

SHE CAN



Highlighting leading women
Ashoka Fellows around the globe



WISE: The Women's Initiative
for Social Entrepreneurship

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INTRODUCTION

She Can is a project that aims to affirm just that – that women innovators CAN and DO make unique impact as leaders and innovators in their field.

Whether they are working to bring dignity to the lives of incarcerated women in America; supply lacking health information to children in the Philippines; upend the traditional male-dominated agriculture industry in rural Jordan; or create space and opportunities for girls in Ghana's tech sector, one thing is clear: women entrepreneurs are a tidal force. Their ability to galvanize movements and overcome the odds stacked up against them make them both courageous entrepreneurs and inspirations for young girls aspiring to be changemakers.

Recognizing and celebrating the achievements of such women is more important than ever: women and their work are continuously under-represented in the social entrepreneurship sector, despite the fact that women are proven to not only scale out to other countries and beneficiaries, but also scale up and scale deep – leading projects that change laws, mindsets, norms, and realities. This overwhelming absence of women in leadership roles contributes to a culture where young girls are not encouraged to develop the entrepreneurial skills to step up as changemakers.

To realize the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and build a world where every individual is empowered to lead change, we must recognize the urgent need for female leadership and applaud those women excelling in and transforming their fields. As the largest platform for social entrepreneurs worldwide, we at Ashoka are well-positioned to spotlight these impactful female innovators, drawing on our global network of women Fellows.

The booklet highlights female Fellows around the world who are leading systems-change across Ashoka's diamonds and sectors, showcasing the unique ways women make impact and how they are catalyzing a narrative shift around the power of female changemaking.

WISE: The Women's Initiative for Social Entrepreneurship

WISE is a global framework for elevating the number, power, and knowledge of female entrepreneurs by identifying and addressing the gender-specific obstacles that impede their work and celebrating the unique ways in which women successfully lead and make impact.

Led by Ashoka Arab World's Regional Director and Vice President of Ashoka Global, Iman Bibars, the initiative was born out of an international gathering of 10 Fellows in Egypt in 2011, where participants connected around their work with women and had the opportunity to identify avenues for collaboration.

While WISE is a global initiative, it is being led by Ashoka Arab World. As an office based within the Global South, we believe it is complementary to us, as we possess unique insights into the specific challenges women face in scaling their work and gaining recognition, allowing us to be at the helm of the worldwide movement for women's empowerment.

In October 2018, Ashoka Arab World played a key role in organizing the soft launch of WISE in San Francisco, convening three Fellows from the United States and international partners for a dialogue on the challenges women innovators face and a discussion on how they overcome these obstacles. We launched WISE on a formal scale at our 2019 Arab World Social Innovation Forum, giving women participants the space to have their voices heard and highlighting their original work and leadership strategies.

Since then, we have led conversations around WISE at Rockefeller's Bellagio Center and the Skoll World Forum and have spearheaded multiple initiatives to advance WISE, including an online collaborative platform that offers our female Fellows the space for peer-to-peer learning and exchange, mentorship, and collaborative action.

Moving forward, WISE aims to serve as a platform for women leaders to come to the fore, creating opportunities for these innovators to source ideas from each on overcoming gendered challenges and harnessing their collective expertise to brainstorm ways of advancing women in social entrepreneurship.



SCALING DEEP

Women social entrepreneurs exhibit distinctive leadership qualities that enable them to lead powerful movements for systemic change. Ashoka's 2018 Global Impact Study found that women Fellows work within systems and are more likely to spread their idea locally, inspiring replication by other groups or institutions within their country of residency.

Female Fellows were also found to be more collaborative, working closely with other citizen sector organizations, supporting other women and young people around them, and empowering their own teams. They also reflected a higher tendency to impact behaviors and mindsets: 76 percent of female Fellows reported influencing societal attitudes and cultural norms as core to their strategy, compared to a lower percentage of males.

In a recent partnership with the Citi Foundation, Ashoka conducted an initial survey of women Fellows from around the world to learn about the ways in which they conceptualize their own success and impact. The Celebrating ChangemakHERS Report similarly found that women social innovators practice inclusive and collective leadership, create new roles for girls and women to accelerate impact, and assert women's life experiences as an asset for leadership and innovation.

This sort of work is scaling deep – creating initiatives that structurally reformulate mindsets, cultural norms, patterns of behavior, and ultimately, societal systems.



Shaping Digital and Physical Spaces for Girls in Tech

Regina Honu, Ghana
Tech Needs Girls



While development and social sector efforts to economically empower women often focus on giving them access to technology, Ashoka Fellow Regina Honu goes beyond this, empowering girls to be the tech creators.

Through her initiative “Tech Needs Girls,” Honu brings information and communications technology (ICT) to girls in low-income and rural communities in Ghana, giving them the tools they need through technology education to become software users, creators, and developers.

Despite 75% of girls in Ghana attending primary school, there is a significant drop in the number receiving secondary education. This is not from a lack of ability – girls often surpass boys in educational attainment and achievement. This is because women and girls face continuous pressure to get married and work in the home, constraints that bar them from pursuing full-time careers.

These trends are especially evident in rural religious communities due to the impact tradition has on girls’ choices in addition to a lack of role models or opportunities for girls to escape these cycles of poverty and marriage. Even ones who do pursue work tend to avoid sectors that women are socialized against, such as science, business, and technology.

This is not surprising – worldwide, young girls are not frequently encouraged or equipped with the skills to excel in these fields, especially in countries with weaker ecosystems for innovation in general and women in particular. Ghana reflects these trends – and the disparities between women and men working deepen when it comes to the ICT sector.

Honu learned first-hand how hard pursuing a career in technology could be in this environment.

Growing up with a love of science, she experienced discouragement from teachers early on, who told her that dreams of “creating and making” are not for girls. Despite these barriers, Honu excelled, and she later wanted to enable other girls to realize these dreams. First, she focused on bringing girls into STEM focus areas, but she quickly realized that there was an urgent need to focus on ICT skills.

There is a high economic demand for ICT skills in Ghana, especially for individuals who know how to develop software as opposed to running it. Due to this, Honu realized that there would be a viable market and a need for others like her – women with the skills, mindset, and motivation to work and thrive in the male-dominated tech field.

Out of this came, Tech Needs Girls, a foundation under Soronko Solutions, a software development company Honu founded and runs. The Foundation operates as a movement and mentorship program designed to get more girls working on the web. The initiative teaches participants how to code through a curated curriculum Honu developed that caters specifically to girls and includes content inspired by local contexts. Through a six-month program, participants take weekly coding classes where they learn the importance of technology and computers, internet safety, web design, and basic HTML.

To date, 7,500 girls have been through Honu’s program with 200 mentors also participating.



A large part of the course encourages students to observe a community problem that ICT solutions could address, developing a website as part of this solution. At the completion of the course, the girls showcase these website creations.

After finishing the classes, the girls have the opportunity to take on a paid internship, giving them the chance for more practical experience in the tech world. These internships are offered through software companies Honu has partnered with.

“A moment that I cherish is when girls from our program get full scholarships to study computer science at a prestigious university in Ghana, while others start their own foundations and tech businesses.”

The first communities Honu engaged with were Muslim ones. By working with a local Imam – a Muslim leader – she was able to promote the value of her idea and build community support around it – a strategy she replicated in further permutations of her initiative.

The modules are taught by mentors sourced from local universities and ICT clubs developed in coordination with Honu. These volunteers and mentors not only facilitate the trainings, but also operate as role models and inspirational leaders for the participants.

Additionally, the initiative has already been replicated in eight different cities in Ghana and expanded to Burkina Faso. Honu has received multiple awards for her work, including being named by CNN as one of the 12 inspirational women who “rock STEM” in addition to receiving attention through BBC and Deutsche Welle.

“ We are now focused on ensuring women and girls find dignified and fulfilling work with their digital and coding skills. We are working with key partners to reach 2.1 million Ghanaian women both offline and online. ”

She was also invited by Ghana’s National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to help contribute perspectives and insights on digital entrepreneurship to developing the national curriculum.

To scale and sustain the impact of Tech Needs Girls, Regina set up Soronko Academy, a coding and human-centered design academy for children and adults. At the academy, participants take part in programs such as “Women in Digital Skills,” “Summer Code School,” “Code Academy for the Deaf,” and “Adult Coding Class.”

The Academy has now expanded to train and impact over 10,000 women and girls. At the end of the training, Honu facilitates direct job placements and supports the women and girls to start their own technology or technology-enabled business. Honu also aims to expand this program throughout Africa. Through this work, Honu isn’t simply opening up digital pathways – she is creating real channels for women and girls to lead and innovate.

From and For the Local Food Industry

Simone Zoundi, Burkino Faso

SODEPAL

Like many countries in the Sahel, Burkina Faso faces great challenges in feeding its population – especially providing nutritious food offerings for children. As a result, the region suffers from chronic malnutrition and growth stunting that affects over 30% of children under five, usually with irreversible consequences.

However, the raw materials for a strong food and agriculture industry exist in the region. Ashoka Fellow Simone Zoundi recognized this and in 1991 established SODEPAL, the first modern agro-food processing factory in West Africa. SODEPAL adds value to the raw agricultural products abundant in Burkina Faso, making these commodities more nutritious, easier to cook with, and overall, more desirable to consumers.

For instance, through SODEPAL, Zoundi worked with a local NGO to develop cereals made for babies from local ingredients enriched with Vitamine. Today, local and nutritious products such as dairy pastries, honey, and dried mango are available in supermarkets.

To further strengthen the market, Zoundi gathered major agro-business and industrial stakeholders to form the Federation of Food and Transformation Industries of Burkino Faso (FFTIB). This federation boosts the launch of new initiatives in the ecosystem, creating the space for low-income producers to join the market.

Members are then given the opportunity to build their capacities and gain access to an intra-firm exchange network. Now, the federation includes more than 150 agribusiness professionals with five offices around the country and thousands of jobs created.

Out of the initial 74 members of FFTIB, 53 were women. Zoundi has constantly worked to bring women into the agri-business sector, building their entrepreneurial acumen and encouraging them to engage in industrialization.

Through all this work, Zoundi has demonstrated the capacity for local resources to solve malnutrition challenges in West Africa. Now, she is turning toward working at the sub-regional level, advocating for positioning local agro-food products on the wider African market.



Grandmothers for Growth: Empowering Grandmother as Leaders and Changemakers Within Their Communities

Judi Aubel, Senegal

The Grandmother Project

Grandmothers rarely factor into mainstream social sector models for change. In fact, they are often perceived as an obstacle to development efforts, viewed as obstructing changemaking efforts on the ground by perpetrating harmful norms and practices. But they're exactly the group Ashoka Fellow Judi Aubel decided to mobilize to improve the lives of women, children, and families in Senegal.

Aubel saw grandmothers as an abundant but under-utilized cultural resource with the capacity to be levers for social change on behalf of vulnerable groups.

Across cultures, grandmothers operate as leaders and value-setters within their communities, passing down norms that can dictate the lives of women and children. Through her initiative the NGO "Grandmother Project - Change through Culture" (GMP) was created in 2005, to leverage grandmothers' power to promote positive change in communities. Aubel realized that grandmothers are central figures within families and communities and that they are open to change when an approach based on respect and dialogue is used. Using a grandmother-inclusive approach developed by Aubel, GMP has seen that grandmothers can lead efforts to promote change in socio-cultural norms that affect women and girls, related to issues such as early marriage, teen pregnancy, FGM, and poor maternal and child health.

Working with grandmothers grounds these social efforts in cultural reality, bringing about positive change at the community level. To optimize the grandmother resource, GMP targets natural grandmother leaders to strengthen their leadership role within their communities. GMP then conducts an under-the-tree grandmother leadership training using participatory non-formal education methods with illiterate grandmothers, bringing together grandmothers from neighboring villages to learn new leadership and communication skills and to strengthen their ties with other grandmothers and with other community members. Additionally, Aubel's work has focused on developing strategies to promote inter-generational dialogue, involving elders, parents and adolescents, men and women.



In the rural areas of Senegal where Aubel and her team are working, the break-down in communication between generations is severe, and communities have been very receptive to the inter-generational forums that GMP organizes, with skilled facilitators to build social cohesion and the capacity of community members to work together to promote the well-being of communities, families, and children.

Community-wide dialogue can lead to consensus building for the need to preserve certain positive aspects of local culture, for example, story-telling, and to abandon others like child marriage and FGM. Where it operates, this initiative has increased the age of marriage for girls, decreased teen pregnancy and FMG, and increased community and parental support for children's education, children's performance at school, and advocacy efforts for girls.

By empowering grandmothers, Aubel has demonstrated that they are a neglected and enormous resource for their communities to drive change and transform their communities for the benefit of families, children, and especially girls.



“ Sustained improvements in the lives of communities stems primarily from the collective efforts of community members who selflessly invest in their own communities, rather than from the initiatives of outsiders to promote community development. ”



The Network Effect: A Peer-to-Peer Learning Model for Youth Empowerment

Janet Longmore, Canada
DOT: Digital Opportunity Trust

The 2018 UN World Youth Report found that the global rate of youth unemployment is 13%, which means that nearly 67 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are unable to find a job. These statistics hit especially hard in developing countries where young people make up large portions, in many cases over 45%, of their country's demographics. When both youth and unemployment rates are high, economies are losing out on the potential contributions of a huge percentage of their population. That's where Ashoka Fellow Janet Longmore's work comes in.

Based in Canada, Longmore works to equip youth, particularly young women, with the tools, training, and networks they need to lead growth within their communities. Longmore realized that the factors causing youth unemployment weren't simply levels of educational attainment – in fact, many youth facing unemployment graduate with a first or secondary degree. Rather, these young people lack practical skills-based knowledge on how to compete in today's rapidly changing economy.

To fill this gap, Longmore's initiative, Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT), provides youth with alternative opportunities for technological and entrepreneurial training. The program is designed to leverage the passion and enthusiasm of young people to be leaders in their communities, transferring the skills and knowledge they gain through the program to community stakeholders. Her initiative specifically empowers women, requiring that 50% of participants be female.

Each year, DOT receives thousands of applications. Longmore will soon be launching a new initiative called "Daring to Shift," which will support young women as agents of change at the center of inclusive growth in Africa and the Middle East. They also aim to shift DOT into a networked organization, operating as localized hubs and programming agencies that are informed by youth and driven by shared values and responsible impact.

Ultimately, Longmore hopes they can take advantage of the flexibility of a networked organization, allowing them to test potential permutations of DOT such as government adoption, youth-led replication, or commercial adoption and business models.

The training quite literally pays off and pays it forward: ninety percent of DOT leaders find employment or start their own businesses after completion on top of impacting the lives of up to 200 community members each during their time in the program.



Raising Bars for Those Behind Them

Erica Gerrity, USA, Ostara

Twenty five-percent of the world's prisoners reside in the United States, and women are its fastest growing population, with more than 250,000 incarcerated women in America: an increase of almost 700% in the last 30 years. With this rise in the number of incarcerated females comes an increase in incarcerated mothers: seventy-five percent of women in prison are moms, and 25% are pregnant or gave birth in the last year. Despite this, prisons are predominantly designed for and by men, meaning that these facilities leave no room for motherhood, pregnancy, or pre-natal healthcare.

Through her project the "Ostara Initiative," Ashoka Fellow Erica Gerrity is working at the intersection of women's health and prison reform to dismantle this male-focused maternal care system prevalent in jails throughout America, creating the space for incarcerated women to have healthy and comfortable pregnancies.

The initiative is an extension of her Minnesota Prison Doula project, a program that provides one-on-one birth attendants for expectant incarcerated mothers and includes services such as weekly pre-natal and parenting group sessions, counseling, and lactation and breast milk banking. Ostara now promotes this program on a national level, providing online trainings and seminars on this model for national stakeholders in prison health systems.

The impact is palpable: the Doula model has now been replicated in more than 15 jails and prisons around the country and individuals in 22 states and from Canada have participated in her seminars. Additionally, Gerrity's work led to legislation in five states that mandate access to birth attendants for incarcerated women. And most importantly, Gerrity's work encourages women to self-identify as mothers and to do better by their children, improving the health of both mother and child.

“ Spend most of your time observing. Listen with all your senses. Come from a place of curiosity, kindness, and respect. Give yourself time to understand the culture of that space, sector, and community. ”



Lacing Up: Walking for Radical Self Care and Health Transformation

Morgan Dixon, USA
GirlTrek

Every Saturday morning, thousands of African American women wake up early to walk together. These walking groups are part of the initiative “GirlTrek,” a program co-founded by Ashoka Fellow Morgan Dixon that encourages women to put aside 30 minutes every day to take literal steps toward their health and well-being.

The initiative turns walking into a revolutionary action – inspiring friends, family, and community members to live healthier, more community-conscious lives.

“Something happened when I started to walk,” Dixon attests on GirlTrek’s website. “The pace of the world slowed down. I started to heal. I became more aware of my body, more aware of the world around me. When I walked, I felt transported.”

Dixon co-started this movement to battle an issue close to her heart: statistics indicating that, by virtue of being black woman, she is more likely to live a shorter life.

The African American community has long been ignored by the health and wellness movement despite the fact that they score worse across most health indicators than any other sub-group in America. For instance, African American women are disproportionately affected by preventable obesity-related diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and coronary heart disease. And according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 80% of black women are currently overweight and 53% are morbidly obese.



A central cause of this health crisis is a lack of time for self-care and prolonged periods of inactivity. Federal government guidelines for adult physical activity recommends getting exercise 30 minutes a day, five days a week. However, research indicates that around two-thirds of African American women engage in little to no leisure-time physical activity, contributing significantly to higher mortality rates and decreased quality of life

This issue itself is a by-product of systemic and historical barriers to health for black women, rooted in ancestral traumas of stress, generational poverty, unemployment, mass incarceration, and racism.

GirlTrek provides a solution to this multi-layered problem by leveraging local volunteers to organize their peers into highly visible walking groups across the country.

Community walking is both affordable and accessible, providing participants with a low-cost, high-impact opportunity for fitness. And the health benefits are proven: walking not only decreases obesity, but also had a positive impact on fighting chronic stress, diabetes, dementia, and other preventable diseases, not to mention its positive effects on mental health.



To mobilize these communities, GirlTrek meets them where they are and contextualizes their self-care revolution within the civil rights movement – a legacy extending back through generations of black woman leaders who walked to heal and walked to grow. In this way, the initiative creates a new dialogue around what being black and healthy looks like, drawing inspiration from African American women throughout history who have walked to transform narratives and reclaim streets.

“Black women have always led transformational movements like this,” Dixon explained. “As we grapple with global warming, massive health epidemics, and a crisis of consciousness around what it means to live on this planet together, I am assured by the grace, fearlessness, and wisdom of our members through the world.”

The emphasis on community also holds participants accountable – by engaging with a support network of friends and community members, participants are more likely to stay on track and form the habit of walking: defined by GirlTrek as when a woman walks at least 30 minutes per day, five days per week, for three months or more.

And the movement clearly resonates. GirlTrek is now the largest public health non-profit for African American women and girls operating in the United States, and so far, 345,489 women across America have taken the GirlTrek Pledge. Additionally, they operate in more than 2,949 cities, occupy 108 parks, and influence 96,648 children. They have been celebrated by Essence, Ebony, CNN, and The New York Times, and former First Lady Michelle Obama.

Their new goal is to have 1 million trekkers by 2020 and to work with local and national policymakers to craft and promote legislation that improves the health of African American families.

“By 2020, GirlTrek will have an army of public health activists walking the streets of the highest need communities in America, and increasingly around the world as organizers have mobilized groups around seven African countries this year. They are modeling resilience, advocating for green space, demanding justice, and walking to save their own lives.”



“ I have no doubt that this movement of a million Black women walking will be talked about for generations to come. ”

As they grow, GirlTrek spreads the word and talks up the walk by highlighting narratives and stories that black women can relate to. They produced a “Harriet Handbook,” inspired by the healing and life-saving walks of Harriet Tubman, to provide trekkers with a step-by-step guide that includes 1,000 walks along with ideas for self-healing and saving your own life. They also shared an inspirational walking calendar which includes other motivational and inspirational goals such as “spend 30 minutes mentoring a girl in your life,” or “perform a random act of kindness for a black woman.” They offer history-themed walks, faith-based challenges, and even opportunities to take part in diaspora treks abroad.

Most importantly, GirlTrek’s transforms its members into leaders and changemakers at the family, community, and national level, giving them a platform to share the challenges they’ve faced, their successes, and as they walk, their victories.

“ This is the kind of community that is powerful in bringing about change. It’s old-school, urgent, and absolutely crucial in the days ahead. ”



Sex and Health Education and Reproductive Well-Being Reintroduced

Amina Swanepoel, Philippines
Roots of Health

Due to the prevalent culture of shame and contempt surrounding contraception, sexuality, and family planning in the Philippines, the overwhelming majority of Filipinos lack basic knowledge about reproductive and sexual health. For example, a survey of nearly 4,000 students in 2017 revealed that 71% of participants believed jumping up and down after sex would prevent pregnancy and 40% thought that women do not get pregnant the first time they have sex. Addressing these informational gaps are imperative – the neglect of health education in the Philippines has led to increased rates of maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, and HIV infection.

These problems are particularly salient in the province of Palawan, which has a teen pregnancy rate higher than the rest of the Philippines and epidemic levels of HIV infection in its capital, Puerto Princesa City. A main cause of this health crisis is that current educational programs regarding sexuality and family-planning are rooted in religion and promote abstinence without providing alternative information or services.

Ashoka Fellow Amina Swanepoel is working to raise health awareness and transform the current sex and health education models in this area through her “Roots of Health” initiative. Instead of preaching against abstinence, “Roots of Health” uses a life-planning approach that reduces stigmas and encourages beneficiaries to reflect on their dreams and aspirations, relating these plans and goals to their reproductive health and sexual lives. For example, the initiative teaches participants about the negative repercussions of unplanned pregnancies and gives them the opportunity to consider this information when making decisions.

The program targets schools and communities, providing foundational reproductive health information to students, along with tackling subjects such as puberty, emotional changes, and healthy relationships.

“Roots of Health” include teachers in these conversations, training them to give advice and refer students to clinics when necessary. Besides the educational content, the program also provides women and young people with access to contraception and free clinical care, matching the new demand sex and health education brings with easily available, high-quality health services including contraceptive counseling, prenatal check-ups, and pap smears.

Swanepoel also established a collective of local women called “Community Health Advocates.” This segment of “Roots of Health” targets women living in geographically isolated, marginalized, and disadvantaged areas through a partnership with the Philippines’s Department of Health. The program trains identified women on best practices for handling contraception, safe sex, and maternal health so they can share this knowledge with others in their communities and create informal safe spaces in their neighborhoods where local women can come to ask questions they are worried to ask to traditional healthcare providers.



“ We have now taught over 40,000 young people the basics of reproductive health education, and provided over 20,000 women and girls their contraceptive of choice. ”

Additionally, Amina designed a “Youth Advocates” program that not only provides comprehensive sex education for young people but also trains them how to be communicative with their friends and classmates about health issue and encourages them to be more informed and responsible.

Swanepoel's efforts have broken down barriers Filipinos face to accessing to information about reproductive health, educating more than 6,000 women and engaging over 50,000 high-school students. Swanepoel has also proactively trained more than 72 community health advocates to care for over 2,500 women in their areas. Through her initiative's clinical work, Swanepoel has met the contraceptive needs of more than 20,000 women.

Due to these great efforts, Swanepoel is currently a member of the Provincial Family Health Council and the Provincial Maternal Death Surveillance and Response Council of the province of Palawan, which gives her the opportunity to both influence and change health polices and budget allocations at a regional scale. The initiative also joined the Humanitarian Response Consortium, enabling it to expand its work to provide care to populations impacted by disasters.



A Rebirth of Leadership for Women in Sri Lanka

Shreen Saroor, Sri Lanka

Women's Action Network (WAN)

As a result of the civil war in Sri Lanka and the displacement of women's organizations that took place during the conflict, the Sri Lankan women's rights movement has been disregarded and efforts to build the capacities of potential youth leaders have halted.

Additionally, the movement has been impeded by structural discriminatory practices against women prevalent throughout society and exacerbated by war crimes and divisions between Muslim, Tamil, and Sinhalese communities.

After the war, there was renewed stability and mobility for women – an opening for the women's movement to grow once more. Ashoka Fellow Shreen Saroor seized this opportunity and founded Women's Action Network (WAN), an initiative that creates platforms and organizations for women of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds to lead post-war development and participate in the transitional government and its justice mechanisms.

WAN is a network of nine organizations spread across nine districts that focus on addressing women's issues such as domestic violence, sexual violence, discriminatory law reforms, and post-war challenges. It also encourages women to look at these issues from a women's rights perspective instead of an ethnic one.

In this way, WAN works to facilitate the founding of such organizations and the development of a cadre of new young women leaders to work within them and advance their missions.

WAN also initiates national and international policy reforms, working to overhaul the discriminatory Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act and take up cases related to the Muslim Personal Law. Involved women also participate in "Gender-Based Violence" forums through which they conduct trainings for police, doctors, lawyers, and other stakeholders on how to deal with women's issues.

Currently, Saroor is working to expand WAN into the south of Sri Lanka. She gives sessions in government universities, school, and youth centers to ensure that younger generations are aware of their rights and are prepared to take up the battle for them when they are older.



A Revolutionary Model for Eliminating Human Trafficking and Sex Exploitation

Hasina Kharbhih, India
Impulse NGO Network



North East India has experienced overwhelming incidents of human trafficking and sex exploitation due to its geographic isolation and unsafe migration, in addition to a rise in ethnic conflict, unrest, and poverty. The increase in human trafficking was also the result of increased vigilance on the practice in other regions, driving traffickers to search out new sources of vulnerable women and children in concert with a rise in displacement in the area due to natural calamity. To make matters worse, a lack of consistent governmental intervention and police infrastructure exacerbate the issue.

To address this problem, Ashoka Fellow Hasina Kharbhih developed a program that combats child trafficking, first with a focus on the state of Meghalaya. This "Meghalaya Model" presently known as "Impulse Model" is a formal collaboration to avoid duplicity between different agencies of the state and central government, law enforcement, lawyers, and a national network of organizations, through shared leadership working on addressing human trafficking in the country.

The coordinators began by running an outreach program for vulnerable children and creating a data bank Impulse Case Management Centre to track them, using web alerts and emails to disseminate information to partner organizations and centralize information on missing and rescued women and children.

These collaborations also led to the formation of legal support network and a victim-protection program that identifies and reports sex traffickers. Additionally, Kharbhih restructured the educational program of police officers by integrating anti-trafficking courses into their curriculum.

This model has proved incredibly successful and has now been adopted by state agencies in bordering countries including Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, in addition to spreading across the eight states of North-East India and North Bengal. Its collaborative group has successfully implemented partnership prevention, protection, policing, press, prosecution reporting, rescue, rehabilitation, and repatriation efforts to reduce trafficking of children and women in North-East India for over 26 years, serving over 72,534 victims, empowering 30,000 artisans, and building the sustainable capacities of 126 cross-system partners.

Impulse Model received the Japanese Award for the Most Innovative Development Project during its global development awards and medals competition in 2012.



EUROPE

Gone Fishing, But Taking Charge

Huriye Goncuoglu, Turkey
Fisherwomen of Turkey

Fisherwomen working in the coastal areas of Turkey have long gone invisible and neglected, excluded from platforms for fisher communities and struggling with exploitation as well as a lack of government support and equal pay.

Goncuoglu works to empower fisherwomen to take on leadership roles in their communities and confidently assert their equal rights. In parallel, she advocates for gender equality in the larger aquaculture industry, elevating the voices of fisherwomen in public policy dialogues and dismantling deep-seated gender stereotypes by introducing discussions about the rights and inclusion of fisherwomen among Turkey's most influential environmental and women's organizations.

Goncuoglu has built a fisherwomen commission under the umbrella of Turkey's largest fishermen's cooperative, which did not previously accept female members, and is scaling her trainings to other regions in the country. Goncuoglu is also the founder of the "Fisherwomen Society" in Turkey which aims to embrace all women, not only fisherwomen, working in the fishery industry.

More than 375 fisherwomen in over 20 villages have received training through Goncuoglu's initiative and have experienced significant changes in their employment, life skills and self-confidence.



I believe that women actively working in the fisheries industry need to be strengthened and recognized. I am working to introduce them to alternative livelihoods related to fishing. It's imperative to handle betterment issues with a perspective of gender equality.

Women may not have all the answers to all the problems pertaining to sustainable fisheries, but if we want to improve marine-related conditions, and ultimately, our future, we need to hear what they have to say.



Building a Framework for Sustainability

Sue Riddlestone, United Kingdom
Bioregional

In co-founding Bioregional and the One Planet Living® framework, Sue Riddlestone launched a set of guidelines and an inspiring collection of real-life case studies that she used as a key influence in the creation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Her work has accelerated the growth of an international movement for individuals, institutions, and governments to reduce their carbon footprint and implement strategies for more sustainable living.

With 10 clear, easy-to-grasp principles, the One Planet Living framework and its detailed Goals and Guidance enables people and organizations to implement the SDGs and integrate sustainable practices into project-based, organizational, city-related, and regional planning.

Bioregional works directly with government entities, corporate organizations, and international coalitions to develop innovative and practical sustainability strategies. In an effort to make the complex rhetoric and structure of the SDGs easier to navigate for everyday citizens, Bioregional offers training programs, helped create a digital platform oneplanet.com to develop action plans, and leads cross-sectoral interventions that connect schools, businesses, and community groups together.

Riddlestone stands as a global champion of the sustainability movement, practicing collective leadership by working at the level of individuals, communities, organizations, and national governments to expand the reach of the One Planet Living framework and the tools it offers.



Since its launch, the One Planet Living framework has expanded to cover five continents. To date, it has been used in more than \$30 billion of real estate development, and 4.4 million people are living in cities and city regions taking part in Bioregional's One Planet Cities project.

“The UN Sustainable Development Goals are very close to my heart. I'm immensely proud of the five years I spent being closely involved in the UN processes to secure the SDGs - and being the official NGO global focal point for successful efforts to include the goal of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in the SDGs.”



Mothers Know Best

Edit Schlaffer, Austria

Women without Borders



“We do have to create our own safe spaces,” says Edit Schlaffer, founder of Women without Borders. “I do believe, strongly believe, that we have to start at the home front where we as women are present.”

Observing the ongoing recruitment of young people becoming enamored with radical groups and the continuous attraction of extremist ideologies worldwide, Schlaffer has identified this as an opportunity to empower mothers as agents of change and ambassadors of violence prevention.

Schlaffer began by looking to concerned mothers and mothers of the perpetrators of violence to deepen her understanding of the process of radicalization. The question of whether mothers can actually protect their children from violent extremism lives led to the first global study, which explored the key question, Can Mothers Challenge Violent Extremism? The study surveyed over 1,000 mothers of adolescent youth in countries traditionally targeted by extremism and terrorism, including India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Israel, Northern Ireland, and Palestine. The data reflected the powerful will of women to change the trajectory of radicalization in these countries and a profound sense of mistrust in the state authorities governing political conversations - most of whom were, and still are, men.

In her conversations with mothers, Schlaffer began to uncover the emotions and experiences driving young people to join terrorist movements: issues such as traumatic experiences with violence or death, feelings of social failure or exclusion, discrimination, isolation, a lack of education and employment opportunities, and a blurred sense of direction. Adolescents already struggling with the physical and psychological turbulences tied to puberty have been found to be particularly susceptible to recruiters of extremist groups.

This pioneering research revealed that recruiters are consciously leveraging this stage of vulnerability and playing into adolescents’ feelings of isolation by investing time to build a sense of trust and understanding. On the other side, among the mothers of adolescents leaving behind their communities for the allure of a welcoming social network, Schlaffer observed a deep sense of grief, often tucked away from the public eye.



Building on more than a decade of work focused on female empowerment and engagement at the grassroots level through her international NGO Women without Borders, Schlaffer introduced a transformational methodology to combat radicalization in at-risk communities.

This approach was based on the key finding of the study that mothers are at the heart of the family and have the closest emotional and physical proximity to their children. They have the unique potential to serve as allies in safeguarding their children from the threat of extremism.

Through the MotherSchools Parenting for Peace Model, Schlaffer began to carve out “formalized informal spaces” as she has described them, for concerned mothers to gather, share their experiences, and learn about adolescent development as well as the early warning signs of radicalization.

“This changes the power dynamics in the family, while also providing an outlet,” said Schlaffer, reflecting on the value of bringing these women together. “They find their voice and can begin to address these delicate questions around taboo issues such as extremism and violence. They’re not alone anymore. They have a network and the skills and confidence necessary to exercise their rights and responsibilities.”

Trained by Women without Borders, MotherSchools teachers guide women through a carefully designed curriculum, aimed at empowering mothers with the confidence, parenting education, and communication skills to step up as influential leaders of change in their families and communities.

The global mothers movement gained immediate traction, and since their establishment, MotherSchools have been successfully implemented in Africa, Asia, and Europe, engaging some 2,000 mothers across 16 countries.

Demonstrating effectiveness in a diversity of socio-political environments, the MotherSchools approach has been welcomed at both the local and national levels in communities and women’s grassroots groups around the world.

The MotherSchools program and network does not simply come to an end with the graduation of each MotherSchools cohort. Rather, participating mothers are encouraged to share and disseminate their learnings within their greater spheres of influence, and some even become MotherSchools trainers themselves as a result.

The MotherSchools Model is an important building block of a female-led, bottom-up security architecture, which elevates women’s voices and paves an innovative path toward preventing and combating radicalization. These local networks of mothers bring women out of isolation and position them as first responders in situations of crisis and conflict. Bringing the stories and experiences of these mothers from the home front to the attention of policy shapers and decision-makers has positively influenced a number of national security strategies.

Through MotherSchools, Women without Borders has tapped into and recognized the powerful potential of women and mothers to act as the first line of defense to protect their families and communities against toxic ideologies.

Women without Borders has worked across almost 40 countries and has translated research into action via 80+ projects to date.



Leading the Body Rebellion

Nerea De Ugarte, Chile

Fundación Niñas Valientes and
Rebelión del Cuerpo

De Ugarte is working to disrupt the cultural narratives that have fed societal pressures and stereotypes imposed on women, negatively impacting their sense of confidence and self-esteem.

She has curated a multi-pronged approach, organizing workshops for schools and companies, leading widespread social media campaigns, and collaborating with policymakers working on media legislation to transform the environment in which girls grow up.

Through her two organizations La Rebelión del Cuerpo (The Body Rebellion) and La Fundación Niñas Valientes (The Brave Girls Foundation), De Ugarte empowers women to develop healthy relationships with themselves and their bodies and garner the confidence to voice their opinions in the public sphere.

Her work revolves around content creation as a means of amplifying women's testimonies and prompting public reflection about sexuality, self-esteem, and gender. She regularly leads local community initiatives to create platforms for women to share their stories.

De Ugarte leverages her massive social media presence to place pressure on advertisers promoting gender biases to stop their campaigns, urging well-known organizations to make public apologies and bring attention to sexism in the spheres of advertising and media.



“**Rebelión del Cuerpo is inspirational. It makes personal testimony visible as a political construction, enabling women to take part in society.**”

Her initiative has successfully eliminated five national advertisements portraying female stereotypes.

Rebelión del Cuerpo has opened chapters in 10 different regions across Chile and expanded to Spain, Australia, Mexico, and Argentina. In 2018, Nerea also led efforts to have 12 different congressional candidates in Chile sign a pledge to ratify legislation preventing advertisers from publishing sexist content.



Beyond the Books

Priscila Gonsales, Brazil

Instituto Educadigital

Despite billions of dollars being poured in Brazil's public education system, inefficient budget use has led to a lack of positive change and stagnant, low quality education. Two of the largest issues are the lack of quality, updated, and region-tailored pedagogical materials to meet the needs of diverse students and the distance between educational policy discussions and the teachers in classrooms.

With Instituto Educadigital, Gonsales promotes Open Educational Resources to enable educators to customize and tailor educational information for students and works to curate collaborations between departments and ministries of education across Brazil to build new teacher training systems.

Through these two initiatives, Gonsales has introduced new models for teacher training and textbook production and has spurred a mindset shift among teachers and students, helping them see themselves as content producers that can contribute to the development of the education system.

Gonsales participated in updating a federal bill about open educational resources. The bill was approved by the Education Commission in 2018 and by the Culture Commission of the House of Representatives in 2019.

Instituto Educadigital is the only social organization in Brazil totally focused on education as an important source of safeguarding digital rights.

“ Education is a human right. In the current moment, we are in a society of data, and it is urgent to develop a "producers" mindset to be aware of digital rights - privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information. ”



A Force for Collective Change: Elevating Citizen Voices

Greta Lucero Ríos, Mexico

Ollin, Jóvenes en Movimiento



From a very young age, Ríos felt an innate drive to help others and leave her mark on the world: “I remember as a kid always trying to solve problems with my parents. When my dad was stressed, I was always thinking about how I could help him. I wanted to make sure things were right in the world.”

When she entered high school, Ríos continued to engage actively in her community through the Model United Nations (Model UN) program and debate team. She remained fixated on learning more about her country’s political systems and felt convinced of her ability to catalyze change in her community.

“I started to understand how policies work,” said Ríos. “I realized that you can change the world by changing the rules of engagement that we have as a society.”

As Ríos grew older, she began to feel perplexed at the state of youth engagement in her country. Noticing no student groups in her university dedicated to solving societal challenges, she led a peer group to organize a Model UN program. “My concern has always been how or why do we have some individuals who really commit, who really work and devote their time and resources to bring about change, and why do we have some others who don’t?” she reflected.

Ríos quickly realized that this crisis of low youth engagement was not limited to her university community. Right now, Mexico is marked by the largest generation of young people in its history, with approximately 31 million Mexicans between 15 and 29 years old. However, with all of this human capital, the country’s youth unemployment rate is still around 9%, more than twice the total population unemployment rate, and 20% of youth neither study nor work.

To bring public attention to these challenges, Ríos launched Ollín – a word used to describe a strong movement of nature, like wind or an earthquake. “It’s something that moves in a natural way, something you cannot control, but that creates change,” Sill described.



Since launching Ollín in 2011, she has activated a thunderous movement of change, working to transform the way in which young people perceive themselves as influential agents whose actions can make a difference. Her work began with intensive research, exploring why youth unemployment was such a pervasive challenge and why young people were not engaging in public policy discussions.

“We found that there were structural barriers for young people to participate in decision-making groups – in governments, political parties, and even universities,” said Ríos. “There was a sense that you had to be older to actually change things and have a voice.”

Ollín has continued to monitor the state of youth participation in Mexico and publish research results in a biannual Youth Participation Index. Based on the findings of the index, Ríos' team develops specific strategy and policy recommendations to share with decision-making entities.

Simultaneously, Ríos works to directly engage young people of a range of ages in political discussions and alter the cultural trends that have kept young people silent and uneducated in recent years. “Many young people don’t understand the importance of their individual actions,” said Sill. “We’re changing the narrative to make young people see that being an active citizen be cool.”

In the past year, Ollin has shifted its strategy to target the wider Mexican population in an effort to encourage stronger civic engagement among all ages and build a more inclusive and engaging approach toward fortifying the country’s democratic institutions.

“We didn’t want to forget our work on youth, but we wanted to transition from being an exclusively dedicated organization youth into something a little more comprehensive,” explained Ríos. “It was also important to me to avoid doing something that I always criticize, telling young people what to do and how they should feel.”

Ollín’s strategy operates on two levels: at the legislative level and among community members. Rios works directly with legislators who are willing to engage with her to increase civic engagement and bolster Mexico’s democratic processes. Given the lack of rigorous educational requirements for legislators, Rios offers workshops to help build their capacities and build deeper relationships between citizens and the country’s larger legislative bodies.

At the community level, Ríos and her team have developed media campaigns encouraging citizens to vote in political elections and organize regular trainings through her “School of Citizenship” to educate individuals about political mechanisms and processes, enabling them with the knowledge to shape their perspectives on policy and take action to have their views heard.





Democracy is not only about going out to vote on voting day, but understanding what each representative does, how you can be in touch with them, and how they are accountable to you. We want Mexico to have a space where we as citizens lead by the rule of law and are more powerful.



Since its founding, Ollín has become an inspiring force in her community and an influential advocate for citizens' right to participation in Mexico's democratic processes. Just last year, Sill led the largest national campaign to engage young people in Mexico's history. In parallel, she also spearheaded and won a legal suit against the Mexican government, calling on officials to recognize a recent bill that had been passed as unconstitutional. "This was a symbolic moment," said Sill. "It affirmed how powerful we were. No other organization or individual was doing what we were doing. We were doing something that was needed by the community."

Ollín has continued to monitor the state of youth participation in Mexico and publish research results in its biannual Youth Participation Index, a publication that Sill launched when she first founded her initiative. Based on the yearly findings of the index, Sill's team has worked on developing specific strategy and policy recommendations to share with decision-making entities. With her new target audience, Sill notes that she is open to transferring knowledge so that other youth-focused organizations can sustain yearly work on the index.

"The index has been adopted by many organizations," reflected Sill. "We've received offers for other organizations to take over the index. It's really powerful. It feels like a confirmation and appreciation for what we did in the past."



Changing the Healthcare Landscape in Egypt

Abla Al-Alfy, Egypt

Egyptian Members' Association of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Ashoka Fellow Dr. Abla Al Alfy is always on the move. Recently hosting an event for the kickoff of a year-long campaign to combat high rates of premature births in Egypt – organized in parallel with World Prematurity Day – Al Alfy divided her time during the event between talking to reporters, giving speeches, sitting in on roundtables, and encouraging participants ideas and reflections. Her team describes her as a force of nature – unstoppable and deeply inspirational. For Egypt, she could well be described as all this and more: a leader transforming and restructuring the child healthcare sector in the country.

Al Alfy was the first one to mobilize the community towards fighting the causes of prematurity in Egypt and contributed to national celebrations of the day for the last two years, with mega public-awareness campaigns and a lighting of major Egyptian monuments in purple, putting Egypt among the countries that are shedding light on the importance of fighting for the smallest among us.

Al Alfy has dedicated her life to reforming early child healthcare and bringing the issue of child malnutrition to the fore – important work in a country where about 22% of Egyptian children have stunted physical and cognitive development. Research shows that the first two years of a child's life are crucial for development, and due to this, improper nutrition in these critical years can have devastating effects. Children with poor nutrition are more likely to suffer from short-term and long-term health conditions including obesity, allergies, low immunity, diabetes, and iron deficiency.

These health issues stem from a lack of information on health and nutrition. For example, only 28% of Egyptian babies are exclusively breast-fed and 71% of mother's who went to a follow-up visit with their doctors after delivery reported a need for more education on child nutrition. This information gap starts with medical professionals: in Egypt, there are not enough doctors and nurses trained on proper child nutrition and early childcare. For instance, there are only 167 lactation consultants in all of Egypt and the majority of medical school graduates are not given the chance to take part in hands-on training. Additionally, few new doctors are trained in sub-specialties like neo-natal care, child nutrition, and aftercare.



After certification as Board Certified Lactation Consultant in 2005, Al Alfy has also been elected to serve as Secretary General for the Egyptian Lactation Consultants Association, using the lactation consultants from this organization to assist her program in training and monitoring. In addition, she has partnered with Save the Children to train community activist on breast feeding and Kangaroo Mother Care and has changed the name used in Egypt to Warm Hug Care to be acceptable to the community. In addition, she created a part-time program of blended education to equip junior pediatricians with the skills needed for optimizing community child health in Egypt. As a result, she made Egypt the first country in the region to gain approval from the Royal College in the UK to host the International Diploma of Child Health.

Now, as Al Alfy works to reduce the causes of prematurity in Egypt, partnering with the government's 100\$ Million Fund to raise awareness about prematurity and address the issue. For the campaign, she is focusing specifically on families in new settlements being developed by the government. In these communities, her organization provides awareness and counseling sessions, as well as training for community members about how to address these health problems. Never asked for a title, she was named from the university professors, and approved by doctors, patients, community activists, and the public as "the mother of the Egyptian children."

Abla is currently partnering with the government's 100\$ Million Fund to raise awareness about prematurity and address the issue.



Empowering and Employing Women in the Levant

Fida Abu Turkey, Palestine

Irada/Palestinian Center for Communication and Development Studies



In Palestine, men dominate the work sector. According to the UNDP, 90.5% of women in Palestine remain outside of the formal labor force, working as unpaid family members or in the informal sector, while neighboring countries in the Levant record similar figures. These statistics stem from patriarchal social norms and un-equitable labor laws that pose obstacles to women's participation in formal economic life, such as personal status and labor legislation that require women get their father or husband's permission to work or travel.

Ashoka Fellow Fida Abu Turkey is working to change these numbers, alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment rates among women in the Levant through her business incubation model "Irada" (Force of Will). Irada provides financial assistance, technical and training services, and international market venues to local women-run businesses and operations with the aim of strengthening their position within the regional entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The initiative began by targeting women in rural communities who were economically affected by the West Bank separation wall and now benefits women across Palestine and the Levant region. Twenty percent of the sales these women make are re-invested into Irada's operations and micro-projects, ensuring the operation's sustainability.

Abu Turkey advances these women entrepreneurs by giving them seed funding to start their own enterprises, supplied in-kind through an assessment of the proposed project's needs. She additionally offers technical assistance to her beneficiaries including theoretical and practical business trainings, marketing services, and mentorship, all ensuring that these women can successfully manage their businesses and market their products.

Fida incubated more than 1000 projects, works with more than 500 women per year, and successfully managed \$2 million in funding.

She also expanded her operations to two countries and received more than \$750,000 to expand her business incubation to Northern Palestine.



From Farmers to Farm-hers: Creating the Space for Gender-Equitable Agriculture

Zeinab Al-Momani, Jordan
Sakhras Women's Society Cooperative

In Jordan today, women are literally “cropping up” in the agriculture sector in large numbers. Seven women's cooperatives have been established in the country with more than 5,000 members and over 800 revolving loans. The country also hosts the first agricultural women's union in the region, which serves more than 450 women agricultural laborers and assists them in confronting the social violence, unemployment, and poverty present in their communities.

This boon in the participation of women in the agricultural sector in Jordan is due to the efforts of Ashoka Fellow, Zeinab Al-Momani.

Many women living in rural areas in Jordan lack opportunities for economic independence, a situation fueled by conservative gender norms; a lack of access to financial services including credit, loans, and collateral; and little support from existing political and legal frameworks. These women are often confined to the domestic sphere and, despite their substantial contributions to agricultural production, only receive two-thirds to one-half of the wages earned by men who perform the same activities.

Fueled by a conviction that the only way for women to gain their full economic rights was to get organized, Al-Momani founded the Sakhras' Woman Society Cooperative in 2003, based in her hometown Sakhras in the Ajloun governorate. Al-Momani chose to establish a cooperative over a conventional income-generating project because cooperatives' profits are equally distributed to all the participating members – a model that enables beneficiaries to establish their own initiatives after joining.

Initially, participants in her cooperative performed basic services such as drying vegetables, cleaning grains, and packaging crops. Later on, the cooperative started revolving loans so women could start their own projects. The cooperative also brought free health insurance to 578 poor families and micro-finance loans to 800 women, while additionally bolstering the leadership capacities of 120 women farmers and training 7,000 women and girls.

Al-Momani also made change on the policy level, working to amend the law of the Jordanian Farmer's Union which only allowed land-owners to be members. As a result of her efforts, the law now only requires land rentals as a pre-condition for joining the Jordanian Farmer's Union, and because of this change, female participation in the Union has grown from one to eight percent. Her women's union has also assisted women in dealing with legal constraints they faced when reclaiming and rehabilitating agricultural lands and created the space for women to speak up and participate in the community.

Al-Momani's work has been recognized by many notable individuals and organizations including the Skoll Foundation and Queen Rania of Jordan. She has recently partnered with the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and moving forward, hopes to replicate her cooperative model across rural areas in Jordan and countries in the region, ultimately establishing an Arab Women Farmer's Union – and truly redefining the meaning of sharing the harvest with all.



Ashoka: Innovators for the Public

Ashoka builds and cultivates a community of change leaders who understand that the world now requires everyone to be a changemaker. We leverage our global networks to spur movements that transform institutions and cultures worldwide in support of changemaking for the good of society.

With more than 3,600 Fellows based in over 90 countries, Ashoka represents the largest platform for social entrepreneurs worldwide. Since its founding 36 years ago, Ashoka has provided stipends, support services, and connections to this expansive network of Fellows.

Ashoka has designed and implemented a rigorous and proven selection process to elect these leading social entrepreneurs. Our offices in 35 countries across the world receive thousands of nominations and from them, select new cohorts of Ashoka Fellows. Ashoka's venture process is an intensive one that ensures the election of only those social entrepreneurs who are truly pioneering systemic social change around the world.

We focus our efforts on sourcing and supporting social innovators who are creating change by tackling the systemic roots of challenges. These ventures are at the core of Ashoka's movement to ensure sustainable social solutions are implemented to confront humanitarian needs worldwide and create impactful and lasting improvements that advance the well-being of society.

Each year, the Ashoka Arab World office receives hundreds of nominations for candidates. Throughout the five stages of our election process, we gather data and information about the nominated Fellow through application forms, local field visits, and semi-structured interviews with both local and external experts. Currently, 38% of our Fellows are women, and we aim to raise that number to 50% as part of our WISE initiative.





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