



**IDEAS
THAT
ARE
CHANGING
THE
WORLD
2023**

**LEADING SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURS**



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FRONT COVER EXPLAINED



Anusha Bharadwaj

Executive Director of VOICE 4 Girls

In rural India, seventh- and eighth-grade girls, especially if from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds, very commonly are married or sold and/or put to unskilled labor. Their education and their chance for a good life suddenly ends.

Recently elected Ashoka Fellow, Anusha Bharadwaj has overturned this pattern. After her intervention, 98 percent of these maximum-risk young women go to college and/or good employment.

She and her Voice4Girls organize three ten-day camps run by the village at-risk adolescents themselves, helped by 19- and 20-year-old women students from nearby colleges. They grasp their situation, see different avenues, and build basic skills and confidence. And they then bring all this to others in their community. Anusha has engaged over 106,000 such peer mentors in seven states so far.

The front cover photo shows her talking with four of these now definitely unafraid, powerful young village women.

Another Ashoka Fellow, Manisha Ghule, targets older (35-40) women from the same disadvantaged backgrounds and turns them into official "village developers" or Sakhis. These women, after intensive training, step into their communities equipped to guide in areas such as agriculture, education, and government support programs. The impact is tangible — a 60-80% increase in the villages' household incomes and the incubation so far of 4,500 microenterprises. Manisha's work transcends individual empowerment, creating a ripple effect across their communities.



Anusha and Manisha's work transcends conventional boundaries, unlocking the potential of marginalized girls and women, paving the way for a more inclusive and empowered society. As Ashoka builds the EACH movement, Anusha and Manisha's stories serve as powerful illustrations of the transformative impact one can achieve through visionary leadership and unwavering commitment.

Anusha and Manisha are also, as all Ashoka Fellows are, central to the historic, essential work to ensure that everyone has what a good life requires: The power to contribute. In an everything--changing world that means being a changemaker.

The Fellows are role models. To succeed, they recruit and help local changemakers succeed (Anusha's teen mentors and Manisha's midlife village developers), and their work gives them the greatest of all gifts to all those they serve.

ENTREPRENEURING FOR THE WHOLE TOWARDS ONE ORGANISM

Over the last few years, three entrepreneurs inside Ashoka have independently invented and developed three quite different ways of measuring changemaking levels in both individuals and organizations. All three work well, and their results correlate.

Because changemaking power is essential in an everything-changing ever faster world, these measures will probably, startlingly soon, have many profound effects across society:

- On investing. Would you invest in a company that is deeply in its cellular structure weak in changemaking?
- On insurance. Because changemaking very strongly correlates with good health, insurance firms will seek to attract high-changemaking individuals and groups as clients. And their pricing will vary accordingly.
- On health. Everyone is a health worker (and self-healer) when they help those around them build their changemaking power to give. How does this change the health sector -- from school nurses to clinical psychologists?
- On leadership and management. Success now requires (1) all your people to be changemakers; (2) your strategy to serve an everything-changing and -connected new reality; and (3) your organization to be a team of many teams that is (a) fluid; (b) open; and (c) purposive/integrated.

Very, very different.



“Would you invest in a company that is weak in changemaking?”

Each of these Big changes, important in themselves, also will have huge impacts on the framework people use to understand how their world

works and therefore how they should perform in every aspect of life, from sibling or parent to leader. Each of these new patterns cries out that changemaking is key. And does so in powerful ways that will reliably and steadily reach everyone. Imagine you're making investment decisions based, at least in part, on the changemaking levels of the firms you are considering. Imagine you/your firm getting a special credit for high-changemaking rates on your insurance bill. (Getting society through this frame change is Ashoka's central objective -- of which more shortly.)

These changemaking measures are also key for the Ashoka community internally. For example, they help: Select whom to invite into the community; know where we are in helping a partner come up their changemaking learning curve; and/or diagnose which of the four key changemaking abilities a colleague most needs help in strengthening.

Where did these three measures come from? From three different Ashoka staff members. Each saw the strategic need and that the timing was urgent. Each then started entrepreneuring independently, but helping one another.

That is Ashoka's core strength. It is a community of 5,000 of the world's best entrepreneurs for the good: 4,000 Ashoka Fellows (including those introduced in this volume), the Ashoka Young Changemakers (see the AYC chapter that follows), staff (including the three creating new ways of measuring changemaking), and a few select others. All are selected rigorously for top entrepreneurial quality, exceptional ethical fiber, and commitment to ensuring that all have a good life -- which, in an everything-changing world, means they must be changemakers.

Each of these 5,000 individual social entrepreneurs is amazing. But Ashoka's power far transcends that. It is a community that is rapidly learning how to connect each to all and how to come together around whatever need or opportunity appears in custom-fitted teams of teams, drawing in everyone in the community who can

contribute for as long as the fit is good. Each such team of teams is fluid (constantly changing as the environment and stage of work changes), open (draws in whoever can contribute, regardless of old attitudinal, organizational, or other walls), and integrated/purposive (works together with sharp focus, discipline, efficiency, and mutuality).

The core team of teams comes from the community, but it reaches out to the whole world, building further “of teams” levels one after another as needed. For example, consider the myriad teams of teams in the investment, insurance, health, and management sectors the Ashoka change-making measurement teams will launch. A key skill of the originating teams indeed is to create decision-making architectures that will ensure that all this remote activity serves the originating purpose and does so without harm.

This is how every human grouping going forward must be organized. The key requirements are:

- **All its people must be changemakers.** That means they have, in the new everything-changing and -connected reality, the ability, the power to give. And they must see and understand the whole of their strategic environment. Since giving brings health and happiness, they will be drawn to the highest level of giving: Giving or growing the power to give. As more and more members of a group reach this stage, the group’s power and ability to give goes up exponentially.
- **It must be organized into:**
 - **A team** (the one place that can see all the pieces and enable them to see one another. Essential, since all the pieces change and need to fit together in fast-changing choreographies).
 - **Of teams** of teams (each sub-objective or partnership needs its “team of teams”).

One of the reasons every group must adopt this pattern is that otherwise it won’t be able to connect openly, fluidly, and omnidirectionally. That means it won’t be able to perform well or be an attractive place for changemakers.

The best way of visualizing this new way humanity is organizing is to recognize that it is very much like the human brain. This analog holds for

each purpose’s team of teams and for humanity as a whole.

When a human thinks about playing, for example, soccer, instantly millions of neurons engage. Some bring memories of the rules, of past games, of conversations with coaches. Others get ready to guide many parts of the body without the human having to think about it. And then our consciousness can change the purpose and the means.



The central organizing principle of evolution is increasing cooperation.”

In the new form of human organization, we recognize a need; define a purpose; mobilize the right “fluid, open, integrated/purposive team of teams” -- which changes as the work goes through different stages. All of which is very brain-like.

The central organizing principle of evolution is increasing cooperation. It has gone from single-cell life to bodies of billions of building blocks cooperating. All of humanity coming together into one brain-like organism fits this pattern and will be a giant step forward for the universe. If and to the degree we can succeed in making this transition, just imagine the consequences. Consciousness would have taken a giant leap forward in the universe. And every emergent need at every level would attract a responsive one or many team of teams developing better, kinder ways forward.

There are two gigantic and beautiful gravitational forces that ultimately are pulling us to this new, far better world.

The first of these forces is the ideas, connections, and impact *cross-multipliers*. People -- be it across the Ashoka community or all of humankind -- no longer do repetitive work in bewalled little boxes. They play diverse roles in multiple, very big, and omnidirectionally connected teams of teams. They get ideas from every dimension of their far

larger, more dynamic universe. And their ideas can fly far and fast. They enjoy the hour-by-hour flow of ideas and of seeing new possible synaptic connections. Once one has one's changemaker's abilities, this is so energizing, so empowering, so much fun!

It also makes it possible for master changemakers working together in focused, disciplined, strategic ways to catalyze major society-wide change quickly. The Ashoka community has developed this capacity over the last dozen years, led by its team in Brazil and more recently Indonesia and Nigeria, followed by South Asia and parts of the other continents. Inventions such as the three measures of changemaking coming from any part of the community feed into and strengthen the ideas from all the other parts. And each of these other elements gives the changemaking measures legs, testing grounds, and flows of enriching ideas.

The second of these new universe-building forces comes from Ashoka's central mission: Ensuring that every human has the power to give. In our everything-changing faster and faster, broader and broader new reality, that means that society must ensure that everyone is a changemaker.

This is why the most fundamental right now is the right to give.

And that is why Ashoka's full name is Ashoka: *Everyone* a Changemaker.

The "*everyone* a changemaker" (EACH) imperative means everyone.



The most fundamental right is the right to give."

It is unethical to deny anyone a life. That is exactly what we are doing today to perhaps 40 percent of the population. Because they don't have the changemaker's abilities, they can't contribute. They are failures. They are crushed. In the U.S., for example, this demographic has, in one pre-COVID generation, lost four years of life expectancy. All across the planet, their anger is

dividing and paralyzing society. This cruelty and consequent division is the biggest threat to the new world we are now building.

In dramatic contrast, the health, happiness, and longevity of changemakers goes up every time they give. Every cell is happy absorbing, enriching, and creating new ideas and new synapses for the good.

And what is the most powerful (and therefore most rewarding) gift? It is helping others develop and grow their power to give.

A team or society where people are skilled givers and where they all, from deep down, want, above all else, to help others grow as givers, is a super-powerful, irresistible team and society.

With the cross-multipliers and the EACH society both fast gaining momentum, and with each reinforcing the other, we should be able to make our way to a far, far better future of dramatic evolutionary advance. However, we humans have to create the new framework, organization, synaptic arrangements, and guiding self-correcting decision-making architecture. This challenge is this new world's greatest gift to us.



Bill Drayton

For the Ashoka community and "*everyone* a changemaker"

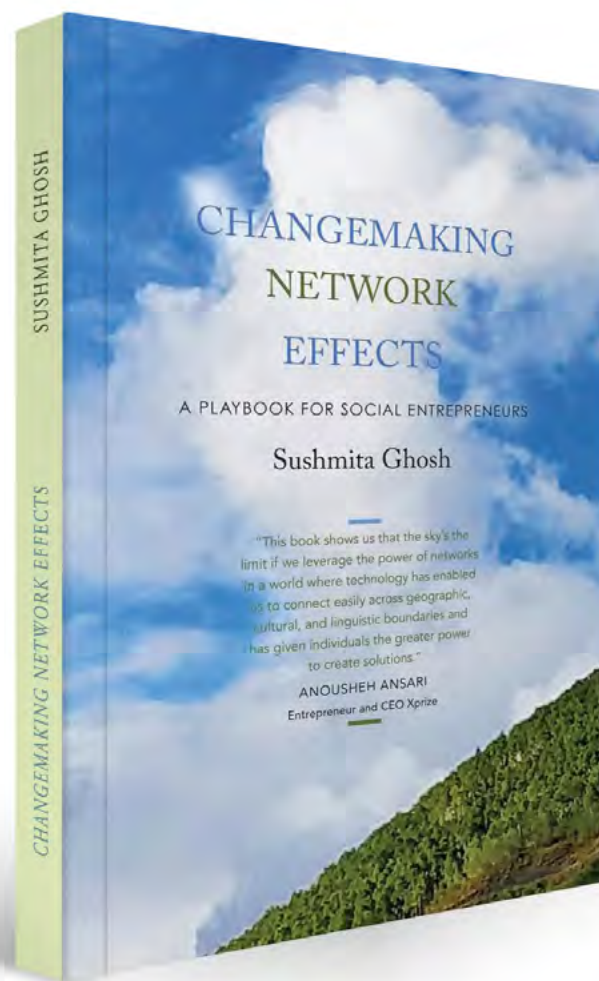
CHANGEMAKING NETWORK EFFECTS

In the first network effects playbook for social entrepreneurs, Ashoka Board Member, **Sushmita Ghosh**, presents the five core principles and accompanying strategies for harnessing changemaking network effects.

Sushmita distilled these conclusions from extensive interviews with Ashoka Fellows who have pioneered global Changemaking Networks. These networks have successfully orchestrated the coming together of several systems, their players, and concerned citizens to serve positive social change goals—such as “Zero Homelessness,” “Health Care Without Harm,” and “Holding Power to Account”—harnessing changemaking network effects.

Ashoka is delighted to share a must-read for every social sector organization, company, funding agency, student, or concerned citizen who cares about a new way of organizing mass changemaking to outsmart and outpace the world’s biggest problems.

Written for action-takers, it leaves every reader with a clear sense about how to get started on building Changemaking Networks. Today.



[CLICK HERE](#)

TO READ CHANGEMAKING
NETWORK EFFECTS

LETTER FROM ASHOKA

Ashoka's vision is summarized as "*Everyone a Changemaker.*" The phrase offers a strategic lens for how society can better organize itself for a world of increasingly rapid change.

It is a framework which serves the good of all, not simply good for a privileged few. Over the last forty years, it is a new reality we have witnessed expand across our global network of nearly 4,000 social entrepreneurs, their teams, and networks.

"*Everyone a Changemaker*" for the good of all is the new framework we see at play in Ashoka Fellows' ventures. Ashoka's core work seeks to accelerate this framework globally as we enter the turning point years.

WHAT DOES AN "EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER" WORLD LOOK LIKE?

It is a world where we find young people and adults from all walks of life reflecting on the question: How do I change the world for the better?

Ashoka's answer is to share what we have learned from creating and advancing the social entrepreneurship ecosystem over the last four decades.

We have learned that social entrepreneurs are innovators who dedicate their lives to changing systems for the good of all. And create many more changemakers along the way. Ashoka's global network teaches us how social entrepreneurs create social impact; they change policy, mindsets, market dynamics, industry norms and their ideas inspire others to independently replicate and adapt solutions.

But they all do something else as well. They demonstrate to everyone that change is possible, and in so doing, they inspire others to act, to join them in their organizations and movement, becoming the changemaking force behind new ideas for global change.

WHAT IS A CHANGEMAKER?

We define a changemaker as someone who envisions a better reality, builds a team to realize this purpose, and takes action to bring this reality into being, while continuously learning and adjusting for the good of all.

This year's leading social entrepreneurs demonstrate the following changemaking abilities that every person, young and old, needs to succeed in an ever-changing world:

Conscious Empathy: The ability to be aware of and understand our own and other's perspectives and to use that understanding to recognize patterns and guide one's actions toward a purpose that contributes to the good of all.

In **Kenya Naomi Mwaura** is using data and education to make public transportation safer for women, children and the elderly while improving the working conditions and pay of Kenya's thousands of matatu drivers. Raised in a family of transport workers, Naomi digs deep into the habits and needs of both operators and passengers, helping them track and prevent the sexual violence and harassment women commonly experience on buses, and making the case for greater revenue by improving service and safety for female and other marginalized or disadvantaged commuters. She's taking her learnings continent-wide, establishing Women in Transport organizations in Tanzania and Uganda and establishing an all-Africa conference for women in the industry. Her recommendations now form part of Kenya's driving school curriculum. Protests led by her group have resulted in the formal outlawing of a common form of harassment. As more women feel safe on public transit, they are gaining new opportunities to participate more fully in the Kenyan economy, including as matatu drivers and operators themselves.

Teamwork: The ability to contribute to and thrive in a fluid ecosystem of teams that mobilizes around each new problem or opportunity.

Myroslava Keryk is creating the conditions for refugees and migrant workers to quickly become active contributors to the common good in their new homes in **Poland**. Through her Ukrainian House Foundation, she helps Ukrainian and other migrants find work and broad engagement in a new country while helping Polish

communities understand and value these new neighbors. With both short-term direct support and deeper, long-term programs she is building social connection, resilience and integration for both newcomers to Poland and the established communities they join. Myra's work has become urgent since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which sent over one and a half million Ukrainians across the border to settle permanently in Poland. Ukrainian House Foundation is actively building new relationships, policies, and understanding across both groups, steering system-wide change across Polish society and workplaces.

Changemaking Leadership: A leadership mindset that recognizes that in a world of constant change, the role is to envision, enable, and then ensure that every player is an initiator and sees the big picture.

Through 'Unplastify' **Agustina Besada** is creating a powerful movement across **Argentina** to change people's relationship to plastic, reducing its use by businesses, schools, government, and individuals. With tools for reflection, planning, and action, she has helped multinational grocers and fast-food companies eliminate plastic packaging in hundreds of products; guided chemical supply companies to transform their distribution to provide bulk delivery and refillable containers; inspired schoolchildren to audit and change how they practice anti-Covid hygiene; and among other things established a bitcoin exchange market that provides tradeable credits for corporations certified to have reduced their plastic footprint.

Changemaking Practice: The process of creating a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, and more just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society rather than to private individuals.

Indonesia contains about one fifth of the world's peatlands, which conserve more carbon than all its forests combined. To keep this carbon out of the atmosphere while improving livelihoods, **Gita Syahrani** convinced nine rural districts to create Indonesia's Sustainable Districts Association, or LTKL, to build businesses that maximize peatland and preserve its environment. In all LTKL districts Gita enlists young Indonesians and ensures they have meaningful training in how to become changemakers themselves. As they master entrepreneurial skills and develop small businesses, young people recognize they do not need to leave rural areas for employment, helping keep rural regions populated with communities that recognize and protect the value of their natural resources.

We hope you will enjoy reading about social entrepreneurs and an *Everyone a Changemaker* world. Their ideas to change the world and the frameworks that they bring to society.



Diana Wells
President Emerita
Leadership Team Member

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana".



Anamaria Schindler
Leadership Team Member

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anamaria Schindler".

CIVIC PARTICIPATION





UMA CHATTERJEE

India



MYROSLAVA KERYK

Poland



SEPTIAJI NUGROHO

Indonesia





UMA CHATTERJEE

Founder, Director of Sanjog

 www.sanjogindia.org

Uma Chatterjee is putting survivors of human trafficking at the center of India's anti-trafficking movement. She is activating their potential to become first-generation leaders, changemakers and policy advocates who are reforming the way India combats human trafficking, while supporting each other in their own recovery and in building new lives of dignity and purpose.

CLICK HERE

**TO READ AND SHARE
THIS ARTICLE ONLINE**

THE NEW IDEA

Every year, more than 23,000 people are rescued from trafficking in India. Yet this often marks the start of a second cycle of entrapment. Rescued victims, mostly youth between the ages of 17-26, are held in custodial institutions or shelter homes for years, as they await court-ordered release. Most 'victims' don't have any decision-making power over their rehabilitation. Those in charge, including social workers and non-profit leaders, often view survivors as silent beneficiaries, incapable of decision-making and devoid of aspirations.

Uma is breaking this pattern by setting up new platforms of leadership and learning for young survivors. These 'survivor-changemakers' are setting up their own organizations, small businesses, and advocacy platforms to collaborate directly with governments, employers, and society. They are creating new livelihoods and laws that restore their self-worth, citizenship, and dreams.

A trained clinical psychologist, Uma energizes survivors to create peer groups in trafficking hotspots, to support each other in moving through their shared trauma, stigma, and shame. Young people who have been trafficked as sex workers, forced laborers, domestic servants and the like begin to make their own decisions about their education, skills, and employment in recovery. Uma then scaffolds these peer groups into a supportive ecosystem of non-profits, which help survivors with the legal, mental and health challenges they often face. Survivors collaborate first, to become powerful for themselves, then, build outward, putting their voices, intelligence and experience at the center of India's anti-trafficking efforts.

Uma's approach is three-pronged. First, she energizes survivors to organize peer-support groups in communities that are centers of trafficking. These peer networks become the bedrock on which survivors help each other



"Me-We-Us Spiral Leadership Training" takes survivors into a deep immersion into their personhood, then gives them the skills and tactics for personal and community resilience and transformational leadership.

build lives of purpose. Second, she equips them to take charge of their own rehabilitation, livelihoods, and citizenship. Survivors plan their future with their own vision for their lives, rather than those supplied by rehabilitation templates and protocols. And they engage and advocate directly with the government and other stakeholders, rather than have social workers do so on their behalf. Third, Uma galvanizes these survivor groups from across India into a collective of collectives: ILFAT, or Indian Leaders Forum Against Trafficking. With 2,500 members, this national platform is rich with membership from diverse survivor collectives. It collaborates with the media, lawyers, and experts to conduct policy research, advocate for and monitor the government's anti-human-trafficking efforts. In the process it surprises the survivors as they experience changing society.

Over five years, Uma and her team have facilitated 5,000 survivors in forming and leading 26 survivor collectives. Thirteen partner organizations are now replicating Uma's model across ten states, and the Indian government has begun running such survivor centers at scale. In affect Uma has persuaded both the citizen sector and government that turning victims into changemakers is what really matters.

Among other accomplishments, peer groups have won greater government compensation for survivors, with individuals winning up to 24,000 USD, 100 times the usual compensation. Survivors have unlocked the full slate of government schemes, entitlements, and social protection programs mandated for them, directly approaching public officials whom they now recognize as public servants who can be held accountable. Uma has put technology tools in the hands of survivor groups to audit and rate the performance of their local governments and allied systems, which survivors then use as 'citizen data' when advocating with government, media, and policy bodies.

As survivors progress, their demand and ambition for non-traditional livelihoods grows. Through a unique, 'trauma-informed' livelihoods and entrepreneurship training program, Uma is opening pathways for survivors to become entrepreneurs. She is giving them the knowledge and skills to engage with markets, customers, finance, and regulators. Uma's approach enables survivors to see micro-businesses as a tool for self-reliance and empowerment. In the last three years 200 women from 15 self-help groups have set up small individual and group businesses, forging partnerships with state bodies and earning start-up capital from local banks and organizations.

As they progress and join into larger networks, survivors are able to chart their own course, support themselves and their families, and advocate directly with the government and other stakeholders over India's anti-trafficking policies and programs. Through ILFAT their goal is to pass India's first broad-spectrum, anti-trafficking legislation inspired and influenced by the survivor community themselves.

THE PROBLEM

It is estimated that close to eight million Indians live in conditions of modern slavery. A majority are children and young adults between the ages of 17 and 26. They are exploited in ways that range from sex work to forced labor, domestic servitude, kidnap and adoption, even organ transplantation.

Every year a small number – about 23,000 people – are rescued and rehabilitated, but they are being failed by the anti-trafficking system in multiple ways.

Their rescue often leads to a second cycle of entrapment, as survivors are sent to custodial institutions or shelter homes, where, by law, they are detained for a period of one to three years. Many languish for more than seven years, and all exist in a situation akin to incarceration, with little decision-making power over their own lives. Their mobility is restricted. They cannot leave the shelter premises without the permission of the Judicial Court, and they have little or no say on how they are treated there. While they are entitled to services that address their trauma, it is caseworkers, not survivors themselves, who develop the plans for their rehabilitation and livelihoods, and those in charge often view them as silent beneficiaries, incapable of decision-making and without aspirations.

The vocational training programs they are offered in shelters are not attuned to markets, jobs, or industry demands. Programs do not account for the age, education, interests, health, responsibilities, or liabilities of the survivors. Nor do they commonly lead to jobs offering sufficient income for a survivor to support a family. Skill-building programs do not address the trauma, shame, and stigma survivors live with. As a result, most are unlikely to get or hold down a job. When survivors are able to integrate back into their communities, they often find themselves in a situation worse than before. They realize that the chasm separating them from having a real chance for a life of dignity has only widened. Most survivors return to their old patterns. Too many end

up becoming part of the criminal network of trafficking, thereby perpetuating the system.

The legal process itself penalizes survivors more than traffickers. The rate of acquittal for traffickers is as high as 83%, while fewer than one per cent of the victims identified from 2010 to 2018 have received compensation. These statistics can be attributed to the limited awareness and training of the rural and grassroots CSOs that provide survivors access to rehabilitation and legal services.

Additionally, the long tail of paperwork for victim compensation, and the process of convicting traffickers, lead to more shame than benefit. As survivors navigate courtrooms, they are subject to the biases and stigmatizing gaze of bureaucrats, elected representatives, medical and police officers.

Traditional non-profits working in this sector often have a savior mentality. They implement rehabilitation services 'for survivors,' instead of 'with them.' Most times, survivors are called revictimizes them. Moreover, these non-profits are also fragmented and unable to build bridges with each other.



Survivors collaborate and strategize to make vital decisions about their education, skills, and employment, and develop leadership skills to prepare them for larger sectoral roles.

THE STRATEGY

Uma brings her training as a clinical psychologist and her earlier leadership in work combating gender violence to her work to fight human trafficking and give real power back to the survivors. She works through a CSO she founded, Sanjog.

The first step in her three step strategy is to build survivor peer communities. In trafficking hot spots, Uma and her team help survivors to set up peer groups as they re-enter the world of family, community, and work. Survivor peer groups are force-multipliers. They enable members to break through their shared trauma, stigma, and shame. Survivors collaborate to seek compensation and in the legal fight against traffickers. They help one another make vital decisions about their education and employment. These survivors receive and support newly arrived peers. Taking responsibility leads them to daily wins and learning. They develop leadership skills – goal setting, problem-solving, and stakeholder management – that prepare them for larger sectoral roles.

A trauma-informed leadership training program fuels and sits at the heart of this model. A methodology pioneered by Uma – the “Me-We-Us Spiral Leadership Training” -- takes survivors into a deep immersion into their personhood, then gives them the skills and tactics for personal and community resilience and transformational leadership. The training bolsters survivors to heal internally, first as individuals (“Me”), then to integrate into communities of survivors (“We”), and finally to grow into high-capacity leaders (“Us”) in collectives that are creative, courageous, and collaborative. It trains them to network, share narratives, advocate, and build alliances as the most powerful representatives of their sector. Survivors are also equipped with the tools for strategy, fundraising and team building to strengthen their organizations. To augment this intensive training, Uma and her team offer mentoring and coaching to survivor-changemakers.

For Uma, citizenship and livelihood with dignity are the two levers that can move local survivor organizations to the next level of change-making. She and the survivor groups therefore focus strongly on both.

As peer groups set up collectives and formal organizations, they develop the norms, roles, and activities of their entities independently. One powerful example is the non-profit Utthan. It conducts workshops on victim compensation with stakeholders from government, civil society, and media. It is the survivors themselves who organize, host and are principal presenters at these

training sessions. Stakeholders attend as participants and guests. This upending of roles is changing the perceptions about survivors—from sad, weak victims to people who are powerful, assertive, and resourceful. Here’s another illustration: When survivors take charge of their own victim compensation cases, the results are unprecedented. Some survivors have been able to win compensation of up to 24,000 USD – 100 times more than the standard payment victims usually receive.

Citizenship becomes real when, for example, survivors start to unlock the full slate of government schemes, entitlements and social protection programs mandated for them. This process has opened direct dialogue between survivors and public officials. It has also led survivors to see themselves not just as beneficiaries of government services, but as a citizen base that can audit, give feedback, and hold duty-bearers accountable.

Uma has equipped survivor groups with technology tools to audit and rate the performance of their local government and allied systems. One tool generates a score card on the responsiveness of public systems to the survivor community. This ‘citizen data’ is used by survivors for advocacy with state and national governments, media, and other policy bodies.

As survivor collectives progress, their demand and ambition for non-traditional livelihoods grows. Through a unique, ‘trauma-informed’ livelihood and entrepreneurship training program, Uma is opening pathways for survivors to create and run businesses. She helps them develop the knowledge and skills they need to engage confidently with markets, customers, finance bodies, and regulators. For a community that has only experienced work as a brutal and exploitative, Uma enables survivors to see micro-businesses as a tool for self-reliance and empowerment. Recently, 200 women from fifteen self-help groups have set up individual and group businesses – salons, tailoring, and the like. For example, several of these first-generation micro-entrepreneurs in West Bengal have forged a partnership with government offices that promote rural livelihood and businesses and have received start-up seed capital and small loans from local banks and organizations.



Sanjog's work centers around a restorative approach to care for human trafficking survivors, facilitating partnerships among NGOs working in the source, transit and destination points of human trafficking, to ensure that survivors have the best chances of remaining free."



For Uma, the emergence of survivor-leaders cannot be possible without an enabling ecosystem of community-based grassroots organizations. Sanjog's thirteen partners in trafficking hotbeds across eleven states build the ground for survivor-led groups to thrive. Uma and her team run parallel capacity-building, peer learning and cross-pollination programs for partner organizations. The non-profit partners are coached to be the 'guide on the side' for survivor collectives. They are trained to facilitate survivor organizations, while providing stimulus to local communities and stakeholders to become allies.



Survivor peer groups in trafficking hot spots help survivors to set up peer groups as they re-enter the world of family, community, and work.

Even as she works hard at helping survivors build peer organizations and then survivor-run businesses and citizen groups, she's also been building a survivor-supporting all-India movement. She is orienting large global anti-trafficking funders to embed survivor leadership in all their programs. Combined with her role modeling and strong public advocacy, she is growing the number and power of a network of survivor leadership citizen groups all across India. That alliance in turn is the core of the national survivor-led advocacy platform, ILFAT, which is working towards survivor-centric laws at the national and state levels. All of this multiplies the spread of ever-more savvy and powerful survivor-led organizations and businesses and the CSOs supporting them.

THE PERSON

From a clinical psychologist to transformational leadership for young survivors of trafficking -- Uma's story shares many common patterns with the young leaders she is launching.

While her father was serving in the army, Uma moved to multiple cities and towns in quick succession as a child. The shock of being uprooted, then having to quickly drop roots in a new place, left a deep yearning for friendships, life anchors, and relationships that would be enduring.



Cross border trafficking between India and its neighbors, particularly Nepal and Bangladesh have been a persistent problem. The proposal of such shelters, for care and protection of trafficked girls, intercepted at the border, is a need often voiced by community-based anti-trafficking organizations like [Uma's] Sanjog at these borders,"

The Indian EXPRESS



Through a unique, 'trauma-informed' livelihood and entrepreneurship training program, Uma is opening pathways for survivors to become entrepreneurs..

College was a turning point in Uma's life. Studying psychology helped her 'find' her own self.

But as she moved from the safe army bases of her youth, Uma discovered how unsafe, violent, and traumatic life in a big city like Delhi could be. She experienced sexual assault in public places, including being physically molested, Eve-teased, and stalked. When Uma reached out for support, she felt unheard, and told to adjust. She kept quiet, but a deep-seated anger made its home inside of her. As a response, Uma volunteered extensively in local non-profits. She ran student clubs and initiated several college activities on issues of gender and violence.

Uma went on to build a successful career as a clinical psychologist. Yet the rootlessness of her childhood kept her on the quest to find her own community. She set up counseling programs across schools – new to the education system in the 1990s. She then turned her attention to community-based healing for survivors of sexual assault. This eventually led her to a leadership role in an international organization that funded and facilitated rehabilitation programs for survivors of sex trafficking across South Asia.

One day, a conversation with a rescued sex worker stopped Uma in her tracks. The young woman had been trafficked from Bangladesh to work in the brothels of Pune and Mumbai and had been placed in an interim Mumbai shelter before her return home. Uma asked if she was excited to return. The young woman flatly

responded that home, a brothel, or the shelter – all three for her were the same. All were spaces of stigma, shame, exploitation, and unfreedom for her.

Uma was shaken and deeply moved. To validate what she had heard, she started having conversations with social workers. She asked them what they loved most about working with survivors of trafficking. Their responses reflected a protectionist mentality. A majority saw survivors as beneficiaries of rehabilitation protocols and services. They said they found fulfillment in counseling the survivors to adjust to their families, even if that sometimes meant living with the same people who had sold them to traffickers. Voice, decision-making, freedom, dignity, citizenship of survivors -- these themes found no place in Uma's chats with social workers. Uma realized that she had been complicit in deepening a custodial and non-empowering approach to rehabilitating survivors. She acknowledged that more than anything else, the young woman from Bangladesh, and others like her, needed allies and champions, not saviors or heroes who would rescue and then counsel them to fit in.

With this conviction, Uma founded Sanjog in 2012. In the next five years Sanjog conducted evidence-based research with survivors, which led to the establishment of survivor collectives and ILFAT. Through Sanjog and ILFAT, India's anti-trafficking efforts now actually free survivors.



MYROSLAVA KERYK

President of Ukraiński Dom

 naszwybor.org.pl

Migration and exile deprive people of agency. Myra Keryk is transforming the experience of migrant workers and refugees in Poland by quickly enabling them to become active contributors to the common good and by building broad-ranging relationships and social cohesion, especially between Ukrainians and Poles. In the process she is helping Poland own a new identity as a multi-ethnic nation.

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THIS ARTICLE ONLINE**

THE NEW IDEA

Through her Ukrainian House Foundation, Myroslava Keryk is both helping (1) Ukrainian refugees and migrant laborers find work and broad engagement in Poland, and (2) helping host communities understand and value their new neighbors. The work aims to reduce prejudice and prevent conflict in a country where fast-growing Ukrainian migration is both challenging deeply held beliefs and attitudes and also dramatically swelling the population of some Polish cities. The sudden necessity of “cohabitation” has created space for polarization and even radicalization among both Ukrainians and Poles. Ukrainian House Foundation is actively building new relationships, policies and understanding across both groups, steering system-wide change across Polish society and workplaces.

To address the needs of both “people on the move,” as Myra refers to migrants and refugees, and their new host communities, Ukrainian House Foundation provides

both short-term direct support and deeper, long-term programs to build connection, resilience and integration. The Foundation gathers data and publishes its findings to inform policymakers and employers about the realities of a new, multi-ethnic Poland. Indeed, its comprehensive survey of the impact of Covid on thousands of Ukrainian domestic workers has already influenced one systemic change: It was credited by Polish activists as helping them successfully organize a domestic workers union – the first of its kind in Poland.

The Foundation’s work has become urgent since Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which sent six million Ukrainians across the border into Poland in a few short months. While many have moved on, some 1.5 million of those have settled there, a fact that upsets one in three Poles. Ukrainians now make up almost 9% of Poland’s population, and some Polish cities have seen between 15 and 50 percent population growth in the past 18 months.



PHOTO CREDIT: Myroslava Keryk

In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, Ukrainian House rapidly scaled its services to meet the crisis. In a few short months it tapped business and community partnerships to provide housing for more than 80,000 Ukrainians; organized legal and social guidance for some 60,000 adults and stood up a children's school staffed with Ukrainian teachers. In total, the organization helped more than 100,000 people directly during the 16 months after the full-scale invasion by Russia.

Consistent with its long-term focus, Ukrainian House sees the newly arrived Ukrainians as contributors and peers. It organizes carefully designed discussions and activities that make this in fact happen. Its programs are anchored by a series of guided discussions. It gets the new arrivals and long-rooted Poles to discuss migration and integration directly.

In addition to wrestling with issues of cultural identity and belonging, Ukrainian House actively shapes cultural and social life in Warsaw and 15 smaller municipalities.

This work includes holding joint cultural and educational programs that highlight shared and distinct national histories, women's clubs, choirs, libraries,

reading groups, conferences, and theater participation. The group also provides activities held at the resource centers and gathering spots for new arrivals across the country. Myra has multiplied such physical centers by drawing in the concept of Ukraine House as a physical gathering place is currently scaled through 60 CSOs in the Mazovia Region (roughly between Lodz and Bialystok) and around Gdansk. Five more centers will open in the next few months. All Myra's Ukrainian-focused undertakings are paired with local Polish organizations and administrations.

As a Ukrainian native who came to Warsaw for PhD studies two decades ago, Myra recognized the growing need for a broad redefinition of the idea of "migrant integration." Along with a consortium of aligned CSOs, Ukrainian House and Myra co-created draft legislation for a National Migration Policy, a framework which has never before existed in Poland. Here again, she takes the long view. How Ukrainian immigrants and their hosts integrate will define the pattern long-term. Myra's goal is to make Poland a model for all Central and Eastern Europe as it too also experiences rapid social change.



PHOTO CREDIT: Myroslava Keryk

To this end Myra is an ongoing advisor to Polish authorities on migration policy and regularly presents her findings at European economic and security gatherings. She has become a respected voice on issues of migration and integration and has received numerous regional and national awards for integrating immigrants and improving Polish-Ukrainian dialogue. Indeed, she is now being nominated as “Varsovian of the Year” -- a singular distinction for a non-Pole.

Through her work Myra hopes to ensure that on a future Polish Independence Day, Poles and people from other nations will march together with Polish and other national flags celebrating freedom and democracy for all.

THE PROBLEM

Large-scale migration to Poland is very new. After World War II and under communism, Poland became a strongly monoethnic country, and Polish identity was built on that homogeneity. Among European countries, Poland has had one of the lowest percentages of ethnic minorities -- as little as 3% of its population.

The homogenization of Poland resulted from an active effort by the Communist regime to build a unified national identity, a process known as ‘Polonization’. Although Poland is politically safer than it has been in centuries, with stable borders and democratic, this framework lives on, perpetuated by media and politicians that forge perceptions of threats to Polish culture and sovereignty.



A year ago, after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian House turned into a crisis response center with a hotline for Ukrainians arriving in Poland, information about changing conditions and procedures at the border, assistance in finding accommodation, coordination of volunteers and psychological support for refugees.”

POLITYKA

Studies show that immigration from Ukraine to Poland in the past decade has started to have significant economic, social, and political consequences. From 2013 to 2018, the number of Ukrainian migrants to Poland grew dramatically across categories -- largely seasonal workers but also work and residence permit holders, students, and others. This growth is transforming the role played by migrants in the Polish labor market. Public opinion polls in Poland show that Poles are apprehensive about Ukrainians, which changed for a moment after the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022.

Russia’s assault sent millions of Ukrainians across the border into Poland. The scale of the influx is daunting: Rzeszów, the largest city in southeastern Poland, has

seen its population jump by 50%. In Warsaw, the population has grown by 15%, while Kraków's has risen by nearly a quarter and Gdansk's by more than a third.

At first Polish society and international humanitarian organizations mobilized to help with the urgent need for housing, income, and schooling. Polish authorities were also supportive initially, introducing special benefits such as payments to host households and free public transport. But these measures were withdrawn in June 2022, and by early 2023 Poland's Deputy Interior Minister announced that free shelters would no longer be available because "we are convinced that many people in Poland can become independent and adapt." Influenced by politicians' narratives, Poles are becoming less friendly towards refugees and migrants from Ukraine.

As the war has dragged on, the Ukrainians' continued presence, and the prospect of their remaining permanently, is raising tensions. One third of Poles are unhappy with the idea of Ukrainian citizens staying "for a longer period," as the Polish government has offered. The sudden experience of migration for Ukrainians, and for Poles, having to live side by side with large numbers of newcomers, has created space for polarization and even radicalization in both groups.



Filled with sadness and hopes of a victorious 2023, hundreds of Ukrainian refugees celebrated their first Christmas since fleeing the Russian invasion at a contemporary theatre in Warsaw organized by the Ukraine House."



THE STRATEGY

Myra understands that the experience of people on the move can only change with a transformation of the welcoming society. Myra's strategy involves discussions and

actions designed to effect systemic change in the mindsets of both groups, both where they live and work.

At its most fundamental, Ukrainian House poses a series of questions to both newcomers and Poles for conversation and reflection. These questions are woven through the many activities the Foundation supports, and across the time period in which migrants are adapting to their new lives.

First comes "Where am I? We are here." The next step asks: "What can we do?" And finally, "Who am I? Who are we?"

As Ukrainians find themselves in a new reality after arriving in Poland, they ask themselves: Where am I? The Foundation supports them in finding the answer, first, through a consultation service that helps them navigate settling in, from working through complex legal issues to locating psychological and social support.

The needs of arriving Ukrainians became urgent in the immediate days after Russia's invasion in late February 2022. Ukrainian House pivoted quickly to respond. It partnered with AirBnB and Polish real estate investors to find housing for 80,000 individuals; tapped 8,830 homes offered by Polish citizens to share and proudly adds that it also found housing for 1,220 dogs, five snails and two tarantulas. With an average accommodation of over a month, Ukrainian House beneficiaries have been hosted over 500,000 days -- almost 1,370 years.

Additionally, from late February to late March, Ukrainian House staff helped with 60,000 cases by phone and over 16,000 consultations in person, expanding its staff tenfold to address urgent need.

On the welcoming side, Polish society benefits from Myra's support in understanding that We are here, in the local community, in the labor market, and in neighborhoods where Poles and Ukrainians live together. At the national level Ukrainian House uses data from its programs to brief Polish leaders with research and publications documenting, among other things, labor violations and the impact of Covid-19 on Ukrainian migrant women. These form a basis for conversation with employers and decision makers. Its report on women workers during Covid is credited by Polish activists with successfully bringing about the creation of a Domestic Workers Union, the first of its kind in Poland. Besides providing direct support to domestic workers, the union works for legislative changes in this still-unregulated market.



PHOTO CREDIT: Myroslava Keryk

The second question Myra asks (and helps Ukrainians and Poles answer) is “What can we do?” to find and create opportunities for active participation by both groups. Jobs are critical for labor migrants and refugees. Ukrainian House established a work department in the second half of 2022, consulting directly on jobs and work-related challenges. It holds weekly open office hours and provides legal support, tax advice, information on the market and other topics. Its team runs a news portal with articles about Polish society and work culture, and specific materials about the rights of employees and fair wages. It has also initiated a program for I-T job training with a corporate partner.

While adults need to work, children need to go to school. Due to the urgent need for refugee children to complete the school year in Warsaw, Myra partnered with an experienced Polish CSO to open the Warsawian Ukrainian School, following the guidelines of Ukraine’s Ministry of Education and Science. In 25 days, Ukrainian House was able to stand up an entire school for multiple grades, staffed with Ukrainian teachers.

Besides work and education Myra recognizes that Ukrainians need to feel at home in Poland. Myra and the Foundation developed the format for a community center called “Ukraine House,” a physical space where everyone is welcome, and a cup of warm tea is offered. These houses offer activities like choirs, reading groups, exhibitions, and volunteering opportunities. The Warsaw location alone offers some 300 gatherings a year. Ukraine House helps speed up a change of perception for a new person in a new community – from being a newcomer to being a member. These houses organize most events in both Ukrainian and Polish, and they model cooperation between the communities.

Myra multiplies this bridge-building work through many collaborations with Polish civil society. Examples include partnering with the Polin Museum (Museum of the History of Polish Jews) and Malta Festival Poznan, a theater festival, to offer courses and discussions about the diverse socio-cultural context of the region.

Myra’s many collaborations have helped her build a consortium of Polish CSOs to co-create national migration policy. She is part of working groups on migration policy in Warsaw and nationally. She has also helped establish a coalition of minority organizations, beyond Ukrainians, to train community organizers, minorities, and migrants. Novice leaders can implement their ideas as part of an incubator of migrant and minority initiatives, multiplying the impact of Myra’s work in new communities.

The third question, Who am I? addresses the challenges migration creates for personal identity. Informal contacts with Ukrainians and Poles aim to shift one identity -- Ukrainian -- toward a new one of "being both" -- Ukrainian in Poland, getting the best of both sides. Ukrainian House helps to define this new identity, by helping embed Ukrainians in a local context, working together with Poles. As women make up a significant proportion of migrants, Myra established the Ukrainian Women's Clubs as a space of exchange and free expression. The first groups consisted mainly of cleaning ladies, who needed a space to express themselves as women, beyond their roles at work. There, they share their talents, hobbies, as well as troubles and challenges. In 2022 there were already six Ukrainian Women's Clubs.

Finally, the Who are we? question calls on both Poles and Ukrainians to embrace the new reality of a multiethnic Poland. This entails building at both the individual and national levels. Ukrainian House discussions, meetings and activities highlight the shared and distinct histories of both Ukrainians and Poles, and in joint activities each group can accompany the other in asking who they are and searching for answers together.

Through her many organizations and allies and her own presence in public discourse and media in Poland and Europe-wide, Myra is seeding this idea.

It's powerful. It fights destructive division. And it helps everyone -- everyone from all groups -- live in a bigger world, a world that invites all to do more. This is what the world, not just Poland and Central Europe, needs.

THE PERSON

Myra was born in the Soviet Union and grew up in a village 30 kilometers from Lviv, about an hour and a half drive from the Polish border. Social commitment and Ukrainian-ness were strongly present in her home and shaped her upbringing. Her father's family founded "Prosvita" (Ukrainian: просвіта, 'enlightenment'), a meeting place for cultivating Ukrainian identity and culture, and for learning to read. The group operated in her father's family home. For leading this initiative, her grandparents, father, and uncles were punished with exile to Siberia. Myra's dad would not return for ten years.

For this reason, the headmistress of Myra's school, a true Communist, deeply disliked Myra's family. Teachers treated Myra harshly, and, because of a skin condition, children also bullied her. Despite the difficulties, Myra joined the Pioneers (Soviet scouts), where she organized

joint cleaning of houses and farms for the oldest inhabitants of their villages.

Myra's mother encouraged her to continue her studies, believing she would not find a husband due to her skin disease. (She was wrong!) After studying history at a university in Lviv, Myra continued her education at the Central European University in Budapest until she moved to Warsaw for doctoral studies.

In 2004 a revolution broke out in Ukraine after rigged presidential elections. Myra joined in demonstrations and began to act in Poland, with both Ukrainians and friends from the university. When the protests died down, Myra decided to deepen her work to continue creating a positive impact for Ukrainians and other people on the move, first as an informal group and later as Ukrainian House Foundation. Myra has committed full-time to building common ground for Poles and Ukrainians, sharing past, present, and future.



PHOTO CREDIT: Myroslava Keryk



SEPTIAJI NUGROHO

Founder and Chairman of MAFINDO

 www.mafindo.or.id

Indonesia's large number of internet users – ranking fourth highest globally – and low levels of digital literacy make Online hoaxes and misinformation a pervasive problem. In response, Septiaji Nugroho is building a civic resiliency movement open to everyone to engage against untruth and manipulation, strengthen digital literacy, and renew trust.

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THE NEW IDEA

Septiaji's vision is a world where every citizen is a fact-checker. Currently, the organization he founded, MAFINDO, has 95,000 Online members in Indonesia who are mobilized as volunteer fact-checkers in forty-nine cities. MAFINDO serves as a hub that unifies citizens reputable journalists, social media, government agencies and more in the fight to protect elections, individuals even businesses targeted by organized crime syndicates.

Key to this work is Septiaji's understanding that many citizens inadvertently contribute to the spread of hoaxes and misinformation because of a lack of digital literacy. To address this issue, Septiaji developed a digital literacy education curriculum called Tular Nalar (spread critical thinking) as a crucial learning toolkit for Indonesian citizens. He has its mass distribution throughout the country through partnership with education organizations, media, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the

Ministry of Education and Culture's Online Learning System.

Septiaji's curriculum has been also adopted by the Ministry of Information and Communication Indonesia and integrated into the National Digital Literacy Movement where Septiaji serves as an official advisor. MAFINDO also partners with one of the biggest Islamic organizations, Muhammadiyah, to implement the 'Spread Critical Thinking' curriculum across its network of schools, pretty much everywhere across the country.

THE PROBLEM

Seventy-three percent of Indonesian citizens use Online media to get information in daily life, and social media use has exploded. Indonesians are the second-largest audience for TikTok and the third largest on Facebook.



MAFINDO has been recognized as the core of a civic resiliency movement pushing back against untruths Online and, in so doing, renewing trust between citizens and institutions.

In 2015 Septiaji's MAFINDO tracked roughly 10 incidents of hoaxes or disinformation campaigns per month; by 2021, that number rose to 3,000 a month.

Roughly half of misinformation in Indonesia relates to government regulations or information. For example, a recent hoax stated the government was inviting a hundred thousand Chinese employees to work in Indonesian cities. Such stories create fear and decrease trust in the government and more broadly. Misinformation about food and drugs have affected public health; racial and religious identity have also been weaponized in ways that create tension and division within society.

Over the past decade, elections have increasingly been a target for misinformation that mislead voters and trigger civil unrest. In the 2014 general election, thousands of Indonesians clashed with the police because they believed the result had been rigged, based on a steady stream of misinformation they received continuously through social media and WhatsApp groups. During Jakarta's 2016 governor's election, violence sparked by Online hoaxes left hundreds injured. Video hoaxes in 2019 targeted the General Election Commission, showing (falsely) millions of pre-marked ballots arriving from China at Indonesian ports.

THE STRATEGY

Using a web-based application Septiaji designed, called 'Cekfata' or 'Check Facts,' MAFINDO members root out misinformation before it can spread. Journalists from 26 reputable Online media organizations supply the data; citizens validate stories or flag fake news. Instead of having to debunk hoaxes, Septiaji considers this work "pre-bunking." To date volunteers have validated or disproved hundreds of thousands of pieces of information. They have exposed over 2,500 cases of misinformation or hoaxes just about Covid-19.

Given the tendency of hoaxes to multiply and spread rapidly around elections as well as during health emergencies, MAFINDO leads a citizen sector collaboration that focuses here and that is also allied with three critical government institutions --the General Election Commission, the Election Supervisory Body (at both the national and local levels), and the National Agency of Drug and Food Control. This effect is now working to prevent and counter upcoming 2024 election misinformation. The collaboration focuses on pre-bunking, monitoring and debunking Online content and improving election and health literacy.



To expand the outreach, Septiaji partners with one of the biggest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah, to implement the curriculum across its network of schools. To date, Septiaji and his team have engaged 1,400 lecturers, 6,000 teachers, and more than 20,000 students in 25 cities in Indonesia



Septiaji also partners with the Indonesian Police Force to ensure the application of a clear distinction between freedom of expression on the one hand, and hoaxes causing criminal offense on the other. As a result of the partnership, the National Police Force announced in 2021 it would address digital cases through a restorative justice approach, prioritizing preventive and educational actions, and encouraging mediation. The partnership with the police is significant not only for collaborative work to prevent and combat hoaxes, but also to protect citizens who contribute to fact-checking.

THE PERSON

As a student at the Bandung Institute of Technology Septiaji was selected to chair the school's computer laboratories, managing 200 computers for students.

Invited by the Directorate General of Vocational Study for the Ministry of Education, Septiaji participated in compiling the network technology curriculum for vocational high school students, which later became the model for the national curriculum.

Before Septiaji was involved in MAFINDO, He was one of the experts in digital literacy in Wonosobo and initiated contact with the digital literacy program by the Ministry of Technology and Information Indonesia. At the Ministry, Septiaji met many who were concerned about the digital literacy issue. However, they weren't yet aware of the dangers of Online hoaxes.

The turning point for him came after the 2014 general election, when Online misinformation began to polarize people, and which triggered violent conflict in 2016. Septiaji felt very worried about the situation and was horrified to see even his educated colleagues spreading the misinformation. Motivated to change this, Septiaji decided to activate a close group of friends to be part of a Facebook group to combat hoaxes. With the help of his relationships at the Ministry of Technology and Information, he created a declaration of anti-hoax movement in five cities in Indonesia in 2016.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





BREE JONES
US



NORA JEANNE JOSEPH
Haiti



ARMIN SALEK
US



HASTINGS NHLANE
Malawi



BREE JONES

Founder of Parity

 www.parityhomes.com

Bree Jones is turning abandoned structures within historically redlined neighborhoods into opportunities for Black homeownership and the revival of once-thriving Black communities.

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THE NEW IDEA

Through her organization Parity, Bree turns the growing problem of hyper-vacancy in cities like Baltimore into an opportunity to expand affordable housing – and grow homeownership and wealth among Black Americans. Parity recruits cohorts of aspiring homeowners, helps them access financing, and – with their collective commitment to buy and live in restored homes – rehabilitates entire blocks of abandoned rowhouses in historically significant Black neighborhoods. The cost-effective model creates affordable homeownership opportunities in the most oppressed housing markets, not in spite of high rates of vacancy but, in a sense, because of the legacies of underinvestment and abandonment. Bree is proving that people still value these neighborhoods, and in doing so, she's prompted a major revaluing of Black neighborhoods by both Black residents and financial institutions. Because it's not just the bones of a house that give it value, it's the way in which neighbors and the surrounding community make it a desirable place to live, and now whole groups of new homeowners can benefit from that value they themselves are creating.

Bree flips much of the housing development playbook on its head. While most developers court well-to-do individuals, Bree sees power in groups of aspiring first-time homebuyers. While most developers focus on affordable rentals, she's focused on homeownership. Where most developers focus on relatively stabilized neighborhoods to reduce risk, Bree goes into the riskiest, most underserved communities. And where most development drives gentrification, Bree's approach makes sure that legacy residents stay put. She calls it "development without displacement."

To speed up what is a notoriously slow process, Bree has found ways to outmaneuver costly barriers, for example by dramatically reducing the time it takes to wipe tax liens from abandoned homes whose owners have fallen behind on payments. In all this she's proven that working at her pace and scale makes financial sense for homebuyers, financial institutions, construction companies, and municipalities alike. As such, Parity's model for leveraging Black homeownership and collective social capital



Bree is showing that a proper appraisal of these homes should include their future value and should consider the fact that a whole block is being revived, a whole community is becoming enlivened. PHOTO CREDIT: Bree Jones

as a foundation for wealth building and social justice has major implications for cities across the country, many of which have reached out to Bree for guidance as they see in her approach a solution to the challenges of affordable housing, hyper vacancy, and the persistent Black-White wealth gap.

“

Part of what makes our model distinct from other developers is that we're not just focused on the construction of new housing, but we're focused on ensuring that legacy residents are retained and can stay in their neighborhood as long as they want and participate in the revitalization.”

- Bree Jones

THE PROBLEM

Each American city has its own unique set of impediments to the creation of affordable housing. Baltimore, known colloquially as the “birthplace of redlining,” set a national precedent for discriminatory real estate tactics in the early 20th century and today bears the scar of this legacy in the more than 16,000 blighted and abandoned buildings in what is known as the “Black Butterfly” of East and West Baltimore. In two of these neighborhoods (where Parity is currently working) more than a third of households are living below the poverty line; over a third of properties are abandoned; and only a quarter of homes are owned by residents (most of whom are elderly). There are no banks, no grocery stores, and 40% of households don't have internet access. Moreover, 95% of residents are Black, highlighting Baltimore's struggle with segregation and concentrated race-based poverty. High levels of vacancy further concentrate poverty and lock communities in a downward economic spiral.

Distressed neighborhoods like these typically follow two trajectories. In the first, the neighborhood is deemed unsavable. Continued disinvestment causes a deterioration of housing stock, which decreases quality of life and pushes people to move elsewhere. This signals to financial institutions that these places are risky and unredeemable. In the second, low-land values attract speculative

developers who use predatory tactics to purchase and flip inhabited homes, displacing native residents and tilling the soil for rapid gentrification. In both instances, the destruction of social fabric erases the possibility to generate wealth across generations.

As housing prices continue to rise in general, the challenges that historically red-lined neighborhoods face are exploited by developers, and a new barrier emerges: an “affordability gap.” Because abandoned housing stock is so time and labor intensive, private, profit-driven developers tend to target houses that are occupied – often by Black elders – and vulnerable to cash-buys and other predatory practices that undervalue their homes. The developers then make relatively minor improvements and sell the homes at inflated prices that are completely out of reach for low-to-moderate income legacy residents, which inevitably leads to displacement and housing instability for the city’s most vulnerable. Alternatively, the developers may split the houses into micro-apartments for Section 8 renters and remove yet another ownership opportunity from the housing supply.

Bree has experimented with and is now modeling a pathway forward not just for Baltimore but all U.S. cities that have yet to achieve deep affordability in both homeownership and rental options.



So much of this work is about the reclamation of power and agency for Black communities, especially as it pertains to land and place. We’re ensuring people who have been historically disinvested of wealth are able to participate in and benefit from reinvestment into their communities, through ownership and equity creation.”

– Bree Jones

THE STRATEGY

Bree’s gift, and the reason she’s been able to increase affordability and create pathways to Black homeownership, is her ability to unearth opportunities where others see intractable problems. Her new development model centers social capital while also leveraging policy and creative financial instruments to significantly reduce the cost of rehabilitating abandoned homes and ultimately sell them whole blocks at a time without driving gentrification. Much of her strategy involves outsmarting perceived disadvantages of housing development that underpin the common reaction that Bree’s kind of development simply can’t be done.

For example: the process of acquiring and then rebuilding abandoned houses is long and laborious, but speed biases well-to-do homebuyers and profit-driven investors. Bree’s approach entails strategic patience and turns this long runway in her favor because it allows her to create the critical social bonds among aspiring homebuyers who become emotionally invested in the project and neighborhood. What about the appraisal gap and securing the financing? Yes, the cost of restoring these homes can be far more than they appear to be worth on paper, especially when the total lien amounts are factored in. But Bree taps into historic preservation funds (usually only accessed by wealthy White property owners), astutely navigates Baltimore City tax codes, and even attracts some philanthropic funding to dramatically lower costs. For example, there is an underutilized mechanism in Baltimore City in which disinterested third party entities can apply to have the accumulated interest, fees, and penalties on tax liens waived on decades-long abandoned properties. This can reduce the total lien amounts on a vacant property from \$100,000 to \$8,000, which suddenly unlocks the possibility of redevelopment for hundreds of homes. Then, by reviving whole rows of houses, the renovation cost per house drops even further.

At the same time, Bree is showing that a proper appraisal of these homes should include their future value and, importantly, should consider the fact that a whole block is being revived, a whole community is becoming enlivened, and each home is thus becoming that much more desirable. This also addresses the gradual loss of social fabric: Blocks of beautiful, refurbished owner-occupied historic rowhouses become the metaphorical warp – the lengthwise yarns in a textile that provide a stable structure around which the transverse weft – of new homeowners and engaged neighbors weave in and out.

When it comes to working capital to start refurbishing the houses, Parity can access construction loans if they can prove they have buyers lined up. Their innovative approach is to pre-sell entire blocks of abandoned properties to pre-existing social networks, rather than attempting to sell a single renovated building on a mostly abandoned block. Renovating adjacent rowhouses at the same time also helps lower the overall construction costs. Another barrier to affordable housing development is labor shortages and thus high labor costs. Parity launched an in-house apprenticeship program to train under- and unemployed residents in carpentry. Construction crew members hired as employees of Parity will not only make a thriving wage but also will be encouraged to start their own journeys toward homeownership.

While construction is underway to restore the acquired structures, each cohort of aspiring homebuyers goes

through a six-month curriculum that prepares them for homeownership and deepens their relationship to one another and their new neighborhood. The curriculum involves financial literacy training, credit repair, support in accessing bank financing, and even Pinterest vision boards to help in choosing light fixtures, paint colors, and trim packages, all of which shores up the new and profoundly empowering identity of “homeowner.” Then comes the real draw: they get to become neighbors by buying homes at the same time, on the same block. “We use collective economics to reduce any one individual’s risk, while deepening the human bonds that make community,” says Bree. “If we have 30 homeowners who all move onto a block at one time, that radically changes the dynamic of a distressed area.”



Side by side, the homes reinvested by Parity are transformed for historically redlined communities. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Bree Jones



Bree hopes to gain larger institutional support, city foundations, and corporations to back her efforts to revitalize Baltimore neighborhoods.”

➤ AFROTECH

Bree has built Parity to operate as a developer, community organization, and an advocacy group (very few organizations do all three). Regarding the latter, while Bree has embraced the long delays of incoherent real estate policies, she also advocates for systemic solutions that will pave the way for other value-aligned developers and future homeowners, in Baltimore and beyond. For example, she played an instrumental part in the establishment of a new 2022 White House task force to address racial and ethnic bias in home appraisals. She authored and helped to pass a Maryland State bill to address the appraisal gap issue. She has supported the creation of a land bank, a quasi-government, community-informed agency that can expedite the process of acquiring vacant and abandoned properties at scale. The legislation they are working on currently would reduce the acquisition



time from 12 to 6 months and process 2,000 buildings per year – solving the issue of hyper vacancy in Baltimore within the decade.

The first Parity cohort moved into eight adjoining row houses in Harlem Park in 2022, with a plan to redevelop almost 100 homes in that neighborhood alone. New homeowner incomes range from \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year. In five years, Bree aims to restore 200 homes per year in Baltimore while ensuring the model takes root elsewhere. It is no surprise that Parity is already gaining national recognition as a pioneer in creating housing supply and homeowner demand in forgotten, disenfranchised neighborhoods. Bree has shared her insights and learnings in local press, with the affordable housing sector, and most recently on the TED stage. She doesn't miss an opportunity to talk about the role of social capital in proving that there is indeed a thriving market where many see 'ruin.' And she sees Baltimore as a ripe testing ground for an equitable development and affordable housing playbook that could be relevant for any city in the U.S., especially those dealing with hyper vacancy, such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit.

THE PERSON

Bree grew up in the Bronx, NY, in a multi-generational household owned by her grandparents, who immigrated from the West Indies in the 60s. Her grandparents prioritized education and instilled in Bree a deep respect and

subsequent hunger for learning. When she was in middle school, she and her mom moved to New Rochelle, NY, so that Bree could access better schools. Her deep curiosity and desire to learn from others took her all over the world at a young age; in China she became fluent in Mandarin, in Cape Town she applied her business expertise to support local women working on the issue of food deserts in shantytowns. During college, she gathered hundreds of students to teach and learn over 50 indigenous languages as the president of the language club.

Bree graduated from college the same year that Trayvon Martin Jr. was murdered, and his murderer acquitted. Outraged and grieving, she joined a grassroots racial justice organization in her hometown of New Rochelle where she finally gained the language to describe dynamics that she had been experiencing her entire life, including learning about race-based policies like redlining. That same year, a development corporation purchased several parking lots in the majority Black and Brown downtown of New Rochelle, with plans to erect 2,000 luxury apartments. Bree helped mobilize community members to advocate for a community benefits agreement that demanded affordable housing, local hire, and living wages on all properties being built. Their group had some small wins, but by and large the developer steamrolled the community. The project set in motion rapid gentrification and today, the neighborhood is almost unrecognizable and most of the people who lived here have been forced out.



I took rejections as a challenge. Like, ok, if you think there's no demand, I'm going to go out and prove there's demand. I'm going to bring the demand to you."

- Bree Jones

In 2018, Bree quit her job on Wall Street and moved down to Baltimore with a suitcase in-hand. When she first pitched her idea to a room of developers, they laughed her out – calling it "impossible." Within three short years, Bree emerged as a leader in her new hometown and is gaining national attention for a housing challenge that no American city is immune to.



NORA JEANNE JOSEPH

Founder and CEO of RADIKAL

 www.radikal.co

Nora Jeanne Joseph is addressing food security in Haiti through women street vendors, to improve access to healthy, sustainable food. She is helping turn informal food stalls into thriving micro-businesses linked to local farmers, bringing safer and more nutritious food to thousands of people every day while lifting communities out of poverty.

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THE NEW IDEA

Nora tackles food security in Haiti by expanding access to healthy, safe, and sustainable food and creating better economic opportunities along the food value chain. The backbone of her strategy is a network of Madan Sara, women who informally sell food and other essentials on the streets. They are at the heart of Haiti's economy – USAID estimates that they are responsible for up to 90 percent of local trade. About half of the population relies on them for food every day, and their stalls are community gathering spaces. Nora's own grandmothers were Madan Sara. Yet their critical role is invisible, and lack of adequate training and support leaves them stuck in poverty.

To change this, Nora and her organization RADIKAL engage Madan Sara as franchisees to simultaneously improve their livelihoods and help bring food security to the most hard-to-reach communities. Women can access equipment, training, and ongoing advising through

RADIKAL. The organization also links them with public services like healthcare and insurance that were previously out of reach to informal workers. This network of women also functions as a community safety net. For example, after the 2021 earthquake, they mobilized swiftly to get emergency relief into the hands of affected families.

Alongside strengthening women's business skills and capacity, RADIKAL focuses on integrating food safety, hygiene, and sustainable practices into their work. Each Madan Sara feeds hundreds of people daily, so improving food handling conditions can have a rippling impact on public health.

RADIKAL also supports Madan Sara to source healthy, sustainable ingredients by integrating local food value chains. RADIKAL buys organic produce from small farmers and then engages women-led cooperatives to



Nora's vital work of organizing a network of changemakers makes it possible to redirect resources efficiently and to obtain economies of scale to implement adaptive solutions.

process and package products like oils and spices, and to pre-cook meals. These products are later distributed to the network of Madan Sara. Instead of having to go to the market every day and buy low-quality imported goods at retail prices, RADIKAL members have an affordable supply that is more nutritious, sustainable, and safe for their customers.

Nora's work provides a blueprint for a farm-to-fork ecosystem that could reduce Haiti's dependence on food imports and increase resilience, while recognizing women's essential contributions. It is also scalable outside the island, as informal and micro food vendors are an integral part of food systems worldwide.

THE PROBLEM

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, three billion people around the world cannot afford healthy food and nearly a million are living in famine conditions. Nora's country, Haiti, is among the worst affected: Nearly half of the population (over 4 million people) faces food insecurity. 1.8 million are in emergency conditions.



Radikal tackles gender equality by recruiting and training women to become better business owners, 'helping them improve their quality of life, and enabling them to step into their power and command respect in their households and communities.'"



As in much of the Caribbean, a key issue is the country's dependence on imports, that leaves it vulnerable to disruptions in global food chains. In fact, Haiti imports 51% of the food it consumes – compared to only 18% in 1981, leading to an import bill that rises above 1 billion USD annually. The promotion of imports through dramatic tariff

cuts since the mid-1990s has meant that farmers in Haiti are unable to compete with cheap, subsidized, imported food. Meanwhile, insufficient access to financing, technologies and training, and limited infrastructure, makes it difficult for the local agricultural sector to become more resilient. The political crisis, rising gang violence, and natural disasters have exacerbated these issues.

Haitians have come to rely on Madan Sara to access food, especially in low-income communities. Street food allows people to save on the cost of fuel and water and is a safer alternative, as storing food is made impossible by frequent power cuts. Street vendors also fill the gap when formal food distribution networks are interrupted by deficient transport infrastructure, fuel shortages and road blockades by protesters and gang – issues that have become the new normal in Haiti – and can provide food on credit when money is scarce.



RADIKAL [is growing] a network of women-operated food franchisees, known as the Saradi, who offer affordable, healthy meals to the most vulnerable in Haiti. Equipped with food carts, local ingredients and water filters, these women are tackling food insecurity head-on.



Despite their essential role, these women entrepreneurs remain trapped in poverty. Limited access to training and schooling mean that few know how to manage their finances and often depend on male relatives, who use this leverage to control their money. They have no access to structural or financial support. Without financing to buy wholesale, Madan Sara buy their inputs at retail prices and sell at a loss because their clients cannot afford to pay more, driving sellers into debt. On top of these barriers, Madan Sara routinely experience gender-based violence and discrimination. They are spat upon and insulted by clients and passers-by; are slapped, punched, and mocked in public spaces; and regularly experience sexual abuse.

The challenges facing Madan Sara have a knock-on effect on public health. A key issue is the unsanitary conditions under which they operate. Researchers from Ghent University found that in 60% of the cases, flies and animals were evident around stalls, and 65% of the sellers did not have access to potable water. The majority served food with bare hands and did not wash their hands after handling money. This lack of adherence to basic hygiene standards and low awareness of food-borne diseases, combined with the prevalence of charcoal stoves, can lead to serious health risks. Additionally, the imported retail products that street vendors depend on are often hazardous due to poor regulation, as Haiti does not currently have food safety laws.

THE STRATEGY

RADIKAL's process starts with local farmers. Historically, Madan Sara mostly sold produce from their own or their community's farms. But this relationship has been broken by competition from cheaper imports. RADIKAL sources produce from smallholder farmers through partner organizations, creating a win-win situation in which farmers can find a stable market for their produce while women vendors gain access to healthier food at wholesale prices.

Crops are then brought to processing facilities run by cooperatives in which at least 90% of members are women. To reduce environmental impact, RADIKAL has introduced renewable energy in these spaces and installed



Her intersectional, long-term movement for food security and economic empowerment includes more than 2,500 women vendors in 45 towns

bio-digester systems, which circle back waste as fertilizer for farmers. The products are then brought to a central kitchen to prepare and package food using biodegradable packaging made from agricultural waste.

In the last stage, Nora has assembled a distribution network of women street vendors called Saradi (a portmanteau of “RADIKAL” and “Madan Sara”). These women participate in an 18-month training program that includes food sanitation and hygiene, business management and other skills. Nora has partnered with international NGOs for these workshops, such as World Central Kitchen and the Clean Cooking Alliance. After the first two months of the program, Saradi can invest in a RADIKAL food cart and start selling, with the option of participating in a mutual savings program to help finance the cost. Carts are equipped with clean cooking stoves and other upgrades that would be difficult to finance otherwise. After they graduate, Saradi continues to access financing, business and marketing support and further training opportunities. RADIKAL also works with municipal governments to ensure that network members have access to state insurance programs, financing tools, and secure work areas, although this support has been destabilized by political turmoil.

As an example of what the full process looks like, to produce peanut oil RADIKAL sources organic peanuts from farmers, and then a women’s cooperative processes them into oil. The oil is packaged and stored by RADIKAL and ordered on an as-needed basis by Saradi to use for cooking or to sell directly. (Conversely, some imported cooking oils sold by Madan Sara have been reported to be toxic recycled oils from international fast-food restaurants.)

RADIKAL’s network currently includes more than 2,500 women vendors in 45 towns, mainly in the south of the country. They each pay a monthly franchise fee that is reinvested into the program. Even with this added cost and the initial investment in their food cart, women vendor’s revenue increases by 50% on average, and their micro-franchise has a 75% success rate compared to less than 20% as an informal business. Thanks to this higher income and their enhanced financial savvy, women build greater economic independence and resilience. They can save or invest in things like health and education for themselves and their families. Many women visit an OBGYN for the first time through RADIKAL’s network of doctors, and others have begun sending their children to school. Given that over 40% of households in Haiti are headed by women, improving their livelihoods can uplift entire communities.

The impact on the Saradis’ individual capacity and financial wellbeing reaches far beyond their own households. By investing in them, RADIKAL seeks to strengthen their role in building food security. Saradi typically serve 400 meals every day, collectively impacting over 125,000 people daily who rely on them entirely for nourishment. Through RADIKAL, they are helping more people access healthy meals affordably. Their food is also safer to eat, thanks to training in food safety and hygiene, and the replacement of coal with clean cooking stoves. Additionally, the network of Madan Sara allows RADIKAL to channel resources to communities that humanitarian organizations find difficult to access. Their importance continues to grow as political, social, and economic crises in Haiti deepen.

Nora has had to remain agile to consolidate and grow RADIKAL in a deeply uncertain context, navigating situations such as gang control on Haiti’s main roads that cuts off supplies, and country-wide shutdowns that force vendors to stay home. This is precisely why RADIKAL is so vital: Organizing as a network makes it possible to redirect resources efficiently and to obtain economies of scale to implement adaptive solutions. For example, after being without gas for three months, RADIKAL leveraged its partnership with Clean Cooking Alliance to switch vendors from gas to ethanol stoves, enabling members to maintain their livelihoods.

In the long term, the food value chains that Nora has built through RADIKAL can become self-sustaining, as farmers, cooperatives and street vendors become better connected and build wealth. The goal is to cut dependence on international aid and predatory imports. Once the political situation is stabilized, Nora plans to mobilize this network of women to advocate for institutionalized training and support and protection of their rights as workers. She hopes that, over time, the network will create collective power to influence policy.

The pervasiveness of street food worldwide means that the model can be readily adapted and replicated. Globally, an estimated 2.5 billion people consume street food each day; in Latin America, street food accounts for up to 30% of urban household purchases. Aware of this potential, Nora has identified the Haitian diaspora as a potential lever to scale internationally in the next three years. She plans to engage Haitians spread throughout the Caribbean and Latin America to establish franchise networks that offer migrants employment opportunities.



Nora's distribution network of women street vendors called Saradi (a portmanteau of "RADIKAL" and "Madan Sara") participate in an 18-month training program that includes food sanitation and hygiene, business management and other skills. After they graduate, Saradi continues to access financing, business and marketing support and further training opportunities.

THE PERSON

Nora grew up between Haiti and the United States. Her grandfathers were farmers, and her grandmothers were Madan Sara, but her parents were able to study and become professionals. Nora became determined to make a positive impact after observing the opportunities that were open to her, while her family and community struggled with poverty. When she migrated to the U.S. definitively at 13 years old, she vowed to return.

At 20 years old she worked at the National Coalition for Haitian Rights in New York to gain a deeper understanding of the Haitian context and learn where she could have the biggest impact. Her job gave her a chance to travel back to Haiti. She was surprised by how hard it was to find quality household items at accessible prices and was

frustrated to see the dependence on cheap, potentially dangerous imports. At the same time, she noted people's struggle to find formal employment, especially difficult for women. This sparked an idea for a business of locally made products that could create sustainable livelihoods for women.

The idea took force after an earthquake devastated the country in 2010. Relatives started reaching out to her for urgent help, and an already bleak situation became increasingly desperate. After developing a model while raising two children, in 2015 Nora took the jump and moved back to Haiti to launch her project. This decision cost her the support of her family and partner. She suddenly found herself a single mother in a country riddled with challenges. Undeterred, Nora worked odd jobs while building RADIKAL, a micro-retailing brand of



cosmetics made with local organic ingredients and distributed through Madan Sara.

Yet another crisis forced Nora to pivot. When the COVID-19 pandemic happened, Nora realized that lockdowns would severely impact thousands of people who rely on street vendors for food. She quickly repurposed the network of small farmers and women she had assembled through RADIKAL to deliver food aid. The dramatic impact achieved in this period motivated her to turn this emergency response into a long-term strategy for food security and economic empowerment.



ARMIN SALEK

Founder and Executive Director of Youth Justice Alliance

 youthjusticealliance.org

Armin's high school legal clinics provide legal support where it is needed and give young people from overlooked communities the idea and belief that they, too, can pursue careers in law.

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THE NEW IDEA

Armin uses the law to help young people find and share their power. Through his work developing legal aid clinics in Texas high schools, he has shown that young people can learn about the legal system and effectively address legal issues facing their families, friends, and neighbors. Their experiences learning and applying the law set many of his students on new paths toward careers in law, seeding change in the makeup of the profession.

While splitting his time between studying at law school and volunteering in high schools, Armin had an epiphany. He realized that he might be able to tap into the talents of high school students themselves to help legal literacy, knowledge, and power flow more equitably between the law profession and low-income, majority-minority communities. So, in 2017, while awaiting the results of his bar exam, he earned his teaching certificate and was licensed as an attorney and certified as a teacher in the same week. He then accepted a teaching position, and with a group of students from Akins High School in Austin, Texas, established the first high school legal aid clinic in the country. Diverse, talented, bilingual high school

students from underrepresented communities, guided by a licensed attorney (Armin himself!), helped with cases, and in so doing were inspired to pursue legal careers themselves. Over the next few years, Armin and his students brought over \$100,000 worth of free and transformative legal support to their community.



To jump-start an interest in the law among young people who hadn't been exposed to that career path, Salek created the Legal Eagle Internship at Austin's Akins High School. It is the first high school legal aid clinic in the country."





On top of feelings of pride and purpose, in exchange for their hard work, the students gain a rigorous grasp of the law, valuable mentorships, and institutional knowledge – all of which opens doors heading towards possible professional careers. PHOTO CREDIT: Armin Salek

Armin is no longer in the front of the classroom, supervising that first legal clinic, or coaching Akins' Mock Trial team. Today he leads the non-profit he founded, the Youth Justice Alliance, as the vehicle to spread this model -- first in Texas and then throughout the country. Toward that goal, Armin supports high school teachers and administrators through curriculum development, guidance, and support in making classes engaging, including by crafting new routes for law students, Bar Associations, and local law firms to connect with young people. Within ten years, he envisions school attorneys and legal clinics will be as ubiquitous as school counselors, and in the process will inspire young people from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue legal careers, transforming the demographics of the profession for good.

THE PROBLEM

Even though law shapes much of our lives, the legal landscape is hard for many to navigate. Widespread legal literacy is low. In terms of formal education, most people will experience no more than the occasional "Know Your Rights" campaign, with minimal impact. A 2019 survey from the American Bar Association found that only 5% of respondents could correctly answer basic civic questions about freedom of the press, due process, and citizenship.

When secondary schools do provide law courses or host mock trial teams, the classes and cases focus almost

exclusively on criminal law. The emphasis often seems to be more about entertaining students than equipping them with knowledge of how the law works and how it shapes our lives.

One might argue that "how-to-fix-your-car literacy" or "computer hardware literacy" is also low, but repair shops can provide the needed know-how for reasonable fees. High costs and other barriers make legal services out of reach for low-income, minority, and immigrant communities in the United States. Retaining a lawyer for something as simple as a basic living will or a name change can easily cost more than a month's wages. Families making less than \$33,125 per year qualify for legal aid, but 86% of those who technically qualify for public defense or pro bono support report that they receive inadequate or no help at all. There are too few public defenders or legal clinics to meet the huge need, and there are huge linguistic and cultural barriers between lawyers and their clients. Indeed, the legal profession is the least diverse in the US, with 85% of all lawyers identifying as white.

The legal profession has largely owned up to its diversity deficits, but its current strategies are insufficient. Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts often focus on increasing the number of minorities on staff, so firms tend to focus on hiring law school grads from minority communities. Yet there are currently too few people of color



Armin saw his students come alive when digging into the legal issues that more directly impacted them and their communities: for example, tenant law, employment law, immigration, and family law.

PHOTO CREDIT: Armin Salek

graduating from U.S. law schools for the field overall to achieve meaningful representation.

Armin, a lawyer himself, immigrated to the US from Iran when he was a child. He believes we need to democratize the whole legal profession, starting with raising overall legal literacy levels and creating meaningful roles and futures for overlooked high school students in low-income, majority-minority schools.

THE STRATEGY

Early on, Armin realized that when our legal aid offices are overburdened or ill-equipped to serve diverse communities, we must at least empower people to stand up for themselves. In his capacity as a high school law teacher and coach for a mock trial team, he saw many untapped opportunities to do so. He pushed back against the superficial obsession with criminal law and saw his students come alive when digging into the legal issues that more directly affected them and their communities – for example, tenant law, employment law, family law, and immigration.

Since 2017, Armin has been fine-tuning a first-of-its-kind legal education course packed with meaningful content, including case studies that appeal to students' interests, and images and videos of Black and Brown professionals engaging with the law. He provides practical materials that teach migrants, employees, tenants, and abuse survivors about their rights. Today the course is made available to all students in Texas as a virtual offering and can be easily adapted to be incorporated into other courses, like civics and history, since a stand-alone law course is often considered a luxury in under-resourced schools.

Armin has found his students eager to show up and engage deeply and authentically with the content he

presents. They experience joy, purpose, and a sense of connection in their classrooms. As Armin puts it, he knows plenty of students who don't care about grades or even about graduating, but he has met none who are unwilling to help their community or to step up when given an opportunity to serve. What shape did that opportunity take? Armin and one of his first classes at Akins launched the Akins Legal Aid Clinic, the nation's first legal clinic staffed by high school students.



Under Salek's instruction and guidance, students work directly on legal cases that meet community needs. Students work directly with clients, while also learning about issues such as confidentiality, the role of attorneys, and how to build trust with a client, especially as a high school student."



Just like the law clinics that Armin worked in as a law student, this clinic was staffed by trained non-lawyers (high school students) and supervised by an attorney (Armin himself). Students had a clear sense of what types of cases they could tackle -- yes to expungements and name



Armin saw his students come alive when digging into the legal issues that more directly impacted them and their communities: for example, tenant law, employment law, immigration, and family law.

PHOTO CREDIT: Armin Salek

changes, no to death penalty defenses -- and their services were free to communities in need. It quickly became clear that this clinic was far more effective because the teenage legal assistants brought things that law-student staffed clinics too often lacked: Language skills (in Spanish, French, Arabic, Tagalog, American Sign Language, and Mandarin), cultural competency, and community ties. To date, more than 2,000 students across Texas have been directly involved. They have helped faculty prepare living wills, secured green cards for school staff, and completed name changes for victims of domestic partner violence. They have provided more than \$100,000 in value to their community.

On top of feelings of pride and purpose, in exchange for their hard work, the students gain a rigorous grasp of the law, valuable mentorships, and institutional knowledge, all of which open doors toward possible professional careers. Armin's Youth Justice Alliance also offers a four-year fellowship to a select group of highly motivated students, who get extra academic programming as well as hands-on experience in legal settings and access to adult allies already in legal professions. This programming is sponsored by local law firms who see the value in investing in their full talent pipeline. Even when young alumni don't pursue legal careers, all leave with important information about their rights as tenants, students, employees, and migrants, as well as the transferable skills that will help them regardless of industry.



With a focus on underrepresented populations and Title I Schools [the Youth Justice Alliance] works to 'democratize the law by redistributing legal knowledge and legal power.' It demonstrates the power of law as a pathway towards creating more equitable communities. "

GETTING SMART

Armin works nationally with bar associations and law school alumni networks to see his model adopted, whether by a school (Akins High, with an attorney educator on staff, the Legal Justice course on offer, or a



When thinking back on how he started the high school legal clinic, Armin has noted that, "I saw the students' dedication and contributions in person, and it was clear to me that I could trust them to work under my license." PHOTO CREDIT: Armin Salek



Armin saw his students come alive when digging into the legal issues that more directly impacted them and their communities: for example, tenant law, employment law, immigration, and family law. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Armin Salek

regular weekend legal clinic); in a city (Austin, where other schools offer the course and the Akins' attorney supervises their legal clinics), or across a state (Texas, where the statewide curriculum is being finalized; where cities like San Antonio and Houston are developing their own clusters, and where state-wide associations and institutions are supporting the work).

When thinking back on how he started the high school legal clinic, Armin says, "I saw the students' dedication and contributions in person, and it was clear to me that I could trust them to work under my license." So, when Armin engages Bar Associations, rather than having them deploy lawyers to give standard presentations to classrooms of sleepy students, he shifts their engagement so that they can see young people as powerful. Instead of a PowerPoint lecture, he asks attorneys to share their own stories of why practicing law is meaningful and to invite students to share how the law is impacting their lives. Coach a mock trial team, he advises them, until you

find yourself saying, "Wow, these kids are good!" Pitch in to help at the student-run clinics or get firms to sponsor a summer fellowship for young scholars. Armin feels that one of his greatest successes is having changed the minds of many legal professionals, who now see the impact of investing in diversity at an early stage -- before students even think about college.

Next, Armin plans to be in at least 20 school districts across Texas with support from three law schools. Each school in the network will offer weekend community legal aid clinics once a month, and at least 100 of the participating young people will earn stipends of \$1,000 per summer for their participation. In ten years, Armin envisions law courses being the norm in every Title I School in Texas, while spreading across the country as on-campus legal aid clinics and "schoolhouse lawyers" become as ubiquitous as on-campus social workers.



We're not there yet, but Armin is seeing the pieces fall into place. Whenever he hears someone opine about the merits of a mandatory year of service, Armin is quick to interject that that's what the full four years of high school should look like, where students use their Spanish skills to help their neighbors or their math skills to support a local farm, during school hours and not as an extracurricular or for extra credit. And when someone suggests we introduce STEM education earlier, Armin tells them that it's also never too early to learn about legal careers. Legal literacy can come earlier and be made far more relevant, youth-led, and practical. The power students draw from acquiring legal knowledge and applying it on behalf of their communities can alter the course of their lives and their careers.

THE PERSON

Armin moved to the U.S. from Iran at the age of five when his parents received a diversity lottery visa. His

family story suddenly changed, he says, when they diverted from the path of government restrictions, mandatory service in the Iranian army, and a lack of economic opportunity to their lucky shot at charting a new family story in the U.S.

Making the most of this opportunity weighed heavily on young Armin. In school, he was focused on getting perfect grades, but his heart wasn't in it. He thought maybe his calling was to be the class clown, but he wasn't funny enough to pull that off, either. Then, as part of a service requirement for a leadership class in middle school, he was responsible for cleaning up the yard of an elderly man who had just lost his spouse. Armin took this very seriously. He vividly remembers thinking, "This is authentic, this is meaningful, this is impactful." While his peers had similar experiences, he was struck by how much it really motivated him. From this very early age, he settled on a truth that became a life guide: That everyone comes alive when they have a chance to serve somebody else. Armin believes that "many won't be motivated by grades or family expectations, but all enjoy and are inspired by a chance to serve their neighbors."

His own commitment to serving his community led him to law school, to getting his teaching certification, to launching the student-staffed legal clinic at Akins High School, and now, to sharing his innovative legal curricula. He's been recognized by his peers as Austin ISD High School Teacher of the Year for 2020 and Texas Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year for 2021, while also receiving other accolades and increasing support for his contributions. He has honed his skills in curriculum writing, partnership development, youth empowerment, and community engagement, and -- via Youth Justice Alliance, the non-profit that he founded and leads -- he has developed a vehicle to spread this work around the country.



HASTINGS NHLANE

Founder and CEO of ACADES

 acadesmw.com

Hastings has made agriculture once again a viable, attractive career option for young people.

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THE NEW IDEA

70 percent of Africa's 1.3 billion people live in rural areas. Here agriculture remains for most the only real way of making a living. It is also critical to feeding the growing African population.

Hastings is making farming a viable and appealing career path for young people in Malawi and beyond. He provides tailor-made technical advice on agriculture and the business of farming to start-up young farmers. Through his organization ACADES, Hastings helps young people establish productive smallholder farms, then unite to improve their productivity and increase their income. He is helping drive a significant change of attitude in Malawi, where farmwork is seen as an occupation of last resort, associated with poverty and hard labor. Hastings is generating real economic prospects in rural areas, where 80 percent of the population lacks access to formal employment options that can adequately support their livelihoods and food security.

Hastings' organization ACADES helps young people overcome multiple challenges, or barriers to entry into

farming. First, it provides training in soil and water management, agribusiness, routes to market, and the like. Then ACADES' own microfinancing arm helps with inputs and early loans, so young farmers can get established and build credit. It then connects them to profitable markets, where they can sell their products at fair prices.

ACADES has developed a thriving community of small-scale young farmers, enabling them to create employment for themselves and others. So far ACADES has reached 6,900 direct beneficiaries, trained 2,625 farmers, and organized 64 new farmer groups.

ACADES has been identified by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN as having the best approach in Africa to strengthening youth employment creation through agriculture. ACADES received the Presidential Zikomo Award from the President of the Republic of Malawi for its outstanding work in creating economic opportunities for rural communities.



After experiencing firsthand the challenges young people face with owning land and farming, Hastings felt pulled to resolve the problem for other young people who might be facing similar difficulties.



ACADES is making agriculture a viable option for rural youth employment creation and creating economic opportunities in rural areas where 80% of people do not have access to formal employment opportunities to support and sustain their livelihoods"



THE PROBLEM

Young people account for 60 percent of the unemployed on the African continent, and there is an urgent need to create work and livelihoods for them in line with population growth. In Malawi, 75 percent of the population is younger than 35, according to the Malawi Population Census Report of 2018. The same report projects that Malawi's population will grow by 35 percent in the next five years.

Despite high unemployment rates, many young people in Malawi and in Africa generally perceive agriculture as an activity for the old and poor, offering only low income and low status. They have grown up seeing farmers in their communities live in poverty and have limited exposure to other role models in agriculture. Additionally, most youth are only familiar with traditional and low-value crops such as maize. Most Malawian families want their children to move to cities when they are grown and find formal employment. The idea that farming is a terrible fate is so engrained that teachers often threaten students that if they don't work hard in school, they'll become farmers.

There are also many practical barriers that make entering farming challenging. Young people tend to have low financial literacy, no savings or credit history, no experience keeping business records and aren't organized in groups, all factors that hinder them from accessing essential support services. Young farmers are seen by financial institutions as risky clients, making it hard for them to get the capital to purchase inputs.

While there are some programs aimed at addressing youth unemployment, most focus on the promotion of technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial activities, mostly in the traditional trades (e.g. carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation, etc.). These programs are

implemented primarily in urban areas, not disconnected rural communities. And they do not focus on agriculture as a sector that can create good jobs for young people.

The few agriculture programs that do target young people are not comprehensive enough to ensure sustainability. They focus on things like training and markets but fall short in transforming the negative mindset that rural youth have towards farming. Existing interventions and government extension programs stress financing for seasonal production, but not beyond that season or that program's duration, providing no long-term aid or guidance. Supporting youth in agriculture is seen as risky and unattractive to most stakeholders and service providers. Consequently, most youth in agriculture engage in farming as an activity of last resort and are looking for ways to exit the profession.

THE STRATEGY

ACADES attracts young people into farming by changing their mindset and reducing risk, through youth-to-youth empowerment programs, a community-led approach, and strategic partnerships.

At its inception, ACADES partnered with the Ministry of Youth, which already had existing youth structures in villages for health promotion purposes. The first youth collectives for agriculture were recruited from these groups. ACADES collectives consist of self-selected young people

who chose their own group leaders. ACADES' only stipulation is that there is equal representation by gender among the leadership, as often men seek and occupy these roles. The collectives are structured as informal savings groups. Some participants have bank accounts; others in more remote locations use mobile money. Training ensures the youth farmers develop necessary skills, covering themes around modern production, climate-smart agriculture, soil and crop management, water management, agribusiness, and financial literacy, so that they can increase their productivity and sustain their production resources. After training, ACADES offers the collectives loans in the form of inputs to get their farming endeavors going. All these measures are important, given that previously unemployed youth are starting up with little prior training and no experience in agribusiness. They ensure that young farmers have sufficient know-how to produce good yields, 40 percent of which are for household consumption. The other 60 percent are cash crops such as soybeans and rice that enable these new farmers to, among other purposes, pay back the loans from ACADES. As ACADES has grown and news about its work and success has spread, more groups are approaching the organization independently to join its programs.



I am really impressed with the project I visited here at ACADES. These youths have created jobs for themselves, and they are able to work with local people.” – World Bank Country Director for Malawi



ACADES has developed a thriving community of small-scale farmers and enabled them to unite to collectively enhance their productivity and increase their income.



To overcome the challenges of access to finance, in 2022 ACADES started its own microfinancing institution, wholly owned by ACADES Foundation. As the new farmers are young and have no credit record, ACADES provides tailor-made loans and loan products, including certified seeds, fertilizers, inoculates, farming implements, and irrigation equipment. These high-quality inputs, productive assets, and advanced technologies enable rural small-scale farmers to quickly increase their

productivity and therefore their income. This reduces the “risk” to farming and makes it easier for young people to get access to future financing, by demonstrating creditworthiness. So far, ACADES has a loan book value of about 230,000 USD. The average loan is 46 USD, and only six percent of borrowers default. When there is a default, it is carried to the next planting season and is a group liability; therefore, the groups reinforce collective responsibility. To date ACADES has provided over 5,000 input loans.

To further influence the way other financial institutions fund small farmers, ACADES is part of the Malawi Micro-finance Network, where it promotes loan products for youth farmer collectives. As ACADES is the only institution that invests in young farmers, Hastings hopes to influence other lenders to expand their loan portfolios to include young farmers, based on their success and the tools ACADES has created (e.g., for record-keeping of income, expenses, sales and loan contributions) that can provide alternative ways to verify creditworthiness.



The beauty of this initiative is that it is directly complimenting the government's development agenda, in line with Malawi 2063, in ensuring food security, job creation and wealth creation.”



To bridge the lack of markets for small-scale farmers, ACADES brings ethical buyers who will pay fair-market prices to its farmers in very rural areas. This reduces risk, in addition to enabling its borrowers to make more money from their hard work. ACADES has established market centers in all its farming communities, where farmers sell their produce and get fair prices for their commodities. As these young farmers make more money, they are able to reinvest it in their business. ACADES has also connected its farmers to international markets, participating in the Intra African Trade fair in Durban, South Africa and the Lusaka Business Indaba in Lusaka, Zambia.

Its model has positioned ACADES as an organization of influence in promoting youth economic empowerment through agriculture in Malawi and Africa. Hastings is

vice-president for the regional farmers’ body South Africa Confederation of Agricultural Unions. ACADES is part of the core advisory panel for Malawi Vision 2063 and is involved in designing country strategy papers for bilateral organizations including the German Development Corporation and the government of Flanders. This places ACADES in a unique position to influence policy and resources targeted at supporting youth participation in agribusiness. ACADES also contributes to the core advisory panel on youth for Malawi’s National Planning Commission, as well as its Ministry of Gender, to break down cultural barriers which hinder women from participating in the agricultural sector.

ACADES has now scaled to five districts in Malawi and aims to grow to all 12 rural districts there, with the goal of creating 500,000 youth farmers in that country in the next five years and creating one million agriculture-related jobs for rural youth throughout Africa. ACADES plans to expand to three new countries – Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe – by 2025. Their growth strategy is to scale the idea through partnerships. The demand for learning visits with ACADES farmers is growing, especially after the UN Food and Agriculture Organization named it the best model to create opportunities for youth in agriculture. To date Hastings has hosted learning visits from organizations in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and Zambia, focused on sharing the ACADES model and how it can be adapted to other African countries.



When I saw ACADES and what they were doing with agriculture, I thought it was a perfect organization for us to partner with. I saw that they’re doing something that has the potential to help the country as a whole.” – Lusayo Mwakatika, Former President of Project Malawi at the University of Wisconsin





ACADES is the largest network of youth in agribusiness in Malawi with over 3,000 members—making agribusiness a viable option for youth employment creation and economic empowerment



THE PERSON

From early in life, Hastings has been exposed to the difficulties faced by the agricultural sector in his country. He grew up wanting to be a teacher, as these were the well-to-do people in his community. Watching farmers struggle to make ends meet in his community made farming an undesirable career option for him. After graduating from high school, he wanted to study engineering but was not granted his first choice and ended up studying agriculture at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. In his first year he was determined to change his degree, but as he started gaining a better understanding of agribusiness, he grew to love agriculture. During his days as an active student leader, he attended a talk that challenged him to reflect on how he could lead the change he wanted to see in agriculture. Upon graduating, he tried his hand at commercial agriculture by farming onions. He experienced firsthand the challenges young people face with owning land and farming when his uncle repossessed the land he was farming on, after seeing that he was starting to make a success of it. This sparked in him the urge to resolve the problem for other young people who might be facing similar difficulties, and he approached the Ministry of Agriculture to allocate land for young agriculture graduates to farm. After many months of persistence, he was allocated 100 hectares of virgin land, but the land proved difficult to work in. He and his fellow young farmers approached over 12 institutions to support them, all of which declined, citing their youth as a risk making them unsafe to invest in. Hastings was not deterred and continued trying to find ways to innovate for young people. He was gifted 6 hectares of land by his university professors, and this laid the foundation for ACADES.

ENVIRONMENT





LAILI KHAIRNUR

Indonesia



LAETITIA VASSEUR

France



VALMIR ORTEGA

Brazil



AGUSTINA BESADA

Argentina



GITA SYAHRANI

Indonesia





LAILI KHAIRNUR

Executive Director of Gemawan

 gemawan.org

Laili trains women from different ethnic and religious groups to collaborate to improve family income and agricultural practices. As their collaborations succeed, women become recognized as community leaders, who then work across boundaries to protect natural resources, establish land rights, and prevent and defuse social and political conflict.

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THE NEW IDEA

Laili organizes women across ethnic and religious divides to work together to improve their family income and food security in the West Kalimantan province of Indonesia. In building and connecting these women's groups Laili is subtly addressing the interplay of ethnic, religious, and land ownership divisions in her region. As women from differing backgrounds begin to accomplish positive change for their communities, they build trust in each other. As they demonstrate their achievements, they become recognized as leaders, a rare distinction in the traditional, patriarchal culture of the region. They begin to contribute to decision-making for their communities. Women are then able to address larger issues of land use and natural resource management with legitimacy and impact. Importantly, their cross-cultural partnerships position them as peacemakers. The trust they develop in each other enables them to prevent or respond to conflict when it arises between larger communities.

Indonesia is vulnerable to conflict, at times violent, due to land, wealth, and power disparities, as well as ethnic and religious identity issues. Of particular importance is how land is allocated and used and who has the power to decide. Women in Laili's groups are increasingly able to influence natural resource management and secure land rights for their communities against annexation by corporations. This is significant for a region where land rights are often contested and which has been targeted by the Indonesian government for large-scale palm oil production, threatening local ownership, use, and cultural meaning.

Laili's grassroots groups have used their new authority to do land surveys of their communities to establish clear title for previously untitled farmers, to set up credit unions that provide financing to farmers and fishers without regard to ethnic or religious identity, and to protect vital



Laili is building a network of women's groups at different levels and strengthening them with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society. PHOTO CREDIT: Laili Khairnur

peatland and mangrove areas by implementing new regulations that allocate land use based on zoning.

Laili also connects these grassroots organizations with national and global public campaigns to protect forest and water resources from large-scale palm oil plantation development. Together with a network of civil society groups, Laili and her organization, Gemawan, successfully challenged the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) to change its investment strategies in the palm oil sector and to halt financing to some companies.

To buttress conflict prevention, Laili and her network of community women leaders are introducing the tools of democratic citizenship across the domains they work in. They have trained regional governments on transparent decision-making and on applying field data, gathered by citizens, to ensure fair access to land. Gemawan has also helped local governments set up regulations that require companies seeking permits to obtain community consent before taking over land.

By starting in areas of common concern for women -- family income and food security -- Laili is positioning women as leaders in arenas where they will not be seen

as challenging traditional male authority. Women in her networks are then able to build on their successes and expand their activities to address problems further up the chain: Natural resource use, land rights, access to financing, and conservation. Laili and her networks are now expanding their work to universities and Islamic schools to provide training in sustainable agriculture and democratic decision-making to younger Indonesians.



Gemawan is currently identifying innovators at the local level to become actors of change."

THE PROBLEM

West Kalimantan, on the island of Borneo, is facing an unprecedented loss of rainforest due to development and agriculture. This is exacerbated by a lack of policies around natural resource management or poor implementation of those that exist. Regional spatial planning, which zones areas for productive use, as protected or customary land, or under individual ownership, has not been available there.

Corruption is rife. It is still common for land concession-holders to tamper with documentation in order to annex land from local people. An additional challenge is that large businesses seeking to operate in the region are supported by powerful global institutions like the IFC.



Since 2010, Gemawan has tried to work on spatial planning issues in order to strengthen communities' activities on land rights and commodity protection."



To ethnic minorities like the Dayaks and others who call Kalimantan home, the rainforest provides not just an economic resource but a cultural identity, and many fear that along with the diminishment of the forest, their culture will also dwindle. As the government plans to center Indonesia's palm oil production in West Kalimantan, forests and agricultural land cultivated by small farmers with no ownership certificates would be converted into palm oil plantations. On paper, this land is considered idle or unproductive, making it easier for the government to dispossess indigenous people of their land.

Land disputes and discrimination between different ethnic groups complicate the situation and have prevented these groups from working together against threats from outside. Immigration policies during the Suharto regime in the 1980s encouraged migration to the region, which led to competition with indigenous communities for land and resources and triggered communal conflicts.

In the past two decades, Indonesia has witnessed episodes of violent conflict in West Kalimantan, as well as in the provinces or cities of Maluku, Poso, and Papua. In West Kalimantan, over a thousand people died and hundreds of thousands were internally displaced. Millions of people continue to live with trauma from the violence and community disintegration and continue to face stigma and stereotyping. This has had ripple effects in other aspects of life. For example, because of prejudices against Dayaks and Catholics, people from these communities are less able to access financial services from the main local credit union due to quiet discrimination.

Women who have made attempts to build peace have not been listened to, due to their traditionally subordinate role, especially around public matters. Women's political participation is limited by the deeply rooted patriarchal culture. In the traditional culture of West Kalimantan, men lead, and women are behind the scenes, especially around natural resource management. Women have limited access to and control of resources and no voice in decision-making, even as their communities face dramatic environmental changes threatening their livelihoods and homes.

THE STRATEGY

When faced with this pressing environmental issue, Laili realized that progress could only happen if land use, ethnic tension, and women's rights were all addressed together. She saw potential in making women key to tackling these overlapping issues.

Laili is building a network of women's groups at different levels and strengthening them with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society.

She began by organizing small groups of women to partner in health and income-generating activities, such as vegetable gardening and planting black rice. Laili chose these activities as an entry point so that her work would not be perceived as a threat by spouses or traditional male village leaders. Vegetable gardening also contributes to meeting both a family's needs and community food sovereignty. It sustains and protects local indigenous food crops that are environmentally friendly and gives respect to the variety of local foods.

Laili then provided these women with civic education to help them organize to protect their land and forests. Since these groups had proven themselves to the larger community and male authorities, showing the women as key

contributors to their families' economy and livelihood, the reaction of the rest of the community, especially from village leaders, was largely positive. The women received an introduction to political and economic sovereignty and leadership training, and, over time, began to take on leadership roles in the community. Now, in each of the villages, there is a vibrant and active women's group demonstrating leadership.



Gemawan is experienced in building community organizing, inclusive community groups which further strengthens local capacity with knowledge and ability to empower the community. This makes it possible to build democratic decisions about what is desired collectively at the local and community level."

EQUATOR INITIATIVE

Laili connects the women's groups at the district and provincial levels. She has established fifty village women's groups across 250 villages, as well as networks in ten cities or districts across West Kalimantan. These groups are now being replicated in other provinces across the Sumatra Island region. Gemawan has grown to a staff of 35 across four branches and mobilizes up to 50 volunteers from the communities and nearby universities. In the near future, Laili plans to set up a training and learning center in West Kalimantan and in new provinces and establish Gemawan as a "Center of Excellence" for education in multiple domains.

Addressing ethnic and religious prejudices and social stigma, Laili applies inclusive practices. She sets diversity in gender, ethnic, and religious backgrounds as one of Gemawan's organizational principles. She also brings the different ethnic groups to work together in social forestry and advocacy activities, which over time has broken down religious stereotypes and stigma, and mitigated community disintegration.



Laili trains women from different ethnic and religious groups to collaborate and lead for sustainable change in their communities, PHOTO CREDIT: Laili Khairnur

Additionally, Laili set up a new credit union to break down discrimination and provide access to financing for a network of farmers and fisherfolk groups that Gemawan has assisted. Gemawan has now set up two additional credit unions in the province.

To aid reconciliation from previous conflicts in the area, Laili has delivered humanitarian support to refugee camps through Gemawan and helped mediate reconciliation between refugees and local indigenous groups. Now, the refugees have begun to set up their own villages within the refugee camps, as the local Dayak and Sambas people are becoming more welcoming.

Gemawan joins with women and community leaders to advocate for policy development at the village level, particularly around measures that help citizens codify their land titles, which have often been observed informally before. This effort aims to prevent land disputes among community members and companies as it uses village authority to map regional lands. Gemawan facilitates this mapping using drone technology to produce more accurate maps.

Laili's networks also campaign for new laws in natural resource management. In a partnership with two district governments, Gemawan trained village facilitators to oversee policy processes and strengthen community participation to ensure fair access to land and forest use.

To further this advocacy at higher levels, Laili built a network of civil society organizations, the Coalition for Sustainable and Just Spatial Management, in 2013. The Coalition advocated for provincial regulation to secure and protect the rights to forests and land of indigenous and local communities against the expansion of palm oil, timber plantations, and mining companies.

To increase transparency, the Coalition initiated a public review of any draft regulations, which has become a new practice in West Kalimantan and nationally. The Coalition has also been able to establish regulations to allocate land based on zoning, which includes protecting peatland and mangrove forests from conversion to palm oil plantations.

To educate young volunteers, Laili partnered with universities to establish the Youth School for Politics and Democracy. Laili also partners with Islamic boarding schools and has set up the Learning Center and Home Garden Development program to provide concrete learning on land management practices. Six Learning Centers and 24 support home gardens have been established in 24 locations.

To further transparency, Laili also helps communities monitor existing concession permits or use of land by outside actors, using drone and GIS (Geographic Information System) technologies. To support this field monitoring, Laili set up a complaint mechanism for villagers. When field data from villagers is received, Gemawan can analyze and compare whether sustainability claims by companies match with field data and identify discrepancies. With this mechanism, Laili is enforcing the anti-corruption movement and advocacy for good and clean governance. The Coalition has also trained government officers on managing concessions, including monitoring companies that perpetuate unsustainable practices.

Additionally, when companies or actors want to obtain a land use permit, they now must implement a free, prior, and informed consent procedure to ensure they obtain meaningful consent from community members before taking over their land.

Laili also conducts global campaigns and participates in global environmental networks. In one significant case, she used field data and identified herself as the local victim, to challenge unsustainable practices and illegal annexation of palm oil plantation lands by Wilmar International. Wilmar, a global agribusiness conglomerate, had financing from the World Bank. Engaging with global NGOs, Laili brought the Wilmar case to the IFC to demand a two- to three-year pause on global lending in order to restore environmental and social safeguards. Because of this campaign, the IFC changed its investment policies and strategies in the palm oil sector. Laili currently sits on the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) to demand investors and companies practice sustainability. This strategic litigation model has been replicated to address mining issues and has also been used as a best practice reference in Sarawak, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Latin America.

THE PERSON

Laili Khairnur was born in 1975 to a Malay family, in a poor and multiethnic village community by the border with Malaysia. She was raised mostly by her father, a school headmaster, after her mother passed away when Laili was just eleven. Young Laili healed herself and passed through the hardship, which made her an independent girl facing life without a mother. She learned empathy and perseverance from her father, a role model to her in bringing about peace in a multiethnic community. She learned from his struggle with an authoritarian government when, despite being a civil servant, he affiliated himself with a non-ruling party.



Addressing ethnic and religious prejudices and social stigma, Laili applies inclusive practices. She sets diversity in gender, ethnic, and religious backgrounds as one of Gemawan's organizational principles.

Living in a multicultural and multi-religious community taught Laili to respect differences from a young age. She learned that every religion teaches goodness. During her teen years at an Islamic boarding school, Laili witnessed discrimination by the community against her Madurese friends. Due to poverty, many of them had to drop out of school and work as household maids in Malaysia. Interethnic communal violence hit her village of Sambas in 1997, and later, Sampit in 1999. In a pivotal moment, she recalls that her father saved the life of her Madurese neighbor by helping her flee the village. To Laili, religious conflicts jeopardize respect for difference and diversity. So she decided to do something about it.

Laili went to study in Yogyakarta in 1993, at IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, an Islamic university. Moved by her father's advice to care for other people, especially those in need, Laili was an eager volunteer during college. She was very active in the Muslim Student Association or HMI. With her female colleagues, she spoke about citizenship and traditions in Islam that made sure men were always chosen as leaders. It was a relatively new topic that wasn't of interest to most women. Yet Laili nominated herself to be the chairperson of the HMI branch in Yogyakarta when it was still uncommon for women to nominate themselves. During her study years there, Laili was also active in working with non-Muslim communities, including Catholic nuns. Laili believed that women could be front-line leaders to keep the peace, but their voices were going unheard. She also learned that the ethnic conflict was triggered by the threats over their

land. So, together with her girlfriends from all different ethnicities (Dayak, Chinese, and Malay), in 2009 she set up a Women's Coalition for Gender, Justice and Peace. She also joined the Women's Alliance for Gender Study to hold congresses voicing women's insights on peace-making and reconciliation of ethnic conflicts in Kalimantan.

Upon returning to her hometown of Pontianak she joined Gemawan as a volunteer in 2001, when it was the first peace-building institution in West Kalimantan. As an intern she established a new women's division and integrated gender into the organization's vision and mission in 2005, transforming Gemawan into a women-led organization. Although most CSOs were dominated by men, Laili was accepted and trusted by local activists and was later elected as the Executive Director of Gemawan in 2008, due to her strong leadership and commitment. International research communities began to take note of Laili's experience with Gemawan, and now she and Gemawan are working with global researchers to share local knowledge internationally.



LAETITIA VASSEUR

Co-Founder and General Delegate of HOP

 www.stopobsolescence.org

Laetitia is spearheading a movement in France to create a “culture of durability” around consumer products and electronics, thereby reducing both damaging environmental waste and cost to consumers. She seeks to increase the lifespan of consumer goods, greatly increase their repairability, and end the practice of planned and premature obsolescence by manufacturers. Through her organization, “Stop Planned Obsolescence”, she is building a new mindset and creating the legal tools, corporate buy-in and citizen awareness to act on it.

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THE NEW IDEA

The goal of Halte à l'Obsolescence Programmée (HOP) is to end the common industrial practice of planned premature obsolescence, in which products are engineered with a limited lifespan, and/or rendered difficult, costly or impractical to repair. The design and manufacture of consumer goods comprises 80 percent of their environmental footprint. By increasing the durability of consumer products, making repairs possible and cost-effective, and challenging assumptions about the value of “newness,” HOP is working to transform French consumption habits. Laetitia is probing for large-scale change by asking companies and consumers to reconsider their part in the entire chain of production: How products are designed, manufactured, marketed, purchased, and cared for. In under a decade, Laetitia has scored big wins. She drafted and steered legislation through lengthy parliamentary maneuvering, succeeding in 2015 to make France the

only country to outlaw planned and premature obsolescence. She successfully sued Apple for software upgrades that pushed owners to discard and replace their iPhones, landing Apple with a €25-million fine. Laetitia has also worked to institute a national “Repairability Index” which rates products on the ease and cost of their repair, which manufacturers and retailers must by law participate in and publicize. And HOP has won a small tax on manufacturers, who now must now pay to offset the costs of repairs for consumers.

Laetitia has accomplished this through skillful coalition building, creating a membership organization of around 70,000 citizens and 30 corporations. Using her experience in gathering allies, creating dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, and her knowledge of legal and regulatory tools, Laetitia is now turning to Europe



Cases like the one brought against Apple highlight the hidden and highly damaging consequences of planned, premature obsolescence – in which companies engineer shorter product lifespans, make repair or parts inaccessible, or require software updates that render even recent models inefficient or useless.

and the wider world. Already EU officials are moving to mandate a Repairability Index for manufacturers across the continent.

THE PROBLEM

Electronic devices have long since become ubiquitous. Machines that once were too costly or complex to own are now everyday household items. And while consumer groups and regulators often ask corporations to address the environmental impact of manufacturing these goods, they have not focused on a product's longevity or durability. Cases like the one brought against Apple highlight the hidden and highly damaging consequences of planned, premature obsolescence – in which companies engineer shorter product lifespans, make repair or parts inaccessible, or require software updates that render even recent models inefficient or useless.

Consumers and investors reward lower-cost goods, pushing companies to make and sell them as cheaply as possible, at the expense of a product's shelf-life or repairability. This phenomenon has produced an explosion of so-called "e-waste" – growing by 5% annually, with only

about 20% of discarded electronic items recycled. Faced with a broken smartphone, coffeemaker or video game device, most consumers are likely to replace, not repair. Indeed, only about ten percent of electrical and electronic equipment in France is repaired outside its warranty period.

While consumer protection groups are natural allies against this throwaway culture, they usually focus on product safety or usability, not on whether a device is likely to be engineered to expire or become prohibitive to fix. So even well-informed consumers aren't cued to consider the environmental repercussions of replacing, not repairing, a broken device and are not armed with the knowledge needed to put pressure on companies to change their practices.

Before HOP's interventions, no one in government or environmental advocacy had looked deeply at the lifecycle of consumer products and whether they were "designed to fail." As a result, companies were not incentivized by the public or by law to make their products as long-lasting and useful as possible, and consumers have had neither the awareness nor the tools to challenge this.



Laetitia has accomplished to spearhead her movement for a “culture of durability” through skillful coalition building, creating a membership organization of around 70,000 citizens and 30 corporations.

THE STRATEGY

Laetitia upended these long-standing patterns. First, she created a more demanding and empowered consumer body. Through HOP, she has equipped citizen-consumers with the knowledge and tactics to become change-makers. Regulatory and retail changes followed, creating global precedents.

She focuses on three target groups to maximize HOP’s reach: (1) Public authorities, with whom Laetitia uses her understanding of policy and advocacy to help shape and pass new laws; (2) consumers, with whom HOP shares information that drive activism; and (3) manufacturers and distributors, with whom HOP shares data and investigates new economic models to disrupt planned obsolescence.



HOP is now a major force.”



HOP has bridged all three groups by convening dialogues and collaborations with consumers, regulators, experts, environmental CSOs, and corporations themselves, orchestrating collective investment in reducing environmental waste. Laetitia recognizes the necessity of finding “buy-in” for her ideas, by seeking input and participation from all players and sharing power and credit. Rather than bringing a “blame and shame” approach to corporations, she recognizes that, as a citizen group, advocating for business regulation is more powerful if done in partnership with companies. She has enlisted their input and their participation across numerous platforms small and large.

Yet when needed, she has not hesitated to initiate class-action lawsuits against businesses like Apple and Epson, gathering thousands of user testimonials and leveraging the media visibility of such actions to build steady pressure on the corporate world, to keep the topic of obsolescence on the public agenda, and to attract new consumers to the movement.



Apple had agreed to pay 25 million euros (\$27.4 million) for failing to tell iPhone users that software updates could slow down older devices...after French prosecutors opened an inquiry in January 2018 at the request of the Halt Planned Obsolescence (HOP) association.”



Laetitia’s work also addresses the entire product supply and sales chain. Drawing on HOP’s expertise and credibility, she has created a “Durability Club.” Participation offers a company a “halo effect” as being environmentally responsible, as well as practical support for early adopters. Beyond manufacturers, Laetitia has enlisted distributors like the large French electronic retailer FNAC-DARTY; the home-improvement company Leroy-Merlin; and smaller repair companies and second-hand retailers.

HOP also proposed and successfully lobbied for a small tax on manufacturers to offset the costs of repair for

consumers, by convening a working group of manufacturers, sellers, repair shops, and an allied NGO, and obtaining their agreement to the tax. She and they then moved to the proposal through government channels until it passed in 2020 as part of a law on the circular economy and zero waste. When the government was slow to implement or publicize the repair fund, Laetitia pressured them by organizing a Durability Summit and inviting the Ministry of Ecology to open the event and discuss the fund's progress. Finally put into place in December 2022, in the first few months the fund helped pay for 21,000 product repairs, a small number Laetitia anticipates will jump considerably when HOP soon holds the first "National Repair Days" in France with 800 events around France. HOP is also organizing and financing a large advertising campaign targeting some 7 million consumers, aiming for 1% of those reached to repair at least one object, avoiding 3,527,676.5 kg of CO2.

Laetitia is expanding her reach well beyond France, working since 2016 with different European Union divisions to create the EU's mandatory repair index and help them implement it. In 2018, she organized a conference and testified about this work in Québec, which later adopted a law against planned obsolescence. She has testified on behalf of France at the G-7; and delivered HOP's research at international conferences in Berlin, Stockholm, and Montréal. She is in the process of developing an international coalition to reproduce the progress France has made in larger consumer nations.

In this way she and HOP are acting as "ecosystem" builders, demonstrating that a durability movement, and the necessary changes to mindset and processes along the chain of production, are possible and in fact may provide reputational and business advantages.

By gathering and publicizing consumer sentiment; pairing buyers, regulators, advocates, and corporations in dialogue and collaboration; shaping and passing new regulatory laws; and creating watchdog structures like the Repairability Index and supporting groups like the Durability Club, Laetitia and HOP are developing the collective vision, tools and public empowerment needed to bring systemic change to consumer culture.

THE PERSON

Laetitia's path to consumer activism was inspired, literally, by a lightbulb moment. In an early job as a staff assistant to a member of Parliament, she watched a documentary called *The Light Bulb Conspiracy* (in French, *Prêt à Jeter* or "ready to throw away") that exposed the

corporate practice of intentionally limiting a product's useful life to maintain or boost sales. The film closed with an appeal to change the law, something Laetitia felt powerfully motivated to do. She hadn't heard of planned obsolescence, but she was outraged that consumers were being manipulated into consuming more – wasting their money and the environment's resources. It was a sentiment she'd experienced earlier during college studies in economics and social management. As a young woman from a financially modest background, she perceived these techniques as unjust, as they required people of limited means to spend unnecessarily.

Working in Parliament, in 2013, she persuaded her boss to let her investigate planned obsolescence. She led fact-finding missions and worked across ministries and with legal experts to bring the topic to political notice. She drafted the original legislation outlawing planned obsolescence, and when that failed to pass in one parliamentary body, reshaped the proposals for the other, delivering the amendments that French officials would eventually pass as law.

In 2014 she left the government to travel to Asia, wishing to explore other collaborative economic initiatives. When she returned to France a year later, the law against planned obsolescence had passed, and Laetitia realized it was just one part of a much larger issue regarding consumption habits. She also knew that a law without teeth would be of little consequence, so she identified a role for herself in setting up a larger regulatory framework. This led her to create and grow HOP. Through HOP, she has catalyzed other stakeholders to work collectively across private and public sectors, crucially centering the citizen-as-consumer in calling for and initiating change. She's earned praise from her peers for her impact, vision, and leadership in making France a pioneer in ending planned and premature obsolescence, curbing consumption, and reducing environmental waste.



HOP, founded ... to battle against the concept of planned manufacturing obsolescence, [was] the first to take up the cudgel."

Forbes



VALMIR ORTEGA

Executive Director of Conexsus

 www.conexsus.org

Valmir Ortega is creating a way forward for small and medium-sized farms and forest producers in the Amazon, making possible a productive economy that regenerates, rather than extracts, natural resources.

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THIS ARTICLE ONLINE**

THE NEW IDEA

To strengthen the small producer economy in the Amazon, Valmir sees and is addressing three main bottlenecks experienced by farmer associations, cooperatives, and small forest producers: access to financing, production and business models, and connection with markets. Formed in 2018, his organization Conexsus supports producers without occupying or competing for space or resources. Instead, it fills gaps in the existing value chain and strengthens leaders' capacities to increase production and market participation, all while expanding everyone's sense of what is possible to achieve as a networked collective. On the financing front, Valmir brings hybrid solutions and helps producer organizations access capital to expand their businesses, increasing incomes by as much as 300 percent. Via a network of credit specialists, Conexsus also guides and advises partners and, where possible, helps them secure loans as a collective – so far leveraging nearly one million USD from other investors (at a rate of 1:5) and developing financing models adapted to community businesses with leading public banks.

In a few short years, Conexsus has gained legitimacy and relevance and now builds bridges between different sectors and actors, including small and medium-sized businesses, the market, and public banks. Looking ahead, Valmir wants to shift the focus of rural credit, currently used mostly for agribusiness, to sustainable activities and develop alternatives to the current economy that is based in monoculture and cattle.

THE PROBLEM

Despite growing global awareness of the effects of deforestation, the situation has only gotten worse in the Amazon in recent years. According to the latest MapBiomass report, 15 percent of the Amazon's natural forests were cut between 1985 and 2022, a very significant loss. In addition, the Cerrado – the biodiverse patchwork of forests, savannas, and grasslands southeast of the Amazon – was reduced by 27 percent over the same period.



Having grown up in the region and seen both the changes and challenges firsthand, Valmir is fostering a new ecosystem of economic development that preserves biodiversity and builds up healthy, connected producer networks across the Amazon region.

Yet deforestation is just one element in a cycle of soil and land degradation and biodiversity loss. Decisions at all levels – consumer, business, government – continue to favor fast returns over a commitment to the future livability of the planet. In the agricultural sector, where Conexsus works, this preference translates into technical support and financing that prioritize monoculture and large-scale producers.

“While about half of Conexsus’ work focuses on the Amazon, the organization – with its team of on-the-ground advisors – also targets other key Brazilian ecosystems, from the Cerrado, a highly endangered tropical savanna, to the coastal Mata Atlantica rainforest.”



Meanwhile, rural forest communities face increasingly limited economic choices. According to the 2017 Agricultural Census, based on two Amazonian states, 88%

of small farmers do not have access to technical assistance, and 83% lack access to credit. In recent years, as pressure to cut down the forest has increased, support for those trying to live in a healthy, balanced way with the forest has become more limited, leaving small-scale producers in already struggling regions in a situation of extreme social and environmental vulnerability.

THE STRATEGY

Having grown up in the region and seen both the changes and challenges firsthand, Valmir is fostering a new ecosystem of economic development that preserves biodiversity and builds up healthy, connected producer networks across the Amazon region. His organization Conexsus starts by strengthening local leaders, communities, and institutions, and filling gaps in the existing value chain.

“Conexsus...came from the identification of gaps for operating with sustainable businesses in the Amazon.”





When the idea for Conexsus emerged, Valmir had begun to see that an enabler was needed to create relationships of respect, support local actors, and deliver economically-viable solutions in tune with the forest – on a large scale.

Valmir began testing this approach with the Conexsus Challenge, a pilot in three phases. The first phase was to map all the actors and see the gaps and opportunities. To ensure good coverage and build legitimacy, Valmir asked 60 organizations to identify promising cooperatives and producer associations from all regions of Brazil, including Indigenous, quilombola (African Brazilian), and land reform settlements. The resulting broad mapping incorporated local and regional perspectives. In the second phase of the Challenge, and in partnership with aligned groups, Conexsus organized a series of national seminars to listen to local communities, learn deeply about their dreams and the challenges they face, and invite information exchange among 300 cooperatives. In the final phase, 100 cooperatives were selected for catalytic and ongoing support, and connected to 80 values-aligned companies eager to purchase sustainable products from the network.

The Conexsus Challenge consolidated the organization's trademark methodology of working alongside local institutions and connecting sectors that do not understand each other well. By strengthening the ecosystem without supplanting existing actors, Valmir is seen, rightly so, as a trusted enabler – without partisan or political leanings, and focused on what's best for the region and its people.

Lessons and insights from the Conexsus Challenge inform three areas of strategy: 1) Development and strengthening of local leaders' capacities and management of their organizations; 2) Promotion of fair-trade mechanisms to increase income of small producers, valuing sustainability as a core tenet; and 3) Expanding access to credit for all partners.

The areas are interconnected and reinforcing. To foster local producers' capacities, Conexsus acts as an accelerator, providing customized training in business (management, marketing, finance) and production (sustainable technologies, operational efficiency). This support is essential to prepare producers for the market. Then, by guaranteeing high-quality sustainable products that consumers will want to buy, Valmir promotes fair trade through roadshows and events, thus strengthening the whole value chain.

At the same time, this work would not be possible without helping producers access affordable capital to grow their businesses. Thus, one of the most important contributions of Conexsus is its work to significantly expand and diversify access to credit in a variety of forms. It does this via values-aligned community business chains through CX Investments which is fully owned by

Conexus. To date, Conexus has invested more than 1.2 million USD into community businesses. Meanwhile, Valmir builds bridges between producers and public banks. By developing partnerships with public banks – Banco da Amazônia and Banco do Brasil – Conexus is working to expand significantly public funds available for small producers.

Supporting hundreds of producer organizations has strengthened Conexus' ability to bring financial impacts to its members and communities. One example is CoopCerrado, a network of family farmers that sustainably harvests and processes fruits, plants, and seeds of the Cerrado. The cooperative's 2018 revenue was 400,000 USD before participating in the Conexus accelerator program; in 2021, after two loans from the Conexus Fund and participation in business roadshows, CoopCerrado will earn more than 1.4 million USD. With more than 4,000 producers across five states, CoopCerrado saw its members increase incomes by more than 300 percent. In addition to the economic contribution, the cooperative has become a reference for the new, environmentally sustainable economy that Valmir knows is possible with the right support.

Looking to the future, Valmir wants to show that small and medium-sized producers and producer networks can be financially viable – and ultimately to unlock significantly more funding and support for efforts that restore biodiversity.

“*Conexus has the intention to provide financial mentoring and loans to approximately 600 institutions over the initial lifetime of the fund, impacting 30,000 producers' households and covering 2.5 million hectares.*”

THE PERSON

Valmir was born into a poor family of farmers who migrated to Mato Grosso do Sul, a central western state of Brazil, in search of new opportunities. As a young person, he witnessed the area's transition from small farms to monoculture and worked various jobs, including as a goldsmith, to help support his family.



Looking to the future, Valmir wants to show that small and medium-sized producers and producer networks can be financially viable – and ultimately to unlock significantly more funding and support for efforts that restore biodiversity.

Later, at university, he discovered and studied geography – it was a powerful way to map and make sense of the world. He also became a student leader in his region. Convinced of education's transformative power, Valmir planned to teach, but an invitation from a government official to develop the state's first protected area took him down a different path. He structured a system of public conservation units, managed water resources, and supported legislation, later taking on roles with the Ministry of the Environment and other public agencies working to stop deforestation in the Amazon.

Equipped with a deep understanding of how the public sector works, Valmir joined Conservation International Brazil in 2010. He began to connect, now from an organizational perspective, with different worlds that do not always understand each other. By 2018, when the idea for Conexus emerged, he had begun to see that an enabler was needed to create relationships of respect, support local actors, and deliver economically viable solutions in tune with the forest – on a large scale.



AGUSTINA BESADA

Co-Founder and CEO of Unplastify

 www.unplastify.com

Through her organization Unplastify, Agustina is reducing the use of plastic by equipping individuals and companies with tools to design, implement, and share solutions for eliminating plastic in their environments.

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THIS ARTICLE ONLINE**

THE NEW IDEA

Agustina is systemically changing people's relationship with plastic. Under the slogan of "Unplastify-ing" organizations and daily life, Agustina guides companies, government agencies and individuals to create both new consumption habits and new production and distribution processes to reduce their use of plastic. Unplastify implements this change directly through tailored programs for corporations, government agencies, and schools, through financial incentives, with scientific research and dissemination, and in public and social media campaigns.

Agustina's approach leads participants to audit their plastic use and design their own "de-plastification" strategies to reduce their use, promoting ownership of both the plastic problem and its possible solutions, and making commitments to behavioral change.

Agustina's work is transforming public understanding into action. She argues that changing our relationship with plastics requires sustained action and a cultural system that provides meaning. Consequently, her programs and public challenges promote reflection by participants about their relationship to plastic and to the planet, as

well as new, enforceable rules to incorporate de-plastifying habits.

In a few short years, Unplastify has worked with large multinational grocers and fast-food companies to redesign entire production lines and packaging; retailers, to adopt re-fillable containers at points of distribution; Argentine municipal and federal governments to change regulations around single-use plastic; and over 300 schools with the 'Unplastify App,' which guides students to design de-plastifying schemes for their classrooms and homes. To provide a financial incentive, Agustina's group developed the 'Unplastify Coin' (UPFC), a blockchain protocol that verifies a company's reduction of single-use plastic and awards credits that can be exchanged on bitcoin platforms. In under two years, the Swiss Medical Group, the grocery conglomerate Carrefour, cleaning company Melcity, and the industrial food supplier Cookmaster earned credits for reducing over 200 tons of plastic from their production lines. Through its research and development lab, Unplastify validates scientific information about plastic pollution and solutions that is then



While the petroleum industry views plastics as a major growth market, approximately 8 million metric tons of plastic pieces find their way into the ocean each year. PHOTO CREDIT: Agustina Besada

used to guide clients. Finally, Unplastify has developed a network of influential science and social media ambassadors to further spread its message. Agustina herself used a seven-month sailing trip to Argentina to research plastic pollution in the ocean and documented it as a NatGeo explorer.



Besada crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a 36-foot sailboat — twice — to research ocean plastics and to study international scalable solutions. She transformed this adventure into action founding Unplastify, a social enterprise on a mission to change the human relationship with plastic, accelerating systemic changes to minimize the use of single-use plastic."



THE PROBLEM

Plastic production has grown exponentially over the past decades, and it's estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans if global patterns don't change. According to the Plastics Europe 2021 report, 367 million tons of plastic were produced worldwide in 2020 alone, the equivalent of one million tons of plastics per day. Sadly, waste management systems are wholly inefficient: only 9% of the total plastic produced from the 1950s to 2015 have been recycled. 79% ended up in landfills or was lost in the environment; 12% was incinerated. Without a robust recycling infrastructure, approximately 8 million metric tons of plastic pieces find their way into the ocean each year.



[UnPlastify's] goal is nothing more and nothing less than to change the relationship between humans and plastic."



As a consequence, plastic waste is affecting the health of the oceans, animals, and people. Over 700 marine species have been affected by plastic pollution through entanglements, suffocation, or poisoning. Microplastics have even been found in abiotic ocean products like sea salt, and the toxic chemicals attached to microplastics are now polluting the ocean food chain. In humans, toxins released by ingested plastics harm fertility and weaken the immune system. A Newcastle University study concluded that a person could eat approximately 5 grams of plastic each week, the equivalent of one credit card per week. Even though it may seem indirect, we are all being affected.

Our systems of consumption and production reinforce negative and perpetual effects of the problem. What we throw away ends up being “someone else’s problem”, thus making the global plastic issue invisible. Approximately 42% of all plastics produced have been used for packaging -- i.e., single-use -- even though the material does not biodegrade and is virtually indestructible. Consumers are unaware, or not prompted to acknowledge, the lifecycle of a material that takes hundreds of years to break down. Companies and consumers benefit from the seemingly low cost of plastic as a component in manufacturing and packaging because they ignore, and don’t directly bear, the true cost of its ultimate disposal. The petroleum industry views plastics as a major growth market, and the main industrial users (Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Nestle, and Unilever) prioritize plastic packaging as a cheaper alternative to aluminum cans. Incentives to sustainably manage plastics are scattered, and the companies producing plastics have no incentive to recover the material.

Yet public awareness and activism are growing. Cities and countries across the world have passed legislation that regulates single-use plastics, and many others have proposed laws related to the issue. Argentina implemented two de-plastification regulations in 2020: A microbeads law and a ban on single-use plastics in national parks, with several proposed laws in Congress that aim to regulate disposable plastics. But these approaches focus on the symptoms -- a lack of recycling capacity -- and not on the root of the problem, the abusive and uncontrolled production of plastic.

THE STRATEGY

Unplastify’s work is guided by three strategic principles: (1) positive messaging to encourage action, (2) personal responsibility for changemaking and (3) scaling and

expanding to multiply impact. To help people and institutions rethink and redesign their relationship to plastic, Agustina and her team propose de-plastification processes by combining exploration, education, action, and working with multiple stakeholders including schools, individuals, companies and industries to change public law and policy.

Beginning with the youngest actors, Agustina works with schools and sailing clubs through educational challenges. Using the Unplastify app, adolescents aged 15-16 work in teams to design a project prototype that solves one aspect of plastic pollution. In a playful way, they learn how to present the problem and get support for their solution while developing their leadership, communication, impact generation, and cooperation skills.



She promotes solutions for a more circular economy and reduction of plastic ocean pollution through regular workshops and talks that draw from her hands-on experience”



Agustina believes that children and youth are the best change agents for their environments, and her educational programs empower and equip them for this purpose. Since 2019 Unplastify has delivered its school program in 343 educational institutions, reaching almost 16,000 students with talks and workshops. Over 4,000 students have actively designed and developed un-plastifying projects. In one workshop, students designed a campaign to promote COVID prevention without using hand sanitizer in plastic bottles. Another group researched the most popular cookies in their school and the packaging waste these cookies generated. Their research convinced the local bakery to make cookies in bulk for them! The Unplastify app guides young people step-by-step with a scoring system and cooperative leadership and is designed for scale. National Geographic, Disney and 11th Hour Racing are partners in expanding the initiative to 100 new schools in eight countries.



The [UnPlastify] challenge made it possible to generate education and dissemination actions in pursuit of waste separation and reduction in the City of Buenos Aires. Unplastify provided pedagogical support for the different activities that teachers were able to develop Online with their students."



Moving up the chain, Agustina targets mass consumer companies to help them redesign their relationships with plastics in both internal operations and external products and services. With Unplastify's guidance, companies diagnose their plastic use, measure their impact, and co-create and implement new de-plastification strategies. As part of the solution, a company will approach new suppliers aligned to this purpose and redesign its products and processes accordingly. To date, Unplastify has worked with 60 corporations, including 16 large multinationals, in the de-plastification of their organizations, with a special focus on packaging to ensure that products are as environmentally friendly as possible from development onward.

Successful examples include the 2019 work Unplastify did with an Argentine fast-food company to identify and design alternatives for products and operations, comparing solutions by impact and cost. The project showed that implementing "de-plastification" strategies in only four types of products - beverages, salads, appetizers, and cutlery - would represent the reduction of 89% of all disposable plastic diagnosed. Since there were no international measurement standards, Agustina developed a new methodology to measure the company's plastic footprint. This is now the 'Unplastify Footprint' measurement, to diagnose and measure the avoided plastic after implementation.

The major supermarket chain Carrefour hired Agustina and her group to reduce its use of plastic in packaging. By changing the packaging for 337 of its products, Unplastify estimates that between 2018 and 2021, Carrefour managed to avoid 752 tons of disposable plastic,



Unplastify has worked with large multi-national grocers and fast-food companies to redesign their production lines and packaging; retailers to adopt re-fillable containers at points of distribution. PHOTO CREDIT: Agustina Besada

with the greatest impact in food and cleaning products. Management at Carrefour's headquarters recognized Unplastify's work as an innovative practice that they will replicate globally.

Additional clients include a large cleaning supply retailer, which Unplastify helped guide to change distribution by transporting its products in bulk. The company installed 1-ton drums, refilled by trucks, and both corporate and individual consumers now refill reusable containers. 39,101 pounds of plastic were avoided between July 2020 and July 2022.

In 2021, Unplastify launched The Unplastify Certification (UPFC), a network certification that verifies the reduction of single-use plastic in a traceable manner. It is issued based on the analysis and community validation of a company's Unplastify Footprint. With the certification, companies publicly demonstrate their impact and increase the transparency of their plastic reduction. For each ton of plastic avoided, they receive an exchangeable credit on blockchain that can then be sold to companies willing to become plastic-neutral. The value of these credits increases as more companies sign on and demonstrate the reputational benefits of cutting out plastic. Five corporations have registered with UPFC and are now earning and trading credits. It is an innovation



UnPlastify has developed a network of influential science and social media ambassadors; Agustina herself used a seven-month sailing trip to Argentina to research plastic pollution in the ocean and documented it as a NatGeo explorer. PHOTO CREDIT: Agustina Besada

still under development, which Agustina and her team are confident will scale and create new market incentives for businesses.

At the policy level, Agustina and her team continue pushing for new laws and regulations. In 2020 they created the Online platform argentinanodescarta.org, or 'Argentina Does Not Dispose,' through which 100 municipalities from around the country register their preventative regulations and practices regarding single-use plastics. In the same year, Unplastify designed a project to de-plastify Argentina's House of Representatives and has since been working with members of parliament and the Chamber of Plastics to draft and pass a law progressively banning single-use plastics.

Through its research and content production arm, the Unplastify Lab, the group validates science around plastic pollution, measures the innovative solutions its clients create, and disseminates its research. Together with the lab, Agustina documented her 2018 oceanic crossing, in which she collected first-hand information about the

state of the oceans and the presence of plastics. In 2021, Unplastify launched the report 'Current State of De-Plastification Regulations in Argentina' to make visible the current regulations around single-use plastic and to provide a tool to promote new regulations. A new report auditing key players across Latin America is underway. Unplastify has also contributed to an ambitious global treaty that addresses global plastic pollution.

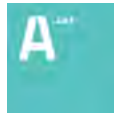
Agustina has also designed a strategy of movement multipliers, the Unplastify Ambassadors, who develop paths to change the narrative around plastic through storytelling. The ambassadors are famous sports players, chefs, and artists committed to the cause, who use their professions to demonstrate creative ways everyone can contribute to this change. Agustina understands that raising awareness one person at a time isn't possible, but Unplastify can empower those who understand this challenge to become changemakers themselves and propel others forward.



Because of family influences, she decided to study medicine, as she thought it was a career path that would allow her to best help people. One trip to Patagonia with friends ended up being the fork in the road when she realized she did not want to be a physician, so she took a year off to discover her true calling. During that time, she learned about industrial design and was fascinated with the combination of people-based designs and solutions to real problems. Determined to deepen her knowledge and tools, Agustina completed a master's degree in Sustainability Studies at Columbia University.



Now with her feet on solid ground, this year Besada and her team will continue their awareness work through educational programs in schools in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile."



Agustina's goal for 2025 is to deplastify 1 million people, who will reduce at least 20% of their annual plastic consumption. This goal would translate into a reduction of 10 million tons of plastic, which is more than the 8 million tons that enter the oceans each year. Influencing big companies, deepening their knowledge of the plastics industry, and adding new key partners as they work to change laws are the key pieces of Agustina's future strategies.

Ever since her school days, Agustina has been fascinated with the wasted value of things that were thrown away. At age seven she began to participate in a school-based recycling initiative, which motivated her to convince her building's superintendent and neighbors to set aside recyclable materials instead of throwing them out. Around the same time, she would ride her bike around the neighborhood with a friend, looking for bottles to recycle. At age 13 she became involved in an extracurricular school activity, supporting rural education in the north of Argentina, in which she participated in fundraising and awareness activities.

THE PERSON

While visiting a friend in a New York neighborhood, she discovered the recycling center Sure We Can. Motivated by her curiosity, she immediately became a volunteer. The center's director eventually invited her to be part of the board. A few months later, the director invited Agustina to take her own job. Directing the center was a transformational experience as well as an important laboratory on the plastics problem. Working with recyclers every day, Agustina came to understand the problem and that the solution would not be found in recycling but would instead come from preventing the problem in the first place.

When Agustina and her husband decided to return to Argentina, they made the trip by boat. They were at sea for seven months, during which she was a National Geographic explorer. They took samples of the ocean's plastics during the trip and collaborated with experts and organizations in Europe working on the same issue. In that sailboat, the idea of Unplastify was born.



GITA SYAHRANI

Secretariat Head of LTKL

 kabupatenlestari.org

Indonesia's peatlands, 20% of the world's totals conserve as much carbon as all of Indonesia's forests. Working with the peatland's local communities and young people, Gita is introducing new forms of livelihood that work well for both people and peat.

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THE NEW IDEA

Gita convinced the leaders of nine rural districts with substantial peatlands to create Indonesia's Sustainable Districts Association, or LTKL. To become a member, each LTKL district committed to creating development plans that protect at least fifty percent of the essential ecosystems within the district's jurisdiction and improve the wellbeing of at least 1 million families living in or around peatlands and forests that provide biodiversity and related ecosystem services.

With this commitment Gita led a successful effort by LTKL to bring together 26 private and public institutions to attract quality investment for new job and business opportunities in the nine districts. One district decided to harvest and market albumin derived from a fish which lives in local peatland canals. Albumin contains high protein and has been proven effective as a medication for wounds. The health of the fish directly correlates to the health of the peat, creating a business case for maximizing peatland and preserving its environment.



LTKL hopes to open up greater market opportunities, enable sustainable investment, and encourage multistakeholder collaboration to develop and communicate sustainable narratives of environmental conservation efforts and sustainable economies in LTKL member districts."

MEDIA
INDONESIA

The investment group secured investors, built a high-quality lab and production centers, found long-term



Gita has won national and international recognition by showing that the local collaboration model can create profitable and climate-protective livelihoods. PHOTO CREDIT: Gita Siyahrani

buyers for their product, and won national and international recognition.

This success prompted other districts to implement the same model, including districts outside of LTKL membership. Gita's next step, already underway, will be to create a broader district network, with the goal of eventually extending to all the seventy-nine districts that contain within their boundaries 80 percent of Indonesia's peatland and 25 percent of its forest resources.

THE PROBLEM

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, forests cover 57% of Indonesia's land area, while peatlands cover only 1%. Despite this difference in land area, and while precise estimates vary, reports indicate that, on average, one hectare of Indonesian peatlands conserves approximately 50 times more carbon than one hectare of Indonesian forest land.

A major reason for this higher carbon density is that the peatlands buildup has taken place over thousands of years by dead plant matter that has partially decomposed by being waterlogged and anaerobic conditions. From a carbon capture perspective, that means substantial removal of Indonesia's peatlands on one percent of the country's land area would result in a very large and

permanent reduction in Indonesia's natural sequestration of carbon.

In 2016 the Indonesian government issued Presidential Rule No. 1. It banned the conversion of peatlands into plantations and required companies to restore degraded peatlands. It also mandated that existing plantation companies halt peatland development until they completed an approval peatland development plan. But it didn't ban peat harvesting, and satellite imagery has revealed that peatlands degradation continues



The LTKL aims to bridge the funding gap by creating districts that can attract investment capital – in part by establishing long-term uptake agreements with companies that want to comply with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."



Gita convinced the leaders of nine rural districts to form Indonesia's Sustainable Districts Association, or LTKL, which commits to creating a sustainable economy. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Gita Syahrani

THE STRATEGY

Gita moves carefully, district by district, to ensure that each new member district will agree to its membership requirements, which are more restrictive than what current Indonesia government environmental regulation allows with respect to peat harvesting and forestry management practices.

For existing as well as newly accepted LTKL member districts, Gita has persuaded the ministries of Investment, Trade, as well as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Indonesian Employers Association to commit to launch at least 100 large-scale green investment opportunities and more than 200 micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises with up to USD 200 million.

One way Gita builds community among the LTKL member districts is through Festival Lestari, a joint event hosted by LTKL member districts to showcase local products, tourism, culture, and culinary programs, as well as potential development opportunities. The annual festival invites public figures, artists, potential sponsors/investors, and representatives from the central government, strengthening these collaborations and attracting national investors. Gita also uses the festival to embed local young professionals in district programs for the future. Festival Lestari has become a powerful space for collaborative work, leading to other, bigger collaborations within the LTKL ecosystem.



Initiatives like Lingkar Temu Kabupaten Lestari send a strong signal that districts are serious about ensuring this. It needs real collaboration between various stakeholders both at the national and regional levels as well as support from the international community."



A second key priority for Gita is carefully drawing new member districts. Seeing LTKL's many successes, more districts now want to join LTKL, including those in the remaining "priority" carbon capture districts. As a first step, to build trust and lay out a "member transition plan" for each prospective member district to follow, Gita connects the district to TAL, a social enterprise in LTKL's network of partners. TAL provides professional consulting services to support districts seeking LTKL membership to



identify economic projects that would be consistent with LTKL's vision and values. Also included among these projects are needed infrastructure investments in transport, communication, education, and health. At this stage ten more districts have begun working with TAL. They are reallocating their budgets, investing more in sustainable businesses, and empowering youth in their local community in furtherance of their application to be admitted to LTKL.

The third element of Gita's strategy is having young people step up and bring their own ideas and entrepreneurial energy to their LTKL district as well as other member districts. She has begun preparing them through *Generasi Lestari*, a program for young people that mentors them in how to become changemakers. LTKL also successfully scouts the best of this young talent to become local LTKL representatives. Each of the current nine districts now has a youth organization in which young people lead activities -- conducting workshops on entrepreneurship, helping small businesses market their products via e-commerce, producing their own local products, and creating nationwide youth events and other activities.

Generasi Lestari youth participants in the Siak district founded *Skelas*, or Siak Sustainable Creative Center, which teaches young people how to be entrepreneurs, with courses on public speaking, marketing, financial planning, and the like. *Skelas* is now an independent

group that hosts its own national-level event. In another district young people founded a group to develop small businesses that can produce sustainable products. The goal of *Generasi Lestari* is that young people understand that they don't have to move to Jakarta to become successful, because their hometown already has natural resources that provide a wealth of opportunities for them.

THE PERSON

One of Gita's earliest memories is her grandmother, who taught her to talk to plants while watering them. Gita's grandmother told her that the plants would be happy to simply hear her talk about her day, which is what Gita did for most of her young life, making nature her friends and family. One day when Gita was in kindergarten, her trusted rickshaw driver casually kicked a dog that was blocking the road. This moment made her determined to 'make everyone love animals and nature...' and even today, she marks this as the moment she found her life-long goal.

Gita took a double degree in Environmental Law & Business Law at Padjajaran University – the only student to do so. During her first job at a law firm, she convinced the owner to open an environmental law division, and later became the division's head. Her entrepreneurial mindset led her to become an expert in financial instruments, working with the government of Indonesia in implementing funding from Norway to mitigate the effects of deforestation. Gita then pioneered working with rural districts to protect the environment and uplift the economy of local people.

Her leadership in this work had its breakthrough when she inspired two districts to commit to a new framework: conserving the environment through sustainable economic practices that raise people's living standards. The two districts then scaled up and invited Gita, as the leading voice in the effort, to work on the bigger coalition, which was the genesis of LTKL. Believing that regulations alone could not change behaviors and that it would take collective action to design and implement deeply a new framework, Gita established and leads LTKL impacts and its going social and environmental.

GROWING UP



PAULA BRUSZEWSKA
Poland



JATON ZULUETA
Philippines



THEMBISO MAGAJANA
South Africa



PAULA BRUSZEWSKA

Co-Founder and CEO of Beyond Theory

 zwolnienizteorii.pl

Paula and her Beyond Theory movement catalyzes high school students all across Poland to care, imagine and then design and implement solutions to social problems – so far serving over 26 million Poles. Once they do, they are and know they are the changemakers a world of change needs. Paula is also helping Polish schools recognize and support changemaking as a key educational outcome.

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THE NEW IDEA

Paula is facilitating the emergence of the “*everyone a changemaker*” society in Poland by helping young people experience their power to lead change and create a better society for all. She and her Beyond Theory movement (BT) challenge and enable teens ages 14 to 18 to imagine, design, and run their own social change ventures. And then to help other teens also have this life-changing experience.

Almost all the world’s great entrepreneurs -- business and social -- today had their first dream, team, and change impact in their early teens. Always a huge advantage, getting this superpower now essential for all. A world defined by change requires it. Paula is bringing this essential for a good life to all.

Changemaking is like bicycling. The only way to learn it is to do it. Through several very powerful approaches,

Paula is quickly shifting Poland from the historical pattern where teen changemaking was extremely rare to just the opposite, which is what an everything-changing and -connected world requires.

Her most powerful tool is the teens who respond to her challenge and in fact become changemakers. They are role models. They recruit a team, which is pulled into that venture’s changemaking very directly. And each young changemaker-and-team is marketing its -- and the idea of being powerful now -- work to their peers. Even a handful of such changemakers in a school, backed by their team and clients, are, to their peers, a super powerful, persuasive force. Moreover, these early adopters open up the youth culture’s patterns and blast away bureaucratic barriers.



Paula and her team use a narrative compelling not only to the young people but to their parents and teachers. Creating real change for the good is a critical learning experience, one that helps a young person to develop the abilities today's world requires. PHOTO CREDIT: Paula Bruzewska

Moreover, before Paula strongly encourages her venturers to help other students and teams launch their dreams and ventures. What could be more powerful in terms of growing the changemaking superpower among these missionaries as well as among those they challenge and support?

Paula also is pressing to get the broader society -- including university and missions policies and school curricula -- to understand just how critical changemaking skills are and to encourage them systematically.

It's hard to overstate the impact when a young person first experiences seeing a need, imagining a solution, building a team, and changing their world (school, neighborhood, etc.). Such teens experience the natural high and gratification of using their power to contribute in a permanent, ongoing way to the common good. In succeeding, they recognize that they have and are developing the abilities and skills required to be full contributors in life. This includes conscious empathy, agency,

confidence, and a host of supportive skills such as cooperation, critical thinking, and management.

Tracking the progress of their projects and associated learning goals, they come to understand what it means for their own growth and development and recast their own ideas of success. In other words, they come to recognize themselves as changemakers.

In the 2021-2022 school year, some 12,000 young people stepped up to be BT changemakers, designing and implementing thousands of impactful social projects. One example is "Campaign Grandparents" which showcases small, local companies that support seniors on social media, attracting 100,000 followers to them. Another addresses "period poverty" or lack of access to menstrual products. Within a few years, its creators spun it off as an independent citizen sector organization called "Akcja Menstruacja" ("Menstruation Action"), which supplies free sanitary supplies for students at 600 schools and counting. Other examples of BT projects include promoting

healthy eating habits, fighting digital exclusion, and connecting Ukrainian peers seeking refuge in Poland.

Instead of seeing such activity as extracurricular, BT works with schools and educational administrators to integrate them and help facilitate student projects, so that the skills and accomplishments of changemaking are measured and rewarded -- helping pull the schools to adopt new metrics for new criteria for success beyond academics.

Paula is also bringing the high leverage of the universities and the government to bear. For example, BT persuaded respected Silesian Technical University to shift admission criteria, conferring an advantage on applicants who are certified BT alumni. She also helped move the Polish Ministry of Education to formally recommend that all Polish high schools add practical management skills to their curriculum. Paula aims to integrate Beyond Theory into all high schools in Poland so that "every teenager identifies as a changemaker."

THE PROBLEM

National surveys of Polish young people show deeply concerning trends in their mental health and their sense of agency and autonomy. Almost 60% say they don't believe they can have any influence on national affairs. 43% of adolescents report feeling "fed up" or overwhelmed by problems. More than a third say they're lonely. One in seven children reports feeling dissatisfied with their life to a degree that threatens their mental health. In large cities, the problem is even more pronounced: Half of urban youth surveyed said they couldn't "accept themselves" as they are. Adolescents and children from families with lower financial status report even worse disruptions in their mental well-being.

Young Poles do not vote in high numbers, but they do care deeply about the world, and when challenged, have demonstrated their ability to act. For example, in 2020 they turned out en masse to protest tightening abortion laws. But despite their desire to contribute to society and make change, they often lack the confidence or know-how to act on it. They may not recognize opportunities, or they may struggle with the barriers to entry: Finding courage, a sense of permission, knowing how to start. Young people do have the power to change the world, yet in Poland, most don't recognize themselves as changemakers.

The education system has been part of the problem. Polish schools focus on imparting academic information,

not building core competencies. The vast majority of students receive general education but no specific preparation for a particular field or profession. As a result, when they graduate from high school, they often have trouble finding the right course of study or of cultivating marketable skills. The main purpose of Polish high schools is to prepare students to pass the standardized "maturity exam" and go on to university. High schools are ranked according to those exam scores. Acquiring and repeating a skill is their idea of success, while creativity, collaboration, or personal initiative aren't even tested.



Beyond Theory [was] met with fears that [it] could only become a big-city initiative. Time has shown that this is not the case, and the forces of small and large cities are more or less evenly distributed – about 40 percent of the participants come from towns with less than 100,000 inhabitants."



Similarly, societal attitudes about what constitutes success generally don't include social impact or changemaking. According to a 2022 survey, in addition to high income, Poles overwhelmingly define success in professional life as having a stable job (79%) and obtaining prestige and recognition (74%).

THE STRATEGY

Paula launched Beyond Theory with two of her former schoolmates in 2014. Their idea was to give teenagers a formation and an experience of success they didn't get in school: The life-changing experience of being a changemaker; the recognition of their own power to contribute; the knowledge they have what it takes to succeed in an "everyone a changemaker" world.

It's a direct challenge to the old "good school/good job" definition of success. BT unleashes young people's creativity, energy, values, optimism, and power. It gives them an active stake in society by equipping them with

tools to address social problems they care about and to contribute to the common good.

The experience starts on BT's Online platform which incorporates gaming elements. Users diagnose social problems and come up with solutions. The platform guides them through the stages of creating and implementing a project, from identifying social needs to approaching businesses and other partners. Depending on their needs and interests, they can elect to develop specific skills in marketing, technology, project management, launching a start-up, and more.

Users get support from BT alumni who have already completed their own projects. They act as mentors and advisers, sharing their experiences of how they solved problems, acquired partners, or handled project financing. It's a very different learning environment from school. Instead of downloading academic information and giving tests on it, teachers certified by BT help young people build skills such as teamwork and problem-solving. Working with mentors, teen participants feel they're part of a team doing something important and practical, not theoretical.

BT participants go through the essential steps of change-making: They perceive a social problem and come up with an idea for a solution; i.e., they have a "dream," build a team, and turn it into a new reality that changes things in some ongoing and verifiable way. Completed projects must reach an appropriate number of beneficiaries (the number varies according to the nature of the project). Each year ends with an "Olympiad," where participants share their experiences and celebrate their successes, and schools and projects are awarded rankings and prizes.



Paula has launched a "Beyond Theory High School Ranking," to highlight secondary schools that support students in developing these forward-looking competencies. PHOTO CREDIT: Paula Bruzewska



PHOTO CREDIT: Paula Bruzewska

At last year's Olympiad, the largest Polish language news website and the country's second-largest private TV network both broadcast from the event. Individual BT participants and projects are often covered in local media and Online.



Each of the students' projects is already dynamically starting its activities and organizing its own events, in which they have the full support of the director of their high school and their teachers. The Beyond Theory Olympiad is an excellent way to develop social and leadership skills among young people. Each project has a chance to win a prize and distinction in this prestigious event."



Those who complete a BT project are also recognized with an international certificate in project management from the Project Management Institute. Business leaders confirm they see experience in managing social projects as a major asset for job candidates. The major Polish job recruitment website Pracuj.pl, which has some 6.5 million users, highly values such skills and is a significant BT ally. But beyond building marketable job skills, the participating BT project helps young people identify their passion and assemble the tools to pursue it.



The Beyond Theory school ranking classifies schools not according to their final exam results, but on the basis of real achievements and the schools' commitment to supporting the development of students shaping the competences of the future - the so-called 4K, i.e., critical thinking, creativity, communication, and cooperation. As the organizers of the ranking emphasize, these skills are necessary to build the mental well-being and agency of young people."



Since BT started in 2014, it has allowed over 76,000 participants to experience changemaking firsthand and identify themselves as changemakers. Collectively, their projects have addressed hundreds of social issues and reached over 26 million beneficiaries. BT participants stay engaged after completing their projects: 90% vote in local and national elections; 13% have gone on to lead or co-lead an organization; another 15% are considering launching one. In the 2020 edition of Forbes Poland's "25 Under 25," 11 of the honorees were BT alumni.

Paula believes it's essential to integrate BT into schools so that educators adopt the mindset that changemaking is a key educational outcome and has cultivated a network of schoolteachers who support this.

BT organizes workshops to help teachers strengthen their competencies in areas key to changemaking such as motivation, feedback, and collaborating and communicating

effectively. Experts specialized in these areas are tapped to provide additional support as needed. Teachers who complete the workshops are awarded a Beyond Theory Certificate attesting to their qualifications.

To further promote changemaking in secondary schools, Paula launched the Beyond Theory High School Ranking, an alternative to conventional rankings based on standardized test results. Instead, BT's ranking reflects a school's rate of participation in BT programs and the quality of student projects. A high BT ranking lets schools that value and foster changemaking stand out, including to prospective students and their parents.

Paula recently partnered with the Ministry of Education to develop a meaningful secondary school curriculum for Business and Management, a subject new to high schools, just launched this year. It incorporates elements of changemaking, including real-world projects conducted by teams of students, with the results of their teamwork counted as part of their exam grade. For teachers, it's an utterly different way of working from traditional instruction. To help them adapt, BT offers teacher trainings, a toolbox, and an Online continuing education program. Paula's goal is for BT to transform all 8,000 high schools across Poland by 2030.

Post-secondary education is the next horizon. All parents want good jobs for their kids, and most believe it's essential for them to get into a good university to land a good

job and find a secure place in life. To this traditional narrative, Paula and her team offer a compelling alternative that works for young people, parents, and teachers alike: Creating real change for the common good is an essential learning experience because it helps young people develop the changemaking abilities required for navigating today's everything-changing world.

Paula partners with higher education institutions to put this narrative into practice. For example, she worked with Silesian Technical University, which has an enrollment of 20,000 students, to change its admission criteria so that prospective students who have completed a BT project get a 20 percent boost as their applications are considered. The Rector of the University is also a leader of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, which is in conversation with Paula about adopting changemaking as a criterion for admission nationwide.

Even as it continues to spread across the country, Paula believes BT will also spread beyond Poland. She and her husband, BT co-founder Marcin Bruzewska ran a small but successful pilot program in South Africa which indicates that there is strong potential for scaling BT internationally.



PHOTO CREDIT: Paula Bruzewska



Thanks to Paula, 70,000 Polish teenagers already got on the fast track through the implementation of their own real social-action projects and then successfully entered world-class universities, started businesses and NGOs."

BRAINBAR

PHOTO CREDIT: Paula Bruzewska

THE PERSON

Paula grew up in a small city in northeast Poland. Her mother, a physician, encouraged her to explore and find a mission of her own. Paula joined a scouting team led by a Catholic priest who cheered on kids' efforts to be in service to others. At age eight she undertook her first social project: Organizing sports tournaments with her peers.

At age 13, she moved with her family to the capital, Warsaw, and attended Bednarska, an alternative, libertarian school. There, she experienced how schools could operate differently, support children's interests, and give them room to imagine and to lead.



Four years after they had started helping students attend Bednarska and create their own social ventures, Paula, Marcin, and Rafal had more applications coming in than some universities. They decided to devote themselves to working with these Polish youth full-time and co-founded Beyond Theory.



At university, Paula met fellow students Rafał Flis and (her now-husband) Marcin Bruszewski. Together the three raised funds for other children to attend Bednarska and started working with them part-time on social projects. After university, Paula wanted the experience of working for the United Nations, so she moved to Switzerland to study for her master's at Universität St. Gallen. While there she attended UN Open Day and was invited to the World Bank in Washington to present a social project for Nigeria.

However, the experience convinced her the milieu of prestigious international organizations was not for her. So she went to India and she helped start a grassroots initiative for backyard vegetable gardens. She continued to raise money for it on her return to Switzerland. But it dawned on her that rather than bring exogenous social projects to Nigeria or India, she could use her

changemaking skills to solve social problems in her native Poland.

From September 2023, a new subject, Business and Management, has appeared in Polish secondary schools, which poses many challenges to both teachers and students. As part of the core curriculum, students will be tasked with completing a team project. However, research commissioned by the Beyond Theory Foundation shows that over 72 percent teachers perceive the new way of teaching the subject, i.e. project management and team projects, as the greatest challenge. Thanks to the activities of Beyond Theory, teachers throughout Poland have access to a special "toolbox," a compendium of knowledge about the new subject. And the Foundation has been teaching young people the competences of the future for 10 years, which will be part of the project.



An application connecting computer gamers, a social campaign to prevent suicidal thoughts among young people, and an art auction for animals at a shelter: these are just some of the social projects a record-breaking almost 6.5 thousand people completed this school year as part of the Beyond Theory Olympiad. Their activities reached nearly 9 million people.

ngo.pl / Journalism



JATÓN ZULUETA

President of AHA! Learning Center

 www.ahalearningcenter.com

How do you rescue whole generations from a failed educational system? The Philippines' public schools rank last in the OECD in reading, and second to last in math. Jatón is helping millions of Filipino students succeed by empowering a volunteer network of parents, teachers, and community members to meet their remedial education needs, armed with locally adapted and fast-evolving approaches and tools.

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THIS ARTICLE ONLINE**

THE NEW IDEA

With a centralized, bureaucratic school system failing the majority of its students and giving rise to a “lost generation” of Filipino youth, Jatón catalyzed a fast-growing volunteer network of parents, teachers, and communities to give students the support they need to succeed.

His organization trains volunteers to serve as remedial educators and mentors. It also established volunteer-based learning centers throughout the country, tailoring learning modules and programs to the specific needs of each local community.

Jatón's movement is a national-scale success yet deals very personally and directly with millions of kids, teachers, parents, and neighbors. They have developed dozens of growing up/learning modules in the country's various languages, adapted to the widely differing needs and realities of millions of young Filipinos. They have several

different organizational thrusts, ranging from serving urban youth in the densest part of Manila to winning over schools and other institutions nationally.

Jatón and his network are constantly innovating in ways that will change the system and shift the pattern of failure, and their success is showing up in test results. For example, 83% of students who worked with Jatón's network could pass a basic reading test, compared to just 31% of public school students generally.

THE PROBLEM

The Philippines public school system is in crisis, threatening to leave a whole generation of Filipino children behind. Millions of them can neither read nor do basic math. According to a 2019 OECD report, four out of five



Jaton Zulueta, MDM 2018, teaches a class at the A-HA! Learning Center. Source: <https://aim.edu>

are “low performers” lacking minimum proficiency in reading and math. Of 79 countries assessed, the Philippines ranked second to last in math and science and last in reading. It is the only country in Southeast Asia where literacy rates are dropping. Since the start of the pandemic, nearly three-quarters of public school students have dropped out.

As a result, many Filipino children haven’t acquired basic skills they need to thrive as adults. They aren’t equipped for the radically different jobs of the near future that we can foresee now, and they certainly aren’t developing the changemaker abilities they’ll need to navigate the new reality of accelerating change and interconnection.

It’s a systemic failure which the Philippines’ educational system hasn’t been able to fully confront, let alone correct. Prior to the OECD report, it underreported, misreported, or overlooked its performance problems. And going forward, it lacks an effective strategy to enable students to catch up. All its remedial education efforts are focused on young children, ignoring underperformance among older students as if they were already a lost cause. And the system has yet to address the underlying causes of these failures: A centralized, top-down bureaucracy and pervasive educational inequity.

Scholars and educators point out that economic, social, and cultural forces in the Philippines create fundamental imbalances in educational opportunity, quality, and resources. There are almost caste-like divisions between the privileged minority of Filipino students from affluent families enrolled in private schools (18%) and the vast majority in public schools (82%). Only 12% of public school students go on to attend university. It’s not surprising that many parents aspire to private schools as a way to ensure their children’s future. But that hurts the public schools even more, financially and in terms of diversity and support.

Parents and the community are the most important factors in raising children, yet they have no voice in the Philippines’ public schools. Parents are socially conditioned to focus on earning enough money to pay for private schooling and, beyond that, to leave teaching to the schools. Most parents of public school students come from poor backgrounds; many have low educational attainment themselves. As a result, they often lack the confidence to get involved in school affairs.

Adding to the problem, decision-making is centralized, and the school system is opaque to outside input. The Philippine Department of Education develops and hands



A-HA! specifically addresses the problem of decreasing enrollment rates at the secondary public-school level. Source: <https://aim.edu>

down curricula, modules, and directives to which local schools rigidly adhere, bypassing the concerns and potential contributions of parents and the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these problems. Decisions made in Manila kept schools closed for as long as three years, even in areas with very low infection rates. Many children from low-income families lacked access to digital devices and internet connections and couldn't keep up with Online instruction. Since the onset of the pandemic, 72% of public school students dropped out, the ultimate indicator of systemic school failure.

Jaton perceived the fundamental problem -- that centralization and inequity were shutting parents and communities out of school affairs and driving systemic failures -- and designed a fundamental solution that taps the inherent power of parents and communities to lead change. It empowers them to intervene and give all public school students the support they need to succeed.

"Our goal is to eradicate illiteracy," Jatón says. "Our country is worth working for. The difficult thing oftentimes is that it takes a lot of courage; 90 percent of it is showing up and connecting with the communities."

THE STRATEGY

Jaton realized that to help a growing "lost generation" of older students who could neither read nor write required more than new school programs; it required a different paradigm that captured and valued the contributions of parents and communities and a shift in perspective to what he calls an "empathy-informed lens."

His own empathetic lens comes from firsthand experience. He fell behind in the public schools himself and later volunteered to help other students catch up. Drawing on those experiences, Jatón founded Angels Here Abound (AHA) to help students aged 9 to 16 catch up to grade level and by empowering parents and communities to intervene. AHA trains parents, teachers, and community members in remedial education and its tools, and volunteer-run AHA Learning Centers offer after-school tutoring and Online programs for students.

Working with AHA staff and volunteering in after-school programs, parents learn how they can complement teachers' work by staying engaged in their child's instruction and providing support at home. AHA trainings and programs were developed and honed over a decade of work with parents and public school teachers. Using a collaborative "beyond school walls" approach, they

connect parents and community members into a citizen network of learning resources for students.

AHA's programs are volunteer-based and designed to be cost-effective, time-efficient, and flexible and adaptable for different grade levels, users, and local conditions. Adaptability is key since the circumstances of low-income students, families, and communities vary widely and can change suddenly. The AHA network has an ethos of learning by doing and supporting one another through struggles. In place of the old attitude of deference to the school system's decisions and acquiescence in its failures, AHA fosters a new mindset that any student can learn and thrive with the right learning support, and that any parent or community member can provide that support



AHA! prides itself in its advanced, private school level materials that can future-proof public school kids and make them globally competitive. No matter their social status, students are taught they all have the right to dream big."

ABS-CBN NEWS

It's a powerful idea that is catching on and changing educational outcomes. There are now AHA Learning Centers across the country. Together with its partners, AHA has trained over 180,000 parents and teachers and reached three million students. 85% of them have seen improvements in their grades. 86% of parents working with AHA report feeling more confident teaching their children. 95% reported improvements in their child's behavior. Students working with AHA participants scored markedly higher on pre- and post-literacy and numeracy tests. For example, those who could read at least a paragraph after working with AHA trainees jumped from 31% to 83%; those who could correctly divide a two-digit number with a remaining value jumped from 3% to 55%. By accessing AHA's programs, older students previously considered either incapable of getting up to grade level or not worth the intensive investment required could catch up in one to two years at low cost.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck and schools closed, it risked erasing this progress and leaving yet more students behind. Lockdowns and virtual instruction put families with limited access to technology at a greater disadvantage. Jatton jumped in and tapped the AHA network to find ways to extend support to them. Within a month, a novel solution emerged: Text-based learning modules students and parents could use at home, delivered via SMS texting, Facebook Messenger, and radio. AHA was the first organization in the country to pioneer this approach, which other organizations and the government of the Philippines later adopted.

Hundreds of citizens in the AHA network mobilized and collaborated to build out the system, developing over 500 different text-based modules in all the major languages of the Philippines, each one specially adapted for local conditions. They also trained teachers and parents on them, for example how to use Facebook Messenger to run basic virtual classes, or to check if students needed help with take-home lessons. AHA worked with the Department of Education and Department of Health to adopt the modules, quickly reaching millions of students and bringing AHA national recognition.

To scale up, AHA identified parent networks and teacher-champions in all regions of the Philippines, working with at least one school division in each region. AHA trainings and after-school programs are delivered via three different, complementary tiers:

AHA Plus Community works to train more parents, teachers, and adopting schools, collaborating with volunteers and partners across the country to co-design over 500 localized learning modules and programs. They teach basic literacy and social-emotional skills, reflecting students' local reality and tapping into traditional Filipino values such as duty to family and care for one's parents and elders. By identifying and supporting teachers who want to champion their use, AHA's goal is to get these modules and programs into 26,000 schools, which is the tipping point for adopting them systemwide.



Jaton praised his AIM MDM professors, saying that they showed him what “a great teacher looks like.” He also shared how surrounding himself with like-minded people inspires him to keep working toward his goal. Source: <https://aim.edu>

AHA Prime is a specially designed after-school program for disenfranchised urban youth in Manila and elsewhere who cope with trauma and struggle to stay in school. It teaches them basic literacy skills and social-emotional tools for building and sustaining relationships, so they can receive ongoing learning support from community members outside of school. The programs stays engaged with these students all the way through college.

AHA Mainstream is a series of playbooks for school districts, organizations, and foundations, to help AHA trainings and programs get incorporated into curricula and local ordinances. To that end, AHA is working with its national network of parents and teachers, six regional education departments, eleven school districts in the Manila region, and aligned organizations such as the San Miguel Foundation, the Gokongwei Brothers Foundation, the Yellow Boat of Hope Foundation, and Teach Anywhere.

AHA is also working to inform and shift education policy at the national level. Whereas past failures of the public school system went unreported, underreported, or misreported, AHA programs and metrics can supply missing data and help set standards for remediation which the Department of Education can use to create more

effective interventions. That way not only are parents and communities no longer marginalized and ignored by the education system, they're central to its success.



Zulueta has a lot of plans for the future of AHA!!. But for now, he is focused on reaching more provinces and communities to make sure that change is felt nationwide. Being an Ashoka fellow, he says, “doesn’t just validate what we do but emboldens us to do even better,” he says.”

INQUIRER.NET



THE PERSON

Growing up in the Philippines, Jatón struggled in public school, especially in math. Labeled a slow learner, he took remedial classes over the summer to catch up. So, he understood viscerally and empathized with the experience of students who fall behind. But as it turned out, Jatón wasn't slow at all – on the contrary.

As a teenager, his mother, a faith-based and community-minded business owner, encouraged him to volunteer with her church group to teach at a graveyard where street kids used to live. Once he began teaching, he realized he wasn't bad at math, he just hadn't been taught in a way that allowed him to get good at it. Hooked on showing other kids how to do it, he kept teaching in the graveyard through his college years.

Inspired by this out-of-the-box teaching experience, in 2009, at age 19, Jatón founded the first AHA Learning Center as a weekend tutorial program in the most populous district in Manila. But it went far beyond ordinary tutoring. It was conducted by volunteers, including parents and other family members. It committed to following students individually and continuing to work with them

to make a difference in their educational outcomes. And it gave the volunteers the empowering experience of making that difference themselves.

In 2019, Jatón devoted himself full-time to AHA, expanding it through creative partnerships with schools, government agencies, private-sector CSR programs, and other citizen-sector organizations. AHA Learning Centers have spread across the Philippines, bring more parents, teachers, and volunteers, and ideas into the movement.



Jatón Zulueta founded AHA Learning Center, a free after-school program providing low-income Filipino students “with an ecosystem of opportunity and support” to supplement their public education. In response to Covid-19, AHA has brought virtual lessons to over a million students and trained more than 50,000 public school teachers. Honored as an Obama Foundation Leader in 2019, Jatón has also established a coding training program.

Tatler



THEMBISO MAGAJANA

Founder and Chairwoman of Social Coding

 www.socialcodingsa.com

Thembiso is transforming rural education to prepare young people for a dynamic and changing world, by training students to become part of the digital workforce. Rural high school students are encouraged to pursue STEM disciplines and trained in computer literacy and coding. By integrating cutting-edge instruction and technology, she is also helping reform schools, train teachers, identify new markets and engage businesses in investing in the future of their workforce.

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THE NEW IDEA

Social Coding is the world's first public education reform program for the modern economy that increasingly requires fluency in technology and Artificial Intelligence. Social Coding trains and advocates for rural youth in South Africa, ensuring that they have access to technology and instruction in coding and computer literacy, in collaboration with local schools and communities. The four-year program for students in grades 8 through 12 provides young people with foundational skills in the years before they need to make key orientation choices for their studies. Students participate in six hours of weekly training in coding and computer skills, while strengthening their abilities in problem-solving and creative thinking. Businesses finance the program, as an investment in their future digital workforce.

Thembiso's approach complements other efforts to improve rural schools through interventions designed to benefit the whole school community. Social Coding introduces high-speed internet and laptops, which are shared by all. Classes run on weekends, but the program provides specialized support and resources to weekday teachers.

Government rural school improvement programs rarely deliver, often for lack of financing. Social Coding turns these failures into opportunities. For example, in early 2019 the South African government announced a plan to introduce robotics and coding into schools, but because the schools were responsible, and unable, to finance this, the program failed. Social Coding showed schools how to



Thembiso's model simultaneously addresses all these problems, fundamentally changing the way that rural communities access and adopt digital education.

tap businesses and employers for financial support and create a pathway for students to enter the workforce after graduation.

In the last six years Social Coding has trained over 5,000 beneficiaries in 45 schools. The Social Coding model solves a daunting set of structural challenges in rural African education and is now ready to be expanded rapidly through its technology delivery platform across more than 5,000 South African schools.

THE PROBLEM

South Africa has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world (43 percent of those aged 25 to 34). The education system continues to be dogged by stark inequalities and chronic underperformance that has left many students without the necessary skills to participate in the economy. Many rural schools and the communities continue to live with the consequences of the political and economic decisions made during the apartheid era, when black education was expressly designed to ensure that blacks remained manual laborers. According to recent research from Amnesty International, the

result of this historical inequity is that in South Africa a child's experience of education still very much depends on where they are born, how wealthy they are, and the color of their skin.

Young people need access to education that prepares them for success in a global world of work that is more connected than ever. The World Economic Forum observed that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) will pave the way for new types of jobs, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, data analysis, computer science and the social sciences. In this context, there is need to adapt the education system to one that adequately equips students with the 4IR relevant communication, thinking, and mathematical skills. Existing vocationally-oriented education interventions for young people – inside and outside public education – tend to be short-term and technically focused, like coding camps or basic computer curricula, while neglecting the generative changemaker mindset and related competencies needed to create and sustain livelihoods in rural Africa – conscious empathy, sophisticated teamwork, and shared leadership.



An important component to Social Coding's work is curricula is to instill a sense of self-confidence and competence in these disenfranchised young people. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Thembis Magajana

The South African Department of Education recognizes the need to integrate technical instruction and has mandated the introduction of subjects such as coding, robotics, and computer science into the classroom. But it has not provided the financing for it. Curricula have been produced to teach these subjects but not the equipment, training, nor the dedicated salaries for the teachers. Rural schools are usually severely under-resourced and understaffed, with rural teachers lacking the confidence to teach these subjects due to poor training. Urban schools also have their challenges, but they are more able than rural schools to introduce science and technology courses. This results in a situation where many rural schools are unable to teach skills that are critical for the future of work. As Internet access and adoption spreads in town and townships, the urban-rural digital skills gap will increase if nothing is done.



Adapting swiftly to remote learning, we bridged the educational gap and provided vital opportunities to students regardless of their location. Witnessing their growth and success fills me with pride, reinforcing the significance of our mission."



Currently, significant government and corporate resources are being invested in providing broadband connectivity in rural communities; however, research shows that internet connectivity in rural communities as a solution on its own is not enough. Programs and initiatives that would truly bring about sustainable change need to provide both hardware and software, meaning the training and incentives for adoption.

The lack of digital skills and access to training limits youth employment opportunities, as increasingly most recruitment happens Online. High data costs, the large price tag of devices needed to connect to the internet, and the lack of infrastructure investment in rural areas (including the electric grid) disadvantage rural students further.

THE STRATEGY

Thembiso's model simultaneously addresses all these problems, fundamentally changing the way that rural communities access and adopt digital education. The entry point is training programs and the culmination point is trainees being recruited to employment by businesses as part of their investment in and adoption of AI.

The interventions and approach meet a felt need by rural schools for students to pursue math or science subjects. Social Coding's baseline studies showed that mathematics uptake (those students who elected to pursue higher math curriculum at high school) was only 2 percent in the schools they work in. The students' apathy towards math and science is typically not due to the lack of intellectual capacity but more a consequence of limited materials and inadequate teacher-to-student ratios. Compounding all this is the failure to communicate the relevance of these subjects to students - missing the opportunity to tap into students' deep interest in becoming employable.

Thembiso's first school readiness criterion is an interest in the school leadership to tackle the rural handicap. Social Coding's team engages the school principal and the school's governing body to show how the intervention works, from small first steps to becoming a year-round educational initiative that is conducted each Saturday (and occasionally after school), with students from the school participating for six hours each week. The total number of sessions over four years is 986.

As part of the effort to win over leaders and teachers, Social Coding offers training to the teachers on basic computer literacy and Online classroom tools, such as Google Classroom and Zoom. Teachers are thus co-opted into the program by nominating the students and then providing support to them in their regular school hours. As the students progress through the program, so do the teachers.

To achieve a 20 percent target for South Africa's students entering STEM subjects, Thembiso realized that Social Coding should pursue earlier interventions, as the students start high school. As a result, programs cluster students into three sequential stages, starting with the Junior Pioneers for grades 8-9. The Junior Pioneer programs introduces young students to STEM subjects before they are required to choose their specialist subjects in grade 10. The weekly Social Coding workshops enable grade 8 and 9 students from rural communities to develop STEM skills through computer familiarization, coding, and robotics skills.

An important component to Social Coding's work is to instill self-confidence and conscious empathy for these disenfranchised young people. These "soft skills" perpetuate a far deeper mindset shift and understanding of one's own capabilities than a simple coding curriculum could. Students work in pairs and come to understand how their gender, learning styles, social skills, and interests determine how they "show up" to their partner. Thembiso has created the categories of "Drivers" and "Navigators" to account for different styles of learning and teamwork, with the goal of reinforcing each child's sense of their own abilities. Each student also develops their own values statement, which are posted in classrooms and become living documents that the students update as they observe how they can change over the course of their program.

Next Grad (covering grades 10-12) prepares young people for university or direct entry to the workforce. Students are introduced to advanced technical concepts such as systems and network technologies. Social Coding also compensates for the near-total absence of lab classrooms or equipment in rural schools by using virtual reality simulations of lab experiments. Next Grads are also exposed to social experiments in these virtual reality lessons to further develop their empathy, e.g., simulations that expose young boys to the reality of harassment that women face daily, as well as programs that give guided





The weekly Social Coding workshops enable grade 8 and 9 learners from rural communities to develop STEM capabilities through computer familiarization, coding, and robotics skills. PHOTO CREDIT: Thembiso Magajana

virtual tours about the history of discrimination. At this stage, Social Coding also facilitates competitive hackathons for their students to apply their knowledge and learn how community businesses are financing and supporting their education.

The third element of Social Coding's program is Untapped. This is a critical piece of Thembiso's model, to ensure direct pathways for employment promised after graduation have been accredited by the South African government agency for vocational training, the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA). This final element legitimizes Social Coding's work and reassures employers that the program meets every standard.

Social Coding then recruits and trains its program alumni to become "accredited facilitators" of computer technology training. The accredited training is delivered by Merchants, a major South African and global technology and training firm, and the course fees are highly subsidized by SETA. Accredited Social Coding alumni then teach students in the Junior Pioneers program and cultivate a strong talent pipeline for Merchants and other technology firms.

Social Coding monitors its impact on young people via the percentage increase of students choosing STEM subjects in high school. Between 2018 and 2021, the average percentage of students enrolling in advanced math and

science subjects across all the schools they work with was just 14 percent, a percentage that has seen a steady increase every year from a baseline of 2 percent.



It's less about building these great start-ups and more about giving [rural students] the tools that they can use to change their lives,"

Lenovo StoryHub

Since 2016, Social Coding has served almost 5,900 students across 45 schools. In order to reach 3,000 schools by 2035, Thembiso is identifying partner schools to become district hubs where she will launch Pioneer Centers. These centers will serve multiple schools in the district and scale Social Coding across all rural schools. Pioneer Centers are equipped with modern technologies for technical education, including the use of virtual reality (VR) for remote learning. A corporate partner will then adopt a Pioneer Center and provide financial and branding support to attract more students. The rollout plan is scalable and will ensure consistent learning experiences and benefit for the community.

Themviso has developed a range of creative partnerships with corporations such as Inclusion Champions, where corporations can contribute through financial or non-financial resources. She currently partners with Merchants and ABSA Bank to receive their depreciated laptops as part of the laptop donation program. She also partners with Facebook through VR for Good to support the Virtual Reality components of Social Coding's program.



By embracing cutting-edge technologies like virtual reality, Magajana ensures that the education offered by her organization remains relevant and equips students for the advanced digital age."



Social Coding is piloting a new business model that hires alumni of Social Coding who do not pursue tertiary education to provide data annotation services using the skills they learn in Social Coding. According to Grandview research, the global data annotation-tools market of 805.6 million USD in 2022 is expected to reach 4.75 billion USD by 2030. Banking technology, telecommunications-based technology, and all AI-based products and services rely on large amounts of high-quality labelled data for training, tuning, and evaluating machine learning algorithms. Themviso is encouraging large technology companies to source data annotation services from rural communities of Social Coding alumni.

To support its rollout in 5,000 new schools across rural South Africa, Social Coding is collaborating with The Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS), based at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg to collect data on the impact of Social Coding and to further understand the inequality dynamics fueled by unequal access to technology. Themviso is also advocating for the adoption of the Social Coding curriculum across all public schools to ensure students are more prepared for the world of work and tertiary education.

THE PERSON

Themviso's passion for contributing to the development of rural communities was sparked in her early childhood when she moved from South Africa to attend a boarding school in rural Zambia. As a teenager, she started support groups for young girls her age and would later start her own non-profit organization while at university.

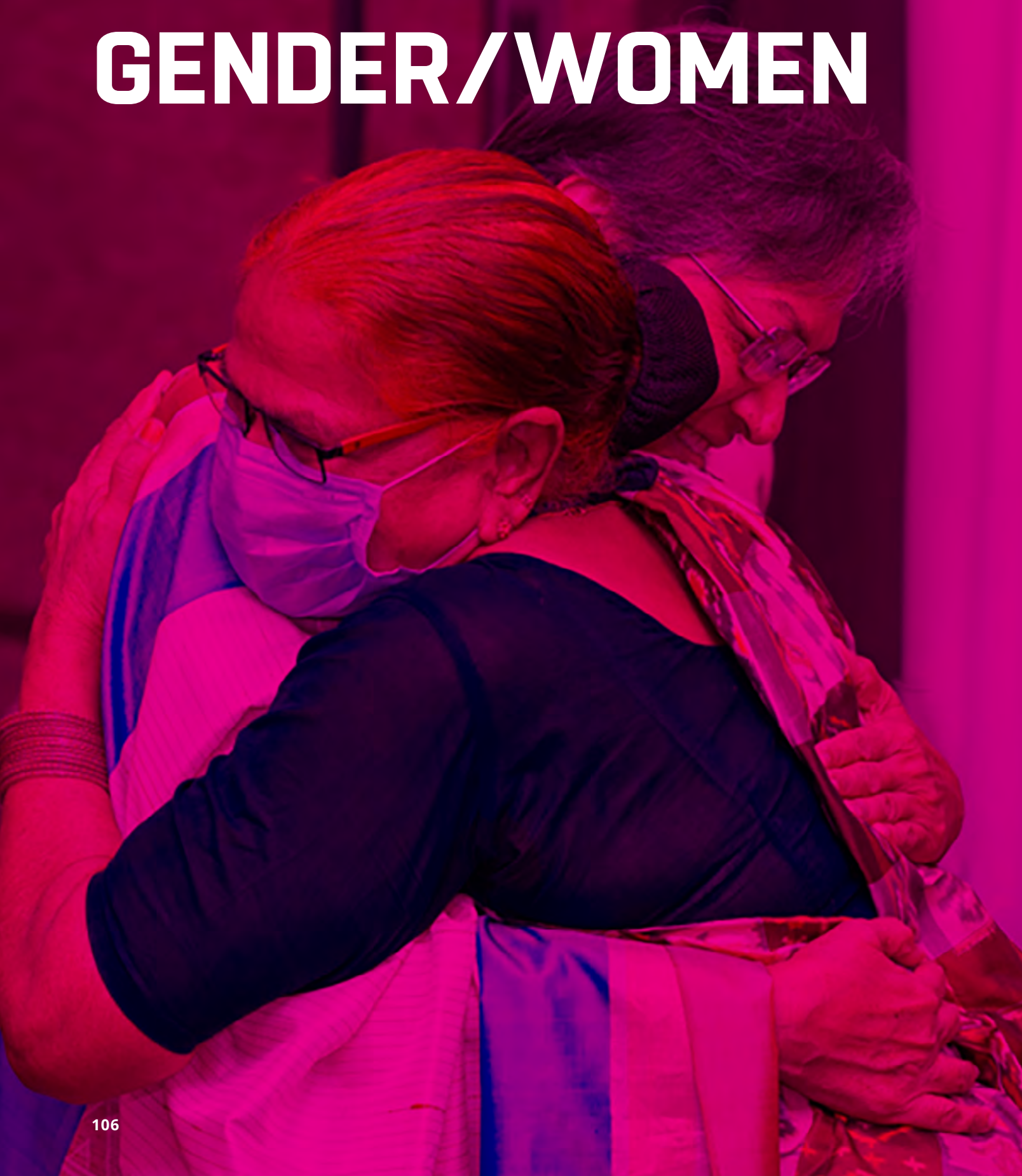
While working in investment banking at Goldman Sachs, Themviso took an interest in teaching her 6-year-old niece coding on the weekends to help her achieve her dream of becoming an innovator in the technology space just like Steve Jobs. Dismayed by how few black women entered the tech sector, Themviso sought to create safe place for her niece and other young girls to nurture their interest in technology and entrepreneurship.

Influenced by her mother's teaching that 'Your dream is not a true dream until it is the dream of the community,' her deep Christian faith, and a growing restlessness to address tech disparities in society, Themviso left her job at Goldman Sachs to start Social Coding and engaged Tshiamo Shilowa, a data scientist specialized in AI, as a partner. In 2016, the initial idea behind Social Coding was to focus on girls but the more she understood the context in which rural children live, Themviso realized it would be more meaningful to ensure the program was inclusive of both boys and girls in rural communities.

Themviso is an award-winning social entrepreneur, a recipient of the 50 Most Inspiring Women in Tech Award and the Margaret Hirsch Heroine Award. She is also a World Economic Forum Global Shaper, a TEDx Speaker, a Spark International Alumnus, and was recognized as one of South Africa's most influential youth in 2020.



GENDER/WOMEN





ANUSHA BHARADWAJ
India



NAOMI MWAURA
Kenya



MANISHA GHULE
India



BETH CARDASO
Brazil



EVITA FERNANDEZ
India





ANUSHA BHARADWAJ

Executive Director of VOICE 4 Girls

 voice4girls.org

How to give millions of the most at-risk young teen girls the understanding and power to reject under-age marriage and worse, and claim a full life including college? That's what Anusha does, by putting exactly these young women, allied with 19- and 20-year-old college women, in charge.

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THE NEW IDEA

Fewer than 16% of Indian women serve in the formal, paid workforce, one of the lowest rates in the world. This is due to deep-rooted social and cultural practices that prevent girls and young women from staying in school, building 21st-century skills, and navigating the world of work. This is especially true for adolescent girls from rural, tribal, and marginalized communities, who start to drop out of school soon after puberty. They are frequently either trafficked or pushed into teenage marriage and parenting well before they turn 18.

Anusha is breaking this pattern wide open. Focusing first on rural and tribal government residential schools, Anusha and her team have innovated a leadership camp and peer mentoring model led by tribal adolescent girls themselves. In these camps, girls are trained as leaders. They identify and strengthen their sense of purpose and autonomy, and they redefine their own sense of where they stand in society. They learn to negotiate with families frozen in the past and to navigate the school-to-work continuum.

They learn to build supportive ecosystems by converting their families and teachers into allies and by supporting one another.

Anusha's organization Voice4Girls, or V4G, has enlisted some 5,000 19 and 20 year old new female college students to serve as highly trained leader-mentors. Pairing high-risk rural and tribal girls with urban college women leaders has been an impact-multiplying strategy. It has helped Anusha to scale her model widely across seven states, while deepening local ecosystems of girl solidarity.

Since 2012, V4G has launched 106,505 adolescent girl peer-mentors across 695 schools. In turn, these peer-mentors have catalyzed an additional 122,500 girls, in a cascading model of change. Ninety-eight percent of the girls who have participated have pursued higher education, been recruited into jobs, or started their own business. Anusha has now been asked by government officials to expand the model to 100 new districts. Anusha seeks to build on this momentum to reach more states and build more civil society partnerships across India.



The Sakhis train, coach, and equip other at-risk girls to change the script of their lives and join in this ever-widening "girl-for-girl" movement. PHOTO CREDIT: Anusha Bharadwaj

THE PROBLEM

Nearly 40 percent of adolescent girls in India aged 15-18 years do not attend any educational institutions. Between the ages of 11 to 13, more girls than boys drop out of school. By high school, 57% of girls have left school. This outflow of adolescent girls from the formal schooling systems is a critical trigger for the big gender gap in India's workforce participation rates.

Deeply held social and cultural norms, with highly gendered expectations and trajectories, underlie these figures. Almost half of India's 113 million adolescent girls -- 48% -- get married before the age of 18 in rural areas, compared with 29% in urban areas. Uneducated and bargained away, these girls can't contribute to the country's productive workforce.

For all practical purposes, most rural adolescent girls lose most of what constitutes a good life the moment they reach puberty. At this stage, the young women are commonly either married off early, trafficked, or pushed into the low-end migrant labor markets.

Government programs for adolescent girls work in silos. They focus on mechanics -- things like distributing hygiene supplies -- and do next to nothing to help girls

transition to empowered adulthood. Discussions of bodily changes, menstruation, and sexual health are hushed by teachers who reinforce traditional values of silence and stigma around these topics. Moreover, civil society initiatives for adolescent girls are mostly designed through an adult lens and are rendered by cadres of government teachers and adult facilitators who don't understand the needs of the girls they are trying to serve.



Many adolescent girls in India are stuck in...the "cycle of denial," a vicious cycle in which their rights are denied at every stage of their development...Can this cycle be broken? Voice 4 Girls has proven that it is possible."

BROOKINGS

Adolescent girls, especially in tribal belts, do not have access to programs or counseling that would help them understand the dramatic physical and emotional changes they experience throughout puberty, or help them imagine powerful futures and build strategies to navigate family and societal expectations. All of which helps explain the growing incidence of adolescent girl suicides.

THE STRATEGY

Anusha places adolescent girls at the forefront of her response, believing girls are the best problem-solvers for their own contexts and lives. Anusha especially targets government residential schools that serve girls from the poorest of the poor families. These girls have often been abandoned, raised by very poor single mothers, and/or belong to nomadic and migrant households with little means to provide for them. Focusing on their most vulnerable lifecycle stage, Anusha and her teamwork with girls when they are transitioning from the 7th to the 8th standard (roughly 7th and 8th grades in the U.S.), the point when they are most likely to disappear from the education system.



The Sakhis train, coach, and equip other at-risk girls to change the script of their lives and join in this ever-widening “girl-for-girl” movement.
PHOTO CREDIT: Anusha Bharadwaj

Over a one-year period, the adolescent girls participate in a set of three leadership camps of ten days each. Every camp is designed as a crucible of real-life scenarios and carries a distinct purpose. The camps are large, with 500-2,000 students participating in one location, with a ratio of one camp counselor (the female college intern) to 30 adolescent girls. At the camps, the girls master 21st-century skills through a gender lens. They hone the competencies of goal-setting, problem-solving, communication, relationship-building, and self-advocacy. Through the entire three-camp experience, the adolescent participants learn how to identify, prevent, and report abuse and violence. They learn about healthy relationships, understand the power of consent, and start to believe that decision-making for their lives lies in their own hands.

“Parichay” (“Introduction”), the first camp, is an introduction to self: One’s body, rights, and safety. At “Disha” (“Direction”), the second camp, girls plan their education, become career-ready, and understand the importance of economic independence. And finally in the third camp, “Sakhi” (“Friend”), the girls realize their leadership potential as peer-mentors.

The backbone of the camps is a well-codified, interactive 250-hour leadership and peer-mentorship curriculum. The curriculum opens safe and de-stigmatized spaces for girls to understand sexual, menstrual, and reproductive health rights. Through 14 core modules, the girls traverse the domains of self, education, employability, leadership, rights, and agency. The pedagogy builds the skills of gender analysis for girls as they unravel the systemic barriers that stop them from pursuing a confident, aspirational, and meaningful life.

All modules are delivered through a “discovery method” of learning, with games and popular local references. Anusha has also integrated stories of local girl and women leaders to provide an alternate sense of what is possible -- that girls can be leaders too and cause lasting change in their communities.

The camp counselors, female students from local colleges who are 19 or 20 years old, are unusual and exceptional partners. As trainers, mentors, and role models, they deliver the transformative leadership curriculum of V4G at scale. In the process, this talent pool of young women trainers experiences leadership and personhood in their own lives as they live the V4G pedagogy.

A rigorous five-day training equips the young counselors to lead the camps so they can deliver critical content with ease and confidence and manage disclosures from girls

facing violence and abuse. Anusha and her team have worked hard to simplify complex feminist teaching into accessible modules, which college students can easily learn and convey.

With deep attention to planning and safety, the camps thrive on the unique relationship and energy shared by girls from different age groups and contexts. Inspired by their camp counselor “Akka” (“Big Sister”), the adolescent girls build a shared bank of solutions, tactics, and ideas for creatively and resolutely walking the path to education and work. More and more school principals and government officers acknowledge how effective the young women camp counselors are, more so than the more conservative or traditional teachers. This recognition is building demand for the program. Fifty percent of schools now sign up for multiple years of intervention.

On completion, the girls graduate as Sakhis. Sakhis are champion-friends or peer-mentors who go on to replicate the leadership camp model in their schools with the support of teacher-allies. The Sakhis train, coach, and equip other at-risk girls to change the script of their lives and join in this ever-widening “girl-for-girl” movement.



I am proud to have attended all three Voice5Girls camps. Using the Sakhi handbooks that we received from camp, a friend and I take classes for small children in our hostel and motivate them as well. Due to all this, my school is now a [model] in my district.” – Participant from Telangana



Anusha’s three-step girl-led program has now been integrated into the government school system as a life skills curriculum. As the camps equip girls to return to their schools with the spirit of paying it forward, adolescent Sakhis facilitate the same camp modules and sessions for their schoolmates. They conduct peer mentoring sessions with other girls and spearhead community action projects to build parent allies. They are aided by a teacher-mentor in each school who creates space in the



The Sakhis train, coach, and equip other at-risk girls to change the script of their lives and join in this ever-widening “girl-for-girl” movement.
PHOTO CREDIT: Anusha Bharadwaj

school routine for girls-led sessions, group mentorship programs, and other supportive projects with families and communities. In these ways, the young Sakhis widen the hyper-local girl solidarity network with the support of teachers and others in the school system.

This girl-led model has registered clear behavior-change outcomes. Ninety-nine percent of the girl participants attend all three camps. This is also an indication that they aren’t dropping out of school at the critical time when they are most vulnerable. Almost all the girls pursue higher education after the camps, while successfully negotiating marriage proposals and challenging domestic violence. Many Sakhis also cultivate safe spaces and solidarity circles in their communities, including a forum of mothers against child marriages.

Forty percent of the college women who serve as camp counselors re-engage with Anusha and her team in subsequent years. Most share testimonies of enhanced personhood and autonomy. Twenty percent of them have chosen sectors of social impact for their future work, taking forward the mandate of a world where girls stand up for each other. To strengthen this resource pool of young women changemakers, Anusha has launched “Soch for Social Change” Fellowships, a feminist leadership academy for young women from smaller cities.



Anusha places adolescent girls at the forefront of her response, believing girls are the best problem-solvers for their own contexts and lives. PHOTO CREDIT: Anusha Bharadwaj

Anusha has leveraged the massive outreach of the Indian government's network of residential schools, as well as its tribal and social welfare schools, to transform the most hard-to-reach communities. The V4G curriculum has been integrated into the state-wide social welfare and tribal schools, as well as in the adolescent girl programs of the state of Telangana state. Impressed by the visible behavior change in the girls at the end of the camps, government officials have invited Anusha to launch her module in 100 new districts across the country.

Partnerships with government school systems are now propelling the spread of Anusha's model. In Telangana, where the model is the most mature, the state government mobilizes participants, co-funds the trainings, and champions the V4G leadership camp program.

Connecting with the government has enabled Anusha to keep her model extremely cost-effective, as the government bears the costs of food, lodging, and transport while Anusha raises capital for her staff travel and training. As of today, the cost of impact per girl for the entire three camps ranges from 10-15 USD.

Lifted by the response and the demand from the ground, Anusha has launched a model for adolescent boys, affecting 15,000 of them already through the camp model. Over the next five years, Anusha aims to multiply her model's reach triplicate her model by deepening her collaborations and by integrating the V4G approach into a growing number of large-scale existing programs.



THE PERSON

Anusha was the first girl born in her family after generations. Her birth was a massive disappointment for the extended family. Her father did not see her face for days and her mother, who had delivered Anusha in her natal home, feared she would not be allowed back into her marital family. Though her father fell in love with Anusha when he finally visited her after much prompting by his in-laws, the scar of the initial rejection stayed with Anusha. She grew up surrounded by an army of cousins and brothers who constantly reminded her of her limits as a girl.

Unsurprisingly, Anusha grew up a rebel, challenging definitions and boundaries. As a young woman, she chose

to play competitive national cricket -- a male-dominated sport -- walking shoulder to shoulder with the current Indian team captain Mithali Raj. All her choices were colored by her inner fight to excel in every masculine domain, including pursuing engineering, which ended up being "an excruciating experience" for Anusha. She went through the academic grind without ever connecting with the subject. This was when she realized that she had set herself up to a poor benchmark "of being like a boy." This insight fired her up to be an authentic young girl, with her own voice and dreams.

Anusha changed her trajectory to work in the non-profit sector. Working with young girls came naturally to her, and she went on to engage with some of the largest, game-changing social sector leaders and programs of the day. After completing an MBA in rural management and a master's degree in sociology, in 2010 she was appointed by the government of Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) to lead and design a comprehensive school health program and policy that eventually spread across 85,000 schools, reaching 10 million students. Anusha launched this program, managing massive multi-stakeholder partnerships. This intense engagement with the government system taught Anusha critical lessons on partnering with state government bodies.

It was at a village meeting on nutrition for pregnant women, that Anusha spotted a heavily pregnant girl of 13-14 years of age. The image stirred her deeply. She kept thinking of how this teenage mother would soon become invisible, either trafficked or destined for low-end migrant labor. This destiny was not acceptable to Anusha. This creative anger led Anusha to give Voice4Girls a whole new direction after its original founders from the U.S. quit in the early years of setting up the organization. Anusha rebuilt the organization from scratch, with a fresh vision and mission statement, and fought enormous battles to keep the non-profit afloat in the early years.

As a social entrepreneur, Anusha lives the power and deep satisfaction of being what she is bringing to the most vulnerable young women when they are at maximum risk as well as to thousands of young college women. It is no surprise that the heart of how she is changing one of society's most deep-rooted patterns is by looking to these young women themselves.



NAOMI MWAURA

Founder of the Flone Initiative

 floneinitiative.org

Raised in a family of transportation workers, Naomi is using data and education to make Kenya's matatu or public bus industry safer and more inclusive for passengers and more profitable for operators.

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THIS ARTICLE ONLINE**

THE NEW IDEA

It would be impossible to describe vibrant Kenyan cities like Nairobi or Mombasa without mentioning the brightly colored minivans called "matatus" and the vital role they play in economic and social mobility. These individually owned and operated vehicles transport 70% of the population every day. While matatus are ubiquitous, the transportation system is plagued by inefficiency and corruption, and it has earned a reputation as unsafe and unpleasant for women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. By engaging the thousands of members of this workforce to improve and dignify their workplace, Naomi believes that within a generation, citizens can make matatus a safe, efficient, and preferred mode of transportation, so that all Kenyans can participate more fully in the economy and society.

Naomi started the FLONE Initiative, named for her parents Florence and Nehemiah, to provide research, training, and advocacy for better public transit after noticing female classmates experiencing harassment at transit

stops near their university campus. FLONE uses research on violence "hot spots;" culturally adapted education of matatu owners about the untapped market potential of women and other vulnerable riders; culturally targeted education campaigns for drivers and the public (including key influencers of particular tribes); and bystander intervention trainings to improve the rider experience for women and vulnerable groups. Naomi and FLONE work with government agencies, transportation workers, and unions to measure and scale improvements to driver and conductor services; and to increase the number of women who can safely work in the public transportation industry.

FLONE has changed laws, reformed policies, upgraded certification processes, and is beginning to make its mark across the continent. Over the past seven years, FLONE has trained 3,000 matatu workers and more than 100 transportation stakeholders (labor unions and government agencies) in public safety, sexual harassment



Naomi organized 'My Dress, My Choice' protests, which sparked awareness and research on the issue and enabled women to speak publicly about daily experiences using public transport. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Naomi Mwaaura

prevention, and capacity building. FLONE created Women in Transport Chapters (WIT), growing to three cities in Kenya and one each in Uganda and Tanzania, to attract and advance women workers in the matatu industry, and has served over 1,000 of them with professional development courses. For two of the larger matatu managing co-ops, FLONE has conducted sexual harassment training and guided the creation of reporting structures and customer feedback systems.

“*Living out the definition of a changemaker, Naomi and the Flone initiative are taking on sexual harassment in public transportation, providing safe employment opportunities for women, educational opportunities for sexual health, and creating programs for a healthy professional transportation system.*”

A Resilience Project

FLONE organized the now-annual continent-wide Women in Transport Africa Conference, providing workshops and research on public safety for over 1,300 practitioners and policymakers. Kenya's National Safety Transport Authority has implemented FLONE's recommendations on sexual harassment into its driving school curriculum. And a national protest FLONE organized led to the outlawing of a common harassment practice on matatus, punishable now by long prison terms.

THE PROBLEM

Every day, 70% of daily commuters in Kenya rely on an informal fleet of some 80,000 privately owned matatus – the popular 13-seat minibuses – to get to and from work, school, shopping, and home. Each matatu operates on a shared revenue model, with a driver up front and a conductor who calls out the route and collects the fares. The driver and the conductor effectively rent the matatu from its owner for USD 50 per day and split any excess proceeds. They drive fast and squeeze in as many passengers as possible to make sure they don't go home empty-handed. Powerful owners lobby or bribe officials to make sure this lucrative business remains unregulated. In exchange for low prices and quicker trips, passengers have for years put up with cramped vehicles, ever-changing routes, unchecked behavior of employees and other passengers, and even high speeds and reckless driving,

which have earned Kenya and neighboring countries the dubious distinction of having the highest road traffic fatality rates in the world.

From the perspective of a commuter using a matatu to access work, school, childcare, or shopping, the industry was designed for the convenience of able-bodied men, not for the needs of women, teenage girls, children, the elderly, or people with disabilities. First, incidents of sexual harassment (e.g., touching, pinching, taking revealing photos, publicly stripping women of their clothes) and sexual assault against women on matatus are high: 73% of matatu managers and 88% of commuters have experienced or witnessed sexual violence against women or girls on public transport. There also are countless police reports on violence against commuters from these and other vulnerable groups.

Second, women in Kenya travel differently from men: As primary caretakers, women often must carry multiple packages and travel with children or older adults. While women are reliant on public transportation, they face enormous obstacles in accessing it, including unpredictable routes, being charged extra for large parcels, feeling unsafe traveling at night, and having to make multiple trips to fulfill their responsibilities.



For the past seven years, Flone Initiative has worked with more than 3,000 public transport workers, over 100 transport stakeholders and 1,000 women professionals to implement interventions."



For decades the government has largely avoided regulating the matatus. Consequently, the public transport industry has evolved into a chaotic system with a weak framework of written and unwritten rules, mostly crafted by the same players who are benefiting from little regulation. There is no official training or qualification required to become a matatu operator, just as there are no background checks or contracts. Owners have little incentive to change, as they pay no taxes, and don't have to provide drivers or conductors with minimum wages,

paid holidays, or benefits. Because of the lack of regulation and oversight, matatu owners and operators suffer the stigma of being associated with criminality and recklessness. There is a widespread belief that working in the industry is for rude and uneducated men. Kenyan commuters merely put up with this dysfunction, while those with means seek the escape of private car ownership.

THE STRATEGY

Over the past decade, Naomi has used data, research, and stakeholder participation to implement new safety policies and business practices in the matatu industry, and to show commuters they can and should expect more of the transportation system. Unlike previous reform attempts that vilified or disregarded matatu owners and operators, Naomi starts by engaging respectfully to help owners, drivers, and "touts" honor and hone their trade.

One of her first strategies has been to help people understand transport problems as systemic, not just the fault of a few bad apples. News stories of tragic accidents often fixate on a reckless driver, just as a woman's dress is often cited as the reason for her having been assaulted on public transit. To change the narrative, Naomi worked with TV and radio stations that reported only individual case by individual case. She helped them see the full picture of systemic dysfunction and the widespread and serious nature of violence experienced by women on public transportation.

Using open-source data and research, Naomi and other stakeholders and allies have taken on one problem after another, pressing for specific changes. One example involves the comprehensive way FLONE addressed a common form of sexual assault in Kenya: When groups of men believe a female passenger at a matatu stop or riding a minibus is wearing a dress that is too short, they strip her naked in public. Appalled but undeterred, Naomi organized 'My Dress, My Choice' protests, which sparked awareness and research on the issue and enabled women to speak publicly about daily experiences using public transport. She brought together county officials, researchers, and commuters to develop a Sexual Harassment and Gender Sex Violence policy for public transport, recently approved at the county level. At the national level, thanks to FLONE's work with legislators, Kenya passed a new law that makes "stripping women in public transport" punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

Improving the experience of Kenyan commuters is a key priority for FLONE. Naomi and her team developed the

Online platform and mobile app 'Report It, Stop It,' for commuters to report incidents they experienced and to rate the security of different transport routes. FLONE then open-sources this data for commuters, CSOs, and local governments. This pinpoints specific problems and specific locations.

To further address passenger needs and concerns, FLONE surveyed Kenyan women's travel patterns and challenges using the matatu system. The assessment revealed multiple acts of violence against women and girls. Partnering with UN-Habitat, FLONE created a toolkit of professional development classes for transport workers, providing minimum standard guidelines and tools to create safer and more accessible systems. FLONE uses the toolkit to integrate gender-sensitive policies into the culture of transport organizations. Courses address how to spot and prevent sexual harassment and violence but also emphasize customer service: How to better accommodate female passengers and other vulnerable groups, and in so doing increase daily revenues. There is also financial management training and help for operators to improve business systems. By working directly with matatu drivers, conductors, and owners to raise the standard of behavior, FLONE is helping them improve the commuters' experience and showing them how this can in turn improve their bottom lines. Naomi is also working with policymakers to incorporate the toolkit into national policy in Kenya and scaling it to Uganda and Tanzania.

Naomi Mwaura is calling for a revolution in public transportation – making route information more accessible, protecting passengers from harassment, and paving a career path for women in the industry.”



Because women report feeling safer in matatus owned and driven by women, Naomi created 'Women in Transport Chapters' (WIT) to attract, retain, and advance women workers in the matatu industry. FLONE launched a comprehensive six-month driving course to help women conductors advance to become drivers, a position better

protected from job loss. From the first training offered, in Nairobi, 33 women completed the course and 11 have received promotions. With WIT chapters in Nairobi, Machakos, and Mombasa County, as well as outside Kenya in Kampala and Dar es Salaam, WIT members have become a voice for transformation in the industry. They've also set up a member-financed loan fund to provide women in the industry with affordable loans, especially important in areas with limited access to traditional banking.

“Naomi is building a movement of inclusive mobility in Kenya where we break down silos and bring support to the three main stakeholders: practitioners, commuters and government officials.”



FLONE created Women in Transport Chapters (WIT), growing to three cities in Kenya and one each in Uganda and Tanzania, to attract and advance women workers in the matatu industry, and has served over 1,000 of them with professional development courses. PHOTO CREDIT: Naomi Mwaura



Naomi envisions hosting future conferences at different cities in Africa to build a smart network of partners who can strengthen, formalize and organize the transport industry in their countries. PHOTO CREDIT: Naomi Mwaure

At the grassroots level has given FLONE the credibility to become the “go-to” organization for labor unions to reach out to for industry advice. FLONE and the Transport Workers Union of Kenya hosted a forum on transport workers’ rights to mediate between workers and traffic police, resulting in the first-ever venue where both parties could discuss issues and develop a consensus on how to handle them. FLONE also worked with the Uganda-based Amalgamated Transport and General Workers’ Union to support women members and to create a Women’s Committee within the Union.

Naomi also engages government agencies and county officials to create capacity at a state level, enlisting both the Nairobi City Council and the State Department of Gender in FLONE’s training, research projects, and stakeholder forums. Because of consultations with FLONE the National Transport Safety Authority incorporated substantial information on sexual harassment in its revised driving school curriculum.

Wider changes in policy and public prioritization can be seen each year at FLONE’s annual ‘Women in Transport Africa Conference,’ a gathering that brings together civil society, policymakers, city authorities, researchers, academics, industry workers, and students from across the African continent. It is the only professional platform for practitioners to share their experiences and challenges and to inform policy, research, and public interventions in the industry. Naomi envisions hosting future conferences at different cities in Africa to build a smart network of partners who can strengthen, formalize, and organize the transport industry in their countries.

THE PERSON

As an only child, Naomi held a special relationship with her introverted father. They read books and discussed them together as a way to teach Naomi to think creatively, question norms, and foster curiosity. Her mother was a full-time secretary but was (and still is) a serial



Yet despite popular belief, Naomi saw the industry not as unfixable, but rather as a neglected sector badly in need of transformation. In her university years, Naomi launched and led several student groups to spotlight and help women -- from poetry slams and peer counseling to female self-defense initiatives. She realized that her female classmates remained especially vulnerable to harassment at the public transit terminals near the university. This both gnawed on her and inspired her to take action. What could she do about a cause she cared about and an industry she knew so well?

In 2011, while still in university, Naomi and some female friends started researching and piloting projects to create safe, sustainable, and accessible public transportation spaces for women and vulnerable groups. After graduating in 2013 Naomi formalized this work under the name FLONE Initiative.

entrepreneur, who would involve Naomi in her ventures, ranging from making and selling soap, selling firewood, and supplying uniforms to security firms in Nairobi.

In her teens, Naomi's family invested in a matatu. She felt a sense of pride knowing that her family's matatu was one of the most popular minivans around, mostly – she suspects – because of its trendy paint job. She grew up watching her uncles as owners, drivers, conductors, and cleaners of matatus. For her family, public transport was a source of income and employment, and Naomi understood its importance to their passengers in accessing jobs and financial independence.

Naomi was very aware of the challenges family members faced working in transportation. All of them contended with the corruption, bribery, and violence endemic to the industry. Her uncles were the victims of a carjacking and shooting while driving their matatu, and Naomi herself was physically assaulted by a conductor.



Naomi organized 'My Dress, My Choice' protests, which sparked awareness and research on the issue and enabled women to speak publicly about daily experiences using public transport. PHOTO CREDIT: Naomi Mwaura



MANISHA GHULE

Executive Director of Navchetana

 navchetna.org

Manisha Ghule is tapping the knowledge, energy, and lived experience of midlife, rural Indian women, ages 30-45, to become village development professionals, raising standards of living and income in their communities as they elevate their own. The skills they develop equip them for new careers, inspiring new cadres of disadvantaged women to follow in their footsteps.

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THE NEW IDEA

In rural India, women do much of the livelihoods and agricultural work. However, their contribution is invisible because their roles continue to be informal and grossly underpaid. Despite being the backbone of their village economies, they are little valued and barely if at all paid.

Manisha Ghule has found how to turn this pattern upside down. How? She focuses on women who have finished their child-rearing and are savvy and mature, albeit from Dalit and other disadvantaged backgrounds. She gets the village to choose the most promising among such women, and she then gives them a year's training in how to be a "village developer" or "Sakhi" ("friend"). The Sakhis then spend several years in a dimension of village development (e.g., helping everyone gain access to the government programs for which they are eligible). Once they have finished these two years as village developers, they move to sophisticated jobs ranging from police to modern agriculture.

After intensive training from Manisha's organization, these Sakhis step into their communities as development professionals, equipped to provide guidance on agriculture, education, personal finance, government support programs, and the like. The Sakhis are selected by their villages for a tenure of three years. Village households pay for the services they provide. In this way, the earnings of the Sakhis become directly linked to better development outcomes in their villages.

Manisha has built village-level architecture to sustain and strengthen the leadership of Sakhis. They lead and own their own goals, performance targets, and service fee structures, all of which are set in consultation with their communities. Being embedded in formal village positions gives the Sakhis authority, enabling them to activate defunct village development committees and programs that are crucial for the progress of their communities.



Through her work she is redefining the roles of women in rural areas and building new jobs and career pathways that transform rural women into leaders of village development. PHOTO CREDIT: Manisha Ghule

In four years, 1,200 rural frontline development professionals have emerged across 300 of the poorest villages of Maharashtra, India's second-most populous state. Communities that employ them report a 60-80% increase in household income. And, from having earned at best subsistence-level wages before, the Sakhis are realizing a 30-50% increase in their own income, making between 140 to 360 USD annually for part-time work of 4-7 hours weekly. Their income rises farther once they move into sharply modern roles after leaving their three years of service.

So far, Sakhis have, for example, incubated 4,500 microenterprises and engaged 3,500 farmers in the bio-farming of high-value crops. They have enabled 20,000 women to become joint owners of property and helped thousands of other women access social protection schemes. More than 3,500 families have been able to leave migrant work for permanent residences, where they can now earn adequate income.

Manisha recognizes that long-term career pathways, not jobs, will build a groundswell of women aspirants for the role of rural frontline development professional. The Sakhis graduate from their three-year tenure equipped with leadership tools, technical expertise, and improved

social standing that allow them to step into new careers with new skills and authority. Sakhis who have completed the program are becoming elected as local leaders, founding women-led businesses, entering the police force, and even setting up banks.



The financial support has led to a sense of confidence, social acceptance, entrepreneurial life skills, and most of all a sense of community to the women. Manisha's lived experience of the community's realities enabled her to bring more women forward to access their rights."



Manisha has designed this approach to be a sustainable and scalable model for rural development. Over time, she aims to set up state-level platforms where Sakhis can engage in peer learning and collaborate as a professional body. For greater community buy-in and to increase Sakhis' legitimacy and visibility, Manisha is also partnering with local colleges of social work to research, formalize, and recognize the Sakhi model as a job and role that will open leadership and career pathways for rural women.

THE PROBLEM

In rural India, women do much of the work but are commonly unpaid and invisible. This is especially so for Dalit or other low status women.

Indian women, especially in rural areas, are among the lowest paid in the world, yet more rural women work than urban women. Nearly 75 percent of rural Indian women are informally engaged in agriculture, but despite their lived experience and knowledge, they are little valued and less paid.

In the last five years, the marginalization of rural women has accelerated. Immediately after the first wave of COVID, more than 12 million rural women lost their jobs. By 2030, another almost 12 million, especially those in agriculture, could lose their jobs owing to automation, according to a McKinsey Global Institute report.



Manisha Ghule, who has been working with the affected women, said the state health department's failure to recognize the long-standing trend of women as young as 20 undergoing hysterectomy was "significant and a collective tragedy, for which the authorities need to share the responsibility".

 **The Indian EXPRESS**

The picture is worse for the nomadic and so-called "denotified tribes," or DNT communities in Manisha's home state of Maharashtra. These landless families are the most vulnerable. Many earn their living from cutting sugarcane, migrating with their entire families for six to eight

months a year to live and work in subhuman conditions. Although they are the backbone of the state's sugar industry, among the most profitable in the country, the average family income among the DNT community is less than 900 USD a year. Women from DNT families in Manisha's region are often coerced to have hysterectomies so that they don't have to skip a day of work during their menstrual cycle.

For a long time, there has been widespread recognition by all sectors that women are key to reviving rural India. Yet opportunities that have engaged rural women have been limited and limiting. The government has instituted roles for rural women such as community health workers, rural childcare center staff and the like; yet despite their reach and impressive work in remote corners of the country, women continue to be viewed as cheap, temporary and last-minute labor. They receive limited technical training, are usually not engaged in leadership programs, and are even denied their service fee for years when governments run deficits. Nonprofit organizations working in rural areas often do recruit and train rural women, but this cadre gets remunerated only for delivering field services within the remit of the organization.

THE STRATEGY

Manisha recognizes that rural India has a giant opportunity – engaging its huge, little-used talent: Its sea of middle-aged women. She is focused on the domains of climate-resilient agriculture, livelihood generation, and social protection, where rural women experts can apply their lived experience, knowledge, and new skills to turn around ailing village economies.

As the daughter of an ultra-poor family of sugarcane cutters, Manisha has drawn her blueprint by looking into her own life. Hailing from historically marginalized communities, her cadres of frontline professionals are comprised of women between the ages of 30 and 45, who are selected at a lifecycle stage at which they have accumulated experience and have leverage with their families and communities. Most have built a solid fund of grit and equanimity. Their children are also older, freeing up their time and mind space to focus on a career.

These rural frontline development professionals are launched through a structured process of identification and selection. The Sakhis are selected by a village council and validated by female village collectives, a platform set up by Manisha and her team, with representation from women from all village households. Five to seven women are nominated for four or five specific roles, with room for dropouts or other exigencies.

A one-year Leadership Development Academy transforms these women with limited formal education into rural frontline development professionals. Curated by Manisha and her team, leadership immersion includes technical training, leadership development, on-site learning, coaching, and peer support. The Academy curriculum blends the Sakhis' knowledge of their village communities with the technical know-how of thematic experts. The faculty ranges from progressive local farmers to experts from financial institutions, including the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, leaders in agribusiness, and representatives from government and non-profits.



Manisha recognizes that long-term career pathways, not jobs, will build a groundswell of women aspirants for the role of rural frontline development professional. PHOTO CREDIT: Manisha Ghule

The leadership academy is a springboard for Sakhis to develop the skills needed for their new positions. In every village, five frontline development professionals take on the critical roles of village livelihood officer, agriculture service provider, education officer, social entitlements officer, and Police Mitra or friends of the police. Together, they build new knowledge, practices, and behaviors in their villages, that have otherwise seen few or no development interventions.



According to Manisha Ghule, who has worked with more than 7,000 families, there is no separate government scheme or help for sugarcane workers; they make do with universal schemes like ration cards."



The Livelihoods Development Officer provides village women the technical services of setting up self-help groups, opening bank accounts, managing record books, incubating micro-enterprises, setting up market linkages, and serving as rural business coaches. The Agriculture Officer engages marginal, small plot holders in climate-resilient farming methods that restore the nutrient balance of soils, recharge natural irrigation systems, and cultivate water-efficient crops. The Education Officer maintains a strict track record of the schooling of children of migrant families and provides care and upkeep services for children in village seasonal hostels. The Police Mitra ensures, for example, steady and timely access to the justice system for women survivors of violence. All five role holders collaborate on the more complex and intersectional challenge of securing women's access to property and land rights and unlocking government schemes and programs.

To prevent the Sakhis from getting relegated to an informal or temporary workforce, Manisha has integrated them into the panchayat system, a village-level governing structure with locally elected leaders. Being embedded in formal village positions gives the Sakhis confidence and authority, enabling them to activate defunct village development committees and programs that are crucial for the progress of their communities.

The Sakhis' effectiveness in these roles is uprooting attitudes that have long blocked rural women's leadership in India. The Sakhis are able to serve throughout their village, overcoming social norms that otherwise frown upon women leaving the home to work. Through the social capital they build, Sakhi are able to engage as professionals with everyone across their communities – while still keeping up with household responsibilities. Though they are not formally educated, their wealth of lived experience and Sakhi training enables them to have major impacts on their communities.

Manisha's model also makes business sense, as the increase in villagers' incomes enables them to pay the Sakhis. Sakhis earn up to 360 USD for 50-75 days of their time every year. They also harvest the recognition factor, as they stand tall in their communities as go-to-advisors, 'business doctors,' 'crop experts' and 'panchayat leaders.'

As a further test of sustainability, Manisha's model works without any external funding.

THE PERSON

Manisha was born into a family of agricultural wage laborers in a remote village in Maharashtra, in a district known for violence and corruption. When she was nine months old, her parents left her and her siblings in the care of their grandparents, to seek work in distant sugarcane fields. Despite poverty and the routine of eating one full meal every alternate day, Manisha recalls being a happy child. She experienced care and well-being from her siblings and grandparents.

Manisha's life was upended after her marriage at the age of 13. Her education came to a grinding halt. In her marital home, she experienced extreme physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Shouldering the burden of agricultural and domestic responsibilities, she gave birth to her son at the age of 15. In a life-altering episode of violence, Manisha was flung into the village well one night by her husband and in-laws. She was pregnant with her second child at the time. Manisha survived the night in the swirling dark waters. This was a watershed moment, the moment when she decided to walk out on violence and give herself permission to build a life of purpose.

The threat of social ostracization drove Manisha's natal family to reject her and her children. But her aunt, a single woman, stood up in her support. With her aunt as her tailwind, Manisha, a single, penniless mother of two, set on a new path of grit. During the day, she earned money as a domestic helper and cleaner in a local NGO. She



Manisha has built village-level architecture to sustain and strengthen the leadership of Sakhis. PHOTO CREDIT: Manisha Ghule

studied at night. With scholarship support and mentorship of a village schoolteacher, Manisha topped her high school exams. She went on to complete her undergraduate and postgraduate education in social work.

But Manisha's real education came from her role as a community worker. She fought many attitudinal barriers to get a job as a field coordinator in the same rural civil society organization that had employed her as a cleaning woman. In this role, she was responsible for some of the activities that today fall within the remit of a rural frontline development professional. The role gave Manisha a new lens. It opened multiple new windows for her to read her own community. She understood that she and those placed like her were not worthless, but that structural violence and exclusion mounted huge obstacles on their path to progress.

Manisha also witnessed other forms of discrimination. In her nonprofit, Manisha and the other field-worker colleagues, who came from local communities, were not consulted on program matters by the managers and leaders of the organization. And there were limited or no pathways of career progression for them.

In 2008, Manisha launched her organization Navchetana, with seven other single rural women. Manisha studied diligently to learn the basics of organizational management, administration, compliance, and fundraising. The absence of clear information, advice, and roadmaps led her to realize the need for development management training for grassroots women who are off the grid of the development sector.

It took her ten years to develop her idea. In 2018, she rolled out a radically new idea – turning disadvantaged middle age rural women into the development frontline professionals.



BETH CARDASO

Technical Coordinator of CTA - Zona da Mata

 ctazm.org.br

Beth enables rural women to measure and therefore make visible their central role in the economy. This advances mindsets on gender equality, and it gives women access to previously denied public benefits.

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THIS ARTICLE ONLINE**

THE NEW IDEA

Beth has developed a methodology to do something entirely new: Enable poor rural women across Brazil to measure and document the significant value created, chiefly through food production and sales. Her tools enable these women to track food and other products they produce, sell, consume, exchange, and donate. The methodology is disseminated through various networks and aggregated to inform public debate and policy.

The vast majority of farmers in non-industrialized countries are women. They are certainly key to Brazil's agriculture and rural economy. But, before Beth, their contributions went unrecorded and unrecognized. This fed gender stereotypes, unequal pay, and denial of public benefits.

Beth's work is changing that. Documenting the women's contributions and making them visible helps them gain recognition and confidence as producers and providers. The data helps them qualify for credit, public programs for training and technical assistance, and public retirement benefits which they would otherwise

be denied. Learning to track and recognize the value of their work also empowers them to assert their rights in their families and communities, and to make improvements to their operations. This not only enhances their well-being, it also strengthens food production and rural communities.

THE PROBLEM

Women's production and contributions to household income in rural Brazil have been largely invisible because the federal census and other government surveys don't record them. This data gap has exacerbated gender inequality and prevented women from reaching their full potential as producers and providers.

To supplement family income, many women in rural Brazil grow fruits and vegetables in family gardens and make and sell sweets, handicrafts, and household utensils. These activities are economically significant, but they aren't measured, and in male-led households, they're



Beth's system pinpoints detailed information on women's food production ranging from monetary value to biodiversity. Armed with this data, rural women realize they are often the main food providers for their families. They then become better informed and more confident in making decisions about their production and land use.

generally regarded as unimportant. With no way to accurately document what they earn, these women can't access financing or other assistance.

Women are critically important to Brazil's agriculture and rural economy. They make up about half of Brazil's rural population (roughly 15 million) and lead 20% of its food production. However, women farmers are stigmatized as inferior, lacking experience, and less productive than men. Only 12% of women-led agricultural units receive any government assistance to improve their operations. Households headed by women also suffer more food insecurity than those headed by men.



[Beth] points out that the backyard needs to be seen as an object of public policy, as it is a space that guarantees the maintenance of families in the countryside.

- Empresa Brasil de Comunicação



Gender inequity in farming and rural economies is a global problem. 60 to 80 percent of farmers in nonindustrialized countries are women, yet they have much less access to credit, land ownership (only 2% of landowners worldwide are women), and education than men. This restricts how much they can produce. Eliminating gender inequality could increase food production and decrease food insecurity.

THE STRATEGY

As an agronomist and a feminist studying family farming in rural Brazil, Beth encountered systemic gender inequality. From her work with the Center for Alternative Technologies (CTA), she realized rural women made important contributions to agriculture and the economy that went unrecorded and unrecognized. She determined that in order for rural women to assert their rights and reach their full potential as producers and providers, their output would first need to be measured and valued.

Beth developed Cardeneta Agroecológica ("farming booklet"), an accessible tool rural women use to document their economic and environmental contributions. Using the Cardeneta, they keep daily track of their production and how much of it is sold, exchanged, donated, or consumed by the family. This creates a record that qualifies them for government benefits requiring proof



Beth developed Cardeneta by tapping into national and regional agroecological networks in Brazil.

of work in an industry, such as rural retirement benefits. Teaching women to use the Cardeneta leads to higher self-esteem, a sense of empowerment, and greater confidence in making decisions about their operations.

In addition to being biodiverse, Brazil is also highly socially and culturally diverse. Beth's methods are designed to be accessible to women of different regions, biomes, backgrounds, and educational levels.

She developed Cardeneta by tapping into national and regional agroecological networks in Brazil. This allowed her to work with rural women, Indigenous people, urban agriculturists, researchers, and CSO technicians all across the country – and therefore develop the tools that work across all this diversity. Incorporating learnings from those experiences, her methodology integrates socioeconomic analysis, intersectional feminist perspectives, and “socio-biodiversity maps” that women create themselves. They use the information to decide which crops to grow, not only for maximum cash return, but also for their cultural value and biodiversity.

Beth's system collects and contextualizes information on women's economic and environmental contributions in ways that other surveys don't capture. Brazil's most recent national census (2017) distinguished between food production households led by women vs. those led by men, but it lacked detailed information about the women's economic contributions, particularly in women-led households.

Beth's system pinpoints detailed information on women's food production ranging from monetary value to biodiversity. A two-year study she coordinated with the

Federal University of Viçosa used her tools` to assess women's backyard farming across four regions of Brazil. It found women's production brought in US \$155 to \$188 per household per year, almost an entire minimum-wage salary that was previously unrecognized, even by the families themselves. The study registered 245 different species of fruits and vegetables grown in women's backyard gardens, revealing them as an ecological resource for their communities.



The results of the use of the [Cardeneta Agroecológica] methodology show, in a practical way, the relevance of the projects to include actions that encourage gender equality relations, strengthening women and their contribution to family income, as well as their recognition as political and economic subjects.”



Armed with this data, rural women realize they are often the main food providers for their families. They then become better informed and more confident in making decisions about their production and land use. For example, some women learned they could earn more money from growing fruit and making jam than from the established cultural practice of harvesting coffee, so they switched crops. Gaining confidence and a sense of self-worth also supports healthier and more balanced family relationships, and women in the study reported a reduction in domestic violence.

Beth's methodology is made available free of charge to public institutions, research institutions, and citizen sector organizations, provided they commit to keeping the data secure and promoting women's rights.

The Brazilian states of Bahia and Espírito Santo, as well as municipalities in several other states, now recognize women's importance in agriculture and are incorporating Beth's methodology into agroecological technical assistance and extension programs that help women improve their crop quality. In Brazil's Bahia State alone,

these public assistance programs now reach more than 19,000 families in 60 municipalities.

Beth is working to scale the use of her methodology further. She recently established an Observatory program at the Center for Alternative Technologies, where she first developed her methodology, so researchers can use it to collect data across all CTA initiatives. The goal is to build a comprehensive and centralized database tracking the contributions of rural women, which can inform public debate about gender disparity and leverage wider policy and systems change in Brazil.



In the interior of Bahia, Jozélia da Silva Santana puts everything she does in her notebook. 'At first I just thought I was just working. After the notebook, I started to see all the diversity that I produce, which I didn't pay attention to. I just planted.' An experience that is almost always forgotten, the value of everything she plants in her productive yard or swidden, is no longer invisible. By writing down each step of her day, Jozélia is aware of the magnitude of her own work."

Brasil de Fato

In addition to being leveraged by governments and institutions inside Brazil, Beth's tools are being disseminated throughout the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development. She is partnering with Toulouse University and the Latin America and Caribbean Agroecological Movement and has recently been invited to expand her work to the central African countries of São Tomé and Príncipe.

THE PERSON

Beth was born in Rio de Janeiro. Her mother was a nursing assistant from rural Paraíba in northeastern Brazil, and her father was a bank employee from Rio.

They divorced when Beth was a young child. Her father took her and her brothers and forbade them to have any contact with their mother, fearing she would try to take them back to Paraíba, where their grandmother lived as one of many rural women farmers.

Her father's actions reflected the sexist and anti-rural discriminatory attitudes of that time, which motivated Beth to study feminism and social justice issues and to work for the rights of rural women like her grandmother.

In college, she studied agronomy and encountered student movements and the Ecological Agronomy Group, which fueled her interest in effecting social change. She later studied gender and agroecology issues for her Master's degree in Spain, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in natural resources and sustainable management.

After college, she worked at FASE, one of Brazil's main community-based organizations, and participated in the National Seminar on Gender and Family Farming. Her time at FASE coincided with the beginning of a national debate on gender and family farming in Brazil.

At the turn of the century, Beth joined the Center for Alternative Technologies (CTA), working on capacity building, political advocacy, and self-organization of women's agricultural networks. She became CTA coordinator in 2003. It was at CTA that she developed her methodology for registering previously unrecognized contributions of rural women.

The following year, she co-created the Gender and Agroecology Seminar, leading to the establishment of the Women's Working Group of the Agroecology National Articulation, a network of state and regional groups across Brazil through which she spread early versions of her methodology.

Beth was inspired to look for her mother after she worked so closely with rural women farmers on gender inequity in communities much like where her mother grew up. She found her mother in 2005 and lived with her until her death in 2011. Beth's work is dedicated to the lives of rural women who share her mother's story of loss, discrimination, and resilience.



EVITA FERNANDEZ

Chairperson of Fernandez Foundation

 fernandez.foundation

Dr. Evita Fernandez has changed childbirth in India. She integrates trained midwives into India's public hospital system where they attend 87% of normal births, providing safe, fuller, far warmer care for women and babies. This also frees the doctors to focus on the most difficult cases.

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THE NEW IDEA

Through her National Midwifery Training Institute Evita is developing highly skilled cadres of professional midwives and midwifery educators and placing them in public hospitals, where they handle 87% of normal deliveries, enabling doctors to focus on births that require medical or surgical intervention. This collaborative model of care is reducing India's high reliance on medicalized birth and C-sections, in a country with one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the world.

Evita's efforts and international recognition have also borne fruit at the highest policy levels. In 2018, the Indian government recognized midwifery as a vital profession, and the following year partnered with Evita's organization to train high-level midwife educators across five states and growing. By 2032, the government seeks to train 90,000 new midwives. The Fernandez School of Nursing, the recognized National Midwifery Training Institute led by Evita, is the only charitable and private player tapped to meet this target.

THE PROBLEM

Indian women account for 15% of maternal deaths worldwide, and three women die each hour in India due to complications during childbirth. Each year, 2.7 million Indian babies are delivered stillborn - one for every ten pregnancies. These losses can be traced to a lack of trained health workers and the over-medicalization of the birth process in India, where C-sections, as one example, are used at nearly twice the rate set by the World Health Organization.

Additionally, many women report degrading or abusive experiences in over-full maternity wards, as overworked staff are often instructed to "clear the labor rooms" and turn to unnecessary medical interventions to speed the birth process. In the last two decades, 1.3 million Indian women have died from maternity-related causes. The poorer states, especially their rural and tribal regions, account for over 60% of these deaths. The World Health Organization notes most of these deaths are preventable.



Dr Evita and Gori Bee. Gori Bee is one of the oldest employees at Fernandez who has been there since the initial years of Fernandez PHOTO CREDIT: Evita Fernandez

Government incentives draw 80% of pregnant women, most living below the poverty line, into government hospitals for prenatal care and delivery. In some states this has increased the number of women giving birth in public hospitals by 40%. There is an acute shortage of skilled staff to meet this volume -- in some regions, hospitals report fewer than one doctor per 10,000 people.



India has a high maternal mortality rate, poor doctor-to-patient ratio, rising C-section rates, absence of last-mile access to quality maternal healthcare. In this context, Dr. Fernandez, a veteran in maternal healthcare, believes that midwifery is a workable solution to these widespread problems.”

Indian School of Business



This overburdened health system is doctor-centric, rather than women-centric. For example, women are asked to lie flat on their backs during delivery - against scientific evidence - to make birth easier for the obstetrician. Doctors don't request consent before performing physical exams, which are often done hurriedly and painfully. The intense pressures on the health system have pushed India's maternity practices toward a strongly medicalized approach, leading to multiple unnecessary interventions, including the high C-section rate of 21.5% for deliveries in institutions. At private hospitals the rate is even higher - approaching half the births.

The excessive patient load often results in poor quality of care, manifesting in negligence or obstetric violence. Physical and verbal abuse and shaming of pregnant mothers by medical staff is common. This trauma often drives pregnant women to exploitive private healthcare providers, where they end up with unnecessary C-sections and excessive debt. Women, especially from resource-poor communities, are not afforded the mental and physical care, compassion, and dignity due to them during the birthing process. These factors make India one of the top five countries with the highest maternal death rates. For every 100,000 live births, 103 Indian women lose their lives -- a rate almost 50% higher than what the Sustainable Development Goals call for.



A Midwife communicating with a pregnant woman during her antenatal visit to the public hospital PHOTO CREDIT:Evita Fernandez



Dr. Evita Fernandez points out how research indicates that a woman's experience during childbirth has a significant impact on her mental and physical health, but the current healthcare system has medicalized pregnancy and birthing."



THE STRATEGY

As a senior obstetrician with three decades of experience, Dr. Fernandez is taking on these public health challenges by developing India's professional field of midwifery and integrating it into India's government health systems.

Midwifery is a globally recognized practice that offers a skilled, compassionate, safe, and empowering route to childbirth and newborn care. Recognizing that birth is a normal, not a medical event, midwifery is grounded in a deep appreciation of a woman's physical and psychological experiences during pregnancy and childbirth. The practice respects a woman's choices and ability to lead the birthing process.

In 2011, Evita's quest to make the healthcare system woman-centric led her to design and establish a model midwifery practice in two charity hospitals. She began by establishing rigorous 18-month training programs for midwives and midwife educators. Compared to the few weeks of training in maternal health and birthing Indian

nurses receive in a typical program, this comprehensive education makes her midwives confident, true experts in the field.

Starting with eight inspired nurses in 2011, Evita grew the team to 28 midwives. Together, they demonstrated compelling impact, which attracted the attention of global medical experts and government health leaders. In 2016, Evita partnered with the state government of Telangana and UNICEF to introduce midwifery into Telangana's public hospitals, establishing midwife-led units or MLUs in public facilities across the state. Today, these MLUs are supporting obstetricians by independently addressing healthy pregnancies, dramatically reducing physician case overloads. They are also driving a sea change in the prenatal care provided by public hospitals across 12 districts in Telangana.

Between 2011 and 2022, the midwives trained at Fernandez' hospitals delivered 42% of the babies born vaginally. Under their guidance the use of episiotomies dropped from 40 to 27% and the use of epidurals from 70 to 40%. In the city of Karimnagar alone, the use of C-sections reportedly dropped by ten percent in just six months.



At a time when Caesarean section (C-section) childbirths are on the rise, the State government in partnership with the Fernandez Foundation and UNICEF is propagating the idea of midwifery".



Public hospitals have been the main site of Evita's work, as they account for 80% of deliveries across India, and are accessed by women from resource-poor communities who often lack adequate information. By listening to these women and paying attention to detail, midwives can better categorize low and high-risk pregnancies, reduce waiting time, optimize obstetricians' time, and improve the case-history taking process. Midwives have instituted childbirth classes on hospital premises and have fought for seemingly simple things, like more chairs for pregnant women, who often must stand in long lines in government hospitals. Community health workers have started to sit in the antenatal classes run by midwives, further expanding the flow of key information to

mothers and their families. They also become evangelists for midwife-led care in local and rural communities.

Obstetricians and nurses have noticed the transformation across hospitals where Fernandez' trained midwives work. In assessment visits to 49 public facilities in Telangana made by Fernandez' supervisors and international educators, obstetricians debriefed in focus groups widely reported that midwives reduced their workload, allowed them to focus on complicated pregnancies, and were an excellent workforce well integrated in their teams. They noted that women were more confident about natural birth, happier, and reported less pain during birthing. In several public hospitals, midwives were actively sought out by women coming in for the first time.

Evita has been mindful to enlist obstetricians as critical allies, advocating with them despite their doubts and resistance to a midwife-led system. Evidence gathered in the pilot programs has led to wide buy-in from the community of physicians. As a result, India's guidelines on midwifery services were created in partnership with the country's leading obstetricians. The national governing board for obstetricians and gynecologists commended Evita's achievements.

Across Telangana and the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, Evita has now built a cohort of 322 midwives and 22 midwife educators. Her trained educators are now building nationwide momentum. A group of three educators can train cohorts of 30 peers.



A distinctive feature of her approach which reflects her genuine concern towards her patients, is that Dr. Evita believes in allowing women to make choices about issues concerning birth. It is her firm conviction that women should have a voice in the process of delivering a child and should make an informed choice."

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Business
School

For Evita, midwifery is also creating a new and empowered career pathway for nurses. Over time, the midwives experience financial and professional growth -- earning 50-60% higher salaries, moving into senior roles in the hospital system and building recognition for themselves and the field.



Dr. Evita during a class for the midwives PHOTO CREDIT: Evita Fernandez



Labour pain management techniques by Midwives with the help of birth companion (husband) in public hospital of Telangana PHOTO CREDIT: Evita Fernandez

India's ambitious goal to train 90,000 midwives by 2032 is supported by fourteen National Midwifery Training Institutes (NMTIs) set up to fulfill this mandate. Fernandez' hospitals are a critical resource in this exercise, providing support to upcoming NMTIs, and creating a research hub to aggregate the experiences and needs of NMTIs across India and its neighboring countries.

As they institute robust quality standards and protocols for de-medicalizing pregnancy, midwives are also training and expanding their own peer networks. Importantly, it is the midwives themselves who are representing the profession at international conferences and government meetings to make a case for its expansion. Across government hospitals they are making a strong case for their profession by demonstrating its benefits, transforming overworked public hospitals into spaces of dignity, joy, and care.

"Fernandez has been immensely successful, but she doesn't just run the hospitals for profit. Her ethical foundation is also an inheritance from her parents. At her hospitals,... Fernandez has been known for making her patients feel special and safe. She strongly believes in the need to make good quality healthcare accessible to all. Fernandez's rare brand of medical care goes beyond good quality treatment. It is ultimately defined by empathy for her patients.

THE PERSON

Evita credits her work in the early 1980s at the National Health Service in the UK for her outlook as a young doctor. There she saw midwives in charge of labor wards, working as equals with obstetricians to provide a dignified, respectful birthing experience for mothers. This inspired her desire to create a more democratic, patient-centered experience at home in India, where Evita's parents had built and then run a small, well-regarded hospital in Hyderabad since the late 1940s.

Shortly after Evita returned from England, her older brother died unexpectedly, and the hospital became her responsibility. She was determined to expand the busy facility, and in 1992, took out a very large loan for a new building. When funds ran low, she sold her own ancestral jewelry to pay for the cement used in the building's construction.

In her early years as an obstetrician, she also saw how HIV-positive mothers were abandoned, due to pervasive fear within the medical community. Evita worked hard to sensitize her team, to offer these mothers a safe and respectful environment. Fernandez became the first hospital in India to treat HIV-positive mothers, all for free, and to provide their babies with free vaccinations for up to a year and a half.

Evita traces her strong desire to serve her community to a conversation with a Jesuit priest she met on a train while returning from the UK. He advised her to travel to find her purpose and spirit of service. In the years that followed she constantly asked herself, “whether we are in this for business or service?” She later formalized this idea as a guiding principle for the whole organization. In 2018, she decided to register Fernandez Foundation as a not-for-profit – an unheard-of choice for a highly profitable hospital. The foundation now runs six non-profit health facilities with 320 beds, including a Child Development Center.

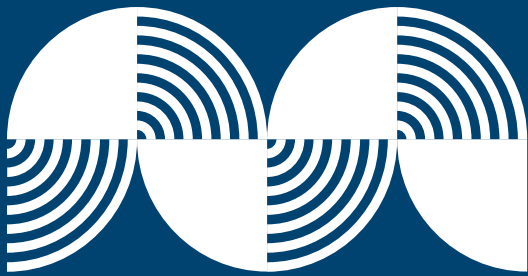
In her mission to champion midwifery, Evita traces her inspiration to two sources. One was “Pregnancy: The Complete Childbirth Book,” by Nutan Pandit, which introduced the idea of treating pregnancy as a normal, physiological process that deserved dignified and respectful care. Reading it led Evita to transform practices at her family’s hospital facilities. Second, in the mid-2000s, when Fernandez Hospitals became a referral center for complicated pregnancies, she encountered several cases in which young mothers arrived at the last minute with multiple organ failures. Seeing so many maternal deaths shook her deeply.

Aware of the success of midwifery at reducing maternal deaths Evita was convinced it was the solution to India’s maternal healthcare crises. She followed up relentlessly with international experts, and despite opposition from the Indian medical fraternity, persisted and brought on board a range of international midwives, obstetricians, and bureaucrats, all of whom, convinced by her vision, lent their institutional backing. She is also known for several pioneering initiatives, including “Kangaroo Mother Care,” to improve breastfeeding and reduce neo-natal care costs, as well as establishing milk banks, screening newborns and more.

In the face of the rapid global privatization of healthcare, Evita’s vision is a radical rethinking of the potential of public healthcare. Through her decades of work, she has demonstrated that high-quality services can be provided at low cost, reaching people across the socio-economic spectrum. Her success integrating midwifery into public health systems shows that equitable access to healthcare is possible for all, with utmost dignity and compassion.



Labour pain management techniques by Midwives with the help of birth companion (husband) in public hospital of Telangana PHOTO CREDIT: Evita Fernandez



ASHOKA YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

YOUR DREAM, YOUR TEAM, YOUR CHANGED WORLD

Whenever anyone first has the “dream/team/changed world” experience, they *know* deep down that they have the power that today’s ever-changing and ever-connected new reality requires. They have the power to give -- because they are changemakers.

When a child becomes a young person (around age 12), they can do this. Indeed, the sooner they do, the richer their life will be. Put another way, anyone without this power will be marginalized. This is the new literacy.

The world’s (and Ashoka’s) core mission must be to ensure that everyone has this changemaker’s power.

Ashoka has begun its “everyone a changemaker” work with a very strong focus on young people. Why?

- What could be more unjust than failing to give young people what they must have to be able to contribute, i.e., to have a life?
- Getting society to know that becoming a changemaker is now the core of what constitutes success in growing up is the fastest, most sure

means of getting adults to know that mastering changemaking is essential for their wellbeing.

- Young people have special roles they are uniquely well-positioned to play in the “everyone a changemaker” (EACH) movement. No one is more powerful with their peers than young people. And, for evolutionary reasons, powerful, successful young people move adults at a deep level because that is central to what constitutes success in life for the adults.

Ashoka and the EACH movement is dealing, and will increasingly deal, with other dimensions of the EACH revolution. It is developing a major thrust to help all groups learn how they must organize in the new strategic reality. And the movement will help all the chief dimensions of society -- ranging from climate to indigenous people -- go

through the profound set of changes they must. Young people will contribute throughout. (For example, using Ashoka's very simple program, Your Kids, any group can turn its adult staff into the changemakers it must have by helping them do what they most want, i.e., to ensure that their kids succeed in life -- and that requires them to help their teens become practiced changemakers.



They are chosen with as much rigor as Ashoka Fellows.

Over the last six years, Ashoka has built a new element into the heart of its core community, the Ashoka Young Changemakers (AYCers). They are chosen with as much rigor as Ashoka Fellows. They have fully succeeded with their dream/team/changed world and now want (1) to grow their changemaking superpower and (2) to help everyone else own its life-changing magic. Becoming an EACH movement co-leader is, by far, the best way of achieving both of those goals. They are chosen (1) both for essentially the same qualities as Ashoka Fellows and (2) because they commit to co-lead EACH -- and because Ashoka thinks they will be good at it. (The only people carrying the "Ashoka" name are Ashoka Fellows, the staff, and AYCers.)

The AYC selection and engagement process plays an important role in the development of both the AYCer and the broader community.

- After identification and two series of staff interviews, comes screening by three AYCers from different continents not including that of the candidate. This is the toughest test. It also conveys that both co-leading and the community are real.
- Immediately after this "Youth Opp" stage is over, Ashoka convenes all those who have passed for three to four months of working together, for example, by helping one another develop their plans for how they will bring EACH to their home metros. Suddenly often-lonely solo changemakers have a peer group, one that is helping them where it really, really counts. Halfway through these few months some of the next-generation leaders of the movement's mega "jujitsu partners" (e.g., the teachers union, a top publisher)

join the group. Once both sides overcome their shyness with the other, they connect and begin to see how they can best help one another and EACH.

- Then there is a major, highly visible national EACH event one key part of which is the final AYC selection panel. The AYCers by then know EACH and are highly effective with media, others joining the movement, boards they visit, etc.
- When they return home after this final selection panel and the surrounding EACH events, Ashoka and they bring EACH to their networks. They also join with the "jujitsu" EACH leaders of their home metro in a series of visits to key editorial boards, organizational boards, and media events.

Each step in this process builds the AYCer's ownership of EACH, understanding of how society works and how to change it, and comfortable collaboration with the other members of the Ashoka core community.

From this point onward, as the EACH revolution's changing opportunities call for -- the AYCers mesh with whom ever from the staff, jujitsu partners metros EACH next generation leaders, Fellows, and E-2s that constitute the best team for the task. **Here are a few examples of how AYCers are key players:**

- The movement will have its most powerful impact when doing a media interview or persuading a key board if it comes as a team of EACH next-gen leaders of diverse mega jujitsu partners (a university, a union, etc.) and an AYCer. The hosts sit up because they have never seen these major forces together before and because of the evolutionarily deep impact of a hugely powerful, successful young person. (An example: An EACH leadership group from Brazil's third biggest city came and addressed the national convention of the syndicate of those who administer the country's 5,800 public school districts. One of the five got a standing ovation. Who was it? The AYCer.)
- As mentioned, Your Kids is a simple, powerful tool that catalyzes adults to become changemakers as they work to help their kids have a good life by helping them become changemakers. AYCers (and advanced Youth Venturers, a sister, more junior program) are necessary contributors/case examples, and many will become program facilitators.

- Who is better positioned to help schools and youth programs tip?
- Or to help education schools and publishers make the big transition they must to EACH?



Suddenly often lonely solo changemakers have a peer group.

As the early cohort of AYCers go on to universities and work, they can play ever more strategic roles in helping those organizations make the many big changes they must. **By coming together on a campus, for example, they can:**

- Get the university to bring EACH to feeder middle and high schools. The schools must listen. And this is brilliant marketing and positioning for the university.
- Show the university how to help the alumni see the myriad changes they will want to make once they grasp EACH -- again brilliant marketing for the university.

- Lead scholars and professional schools to see the new research/teaching/consulting opportunities EACH opens up. Strategy, organization, and leadership will, for example, all have to change in the business schools. And what about history?

Working out how to best build the core ties the Ashoka community must have with AYCers over their full lives is just beginning.

There is also huge demand to define and develop support for millions of young people taking early “my dream/team/change world” steps. This work will fit closely with AYC, Lead Young, mass storytelling, and Your Kids.

There follows:

- Introductions to a sample of AYCers, focusing on their EACH co-leadership roles..
- An internal memo from the intrapreneur who has built and is leading the AYC thrust globally, Yashveer Singh. It discusses the new frontiers for AYC on which he and a great global team are working.



AYCERS CO-LEADING EACH

Here are stories of some of the planet's most impressive and giving young changemakers. Elected through Ashoka's famously rigorous process, these Ashoka Young Changemakers have succeeded with their own "dream/team/changed world" and are now key co-leaders in society's struggle to ensure that everyone will have a life because they have the changemaker's power to give.

Let us introduce:

- Muhammad Usman of Nigeria
- Jonathan Godwin of Nigeria
- Aditi Gera of India
- Aniket Gupta of India
- Pablo Azebedo of Brazil

Muhammad Usman

Founder of Young Developer Foundation | Empowerment of Underprivileged Children



Growing up in Northern Nigeria, Muhammad Usman saw first-hand how children in the Almajirai system, a traditional Islamic education practices in Northern Nigeria, face abuse, exploitation, and often get involved in criminal activity. And at 15 years old, Muhammad looked at the young people in his neighborhood and understood the most critical disparity between him and these other children and teenagers—access to quality education and skill development. Muhammad believes that all young people in his community should have their basic needs met, have equal access to opportunities, and engage their peers in growth that benefits everyone's' livelihoods.

To realize his vision, Muhammad launched the Young Developer Foundation, a community-based organization that extends access to school education and vocational skills development to out-of-school youth and the Almajirai children in Northern Nigeria. Many children from less-privileged homes in the region are forced into the Almajirai system where they lack parental care, access to education, and economic opportunities. They often get by as street beggars, asking for alms, as they face chronic poverty and food insecurity. Many of these young people end up tangled in criminal activities, like drug abuse and trafficking, phone snatching, and stealing.

Through the Young Developer Foundation, Muhammad is working towards a new reality for out-of-school youth and the Almajirai children where they are equipped with the knowledge and skills required if they are to be meaningful contributors to society. Muhammad coordinates skills acquisition sponsorships for these young people, sponsors their education, and offers professional training and creative skills development. Through an Orphans Skill Acquisition Program, he engages young orphans by training and empowering them with different high-demand, practical skills, including, hair barbering, phone repair, carpentry, welding, tailoring, hairdressing, tailoring, and cosmetology. In deciding what skills to offer to the young people, Young Developer Foundation considers the location of the young person and the demand for different skills there.

Additionally, Muhammad is multiplying his impact by encouraging and enabling his 150 early beneficiaries to teach others the skills they have mastered.

Muhammad raises awareness about food insecurity and the plight of young Almajirais, who are left to fend for themselves without any skill and in an unsafe environment. He advocates for lasting solutions and engages community leaders to explore the implementation of these sustainable ideas. As a result of their advocacy, the Young Developer Foundation has persuaded two Islamic school centers in Kano State to provide daily meals to nearly 300 young people daily. This success has also helped their community see the value of providing for less privileged children and given them the opportunity to work as a community to find solutions to the Almajirai issue.

Young Developer Foundation continues to raise awareness, by partnering with media groups, numerous community-based organizations, and other youth-led organizations. Their community Advisory Committee helps them monitor and evaluate the impact of their initiatives to ensure sustainability and greater impact.



Through the Young Developer Foundation, Muhammad is working towards a new reality for out-of-school youth and the Almajirai children where they are equipped with the knowledge and skills required be meaningful contributors to society.

Jonathan Godwin

Founder, STEM CLUB | STEM Education, Social Innovation and Environmental Action



Jonathan is bridging gaps in digital skills, computer instruction, and STEM education in Nigeria. The organization he founded while in high school in Lagos works with thousands of students on digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership while helping them learn STEM subjects.

Jonathan quickly perceived structural problems in his public high school. He saw that many students had low digital skills and no access to the computer training needed to learn them. That, combined with poor instruction, left them at a serious disadvantage. Many weren't taught STEM at all in early grades, and the schools didn't support them to catch up. As a result, they were not only behind in STEM, they lacked the basic skills and

information needed to be creative problem solvers who could help their communities.

As a third-year high school student, Jonathan came up with his own solution: STEM Club, a student-run peer network to teach students digital skills and provide the STEM education they weren't getting in class. He built a team around the idea, and worked with a teacher who supported it to obtain permission from the Lagos State Ministry of Education to start the club. In addition to working with students who join, STEM Club works with teachers, creating learning materials they can integrate into their curricular or co-curricular work.



STEM Club has been adopted by other schools in Lagos State and beyond, mostly in underserved communities.

STEM Club has been adopted by other schools in Lagos State and beyond, mostly in underserved communities. To date it has reached about 5000 students and 50 teachers. STEM Club teams use what they learn to come up with their own solutions to community needs, for example, a robot that encourages children to recycle, mini green farms that combat food insecurity, and an app that delivers maternal care information to pregnant women during the pandemic, which made it to the semifinals of the prestigious Technovation Challenge. Other STEM Club participants have gone on to win competitions like the Chevron partner innovation challenge and the National Girls in ICT competition. One participating teacher was the only Nigerian named among the Varkey Foundation's top 50 teachers in the world.

After high school, Jonathan moved to Kigali, Rwanda where he attends African Leadership University on a MasterCard Fellowship. There he continues to expand STEM Club. He sees opportunities for scaling it across Africa and is actively seeking financing. Already his work has built changemaking skills on a significant scale and has helped shift mindsets toward embracing STEM and innovation as integral to education. Jonathan is also a sustainable environment advocate and has through his initiative provided waste management robots that encourage children to recycle and keep the environment clean.

AYCERS CO-LEADERS OF THE EACH MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA

As co-leaders of the EACH Movement, Ashoka Young Changemakers in Nigeria are co-creating and leading changemaker initiatives with jujitsu partners in their respective metro areas; bringing young people in their network (schools, church, communities, etc.) together in Peer Circles to discuss changemaking and the critical skills needed to create positive change; and sharing their changemaker stories through radio interviews, podcasts and as panelists in physical and virtual forums. Through their commitment towards advancing changemaking, they are bringing visibility to the role of young changemakers and the possibilities and powers of young people, when given opportunities.



STEM Club teams use what they learn to come up with their own solutions to community needs, for example a robot that encourages children to recycle, mini green farms that combat food insecurity using plastics, and an app that delivered maternal care information to pregnant women during the pandemic, which made it to the semifinals of the prestigious Technovation Challenge.

One changemaker initiatives that AYCers are co-creating and co-leading with Jujitsu partners is the CTEACH program. This initiative was launched in September 2023, in collaboration with the Lagos State Ministry of Education (a jujitsu partner). CTEACH seeks to empower teachers across public schools to become active changemakers who are infusing changemaker skills into their teaching and engagement of millions of young people that go through the Nigerian educational system.

Jonathan Godwin, alongside co-AYCers Abeedah Alabi and Magnus Imam, worked with other members of the Lagos metro area to implement a three Day Residential Training event for selected teachers to launch the CTEACH program in Nigeria. Prior to the launch of the program, Jonathan came on board as a major contributor towards the strategic design of the program curriculum. As a facilitator during the residential training, he coordinated several group activities and ensured the teachers understood and enjoyed the sessions. He used the platform to share his powerful changemaking journey as a student in a public school who found his power through the support of one of his high school teachers thus highlighting the value of changemaker teachers and how

instrumental they are in supporting (not controlling) young changemakers.

Furthermore, Jonathan is currently leading the Changemaker Squads and Maker Spaces Initiative, which is a sub-initiative of the CTEACH program. He is responsible for overseeing the implementation of changemaker clubs within early mover schools in Lagos state. Along with the CTEACH team, he is supporting new clubs as they develop their action plans and implement their desired activities and projects. Jonathan continues to be involved in the co-creation of other strategies that are advancing EACH globally. For example, Peer to Peer is a tool for activating an EACH mindset in young people by helping first-time changemakers get mentorship from seasoned young changemakers. Through a series of shared learning conversations in Peer Circles sessions and access to a directory, all young changemakers can connect and collaborate with each other across the world.



Muhammad coordinates skills acquisition sponsorships for these young people, sponsors their education, and offers professional training and creative skills development through workshops and trainings.
PHOTO CREDIT: Muhammad Usman

Muhammad Usman is already accelerating the EACH movement through the launch of his co-leading initiative "Be the Changemaker" in September 2023. Through this initiative, he is creating a mindset shift amongst young people by spreading the message of changemaking across several communities in the northern part of Nigeria. Immediately after his election, he was invited to speak at several forums, share his inspiring changemaker story, and call for young people in the region to take action towards positive change, using what he has learned as a help. As a member of the EACH-Jujitsu Kaduna metro area, he is making connections with other strategic partners of the team to sensitize the public on changemaking through radio stations and podcasts interviews. He also collaborates with relevant stakeholders (such as the government, schools and CSOs) in Northern Nigeria to adopt the EACH vision and infuse it into their processes. Furthermore, Muhammad recruited two other AYCers (Victor Eyo and Magnus Imam) to take the message of changemaking to students in every school

in Kano State. As a result of the school tour, Muhammad is empowering 20 young changemakers to gain facilitation skills as Peer Circle leaders who will be responsible for running Peer Circle sessions in their schools to help other young people benefit the "Be the Changemaker" initiative. This work has helped Muhammad build teams and grow their understanding of EACH.

Nigerian AYCers like Muhammad and Jonathan continue to amplify EACH through their own initiatives. They are eager to co-create with their metro area partners, so the EACH message reaches every corner of Nigeria.

Aditi Gera

Founder, Empowerette



As a digital native, Aditi knows firsthand the strengths and shortcomings of hashtag activism and how social media impacts people's mental health and confidence. In response, Aditi started Empowerette, an organization that supports girls without support or resources through a mentorship program to develop leadership and support emotional health, with attention to holistic growth.

Aditi and her growing team in Ujjain have organized weekly mentorship sessions with cohorts of girls from rural areas. They facilitate bringing female early career professionals, bringing knowledge, support, and leadership insights to these girls. This work helps the girls they serve gain the confidence that allows them to build the agency that allows them to change their own lives. When Aditi was selected as an Ashoka Young Changemaker, it was huge news in her small town, Ujjain, in northern India. In the six-month engagement with Ashoka prior to her selection, Aditi learned that the biggest growth opportunity she can have would be to learn how to create a world where everyone can contribute towards change. Aditi brought this vision to her campus and created peer-to-peer conversations to help other students and

teachers learn the criticality of being a changemaker. She was also able to bring the insights of an EACH framework to her own initiative Empowerette.



Aditi has also participated in conversations with Ashoka community on how an "Everyone a Changemaker" world will be far more gender equitable.

Aditi has also participated in important community conversations on how an EACH world will be far more gender equitable. She also supports adults in her town in becoming champions of young people as changemakers.



She fostered a community of 500+ tech startup founders across different industries.

Aditi was an early AYCer in India (which is where the program was born) and has now graduated from university and is at work. She has continued helping others develop as ever more powerful changemakers. Ashoka is talking with her regarding how best to engage AYCers at her life stage.



Aditi has witnessed that when girls are more confident, they build the agency to change their own lives.

Aditi has been an ambassador of an "EACH" culture at workplaces. After graduating from university, Aditi built and scaled Razorpay Rize, a startup program by India's leading fintech company Razorpay, to enable a support ecosystem for early-stage entrepreneurs in India. She

fostered a community of 500+ tech startup founders across different industries. The program continues to help entrepreneurs in scaling their ventures by providing resources such as expert mentorship, investor network, business and operational tools, as well as other growth opportunities. Aditi's current role is at a software-focused venture fund called BoldCap. She is leading a global platform initiative where she partners with Go-To-Market leaders and C-suite executives across the world who can support Indian startup founders build global companies. The initiative actively bridges the accessibility gaps between the North American, European, and the Indian markets.

Aniket Gupta

Founder, Tale of Human Kind and Indian Science and Technology Campaign



Aniket built a successful program to help shift Indian STEM education from dry academics to practical, joyful learning infused with the arts. Then he went on to found initiatives to empower other young people to be changemakers.

As a high school student in Delhi, Aniket perceived the shortcomings of India's educational system, which focuses on academic book learning and grades, not on the practical application, inspiration, and joy of gaining and using new competencies in the real world. Now an engineering student at university, Aniket was always drawn to art, painting, and music, and sees STEM and the arts as mutually reinforcing. At age 16 he founded the Indian Science & Technology Campaign (ISTC), a classroom initiative that combines arts with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or "STEAM." ISTC conducts practical experiments for students to test and apply the theoretical concepts they are taught in class. The goal is to inspire students to celebrate the joy of science, and to

show how STEAM can help them solve real-world problems and improve lives.

With help from mentors, Aniket designed the program and assembled a team of 12 people who got ISTC adopted in 24 different schools. Several of the team members went on to work in NITI Aayog, the policy think-tank of the Government of India, on implementing sustainable development goals in rural areas. The ISTC team also worked closely with state government in Delhi to help ensure all students develop core competencies in STEM fields. So far, ISTC's work has reached over 23,000 students and 320 teachers.



Participants in teams work through the steps the changemaker's journey, design their own social projects to address the problems they care about most, and pitch their ideas to a panel of experts.

Having experienced the power of changemaking himself, Aniket took the next step of wanting to empower other young people to discover it. He founded The Tale of Humankind, a youth-led civil society organization which works to help young people understand the changemaking framework and apply it to solving problems in their communities.



Having experienced the power of changemaking himself, Aniket took the next step of wanting to empower other young people to discover it.

Together with a few of his fellow AYCers, Aniket also launched a Young Changemakers' Bootcamp, a one-week summer and winter residential program for high school students. Participants in teams work through the steps of the changemaker's journey, design their own social projects to address the problems they care about most, and pitch their ideas to a panel of experts. Many of them go on to found new student changemaking groups themselves which impact their schools and communities.

Pablo Azevedo

Founder, Clicaki



Pablo co-founded a youth-led social venture to promote digital literacy, then leveraged his experience as an AYCer to design and implement a leadership training program and social project incubator across his city's entire school system.

Growing up in Jardim do Seridó, a small city in northeastern Brazil, Pablo had early access to computers and completed a computer technician course. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, he noticed many other young people weren't so lucky. They had limited access to and little familiarity with the digital world, leaving them more disconnected and less prepared for the digital job market. Analyzing their profiles and needs, he designed a solution that would work for them, and with two of his friends co-founded Clicaki. It's a social venture offering Online digital education courses which appeal to young people from diverse backgrounds and take much less time than conventional trainings. Pablo's initial team has expanded to 16 volunteers, and Clickaki has helped some 400 users and counting.

This year, Pablo, who also serves as a youth advisor to the Jardim do Seridó City Council, was selected as an Ashoka Young Changemaker and went to Rio de Janeiro to take part in the AYC 2023 Panel. There he developed an EACH co-leading program he called "Jovem Líder Jardim" (Young Leaders of Jardim), which combines peer leadership trainings with community mapping to identify and meet local needs. The trainings also serve as an incubator for participants to create their own social projects.

On returning to Jardim do Seridó, Pablo proposed to the City Council that he implement Jovem Líder Jardim across all of the municipality's six schools, including elementary,

middle, and high schools. He also had the idea of connecting student participants with volunteers from universities to collaborate on social projects. The Council agreed on the condition that Pablo line up the university volunteers in advance.



Clicaki is a social venture offering Online digital education courses which appeal to young people from diverse backgrounds and take much less time than conventional trainings. PHOTO CREDIT: Pablo Azevedo

Pablo successfully recruited a team of volunteers studying medicine, nutrition, journalism, mathematics, architecture, and law, then went to pitch his program to the school's directors. His credibility was bolstered by his work at the AYC Panel in Rio, which the educators had followed on social media, and they agreed.

In a pilot program, this year an inaugural group of students from each of the six public schools participated in leadership trainings and meetings with the university volunteers and came up with their own ideas for six different social projects. One of them, "Saúde no Campo" (Health in the Countryside), an idea for health fairs in the rural part of Jardim do Seridó, was adopted and implemented by the municipal authority. Next year Jovem Líder Jardim is slated to continue with many more students participating.



Pablo's initial team has expanded to 16 volunteers, and Clickaki has helped some 400 users and counting. PHOTO CREDIT: Pablo Azevedo

YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS: LIFE-LONG TRUSTED PARTNERSHIPS

MEMORANDUM

To: AYC Colleagues
From: Yashveer Singh
Date: November 16, 2023
Subject: Young Changemakers: Life-Long Trusted Partnerships

We all know we are at a major inflection point – for the world and for our work. This memo will try to map some of our new opportunities/challenges.

Ashoka Young Changemakers (AYC) is a carefully selected network of young people who have the power to create change for the good and are ready to take on their next big role as co-leaders of the global “*Everyone a Changemaker*” (EACH) movement. Growing the global community of Ashoka Young Changemakers over the last five years across six giant countries has provided Ashoka with many valuable insights and has made the pivotal role of young people in our movement visible and undeniable. Moreover, the integrated Seek-Select and then Engage/Select approach and methods we developed for building the AYC community is becoming a prized gift we can offer all in the Ashoka and AYC community. This model has already expanded Ashoka’s thinking on selection processes for Venture (Fellow Selection), Jujitsu Partner and Metro Next Generation Leaders and other constituents.

The demand for young people to co-lead the EACH movement is, to our delight, growing faster than anticipated. At this crossroads, we need to rapidly expand our engagement with young people and do so at each stage of their growing their changemaking superpower prior to their reaching the “Black Belt” AYCer level. With the analogy of the Judo ranking system of varied color belts, our thinking has been evolving on how to best categorize, understand the need, strategize, and deliver mutually benefiting engagements to tens of millions of young people in the overall “*Everyone a Changemaker*” movement.

Our current learnings from successfully running AYC in 6 countries actively inform how we designed our engagement objectives and strategies. We call it the “**Whole Person - Whole Movement**” philosophy. Here are some central tenets of this approach:

- AYCers are individuals with many aspects to their lives, and helping them achieve a happy, healthy, and successful life (one defined by changemaking) is pivotal to them acting as “role-models” and co-leaders of the EACH movement.
- We help them channel the superpower they possess as changemakers into all aspects of their life to enable them to achieve their self-defined goals, be it academic, career, venture scaling, or co-leading, among other things. We do so especially at key transitional moments in their life (high school to tertiary education, and then on to early career).
- This also means that AYCers are a core constituent of the EACH revolutionary core within and beyond Ashoka’s Purposes I and II, which ensure young people grow up practicing empathy and changemaking; they have a leadership role to play across all the existing and emerging Purpose Teams -- from Planet and Climate to Technology and Humanity. Our engagements must enable them to contribute to and learn from the work happening across Ashoka and the EACH movement both at home and globally.

Holding the **“Whole Person - Whole Movement”** philosophy front of mind, the AYC engagement strategy being piloted in various countries -- in terms of operational activities and practical how-tos -- can broadly be categorized into three Pillars: AYC Community, Co-leadership, and Whole Person engagements. Each of these pillars mutually reinforces the others and multiplies the positive gains for everyone involved: AYCers, Jujitsu Partner and Jujitsu Metro Next Generation Leaders, Fellows, Ashoka staff, and the EACH movement at different levels.

In a recent independent impact assessment of the AYC community in India, a third party highlighted:



Young Changemakers said that the network is the ‘most integral part of the program’ and has helped with personal as well as professional development... AYCers were also of the view that the program not only gave them access to a network but also taught them how to build and maintain that network.”

The connections that AYCers have built with Ashoka, our other constituent groups, and with each other have benefited them and our overall team immensely. It has also been catalytic for their co-leadership in our EACH movement-building in their countries. Imagine if we had Next Generation Leaders, Metro co-leads, and Fellows also building and leveraging such connections on every continent!

New Roles as AYCers Mature:

As AYCers elected in the last few years graduate from high school and move into their young adult and then mature life stages, their roles within our movement must also evolve. As they move on to college and work, Ashoka must help them take on new forms of EACH leadership and continue to engage with them as whole people with broad needs and aspirations. Here are some ideas we have experimented for life engagement with AYCers:

1. During Selection and Through High School:

It is critical for an AYCer’s personal growth and ability to be an effective EACH co-leader that Ashoka draw them into the richest, fullest membership in and engagement with the full Ashoka and EACH movement community. Working as genuine co-leaders in real, mutually dependent, and important work with Ashoka Fellows, staff, and the EACH next-generation leaders from mega, diverse jujitsu partners and metros is beyond invaluable for the AYCer. And for the work. Each party brings unique value, and each learns from the others.

2. On College Campuses:

- Ashoka should connect AYCers joining a university with other AYC alumni there (and with Fellows/Staff/Entrepreneurs-2-Entrepreneurs/Next Generation Leaders who are alumni) to form the Ashoka EACH Community. Its membership will be self-replenishing.
- This university EACH community can play a highly strategic role helping the university change in the many core ways required by EACH. All eleven of the major constituencies of the university must change, from (1) research and teaching in almost every field from history to management to health to (2) helping the alumni grasp EACH and then change many aspects of their lives, from parenting to organizing. Here we should learn from the earlier Polish ‘Bridge for Universities & Societies’ program pioneered by Ryszard Praszkiel. This is key to both 1) drawing universities into EACH and 2) influencing society.
- Create opportunities for everyone on campus to get the Ashoka Booster Shot, a vaccination against redundancy in an exponentially changing world.

- Expand the universities' outreach to high schools across the country (and abroad), especially their feeder schools, and encourage the schools to provide changemaking as a core part of their curricula, including demonstrated changemaking ability as a priority for admission to the university, and therefore a top priority for parents and the school administrations.

3. At their Workplace & Community:

- Train AYC Alumni to run Your Kids sessions and Parenting Changemakers challenges at their workplace and in their communities.
- For AYCers starting their career at one of our 90 (and counting!) jujitsu partner organizations, help them find and engage with the Next Generation Leaders in their organization, thereby positioning them strategically as changemakers.
- For alumni joining corporations and influential startups, help them bring EACH to their company, so they see EACH's strategic opportunity and become a strong ally to many of the 16 Purpose Teams, thereby bringing high-value problems for the company to solve and do so with the partnerships of heavyweight jujitsu partner organizations.



Our country teams have continually worked on innovating and improving on the pre-panel and post-panel engagements leading up to an AYCer's first years of helping co-lead EACH. As we learn more from our fast-evolving Full Person/Full Life paradigm of organizing ourselves, we realize that these engagements with AYCers and advanced Youth Venture alumni need to continue well into their campus life and early career stages. They are key drivers of EACH transformation in their universities and workplaces, and even further into their adulthood as significant members of our core community and its shared EACH purpose. We realize there are key transitional moments in their life that can be the inflection point in their careers, and it is important that we help them access the right opportunities at the right moment.

This is about engaging the whole person over time and is interlinked with our Jujitsu and Metro strategy. Every year, more and more of our AYCers are graduating high school and moving to colleges. We will soon have a critical core group of AYCers in many of the most reputed universities across the world. Year after year, new waves of AYCers would enter the university system pushing the entire system (and everyone in it and influenced by it) towards EACH.

Here are some choice illustrative examples: We are already seeing early signs of this transformation in Stanford. Similar advances led by AYCers have been made in BITS-Pilani in India. BITS is one of the top engineering colleges in the country; it is extremely competitive to enter; and it is the most reputed for entrepreneurship. Over the last two years, AYCers, Youth Venture alumni, and staff who are associated with BITS have worked together closely to:

- Build a core community of changemakers (students, faculty, and alumni) that involves other young people as co-leaders of the EACH movement, building within and outside campus.
- Engage with the existing social impact/service-learning programs of the university to rejuvenate them, to change their curricula to catalyze individuals and teams to experience life-changing Idea-Team-Changed World breakthroughs, and to see the historic opportunity they now have as changemakers.
- Organize an annual summer camp for high school students (especially from key feeder schools) at the initial stages of their "Dream/team/Changed World" journey and guide them into reaching Youth Venturer-level proficiency in changemaking through their initiatives (bring it back to their schools and local communities).



Similarly, in the case of top employers, AYC alumni would enter the workforce with not just talent but with exactly what every organization is desperate for in the new everything changing and connected reality. They will continue to create spaces and organizational strategies that nudge their whole employer towards EACH. Here's an example: A Fellow's organization, Karo Sambhav (doing system changing work in e-waste and related challenges in the Planet and Climate space). It has already hired two of our AYCers. Their feedback has been that the AYCers are able to take up responsibilities far above their age level and lead new verticals. Not surprisingly, they now want annually to hire more young changemakers for key leadership positions from the AYC alumni pool.

Ashoka leaders are also learning. We now have three AYCers already on the Ashoka staff team running young people programs in Indonesia and Brazil. We also have another Youth Venture alumnus as a top leader across Southeast Asia. Their leadership has made a huge difference in both the quantity and quality of AYCers being elected and in the quality

and variety of our engagement activities with the AYCers. This leads to AYCers' individual growth along the full-person/full-life pathway, and the advancement of the EACH movement at the Metro and national levels. Their leadership, stemming from lived experiences, has been a critical accelerator in both these regions. (All four lead broadly.) As we have more and more AYC/Youth Venture alumni join our ranks as staff members across teams, we can see a deepening of our Ashoka culture and more innovative ideas that strengthen our programs, partnerships, and purpose flows.

Several of the activities envisioned for AYCer engagement can be replicated with Youth Venturers at the Metro level. There are also activities we could design with universities like Stanford to have further spaces for Youth Venturers to contribute in building an EACH culture on campus.

And, as we conclude, let us also imagine how these engagements are for the young people engaged with us: deeply empowering, fulfilling, and would help access high-growth high-impact opportunities far beyond what any of the current institutional structure in their lives can provide. This also means that AYCers are a core constituent of the EACH revolutionary core within and beyond Ashoka's Purposes I and II, which ensure young people grow up practicing empathy and changemaking; they have a leadership role to play across all the existing and emerging Purpose Teams -- from Planet and Climate to Technology and Humanity. Our engagements must enable them to contribute to and learn from the work happening across Ashoka and the EACH movement both at home and globally.

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ASHOKA LEADERS

World Council



Marjorie C. Benton

Marjorie, very much a fellow spirit, has founded and co-founded many socially important organizations including: the Chicago Foundation for Women; the Women's Issues Network; and The Peace Museum. She has been board chair of Save the Children, and she served as a delegate to the United Nations special sessions on disarmament in the 1970s, and then as U.S. Ambassador to UNICEF.



Vera Cordeiro

One of the early Brazilian Ashoka Fellows, Vera Cordeiro founded Associação Saúde Criança which addresses the root causes that prevent poor families from providing adequate care to their children when discharged from hospital.



Marian Wright Edelman

Marian Wright Edelman is a lifelong advocate for disadvantaged Americans and is the creator and long time leader of the Children's Defense Fund. Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation's strongest voice for children and families.



Anupam Puri

Anupam ("Tino") Puri founded and managed McKinsey's practice in India. In 1996, he was elected a managing director, and from 1998 onwards, he oversaw all of McKinsey's Asian and Latin American practices. Tino was a founder board member of Ashoka.



Sir Shridath Ramphal

Sir Shridath Ramphal is Co-Chair of the Commission on Global Governance and President of the World Conservation Union. He is Former Secretary General of the British Commonwealth, Chancellor of the University of West Indies and former Foreign Minister and Attorney General in Guyana.



Muhammad Yunus

Nobel Prize recipient, Muhammad Yunus, provided the global leadership that made microcredit a universally accepted development tool. He went on to create a series of social businesses, including the largest telephone service in Bangladesh and now champions new forms of social-serving organization globally.

ASHOKA BOARD

Bill Drayton

Chair and CEO, Ashoka: *Everyone a Changemaker*
Chair, Get America Working!
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Leadership Team Emerita
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India

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Ashoka Fellow
Founder & CEO, Roots of Empathy

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Chair, Royal Dance Academy
Former Chair, Asylum Aid
Former Chair, Toynbee Hall

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ENSURING THE FUTURE: THE ENDOWMENTS

Ashoka's endowments provide an enduring base of support for innovation across the globe. Their growth also helps ensure Ashoka's long-term ability to serve a field that will be critically needed as long as society must adapt and change. Ashoka's endowments have had positive investment results annually for all but three of the last forty years. Managed with a five-year perspective by three endowment trustees, the trustees invest with a long-term perspective and are committed to maintaining the real value of the funds before agreeing to disbursements. Given by both institutions and individuals, Ashoka endowments often create a permanent statement about or memorial to someone the donor especially loves or respects.



The Amaterasu Endowment

For the support of female Fellows working outside the Americas in the areas of women's reproductive rights, women's empowerment, or sustainable community. Endowed by Katherine Victoria Randolph. Established in December 1999.



The Henry Beal Endowment

In memory of Henry Beal, a founding friend of Ashoka and, before his death, one of its Endowment Trustees. He was one of America's most inspired and effective environmental managers and leaders. The endowment is focused on environment issues and HIV/AIDS. Established in 1992.



The E. Noel Bergere Endowment

In memory of Noel Bergere who, though crippled by polio at three years old, became Master of the High Court. He was also a leader of the disabled and a patron of education in Australia. Focused on supporting a Fellow who is handicapped and/or whose work relates either to education or the law. Established in 1984.



The Joan Bergere Endowment

Joan Bergere came to America as a young musician and later helped other young musicians get their first career opening at major New York City public concerts. She was a loving parent and a citizen of the world with broad interests. Established in 1982.



The Benjamin and Anne Bloom Endowment

Ben Bloom was a successful lawyer and businessman who, as the son of immigrant parents, believed strongly in creating opportunities for others to succeed as he had succeeded. This endowment was been established to honor his desire to provide opportunities for those who are willing to work hard but need a chance in life. Anne, his lifelong partner, passed away in 2019, and thoroughly agreed with him about providing opportunities for others. Established in 1996. Unrestricted.



The Columbia Ashoka Fellowships I and II

The Columbia Foundation created two endowments to enable Ashoka to elect more women as Fellows. Established in 1986.



The C.M. Cresta Fund

Established in 1986. Unrestricted.



The Padma Rag Datta Endowment

Dr. Padma Rag Datta dedicated his life's work to using science to improve human welfare and preserve the environment. His father, Parasuram Datta, founded a wildlife sanctuary in Assam and was a strong believer in social justice. The family wishes that their legacy be continued through this endowment so that Ashoka Fellows may find their own path to the simple and profound acts that make a difference. Established in 1996.

ENSURING THE FUTURE: THE ENDOWMENTS



The Sarah Dunbar Endowment

Sarah Dunbar had an enduring concern for downtrodden people whose environment had been destroyed or reduced by modern times, especially by war and industry. Contributing to maintaining a people-friendly environment was another of her passions. Established in 2000.



Endowment Fund B

Established in 1999. Unrestricted.



The Michael Fein Honorary Endowment

This endowment is in memory of Michael Fein and his tremendous ability to touch so many lives. He was very passionate about the social enterprises that Ashoka fulfilled. Established in 2001.



The Maurice Fitzgerald Ashoka Fellowship

Maurice Fitzgerald taught in the Philippines after the Spanish American War. He loved teaching and the people of the Philippines. Created for a teaching and education fellowship. Established in 1986.



The Fox Peace Endowment

The Fox Peace Endowment is inspired by the Peace Testimony articulated by George Fox in 1651 and by the commitment of Tom Fox, who was killed in Iraq in 2006, while serving as a witness for peace. Its purpose is to identify and launch social entrepreneurs and their projects dedicated to the development of structures, conditions, and communities that nurture peace.



The Buckminster Fuller Ashoka Fellowship

For Fellows working to alleviate hunger in South Asia. Established in 1983.



The General Endowment Fund for Ashoka

The General Endowment for Ashoka was established in 1998 from numerous individual contributions earmarked for endowment purposes. Unrestricted.



The Sanjoy Ghose Endowment

This endowment is a tribute to the work and sacrifice that Ashoka Fellow Sanjoy Ghose made in building a culture of volunteerism and a sense of citizen responsibility among young people in India's northeastern state of Assam. It is a legacy of the work he began to reorient the area's youth away from violence and anarchy, towards constructive and active social involvement in the face of ethnic strife, insurgent movements, and state repression. Sanjoy was abducted on July 4, 1997. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) claimed responsibility for this event. Unrestricted. Established in 1998.



William T. Golden Ashoka Endowment

Bill Golden helped launch Ashoka in 1980. He held lifelong enthusiasm for science and the arts. He studied business and used his skills to accomplish useful work in diverse fields. He was a wide-ranging creator, himself an artist, repeatedly forging ingenious and effective ways to promote education, research, and understanding. If asked about his purpose, Bill would answer, with a twinkle in his eye, "to do interesting things." In common with Ashoka, Bill Golden brought opportunity to people with ideas for highly constructive ends. For over three decades, Bill was a close partner, advisor, and also Endowment Trustee for Ashoka.



The James P. Grant Ashoka Endowment

Named for the late Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and created by his friends, colleagues, and family to "continue his life's work and world vision." The endowment's purposes include supporting innovative leadership that contributes to social development among children and the disadvantaged, developing new methods and low-cost technologies to further social development, and encouraging dialogue leading to policies that improve the lives of children and all humankind. Established in 1998.



The John and Eleanor Forrest Ashoka Fellowship

Established in 1986. Unrestricted.

ENSURING THE FUTURE: THE ENDOWMENTS



The Jeroen Hehuwat Endowment

In memory of Jeroen Hehuwat, an easygoing young man, with many interests and many good friends. His greatest passion was the natural world and he loved hiking, climbing, and whitewater rafting. In April 2015, he was on a hiking and climbing expedition to Yala Peak in Nepal when an earthquake struck, causing a landslide in the Langtang Valley where Jeroen and his team lost their lives. The endowment will support Ashoka Fellows and Youth Venturers in Indonesia. Established in 2015.



The Albert O. Hirschman Fellowship

Given to honor Professor Hirschman's long leadership in the field of practical, grassroots development. Established in 1986. Unrestricted.



The Jimmy Hopkins Fellowship

Jimmy Hopkins was a Judge in the New York State Supreme Court, Appellate Division. He was known as a very kind man who was a master of the law. Many of his decisions and interpretations are the basis for important legal precedent. Created for a Fellow in the legal or judicial arena. Established in 1997.



The Martin Klitzner Endowment

Marty Klitzner was an anomaly. He spent his life in the financial industry, most of it as president of Sunrise Capital Partners, a successful hedge fund. Yet he and his family lived comfortably, not opulently. The family's extra money was for others—in the local community and worldwide. Marty was one of the most loved and respected men in the American financial community. He was known for his integrity, ready smile and good humor.

In the mid-nineties when Marty learned about Ashoka. He said, "This is my kind of an organization." Until his death in 2012, he was a fervent fan and contributor. He was delighted to have dinner with Bill Drayton and discuss their shared ideal of helping others in the most effective way.

The greed and excesses of the financial industry are a shame on it and our society. Hopefully, the Ashoka Fellows supported in Marty's name will help start the reversal of this culture. Established in 2012.



The Abdul Waheed Khan Memorial Endowment

Abdul Waheed Khan, who was elected an Ashoka Fellow in Pakistan in 2003, was assassinated in 2013, following death threats for his work. This Endowment celebrates his life and work. Abdul is remembered by his colleagues for his gentle, empathetic, persistent and values-driven approach to finding peaceful solutions to problems. He wanted all children to learn and be prepared to succeed in the modern world.

Because of his country's inadequate investment in education, poor communities often create their own schools, typically madrassas. Responding to what parents and local communities wanted, Abdul brought new approaches and modern subjects to learning, including mathematics, science, computers and English. Abdul leaves a legacy of great courage and determination; a spirit that was committed to change in spite of risk; and work that will have a lasting impact through the many thousands of children who will be able to live far richer, more open lives because of Abdul. Established in 2013.



The Fort Hill Endowment Fund

Established in 1993. Unrestricted.



The Jan Schmidt Marmor Endowment

Jan Marmor was a wise counselor to her family, friends, and patients. She was a fine poet and artist. She was a close friend to Ashoka from its launch. With commitment and love she built a family that believed that "no good idea should go unexpressed—or unheard." Established 2003.



The Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund Ashoka Fellowship

For support of Fellows working in Mexico. Established in 1989.

ENSURING THE FUTURE: THE ENDOWMENTS



Svayam Krishi Endowment

*"The soul of India lives in its villages."
-Mahatma Gandhi*

India has 640,000 villages, which saw three revolutions since the 1970s: rice and wheat, milk and poultry. As a result, India is number one in milk production and among the top six in poultry. Smart village revolution can be next in providing holistic and integrated development. Svayam Krishi Endowment was created to support social entrepreneurs and changemakers to build models for sustainable villages and self-reliance among villagers and to spread the models across villages in India. Sustainability means that villagers are able to meet their human potential and flourish within the village on a long-term basis rather than needing to migrate to cities for sustenance. Self-reliance means that families and individuals within the village are able to meet their needs without external assistance. The endowment meets these objectives: (1) through the election and support of Ashoka Fellows whose work strongly supports these objectives and who will bring significant pattern change across India, and/or (2) through enabling young people in the villages to play important roles contributing to these same objectives, first (a) by helping them to dream their dream, build their team, and change their world for the better, and second (b) by enabling them to be role models and to provide active and broad-impact self-reliance leadership.

Dr. Ratnam Chitturi has taken this initiative and is helping many others to join and contribute to this endowment to bring a sustained benefit to rural India.



The W. Arthur Lewis Ashoka Fellowship

Given to honor Professor Lewis's remarkably broad contributions to our understanding of economic development and of key areas of the world. Established in 1986. Unrestricted.



The Mack Lipkin Sr. Memorial Endowment

In memory of Dr. Mack Lipkin, a much loved friend and doctor who was also a leader in the medical profession and a founding friend to Ashoka. Dedicated to innovations in the effectiveness and humane quality of health care. Established in 1991.



The Francisco "Chico" Mendes Endowment

In memory of Chico Mendes, a friend and early Ashoka Fellow. Chico created an approach to grassroots organizing in the Amazon basin that Gandhi would have recognized but that was adapted to his own, very different, environment. Chico, like Gandhi, was killed pursuing peaceful change. The preferred uses of the funds are grassroots work and environmental issues, though the endowment carries no restrictions. Established in 1988.



The Helen Meresman Fellowship

In memory of Helen Meresman, the personification of breaking boundaries with determination, grace, and charm. The Helen Meresman Fellowship was established by Roger Barnett in 1997. Unrestricted.



The Jawaharlal Nehru Endowment

As the first Prime Minister in India, Jawaharlal Nehru was far more than a great national leader. He helped build a global community; he was a democrat; he was a historian; and he used his reflective power to hold himself to a high ethical standard. Unrestricted. Established in 2003.



The Nguyen-Phuong Family Endowment

Dedicated to supporting social entrepreneurs who operate in emerging markets; a permanent symbol of the family's keen commitment to social services in the developing world. Established 2014.



The Jacob H. Oxman Memorial Fund

In memory of Dr. Jacob H. Oxman, a devoted husband and father, and a kind, caring, generous, and principled man. This endowment is used to support an Ashoka Fellow. Any additional funds can be used either to support another Fellow or to cover operating costs. Established in 1986. Unrestricted.

ENSURING THE FUTURE: THE ENDOWMENTS



Diane Pierce Phillips Ashoka Fellowship Endowment

Diane Pierce Phillips led an exemplary life of spiritual integrity and servant leadership as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer, wife and mother, registered nurse, hospice volunteer, minister of the United Church of Christ (Congregational), and spiritual director. Established in 2003. Unrestricted.



The Eiler Ravnholt Ashoka Endowment

In memory of Eiler Ravnholt, a friend and role model to the founder of Ashoka, a man of values and hard work. He was a dedicated public servant and active citizen, generous with his time, voice and heart. He was a lover of history and defender of our collective responsibility to assist those in need—his own life was shaped by the Great Depression, World War II and the GI bill. Eiler was a fervent and loyal supporter of Ashoka's vision throughout its existence. He will be missed by the entire Ashoka community. Established in 2012 and devoted to social justice.



The Daniel Saks Ashoka Fellowship

In memory of Dan Saks who, had he lived longer, would have changed U.S. employment policies even more profoundly than he already had. Dan was also one of Ashoka's earliest creators, beginning in 1963. This fellowship is focused on creating work opportunities for the poor or otherwise disadvantaged. Established in 1986.



The Morton Sand Memorial Endowment

Mort Sand, long a highly successful business entrepreneur, turned his energy and creativity to solving society's ills over his last decades. He helped build Ashoka's Entrepreneur-to-Entrepreneur program, created business opportunities for Brazil's street girls through three Fellows there, and was key to the launch of the Ashoka U.S.A./Canada program. The Mort Sand Endowment will be used in the U.S.A./Canada. Although it is unrestricted, the endowment will give priority to enabling disadvantaged young people through opportunities in business. Established in 2002.



The Richard H. Ullman Endowment

Dick Ullman cared deeply about others—from the wellbeing of the world (reflected in his scholarly and journalistic work in the difficult field of international relations) to that of his students (who repeatedly rated him the best professor). As a young professor in the 1960s, he encouraged one of his undergraduate students in the early thinking that eventually led to Ashoka. Over the ensuing decades he was always with Ashoka—sharing ideas, opening doors, and serving on the North America Council.

Why was Ashoka such a close fit for Dick? One reason was that he believed in and helped develop young people of values. This belief—plus, in the words of his students, his “combination of rigor and candor,” his “dry wit,” and his “genuine kindness”—changed many lives and, as a result, many important foreign policy decisions. He intuitively knew why the Ashoka Fellows are so powerful, and he recognized the importance of supporting them.

These qualities also allowed him to change the country's course more directly. In addition to teaching at Princeton University for 35 years, he headed the 1980s Project of the Council on Foreign Relations, helped lead *Foreign Policy* magazine, and served on the Editorial Board of the *New York Times*.



The Ibrahim Sobhan Endowment

In memory of Muhammed Ibrahim Sobhan, the first Ashoka Fellow in Bangladesh. He launched the innovative Association for School Based Education (ASBE) to improve rural primary education for Bangladeshi children attending government, non-government and community schools. Enrollment increased by 40 percent.



The Father Eugene Watrin Endowment

In memory of Father Watrin, a remarkable educational founder and builder for over 50 years in Nepal and Ashoka's volunteer representative there for its first 15 years. His special commitment to the Ashoka vision and to all in its community, which he did so much to build, exemplifies why he had such a powerful impact on all around him. His greatest legacy is the model of how to live life well through service that is both highly important and performed with the modesty of true caring, love, and faith. For the support of Fellows working in Nepal. Established in 2004.

IN MEMORIUM: DR. SALEEMUL HUQ



Source: International Centre for Climate Change & Development (ICCCAD)

Dr. Saleemul Huq

1952 – 2023

The Ashoka community deeply mourns Dr. Saleemul Huq's passing; his absence will be keenly felt. Conversely, his spirit will forever resonate within Ashoka, the connection being profound, intimate, and enduring.

Saleem's upbringing was shaped by his parents, who served in the Pakistani diplomatic service. The family's journey took them across continents, including Europe, Asia, and Africa, because of his parents' diplomatic postings. In the aftermath of the 1971 war, which led to the independence of Bangladesh from East Pakistan, Huq's Bengali parents narrowly escaped capture by the Pakistani army. Their escape route was both remarkable and symbolic – traveling overland on a donkey to India.

Amidst these experiences, Saleem's awareness of environmental issues began to crystallize.

Saleem's dedication to addressing the devastating impacts of climate change set him apart: He focused especially on adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Saleem was not content with mere calls for action. Attending all 27 Conferences of the Parties (COP) talks, he became a leading advocate for the "polluter pays" principle. Recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries, he championed the cause of requiring the most developed nations to compensate poorer countries for the "loss and damage" caused by climate change.

His dedication bore fruit at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where an agreement was reached to establish a loss and damage fund. This achievement, the culmination of a 30-year quest, showcased Huq's unwavering commitment and his ability to navigate complex negotiations.

Saleem's impact extended well beyond his advocacy. He was named one of the top 10 scientists globally by Nature in 2022. His commitment to mentorship, particularly fostering young scientists from developing countries, contributed to a new generation of voices in climate change negotiations.

Described as the "voice of the voiceless," Saleem tirelessly worked to raise awareness of the needs of communities already affected by climate change. His advocacy emphasized the inherent injustice of climate change impacts, affecting the most vulnerable while being caused by the emissions of the world's wealthiest nations.

Saleem's story is one of unwavering dedication, intellectual leadership, and a commitment to justice. He will be remembered not only for his intellectual prowess but also for his humility and equanimity. As the global community continues its fight against climate change, his legacy serves as a guiding light, urging us all to remain steadfast in the pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable world.

ENDOWMENT, IN-KIND, AND PLANNED GIVING

Ashoka will, with deep appreciation, work with you regarding any form of special gift you wish to consider, including an endowment, the gift of securities, in-kind gifts, and planned giving.

ENDOWMENTS

Ashoka now has well over 40 endowments, almost all to honor and/or create a lasting memorial for one or a few people who are dear to the donor(s). During 2023 and 2024, matching grants for new contributions or new endowments are very likely available. Please see the closely preceding section on endowments for more information and to appreciate the quality of the community represented by the endowments.

GIFTS BEYOND MONEY

Ashoka has the systems in place to reliably honor any conditions associated with non-monetary gifts, ranging from securities to physical assets. Our global staff and partners make this possible. For example, one donor gave us a complex of apartments in Poland, which required several years' work to manage through a complex transition. It ultimately had very significant impact on our work there.

PLANNED GIVING

Ashoka is grateful for receiving many bequests and other forms of planned giving. It is experienced in working with donors and reliably following through on their wishes. Ashoka's work is forever. The need for change for the good is accelerating with the overall rate of change. Endowments, bequests, and other forms of planned giving make a tremendous difference in Ashoka's ability to continue being central to making this work possible and powerful.

CONTACTS

If you would like to discuss any of this with Ashoka, please contact:

Bill Drayton wdrayton@ashoka.org and/or

Tope Fajingbesi tfajingbesi@ashoka.org



OPPORTUNITIES

Ashoka is tirelessly working to amplify and accelerate the revolutionary efforts of our global fellowship, fostering collaborations and building bridges for impactful partnerships. Our volunteers, integral at every phase of an Ashoka Fellow's journey, are pivotal in scaling impact. Whether it's during the nomination and selection process, various stages of organizational growth, or providing operational support, they are key to our success.

Our partnership with LinkedIn widens our reach, attracting professionals eager to contribute their skills. Through the Ashoka-LinkedIn Volunteer Marketplace, we efficiently connect volunteers with Ashoka staff and Fellows for mutually beneficial collaborations.

Volunteer roles are diverse and ever-evolving, from developing strategic plans to creating marketing strategies, website development, editing, filmmaking, teaching, project management, conducting impact assessments, to documentation and research. Opportunities are available virtually and on-site across our global offices.

In the words of Peggy Carr, a volunteer since 1987 who has managed Ashoka's virtual communications network from our global office:

"Working with Ashoka's Fellowship team has given me the opportunity to help Fellows in a direct and personal way. Whether researching a request for information or helping Fellows network with each other, the goal is always the same—forging strong links throughout the Ashoka community, of which I am happy to be a small part."

Needs vary widely and change regularly. Some require assistance on-site and others can be met virtually. Recent volunteer opportunities have included:

- Developing business and strategic plans
- Creating communication and marketing strategies
- Building or improving websites
- Editing books and videos
- Filming documentaries of Fellows' work

- Helping young people and adults learn
- Project managing initiatives within a variety of organizations
- Conducting impact assessments
- Documenting conditions and needs in rural areas
- Researching markets and effective supply chains for rural areas
- Providing office, HR and branding support in Canada
- Managing crowdfunding campaigns
- Writing grants and researching potential donor support
- Writing journalistic reports for papers and newsletters
- Translating documents and transcribing Fellow interviews

For more information on how you can join this transformative journey, visit:

www.ashoka.org/engage/contribute

Here, you'll find FAQs, a checklist for traveling volunteers, and contact details for any further questions or ideas at volunteers@ashoka.org

Join us in creating an "everyone a changemaker" world.

YOU CAN SEE **THE FUTURE**



THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE ONLINE

SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ THE BOOK
LEADING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS
(PUBLISHED 2023)



ASHOKA



"Ashoka, which played a critical role in defining, growing, and proselytizing the social entrepreneurship movement, recently adopted an organizational model-the team of teams model... In our view, the principles that underlie this model are so strong that more and more high performing organizations will begin to follow it."

STANFORD BUSINESS BOOKS

"Ashoka has quietly given philanthropy a new dimension: It has shown how to invest successfully in pattern-breaking, powerful ideas and the people behind them -- and how to do so early when a little makes an enormous difference -- when hope can overcome cynicism, where tenacity can prevail over inertia. It has given us all lessons in how to harness the most powerful energy in the world -- human talent -- to the task of adapting to the demands of the 21st century."

Peter Goldmark

*Former president, the Rockefeller Foundation;
former publisher, International Herald Tribune.*

"Ashoka has identified a clear pattern: In Fellow after Fellow you see new ideas of how you can put children in charge of a series of activities, and how empowering them had a strong impact on them for academic performance and their motivation."

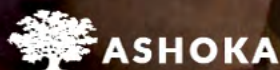
THE ATLANTIC

"Ashoka helps to launch the best new social change ideas and their entrepreneurs, and then enables them to work together to tip the world with their best ideas."

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