

2018

GATHER Fellowship

In order to advance peace, how do we move beyond superficial diversity to leverage our differences and build thriving, equitable communities across lines of conflict?

This was the challenge posed to changemakers across the globe who recently applied to the GATHER Fellowship, the only program of its kind at the intersection of social innovation and conflict transformation. Meet the Fellows from around the world who were selected to take part in a year-long fellowship that kicks off in Sweden from March 11-16, 2018.



GATHER Fellow, 2018

CHALLENGE: 244 million people live outside their national borders, an increase of 41% since 2000. 65 million are internally displaced or refugees.

SOLUTION: Leverage a popular online gaming platform (Minecraft) to counteract negative perceptions of refugees and teach empathy among adolescents in host European communities.

“In a political environment of increasing prejudice towards foreigners, it is crucial for young people to learn about the experiences that create refugees, to see the human faces and stories behind the label of ‘refugee,’ and also to learn about how all societies benefit from recognising the needs of both the newcomers and host communities.”

BIO

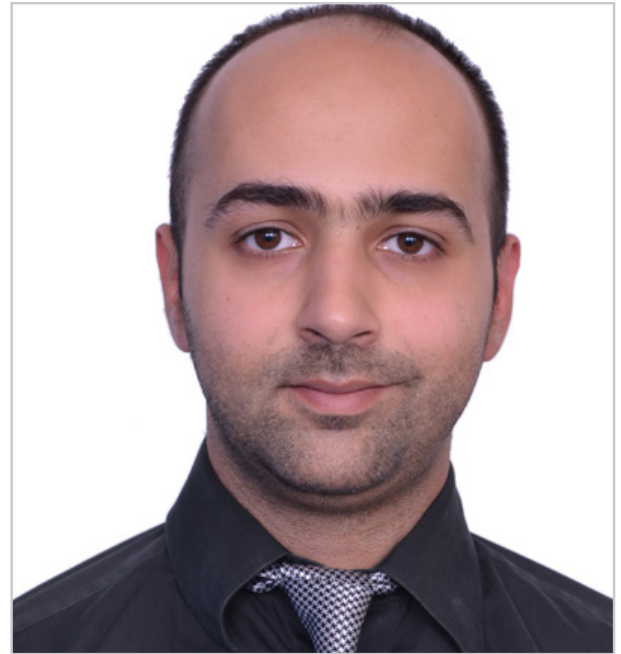
Lilly is an Iranian-American living in the UK since 2006. She graduated from Smith College in 2002 with a degree in Anthropology and International Relations. Her first job out of school was working with the Director of Refugee Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Since then she has had a few different careers and is currently connecting the dots and coming full circle.

In the last 5 years Lilly served as Director of Talent at Maker Studios, the world’s largest short form digital media company, which was acquired by Disney in 2013. Working with some of the most subscribed YouTubers in the world, she has been at the forefront of video creation for digital, millennial audiences, helping to define how advertisers, commissioners and publishers work with this new generation of creatives.

Lilly was born in New York a year after her parents fled the Iranian revolution. Growing up, her sense of not belonging led to a lifelong series of questions that has now driven her to address the opportunities and conflicts raised by refugee resettlement.

AHMED

LAHORE, PAKISTAN



CHALLENGE: Pakistan is consistently ranked among the least gender equitable nations. Women make up less than 25% of Pakistan’s workforce and Pakistan consistently shows the least progress in the region when it comes to educating low-income girls.

SOLUTION: Develop and expand a progressive school program that empowers young women and furthers their educational, economic and entrepreneurial potential

GATHER Fellow, 2018
Seed, Pakistani Delegation 2004
Facebook: @LincolnSchoolSystem

“Conflict is the only byproduct when half of a country’s population is neglected and denied opportunities. A good education will give women skills through which they will transform Pakistan’s society in unimaginable ways.”

BIO

Ahmed first grasped the dearth of opportunities available to Pakistani women while serving as Prime Minister of the Youth Parliament of Pakistan — at 19, the youngest in the history of the program. After graduating college and working at a US military base in Qatar, he returned to Lahore with a mission to advance women’s education.

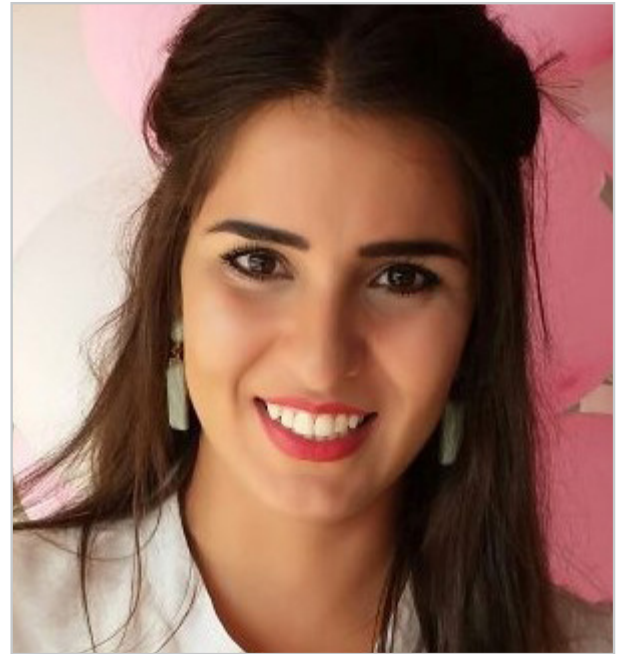
To do so, Ahmed founded the Lincoln School System, a progressive program that provides steep tuition discounts to girls, a comprehensive English literacy curriculum, confidence-building programs and career advisement. Ahmed hopes to increase his enrollment among young women and, eventually, franchise the Lincoln School System as a first step to reshaping education in Pakistan.

Ahmed received his BSc with Honors in Social Sciences from Lahore University of Management Sciences.

AMANDA

BEIT JALA, PALESTINE &
BHUBANESWAR, INDIA

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



CHALLENGE: Around a third of Palestinians are in need of mental health interventions, yet mental health services are among the most under-resourced areas of health provision.

SOLUTION: Expand access to psychological support for communities in the region through an arts therapy program that provides a safe space for creative expression and healing.

GATHER Fellow, 2018

Palestinian Delegation Leader, 2012

“I grew up witnessing the influence of the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict on people, especially youth. I made art to make sense of what was happening around me. Now, I use it to facilitate social change, trauma healing, and conflict transformation.”

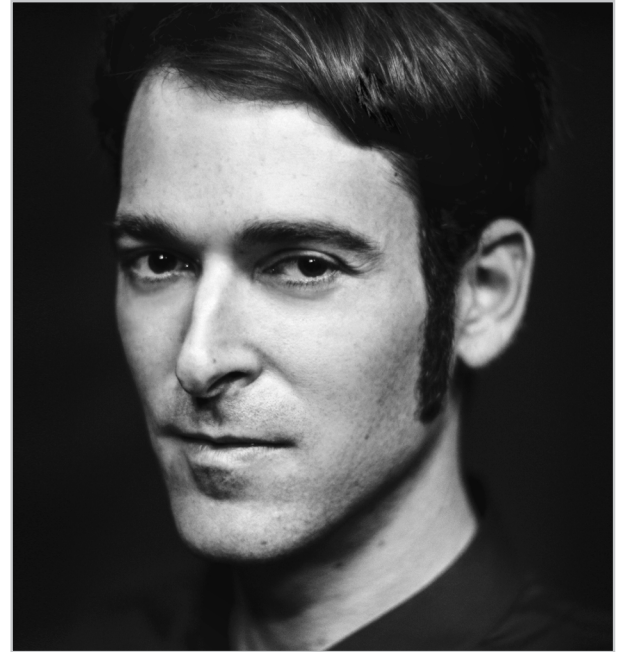
BIO

As a young adult, Amanda attended peace and dialogue programs, and took interest in the psychology of the conflict on all levels, and the traumatic effect it has on people. That set her down a path dedicated to helping others heal their trauma. In 2012, she earned her Masters in Community Psychology, followed by a Diploma in Expressive Arts Therapies two years later.

Amanda’s program, Palestinian Hearts, offers mental health care to people in the region — among the most under-resourced areas of health provision. There, people can share their stories, heal, and foster self-care through arts therapy. In workshops that combine visual art, psychodrama, music, movement and dance, Palestinian Hearts promotes peace, inspires resilience and transforms conflict into personal meaning. Its mission is to heal the collective, trans-generational trauma as a first step to becoming an inclusive Palestinian community.

ARNON

JAFFA, ISRAEL



CHALLENGE: Hostility, misunderstanding and distance between Israelis and Palestinians continues to grow.

SOLUTION: Use music to inspire young people in Israel and Palestine to join together, celebrate their differences in harmony, and develop a common language that transcends politics, religion, and cultural identities

GATHER Fellow, 2018
Participant in Seeds of Peace Artist Retreat

“Reconciliation comes from meeting, from being in the same space together. Racism and violence can be cancelled out by working together. Can you hate someone who sings with you? What kind of friendships can be created from playing music together?”

BIO

Arnon is a Jaffa-based singer-songwriter and producer. Under his artist name Sun Tailor, Arnon has performed around the world over the last seven years, including Israel, Russia, Japan, India, and most recently Germany. His current project is an immersive music workshop geared toward young people living in Israel and Palestine. Arnon believes that the greatest challenge to resolving the conflict is a lack of communication, and that music — the universal language — can be a powerful tool to unite, create a safe environment for respectful dialogue, and ultimately serve as a vehicle for social change. His workshop will teach how music can be an effective language to communicate conflict and express ourselves to others.

Arnon received his HND with Distinction in Music Performance and Production at the London Center of Contemporary Music.

BASANT CAIRO, EGYPT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



GATHER Fellow, 2018

CHALLENGE: The UN estimates a staggering 99% of women in Egypt experience gender-based violence. Over 2,000 girls and women in Egypt's most vulnerable five slums fall victim to sexual and domestic violence every year.

SOLUTION: Mobilize the community to create a cultural shift and empower women through awareness, education, self-defense and support resources for survivors.

“Since the Egyptian revolution, the country has become deeply polarized. The conflicts in society have expanded on so many levels, and the transformation of these conflicts is impossible without gendered lenses that take into account gender-based violence victims.”

BIO

In 2011, Basant founded Aspire, the only organization that operates in Cairo's fragile, marginalized communities to empower young women and provide specialized support resources to violence survivors and victims of abuse. Within three years, the organization grew into a network of over 600 volunteers across Egypt.

Aspire targets marginalized women as well as their children in the five most vulnerable slums in Cairo. It establishes support networks for violence survivors, women's rights activists and volunteers through community-based victim centers, legal clinics, reproductive health and rights classes, self-defense trainings, counselling sessions and self-esteem workshops. To date, Aspire has touched the lives of 500 abuse survivors and protected more than 300 women from falling victims to violence.

Basant is working on a PhD in Public Health at the University of Maryland. She earned her MD from Ain Shams University and a Masters in Public Health from Johns Hopkins.



CHALLENGE: Nativism and anti-immigrant, anti-refugee rhetoric has risen in the United States. Last January, the KKK plastered flyers on Middle Eastern grocery stores in Augusta, Maine.

SOLUTION: Integrate refugees with host communities in Augusta and beyond by dining together and sharing food across cultures.

GATHER Fellow, 2018

Seeds of Peace Counselor, 2013-14

“My community-through-food concept is rooted in the idea that when people from different cultural backgrounds meet, food is a common language. Sharing a meal is not only nourishment, but an act of inclusion.”

BIO

At the age of 8, Heba immigrated with her Palestinian parents from the UAE to the US. Her past work with refugees, along with her family’s experiences as refugees living through generations of conflict, drew her to activism at a young age. Now, Heba leads her own nonprofit in Augusta, Maine, which is experiencing a wave of secondary refugee settlement and is in need of an innovative integration model to support the hundreds of migrants who have sought community and quality of life there.

Heba’s organization, World to Table, works with community members and the city government to research local needs and develop a unified vision for refugee integration in Augusta. It organizes community pop-up dinners where 70 local guests from various backgrounds dine together in public spaces, local cooks from different cultures present their food, and guests mingle with people they do not know.

World to Table also assists local service providers, like the fire department and hospital, in navigating cultural barriers, language barriers, and other challenges that arise when interacting with the local refugee population. Heba seeks to establish a permanent space for World to Table in downtown Augusta.

MARIOS NICOSIA, CYPRUS



CHALLENGE: The vast majority of school-age children in Cyprus continue to lack knowledge about, or personal encounters with, people on the other side of the dividing line.

SOLUTION: Create a children’s book series addressing the conflict in Cyprus that teaches students about respect, diversity, and multiculturalism.

GATHER Fellow, 2018
Seed, Cypriot Delegation 1998

“The culture of othering is the product of a variety of factors forced upon children, including family, school, and society. There is a space, though, where children are the master of themselves: their imagination.”

BIO
Marios is a caring, passionate educator with a global perspective and a profound belief that education is the primary tool in promoting a culture of peace. His teaching style emphasizes the necessity for culturally relevant pedagogy and urges people to think critically, engage in dialogue, and explore the world to its fullest. Marios recently returned to his homeland of Cyprus after eight years of graduate school in the US, culminating in his PhD in Education (Culture, Curriculum & Change) from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill where he focused on Peace Education.

While working as an elementary school teacher in Cyprus, he quickly realized that young students there often have negative perceptions of, or animosity toward, the people from the other side, and in most cases, they are simply uninformed about the other. This is true for both the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot community. To combat this, Marios seeks to develop Children’s Books Tell Stories of Peace, a series that promotes tolerance, nonviolence, and the power of working together. Though similar children’s books exist, this will be the first specific to the conflict in Cyprus. The project has already been awarded the 2017 Stelios Bi-Communal Award, and Marios expects to print, sell and donate 3,000 copies to schools this year.

MOLLY CAMBRIDGE, MA; UNITED STATES



CHALLENGE: Many young people do not thrive in traditional academic settings where they are taught to be passive recipients of information instead of independent investigators.

SOLUTION: Develop a new kind of school that completely breaks the mold and preserves the creativity, spirit, idealism, rebelliousness, and joy of youth.



GATHER Fellow, 2018
US Delegation Leader, Maine, 2012
powderhouse.org

“The vibrancy and zest of young people is sacred. They are particularly good at seeing old things in new ways. Supporting them in their creative work is an incredible privilege.”

BIO

Molly is a staff member and part of the founding team at Powderhouse Studios. Previously, she taught biology in New York City, was an American Delegation Leader at Seeds of Peace, and attended Harvard’s Graduate School of Education. As a teacher, she quickly became aware of how many beautiful impulses, great ideas, and acts of self-determination get squashed by a school system that confuses process for substance. In response, she has developed a public high school in Somerville, Mass called Powderhouse Studios (PHS). Molly’s intention is for PHS to feel nothing like a traditional American school, but instead a creative workplace for youth, supporting young people undertaking deep, difficult, and personally meaningful projects of their own design based around their own tastes and interests. The school will serve a racially and socioeconomically diverse group of young people.



CHALLENGE: While atrocities against the poor and marginalized are often reported by the mainstream press, nuanced profiles capturing one person's triumphs and struggles are less common. This impersonal portrayal of the lower classes dulls empathy and keeps their stories out of public consciousness.

SOLUTION: Create a podcast that gives personal voice to the underserved and suffering in India.

GATHER Fellow, 2018

Seed, Indian Delegation 2001

Facebook: @NergishSunavala

“As a journalist, I see things that put the world in perspective. I choose a topic but not the adventure. I choose a place but not what I'll find. Fortunately, I like the unpredictability. I like talking to strangers.”

BIO

Nergish knew she wanted to be a journalist since she was 15, when she heard Mariane Pearl speak at a Seeds of Peace conference in Manhattan. After graduating from Syracuse in 2010 with a BA in Broadcast Journalism and International Relations, Nergish worked at *Tehelka Magazine* and *Time Out Mumbai* before becoming a principal correspondent at *Times of India*. Her proudest achievements are stories that lead to decisive action in underserved communities. Recent examples include a piece on child labor in illegal mica mines that led to a government crackdown, a piece on exploited Parsi pallbearers that led to their employers acquiescing to wage demands, and a piece on the isolation of border villages, which led to PM Narendra Modi championing the building of a road during a speech in Meghalaya.

Nergish has noticed that there are fewer features and profiles of people living on the margins of society compared to wealthier and more literate subjects. In response, she plans to create an Indian counterpart to *This American Life* or *The Moth*, focusing on the personal stories of marginalized individuals that highlight a larger social issue. By telling stories embedded in the culture to which they belong, with a rich world of local details that authentically capture her subjects' voices and communities, Nergish hopes to draw parts of the country that require urgent attention into public consciousness.

ANIS LONDON, ENGLAND



CHALLENGE: Around 62,000 refugees, predominantly women and children, are stranded in overwhelmed Greek refugee camps.

SOLUTION: Provide free music education in Greek refugee camps to empower children, and create choirs and orchestras mixing refugee, migrant and Greek youth to build a sense of community within the camps, Greek society, and Europe at large.



GATHER Fellow, 2018

“The message is simple: no matter your religion, your nationality, or your color of skin, on stage we are all artists. These children are the future, and they are brilliant! What drives me during the day is their smiles. Each smile is a victory.”

BIO

A French national of Tunisian and Danish origins living between London and Greece, Anis is no stranger to navigating a conflux of many cultures and identities. His background is equally eclectic: after graduating from French universities — receiving a Diploma in Clarinet, Chamber Music & Music Theory as well as a Masters in Law and a Masters in Political Science in Bilingual English — he served as Deputy Cultural Attache at the French Embassy in the US, General Manager of the Maitrise de Radio France in Paris, and as Professor of Music and Politics at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris.

Currently, he is Associate Project Manager at Askonas Holt, representing around 20 orchestras and choirs for international touring. This inspired him to co-found an innovative model of social integration through music. El Sistema Greece provides free music education for children in refugee camps and other vulnerable youth in the region. By learning music, these children are inspired to strive for a better future, while the music itself provides a platform for dialogue and togetherness across diverse communities. The activities in El Sistema Greece are led by Greek and foreign teachers, professional musicians and internationally-known artists, as well as refugee hires from the communities themselves.

POOJA MUMBAI, INDIA

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



CHALLENGE: An unprecedented 28 million children have been left without quality education or emotional support as a result of the ongoing migrant crisis, yet for many this fact is just that — a statistic, removed from real human suffering.

SOLUTION: Humanize the “Other” through sensitization workshops, psycho-social support, and by fostering pen pals across borders and cultures.

GATHER Fellow, 2018
Seeds of Peace Counselor, 2017

“**The core idea of my work is to shake the inertia of apathy people have about grave humanitarian issues. To inspire others to help make a difference in this daunting crisis, we must first inspire empathy.**”

BIO

As a physics and mathematics educator, Pooja has always rooted for children and believes them to be the key to sustainable positive change in the world. To her, sensitizing students to topics of conflict and equipping them with life skills are as important as academics. Outraged by the way global media have abstracted and desensitized the ongoing refugee crisis, Pooja founded Letters of Love in 2015. Through this initiative, a team of activists across 11 countries works to forge that critical human connection.

Letters of Love, which is an official member of the UNHCR #WithRefugees Coalition and a member of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), operates on many levels. Its Pen Pal Project fosters impossible friendships between students in fortunate settings to refugee children and those entrapped by war in an effort to humanize one another and encourage the flow of perspectives. The organization delivers handwritten notes to tens of thousands of Syrian, Iraqi, Palestinian, Rohingya, and Yazidi refugee children, as well as children in Gaza and Syria. Letters of Love also runs sensitization workshops at schools and universities around the world to cultivate empathy, develop students’ self-worth, and bring about social change. Its Student Ambassador Program trains exceptional teenagers demonstrating leadership potential to become changemakers in their communities. And finally, the organization provides children living in community centers, refugee camps, and war zones with necessary provisions and psycho-social support.

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GATHER Fellow, 2018

CHALLENGE: Marginalized communities in Israel are often without power for a good portion of the day.

SOLUTION: Develop an affordable, off-grid, self-installable solar kit for Bedouin communities within Israel, which are suffering from electricity shortages.

“I’m driven by the will to turn my surroundings into better ones. My methods can vary, but as long as I feel my work has an affect on reality, it’s hard for me to stop.”

BIO

Yo'av began his entrepreneurial career by founding Bit-else, a web development and tech consultant service for NGOs. Soon after, he was invited to join Our Generation Speaks, the prestigious incubator program for emerging Israeli and Palestinian leaders to create innovative, high-impact ventures. These leaders cooperate across ethnic and political lines to build shared prosperity within the region. Together with three Israeli and two Palestinian friends from the program, Yo'av co-developed SolarBox, an affordable power kit to bring independency to Middle Eastern families through solar energy.

Yo'av began working in youth movements at the age of 15. Initially starting with groups of a dozen kids, his coalition grew steadily to the point where he started a youth center in a Palestinian neighborhood in the city of Acre. The youth center currently serves around 500 kids and teens, sometimes even whole families. He was recently one of the builders and the CTO of V15, the biggest political campaign in Israel's last elections.

KEITH SAVANNAH, GA; UNITED STATES



CHALLENGE: According to research, men are buckling under pressures of toxic masculinity with dangerous consequences—increased violence against themselves (men are four times more likely to successfully commit suicide) and others, especially women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

SOLUTION: Facilitate healing through online and in-person safe spaces where men and their communities use the power of everyday intimate conversations to redefine masculinity, fostering fearlessness, empathy, and vulnerability at the individual, community, and national level.

GATHER Fellow, 2018
thepillowtalkproject.com
Facebook: @ thepillowtalkproject
Instagram: @ morepillowtalk

“The Pillow Talk Project inspires us all to embrace a new understanding and embodiment of masculinity — not just one of brawn but of fearless empathy, intimacy, and inclusivity, so that we can all heal together.”

BIO

Battling trauma from physical and emotional abuse at the hands of his peers while growing up, Keith eventually sought refuge in the creative arts to understand, critique, and reimagine the world he lived in.

Now a proud Gates Millennium Scholar and Northwestern University alumnus, Keith was recently hailed one of Georgia’s “40 Under 40,” “Southerner of the Year,” and “The Empowering Educator” after successfully using everyday intimate conversations and vulnerability as the cornerstone of his practice as a teaching artist, village-maker, and researcher.

In addition to his work as the founder of The Pillow Talk Project, Keith serves as program director for Block by Block, a nationally-recognized creative writing and youth leadership program for high school artists, at the Deep Center in Savannah, Georgia; is a National Afterschool Matters Fellow; National Writing Project Teaching Consultant; and Master’s candidate in Educational Psychology.



HASAN

AR'ARA, ISRAEL



GATHER Fellow, 2018

CHALLENGE: Over 53% of Palestinian citizens of Israel live below the poverty line, the largest population group in the country with the highest poverty rate OECD nations.

SOLUTION: Foster longer-term, systemic economic development through affordable and accessible entrepreneurial and makers education.

“If you can do just one thing in life, educate a child. Empower her or him with curiosity, confidence and opportunity, and they will change the world!”

BIO

A Forbes 30 Under 30 honoree and an impact-driven entrepreneur, Hasan is an experience-designer and technologist who lives to transform meaningful ideas into sustainable projects of social impact.

In 2013, Hasan dropped out of university to work as a software developer in Tel-Aviv. Inspired by the flourishing hi-tech ecosystem there and motivated by the lack of development of such fields in his society, he turned his parents' basement into the first community-based hackerspace for Arabs in Israel. One year later, Hasan founded Hasoub, a grassroots NGO that fosters tech-entrepreneurship and economic development among Arab society. Two years later, he founded Ibtekar, which provides affordable maker and entrepreneurial education to school pupils from underprivileged backgrounds. His hope is to help empower them to pursue their passions and become knowledgeable, active citizens who create and innovate to positively impact the world.

Hasan is motivated by the lack of equity in Israeli society and its reticence to embrace diversity. He credits his supportive family who has encouraged his social activism spirit since 4th grade, when he and his brother organized a campaign to help families in need in his village.



GATHER Fellow, 2018

CHALLENGE: The 2014 war in Gaza destroyed more than 160,000 homes and import restrictions limited access to building materials. It also has the highest unemployment rate in the world.

SOLUTION: Develop cost-effective, locally-sourced, and sturdy building blocks created from ash and the rubble from demolished structures.

“**I did not lose hope because I have dream. I believe in it and I believe that we have the right to have a good life. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. We can plant hope again and give people the right to have a dream.**”

BIO

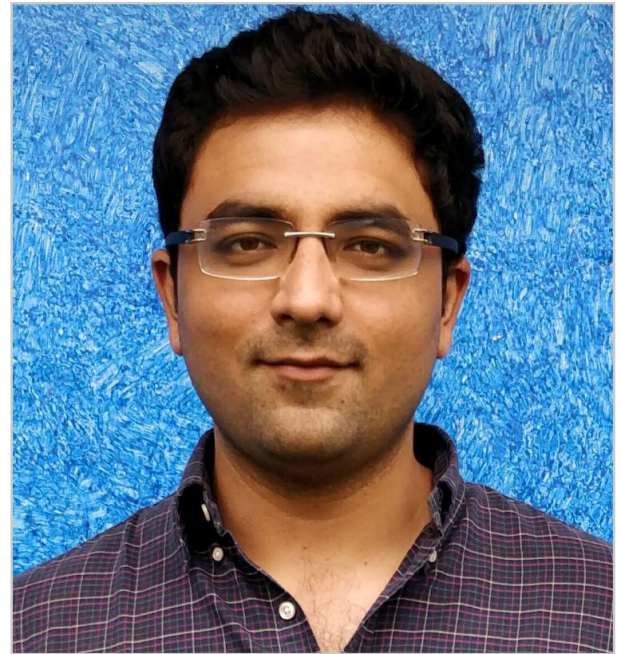
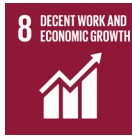
As a resident of Gaza, Majd often sees how political conditions take tolls across the Strip. Damage to city infrastructure created a higher demand for new developments, while sources of construction materials quickly depleted due to years-long blockades of the Gaza Strip. Majd’s background in material sciences led her to find a solution that addressed the need for an alternative, sustainable construction resource. She founded GreenCake Construction in 2015, a company that creates environmentally friendly bricks from ash and rubble to use in the reconstruction of buildings in Gaza.

Majd has presented GreenCake at MIT’s Enterprise Forum Arab Startup Competition, called Mobaderoon, and was awarded first place for her work in the Japan Gaza Innovation Challenge in 2016. Majd was also nominated to receive the Palestinian Women’s Award for Innovation and Excellence in recognition of GreenCake and was recently awarded the Emirates Energy Award. She received her B.Sc in Civil Engineering from the Islamic University of Gaza.

After 10 years of blockade, Majd’s peers were losing hope of ever seeing change or fulfilling their dreams. GreenCake became a symbol for dreams coming true.

RISHI MUMBAI, INDIA

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



CHALLENGE: Unemployment and underemployment are national crises in India, with around 95% of Indian youth considered unemployable.

SOLUTION: Use analytics to identify high potential candidates from lower-income backgrounds and provide them with affordable two-to-four-month job and finance coaching.

GATHER Fellow, 2018
Seed, Indian Delegation 2006
xbillionskillslab.com

“Disproportionate capital has been invested to create demand for products nobody needs. Thus, we have created a world where the most important enterprises, the ones with the most access and resources, have nothing to do with creating a better life for its residents. Neither policy nor charity alone can change this — only human endeavor. I want to be part of this change.”

BIO

Rishi has spent the better part of his adult life wondering, “What went wrong with the world order?” He believes the answer lies in a free market where no morality is attached to the production of goods, and in the unequal distribution of wealth that has resulted from it. This is particularly true in his home country of India, where unemployment has risen to crisis levels.

To Rishi, the role of the entrepreneur today is to create effective, innovative organizations that can alter the flow of capital by creating attractive investment avenues that create a better world. In line with this understanding, he co-founded X Billion Skills Lab, which uses algorithms to find high potential job seekers from underprivileged circumstances. Once this talent is identified, X Billion Skills Lab equips the candidates with the skills they need to succeed as economic changemakers. Rishi’s hope is that his organization enables an ecosystem of social entrepreneurs and enterprises to come together and solve problems ranging from climate change to skill development to healthcare.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND SYMBOLS

Seeds of Peace GATHER Fellow

Social entrepreneur or influencer selected for the year-long leadership development program

Seed, [Nationality] Delegation

Indicates that the Fellow attended the Seeds of Peace Camp

Seeds of Peace Counselor

Indicates that the Fellow was a Counselor at the Seeds of Peace Camp

Delegation Leader

Indicates that the Fellow accompanied a group of Seeds to Camp, serving as representatives of the campers' parents and home communities. Delegation Leaders participate in educational workshops while at Camp.

Sustainable Development Goals

A set of agreed-upon goals adopted by world leaders at a UN Summit in 2015. They serve as a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

