



**ASHOKA**

**WHAT  
WE DO  
AND  
WHY**

**BOOK 1**

# WELCOME TO ASHOKA

What does Ashoka do and why?

This is probably the most common question that we are asked.  
In a nutshell,

**ASHOKA CREATES NETWORKS OF SOCIAL INNOVATORS  
TO TACKLE THE WORLD'S MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS.**



However, it always takes more than one sentence to give the full picture, often a whole conversation, and sometimes even five books.

Once you have understood, deeply understood **what drives Ashoka** and what we strive for, you will never forget it. Because it springs from a rooted motivation, follows a clear vision and is **fed by inexhaustible energy: humanity.**

# A WORLD OF SYSTEMS



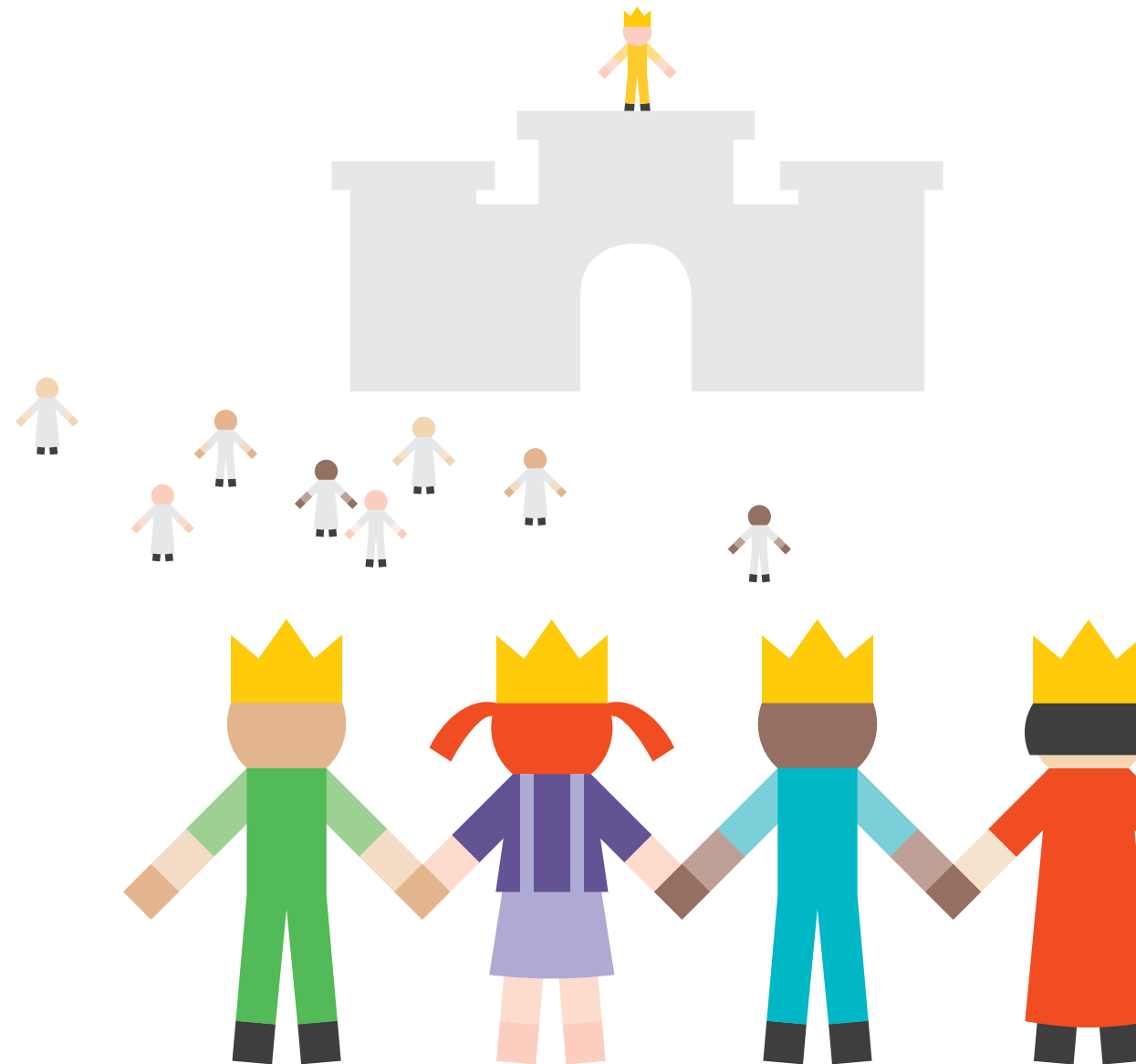
**The universe** we live in is a complex system, as is **nature** around us. These systems are composed of different **actors and roles interacting** with each other, they are governed by certain **rules and produce results from given resources**.

Humankind has also managed to develop **its own sophisticated systems**. Systems such as healthcare, education or social security have been designed to provide for the comfort and security of our lives.

**The complexity of man-made systems is further increasing** with time and technological advances. However, some systems do not always serve the needs of all well enough. They require improvements, and sometimes they **need to be re-designed**.

Re-designing a system is **no easy task**.

# THE OLD GAME IS OVER



**How can we organize ourselves** to re-design and improve systems?

Relying on centralized decision-making and rigid hierarchies in which a few command the many is no longer effective or even desirable.

**SUCH AN APPROACH FAILS TO UNLEASH THE CREATIVE ENERGY OF CITIZENS AROUND THE WORLD.**

For social problems to be addressed effectively, citizens **need to understand** the mechanics of change and be ready to **take up the responsibility** for solving them.

# THE NEW ORDER OF THINGS

The complexity of social challenges requires us, citizens, to become self-empowered.

**BEING SELF-EMPOWERED MEANS THAT WE PAY ATTENTION,  
TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, LEAD IN OUR COMMUNITIES  
AND COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS TO MAKE LIFE BETTER...**

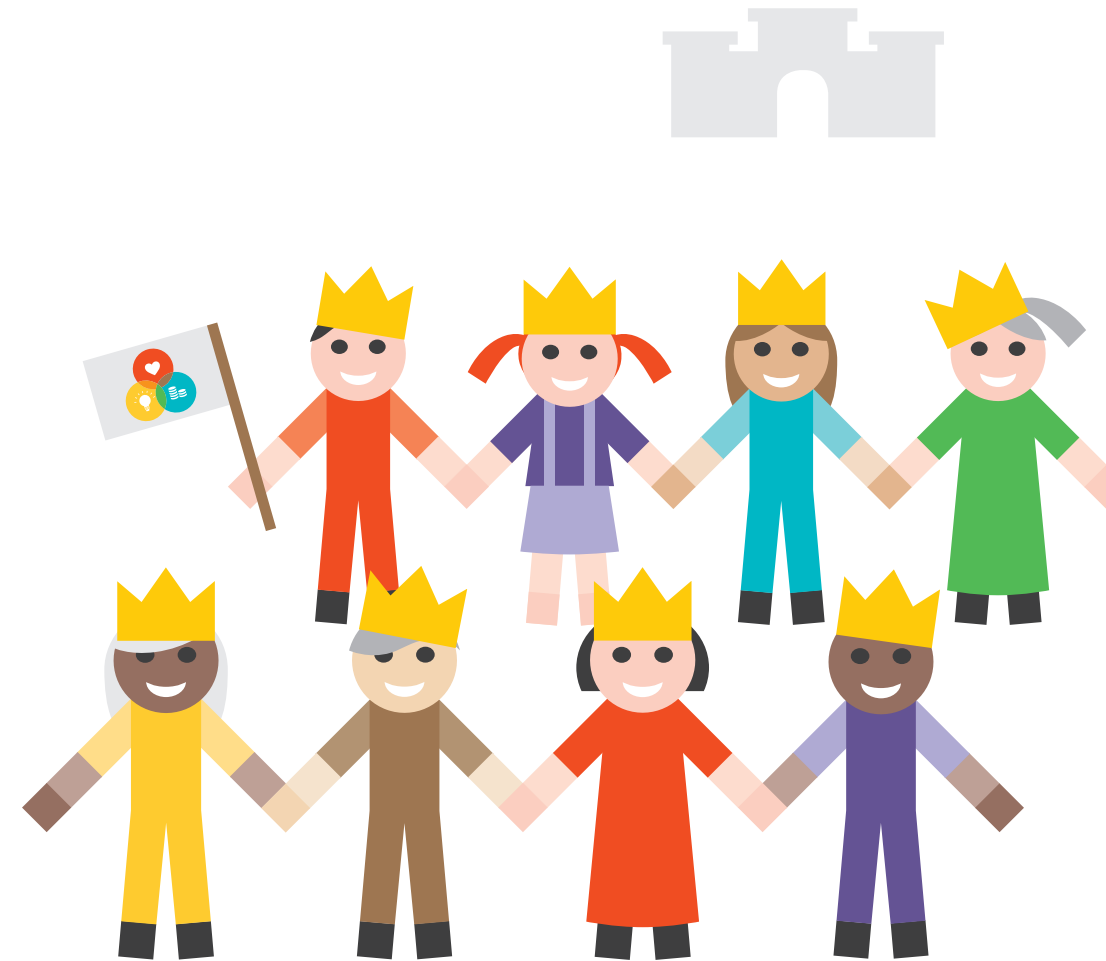
for ourselves, for our families and friends, for our communities,  
for humanity and for our planet.



The good news is that throughout human history and across all regions, there have always been those **creative problem-solvers**, those willing to stick their necks out on behalf of others, those we can look up to as **role models**.

**WE CALL THESE PEOPLE CHANGEMAKERS.**

# CHANGE- MAKERS TAKE ACTION



Who are changemakers?

**CHANGEMAKERS ARE PEOPLE WHO, NO MATTER HOW OLD THEY ARE OR WHAT THEIR PROFESSION IS, FEEL EMPOWERED TO LEAD A CHANGE FOR THE COMMON GOOD.**

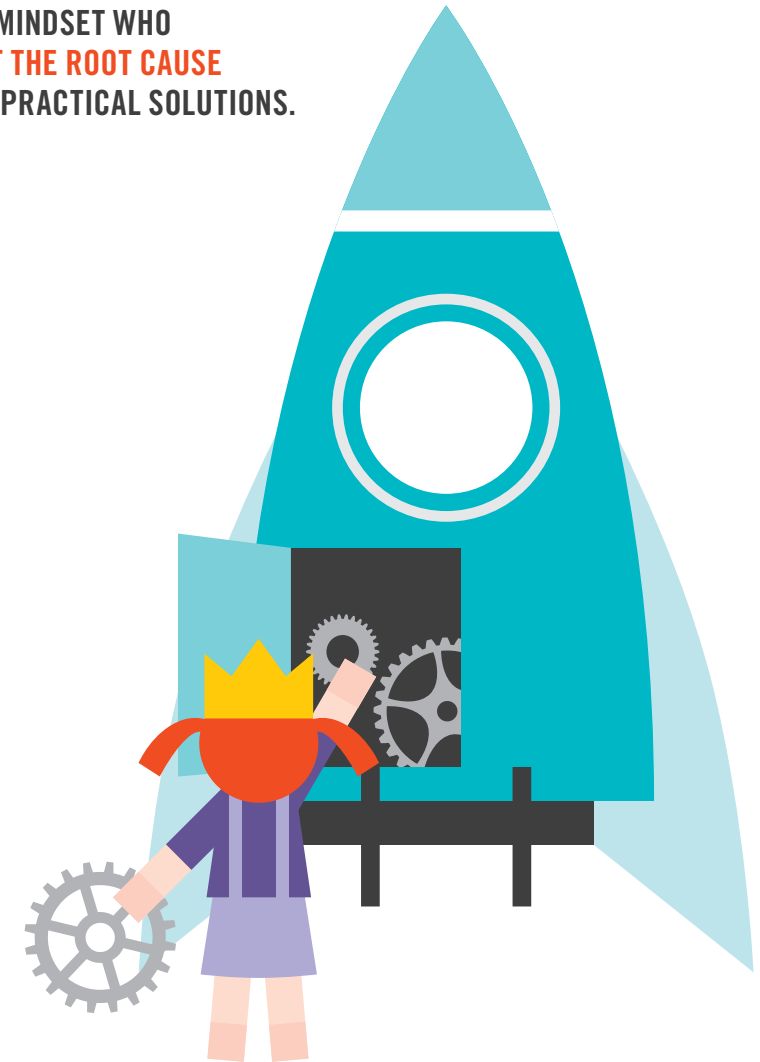
They may stand up to a bully, run a campaign, organize a march, or write a series of provocative articles. Some of them **build organizations** that deliver services improving the lives of many.

# SOCIAL ENTRE- PRENEURS CHANGE SYSTEMS

Among changemakers, there are people who go beyond building one organization and developing important services. **They undertake systemic measures to address a deep rooted problem**, for example, by changing rules that govern a flawed system.

We call these people **social entrepreneurs**.

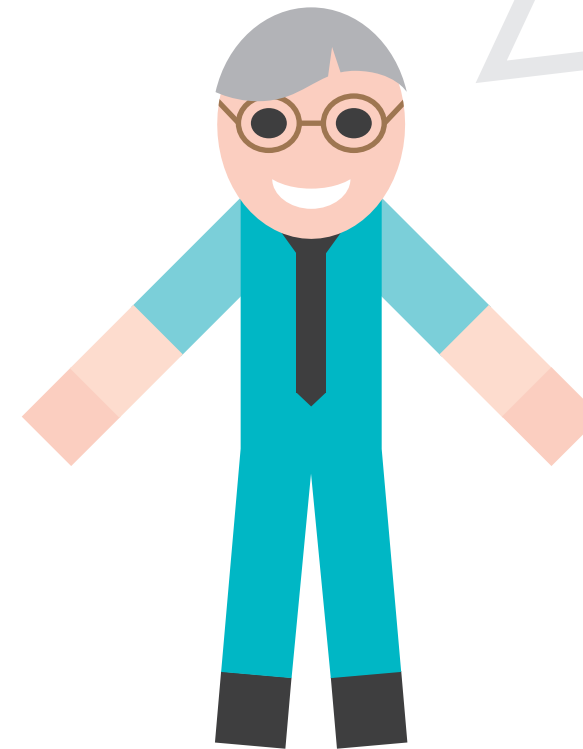
**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET WHO TACKLE SOCIAL PROBLEMS AT THE ROOT CAUSE WITH THEIR INNOVATIVE AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS.**



Think, for example, of Florence Nightingale and her contribution to humanity. Back in the 19th century, she **established standards** for sanitation and hospital management that have shaped norms worldwide. As a result, people everywhere can enjoy safer hospital care today.

Social entrepreneurs like Nightingale initiate **a new order of things**, contribute to a more peaceful world and help us keep pace with global problems.

# FOUNDED TO SUPPORT SOCIAL ENTRE- PRENEURS



“SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS  
DON’T JUST GIVE PEOPLE FISH,  
OR TEACH THEM HOW TO FISH.  
THEY BUILD NEW AND BETTER  
FISHING INDUSTRIES.”

Bill Drayton

In 1980 a man called Bill Drayton felt that people tackling society’s problems at the systemic level **went largely unnoticed**, had almost **no support** and were not viewed as role models. At that time, a name for such individuals did not exist.

It was Bill Drayton who saw the entrepreneurial-like qualities of these individuals and created the term “**social entrepreneur**.”

**HE FOUNDED ASHOKA, AN ORGANIZATION TO  
IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT LEADING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS,  
AND HELP THE WORLD RECOGNIZE THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS.**



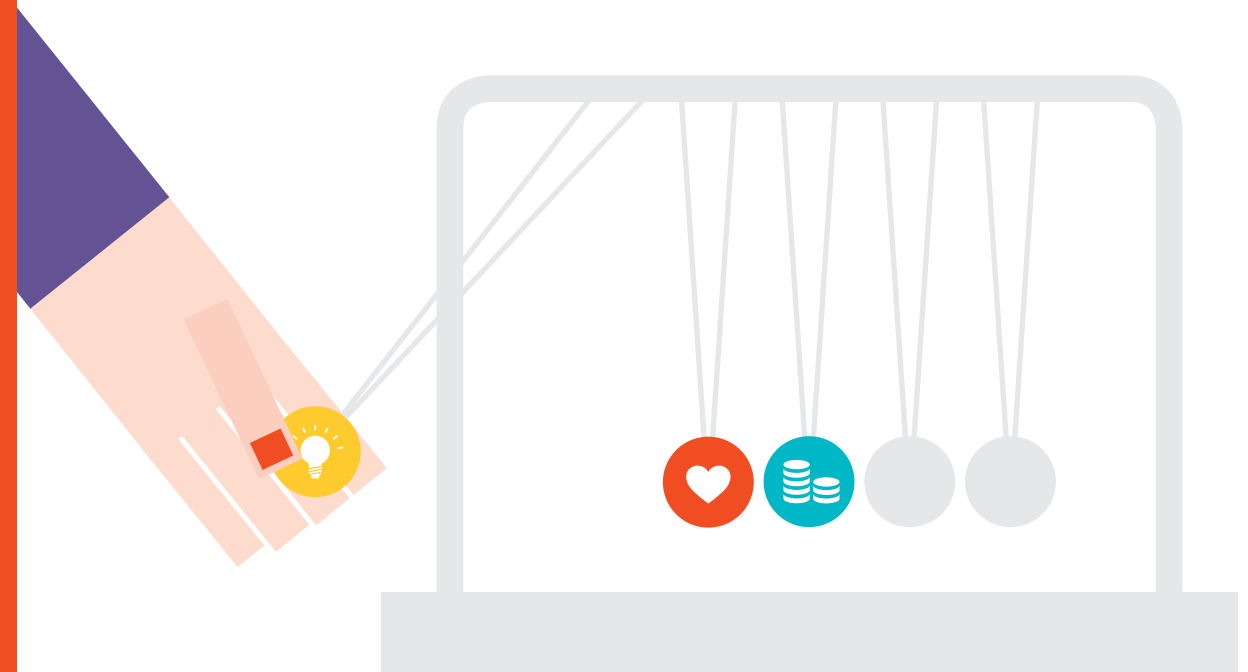


# THE PROCESS SET IN MOTION

Over the last four decades, Ashoka's network of social entrepreneurs has grown into a powerful community of **3,500 members** – or **Ashoka Fellows** as we call them – **from over 80 countries**.

**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS TODAY HAVE BOTH  
A NAME AND A VALUED PLACE IN SOCIETY.**

Their contributions to improving the lives of millions of people around the world are clearly **recognized and celebrated**.

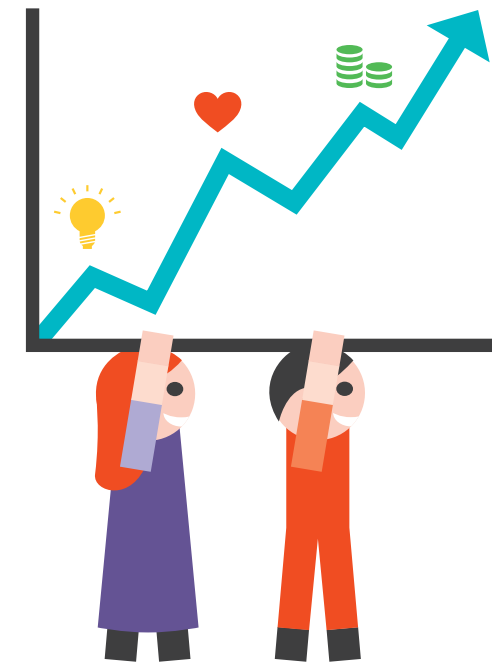


# WE ARE NOT ALONE

More and more influencers from the public and private sectors have added the term “social entrepreneur” to their **vocabulary**. Many people see **investing** in such individuals as a credible avenue for achieving impact. More and more young people choose social entrepreneurship as their **career path**. Bill Drayton, a social entrepreneur himself, has been an important engine behind this change.

**Supporting social entrepreneurs** on their way to maximizing social impact has become **the first pillar of Ashoka’s work**. And although we at Ashoka and other organizations worldwide have a lot more work to do in developing support infrastructure for social entrepreneurs further,

**THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FIELD HAS ALREADY  
DEVELOPED IN IRREVERSIBLE WAYS.**



“Ashoka conceived and, with great skill and persistence over decades, spread the subtle but deeply empowering realization that social entrepreneurs are powerfully changing the world for the good. That idea has changed what many of our best students will do.”

Prof. Merit E. Janow,  
Dean, School of Internal and Public Affairs  
Columbia University

“We [Europe] have always been a continent of creative social entrepreneurs who have designed systems to enhance education, health, social inclusion and the well-being of citizens... Social innovation is more important than ever to build a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.”

José Manuel Durão Barroso,  
President of the European Commission  
(2004 – 2014)

# EVERYBODY'S GAME NOW

Today Ashoka's vision has grown more ambitious.

We not only envision social entrepreneurs to be supported and recognized.

**WE WORK TOWARDS A WORLD WHERE  
EVERY CITIZEN HAS THE SKILL AND THE WILL  
TO BE A CHANGEMAKER.**



**How** can we get to this world?

What helps us understand it is **the experience of social entrepreneurs** in our network. Observing the **personal journeys** of Ashoka Fellows around the world and the way they build **social movements**, we started seeing **patterns of how people can become changemakers**.

We have realized that we at Ashoka can empower more individuals to raise hands as solvers of social problems by:

- fostering cooperation between representatives of **different sectors of society** and
- changing **the way we bring up our children**.



# PREPARING THE YOUNG

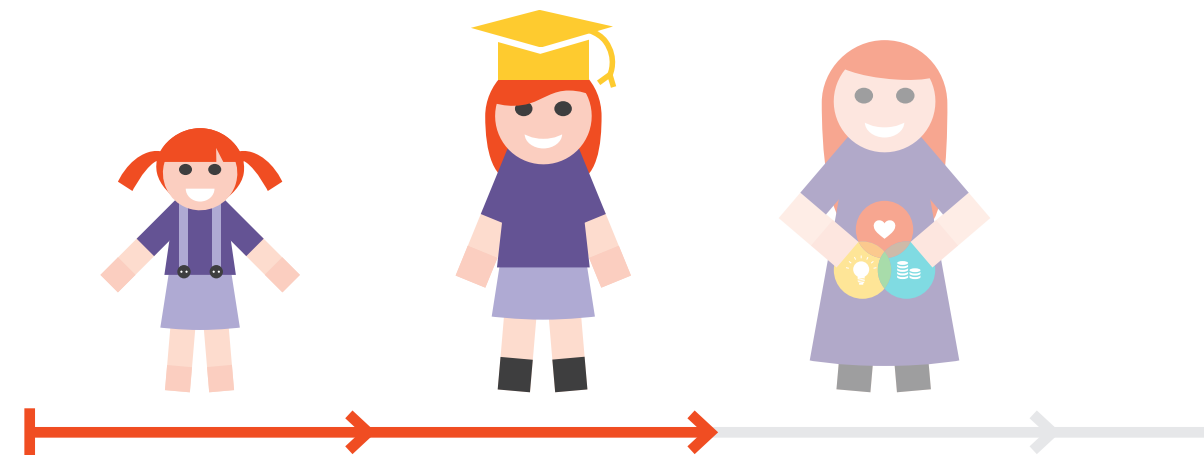
Another insight about empowering people to become changemakers stems from how social entrepreneurs describe their **journey to who they are today**.

They often report a defining experience with **empathy and changemaking** already in their **young years**. That experience of changing somebody's life for the better, even if in something really small, allowed them to see they can bring about a positive change. An experience that got them "hooked" and prepared them to confidently step up when life calls upon them.

This insight led Ashoka to understand that in order to nurture **the next generation** of changemakers, we need to enable every young person to have such an experience.

This is why the third pillar of Ashoka's work today is:

**MAKING SURE THAT PRACTICING EMPATHY  
AND CHANGEMAKING EARLY ON BECOMES AN ORGANIC PART  
OF BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION.**



# CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

The main pillars of Ashoka's work today are:

- 1** Supporting social entrepreneurs and changemakers to maximize the positive impact of their work
- 2** Nurturing collaboration of changemakers from different sectors
- 3** Ensuring that young people grow up practicing changemaking and empathy



**WE KNOW THAT BEFORE DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY,  
ONE HAS TO SEE THEM DIFFERENTLY.**

Therefore, in order to achieve our bold goals, Ashoka supports people in:

- 1** Seeing their roles in society as **powerful and creative problem-solvers**
- 2** Perceiving their **counterparts** from other sectors in society as **partners and co-creators** and
- 3** Believing that learning **empathy and changemaker skills is key** for every child.

But how is it possible to influence the mindsets of millions of people?

# OUR THEORY

# OF CHANGE

## THE HOW-TOs – A SNEAK PREVIEW.

We think the strategy Ashoka has implemented globally to ignite a movement around social entrepreneurship has proven itself over the years.

This is why we use it as a guide in achieving our broader vision in all **three pillars of our work:**

### 1. FIND

First, we **find and celebrate role models**. These are social entrepreneurs and changemakers already employing effective solutions to social problems.

Please read Book 2 to learn about how we identify leading social entrepreneurs.

### 2. ACCOMPANY

We surround them with comprehensive **support and powerful network**.

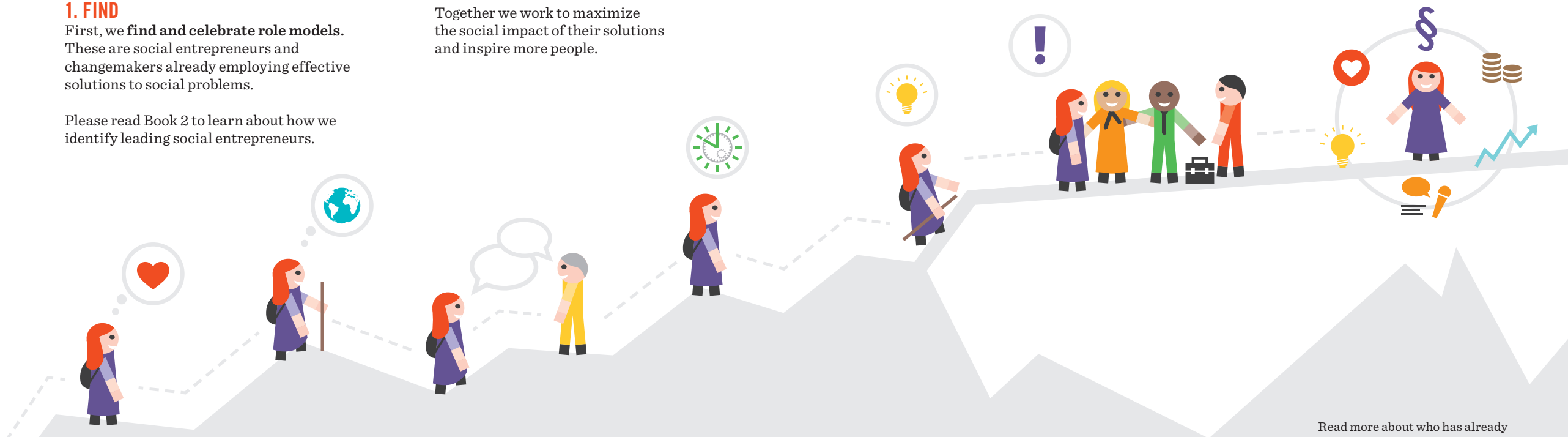
Together we work to maximize the social impact of their solutions and inspire more people.

Book 3 will shed light on how we support social entrepreneurs.

### 3. FOSTER ECOSYSTEM

We analyze patterns and infrastructure obstacles these role-models face in their work. We join forces with key players and institutions across sectors to eliminate these obstacles. We work to **build supportive ecosystems** for all changemakers, both beginning and established ones, in individual countries and at the global level.

Our ecosystem work is described in detail in Book 4.



Read more about who has already joined Ashoka's network in Book 5.

# LET'S WORK TOGETHER!

Ashoka has a much broader and more ambitious vision than ever before. Just like the social entrepreneurs in our network, **we seek to achieve systems change** in how changemakers are perceived and supported in the world, and how any citizen can become a changemaker.

We know this mission is **too big for us to achieve on our own** – we need key stakeholders across sectors as partners in this work.

Does our “Everyone a Changemaker” vision paint a picture of the world you want yourself and your children to live in? And if so, would you like to contribute to building this world?

## WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US!

Let's get to know each other better and explore ways we can work together to:

- **support people** in becoming effective changemakers,
- **build bridges** between sectors and
- **encourage youth** to step up.



**TO COLLABORATION  
FOR THE COMMON GOOD!**

Best,  
Ashoka Central and  
Eastern Europe team





**ASHOKA**

**EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER**

[www.ashoka-ccc.org](http://www.ashoka-ccc.org)