Our campaigns promote gender equality while condemning violence and discrimination. We deliver hope to those who have never had it. We can’t give up.”

Ayaz Shalal Hassan
2015 Laureate Global Fellow
IRAQ

Cover: Ayaz Shalal Hassan, Deputy Director of Programs for the Rasan Organization, stands in front of a public art project for gender equality that his organization launched in Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, in late 2016.
CREATING A MORE JUST, EQUITABLE, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE BEGINS WITH PUTTING YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE FOREFRONT.

YouthActionNet®, a signature program of the International Youth Foundation (IYF), equips the world’s greatest asset—youth—to solve our greatest challenges. We support young social entrepreneurs, ages 18 to 30, who have pioneered innovative solutions to urgent problems in their local and global communities.

Our 1,507 fellows in 92 countries tackle diverse issues in their work yet are united by core values. They believe that inclusive societies are fundamentally better societies. They recognize that all people, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, or economic standing, have inalienable rights that must be upheld. And they understand that living in balance with nature is essential to the sustainability of our planet.

Each passionately pursues social change solutions that uphold these values. In the pages that follow, we tell the stories of young change-makers who are strengthening democratic participation in India, promoting greater social integration of children with disabilities in Kenya, and advocating for prison reform in Costa Rica. They do so through employing technology, art, human-centered design, storytelling, business principles, and other innovative strategies.

At a time of sweeping change and global challenges, our role is to support, train, mentor, connect, and advocate for these exceptional young leaders. With 193 nations having united behind the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, the question is not what we need to do to safeguard our collective future, but how? Supporting youth-led efforts to advance justice and equity must be part of any lasting solution.

1,507 YOUNG SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS
92 COUNTRIES
23 YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTES
1.7M LIVES IMPACTED IN 2016
In India there’s a lot of cynicism about change being possible. Being specific and pursuing short-term solutions helps people see how change actually happens.

“I grew up without a male role model,” says Sheldon Smith, who was seven when his father was first incarcerated and left home. When Sheldon became a dad at 21, he vowed to become a hands-on parent. But his determination didn’t stop there. In 2009, he founded The Dovetail Project to teach African-American fathers, ages 18 to 24, about their roles, rights, and responsibilities. To date, more than 280 young men have graduated from Dovetail’s 12-week training course, gaining parenting and life skills, along with a better understanding of felony street law. In 2016, Sheldon was honored as a CNN Hero and is now launching two new program sites in Chicago. Through his personal and professional experience, he seeks to contribute to a new narrative surrounding young African-American fathers. “I want to drive a conversation about fatherhood,” says Sheldon, now 28. “People don’t understand that support for fathers has a big impact on children.”
“Fatherhood doesn’t come with a map or a manual. It’s our goal to get young men to think differently and access the love they need to move forward.”

Sheldon Smith
Founder, The Dovetail Project

Photo credit: Sara Stathas for CNN
“When we prevent young offenders from returning to jail, we solve a problem, not just for them, but for society as a whole.”

Lauren Díaz, Founder, Nueva Oportunidad
THE REFORMER

Lauren Díaz // Costa Rica // 2012 Fellow

In Costa Rica, the majority of people sentenced to prison have committed petty crimes, most related to poverty and lack of economic opportunity. The prison environment offers little in the way of rehabilitation, with roughly one in five prisoners released eventually returning to jail. Lauren Díaz founded Nueva Oportunidad (New Opportunity) to change this reality and influence how society views ex-convicts. “Our main focus is on youth who are born into poverty and end up jailed for minor offenses,” says Lauren. She and her team work to improve conditions within prisons, while advocating for policy changes at the national level. Nueva Oportunidad also supports soon-to-be-released inmates in developing micro-enterprises to help them earn an income upon their release.

THE BOUNDARY BREAKER

Melanie Tran // Australia // 2017 Fellow

It is estimated that just one in 10 people living with a disability globally has access to the assistive technology devices necessary for social inclusion and independence. To fill this gap, Melanie Tran co-founded AbilityMate. Blending technology with human-centered design, Melanie and her team develop custom, 3-D printable, assistive technology solutions that help people with a range of disabilities increase their mobility and ability to carry out everyday activities. “Empathy is one of my core values,” says Melanie, a student at Torrens University Australia, a member of the Laureate International Universities network. To date, AbilityMate has engaged over 100 individuals with disabilities and their families through co-design workshops and mobilized 500-plus supporters through a crowdfunding campaign to jumpstart clinical trials and secure regulatory authorization. Each product designed by AbilityMate becomes open-source with the goal of increasing global access to low-cost, custom solutions.

“Technology is one of the most powerful tools we have to break down barriers for people with a disability.”
THE BRIDGE BUILDER

Maria Omare // Kenya // 2013 Fellow

“People become nervous around those with disabilities and tend to avoid being around them,” says Maria Omare, who founded The Action Foundation (TAF) to rehabilitate and integrate children with disabilities into social spaces so they can lead healthy, dignified lives. A youth-led, grassroots organization, TAF operates in low-income communities in Nairobi to provide early intervention and care for children with conditions including autism, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy. It also empowers parents to be active participants in their children’s development. Recognizing the importance of shifting public policies and hiring practices related to individuals with disabilities, advocacy also plays a major role in Maria’s work. Ultimately, she seeks to create a barrier-free society for these children.

THE SOCIAL ARTIST

Leonardo Párraga // Colombia // 2015 Fellow

“Reducing inequalities is what drives me,” says Leonardo Párraga. In 2013, Leonardo launched the BogotArt Foundation in Colombia to empower youth and community members to identify local challenges and develop arts-based solutions. “We’ve seen how art can break down stereotypes and change people’s perceptions,” says Leonardo of BogotArt’s work to transform marginalized neighborhoods into cultural hubs. In early 2017, following the passage of a peace agreement between the national government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Leo cofounded Cartas por la Reconciliación (Letters for Reconciliation). With ex-combatants poised to reintegrate into Colombian society, the letter writing campaign helps foster communication—and empathy—among youth on opposing sides of the conflict with the goal of supporting a sustainable peace.

“We help people realize that what they share in common is far greater than their differences.”
“Having a disability should not be a barrier to people achieving their dreams.”

Maria Omare
Founder, The Action Foundation
Over 17 years, we at the International Youth Foundation have tailored YouthActionNet’s response to best meet the needs of our fellows, while building a supportive ecosystem for youth leadership both nationally and globally. Here are five ways we’re working to strengthen today’s global youth movement—one leader, one community, at a time.

Creating Change from the Ground Up
Lasting change starts small and grows. By focusing on early-stage youth-led ventures, we provide training and support where it is needed most. Over time, we’ve helped hundreds of young social entrepreneurs to strengthen and scale the impact of their work. Many report that the training, support, networks, and credibility provided through their YouthActionNet fellowship were critical to reaching long-term goals.

Building a Global Network
Central to our mission is the establishment of national and regional YouthActionNet institutes that are locally rooted and globally connected. These institutes—housed within universities, foundations, and nongovernmental organizations—tailor their approaches to meet the needs of youth leading change within their countries/regions. This social franchise model enables us to scale our impact, while ensuring local ownership and long-term sustainability.

Amplifying Youth Voices
Through events, publications, and related media, we bring youth voices to the forefront of development. Globally, YouthActionNet Fellows have addressed audiences convened by The World Bank, International Finance Corporation, and the United Nations, among others. At the national level, our institute partners are recognized focal points for youth social entrepreneurship, providing essential research and data related to the sector as a whole. Each offers fellows a valuable platform for sharing their innovations and expertise with decision-makers. In 2017, we launched a new video series, “Goal Getters,” profiling fellows’ achievements in advancing the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.
Engaging Universities as Partners
We partner with universities to support youth-led change. Our signature partnership with Laureate International Universities has resulted in the creation of 23 youth leadership institutes, with 15 housed on Laureate campuses. From Brazil to Spain, Peru to Turkey, these institutes serve as vital hubs for youth-led social innovation. Our work with institutions of higher learning, including Georgetown University,

connects the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom with practical, real world examples, as students learn from and contribute to youth-led social ventures.

Supporting Lifelong Learning
Leaders have different learning needs depending on where they are in their social change journeys. To meet these needs, we offer a range of continuing education opportunities, including mentoring, webinars, videos, and the sharing of valuable resources. As guest speakers, our alumni contribute their first-hand experience on a range of issues. Recent webinar topics include advanced project management, communications planning, and how to pursue client-centric funding partnerships.

“Our partnership with IYF is rooted in shared values and the belief that engaged and empowered young people can solve the world’s toughest challenges.”

Esther Benjamin
Senior Vice President, Global Public Affairs & Chief Benefit Officer, Laureate International Universities
A Locally Rooted, Globally Connected Network

Over 17 years, YouthActionNet® has established or partnered with youth leadership institutes in the following countries and regions.

Anglophone Africa Regional Program*
Social Entrepreneurs Transforming Africa
(Kampala, Uganda)
www.facebook.com/SETafrica

Arab Regional Program
King Abdullah II Award for Youth Innovation and Achievement
Amman, Jordan
www.kafd.jo

Australia
Young Social Pioneers
Melbourne, Australia
www.fya.org.au

Brazil
Premio Laureate Brasil: Jovem Empreendedor Social—UAM
São Paulo, Brazil
Premio Laureate Brasil: Jovem Empreendedor Social—UnP
Natal, Brazil
Premio Laureate Brasil: Jovem Empreendedor Social—UniNorte
Manaus, Brazil
Premio Laureate Brasil: Jovem Empreendedor Social—UNIFACS
Salvador, Brazil
www.premiolaureatebrasil.com.br

Chile
YouthActionNet Chile
Santiago, Chile
www.yanchile.cl

Costa Rica
Premio Yo Creo
San José, Costa Rica
www.premioyo creo.com

Francophone Africa Regional Program*
Innove4Africa
Dakar, Senegal
www.synapsecenter.org/innove4africa

Honduras
Premio Yo Emprendo
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
www.premioyoemprendo.com

Jordan
BADIR
Amman, Jordan
www.badir.jo

Kyrgyzstan
School of Social Entrepreneurship
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
www.ase.kg/en

Mexico
Premio UNITEC a la Innovación Tecnológica para el Desarrollo Social
Mexico City, Mexico
www.unitec.mx/premio
Premio UVM por el Desarrollo Social
Mexico City, Mexico
www.premiouvm.org.mx

Morocco*
Entrepreneurs en Mouvement
Casablanca, Morocco
www.entrepreneurenmouvement.com

Nigeria
Social Innovators Programme
Lagos, Nigeria
www.leapAfrica.org

Peru
Premio Protagonistas de Cambio UPC
Lima, Peru
www.premioprotagonistasdelcambio.upc.edu.pe

Senegal*
Projet JETS (Jeunesse, Entreprise et Transformation Sociale au Sénégal)
Dakar, Senegal
www.warccroa.org/jets

South Africa
MSA LEAD
Johannesburg, South Africa
www.msa lead.msa.ac.za

Spain
Premios Jóvenes Emprendedores Sociales
Madrid, Spain
www.emprendedoressociales.universidadeuropea.es/

Turkey
BİLGİ Genç Sosyal Girişimci Ödülleri
İstanbul, Turkey
www.biligigo.org

*Indicates programs that are not actively recruiting fellows.
SOUTH AFRICA
Partner: Monash South Africa

AUSTRALIA
Partner: Foundation for Young Australians

TURKEY
Partner: Istanbul BILGI University

KYRGYZSTAN
Partner: Association of Social Entrepreneurs

JORDAN
Partners: USAID CIS, FHI 360, Starbucks Foundation, and M.H. Alshaya Co.

ARAB REGIONAL PROGRAM
Partner: King Abdullah II Fund for Development, Jordan

BRAZIL
Partners: Universidade Anhembi Morumbi (UAM), Universidade Potiguar (UnP), Centro Universitário do Norte (UniNorte), and Universidade Salvador (UNIFACS)

NIGERIA
Partner: LEAP Africa

SPAIN
Partner: Universidad Europea

MOROCCO*
Partner: Université Internationale de Casablanca

SENEGAL*
Partner: West African Research Center

FRANCOPHONE AFRICA REGIONAL PROGRAM*
Partner: Synapse Center, Senegal

ANGLOPHONE AFRICA REGIONAL PROGRAM*
Partner: Makerere University Business School, Uganda

SOUTH AFRICA
Partner: Monash South Africa

AUSTRALIA
Partner: Foundation for Young Australians
Class of 2017 // Laureate Global Fellows

Each year, we proudly support the leadership journeys of 20 outstanding young social entrepreneurs through the Laureate Global Fellowship. Supported by Laureate International Universities, the yearlong program includes advanced leadership training, coaching, advocacy, and networking opportunities. Together these young change-makers—all founders and CEOs under 30 years of age—demonstrate Laureate’s and IYF’s commitment to developing an emerging generation of global leaders.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Innocentia Mthembu, 29
Show Time Film Club
SOUTH AFRICA

Innocentia launched the Show Time Film Club to help disadvantaged children and youth discover their potential through gaining video production, storytelling, and citizenship skills. In 2016, 120 students developed skills they can use to pursue productive futures, while connecting to their communities.

www.facebook.com/ShowTimeFilmClub

Sylwia Wodzinska, 27
MamyGlos
POLAND

Sylwia co-founded MamyGlos to equip teenage girls in Poland to advocate for their rights and end gender discrimination in their schools and communities. Through workshops on activism and women’s empowerment, as well as creative media campaigns, MamyGlos empowers Poland’s next generation to take a stand for gender equality.

www.mamyglos.weebly.com

Rosario Ahumada, 29
JUNO
ARGENTINA

With low-income mothers often unable to leave their homes and children to earn a living, Rosario founded JUNO. Through the social enterprise, 120 women now generate extra income by producing handcrafted items from home. JUNO also offers entrepreneurship workshops.

www.junotrabajosremotos.com

Paul Matovu, 27
Vertical Micro-gardening
UGANDA

Through Vertical Micro-gardening, Paul manufactures and sells vertical farms to low-income urban residents, particularly housewives and youth, enabling them to grow fresh, organic produce in a limited space while generating much-needed income.

www.unitedpartnerships.org/project/vmg

David Hernandez Sandoval, 29
2da Mano-Ropa Solidaria
COSTA RICA

Through 2da Mano-Ropa Solidaria, David empowers female heads of households with the skills and materials needed to repurpose and sell second hand clothing. Since 2014, 43 women entrepreneurs in 18 communities have benefited from an average 80 percent increase of income.

www.facebook.com/2damanocr

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
Mikayla Sullivan, 22
KinoSol
UNITED STATES
To help reduce post-harvest food loss in developing countries while creating entrepreneurial opportunities for subsistence farmers, Mikayla co-founded KinoSol. With KinoSol’s solar-powered dehydration technology, over 100 mostly women farmers in 39 countries are now able to preserve—and sell—fruits, vegetables, grains, and even insects.
www.getkinosol.com

Binayak Acharya, 29
ThinkZone
INDIA
Binayak founded ThinkZone to enable women in low-income communities to deliver quality early childhood and primary education programs through a technology-enabled school-in-a-box solution. To date, over 1,500 children have received quality education, with 45 women benefiting from livelihood opportunities.
www.thinkzone.in

Innocent Eliuseli, 26
My Little Travelling Library
TANZANIA
Innocent co-founded My Little Travelling Library to inspire a passion for reading and independent learning among rural primary school students in Mwanza, Tanzania. In 2016, over 2,400 youth in 15 schools benefited from the organization’s network of mobile handcart libraries delivering books and interactive reading lessons organized by university student volunteers.
www.mylittletravellinglibrary.com

Natalie Kyriacou, 29
My Green World
AUSTRALIA
Through My Green World, Natalie empowers educational institutions, children, and families with fun, creative ways of learning about and acting on global environmental issues. To date, My Green World has directly impacted 12,000 young Australians and indirectly reached over 900,000 people through its website and social media platforms.
www.mygreenworld.org

Cristina Balbás Martinez, 29
EscueLab
SPAIN
Recognizing that students’ attitudes toward science are shaped by age 14, Cristina co-founded EscueLab, which equips children, ages 6 to 14, with STEM skills through educational materials, teacher training, science clubs, and camps. In 2016, EscueLab reached 1,900 students, with a special focus on vulnerable children.
www.escuelab.es
Luiz Hamilton Ribas, 28  
*Ação Social para Igualdade das Diferenças*  
BRAZIL

Luiz co-founded *Ação Social para Igualdade das Diferenças* (Social Action for Equality of Differences) to bring together companies, volunteers, people with disabilities, and caregiving institutions to create a more inclusive Brazil. In 2016, the organization provided 35 care institutions with management consulting to increase revenues and improve services.  
www.asidbrasil.org.br

Ivonne Bocanegra, 27  
*Grupo Ambiental Tierra Amazónica-Gatia*  
PERU

Through *Grupo Ambiental Tierra Amazónica-Gatia* (Amazonian Land Environmental Group), Ivonne trains youth and women as eco-entrepreneurs, and promotes environmentally-friendly behaviors through campaigns and events that have reached over 12,000 people.  
www.facebook.com/Grupo-Ambiental-Tierra-Amazonica-Gatia-135862429819811

Dysmus Kisilu, 28  
*Solar Freeze*  
KENYA

Through *Solar Freeze*, a company that produces solar-powered walk-in cold rooms, Dysmus increases the incomes of smallholder farmers by preventing post-harvest food losses. To date, the initiative has benefited 1,000 youth and women.  
www.solarfreeze.co.ke

Ankit Agarwal, 28  
*HelpUsGreen®*  
INDIA

With floral waste from religious institutions imposing a heavy pesticide burden on the Ganges River, Ankit founded *HelpUsGreen®*. The initiative now employs 128 women who previously worked as scavengers to upcycle the floral waste into organic fertilizer and incense, while generating much-needed income for themselves and their families.  
www.helpusgreen.com

Dissa Ahdanisa, 27  
*Fingertalk Enterprise*  
INDONESIA

Dissa founded *Fingertalk Enterprise* to end the stigma against the Deaf in Indonesia and reduce unemployment rates among Deaf youth. Fingertalk’s social enterprise model employs 30 Deaf individuals at various small businesses, including a Deaf café where all people can connect regardless of hearing ability.  
www.facebook.com/deafcafe.fingertalk

**ENVIRONMENT**

**SOCIAL INCLUSION**
Junto Ohki, 29
ShuR Group
JAPAN
As co-founder of the ShuR Group, Junto uses technology to transform the lives of the Deaf. Among its achievements, ShuR launched an online sign language dictionary with the world’s first sign language keyboard, making it easier for Deaf individuals to look up a word or sign.
www.shur.jp

Ignacio Rodriguez, 28
Epix
VENEZUELA
With Venezuela experiencing the worst social, economic, and political crisis in its recent history, Ignacio founded Epix, a social venture dedicated to restoring empathy and connecting the nation’s citizens through the sharing of stories. Through its online platform, events, and social media outreach, Epix reached an audience of 43,000 in 2016.
www.epix.com.ve

Nushelle de Silva, 29
Building Bridges
SRI LANKA
In the wake of the Sri Lankan civil war, Nushelle founded Building Bridges to provide ethnically diverse youth with the opportunity to express themselves and connect with others. In 2016, Building Bridges guided 200 students from rural communities across Sri Lanka in building empathy and collaborating through the creative arts.
www.buildingbridges.lk

Melanie Tran, 21
AbilityMate
AUSTRALIA
Melanie co-founded AbilityMate to increase global access to assistive technology devices that help individuals with disabilities achieve greater independence. Combining 3-D printing and open source technology with human-centered design, AbilityMate develops low cost, customized devices that support users’ mobility and ability to carry out everyday activities.
www.abilitymate.com

Katia Zahwi, 24
Architects for Change
LEBANON
Believing that architects are capable of not only designing buildings but strengthening communities, Katia co-founded Architects for Change. Comprised of 83 design students and recent university graduates, the collaborative implements participatory design solutions for cultural and public spaces.
www.facebook.com/archforchange
FROM THE CEO & THE CHAIRMAN

William S. Reese
CEO
International Youth Foundation

Douglas L. Becker
Chairman
International Youth Foundation

Founder, Chairman & CEO
Laureate Education, Inc.

Healing our deeply divided world depends on nurturing the values of justice and equity among today’s youth. Featured throughout these pages are the stories of young leaders who not only uphold these values, but inspire their peers to do the same.

For Leonardo Párraga in Colombia, the art of letter writing offers a powerful tool for reconciling youth who have grown up on opposing sides of the nation’s decades-long armed conflict. For Melanie Tran in Australia, low-cost 3-D printing technology, combined with human-centered design, holds a key to creating a more inclusive world for those with disabilities. And for Sheldon Smith in the United States, equipping young African-American fathers to be engaged parents is helping to transform larger societal narratives around race and the role of fathers.

These young change-makers are among 1,507 YouthActionNet Fellows in 92 countries whose social innovations are bridging economic, racial, political, and other potent divides.

The journey of social change begins with empathy and agency. The vast majority of our fellows took action as a result of being exposed to social injustice in their communities. According to our research, 60 percent of youth first feel inspired to lead change at the age of 16 or older. How do we move more young people from interest to action? How do we equip them with the knowledge and tools to be effective? We believe that offering real-life examples and hands-on experience are crucial to developing young people’s civic engagement and leadership skills. This year, we expanded our efforts to engage our fellows with university students to foster peer-to-peer learning and social action.

Our work to build a supportive ecosystem for youth-led social entrepreneurship was especially visible in Costa Rica and Chile. In both countries, youth leadership institutes housed at institutions in the Laureate International Universities network equipped fellows to facilitate training workshops for their peers seeking to launch social ventures.

At the same time, we realize that young change-makers face significant obstacles in realizing their potential. Only 19 percent of YouthActionNet fellows feel key institutions in their community strongly support their work. By advocating for youth needs—and amplifying youth voices—we seek to create a groundswell of support for today’s global youth movement.

The world’s 1.2 billion young people represent a powerful force for positive change. In a recent IYF perceptions survey, more than 80 percent of youth respondents reported believing they have an obligation to help those who are less fortunate. Engaging this generation to create a just and equitable world has never been more urgent. They are ready, and we as a society need to step up in pursuing shared goals.
INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FOUNDATION

For more than 25 years, the International Youth Foundation (IYF®) has focused solely on helping young people succeed. A global nonprofit organization, IYF believes success in life is secured by learning skills that will endure, earning a livelihood, and growing as an engaged citizen. While most youth choose a career path and land that first job, many others decide to start their own small businesses or social ventures. Regardless of the road chosen, IYF has been by the side of more than 19.7 million youth in 105 countries, empowering them to lead productive, fulfilling lives.

www.iyfnet.org

LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

This publication was produced with support from Laureate International Universities. Since 2001, Laureate International Universities has provided more than US$25 million in grants to more than 100 nonprofit organizations to support initiatives around education, youth leadership, global citizenship, economic opportunity, and the arts.

Laureate International Universities sponsors the Laureate Global Fellows and is co-sponsor of YouthActionNet programs at institutions within their network—which is the world’s leading higher education provider, comprised of nearly 70 institutions of higher education in 25 countries and with over one million students. Laureate, the largest Certified B Corporation® in the world, is committed to being Here for Good in the lives of students and communities worldwide.

www.laureate.net

PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Cover: Rasan Organization; p. 2 Jhatkaa; p. 3 Sara Stathas for CNN; p. 4 Nueva Oportunidad; p. 5 AbilityMate; p. 6 Cartas por la Reconciliación/Valentina Monsalve; p. 7 The Action Foundation

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