

**YOURKIDS**

# LeadYoung: Stories of Young Changemakers

IF YOUR 12 OR 16-YEAR-OLD HAS A DREAM, BUILDS A TEAM, AND CHANGES HER WORLD, SHE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY DISCOVER HER POWER TO CREATE CHANGE – AND THEREFORE WILL INCREASE HER CHANCES TO BE HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SUCCESSFUL ACROSS HER LIFE.



That's why almost all the over 1,000 Ashoka Fellows focused on kids put them in charge. That's why the majority of the Ashoka Fellows first started something in their teens.

That's why those on LinkedIn who report starting something in their teens are four times as likely to be level leaders, four times as likely to be entrepreneurs, and five times as likely to be founders or co-founders.

Ashoka is working to help the world grasp that success in this world requires one to be a changemaker. And that it's critical to start in one's teens.



# Young people around the globe are doing amazing things to change the world. The stories provided showcase the power and potential of young changemakers.

Which story was your favorite? Why?

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Did you notice patterns or similarities between the stories? What are they?

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If you chose to change something around you, what do you think that would be? Why?

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**Do you feel supported to change something you care about – to act as a changemaker? Explain.**

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What do we do as a family to make all of us changemakers? What could we do?

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## How can you support young changemaking?

### Foster passions and curiosity

Young people have inherent curiosities and interests. Encouraging them to explore these passions can lead them to confront and embrace problems they care deeply about.

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### Create exposure

Help young people understand problems they care about by immersing even further in the issue(s) they have identified. Exposure to related culture, environments and others who are experiencing the problem first-hand will give them the opportunity to ask questions and empathize.

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### Be an ally

Whether you are a parent, family member, teacher or community member, you can support a young person in their journey as a changemaker. A good ally will ask questions and provide learning opportunities for young people but not step in and do things for them.

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### Connect young people to like-minded peers

Young people need support from adults but also from peers. Help young people find and connect with other young people with passion and drive whether the interests are similar or complementary.

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### Give space and permission

One of the most valuable supports adults can provide to young people is space: space to lead, space to fail, space to learn. Young people often hear “no” when it comes to launching an idea of their own. Instead, stepping back and providing a supported space for young people to try and fail and try again will promote resilience.

# Sarah Toumi

Tunisia, Ashoka Fellow since 2014

## Leading change in rural areas of Tunisia since the age of 11



Growing up, Sarah Toumi, a French-born Tunisian woman, spent time with her extended family in Bir Salah, a small town in southeast Tunisia. During one visit, she remembers sharing with her cousins her dream of becoming an astronaut when she finished school. She then asked them about their dreams. Her three cousins, all girls, said that they were dropping out of school because there was no bus to take them. The high school was 12 km away and it was too dangerous to go by foot. Sarah remembers thinking, “How is that possible? I can become what I want because the school is close by and everything is possible for me.” Sarah enlisted her father’s support and set up her first organization—helping children in her family’s village and beyond have access to learning opportunities in and outside of school. She was 11 years old.

Now 29, Sarah is leading Acacias for All, a movement to curb desertification in rural communities across Tunisia. She introduces alternative crops, like Acacia trees, to help farmers increase their income while restoring the quality of the soil. Sarah’s initial program in Bir Salah with 300 farmers and rural craftswomen resulted in an average 60% increase in income. She is now expanding to half of Tunisia’s provinces with 100,000 trees planted. Sarah’s aim is to change the way farmers and policy leaders approach climate change mitigation, taking it from a low-priority, costly endeavor to a core strategy for improving rural livelihoods.

What made it possible for Sarah to do this? Sarah’s early changemaking experience was critical to her success today. “When you start early, you learn how to work with others and solve problems... I didn’t know I was a ‘changemaker,’ but I was sure I was going to be an actor of change.” From an early age, Sarah’s parents involved her in their own purpose-driven work and her teachers gave her the space to be creative and curious.

According to Sarah, it is critical to give young people today the kind of exposure and support that her parents and teachers gave to her. “For those who think that their children will become successful if they simply become a doctor or lawyer, they are wrong. Their children will be completely out of the game.”

Sarah sees the world her young cousins are growing up in as unstable and frightening at times with extremism, terrorism and climate change. “But young people have the ability to dream without constraints. They are connected, have access to information, can travel and talk to people who are different, and talk across continents. What they need is support from my generation and older to gain the skills and motivation to believe in themselves, do things and try.”

[Read Sarah’s story online at leadyoung.ashoka.org.](https://leadyoung.ashoka.org)

## Discussion questions

After reading the story together, take some time to reflect collectively on it. Remember to value your kids’ opinions and stimulate them to think further. Here are some guiding questions you may use in the conversation:

What factors do you think enabled Sarah to become a changemaker?

Sarah says, “For those who think that their children will become successful if they simply become a doctor or lawyer, they are wrong. Their children will be completely out of the game.” What do you think Sarah meant by that? What kind of support does Sarah think young people need growing up? Do you agree?

Is there anything that bothers you in your life, school, or community right now that you would like to change? How would you want to change it?

# Gino Tubaro

Argentina

## Turning kids with disabilities into superheroes



At the age of 17, Gino Tubaro received a letter from a desperate mother. "Please make my boy, Felipe, a hand," it said. "We cannot afford a prosthetic." Gino had been inventing things since the age of 13. His own mother had taken him to science fairs and invention workshops, pushing him to follow his passion for technology. Where would I be if I only had one hand?" Gino acquired a 3D printer the year before and saw endless possibilities for his own future as an inventor. But Felipe's hand soon became his obsession.

Gino launched the Limbs Project (<http://limbs.earth/>) under the organization he founded called Atomic Lab (<http://www.atomiclab.org/>). He assembled a small team of like-minded inventors to use 3D printing to make Felipe's hand. He drew from various designs available online. After a number of attempts, Gino's team made a hand that fit perfectly AND made Felipe feel like a superhero. His new, red-colored robotic hand looked like something out of a Marvel movie. Gino saw for the first time how something he made could actually change lives. He accelerated the printing and started organizing "Hand-a-thons," (manotónes in Spanish) events where he distributed prosthetics, turning hundreds of kids in Argentina into superheroes.

In April 2017, with a waiting list of 3,500 kids who needed prosthetics in 17 countries, Gino launched a video with the help of Ashoka and PlayGround, a digital media company. The video recruited "Atomic Ambassadors," people around the world committed to the cause who had access to a 3D printer, to meet the demand in their own countries. The video went viral and within a month, Atomic Ambassadors began delivering hands in their own countries. Today, at 23, Gino has helped more than 750 Felipes and has unleashed the power of 1,000 changemakers in 30 countries to help kids most in need see themselves as superheroes. Gino inspired Marvel to get on board and signed a deal with Disney to print The Avengers-inspired hands for free to distribute to kids at Hand-a-thons in Latin America.

[Read Gino's story online at leadyoung.ashoka.org.](http://leadyoung.ashoka.org)

See the video about Gino's story here: <https://goo.gl/sEUB5V>

## Discussion questions

After reading the story together, take some time to reflect collectively on it. Remember to value your kids' opinions and stimulate them to think further. Here are some guiding questions you may use in the conversation:

Gino found his power at the age of 17, triggered by the empathy he felt towards Felipe and his need. Why do you think Felipe's story was so important to Gino at that time that it pushed him to take action?

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What's something that each of us in our family is passionate about? Do we pursue those passions? What can we do together as a family to explore those interests more?

# Mahika Halepete

United States



At 13, Mahika signed up as a virtual tutor for girls in Africa. A powerful experience, it changed the course of her life. She began to explore development issues questioning common practices and trying to understand how to best help those in need. She learned, for example, that pouring aid into countries without addressing systemic problems like poverty could sometimes make things worse, and decided to do something about it.

Mahika developed an organization called AYANA that enables young people from developing countries to dream up projects and take steps to make them a reality. She set up a 5-day curriculum that takes people through the stages of identifying a problem to investigating and testing solutions to forming a team and getting started. She learned from and partnered with local development groups with broad experience on the design. So far, 10 groups of young people (age 12-22) in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Cameroon are implementing their ideas with support from AYANA.

Now, after school and homework, 15-year-old Mahika gets online in her San Jose home and connects with changemakers from across the world.

These teens are, like her and others in the network she created and leads, solving social problems in their schools and communities.

“Really caring about a problem is what sets you apart, not your age or whether you have a college degree,” she says. Mahika says that she sees many 12- and 13-year-olds leading positive changes and responding quickly to problems as they appear –more quickly and fluidly than many adults. Very often, young people are seen to be less capable but Mahika points out a key advantage of being young: “You haven’t been told “no” so many times.”

[Read Mahika’s Story online at leadyoung.ashoka.org.](https://www.leadyoung.ashoka.org/)  
[See the video about Mahika’s story on our YouTube Channel.](#)

## Discussion questions

After reading the story together, take some time to reflect collectively on it. Remember to value your kids’ opinions and stimulate them to think further. Here are some guiding questions you may use in the conversation:

Mahika says that she sees many 12- and 13-year-olds leading positive changes and responding quickly to problems as they appear around them. Do you see this too around you? What do you think could help you and your friends to promote more and more creative changemakers?

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Do you consider yourself a changemaker?

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Do you think technology is a useful tool for changemaking in today’s world? Do you have any idea on how you would like to use technology to solve a problem you care about?

## #LeadYoung

Visit [Ashoka LeadYoung](#) for more inspiration and guidance on how to enable the young people you love to be changemakers.

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