



COMPLICITÉ

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY EXTERNAL REPORT

July 2025

Complicité

3ADAPT
People focused. Data informed.



At Complicité, we've always believed in the power of theatre to provoke, to transform, and to connect. We create from the world, in the world and we can't ignore that the world is in crisis.

This strategy doesn't start from a place of perfection. It starts from a place of reality. Ours is a company that thrives on knowing the answer isn't simple, but asking the question anyway, on collaboration; that reaches across borders, that takes creative risks and embraces the unknown. We know our work has impact creatively, socially, and environmentally. We also know it carries contradictions.

As an international touring company, we rely on travel. We draw in large teams. We make things. But we also make meaning out of the world around us, and that, too, has weight. What we do on stage and behind the scenes, how we treat people, how we use resources, how we tell stories, it all matters.

This strategy lays bare those tensions. It doesn't promise quick fixes, but it does commit to transparent action. We name the impacts we have – direct (like our energy use), indirect (like audience travel), and enabled (the ripple effects of our storytelling). We measure what we can. We act where we must.

It's a framework, not a rulebook. A way to centre environmental and social responsibility in our creative decisions, without compromising artistic freedom. It asks questions we may not always have comfortable answers to. It invites everyone we work with, staff, artists, audiences, partners, into that questioning.

We're not separate from the systems we want to change. But we are part of the cultural response. This is how we begin.



Susie Newbery

Executive Director

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

At Complicité, we believe storytelling holds the power not just to reflect the world, but to transform it. As artists and collaborators, we recognise our deep responsibility to address the climate and ecological crises, not only through the work we create, but also in how we operate, who we work with, and the values we live by.

This strategy marks a pivotal step in our journey toward creating a more just, inclusive and sustainable future. As a company, we are driven by the urgency of the global situation, but equally by a hopeful belief in the power of the arts to create space for empathy, imagination, and change.

Our productions have long explored the systemic forces shaping our planet and our society. These are not abstract themes for us, they are personal, visceral, and embedded in our practice:

- **Can I Live?** confronts the intersections of climate justice, race and identity, exposing how environmental breakdown disproportionately impacts underrepresented communities and the Global South. It asks urgent questions about whose voices are heard in climate activism, and whose are not.

- **Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead** challenges our moral relationship with nature, animals, and the land. Adapted from Olga Tokarczuk's novel, it explores the ethics of ecological violence and the blurred lines between justice, grief, and resistance.
- **The Encounter** immerses audiences in the Amazon rainforest through the story of a photojournalist who becomes deeply entangled in indigenous wisdom and environmental loss. It is a sensory confrontation with the forces of deforestation, cultural erasure, and industrial expansion.
- **Mnemonic** links personal and planetary memory, juxtaposing historical and ecological narratives, including that of Ötzi the Iceman, to reflect on the enduring entanglement of humanity and the natural world.

Together, these works form a body of practice that already engages with sustainability thematically, raising awareness, provoking dialogue, and offering deeply human entry points into complex issues. But we knew we needed to go further.



“

Who gets to speak for the planet?
Who gets to live on it?

”

Zena Edwards / Fehinti Balogun (Can I Live?)

To support this journey, we partnered with sustainability consultancy 3ADAPT, whose experience spans globally renowned cultural institutions, universities, and progressive organisations. Their approach helped us move beyond compliance or carbon footprinting, toward a deeper inquiry: what does sustainability mean in the context of a small but far-reaching creative company like Complicité?

What followed was a period of reflection, exploration and deep listening, which forms the foundation for this strategy.

LOOKING OUTWARD: UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

Before we turned our focus inward, we sought to understand the broader context in which our work exists.

With support from 3ADAPT, we explored the global, national, and local frameworks shaping the sustainability conversation, from policy and legislation to creative practice and public values. This included the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, the **UK's Climate Change Act**, the **Environment Act**, and the government's **25-Year Environment Plan**. We also considered more place-based drivers such as the **London Environment Strategy**, which echoes the importance of clean air, thriving communities, and access to green space.

We revisited the tools and communities we've long engaged with, including **Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tools** and the **Theatre Green Book**, which we helped inform and remain committed to. Our early support for **Culture Declares Emergency** further underscores our belief that artists and cultural organisations have a unique role in confronting ecological and social crises—not through compliance, but through imagination, provocation, and care.

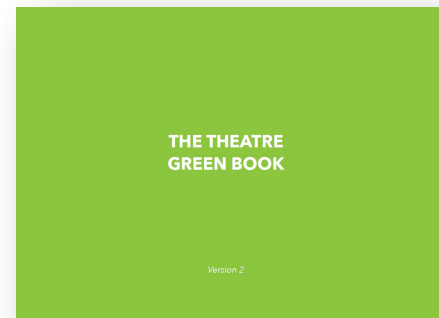
To deepen our understanding, we also turned to conceptual models that offer a more holistic lens on sustainability. These included:

- **The Planetary Boundaries framework**, which defines the environmental limits we must stay within to preserve Earth's life-support systems.
- **The Social Foundation**, drawn from **Doughnut Economics**, which sets out the basic human needs, health, education, voice, equity, culture, below which no one should fall.

Together, these models describe **a safe and just space for humanity**, an idea that resonates with our work as storytellers and collaborators who seek to hold space for difficult truths, multiple perspectives, and shared hope.

Finally, we looked across the fields in which we work, from theatre and performance to education, public engagement, and creative production. We drew insight from organisations and individuals we admire: how they define sustainability, where they take action, and how they wrestle with the same tensions we face, between values and pragmatism, expression and constraint, local presence and global relevance.

This exploration set the foundation for our next step: to reflect on ourselves with the same rigour, empathy, and curiosity.



LOOKING INWARD: UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES



Through a series of 1:1 interviews, 3ADAPT engaged every member of the Complicité team, from creative to administrative, production to outreach, as well as a cross-section of our associates and collaborators.

These conversations surfaced a layered understanding of our impact:

- **Direct impacts:** travel, energy use, materials, wellbeing of our staff and freelancers.

Example: efforts to choose sustainable office space and reduce travel footprints.

- **Indirect impacts:** the organisations, venues and supply chains we choose to work with, and the expectations we set for collaborators.

Example: how our Green Book-informed contracts support change.

- **Enabled impacts:** the ways our productions influence how people see the world, and the social change they catalyse.

Example: “Can I Live?” inspiring climate conversations and actions.

We recognised that while our direct footprint may be small, our potential to create positive ripple effects, particularly through our performances and community engagement, is significant.

But impact isn’t always easy to measure. We also want to “practice what we preach”, even within the financial and operational constraints of being a small, independent and often underfunded company.

PERFORMANCE WITH PURPOSE: COMPLICITÉ'S SUSTAINABILITY

Informed by the engagement process and workshop, a review of sustainability standards and guidance, and a materiality assessment, we developed a set of eight sustainability themes. These reflect Complicité's most pressing environmental, social, and economic priorities and align with leading frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and the Theatre Green Book.

The themes provide a clear structure to help us:

- Focus on what's most material in our context
- Track progress across different forms of impact (direct, indirect, enabled)
- Align with relevant best practice and sustainability frameworks (e.g. SDGs, Theatre Green Book, GRI)
- Connect action to Complicité's ethos and creative identity

Each theme is grounded in both sustainability best practice and the real conditions of creative work.

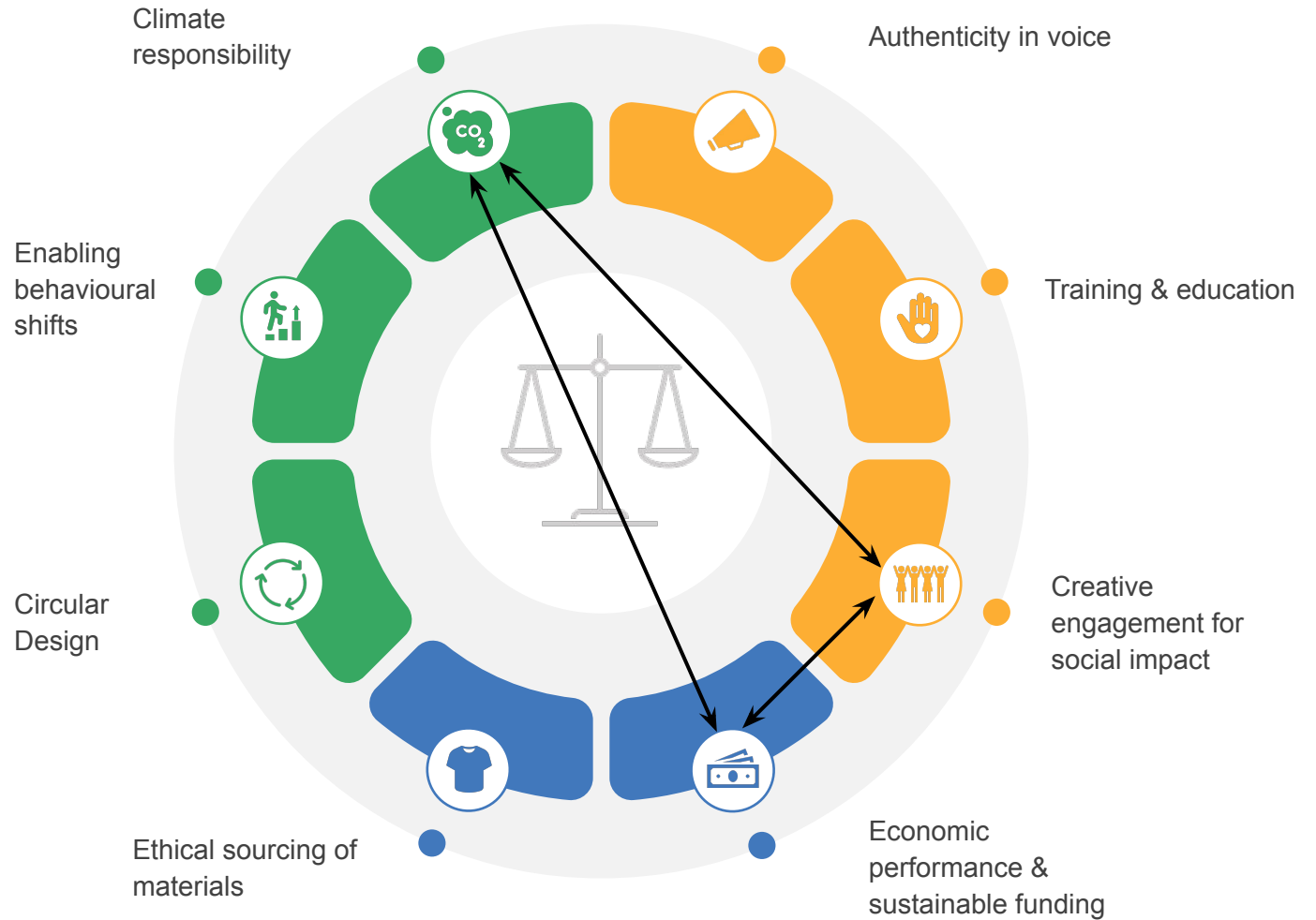


ADDRESSING COMPLEXITY

Throughout the development of the Sustainability Strategy and engagement process, several points of tension emerged. As illustrated in the adjacent figure, many of the themes are deeply interconnected. For example, balancing the financial realities of running a small theatre company with the responsibilities of climate action and the aspiration to create positive social impact presents a complex and often competing set of challenges.

To make meaningful progress, these tensions must be acknowledged and addressed openly and transparently.

This need for candid dialogue was a central focus of workshop sessions and many tensions were explored. Whilst we have mapped many tensions through the development of this strategy, we welcome our team, collaborators and audiences to also raise and discuss these tensions openly with us.



3. WHAT CAN COMPLICITÉ DO

INTRODUCTION

To support meaningful progress, a structured sustainability framework and action plan have been developed around the eight key themes identified in the previous section.

This framework outlines clear objectives, responsibilities, and key metrics for each theme, providing a practical roadmap to guide Complicité’s ongoing efforts and ensure sustained impact across environmental, social, and economic areas.

The following pages also show immediate actions that Complicité are able to implement and can be used to track against the KPIs.

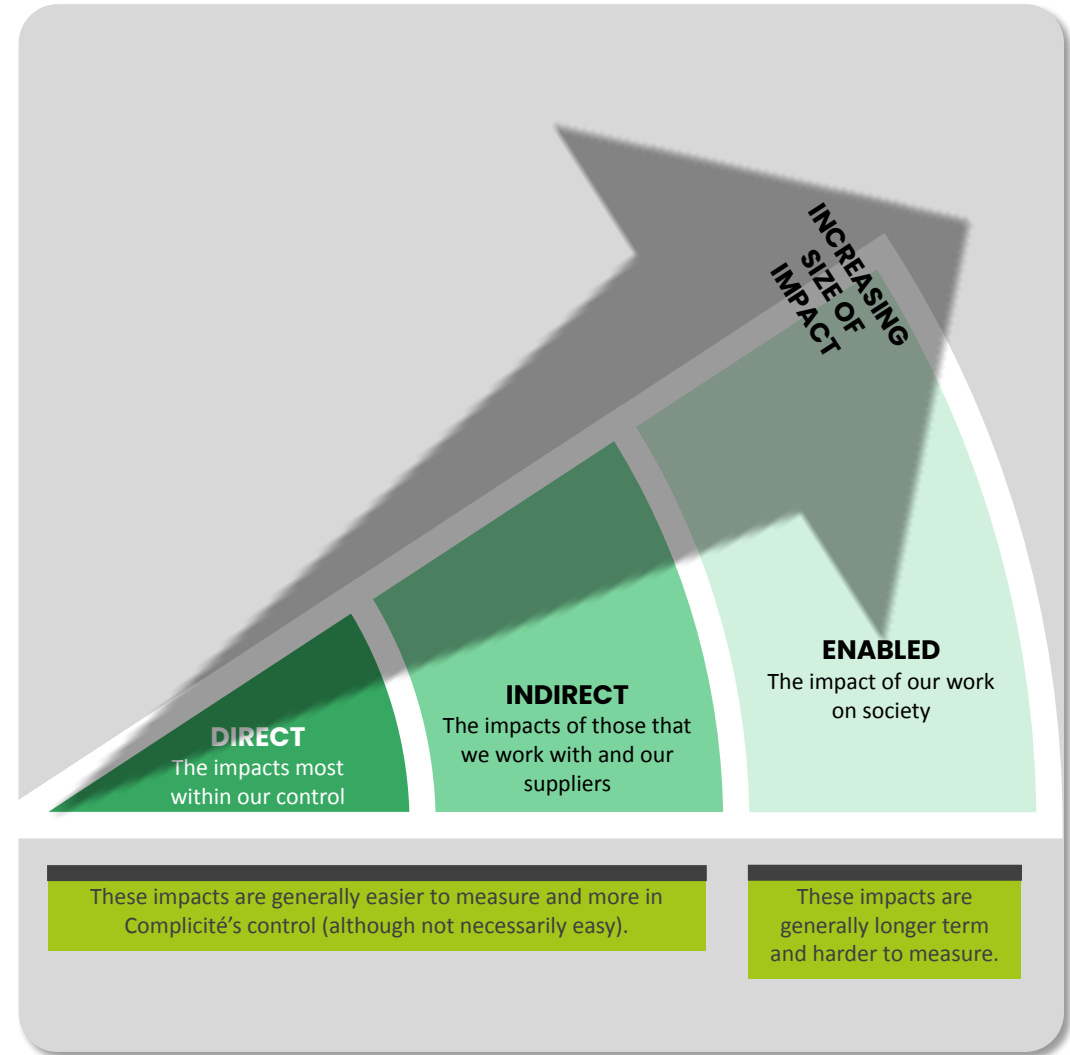
CONSIDERING ALL SCALES OF IMPACT

While influence was already considered as part of the materiality assessment, we also wanted to explore it through the lens of different scales of impact.

In developing Complicité’s sustainability framework and action plan, we have taken a comprehensive view of its spectrum of influence — from areas where the company has the highest level of control, such as operations and supply chains, to areas where its influence is more indirect but potentially far-reaching.

Although operational and supply chain impacts may be prioritised due to their direct manageability, we have also recognised the broader, longer-term influence of Complicité’s productions on audiences.

Productions such as *Can I Live?* demonstrate the kind of enabled impacts that, while harder to measure, may ultimately be the most significant and enduring.











FROM STRATEGY TO ACTION

For each of our eight themes, we've identified a core set of initial actions, with examples provided on the following page.

These reflect where we are now, not a finished plan, but a clear line in the sand. We are committing publicly to this journey, even while acknowledging the constraints we work within.

This is an iterative process:




- We act.
- We measure.
- We learn.
- We refine.

THEME	OBJECTIVE	EXAMPLE OF HOW TO MEASURE
 Climate Responsibility	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	Estimated emissions per production; % projects with carbon budgets
 Low-Waste Production & Circular Design	Minimise waste and promote reuse	% reused/repurposed materials; % diverted from landfill
 Enabling Behavioural Shifts	Inspire long-term change through creative engagement	% audience reporting attitude/awareness change
 Creative Engagement for Social Impact	Empower underrepresented communities	% engagement from target groups; number of co-created works
 Authenticity in Voice	Avoid tokenism; embed ethical storytelling	Diversity of voices; representation in content creation
 Training & Education	Embed sustainability knowledge across teams	% staff trained; % projects with sustainability reflection points
 Economic Performance & Sustainable Funding	Align funding with values and ensure resilience	% bids referencing sustainability; % funds spent on sustainable goods
 Ethical Sourcing of Materials	Prioritise fair, sustainable sourcing	% suppliers screened; % sustainable procurement

ACTIONS AT EVERY SCALE

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS




The adjacent image outlines example actions across the environmental themes at each scale of influence.

		DIRECT	INDIRECT	ENABLED
	Climate Responsibility	Install smart meters and track monthly usage in offices to identify trends and efficiency opportunities	Use high-quality, local offsetting schemes as a last resort after all feasible reductions	Consider opportunities to encourage climate responsibility through our work and productions.
	Low-Waste Production & Circular Design	Integrate the Theatre Green Book Materials Hierarchy and develop a materials tracker for each production with RAG status to assess need e.g. apply a "cooling-off" period in decision-making to assess material needs	Flag unavoidable ethical compromises (e.g. urgent purchases) transparently for discussion	Encourage all production designers to prioritise reused or recycled materials as the default choice
	Enabling Behavioural Shifts	Build a library of impact case studies to show how Complicité's work influences awareness and behaviour	Develop materials to support our collaborators and associates to understand and drive environmental improvement.	Create a survey to be issued to assess shifts in mindset e.g. e.g. "Since seeing X performance, do you feel your relationship with [theme] has changed in a positive way?" or "Has the performance made you more conscious of our environmental impact?"

ACTIONS AT EVERY SCALE

SOCIAL ACTIONS



The adjacent image outlines example actions across the social themes at each scale of influence.

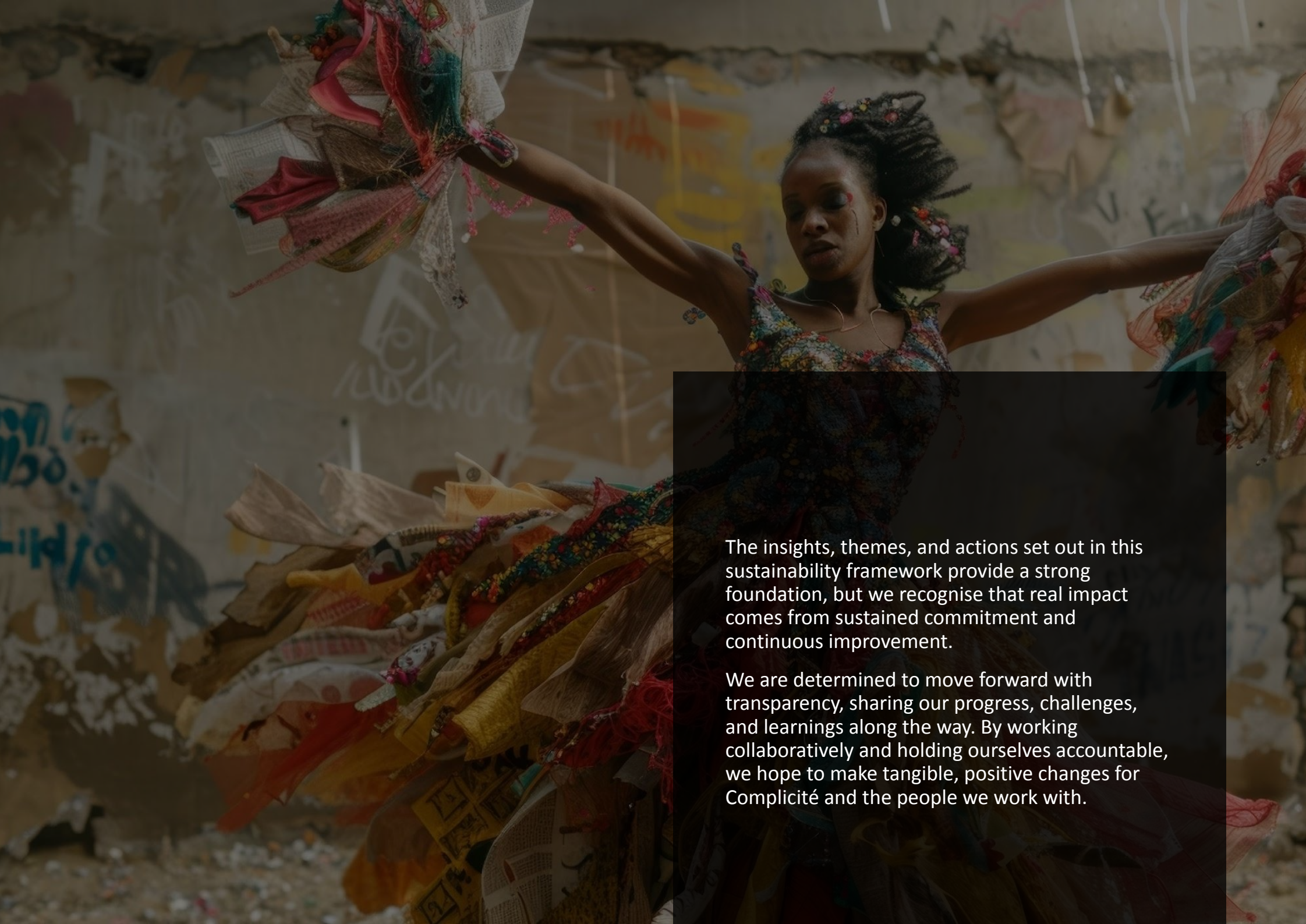
			DIRECT	INDIRECT	ENABLED
	Creative Engagement for Social Impact		Consistent and accurate tracking across all creative engagement events to support the development of meaningful impact case studies.	Build a clear picture of audience reach and identify participation trends	Use outreach materials in multiple languages and culturally relevant formats. Compare current participation demographics with community census data to identify gaps
	Authenticity in Voice		Timely publication of sustainability-related updates (e.g., blog posts)	Create pathways to democratise sustainability narratives and foster shared ownership	Build public trust
	Training & Education		Schedule and deliver at least one annual sustainability or impact-focused training workshop, for core team members and collaborators e.g. Hawkwood	Measure attendance, feedback, and subsequent application of training content in both creative and operation work	Equip participants with practical tools, frameworks, and real-world applications

ACTIONS AT EVERY SCALE

ECONOMIC ACTIONS

The adjacent image outlines example actions across the economic themes at each scale of influence.

		DIRECT	INDIRECT	ENABLED
	Economic Performance & Sustainable Funding	Develop a centralised case study bank for funding applications	Track funding alignment with social/environmental goals, approach funders as partners, not just sources of money – align values and goals	Include testimonials, visuals, or beneficiary stories in case studies to show human dimension of impact
	Ethical Sourcing of Materials	Conduct Internal reviews and sustainability reports to drive transparency and continuous improvement	Create a supplier code of conduct and assessment checklist and prioritise low-impact certified suppliers	Develop checklist so that suppliers can self-evaluate compliance or areas for development



The insights, themes, and actions set out in this sustainability framework provide a strong foundation, but we recognise that real impact comes from sustained commitment and continuous improvement.

We are determined to move forward with transparency, sharing our progress, challenges, and learnings along the way. By working collaboratively and holding ourselves accountable, we hope to make tangible, positive changes for Complicité and the people we work with.

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