

# THE UNLONELY PLANET 2022

HOW ASHOKA FELLOWS ACCELERATE  
AN EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER™ WORLD

Results of the 2021 Global Fellows Study



## “Changemaker journeys are often very lonely.”

One of the biggest sources of support from Ashoka is being the ‘unlonely planet’ where I can connect with people who have equally lonely journeys. Ashoka has reconfirmed my self-belief in moments of absolute self-doubt. Ashoka has also connected me with an interesting network where I can constantly learn from other changemakers on similar journeys, and people from other walks of life. Ashoka has helped me amplify my voice.”



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**PARAMITA BANERJEE**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

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# Foreword

## Ashoka's Evolution to Everyone a Changemaker™

For its first 20 years, Ashoka's theory of change held that there was no more powerful force for societal transformation than a system-changing idea in the hands of a social entrepreneur. We set out to prove that these extraordinary individuals existed across the globe and when we did, we built the field of social entrepreneurship along with others invested in big change. We selected the world's most promising social entrepreneurs and gave them resources to accelerate the rate at which their solutions addressed seemingly intractable problems.

By the late 1990s, we had built a critical mass of top social entrepreneurs—what we like to think of as the world's best focus group—and we engaged these leaders to predict what was to come in the next 20 years. We developed an impact measurement framework for social entrepreneurship that focused not on direct service outputs but on progress in changing systems and mindsets to address the root causes of social problems.<sup>1</sup> Year after year, the work of our Fellows has offered a deeper understanding about the world around us and where it was headed. Over time, our growing understanding has brought many insights, the most profound of which is the realization that human society has reached an historic inflection point. We are no longer living in a reality that is defined by repetition in search of greater efficiency, but rather, by our ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, both natural and human made. To thrive, let alone survive, we must learn to lead change. This is exactly what Ashoka Fellows enable others to do.

Across a wide range of geographies and sectors, we have seen Fellows engage those around them, inviting them to contribute to their ideas and to build something new together. We have come to recognize that this inclusive approach has a profound effect on individuals' worldviews. They begin to see the world through the lens of possibilities rather than problems. They recognize their own capacity to bring about better realities and learn to lead change. These changes in mindset hasten the pace at which Fellows can shift whole systems and more importantly, are the lifeblood of societal transformation for the good of all.

With these insights, we have shifted our focus beyond exclusively supporting leading social entrepreneurs in order to build a world in which everyone has the tools to thrive—where everyone is a changemaker. We have expanded our network and our efforts to include greater diversity in people, organizations, and partners. Only together can we create a world in which *everyone* is a giver, *everyone* is powerful, and *everyone* is a changemaker. This is Ashoka's purpose, and it comes directly from what we have learned from Fellows' impact.

## Building an Everyone A Changemaker™ World

Ashoka is committed to data-driven organizational evolution and sharing its research to advance the field. For the past 40 years, we have had the unique privilege to learn from our Fellows. In 2021, we built on our learnings from our 2018 study by conducting a second deep dive into Fellows' strategies and Ashoka's impact—this time, with special attention to our Everyone a Changemaker™ vision.<sup>2</sup> We received 817 survey responses and conducted 32 in-depth interviews, representing 80 of the 95 countries where Fellows have been elected.

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1 To learn more about our impact measurement framework see [Social Innovations Journal Issue 52](#).

2 Please follow [this link](#) to read results from our 2018 study.



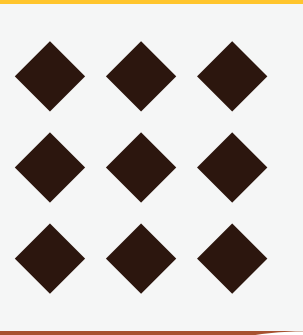
ASHOKA ARCHIVE

This report is not simply a presentation of Ashoka Fellows' impact, but a preview of the architecture they are building to ensure that all members of society can thrive.

We are delighted to share our findings with you and invite you to join us in this journey. Together, we can create a more equitable, just, and therefore, healthy world; a world where everyone is powerful. We hope this report presents a roadmap for how you, I, we can do exactly this.



**Diana Wells**  
President Emerita  
Leadership Team Member



## INTRO

PHOTO COURTESY OF SORONKO ACADEMY.



# ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

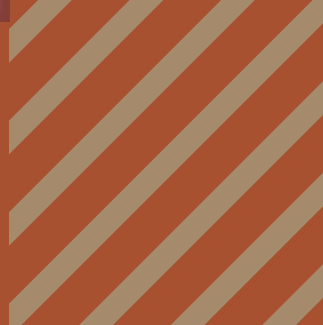
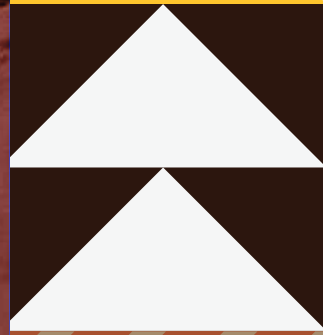


PHOTO COURTESY OF HEALTHY COMMUNITY STORE INITIATIVE.

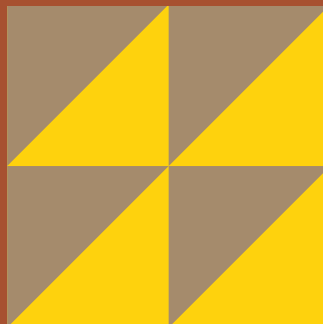




PHOTO COURTESY OF SORONKO ACADEMY.

## Acknowledgements

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A special thank you to our Fellows, without whom none of our work would be possible. We are grateful for your participation in this study.

We would also like to thank the Social Innovations Journal for dedicating space for further analysis of this data which can be found in Volume 11 - January 2022.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Please follow [this link](#) to read further insights from our data in Social Innovations Journal Volume 11.

## REPORT OVERVIEW

This report presents our findings and is organized in two parts (previewed below). **Part I** outlines the strategies Fellows use to build an Everyone a Changemaker™ world. **Part II** outlines the strategies Ashoka uses to support Fellows' lifelong commitment to changemaking and efforts to realize the Everyone a Changemaker™ vision.

PART 1

### TO BUILD AN EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER™ WORLD, FELLOWS...



#### Inspire individuals to become changemakers by...

- Creating opportunities for them to contribute
- Encouraging belief in their own capacity
- Redefining their “weaknesses” as strengths
- Supporting their changemaker identity development



#### Collaborate to engage more changemakers by...

- Building multiplier partnerships
- Creating space for community voice
- Engaging individuals everywhere



#### Change systems to support all changemakers by...

- Creating policy change and market systems change
- Influencing societal mindsets or cultural norms
- Fostering supportive environments that enable changemaking
- Building ecosystems that sustain changemaking

PART 2

### ASHOKA STRENGTHENS FELLOWS' IMPACT BY...



- Providing them the opportunity to pursue their idea full-time
- Inviting them into a lifelong community
- Offering them thought leadership





PHOTO COURTESY OF SORONKO ACADEMY.

## METHODOLOGY

For this study, we used a mixed-methods approach, leveraging quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose of this study was threefold:

- To learn about the strategies Ashoka Fellows use to build an Everyone a Changemaker™ world,
- To understand the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on Fellows' work, and
- To determine the impact of Ashoka's support on Fellows' lifelong commitment to changemaking and efforts to realize the Everyone a Changemaker™ vision.

### Survey

In partnership with researchers at the Management School of the Polytechnic University of Milan, we designed a survey to distribute to our full Fellow network.

A total of 817 Fellows completed the survey, yielding a 26% response rate. This sample represents over 80 of the 95 countries where Fellows have been elected. Survey responses were analyzed for key trends. The Polytechnic University of Milan research team conducted an independent evaluation of our survey data and analysis.

### Interviews

We randomly selected thirty-two Fellows for one-and-a-half-hour interviews. Interview responses were transcribed and coded for key themes.

### Administrative Data

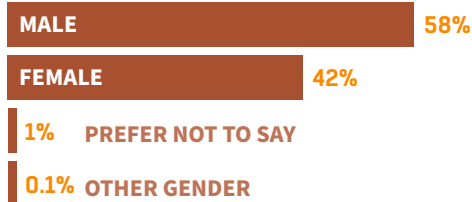
The last global Fellows study was conducted in 2018. Throughout this report, several data points are included in reference to that study to communicate field trends; these are not meant to serve as true comparisons between the 2018 and 2021 samples.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We did not collect identifying information in either survey, thus we are not able to determine if the same Fellows who completed the survey in 2018 also completed in 2021. This limits our ability to make true comparisons over time.

# SAMPLE

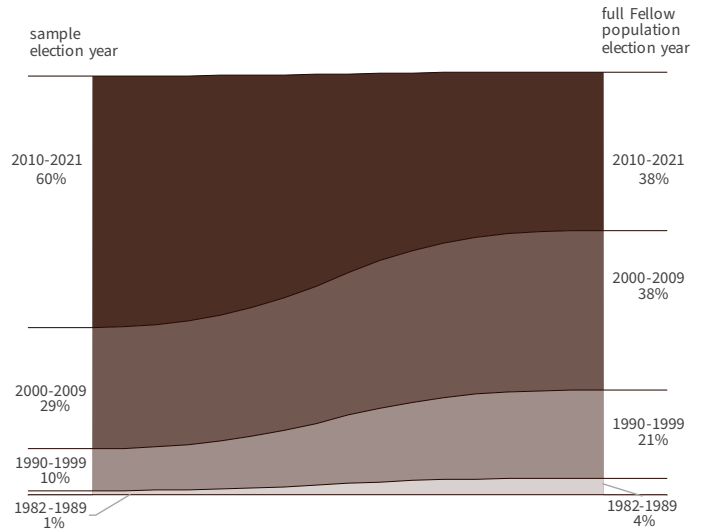
## SURVEY

The majority of our survey sample identified as **male**.

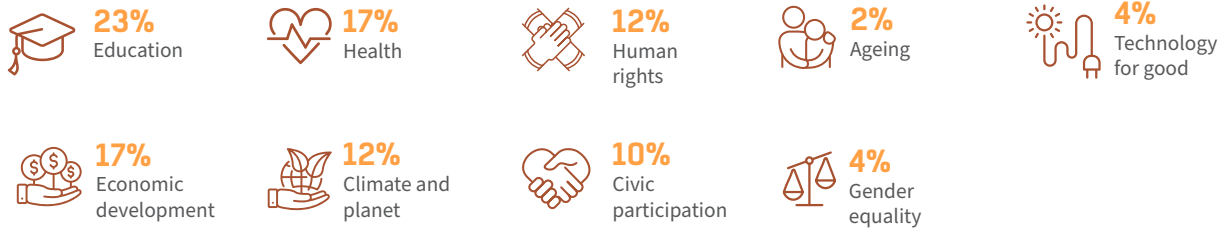


The sample's gender distribution is representative of Ashoka's full Fellow population.

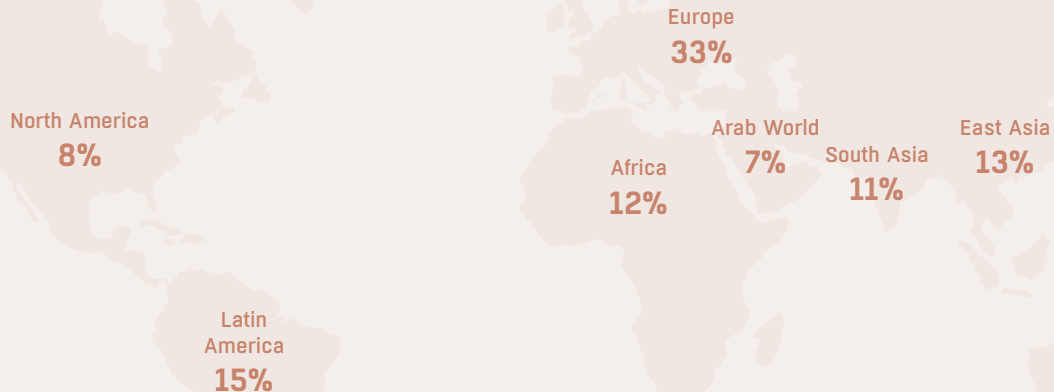
Our sample is slightly skewed, with the majority of Fellows having been elected **between 2010-2021**.



## FIELD OF WORK



Fellows who completed the survey were elected in the following countries:



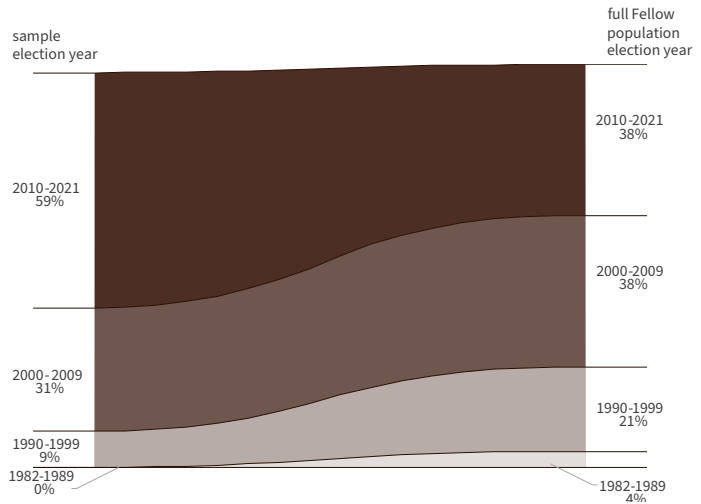
## INTERVIEWS

The majority of our interview sample identified as **male**.

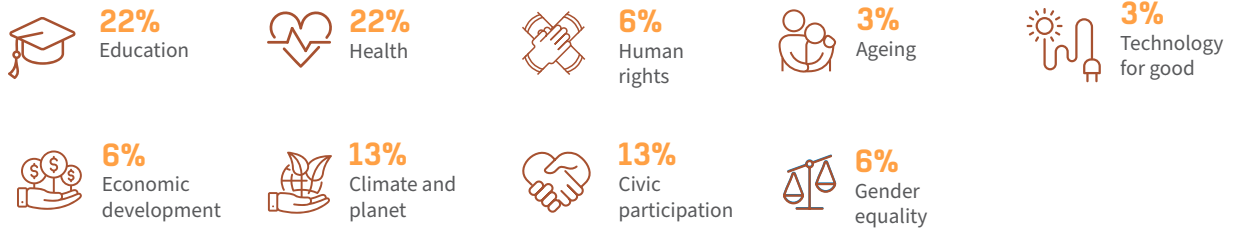


The sample's gender distribution is representative of Ashoka's full Fellow population

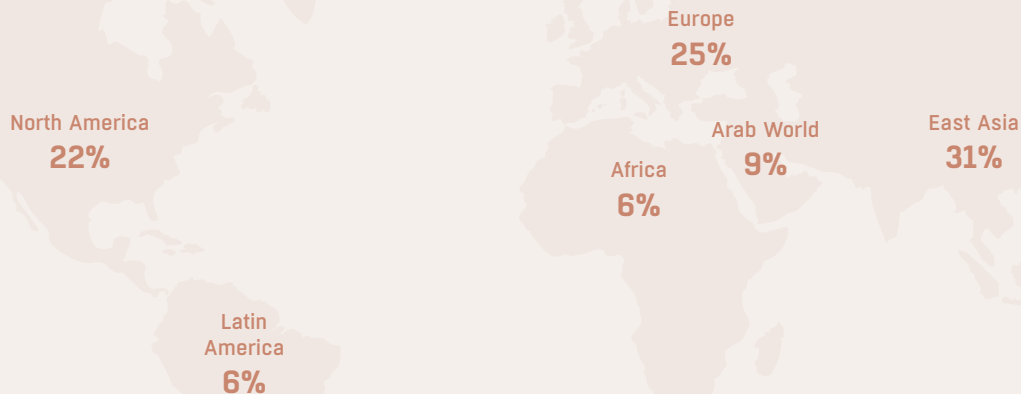
Our sample is slightly skewed, with the majority of Fellows having been **elected between 2010-2021**.



## FIELD OF WORK



Fellows who participated in our interviews were elected in the following countries:





**PART 1**



# **BUILDING AN EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER™ WORLD**





## I. Inspire Individuals to Become Changemakers

Ashoka Fellows are not only powerful role models in today's world, they are also role *makers*. They create opportunities for millions to contribute to positive social change, and through these opportunities, inspire individuals to become changemakers.

As Fellows engage people as core contributors to their solutions, those contributors begin to see the world through the lens of possibilities rather than problems. They question beliefs that have long defined their identities and that have limited their own potential to contribute meaningfully. Fellows' deep conviction and evident moral imperative prompts individuals to think differently, and therefore, do differently.

Committed to the inclusion of others, Fellows create opportunities for others to practice changemaking. By playing a role, individuals experience agency. It becomes clear that changemaking is not an ability reserved for a select few; it is for them, for you, for me—*for everyone*.

“ From a very early age, I wanted to empower people to feel that they can create their own life, and by creating their own life, to have the life that is aligned with their personality, with their values. And if you achieve to have these kinds of people, then you can have powerful citizens that really dare to make a change and dare to make their voice heard. I trust people in their ability, in that capacity of making change. In order to achieve that, they need to trust themselves and have the condition to be a changemaker. And this is really my life mission.”

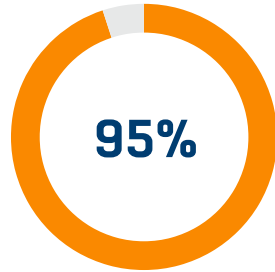


**ISABELLA LENARDUZZI**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

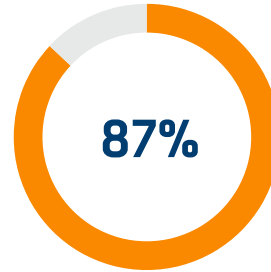
## STRATEGY #1: Create Opportunities for Many Individuals to Contribute

Nearly all Fellows offer employment and volunteer positions within their organizations, giving many the opportunity to practice changemaking.

Percent of Fellows that provide **employment**

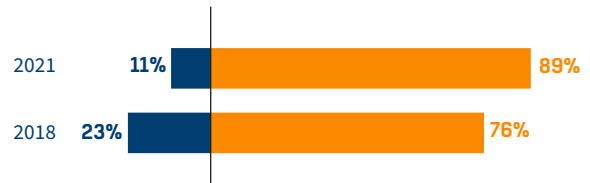


and **volunteer opportunities**



Many Ashoka Fellows realize that it is time for a fundamental shift in how people see the world, especially the role of young people within it. By putting them in charge of leading change within their organizations, Ashoka Fellows give young people an opportunity to contribute. Further, they help to reshape how society sees young people and develop the next generation of changemakers.

**89%** of fellows are putting **young people in charge**, a 13% increase from our 2018 sample



ASHOKA ARCHIVE

“Throughout history young people are often the ones at the forefront of social movements. They are the ones whose lead we should be following. But they also need us. What we can do as adults is value the unique abilities of young people and work alongside them, lending them our power and influence.”

**ILONA DOUGHERTY**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

## STRATEGY #2: Encourage Belief in One's Own Capacity

Ashoka Fellows help people to believe that they can change themselves and the world around them. In their interviews, Fellows talked about how they spark this belief by first demonstrating that even the smallest actions make a difference. Then, they encourage those around them to give changemaking a try. By encouraging problem-solving on even a small scale, Fellows expand others' sense of their own agency. Taking action and making a difference—no matter how small—sets in motion a long-term commitment to changemaking and continues to reinforce individuals' belief in their capacity as changemakers. We saw this strategy come to life as Ashoka Fellow Dina Lumbantobing discussed her work with us.

Ashoka Fellow **Dina Lumbantobing** from Indonesia is working towards achieving economic independence and instilling pride in Indonesia's Pakpak minority in North Sumatra. She does this through her program that caters to children, combining their pre-school and cultural education.

In her endeavors, Dina involves the entire community: parents, teachers, and elders. Her organization, Yayasan Sada Ahmo (YSA), further feeds into governments' initiatives on the development of marginalized ethnic groups through establishing daycare centers, credit unions, and young parents' groups.

Through her organization, programs, and initiatives she develops a belief in children and their families from marginalized communities that they are capable of participating meaningfully in shaping their social contexts. They ultimately also challenge ill-conceived stereotypes around their communities while getting their educational and health needs addressed.

“ For me, it's the mindset and how you position yourself in the system - that you are not a subordinate, coordinated by the other. You are equal.”



**DINA LUMBANTOBING**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

 For more details on Dina's work, please go [here](#).

### STRATEGY #3: Redefine “Weaknesses” As Strengths

Ashoka Fellows see strengths where others may see weaknesses. Interview data showed that Fellows take stock of people’s skills and invite them to put these to good use. Further, they look at what broader society may perceive as weakness and find strength. Fellows know people can leverage their diverse lived experiences to improve their communities. Agazi Afewerki’s work demonstrates this exact strategy.

Ashoka Fellow **Agazi Afewerki** shifts the narrative from youth as service-recipients to expert service-providers. He believes that accessing the untapped potential of younger generations is the solution for much needed community level change everywhere in terms of intergenerational dynamics. He has thus far developed programs in Canada, Spain, Ethiopia, Poland, and Afghanistan. Agazi challenges the long-standing societal belief that only adults are competent enough to contribute to society in meaningful ways. Through his “reverse mentorship” program, he demonstrates how young people support parents and older community members by teaching them useful skills in which youth excel for instance, digital literacy through issues such as using online banking or identifying fake news.

“ If you really reach young people, it’ll be something they can leverage as a strength, through empathy. Look this is what your parents have to go through. That changes their perspective to ‘my parents do have a much harder time than I give them credit for’ and that can easily shift into a leadership position where it becomes a strength.”



**AGAZI AFEWERKI**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

 For more details on Agazi’s work, please go [here](#).



PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUTH EMPOWERING PARENTS.



## STRATEGY #4: Support Changemaker Identity Development

Ashoka Fellows see systems-change work as a lifelong creative process. Many said that they can sustain this commitment because they have internalized the identity of “changemaker”—someone who can and will make a difference. This identity benefits their communities and professional endeavors as well as their personal development and quality of life. Having the opportunity to contribute is the greatest gift; it gives life purpose. Wanting this for those around them, Fellows help others to develop changemaker identities as is illustrated by Ali Raza Khan.

Ashoka Fellow **Ali Raza Khan** has instituted the National Youth Service (NYS) in Pakistan to tackle the increasing disengagement of youth from their community, as well as to address the missed opportunities of employing youth as a valuable resource for the community and their families. Ali’s paradigm not only enables the youth to uphold their character, image, and realize their potential, but it also recruits young people to address societal issues like violence, crime, and terrorism.

He has thus far developed training modules on Youth Participation, Youth Action Planning, Leadership, Mentoring, HIV/AIDS and Sexual Reproductive Health, and Life Skills. His model brings together youth with their parents, government representatives, and community members to address all these issues. He has also successfully replicated it in Zimbabwe and Kenya.

Through Ali’s Youth Employment Scheme (YES) campaign under NYS, Ali inspires the youth and gives them a platform to embed changemaking in their work, demonstrate creativity in designing solutions to social problems, and use their potential to improve their communities. These skills they hone will benefit them and will enable them to take meaningful action throughout their lives. In addition, by centering young people and their contributions, the idea of changemaking and the importance of fostering it – as parents, teachers, government representatives and more – becomes engrained in society more broadly.

 **For more details on Ali’s work, please go [here](#).**

“ I think the greatest challenge for me while working with young people is to generate this belief that they are valuable for themselves, for their families, for the communities. And I think wherever you go, interest young people. Every, every word just counts a lot.”



**ALI RAZA KHAN**  
ASHOKA FELLOW



ASHOKA ARCHIVE

## II. Collaborate to Engage More Changemakers

While the previous section underscores the importance of developing and supporting individual changemakers, this section emphasizes the importance of community-driven changemaking. Fellows know that they need to harness a collective power to initiate and sustain momentum in the direction of the public good. As such, they invite others to partner, encourage replication, and look to community members to lead. These steps not only ensure that effective solutions spread more widely, but they also activate changemakers, generating the combined effort needed to make lasting change in the face of intractable problems.

### STRATEGY #5: Build Multiplier Partnerships

Fellows build partnerships that generate changemakers and solutions. When they build these “multiplier partnerships,” they hope that their partners will build on their original solution or generate their own. They aspire to develop leaders, not followers. These partners can be individuals, communities, or organizations, as seen below.

Survey trends reveal that a greater number of Fellows are partnering now than in 2018. This increase is especially noteworthy given that Fellows were navigating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even (or especially) in crisis, Fellows know that securing new opportunities and enlisting new changemakers must remain a priority.

Except for for-profit company partnerships, survey trends show an **increase in partnerships** compared to the 2018 sample

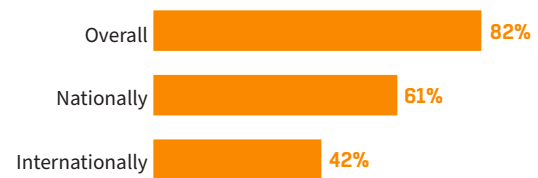


\*We first asked about International or Supranational Organizations and Ashoka Support Network partnerships in 2021.

One specific way Fellows strategically partner and multiply impact is through independent replication. Unlike for-profit entrepreneurs, Ashoka Fellows frequently relinquish control and ownership of their ideas to see them spread as far as possible. To do this, they encourage organizations or institutions to take up their idea and bring it to an even larger scale, facilitating independent replication. Independent replication can happen through licensing or open-sourcing, among other strategies.<sup>6</sup>

Like survey trends, our interview data also make evident Fellows' focus on building multiplier partnerships to spread solutions and solve significant social problems. Fellows intend for this so-called "multiplier effect" to transform partners—and even their own team members—into peer leaders who find new ways to execute on their shared vision. By collaborating, Fellows like John Badalu spread their ideas far and wide through community-led action and this vision is, ultimately, what furthers their collective mission.

### Fellows encourage independent replication



*Independent replication differs from a more traditional scaling approach in which a leader scales a solution with partner support but exclusively within their own organization. Fellows do not treat their solutions as if they are proprietary nor are they driven by profit maximization or customer acquisition. In fact, they work as hard as they can to spread their solutions to as many people as possible, knowing this increases the likelihood it will reach those who need it most.*


**John Badalu**, an Indonesian Fellow and a film producer, is upending the cultural norms that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual communities in Indonesia. He started the first queer film festival (Q! Film Festival) to give alternative films focusing on LGBTQ issues a platform in Indonesia. This film festival was birthed out of a group of LGBTQ activists that engaged in dialogues around LGBTQ rights, called Q-mutiny.

Subsequently, John along with other volunteers and activists used the film festival's popularity to influence policy around LGBTQ communities in Indonesia, successfully placing the rights of LGBTQ minorities on the agenda of the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights. Q-mutiny is now a legal entity facilitating public service announcements centered around LGBTQ rights. Although the Q! Film Festival was stopped in 2016 due to financial limitations and an increase in government constraints to work in the field, John's organization has created ripples that now independently advocate for LGBTQ rights in Indonesia. Some of the former team members have founded a new foundation that organizes the 100% Human Film Festival, which incorporates and continues to advance the conversation around LGBTQ rights, representation, and equal participation.

“ I think in a way, this festival gave them a platform to be more confident about themselves. Because they somehow get a position—even if they're volunteers—to do something...we try to cooperate with a lot of people and a lot of organizations as well.”



**JOHN BADALU**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

 **For more details on John's work, please go [here](#).**

<sup>6</sup> This text was first published in Social Innovations Journal Issue 52. Please follow [this link](#) to read the full article.

## STRATEGY #6:

### Create Space For Community Voice

Ashoka Fellows take on the role of facilitator in their work with others. They see community members not as beneficiaries, but as experts and decision-makers. As such, Fellows create space for community members to develop solutions and voice their plans for action. They present ideas and ask for input from a range of stakeholders or invite others to partner in implementing solutions. These strategies ensure that solutions are community-driven as is illustrated by Mukteshwari Bosco.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HEALING FIELDS FOUNDATION.

**Mukteshwari Bosco**, an Indian Ashoka Fellow, along with her team, enables fair and equitable access to high-quality healthcare in India through a comprehensive health education and entrepreneurship model. She started her journey as a social entrepreneur with a unique health insurance program for the financial and health needs of India's rural poor. This high-impact model brought together the insurance companies, health providers, and facilitation support through her organization, Healing Fields, to ensure access and availability of health services to the poor.

The lessons learned from the micro health insurance led to the germination of another highly impactful program, the Community Health Facilitator program. The program initially focused on creating health awareness in the community through local women trained as health change agents. Constant interactions with the women and communities revealed that to create change, access to health products and services needs to be created and the facilitators need to be sustained through livelihoods. This led to the evolution of the model to elevate these women as Community Health Entrepreneurs (CHE).

The CHE works to prevent health problems and facilitate access to health services and entitlements from the government and enable livelihoods for themselves through access to health products to their communities. Through these health change agents, positive health and empowerment outcomes are achieved in rural villages of 10 states, reaching over 6.25 million people. These women have in the last 18 months led COVID-19 responses and built resilience in their communities.

“ We don't believe that we are creators, we are only facilitators, we are showing the path. It's they who walk the path, not for us to lead them.”



**MUKTESHWARI BOSCO**  
ASHOKA FELLOW



For more details on Mukteshwari's work, please go [here](#).

## STRATEGY #7: Engage Individuals Everywhere

Interview data also show that Fellows strategically recruit public participation through outreach and communication campaigns that target community members who may be unaware of their work. Many Fellows mentioned efforts to engage the community beyond the inner circle of allies to garner wider engagement and deeper social motivation for change. This strategy, as illustrated through the word of Arnoud Raskin, surfaces “unlikely allies” or, in other words, individuals who may not encounter a specific social issue without Fellows’ outreach, but who can meaningfully contribute to positive social change.

**Arnoud Raskin**, an Ashoka Fellow based in Belgium, launched a pioneering idea of ‘mobile schools’ along with 300 educational tools to empower underprivileged children who are forced to live on the streets. Arnoud is shifting the narrative from the kids being seen as disadvantaged to empowering them and leveraging their existing talents and skills developed as they survive and work on the streets.

Besides supporting and preparing young people for reintegration into society, the program also inculcates a sense of self-esteem, by making them aware of their extraordinary survival skills and grit that distinguish them from the rest.

Arnoud’s organization not only engages the expected stakeholders like academics or educators, but also NGOs, companies, and youth in general to create more vigorous networks and robust tools for engaging his target group. He believes in operating from “communities of communities” mindset, and in line with this, his organization trains around 10,000-15,000 volunteers and educators every year. Furthermore, he reaches out to stakeholders and communities with limited previous involvement in the issues connected to street youth, but who can make a difference in their own social roles.

“It’s all about empowering people, you know, the strong belief that everybody has something to give, to contribute, everybody’s talented somehow. And that if you want people to excel, you need to empower them. The level of being empowered in society is fundamental. We started doing this, focusing on street-connected children, so vulnerable kids, and youth. But we are doing this as well, in other layers of society. We do this as well in companies through our business ventures.”



**ARNOUD RASKIN**  
ASHOKA FELLOW


 For more details on Arnoud’s work, please go [here](#).



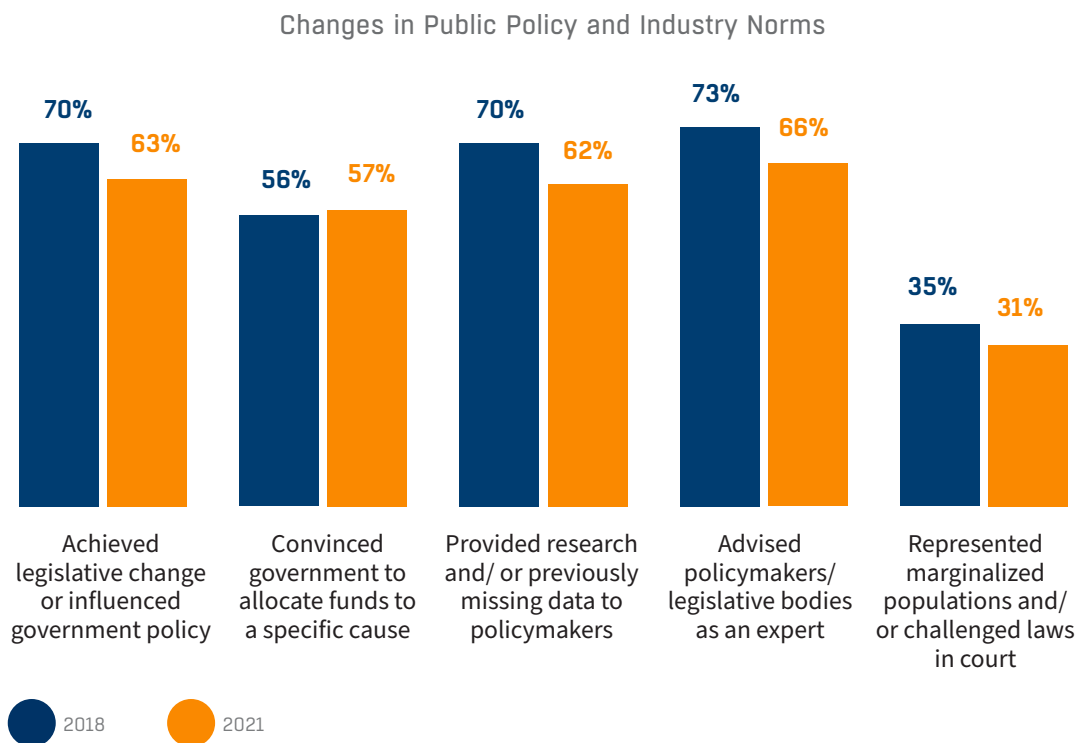
PHOTO COURTESY OF JUNIOR UNDISCOVERED MATHEMATICAL PRODIGIES.

### III. Change Systems to Support All Changemakers

Beyond a deep commitment to individuals as changemakers and to collaboration, Fellows also work to rebuild systems that maintain the status quo so that everyone wins. We are waking up to the ways in which deep division, inequity, and instability limit our power to improve the world we live in. Many of our institutions either by design or inadvertently prevent large portions of society from reaching their full potential. Ashoka Fellows play a central role in our transition toward Everyone a Changemaker™ world by shifting systems and restructuring institutions to operate in service of the collective good. What begins to emerge is a foundation upon which many more people have the freedom and support to contribute.

#### **STRATEGY #8: Create Public Policy Change and Market Dynamics Change**

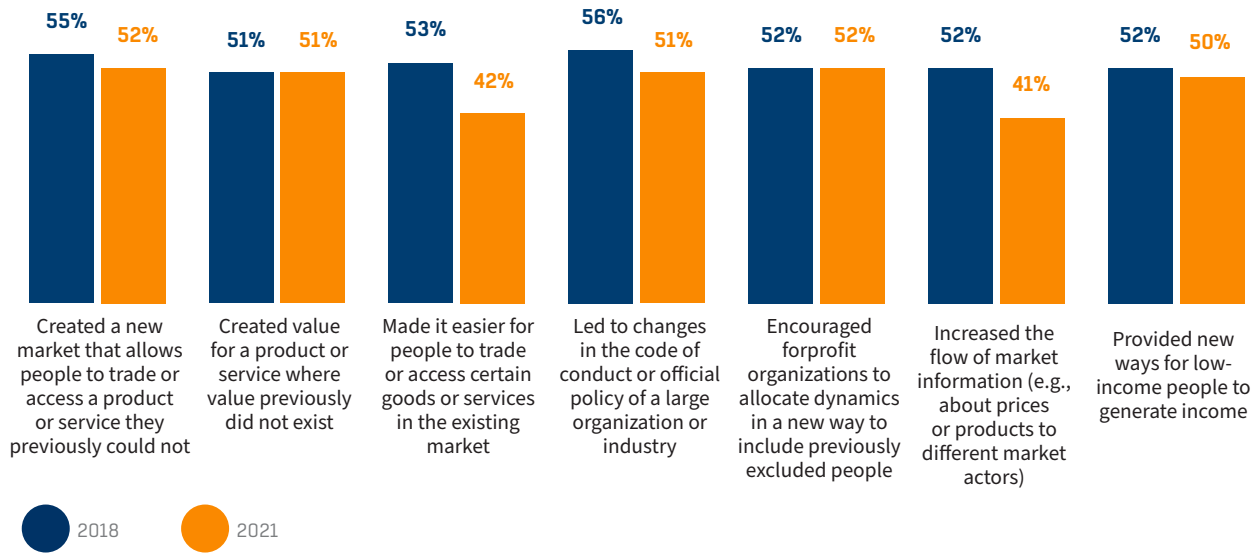
As evident in these discrete data points, our study found that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its corollary economic crises, Fellows remained focused on their efforts to address policies and markets that perpetuated the very problems they were addressing. Survey trends show that Fellows' systems-change efforts stayed consistent with or decreased minimally compared to our 2018 sample.



#### **The Pandemic Didn't Slow Down Change**

Nearly half of Fellows reported reductions in funding and in revenues as consequences of the pandemic. Many still report that COVID-19 developments are significantly affecting how they create impact. Despite these challenges, more than a third of Fellows are finding new ways to innovate in response to these circumstances.

## Changes in Market Dynamics and Value Chains

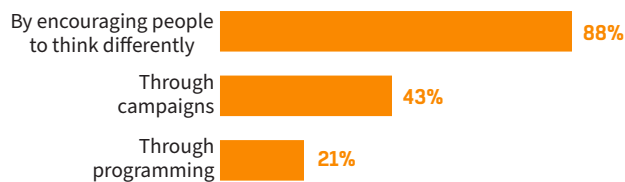


### STRATEGY #9:

#### Influence Societal Mindsets or Cultural Norms

Fellows understand that changing societal beliefs is necessary for sustainable social transformation. By influencing societal mindsets and cultural norms, they help others to see and act in accordance with social changes that benefit all.

#### Fellows aim to influence societal mindsets and cultural norms



## STRATEGY #10: Foster Supportive Environments that Enable Changemaking

Ashoka Fellows foster environments conducive to changemaking on all levels. Data from our study show that Fellows invest their energy in the creation of communities where individuals feel psychologically and physically safe, cared for and supported. They make certain that people are treated with dignity and feel accepted, establishing a strong foundation of trust needed to generate and sustain collective action. Often, Fellows foster these environments within the walls of the organizations they run, creating an organizational culture of safety. Likewise, they foster these changemaker-friendly conditions wherever they convene the broader community in public spaces from classrooms to community squares. In doing so, individuals feel comfortable to share their ideas, work with others, and build something new, as is illustrated by Vishal.

The organization of Indian Ashoka Fellow **Vishal Talreja**, Dream A Dream, strives to create supportive environments for children and young people from vulnerable backgrounds to overcome adversity and learn to thrive. Starting from the deep understanding of their various adverse childhood experiences and their long-term effects on the life opportunities of youth, Vishal and his team develop a range of comprehensive programs.


At the core of their work with youth is the creation of learning environments which are trustworthy, non-judgmental, creative, and safe. With the help of partnerships with schools, companies, volunteers, and many other organizations, Vishal has been successful in creating supportive environments for the children and youth not only to learn valuable life skills, but also to develop healthy relationships and to offer them exposure to new and varied experiences thus helping them thrive for life.

The work of Vishal and his team has also evolved from directly developing life skills of youth and scaling those programs, to working with facilitators such as teachers and governments to build and strengthen the frameworks for transformative education. The team has become increasingly more aware of the systemic barriers and inequities youth face despite the life skills acquired through the programs, so now their focus is on changing the societal intersectional biases and stereotypes that come in the way of young people. Using Dream a Dream as a lab, they are addressing issues of agency, power, privilege and internalized biases within the organization, where many of staff are alumni of the programs, before attempting them in complex systems such as public education. Pedagogical approaches grounded in safe and supportive environments are then taken into departments of education across India to transform behaviors of second line actors deciding for young people and ensuring they are designing curriculums, training, pedagogy, assessments on principles of care, safety, equity, and thriving.

“ One principle is a consistent engagement in a learning environment that is safe, trustworthy, non-judgmental, creative, caring, in a presence of a caring, compassionate adult, even physical and emotional spaces that are safe, and emotionally thriving.”



**VISHAL TALREJA**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

 For more details on Vishal’s work, please go [here](#).



## STRATEGY #11: Build Ecosystems that Sustain Changemaking

Ashoka Fellows build broader ecosystems to support individuals' changemaker journeys. Interview data show that Fellows bring together funders, businesses, governments, civil society organizations, media companies, and universities to reduce barriers that blunt agency and prevent individuals from engaging in changemaking. Each of these stakeholders can independently play a role in reducing barriers and providing opportunity; however, by working together, they can exponentially increase their potential to sustain changemaking and address issues that perpetuate systemic inequality such as power and privilege. Ashoka Fellow Harendra de Silva uses this strategy in his work focused on children's rights.


Ashoka Fellow **Harendra de Silva** works in child protection rights and has institutionalized the National Child Protection Authority in Sri Lanka. The authority works tirelessly on raising awareness about children's rights, partnering with schools to distribute materials, using art (playground theatre), and lobbying to influence policies at the national level.

Harendra's endeavors and those of the National Child Protection Authority have resulted in an ecosystem of government ministers, officials, police, judges, teachers, medical professionals, and community workers working towards the protection of child rights. His focus has been on developing collaboration and effective communication between all these entities.

“ There's the pediatrician who thinks it's his or her problem. The policeman thinks it's his problem. And then the probation and childcare system for the social services thinks so too. We think our ability to do work is a problem mainly because we as individuals are very territorial. We don't like anybody coming in and threatening our daily job. We like it to be our territories. Right. So as a result of that, things don't happen, there is no coordination, there is no cooperation.”



**HARENDRA DE SILVA**  
ASHOKA FELLOW

 For more details on Harendra's work, please go [here](#).

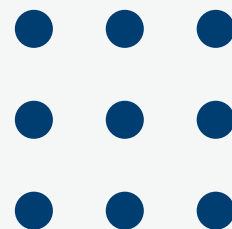




**PART 2**

PHOTO COURTESY OF HEALING FIELDS FOUNDATION.

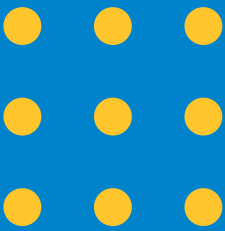
**HOW ASHOKA  
STRENGTHENS  
FELLOWS'  
IMPACT**



## I. Provide Fellows the Opportunity to Pursue Their Idea Full-Time

The Ashoka Fellowship selection process is designed to be a transformative experience. Candidates share the systems change potential of their idea, explore how-tos, and reflect on their personal journey that has gotten them to this point.

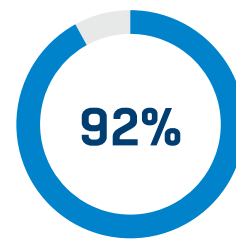
Once selected, Ashoka Fellows are provided a tailored stipend that allows them to make a full-time commitment to their idea, as evidenced by our survey results. For almost half of our sample, this stipend was their first significant source of funding.



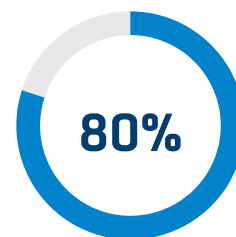
**80%**  
of Fellows reported the stipend helped them focus on their idea full-time



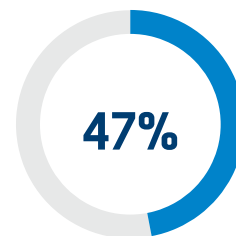
Percent of Fellows that report the selection process strengthened their idea



Percent of Fellows that report the stipend helped them focus on their idea full-time



Percent of Fellows that report that their stipend was their first significant source of funding



## II. Invite Fellows Into a Lifelong Community

Committing one's life to developing individuals, forming collaborations, and disrupting unjust systems is as demanding as it is rewarding. Some even say it can be a lonely journey. Knowing this, Ashoka invites Fellows into a global network of social entrepreneurs who can provide lifelong moral support and resources. Indeed, survey results show that Fellows gain access to key resources from this community, including strategic guidance, new partnerships, mentorship, and more.

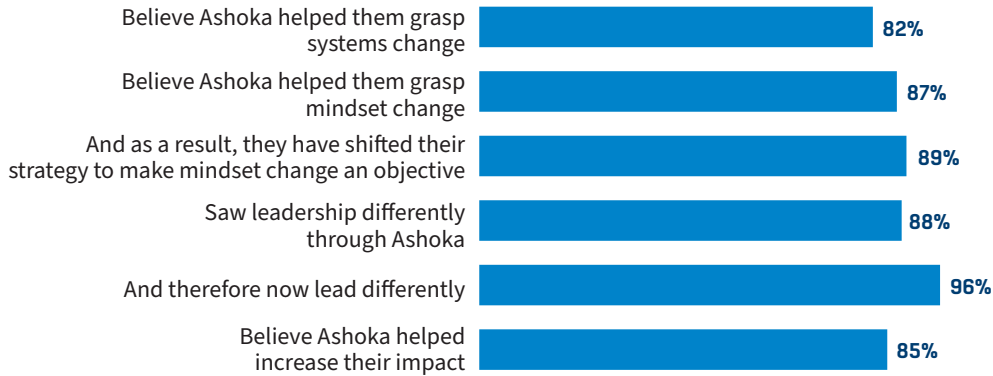
### Fellows gain key resources from the Ashoka Network



### III. Offer Fellows Thought Partnership

Survey results show that Ashoka also helps Fellows to see differently, so they can lead differently. Specifically, Ashoka helps Fellows to recognize the importance of shifting individual, community, and societal mindsets. Fellows may not always visualize the path to systems change or mindset change at first and they come to see and value it as they go through the selection process and into the Fellowship.

#### Percent of Fellows who:



**96%**

now lead differently because of what they learned from Ashoka

“ Ashoka impacted me and my thinking. I know much more about system change and how to use it to influence reality. Ashoka in Czech Republic also started talking about system change with the philanthropists. It changed the whole ecosystem. That was really helpful. It started several cooperations for system change.”



**ZDENĚK SLEJŠKA**  
ASHOKA FELLOW



## CONCLUSION

# CHANGEMAKING FOR THE GOOD OF ALL



**The COVID-19 pandemic** has taken a significant toll on the world. It has brought devastating loss and has highlighted stark racial, social, and economic inequities. It has made our shared reality unquestionably clear; namely, that the prosperity of society, now and in the future, hinges on our ability to operate as a global community that builds better outcomes for all. In other words, the pandemic has forced us to reckon with the truth—our ability to survive and thrive as individuals is interconnected to others’ ability to do the same. The future depends on our ability to prepare ourselves and one another to be changemakers in daily life.

This report explores how Ashoka Fellows are bringing about an Everyone a Changemaker™ world. We learned that Fellows inspire those around them to recognize their changemaking abilities, provide opportunities for collaboration, and change systems to sustain changemaking. Results also demonstrated the impact of Ashoka’s Fellowship and influence, both of which strengthen Fellows’ ability to build an Everyone a Changemaker™ world.

In the context of our everything-changing world, these findings become even more salient. For many years, we lived in a world defined by efficiency and repetition. Work was governed by hierarchies based on a one-leader-at-a-time framework. People learned a skill (e.g., baker, lawyer) and repeated it for life. Now, we bring this model to a world driven by increased disruption. Flattening hierarchies, collapsing siloes and advancements in technology are providing individuals opportunity to contribute more fully in

society. As change accelerates, the old model will no longer work and a new inequality will emerge: those with the skills and mindset to contribute in a changing world and those without. In fact, it already has.

Ashoka believes that the best antidote to this new inequality is an Everyone a Changemaker™ world. A changemaker has the sophisticated abilities required to respond to changes. They can envision a better reality, build a team, and take purposive action for the good of all. Ashoka Fellows are developing these changemakers and in doing so, are showing us that change is to be embraced. While it contributes to unforeseen challenges, it also opens new opportunities to make our societies better for everyone. There are many ways of getting there—these strategies are just a start. But we hope this report has provided compelling evidence that we can all play a role in building a world where everyone is a giver, everyone is powerful, and everyone is a changemaker.

“ Ashoka’s core objective is Everyone a Changemaker™—to help create a world where everyone has the freedom, confidence, and skills to turn challenges into solutions. This is the fullest, richest life. A society of such people will evolve and adapt faster and more surely than any other: each person, rather better than the body’s white blood ‘attack’ cells, courses through society spotting challenges and then conceiving and putting in place the next, better solution.”

**BILL DRAYTON, ASHOKA FOUNDER**



# THE UNLONELY PLANET 2022

To read more articles based on our Global Fellows Studies, please visit [Social Innovations Journal Volume 11 published in January 2022](#).

To read more of our knowledge products and be up-to-date with the patterns and insights we gain thanks to our community, please visit our [Learning and Action Center](#).

We have designed a new tool to assess the dimensions of a changemaker's mindset. Visit the [Changemaker Index](#) to see how well equipped you are for an everything-changing world!



ASHOKA: EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER™

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