ASHOKA

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE ASHOKA SETU FUND TO SUPPORT ASHOKA FELLOWS IN INDIA

Forty-five years of finding, selecting and supporting social entrepreneurs, and a bridge for donors who want to back the next generation in India.

ASHOKA
SETU
FUND

Join us!

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WHAT ASHOKA FELLOWS HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED

A first look at the leaders your gift would back, from around the world and from India

In 2015 Mozambique was declared free of landmines, thanks to the work of APOPO, which uses specially trained rats to find mines and was founded by Ashoka Fellow Bart Weetjens. Wikipedia exists because Ashoka Fellow Jimmy Wales decided that knowledge could be written and edited by thousands of people instead of a few experts. In India, a free helpline for children in danger now operates across the whole country because Ashoka Fellow Jeroo Billimoria started it and the government then made it a national service.

In each of these cases one leader with a new idea was backed early, and the idea grew until it changed how a whole system works. The stories below show what that looks like, first around the world and then in India, where your support through the Ashoka Setu Fund would go.

AROUND THE WORLD

FELLOWS WHOSE IDEAS CHANGED WHOLE SYSTEMS

Bart Weetjens Belgium, Fellow since 2006	Rats ignore scrap metal, which makes them much faster than metal detectors at finding landmines, and APOPO has removed more than 150,000 landmines in seven countries, among them Cambodia and South Sudan, besides clearing Mozambique.
Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka Uganda, Fellow since 2006	When she began, only 650 mountain gorillas were left in Uganda's national parks, and today there are 1,063. She worked with communities that had hunted gorillas for food so that they became the animals' guardians, and by improving the health of the people she improved the health of the gorillas as well.
Jos de Blok The Netherlands, Fellow since 2015	He reinvented community health and elderly care through Buurtzorg, which today employs 15,000 nurses, has repeatedly been named Best Employer of the Year and reports the highest client satisfaction of any healthcare organization, while saving the Dutch social security system hundreds of millions of euros every year.
Sue Riddlestone United Kingdom, Fellow since 2019	Starting from one eco-village in London, she turned its principles into the "One Planet Living" framework, which has since been applied in $30 billion of real estate development and by local governments and companies worldwide.
Claire Nouvian France, Fellow since 2013	Through BLOOM, a focused and data-driven campaign against deep-sea bottom trawling changed the fishing practices of the supermarket chain Intermarché and led the European Commission to protect 16,000 km^2 of fragile ocean.

IN INDIA, WHERE ASHOKA HAS MORE THAN 550 FELLOWS

Ashoka coined the term social entrepreneurship in 1980 and elected its first Fellow, Gloria D'Souza, in India in 1981, and the country has been one of the strongest sources of Fellows ever since, which makes the following stories a natural place to start.

Kailash Satyarthi Fellow since 1995	His 1998 global march against child labor led the International Labour Organization to adopt its fastest-ratified convention, the movement he built has helped rescue more than 138,000 children from trafficking and exploitation, and in 2014 he received the Nobel Peace Prize.
Jeroo Billimoria Fellow since 1998	Childline, her free helpline for street children, grew from one district to 598, was mandated by the Indian government across the country and has been replicated in 133 countries.
Anshu Gupta Fellow since 2004	Through Goonj he turned discarded urban material, particularly clothing, into a development resource, and its "Cloth for Work" model lets rural communities carry out projects such as water systems, roads and schools. Goonj has supported approximately 10,000 projects, and he received the 2015 Ramon Magsaysay Award.
Chetna Gala Sinha Fellow since 1996	Through Mann Deshi she founded India's first bank for and by rural women, with financial products designed around the needs of women micro-entrepreneurs. She then went beyond banking by building business schools, a community radio and a chamber of commerce for rural women. Mann Deshi reached one million women in 2024.
Purnota Bahl Fellow since 2023	Her Cuddles Foundation provides specialized nutrition support to more than 19,000 children with cancer each year across over 40 hospitals.

IN INDIA, WHERE ASHOKA HAS MORE THAN 550 FELLOWS

CONTINUED

Harish Hande Fellow since 2006	Through SELCO he made solar energy an economic opportunity for poor communities, and SELCO is now one of the world's largest providers of solar technology to those communities.
Shanti Raghavan Fellow since 2005	Through Enable India she has changed the narrative around disability, so that persons with disabilities are seen as changemakers and nation builders. More than 350,000 people across 19 disabilities and 28 states of India have benefited, and the work is being replicated internationally. Her concept of the purple economy shows the potential of millions of jobs in the disability sector for disabled and non-disabled citizens alike.
Shaheen Mistri Fellow since 2001	She founded Teach For India in 2008 to build a movement of leaders committed to ending educational inequity, and today more than 1,000 Fellows teach 34,000 children across eight cities. Its alumni community of more than 4,600 members impacts 1 million children directly and reaches 50 million indirectly, which makes it the largest network of education changemakers in the country.
Khushboo Awasthi Fellow since 2023	Through Mantra4Change she has transformed 275,000+ government schools across India. Instead of building parallel solutions, she brings the state, policymakers, experts, teachers and NGOs together in one project management unit. She is now guiding Shikshagraha, a people's movement that seeks to improve 1 million public schools in India.
Azeez Gupta Fellow since 2025	Through Rocket Learning, his technology-enabled platform supports more than 400,000 Anganwadi workers and reaches approximately 5 million children and caregivers across India.
Tarun Cherukuri Fellow since 2023	Tarun is transforming how vulnerable families in India access public entitlements. Through Indus Action, hundreds of thousands have accessed education, maternity and worker benefits. His model works with government to make existing public systems more accessible and effective. Tarun received the prestigious Skoll Award for Social Innovation in 2025.

ASHOKA AT A GLANCE

FORTY-FIVE YEARS OF FINDING, SELECTING AND SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Ashoka has built the largest network of social entrepreneurs in the world. Its approach resembles that of a venture investor in the social sector, because it searches for the best founders, funds them at an early stage and connects them with each other, with the difference that the return is measured in impact instead of money.

4,000+	Ashoka Fellows in 99 countries	**90%**	of Fellows still pursue their idea ten years after election, against 5.2% of leaders for the common good (World Economic Forum)
650 million	people reached every year by the work of Fellows	**47%**	say the Ashoka stipend was their first significant source of funding
$1 billion	catalyzed for changemaking over 45 years	**$6 to $27**	in social value created for every $1 invested (SROI sample of Fellows)
550+	Fellows in India, one of Ashoka's largest hubs	**2.5x**	higher revenues than peers ten years after election*

*Revenue comparison based on US Fellows. Sources: Ashoka Global Impact Studies (2021, 2022 and 2025) and "The Changemaker Century", September 2026, and "Ashoka's Journey in Changemaking", January 2026.

WHY FUNDERS TRUST ASHOKA'S SELECTION

Ashoka identifies roughly one Fellow for every ten million people, drawing on more than 20,000 nominators and 35 offices around the world. Every candidate is assessed against the same five criteria Ashoka has applied since 1980 and passes through several independent checkpoints, from local research to a final decision by Ashoka's global Board, which adds up to more than 400,000 hours of due diligence across 4,000 Fellows. For funders, this results in a trusted pipeline of social entrepreneurs whose ideas and leadership have already been tested at a global level, and the scale of the investment that followed shows how far that trust extends: the Gates Foundation has invested $560 million in leaders and ideas identified by Ashoka, MacKenzie Scott has invested $848 million in organizations led by Ashoka Fellows, and 115 families and foundations have each given more than $1 million to Ashoka.

Our partners, therefore, don't have to begin the search from scratch; Ashoka brings 45 years of experience in identifying people with the potential to change systems, not simply to run successful projects. The searching, the vetting and the long-term relationship-building that follow would be extremely difficult for any individual funder to replicate, and donors gain access to that work through the Ashoka Setu Fund.

RECOGNIZED AROUND THE WORLD

Ashoka's track record has earned global recognition: five Ashoka Fellows have received the Nobel Peace Prize over the last 20 years, and in 2026 Ashoka was ranked #6 among the world's Top 200 Social Good Organizations by thedotgood, based on impact, innovation and governance.

> "Ashoka is a living encyclopedia of social innovation in every field around the world."
>
> **Jimmy Wales**
> Founder of Wikipedia and Ashoka Fellow

WHAT THE ASHOKA SETU FUND IS

The Ashoka Setu Fund is a philanthropic collective giving fund that pools the contributions of people from the Indian diaspora, philanthropists and business leaders in India to help Ashoka find, select and support the leading social entrepreneurs who are solving some of the most important and difficult social challenges in India. Rather than each donor searching for and vetting organizations on their own, the fund brings these resources together and puts them to work through Ashoka's proven model, so that every contribution, large or small, becomes part of a shared portfolio of social entrepreneurs backed by Ashoka's selection, support and global network.

Setu means "bridge", and the fund works as one, connecting people who have built successful careers and businesses with Indian social innovators whose new ideas are changing how whole systems work in education, health, climate, livelihoods and inclusion. Your contribution funds the full journey of a new Ashoka Fellow, from Ashoka's rigorous selection process and a three-year stipend that lets the Fellow work full-time on their idea, to lifelong support through strategic guidance, programs such as our scaling accelerator, introductions to funders and partners, and a place in a global network of peers.

Because this support often arrives as the first significant funding a Fellow receives, it acts as catalytic capital that helps these leaders change policies, create new markets and spread their ideas well beyond where they started.

OPEN TO NEW CONTRIBUTIONS AT ANY TIME

The fund is open to new contributions at any time, and as it grows, so does the number of new Fellows we can select and the number of accelerator cohorts we can offer to Fellows who are ready to scale. There is no minimum gift, so you decide what fits you best, and every amount counts.

WHY GIVE THROUGH ASHOKA RATHER THAN DIRECTLY

Many of our donors already support excellent Indian organizations directly, and we encourage them to continue. Giving through the Setu Fund adds four things that are hard to obtain on your own:

SELECTION YOU COULD NOT RUN YOURSELF

Every Fellow goes through a due diligence process that takes roughly 100 hours and involves 10 to 15 people, so you back leaders who have been tested far more thoroughly than most grantees.

A PORTFOLIO RATHER THAN A SINGLE BET

Your gift is spread across a group of Fellows working on different challenges, from early childhood to climate resilience, which lowers your risk and widens your impact.

SUPPORT THAT CONTINUES AFTER THE GRANT

Fellows receive lifelong support and can join the scaling accelerator, which helps them design strategies that spread their ideas through others, well beyond what one organization can achieve alone.

A GLOBAL NETWORK

Fellows join more than 4,000 peers in 99 countries, together with business leaders, funders and pro bono partners, which opens doors that a single donor rarely can.

HOW FAR THIS SUPPORT CAN GO

Ashoka's support does not end when a Fellow is selected. From the initial stipend to later-stage scaling support through our accelerators, we accompany Fellows as they move from proving an idea to enabling others, influencing systems and taking their impact far beyond what one organization could achieve alone.

Dr. Suresh Kumar shows how an idea that begins locally can ultimately travel around the world. With Ashoka's three-year stipend and later support through our scaling accelerator, his community-based palliative care model grew from serving 2,500 families a year in Kerala to reaching 53 countries through a global volunteer network.

Arundhuti Gupta shows how this support can help turn a successful program into public infrastructure. Through the scaling accelerator, Mentor Together shifted from delivering mentoring itself toward building the partnerships, policy pathways and digital infrastructure for others to do so. In 2025, this culminated in an MoU with India's Ministry of Labour & Employment to bring mentorship and career guidance into the government's National Career Service platform, moving her vision from scaling one organization toward embedding mentoring within a national employment system.

Dr. Sunderrajan Krishnan shows how Ashoka's support can help a Fellow move from delivering solutions to enabling others to lead. After receiving the stipend and participating in ASPIRe, INREM evolved from village-level water interventions toward a network model in which schools, communities and local leaders become agents of change. In Assam alone, he has activated 100,000 young people as Water Champions, and the model is now expanding to other states across India, multiplying INREM's impact far beyond what it could deliver alone.

> "Ashoka gave me more than recognition. It connected me to a community of changemakers, sharpened my strategy, and helped transform an idea into a movement capable of changing systems."
>
> **Hasina Kharbhih**
>
> Founder, Impulse NGO Network | Ashoka Fellow, India (2006)

WHAT YOU RECEIVE AS A DONOR

Our supporters receive more than a report on their donation, because they join a network that sees emerging patterns before they become mainstream. As a member of the fund, you can:

FOLLOW THE RESULTS

Receive an annual report on the Fellows supported, their progress and the use of funds.

SEE SELECTION FIRST-HAND

Join a selection panel as an observer and see first-hand how Ashoka finds and selects new Fellows.

MEET THE FELLOWS

Join Fellow gatherings and site visits in India, meet Fellows and join conversations on trends in fields such as AI, climate resilience, aging and democracy.

JOIN THE ASHOKA SUPPORT NETWORK

Bring your own expertise and networks to Fellows, if interested, as a member of the Ashoka Support Network, which today has more than 340 members worldwide.

GLOBAL GIVING, LOCAL IMPACT

Whether you live in Mumbai, Palo Alto, London, or anywhere else in the world, giving is straightforward through Ashoka's established charitable entities:

UNITED STATES

Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

INDIA

Ashoka India, with applicable 80G tax treatment.

UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND

Ashoka UK & Ireland, with Gift Aid where eligible.

Ashoka also manages the legal and compliance requirements for cross-border philanthropy, including FCRA-compliant transfers into India, so your contribution reaches exceptional social entrepreneurs through fully compliant and transparent channels.

JOIN A COMMUNITY OF ENTREPRENEURS AND PHILANTHROPISTS ALREADY INVESTING IN INDIA'S LEADING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

When you contribute through the Ashoka Setu Fund, you join a growing community of entrepreneurs, investors, business leaders and philanthropists from venture capital, technology, finance, private equity and global banking, who share a belief that transformative social change happens when innovative social entrepreneurs receive the resources, networks and long-term support they need to scale.

Nikunj Jhaveri
Mumbai
Founder of Systems Plus and a longtime champion of helping grassroots organizations scale

Amit Bhargava
Utah/London
Former Fortune 500 executive and global strategy advisor

Navneet Kaur
New York
Managing Director at Barclays Investment Bank

Vineet Jawa
Bangalore
Serial entrepreneur and founder of multiple high-growth ventures

Shripati Acharya
Bangalore
Managing Partner at Prime Venture Partners

Paul Alapat
Bangalore
Former executive at Acuity Knowledge Partners and active investor and mentor

Sri Vasireddy
Virginia
Co-Founder and CEO at REAN Foundation

The fund is also inspired by the legacy of the late **Ramesh Kacholia**, one of India's most respected philanthropists, who mobilized more than ₹200 crore for social-impact organizations and supported dozens of nonprofits in achieving national scale.

[Placeholder] *quote from a donor on why they give through Ashoka*

ANNEX: THE EVIDENCE BEHIND ASHOKA'S MODEL

Most figures below describe Ashoka Fellows worldwide and come from Ashoka's Global Impact Studies. Read in the way an investor reads a portfolio, they cover the quality of the deal flow, the rigor of the due diligence, the survival rate, the growth curve and the return.

A RIGOROUS SELECTION PROCESS

Ashoka selects some of the most promising social entrepreneurs in the world, and it does so with a very rigorous selection process. Every candidate is assessed against the same five criteria Ashoka has applied since 1980 (a new idea, creativity, entrepreneurial quality, the social impact of the idea and ethical fiber) and passes through a series of independent checkpoints, starting with research and site visits by the local team, followed by an interview with a senior Ashoka leader from outside the region, a panel of three leading social and business entrepreneurs from the same region, and a final decision by Ashoka's global Board. The due diligence process takes roughly 100 hours for every Fellow elected, and 10 to 15 people are involved. Moreover, 92% of Fellows report that the selection process itself strengthened and refined their idea, making Ashoka's due diligence not only a method of identifying exceptional changemakers, but also of helping them become even more effective.

> "Ashoka finds the evidence-based ideas before they are evidence-based. In that way they play a critical role in the ecosystem, including for philanthropy."
>
> **Brittany Erikson**
> The Ray & Tye Noorda Foundation

Joining the fund gives you the earliest seat at the table, at the moment when a relatively small amount makes the biggest difference.

INVEST IN SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Most social ventures do not last, and the survival rate shown earlier means that the risk of your support ending up in an organization that disappears is unusually low. Their ideas also travel, as 82% of Fellows have seen their innovations independently replicated by other organizations.

Ashoka Fellows go further than delivering a service, because they change the systems that create the problem in the first place. Ashoka's latest Global Impact Study shows the systemic reach of its Fellows:

63%	report achieving legislative change
88%	have advised policymakers
77%	have convinced governments to allocate public funds to their solutions

Fellows also point to the credibility that the Ashoka label brings, the doors it opens to funders and partners, and the support they receive to grow in a more structured and sustainable way. In fact, 54% of Fellows were introduced to funders thanks to Ashoka, 85% say that Ashoka has helped increase their impact, and 54% have received national awards since being elected.

> "We need spaces that allow social entrepreneurs the freedom to collaborate, experiment and fail while designing innovations that will eventually shift systems."
>
> **Harish Hande**
> Founder, SELCO India | Ashoka Fellow, India (2006)

MAKE A CATALYTIC INVESTMENT

The relatively small amount invested at an early stage, and the support Ashoka provides to help them design for scale, will enable these Fellows to increase their impact and raise significant scale grants. The three-year stipend reaches Fellows at the moment when other funders are not yet ready to take the risk, and 80% of Fellows say that Ashoka's support allowed them to focus on their idea full-time.

COUNT ON A STRONG SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Ashoka calculated the Social Return on Investment (SROI) for a sample of Fellows and found that every $1 invested creates between $6 and $27 in social value, much of it in savings for governments and public systems.

Each contribution is also multiplied by the partners around the Fellows: in 2024, the pro bono legal services provided to Fellows alone were worth $1.2 million, together with 18,000 hours of professional volunteer support through a partnership with LinkedIn.

Many players around the world are leveraging their knowledge, expertise, and networks to support these Fellows' missions, multiplying their potential to succeed with your support. On average, each Fellow partners with four other Fellows to scale their work, and business leaders who join the Ashoka Support Network strengthen this effect further, because Fellows who work with them are far more likely to gain connections to funders (71% compared with 46%) and new partnerships (85% compared with 63%).

71% vs 46%

connections to funders, Fellows with and without Ashoka Support Network members

85% vs 63%

new partnerships, Fellows with and without Ashoka Support Network members

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

We would be glad to tell you more about the fund, introduce you to Ashoka Fellows in India and answer any questions about how your support would work. Please reach out to:

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