment to access through language equity.

The Endline evaluation interviews revealed that National Centres are making strong efforts to overcome language barriers to access through the use of translation tools and the work of individual members. For example, one of the interviewees was introduced to ASSITEJ International through his work as a translator at a previous World Congress. He said he now spends a great deal of unpaid time translating ASSITEJ International newsletters and other communications into his home language because there is a strong need for this to support his country's members.

The *BABEL Project* and other forms of professional exchange also support members' efforts towards improving language equity in the TYA sector. For example, one interviewee said that ASSITEJ International and its associated network, IIAN (International Inclusive Arts Network) has provided her with a community of practice that she can consult with when creating new multi-lingual work and projects involving sign language.

The efforts of the individuals noted above speaks to another significant element in ASSITEJ International's access work; the role of 'champions.' Champions are discussed in greater detail below in the section, 'Represent the sector and advocate for TYA.'

Recommendation 1:

That ASSITEJ International:

1a: Explores ways to better communicate its aims, activities and parameters around access and inclusion e.g. it is important that members understand that while ASSITEJ International can offer limited targeted financial support to members and can provide guidance for National Centres, it does not fund National Centres, does not have the capacity to support all members who require financial assistance to attend international events and does not have the authority to support individual visa applications.

1b: Continues to offer support to National Centres to provide quality online access to key events where financially possible.

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1c: Continues to work with National Centres and non-affiliated members to explore sustainable alternative financial membership arrangements with the organisation.

1d: Explores ways to further promote its *National Centre Toolkit*, which provides a suite of information for National Centres to adapt to their local contexts.

1e: Explores the possibility of providing targeted in-person support for National Centre office bearers, particularly around the issues of governance and membership growth (e.g. mentorships, strategic invitations to events).

1f: Continues to support regional activities and networks to overcome the barriers to access of time, distance, cost and language.

4.2 Stimulate artistic exchange and networking

The Midline evaluation report noted the importance of artistic exchange and networking to members. It highlighted the role that ASSITEJ International development initiatives such as the *Next Generation* program, and regional and professional networks such as *Small Size* and *ITYARN* play in creating a global community of TYA practice. The Endline survey and interview data reinforced the findings of the Midline evaluation. For example, the top three responses to Question 4, 'Why are you a member of ASSITEJ International?' were:

- To communicate with other professionals working in theatre & performing arts for children & young people (95%)
- To create more space for international exchange (69%)
- To learn about professional opportunities (59%)

23 of 38 (60%) comments made in response to Question 10 (a question inviting a qualitative response) of the Endline survey, 'In your opinion, what is the value of ASSITEJ International to the theatre & performing arts for children & young people sector?' related to professional exchange, communication or networking. They include:

It's important and inspiring to have a worldwide network dedicated to TYA. For me personally as a freelancer it might be difficult at times to make the international exchange because of financing possibilities and

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time difficulties, but I think for institutions it's a really great opportunity to work together on international projects.

Strengthening TYA worldwide through exchange in the international community.

Professional exchange and work in projects with international partners.

Networks for sharing of ideas, solutions, and dreams is important.

The Midline and Endline surveys asked respondents which ASSITEJ International activities they had recently participated in and what prompted them to do so. For both surveys, the highest reasons were 'To network with other practitioners' (74% for the Midline survey and 85% for the Endline survey) and 'To share and be exposed to new ideas about theatre and the performing arts for children and young people' (73% for the Midline survey and 85% for the Endline survey). When asked why they attended the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2023: Turning Point (Serbia)*, 88% of respondents nominated the choice, 'To network with other TYA practitioners and researchers.' This was the highest ranked reason. 83% of respondents selected this response in answer to a corresponding question in the Endline survey regarding *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. These results confirm the importance of professional exchange opportunities to ASSITEJ International members and endorse this goal of the Building Collective Resilience project.

4.2.1 Exchange

Communication with and between ASSITEJ International members is a significant driver of artistic exchange and networking and is discussed separately below. This section explores what *other* kinds of exchanges are important to members and why.

The Endline interviews revealed that members value many dimensions of the social and professional exchange opportunities that ASSITEJ International offers. On a personal level, members feel that the organisation and its affiliated networks offer them friendship and a sense of belonging. One interviewee noted that, 'At the end of the day we sort of all want to belong to something and this helps us belong to that community.' The community he refers to is described by other members as being a group of people who have common

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interests and goals. Several interviewees noted that they have made strong personal friendships through their involvement with ASSITEJ International, with one commenting that these friendships are partly responsible for sustaining him in his poorly paying and time-consuming role as Secretary of a National Centre. He elaborated, 'I like reading and writing by myself, but sometimes I think that I love to work with people who are interested in child's education and child's right to arts.' Another practitioner said that 'When people come together, they have the same goal. We're building a collective network to make this happen.' Another endorsed this view and said that, in her pitch to potential members, she explicitly highlights the opportunities for exchange and the sense of belonging to a community of practice that ASSITEJ International provides.

Members also value the professional development that connecting with other practitioners provides. For one interviewee, international gatherings are stimulating experiences that offer 'inspiration' and 'understanding'. Another said these exchanges offer her 'strong food' for her practice. She partly attributed this to the rich discussions that occur during gatherings like the Next Generation program saying, 'You're not just watching and going away, and the show evaporates. You are ... taking something away with you.' A member from North America observed that, through meetings and discussions, TYA practitioners 'are generating a shared vocabulary.' She explained further that she understands this to be a core function of ASSITEJ International:

It's growing the vocabulary of TYA, bridging people's gaps in knowledge about the vocabulary they already have, and how it can be adapted to TYA, or vice versa. I think it's growing our understanding of production value for TYA.

4.2.2 Communication

Communication is an important dimension of professional exchange. Consistent with the results of the Midline survey, the highest ranked reason for respondents to Question 4 of the Endline survey question, 'Why are you a member of ASSITEJ International?' was 'To communicate with other professionals working in theatre and the performing arts for children and young people.' (95% of respondents selected this choice.) The importance of

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communication to members is also reflected in the responses to Questions 14-16 in the Endline evaluation survey which explored to what degree members are aware, participate in and value ASSITEJ International activities and resources. The ASSITEJ International newsletter was the activity or resource with the highest level of awareness amongst respondents (91%), was the second most important to them (56%) and was the most accessed by them (82%). The website had the second highest level of awareness (85%), was the third most valued (53%) and was third most accessed (56%) activity or resource.

Communication via the ASSITEJ International magazine, newsletters and website helps to keep geographically distant members informed and connected. One interviewee from Asia said that the exchange of information and sharing of news is the main part of his job. Further, he explained that a major motivation for his nomination for election to the Executive Committee at the previous General Assembly was so, 'I could get information of TYA quickly and precisely if I am elected.'

For communication to be effective, it needs to be accurate and timely. A North American member noted that it takes time for information about ASSITEJ International opportunities to be communicated to National Centres and then to members. She said, 'We have a little bit of delay in international calls, sometimes for certain opportunities that are ideal ... they feel like they come up really fast for implementation for us to be able to not just do a social media post and call, but actually have time to reach out to independent artists that we know are perfect fit for this.'

Regarding accuracy, several comments in the Endline survey responses suggested that members did not feel properly informed about the experience they were likely to have at *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. Despite emphasising the many positive aspects of the event, one interviewee noted that much of the production information he had been required to provide before the Congress was not acted upon by the organisers and that he was unprepared for this. He said, 'We were aware of definitely ... you know ... some things were always going to be unknown. But then just other things were like ... Yeah ... Just needed more communication.'

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ASSITEJ International has made great efforts to make information about the governance of the organisation publicly available and to support National Centres to pass this onto potential members. The new website, launched in 2024, contains a *National Centre Toolkit* and detailed information about the organisation, the sector, opportunities and events. Several interviewees mentioned that they use the website to support their advocacy efforts such as running campaigns for *World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People* and commenting publicly about children's rights.

Despite the wealth of information on the website, however, not all members or potential members appear to be able to access the information they require. For example, two respondents to each of the surveys said that they were not members because they did not know enough about what ASSITEJ International does. Seven suggestions to Question 35 of the Endline survey ('Do you have any suggestions to make ASSITEJ International more accessible and useful to you, your professional colleagues and/or children and young people?') proposed providing more support for local activities and the development of National Centres, information that is already on the website.

One practitioner indicated that she was unaware that she could subscribe to the ASSITEJ International newsletter without being a member of a National Centre but noted that this would be useful for herself and other artists in the region. She said, 'Yeah, that would be nice. And then we will know what events is happening.' Comments by other interviewees indicated that they were not aware they could access the *National Centre Toolkit* online. These findings suggest that visitors to the website may have difficulty finding relevant information on it.

The external evaluation and five research streams (discussed elsewhere in this report) have been key components of the *Building Collective Resilience* project. Respondents to the Endline evaluation survey indicated a moderately high level of awareness, interest and participation in ASSITEJ International research (53%, 26% and 29% respectively chose 'research' as one of their top five of 20 choices). As one interviewee explained, this information could be useful for local advocacy efforts. She said, 'It would be nice so we will know what people are searching [for] in this period, and ... we need to be [kept] updated about it. And it's also worth for us to prove to the local government or the local organization to get more resources.'

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4.2.3 Internationalism

When asked what makes ASSITEJ International unique amongst TYA organisations, 15 of 29 respondents to the Endline survey (Q.11) mentioned the international nature of the organisation. Some sample comments include:

International focus, AGs and world congress and festivals in different parts of the world.

The global perspective, the sharing of resources, the use of international exchange to foster artists who might not otherwise be supported.

International reach – connecting people from all over the world!

The interviews offered an insight into why members believe internationalism is important. A common response was that members can gain new perspectives and knowledge from people working in other contexts. For example, one member said, '[My country] can't meet my needs ... This international connection, I think, always helps. And I think we can't rule out the global knowledge and the global rising of cross pollination of knowledge.' She explained that knowing what other TYA practitioners are doing around the world is always valuable information in some way:

What's effective for me is the conversation that we're having. So, for me to understand what's happening in the Nordic side, for me to understand what's happening in Australia or for me to understand what's happening in New Zealand as opposed to Australia. That's information I can actually take with me and do something about it. Maybe we're behind sometimes. Maybe we're ahead. Doesn't matter – I can do something with it.

An interviewee from South America noted that even though the standard of theatre for children and young people in her country is high, she knows that seeing international work offers practitioners 'new images' and a chance to 'refresh' their work. She said, 'Luckily I have had the opportunity to travel—whether for theatre for adults or theatre for young audiences—so I have seen a lot of theatre in other places, and it has inevitably opened my eyes and this is what would like to happen with the companies [here].' A member from Africa observed that while there is always a need for better funding for TYA, his main

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focus is networking, to strengthen practice. He asked, 'Can we get members of ASSITEJ coming here to do an exchange program?'

4.2.3.1 Internationalism: Regional networks and exchanges

In recent years ASSITEJ International has supported regional exchanges which members value for different reasons to the exchanges they have with practitioners from far away. One interviewee from Asia observed that regional exchanges are popular with members because they are generally more accessible than large international events that may require long-distance travel and because they offer valuable opportunities to discuss 'common programs or mutual concerns.' Another noted that quarterly online coffee sessions have helped her to connect with and know more about cultures in her region, which she described as 'getting to know your neighbours.' She said, 'We don't know what's going on in Southeast Asia or the Middle East. But now ASSITEJ has members from even Mongolia.' The Next Generation program has even overcome the longstanding separation between practitioners from bordering countries Pakistan and India, as she explained:

That was, I think, the only time that I could be so close to someone from Pakistan ... We can't visit each other, or if I have a Pakistan visa stamp on my passport, I get inquired about any and every other trip. And people from Pakistan don't even get a visa to come to India. So that was a moment of erasing borders for me.

Regional networks can also be useful for selling TYA productions, as a South American member explained: 'Last year we were in Tijuana participating in the meeting of the Ibero-American Network ... activities that have to do with import and export, to publicise the organisation nationally, to introduce companies to international programs and to generate links for the companies.' The evaluation of *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)* by Red Iberoamericana noted that this meeting in Tijuana was 'aimed at professionalization, the opening up of the individual panorama and the dissemination of [the members'] work' and resulted in a suite of activities at the Congress. The report also found, though, that while the Congress offered valuable opportunities for Ibero-American

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artists to 'network and dialogue', it was disappointing that logistical challenges prevent exchanges with ASSITEJ members from other regions.

4.2.3.2 Internationalism: Artistic exchanges

Several members have noted the important role that professional networks play in artistic exchange between members with similar interests. For example, several interviewees said they have made professional connections through IIAN. One explained that these relationships are useful for problem solving: 'I'm trying to work in sign language and create multilingual performances, using sign and verbal and spoken languages. So I have a wide range of a references now that I can ask someone or the other that okay, this is what I'm looking for. Do you know someone? Or do you have a company that at least, whose videos I can watch?' Another interviewee observed that because members of these affiliated networks have common interests, 'they provide more of an emotional support' than the larger organisation of ASSITEJ International can with its more dispersed concerns. These comments endorse ASSITEJ International's ongoing efforts to provide a 'holding space' for a range of networks.

4.2.3.3 Internationalism: Governance

The Endline evaluation offered an opportunity to hear the views of members who are involved in the administration of National Centres. These members are doing valuable work to support local members and to strengthen the TYA sector in their home countries and internationally and their role as champions is discussed in greater detail in relation to engagement of the performing arts community in the life and mission of ASSITEJ International. A recurring issue raised by them was that they would like to develop a community of practice with other administrators of National Centres that could offer similar support to that provided to practitioners by initiatives such as the *Next Generation* program. For example, a South American member said:

We are a recent group and a Latin American country with few resources, so I believe that one form of support is to show us how organisations that have been around a long time work and how they have been able to manage activities and resources. I think it is mostly to do with how the organisation is managed from within and how it works at the board level and, in the case of those of you who have it, how you

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manage a general secretary who ultimately does the work of the association ... I understand that in many of your countries the general secretary is paid by the government.

A respondent to the Endline survey echoed this view, writing:

How far could our ASSITEJ members of a national centre take part in or learn from the committees within in Executive Committee such as sustainability or access. Because many members are interested in these topics and we as a national centre cannot cover everything.

The member quoted above described a visit to Chile, Uruguay and Argentina from ASSITEJ International president, Sue Giles, as 'a blast' and noted that the rich discussions that such visits prompt have the potential to 'open perspectives and panoramas' for practitioners. As noted earlier in this report, she also proposed establishing a formal exchange program between National Centres to support their administrators:

I always have the feeling that it would be important to have a kind of internship where we can go to understand how the organisation works from within ... that allows us to understand logistics from the inside and see how they work, how they manage, how they delegate ... in effect it is like a kind of management internship, but really of the organisation.

Given the pivotal role that the officials of National Centres play in building membership and advocating for the sector, this could be a worthwhile initiative for ASSITEJ International to explore. It is worth noting that the success of the *Next Generation* program was also mentioned by a respondent to the Endline survey who commented, 'It is wonderful that the Next Generation program exists. Maybe similar programs for other professionals could be imagined?'

Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba) was, in a sense, a large professional exchange project containing many smaller, individual exchanges. One of the Congress organisers was pleased that the event prompted 'lots of learning' and described the process of preparing for it as a 'true collaboration' between ASSITEJ Cuba and ASSITEJ International. Members of the international Executive Committee made multiple visits to the country to offer support during the lead up to the event, and Cuban delegates studied previous World Congresses (especially the

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one in South Africa in 2021) to learn how to solve various problems. Particular mention was made of the support offered by former President of ASSITEJ International, Yvette Hardie who encouraged ASSITEJ Cuba to take on this bold project. This case illustrates the multiple dimensions of professional exchange and communities of practice that ASSITEJ International facilitates.

Recommendation 2:

That ASSITEJ International:

2a. Continues to provide information to members via the regular newsletters and magazines.

2b. Considers ways to help visitors navigate the ASSITEJ International website more easily. This may include minor redesign of key parts of its website to highlight important information e.g. the subscription link to the newsletter could be on the homepage.

2c: Explores ways to communicate time-sensitive information to members (e.g. via social media) and continues to encourage National Centres to provide the ASSITEJ International Secretariat with information in a timely manner.

2d: Considers ways to support the administrators of National Centres to exchange knowledge and ideas.

2e: Works with National Centres to provide accurate information about international events, to ensure that members can navigate these experiences more easily.

2f: Creates a plan for sharing the *Building Collective Resilience* research and evaluation findings widely, to take advantage of members' interest in these endeavours.

2g. Continues its excellent work supporting regional and professional networks.

4.3 Inclusion

As mentioned earlier in this report (section 4.1), inclusion can be defined as the efforts that are made to make people feel welcome and part of an organisation. The Endline survey question, 'What makes you feel included as a member of ASSITEJ International?' elicited 39 responses of which only three said they did not feel included. The highest rating reason for feeling included was 'Achievable opportunities to participate in ASSITEJ International activities'

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(82%). The word 'achievable' may be significant here and can be understood in relation to other data that highlights members' concerns about barriers to access discussed in section 4.1. 44% of respondents to the same question said that 'Achievable opportunities to contribute to the strategic direction and governance of ASSITEJ International' made them feel included. This result suggests that members are invested in the future of the organisation and willing to contribute more to it.

The second highest rating reasons for feeling included were 'Feeling that my values and goals are aligned with those of ASSITEJ International' (77%) and 'Regular communication with and from ASSITEJ International (e.g. newsletters and magazines)' (72%). These results resonate with the earlier discussion in this report about ASSITEJ International's role as a focal point for a community of like-minded practitioners. Only one respondent offered a comment explaining why they do not feel included which related to a desire for ASSITEJ International to provide financial support for a National Centre. As this is not ASSITEJ International's role, more can perhaps be done to communicate the nature of the relationship between the national and international organisations (see Recommendation 1a).

The interviews undertaken for the Endline evaluation provided further information about members' sense of inclusion in ASSITEJ International. For example, a member from Africa said of his decision to become a member, 'That's what piqued my interest [in ASSITEJ International] because of the openness to accept everybody as members ... there was no limitation as to what criteria you have to get to before you become a member ... they open their arms to welcome both the young and the old professionals.' The support for young people was also noted by a member who had participated in the *Next Generation* program, who said 'there's no hierarchy ... that's one thing that I found ... the element of access there is that we're all in the same age range, and we're not intimidated by each other in any sense.'

Inclusion can be framed in multiple ways. For example, it can be viewed as the responsibility of those in power to extend opportunity to those without. This somewhat paternalistic definition has been challenged in recent times by a view of inclusion as a relational process that involves mutual listening, a process that Scudder (2020) sees as essential for democratic deliberation and

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participation. ASSITEJ International's approach to inclusion aligns with this view, as can be seen by its support for the 'Voices of Children' and 'Voices of Teenagers' projects and the External Evaluators' approach to the *Building Collective Resilience* project evaluation which has prioritised the voices of ASSITEJ International members with the aim of understanding what they value about the organisation and how they view its activities and goals. The strong and considered response to both surveys and the willingness of members to be interviewed (44 respondents to the Midline survey provided their details for this purpose) suggests that many members are invested in the future of ASSITEJ International and keen to have their views heard. All interviewees for the Endline evaluation expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to speak about ASSITEJ International. For example, a member from ASSITEJ Cuba said that she had felt like 'an abandoned bottle in the ocean' after congress delegates left Cuba, so was thankful for the chance to properly conclude the event by having a chance to say what she needed to about it. Such comments endorse ASSITEJ International's commitment to inclusion through consultation and ongoing evaluation of its governance and activities.

Recommendation 3:

That ASSITEJ International:

3a. Continue to prioritise access, as a condition of inclusion.

3b. Explore more ways for members to be actively involved in the governance of ASSITEJ International.

4.4. Sustainability

The Midline and Endline evaluations suggest that ASSITEJ International members have complex interpretations and views about the term 'sustainability'. Both surveys indicate that members have low awareness of the organisation's sustainability committee, with this initiative being the sixth lowest (for the Midline survey) and the fifth lowest (for the Endline survey) of 22 activities that members know about. The term also prompted some hesitance from interviewees. For example, one respondent initially said, 'Sustainability hmm ... Oh, for me it's a little bit difficult to imagine or understand that word.' It soon became apparent, though, that like other interviewees, this member views the term primarily in economic, social and artistic terms, rather than

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environmental ones. His main concern is about the need for generational renewal in the TYA sector. He said, '[the] majority of members of ASSITEJ is becoming older and older ... we need some new generations, but they don't have so much money. So sometimes we have to find some support [for them].' Another interviewee also worried that generational renewal isn't happening quickly enough in the sector, saying that while mentorship can be useful, there's a need for older generations to 'release all of the information faster.'

The evaluation surveys confirmed these members' impressions that ASSITEJ International is largely made up of older practitioners. 88% of respondents to the Midline survey were over the age of 30 and 60% were over the age of 40. 82% of respondents to the Endline survey were over the age of 40, although this could have been influenced by the high number of respondents who had attended *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)* because the cost of travelling to these events can be prohibitive for younger members.

The TYA sector's underlying lack of economic sustainability is a pervasive concern for members. One interviewee cited it as a major reason for young artists choosing to work in other, better paying, art forms but noted that it is also a problem for older practitioners like himself. He explained that TYA is expensive to produce and that he self-funds most projects. He said, 'sometimes it's for the passion but then, you know at some point also you have to say, "let me not cut my head in this."' Another interviewee, from a different region, echoed this, saying, 'Actually, my salary [as Secretary of a National Centre] is very low so sometimes I think that maybe I should change my careers, but.... at this time, yeah, I could continue maybe next three years or five years.' These experiences are driven by a widespread lack of funding for TYA and one member expressed concern about the wider and long-term effect this has on her country's sector, saying, 'We should have funding to present TYA projects that are struggling to make ends meet because this is not sustainable ... we're losing our audiences as a whole.' Advocacy for TYA plays an important role in addressing this problem and is discussed further below in this section.

One member observed that economic sustainability is particularly precarious for independent TYA artists. He said:

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We're in a sector where volunteerism is a massive part of what we do. I think it's different when you're in a company, because you still have a baseline income but, you know, as an independent, there is no baseline. There is no money. There is no sustainability ... There is no pathway to help that sustainability, because it continues to ask for volunteering in the contribution of your presence.

This comment was made in the context of this member's experience performing a show at *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)* which encountered some significant production hurdles despite many months of preparation. Although he said that he ultimately delivered very enjoyable performances to small but appreciative audiences, he also reflected:

We're always happy to bring those extra efforts but I suppose when it's on a massive scale, like, for example, with Cuba, you just go, 'Wow!' You do go, 'Really, was that worth it?' Sometimes I was over there going, 'This is not worth it.' You know; the amount of effort, money ... Yeah, that is not a sustainable practice for an artist or a company to undergo.

This observation resonates with findings in the Midline evaluation report which discussed the unsustainable workload encountered by the ASSITEJ International Secretariat in preparation for the *ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2023: Turning Point (Serbia)*. As noted in that report, the Executive Committee are keenly aware of the need for realistic timelines and workloads and are actively putting in place ways to support the organisers of large events. Like all member-based organisations, ASSITEJ International is constantly challenged to ensure that the voluntary, passion-driven contributions of members drive resilience through a positive sense of shared purpose rather than burnout, and it is to the organisation's credit that it commissioned this evaluation as part of that ongoing process.

The *Building Collective Resilience* project's main sustainability focus was the environment. In the context of rapid climate heating, this is a concern that has universal relevance and particular urgency for intergenerational justice and equity. ASSITEJ International has developed a comprehensive [sustainability policy](#) which guides its activities and the work of its Sustainability Committee. In keeping with the organisation's philosophy of supporting rather than

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dictating to members, the ASSITEJ International website offers a wide range of resources and ideas for National Centres and individuals to draw on, to lessen their carbon impact. An example of this is the space devoted to environmental sustainability on the Congress 2024 page which included information about [reducing delegates' carbon emissions from airline travel](#).

As mentioned above, there appears to be low membership awareness of this aspect of the *Building Collective Resilience* project and of the members who participated in interviews for the Endline evaluation only one spontaneously addressed environmental sustainability. These results do not necessarily imply that members are unconcerned about the issue, though. For example, Question 34 of the Endline survey asked if anything prevented respondents from participating in any or all of ASSITEJ activities in the past year and 21% of respondents nominated the environmental cost of travel. Perhaps the apparently low level of engagement with environmental sustainability is because many small-scale TYA practitioners are not high carbon users in the first place, so they do not see a need to radically change their practices.

One interviewee offered a nuanced analysis of how environmental sustainability intersected with *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. He noted the advantage of hosting a Congress in a country with limited infrastructure and resources, saying,

It is a great aspect ... that it can be quite nimble and pivot quickly to this location or that location on limited resources. I think that is just by nature of it being a more nimble Congress in that you're not inviting massive theatre shows in with 100 different lighting states and 10 special effects and all those sort of things. So that helps the lessen the environmental impact of the touring production elements.

Conversely, he wondered if the lack of stable infrastructure also contributed to carbon emissions, offering the following example:

It was very hard to say what this sustainable practice was like. I would have spent hours in taxis over there, just going from one side of the town to the other ... and then you would have seen, oh, 20 other people arriving in taxis also, but individually, because we're all coming from somewhere different. So just that coordination of people moving, just as

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a small example - there was no coordination to help that environmental impact be lessened.

Participants in this evaluation project offered a range of ideas for improving social and economic sustainability in the TYA sector. Some of these suggestions came from answers to Question 35 of the Endline survey which asked, 'Do you have any suggestions to make ASSITEJ International more accessible and useful to you, your professional colleagues and/or children and young people?' While only one response explicitly referred to sustainability, these comments are significant in the context of the wider interpretation of sustainability offered by members and are therefore worthy of attention by the ASSITEJ International Executive Committee. Other suggestions around sustainability were given by interviewees.

Sustainability: Membership recruitment

To maintain the sustainability of his National Centre, one interviewee is focused on encouraging practitioners to join the centre. He said, 'We try to encourage or try to recruit many other new members. Like maybe sometimes they are retired person, sometimes they are students or younger people, but I would try to get more and more people's members and spread our news too.' This member also noted that the ASSITEJ Awards are an effective tool for gaining the attention of potential future leaders.

Sustainability: Removing barriers to access

One African member observed that removing the barriers to access discussed earlier in this report would help to improve the long-term viability of the sector. He said, 'If those issues raised like the funding, the visas, and all that ... if those issues are addressed, squarely addressed ... I think it will go a long way to sustain this particular project.'

Sustainability: Online engagement

The Midline report discussed the use of online resources in detail and the Endline evaluation supports those findings. Members appreciate having access to online events but do not attend many, which poses the question for ASSITEJ International of how many resources to devote to developing online activities. As mentioned above, some members report having difficulty finding information on the extensive website. The following quote from the Endline

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evaluation survey (Question 35: 'Do you have any suggestions to make ASSITEJ International more accessible and useful to you, your professional colleagues and/or children and young people?') illustrates this issue and offers a possible solution:

Involving members more directly: How far could our ASSITEJ members of a national centre take part in or learn from the committees within in Executive Committee such as sustainability or access. Because many members are interested in these topics and we as a national centre cannot cover everything. Can socials and newsletters focus on single issues like this to direct members to this information that may be hard to find on such a large website?

Sustainability: Research

Research is a major element of the *Building Collective Resilience* project, and the evaluation shows that many members are interested in the findings. Research can play an important role in advocacy which, as mentioned above, may help to strengthen and sustain the TYA sector. This is a view shared by the members interviewed for this evaluation. For example, one interviewee said, 'it is research that will help us to sustain' and two others explained that a way in which it does so is by using it to support funding applications.

Research is discussed elsewhere in this report and there will be much to be learned when the findings of the five research streams of Building Collective Resilience are shared with and used by the ASSITEJ International membership.

Recommendation 4:

That ASSITEJ International:

- 4a. Qualifies its definitions of and conversations around sustainability to explicitly include economic, social and artistic dimensions alongside environmental sustainability.
- 4b. Continues to promote membership to younger TYA practitioners.
- 4c. Considers periodic focus on sustainability in the newsletter and on social media channels.
- 4d. Continues to support and share research, with a specific focus on how members may use research findings for advocacy.

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4.5 Represent the sector and advocate for TYA

ASSITEJ International's focus on advocacy through the *Building Collective Resilience* project is endorsed by the value that members place on these aims. 85% of respondents to the Endline survey question 'Why are you a member of ASSITEJ International?' chose 'To support advocacy efforts for the rights of children to experience performing arts.' Given that 77% of respondents also reported that they feel included when their values align with those of the organisation (Question 5, Endline survey), this is a significantly positive result.

Question 10 of the Endline survey asked what the value of ASSITEJ International is to the theatre and performing arts for children and young people sector. These responses also show that members appreciate the organisation's efforts to represent and advocate for TYA practitioners and children and young people. For example, one respondent wrote, 'ASSITEJ International is the custodian of theatre and performing arts for children and young people internationally. It promotes TYA world over and provides a platform for children and young people to be involved in the creation of TYA.'

Question 13 of the Endline survey asked respondents which of the *Building Collective Resilience* aims they were aware of, and Question 14 asked which were most important to them. Advocacy for the rights of children to experience theatre & performing arts which is made especially for them was the highest ranked choice for both questions. Other questions related to respondents' awareness of, thoughts about and participation in ASSITEJ International activities. Responses to these questions show that members are highly engaged in one of the organisation's major avenues for representation and advocacy, *World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People*. This initiative ranked second highest of 21 choices for awareness (85%), fifth highest for importance (32%) and fourth highest for participation (56%). These results are broadly similar to those for the same question for the Midline survey: second highest of 22 choices for awareness (80%), sixth highest for importance (24%) and third highest for participation (48%).

Representation of the theatre and performing arts for children and young people sector was not given the same explicitly high endorsement of members in the surveys (e.g. it ranked third of four choices for questions 13 and 14 of the Endline survey) but these results can be qualified by comments made by

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members elsewhere. For example, when asked what the value of ASSITEJ International is to the TYA sector, (Question10, Endline survey), the following answers were given:

Builds reassurance of the work we do.

Giving a voice to researchers and artists in TYA.

Provides an international showcase of excellent theatre for young people and offers a scholarly platform for those who research in TYA.

It unites, introduces, keeps, promotes, develops, spreads, creates.

Global Voice.

Visibility and strength.

Advocacy and representation are closely linked and although the *Building Collective Resilience* project is specifically focused on advocacy for the rights of children to experience theatre and performing arts which is made especially for them, members involved in the evaluation offered a range of issues that they would like the organisation to advocate for. These included the work of practitioners in Africa and other countries with developing economies, the rights of children to live in peace, and the need to listen to children and amplify their voices. It should be noted that ASSITEJ International is already engaged in all of these issues and that this is acknowledged by many members. For example, one interviewee described ASSITEJ International as a 'leader' in advocacy. Another said, 'ASSITEJ could be ... like a go to. Actually, I think I've already started doing this; every time I want to talk about children's rights or cultural rights, I look at the ASSITEJ website and the manifesto.' This comment points to the role that members themselves play in promoting life and mission of ASSITEJ International, which is discussed next.

4.6 Engagement of the performing arts community in the life and mission of ASSITEJ International

A key aim of the *Building Collective Resilience* project is to support members to be active participants in ASSITEJ International. The Midline evaluation report noted the strong evidence of member engagement in the large numbers of applications to contribute to artistic exchanges, the vitality of regional and

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professional networks and the eagerness of members to be involved in this evaluation. This Endline evaluation has highlighted two key aspects of member involvement in the life and mission of ASSITEJ International: collective and individual action.

4.6.1 Collective action

As noted earlier in this report, ASSITEJ International is valued by members for the community of practice that it provides. This goes beyond the exchange of information and skills to active collaborative support for the sector. For example, one interviewee said, 'What I have understood or noticed is that if we come together that's when we can speak for ourselves and get people to take us seriously. If we're working in isolation we are bound to face a lot of challenges, and as an industry we are a very small community so as a small community, it is even more important for us to have a collective voice.' This member noted that collective action can also be beneficial to individuals. She encourages new members to get involved in ASSITEJ International in the following way: 'The community aspect of it is what I focus on because if you're not active, then you're not going to get the opportunities.'

4.6.2 The Role of 'Champions'

As with all member-based volunteer organisations, ASSITEJ International has members who are active to a greater or lesser extent. This evaluation highlighted the role of members who act as 'champions' of the sector and how ASSITEJ International supports their efforts. Several interviewees spoke of the formal and informal ways in which they advocate for the sector and for children's rights. On a very practical level, these members play an important role in promoting membership of National Centres. One explained, 'A regular artist who wandered into TYA doesn't know what ASSITEJ is so ... I'm at three different festivals [saying], 'Hey, here's ASSITEJ doing coffee chats. Did you even know we exist? What do you need to know?' Another member said he regularly speaks to arts students of all disciplines, to encourage them to consider working with children and young people in their future professional practice. He also stresses the need for emerging artists to think about inclusion and access and said that he has been greatly supported in this work by his recognition as an inclusion champion by the ASSITEJ International-aligned



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professional network, IIAN (International Inclusive Arts Network). He said of this recognition of his work, 'It boosts my strength, my motivation to practice more inclusive arts.'

One interviewee framed her work as president of a National Centre as a means to promote the rights of children. She said that although her country produces excellent theatre for children and young people, she encourages artists to 'really think about how we are contributing to the lives of young children.' This practitioner noted that she has been greatly supported in this work by ASSITEJ International, particularly through her direct encounters with the President, Sue Giles. She said she especially valued the visit Sue made to her region, to speak directly with local practitioners. The importance of direct experience was also mentioned by other interviewees who said that they valued the support they have had from ASSITEJ International to participate in events such as the Next Generation project or Artistic Gatherings. One said, 'Had I not had these experiences ... I wouldn't be able to communicate or advocate for ASSITEJ at the National Centre level.'

Perhaps the strongest example of 'championship' is the immensely impressive work undertaken by members of ASSITEJ Cuba in hosting *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. An organiser said that one of her key goals was to showcase and champion Cuba's support for TYA. Regarding the goals of the *Building Collective Resilience* project, it is significant that ASSITEJ International provided Cuba with the opportunity and assistance to do so.

As can be seen in the examples above, ASSITEJ International provides a range of supports to members to involve them in the life and mission of the organisation. Other strategies are also worth noting. ASSITEJ International's communication platforms, including the website, newsletter and social media pages help members to take an active role in the organisation. For example, one interviewee mentioned that when his National Centre is promoting *World Theatre Day*, he appreciates the help he can access from the *World Theatre Day* toolkit (housed on the ASSITEJ International website) and related social media posts. Another member spoke at length about how a visit from Sue Giles, followed by a Strategic Invitation to an Artistic Gathering has galvanised her efforts to create an informal network of early arts practitioners in her country. As one member noted, ASSITEJ International has limited resources

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and cannot provide such targeted assistance to all who need it, but these initiatives clearly have a ripple effect that can augment the organisation's other open-access resources.

Recommendation 5:

That ASSITEJ International:

5. Takes note of the positive feedback it has received regarding *Collective action* and *The role of 'Champions'* as communicated in this report (see section 4.5) to inform future engagement with the performing arts community.

5.0 Feedback from the researchers on the BCR research projects

Over the course of this project the External Evaluators have had the opportunity to talk with, and observe presentations from, those researchers who are running the ASSITEJ International research projects, namely (as reported on the ASSITEJ International website):

Quantitative Access Data – An international comparative quantitative study that explores which, and how many, children and young people are currently accessing TYA by: (a) investigating, collating, and interpreting pre-existing data; and (b) defining, overseeing, and interpreting the collection of new data.

Dissemination / Engagement Case Studies – An international comparative series of case studies exploring how children and young people access TYA on a structural level – including the habits, structures, and schemes through which children and young people engage with TYA.

Leadership Demographics - A study examining the extent of diversity of TYA sector professionals, particularly those holding leadership roles.

Small Size – Research on how small children are perceived within the field of TYA.

Value of TYA – Collated evidence on the value of TYA that curates and synthesises the existing research from across the field.

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It is evident that the researchers have seized the opportunity to assist ASSITEJ International in its work, especially around *Building Collective Resilience* and to enhance the knowledge-base in the Theatre for Young Audiences sector more generally. However, from some of the researchers (those who responded to an invitation to provide feedback to the External Evaluators for this report) there are areas of common feedback that are worth noting given that ASSITEJ International is working to increase the research elements of its operations. Below, the Evaluators have summarised the feedback they received, whilst acknowledging that whilst this represents the viewpoints of some of the researchers, it does not speak for all of them.

5.1 Funding

All of the researchers who provided feedback stressed that they have found working on their projects to be personally/professionally rewarding and that they were committed to 'giving back' to the sector because of their interest in it. However, they wished to point out that ASSITEJ International may not always be able to rely on such 'goodwill' (as a few of the researchers put it) and that a more realistic funding model is called for.

The researchers wished to feedback that the funding provided by ASSITEJ International does not fully cover that required to run the research projects. Researchers reported devoting many more hours to their project than the funding covered. Some researchers asked for this in-kind support to be formally/publicly acknowledged, and suggested that, in the future, this should be clarified/established at the commencement of the project.

5.2 Communication

The researchers stressed that they would welcome more frequent and direct lines of communication with the Executive Committee. When asked how much contact they had had with the ASSITEJ International Research Advisory Group most said they were not aware of it and/or that little to no contact had been made. Similarly, the researchers were either not aware of, or not sure about, the relationship between their work and ITYARN (and in some instances they stated that the relationship between ITYARN and ASSITEJ International should have been made clearer to them at the outset of their project).

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5.3 Research findings and outputs

Whilst all researchers acknowledged that they had received a brief for their project from ASSITEJ International, generally they reported a lack of clarity as to how specifically the Executive Committee considers their findings will help to enhance the work of the organisation. They also queried about what the Executive Committee thought might be the various outcomes to emanate from their projects, beyond reportage on the organisation's website (such as here: <https://assitej-international.org/advocacy/research/>). For example, they asked if the Executive Committee was assuming that the researchers would publish out of their findings in journals and other output forms.

Recommendation 6:

That ASSITEJ International:

6a. Continues to invest in research, acknowledging its importance for advocacy and sector development.

6b. Establishes clearer expectations for the research process including funding capacity, scope, and reporting and publication.

6c. Explores ways to better support researchers through enhanced communication with the research advisory committee.

6.0 Moving Forward – Reflections on the Three-year Evaluation Project

In this section the External Evaluators share some of what they've learnt over the past three years regarding evaluating the work of ASSITEJ International and propose ways of going forward that could usefully inform future evaluations.

6.1 Reflections on the process

Given the wide scope of the *Building Collective Resilience* project, the evaluation plan was initially left deliberately open, and the evaluators were given the licence to progressively focus the evaluation as the project progressed. The evaluation ultimately centred on the experiences and views of ASSITEJ International members, offering insights into how some of the many

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activities of the *Building Collective Resilience* project effects TYA practitioners. Some reflections about the process and recommendations for future evaluation follow.

6.1.1 Surveying and interviewing

- The surveys were useful for reaching a large number of members. They were translated from English into Spanish, Portuguese and French and a small number of members accessed these translations. A large number of respondents did not complete the surveys, with nearly 50% dropping off in the second survey. It is likely that this was because, with 31 (Midline) and 40 (Endline) questions, the surveys were too long.
- The surveys included many common questions. Comparing results for some questions provide confirmation of some information but significant trends cannot be drawn from just two surveys. The questions could, however, form the basis of regular future surveys so that trends in members' views can be tracked over time.
- The Evaluators could construct shorter surveys for use by the Executive Committee that focus on gaining targeted information. For example, demographic information, member experience of an event, or members' views about the strategic direction of ASSITEJ. It is hoped that this will improve survey completion and encourage members to engage with future surveys. The EC could determine which survey questions are useful to include in repeated (perhaps annual) surveys, to track changes in membership demographics, views and participation over time.
- It is recommended that ASSITEJ International continues to translate surveys into as many languages as possible, to encourage a wider range of members to be involved in evaluation.
- The interviews offered rich and nuanced information about members' experiences that augmented the survey data. The interviewees spoke freely because the interviews were open-ended in nature. It is noteworthy that all the interviewees made direct or indirect positive comments about how useful they found the interview process to be.
- Each interview took around six hours to organise, conduct, and analyse, absorbing a large part of the evaluation budget so this will be an important consideration for future evaluations.

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6.1.2 Attendance at International events

Online and in-person attendance at ASSITEJ International events was very valuable for understanding the nuances of these experiences. As mentioned above, various issues prevented the evaluators from attending *Voices of a New World: 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 (Cuba)*. As noted at the start of this report, if attendance at live events is considered to be a priority for future evaluations, processes for supporting this can be developed at the outset.

6.1.3 Communication between the External Evaluators and the ASSITEJ Executive Committee

Meetings with the EC and Secretariat were invaluable to the External Evaluators, to inform timelines and the direction of the evaluation. Across the three years there were times when this communication was interrupted by unavoidable events, and this slowed the evaluation at these times. The practical assistance of this team across the three years was greatly appreciated.

Recommendation 7:

That ASSITEJ International:

7a. Works with the Evaluators to construct shorter surveys that focus on gaining targeted information e.g. demographic information, member experience of an event, or members' views about the strategic direction of ASSITEJ. It is hoped that this will improve survey completion and encourage members to engage with future surveys. The EC could determine which survey questions are useful to include in repeated (perhaps annual) surveys, to track changes in membership demographics, views and participation over time.

7b. Continues to translate surveys into as many languages as possible (i.e. beyond the current four languages), to encourage a wider range of members to be involved in evaluation.

7c. Works with the External Evaluators to identify priorities and scope for future evaluation(s). This might be informed by reflection on what deliverables have been chosen for the next EU project, what the desired outcomes are, and what will indicate that these outcomes have been met. These might include

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quantitative indicators such as greater membership involvement in elections or more submissions to the newsletter as well as qualitative ones such as how supported or included members feel by ASSITEJ's activities.

7d. Considers developing an MoU for future evaluations that contains a budget-breakdown commensurate with achievable goals and timeframes for the External Evaluators. The evaluation plan should also contain the evaluators' estimates of the time each evaluation activity may take. It is hoped that this will help to focus the evaluation within a realistic budget.

7e. Develops a more streamlined method of payment for the External Evaluators that reduces the 'red tape' and the steps that need to be taken to be remunerated.

7f. Develops a plan for communication between the External Evaluators, the Secretariat and the EC in future evaluation MoUs, which includes a backup point of contact in the event that key personnel are not available.

7g. Considers ways to develop an evaluative culture at ASSITEJ International by decentralising evaluation processes (see below).

6.2 Developing an evaluative culture

The evaluators wish to stress the importance of recognising that most of the ASSITEJ Executive Committee members are volunteers and that what is suggested below must be considered and implemented with this in mind.

6.2.1 Background

The *Building Collective Resilience* project was developed using *Theory of Change*. This widely used approach to organisational renewal and planning involves an iterative process of goal-setting, activity planning, reporting on deliverables and reflection. Reflection includes analysis of whether the project's activities have achieved its practical and philosophical goals, and discussion of how the findings may inform future planning (Cultural Development Network, 2019). ASSITEJ International's initiation of this evaluation can be seen as contributing to the last element of this cycle. The aims of the *Building*

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Collective Resilience project are now well embedded in all ASSITEJ International activities and processes. It follows that an ongoing approach to evaluation could also be considered.

6.2.2 A culture of evaluation

ASSITEJ International is a large, multi-celled organisation which has many activities running at any one time. While external evaluation can provide a useful 'outside eye', the organisation's skilled and invested membership and executive could also play a valuable role in augmenting reflection through ongoing evaluation. Voluntary, manageable and meaningful evaluation of activities by the members that run them could help grow an 'evaluative culture' in ASSITEJ International that:

- Maximises the evaluation budget;
- Allows key goals and values to be evaluated across multiple programs;
- Gives members more opportunities for feedback about the activities and direction of ASSITEJ International;
- Gives members more opportunities for ownership of the programs they run on behalf of their National Centres; and
- Informs future planning across a greater number of programs.

How this could happen

There are four main, interconnected considerations for future evaluation:

1. Focus/scope
2. Self-evaluation
3. Budget
4. Methods

1. Focus/scope:

This relates to what ASSITEJ International wants to evaluate and why. Some relevant questions might be:

- What does ASSITEJ International want to know?
- Which activities or members does ASSITEJ International want to know more about?
- To what extent does the membership want to be involved in ongoing evaluation and what are their priorities for it?

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2. Self-evaluation:

Some activities and processes may be best evaluated by external evaluators but many may be more effectively evaluated by those running the activities. The people who may be involved could include members of National Centres, members of regional or professional networks, or organisers of major events. The Executive Committee may be involved to the extent that they inform and approve evaluation tools and draw on members' evaluation reports in future planning.

It is important to note that engagement with evaluation should not result in more work for ASSITEJ International members or the Executive Committee. Rather, members should feel that they are supported to undertake the kind of evaluation that serves them best.

3. Budget:

All of the above will be partly determined by ASSITEJ International's budget but it is likely that by embedding achievable evaluation practices in the ongoing activities of ASSITEJ International the evaluation budget will go further.

4. Methods:

There are many approaches that can be taken to developing an evaluative culture and the following are just some ideas that could be considered by the Executive Committee:

- The EC develops a plan that identifies priorities for future evaluation.
- The External Evaluators suggest appropriate evaluation tools. Some of these may be implemented by the External Evaluators at strategic points throughout the next three years (e.g. interviewing key attendees of an Artistic Gathering). Some could be embedded in the project's ongoing activities and undertaken by members (e.g. simple survey templates that members can customise and use to gather feedback about their local events.)
- ASSITEJ International invites members to engage with these tools, use them to inform their own practice, and report any significant findings to the EC.

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- It is important that members do not feel that engaging with ongoing evaluation is a requirement or a burden. It may therefore be worth determining the level of member interest by initially inviting members to engage with a single tool such as a simple survey template and tracking uptake over a period of time.

7.0 Final comments

The External Evaluators have found working on this three-year (2022-2024) project for ASSITEJ International to be highly rewarding on both a professional and personal level. In the near future they intend to develop journal/conference papers relating to what they have learnt about constituting and implementing an evaluation of this kind for an international arts organisation. They hope to continue to work with ASSITEJ International in one form or another as it continues to grow as an organisation and welcome any subsequent opportunities to discuss or action anything that may emanate from this report.

8. Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That ASSITEJ International:

Ia: Explores ways to better communicate its aims, activities and parameters around access and inclusion e.g. it is important that members understand that while ASSITEJ International can offer limited targeted financial support to members and can provide guidance for National Centres, it does not fund National Centres, does not have the capacity to support all members who require financial assistance to attend international events and does not have the authority to support individual visa applications.

Ib: Continues to offer support to National Centres to provide quality online access to key events where financially possible.

Ic: Continues to work with National Centres and non-affiliated members to explore sustainable alternative financial membership arrangements with the organisation.

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1d: Explores ways to further promote its *National Centre Toolkit*, which provides a suite of information for National Centres to adapt to their local contexts.

1e: Explores the possibility of providing targeted in-person support for National Centre office bearers, particularly around the issues of governance and membership growth (e.g. mentorships, strategic invitations to events).

1f: Continues to support regional activities and networks to overcome the barriers to access of time, distance, cost and language.

Recommendation 2:

That ASSITEJ International:

2a. Continues to provide information to members via the regular newsletters and magazines.

2b. Considers ways to help visitors navigate the ASSITEJ International website more easily. This may include minor redesign of key parts of its website to highlight important information e.g. the subscription link to the newsletter could be on the homepage.

2c: Explores ways to communicate time-sensitive information to members (e.g. via social media) and continues to encourage National Centres to provide the ASSITEJ International Secretariat with information in a timely manner.

2d: Considers ways to support the administrators of National Centres to exchange knowledge and ideas.

2e: Works with National Centres to provide accurate information about international events, to ensure that members can navigate these experiences more easily.

2f: Creates a plan for sharing the *Building Collective Resilience* research and evaluation findings widely, to take advantage of members' interest in these endeavours.

2g. Continues its excellent work supporting regional and professional networks.

Recommendation 3:

That ASSITEJ International:

3a. Continue to prioritise access, as a condition of inclusion.

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3b. Explore more ways for members to be actively involved in the governance of ASSITEJ International.

Recommendation 4:

That ASSITEJ International:

4a. Qualifies its definitions of and conversations around sustainability to explicitly include economic, social and artistic dimensions alongside environmental sustainability.

4b. Continues to promote membership to younger TYA practitioners.

4c. Considers periodic focus on sustainability in the newsletter and on social media channels.

4d. Continues to support and share research, with a specific focus on how members may use research findings for advocacy.

Recommendation 5:

That ASSITEJ International:

5. Takes note of the positive feedback it has received regarding *Collective action* and *The role of 'Champions'* as communicated in this report (see section 4.5) to inform future engagement with the performing arts community.

Recommendation 6:

That ASSITEJ International:

6a. Continues to invest in research, acknowledging its importance for advocacy and sector development.

6b. Establishes clearer expectations for the research process including funding capacity, scope, and reporting and publication.

6c. Explores ways to better support researchers through enhanced communication with the research advisory committee.

Recommendation 7:

That ASSITEJ International:

7a. Works with the Evaluators to construct shorter surveys that focus on gaining targeted information e.g. demographic information, member

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7d. Considers developing an MoU for future evaluations that contains a budget-breakdown commensurate with achievable goals and timeframes for the External Evaluators. The evaluation plan should also contain the evaluators' estimates of the time each evaluation activity may take. It is hoped that this will help to focus the evaluation within a realistic budget.

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7g. Considers ways to develop an evaluative culture at ASSITEJ International by decentralising evaluation processes (see below).

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Appendices – Summary of content

NB: Please refer to the *Baseline report (2022)* and *Midline report (2023)* for the Appendices that were attached to those previous documents. They are **not** reproduced here.

1. ASSITEJ Midline Member Survey: Results and Analysis
2. Endline Evaluation Interview Thematic Analysis Table
3. Evaluation of the Ibero-American Network in Relation to the ASSITEJ XXI Congress
4. ASSITEJ XXI Congress Survey Report
5. Endline Survey Results and Analysis

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