2025 IMPACT REPORT

Global Fellows *in* Courage

57 LEADERS IGNITED
1.6M+ PEOPLE EMPOWERED
RIGHTS & OPPORTUNITY
ADVANCED IN 40+ COUNTRIES

"The fellowship experience has been truly life-changing. What stood out most is the space GFiC created where Fellows could share not only our successes, but also our failures and vulnerabilities. That atmosphere of trust and authenticity is incredibly powerful. Knowing that this work is hard, and it is not just me who is struggling, has validated my experiences in a way I did not expect."

— 2025 Fellow, Nepal

01 — FOUNDER'S MESSAGE:

What drew me to create Global Fellows in Courage was my belief that the promise of human potential lives in every nation and community on Earth. Yet that promise can only flourish where people are free to learn, to grow, to speak and to build lives of dignity and purpose. History reminds us that such freedoms are never guaranteed; they endure only because brave and committed individuals stand up to defend the rights of others. GFiC was founded in support of those individuals — leaders of character and courage who work so that their fellow citizens may enjoy the opportunities and freedoms that allow human potential to take root and grow.

Our journey began in 2024 with a pilot group of twelve Fellows, an experiment to test a simple idea: that courageous young leaders advancing rights and opportunity could benefit from a community committed to strengthening their confidence, capabilities, and connections. What we learned gave us the confidence to launch our first full program year in 2025. We selected 45 Fellows from 38 nations out of 2,445 applicants, and have seen what becomes possible when determined leaders are supported by a network that believes in them. Through their work, they remind us that meaningful change rarely begins in the great halls of power — more often it begins with individuals who act with courage and conviction on behalf of others. Our Fellows are leading advocacy and enterprises that advance education for women and girls, economic freedom through entrepreneurship, legislation to eliminate child marriage, creating safe and healthy living/working conditions and much more.

This work would not be possible without the extraordinary generosity of the community that has gathered around our Fellows. We are deeply grateful to the volunteer coaches, advisors, speakers, and Board members, all of whom share their time and wisdom. We thank the donors whose belief in our mission sustains this effort. And I offer special appreciation to our remarkable leadership team — Eugenia Mazurenko and Kelly Stone — whose skill, commitment and creativity transformed a vision into a program that truly moves the needle of global impact.

Eugenia has curated, cobbled and combined systems and processes with a fractional team on three continents, enabling us to deliver a high level program to nearly 200 stakeholders around the globe. Kelly, the longtime and transformative former CEO of SEGreenhouse.org has developed and delivers a high-touch virtual program that brings together the best thinking from around the world and engages Fellows and Coaches in building shared understanding, deep connection and lasting collaboration for long-term impact.

I invite you to explore the pages that follow, where the voices of Fellows and coaches bring our first full year's work to life. Their reflections reveal both the impact of the program and the promise ahead. We remain committed to learning and improving as we go, refining our curriculum, expanding collaborations, and strengthening the fabric of connections that enables our Fellows to grow in confidence, capability, and collective impact.

Lorne Adrain
Founder, Global Fellows in Courage

In supporting these courageous leaders, we affirm a simple truth:

when human dignity and freedom take root anywhere, they strengthen the promise of freedom everywhere.

With gratitude and courage!
Lorne Adrain

02 — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: TWO YEARS IN & EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT

2025 was a year of growth and improvement. We piloted GFiC in 2024, empowering 12 courageous Fellows committed to advancing human rights around the world. And this first cohort of Fellows continues to do amazing work. We learned a lot from the pilot and committed to improving and expanding our impact in 2025. And we did just that.

OVERVIEW

We experienced record interest with more than 2,400+ applications from more than 100 nations from which we chose a cohort of 45 outstanding Fellows from 38 different nations — from Libya to Afghanistan, Nigeria to India, UK to Ukraine, Australia to North America. **These Fellows reach more than 1.6 million people through their work.**

- We sharpened our focus to working with high potential social entrepreneurs with a human-rights and gender equity lens, resulting in improved cohort cohesiveness and enhanced engagement.
- We structured all activities with the goal of building and strengthening relationships among Fellows and between Fellows and Coaches/ Advisors/Mentors.
- We expanded our volunteer coach network internationally to include more than 60 experienced business, community and subject matter leaders.
- We offered more professionalized onboarding, better matching, and deeper engagement. We also engaged more than 20 volunteer guest speakers including two Nobel Peace Prize winners (Oleksandra Matviichuk and Ken Roth), and leadership from Harvard Business School, Harvard Kennedy School, Bridgespan, LinkedIn and many more.
- We believe the relationships we enable and encourage are the most important long-term contributors to Fellows' effectiveness and impact.
- We strengthened our curriculum, its delivery and peer-learning. We offered more practical sessions, improved facilitation, and enhanced the online learning experience that included external subject matter experts and global leaders but was led by Fellows themselves. There is extraordinary expertise in our Zoom rooms.
- We continued building our infrastructure and outreach with a growing social media presence, inspiring Fellow stories, and early press coverage. See a recent profile of GFiC here.
- And we were able to provide significant value across the globe, at low cost, through leveraging our network of pro bono coaches, speakers, program volunteers and global team.

In an era of rising authoritarianism, increasing restrictions on rights and freedoms and cuts to foreign aid, GFiC's work to increase the confidence and effectiveness of young leaders is more essential than ever. As we reflect on 2025 and plan for 2026, we thank our current supporters and invite new partners to join our mission.

GFiC needs you. Our Fellows need you. *The world needs you.*

03 — WHO WE ARE

Global Fellows in Courage (GFiC) was established with an important goal: to identify the young Malala's, Mandela's and MLK's in the world and help them do more, better and faster.

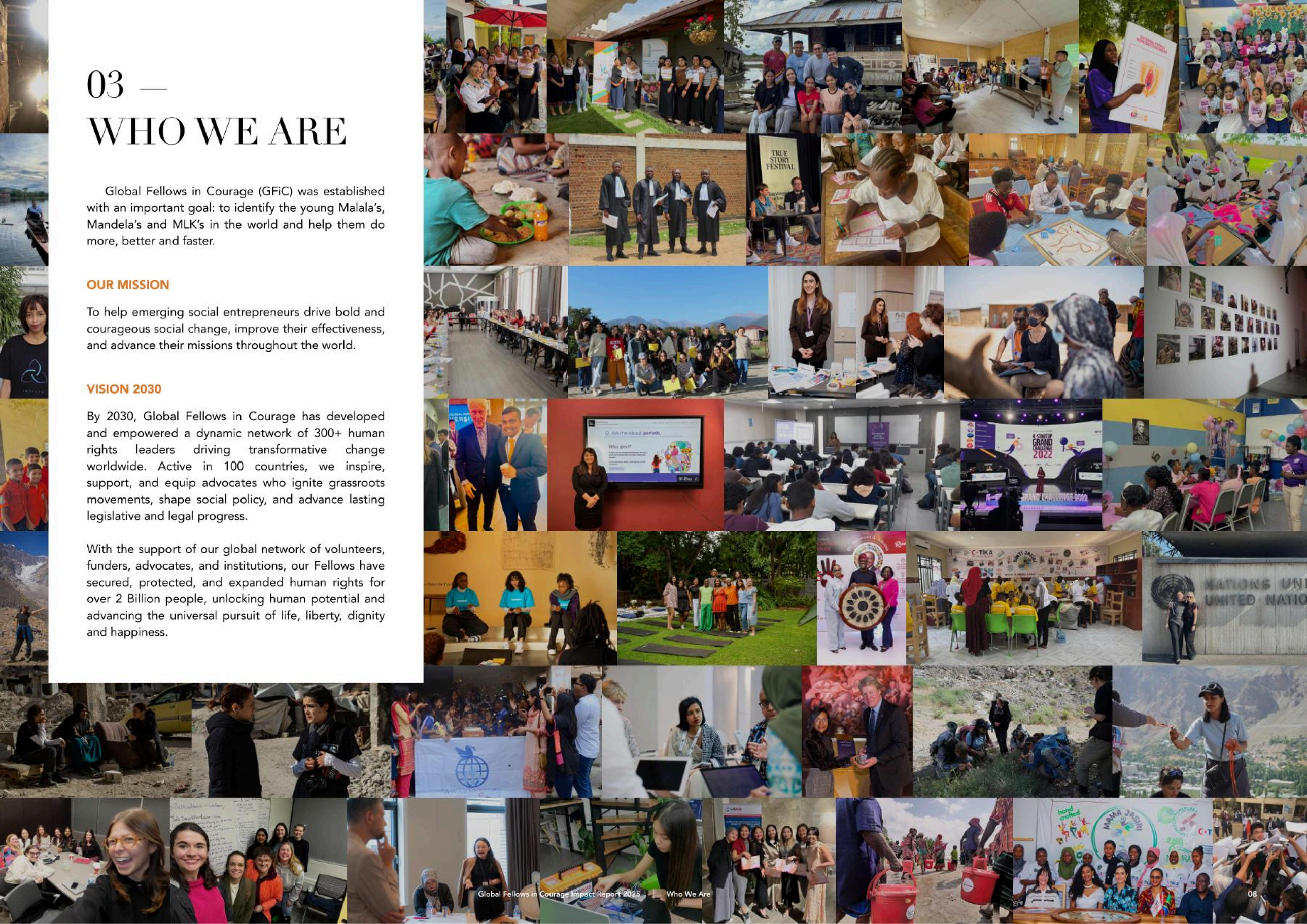
OUR MISSION

To help emerging social entrepreneurs drive bold and courageous social change, improve their effectiveness, and advance their missions throughout the world.

VISION 2030

By 2030, Global Fellows in Courage has developed and empowered a dynamic network of 300+ human rights leaders driving transformative change worldwide. Active in 100 countries, we inspire, support, and equip advocates who ignite grassroots movements, shape social policy, and advance lasting legislative and legal progress.

With the support of our global network of volunteers, funders, advocates, and institutions, our Fellows have secured, protected, and expanded human rights for over 2 Billion people, unlocking human potential and advancing the universal pursuit of life, liberty, dignity and happiness.



THEORY OF CHANGE

GFiC believes that if we identify and engage emerging human rights leaders and provide them with four essential elements, they will amplify and scale their impact worldwide:

Concepts

New technologies and tools, strategic frameworks, and best practices.

Cohort

A peer community of emerging leaders who learn from and support each other.

Connections

Access to expert coaches, mentors, advisors, and their global networks.

Capital

Access to global sources of funding to sustain and scale their work.

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

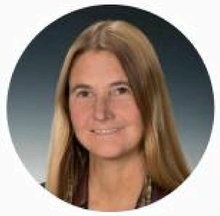
GFiC is led by a small but deeply committed team with expertise in international development, social entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and education.

Every member has built something before and brings that experience to everything we do.

Lorne Adrain

Founder/Volunteer

Has a long history of leading/launching initiatives that bring people together to help each other make a difference in the world — Social Enterprise Greenhouse, National Neighborhood Day, Kindmark, Community Across America to name a few. He has served as Chair of Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education and of the URI Foundation and as Vice President of the Harvard Business School Global Alumni Board.



Kelly Stone

Program Facilitator

She is co-founder and was the long-time CEO of Social Enterprise Greenhouse. A former Peace Corps Volunteer and US State Department Foreign Service Officer, Kelly has taught social entrepreneurship for 20+ years at universities including Brown, Michigan, Providence College, and RISD.

Eugenia Mazurenko

CEO

She is originally from Ukraine and is the founder of the "Philanthropy in Ukraine" platform and Chair of the board of Voices of Children. She joined GFiC in 2024 to lead the launch of the inaugural cohort, and in 2025 took full responsibility for the program, leading recruitment, selection, and program execution.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Global Fellows in Courage (GFiC) is a six-month virtual accelerator program designed for social entrepreneurs aged 25–35 who are advancing human rights and gender equity around the world.

The program is built around a core belief: **the right support, delivered at the right time, can ignite and sustain a promising young leader to become a lifelong effective changemaker.**

Even a 2-3% improvement in their effectiveness creates enormous impact over the course of their 40-50 year careers.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Everything begins with curating amazing Fellows. We do not wait for talent to find us, we actively source, screen, and select 45 Fellows from across the globe, prioritizing leaders who have demonstrated both the courage to challenge status quo and the capacity to lead sustainable change.

Once selected, Fellows enter a structured six-month Zoom-based accelerator focused on the core capabilities social entrepreneurs need to create sustainable, long-term impact. The curriculum is practical, rigorous, and designed around the real challenges Fellows face in scaling their work.

Paired with the accelerator curriculum is an intensive coaching component. Each Fellow is matched with an experienced coach who works with them individually throughout the program. This one-on-one support refines direction, accelerates growth, sharpens strategy, and strengthens the scalability of their initiatives. Coaching is complemented by access to a growing global network of practitioners, mentors, and peers.

We also support the Fellows financially by connecting them to funding sources and preparing them to make effective grant proposals.

In 2026, we will introduce a robust "GFiC Alumni" experience, designed to foster relationships and collaborations among Fellows.

The result is a stronger social entrepreneur and leader who will launch and lead stronger organizations that are better equipped to deliver measurable, sustainable, long-term impact.

- Recruitment
- Cohort Selection
- Six-Month Accelerator
- Coaching & Network Access
- Access to Capital
- *Measurable Long-Term Impact*

04 — WHY THIS WORK IS URGENT

The need for GFiC has never been greater and they need our support now. Human rights advocates around the world are operating in an environment of rising authoritarianism, increasing personal risk, and unreliable foreign aid.

And yet they show up, day after day, because they believe change is possible. They are building organizations, advocating for rights, and creating change in communities that need it most. GFiC helps Fellows build resilience, capacity and confidence to navigate whatever challenges they face.

AUTHORITARIANISM IS RISING

The number of authoritarian governments worldwide is growing. Civic freedoms are increasingly under threat. In half of the 24 countries regularly surveyed for US favorability, ratings have declined since 2024.

In this environment, non-governmental interventions from trusted, independent organisations are needed more than ever.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND SUPPORT IS INADEQUATE

Many emerging leaders today work outside established institutions, operate across borders or in fragile contexts, and assume responsibility earlier in their careers. They lack access to foundational leadership skills, trusted peer networks, and practical organisational support at precisely the moment those resources would make the greatest difference.

GFiC exists to fill that gap, not with a transaction, but with a community. A trusted ecosystem of coaches, mentors, donors, and peers who stand alongside young leaders for the long term.

FOREIGN AID IS VOLATILE

U.S. foreign assistance averaged nearly $72 billion in FY 2023. USAID, which historically distributed around $44 billion annually, has seen more than 80% of its programs terminated. The rollback of USAID's global operations could contribute to millions of avoidable deaths over the next decade due to weakened health systems and a collapse in essential services.

Several GFiC Fellows have lost funding directly as a result of these cuts. Their organisations, which provide legal aid, health education, climate resilience, and youth empowerment, cannot simply pause their work while the funding landscape shifts. GFiC helps them connect to alternative funding sources.

05 — OUR JOURNEY

GFiC believes that if we identify and engage emerging human rights leaders and provide them with four essential elements, they will amplify and scale their impact worldwide:

FROM PILOT TO SCALE: TWO YEARS OF BUILDING

57
Leaders Since 2024

4.9/5
Program Rating

60+
Pro Bono Coaches

2000+
Pro Bono Hours

2024: TESTING THE MODEL

In 2024, GFiC launched its inaugural cohort of 12 Fellows. The goal was not to scale, it was to learn. Each Fellow received a $10,000 grant to advance their project and was paired with a dedicated mentor. This was intentionally a high-investment, high-touch pilot because we wanted to understand what emerging human rights leaders truly needed, what worked, and what we would need to build.

The model worked. Fellows reported profound personal and professional growth. The combination of curriculum, coaching, peer connection, and financial support created something rare. A program that met leaders where they were and helped them go further.

38
Applications in 2024
20+countries

12
Fellows Selected
20+countries

11
Countries Represented

1.6M+
People Empowered

2,445
Applications in 2025
100+countries

45
Fellows Selected
20+countries

38
Countries Represented

2025: BROADENING OUR REACH

In 2025, we enhanced our outreach and recruiting efforts. We received 2,445 applications. That told us that many young people are dedicated to making change and that the demand for GFiC is enormous. From those applications, we selected 45 Fellows, three cohorts of 15, representing 38 countries and working across the full spectrum of human rights: gender equity, health access, climate resilience, civic engagement, legal reform, and more.

Every Fellow received a $2,500 stipend upon successful completion of the program. Our coach network grew to 60+ expert leaders who contributed 2000+ pro bono hours. And Fellows rated the overall program 4.9 out of 5.

OUR FELLOWS 2024 & 2025

For your courage, your trust in us, and your relentless commitment to a more just world. You are the reason we do this work.

Tunde Adeyemi
Nigeria

Deborah Akello
Uganda

Priyal Agrawal
India

Oluwadamilola Akintewe
Nigeria

Jummah Alsileeni
Libya

Dinara Auyelbekova
Kazakhstan

Memory Tapela Banda
Zambia

Augustus Nicko Bas
Philippines

Yasmina Benslimane
Morocco

Dr. Khadijah Bwanakheri
Tanzania

Dawsher Charles
Grenadian/Trinidad and Tobago

Shomy Hasan Chowdhury
Bangladesh/United Kingdom

Tara Grace Connolly
Northern Ireland

Tamana Farewar
Afghanistan/Germany

Brenda Formin
Cameroon

Imogen Gerraty
Australia

Isabella Grajczyk
Canada

Noemi Grütter
Switzerland

Shannon Asher Hardy
Sri Lanka

Alona Hryshko
Ukraine

Jessica Ilunga
Belgium

Racheal Kalinaki
Uganda

Rita Kamazima
Botswana

Aida Kandil
Morocco

Fatoumatta L Kassama
United Kigdom/Gambian

Pallavi Kejriwal
India

Muetter Iliqud
China

Sarah Imran
Pakistan

Victoire Mandonnaud
France/USA

Nishat Maryam
Pakistan

Maya Mitre
México

Yairy Vega Muenala
Ecuadorian/England

Ani Mukhigulashvili
Georgia/Sakartvelo

Elizabeth Mwangi
Kenya

Anastase Ndagijimana
Rwanda

Monique Ntumngia
Cameroon

Christiana Okere
Nigeria

Himanshu Panday
India

Chanu Peiris
Sri Lanka

Gabriela Oviedo Perhavec
Costa Rica

Surya M Rajendran
India

Question Jaden Ramontsho
Botswana

Dr. Nojus Saad
Iraq

Jhuma Sen
India

Furough Shakarmamadova
Tajikistan

Astha Sharma
Nepal

Sumesh Shiwakoty
Nepal

Mbali Pfeiffer Shongwe
South Africa

Axana Soltan
Afghanistan

Eden Tadesse
Ethiopia/Germany

Finbarr Toesland
United Kingdom

Giovanna Martins Vial
Brazilia/Lebanon

Bradford Watson
USA

Sohee Yang
South Korea

Mohammad Taqi Yasir
Bangladesh

06
— PROGRAM DETAILS

WHAT WE OFFER:
A PROGRAM BUILT FOR CHANGEMAKERS

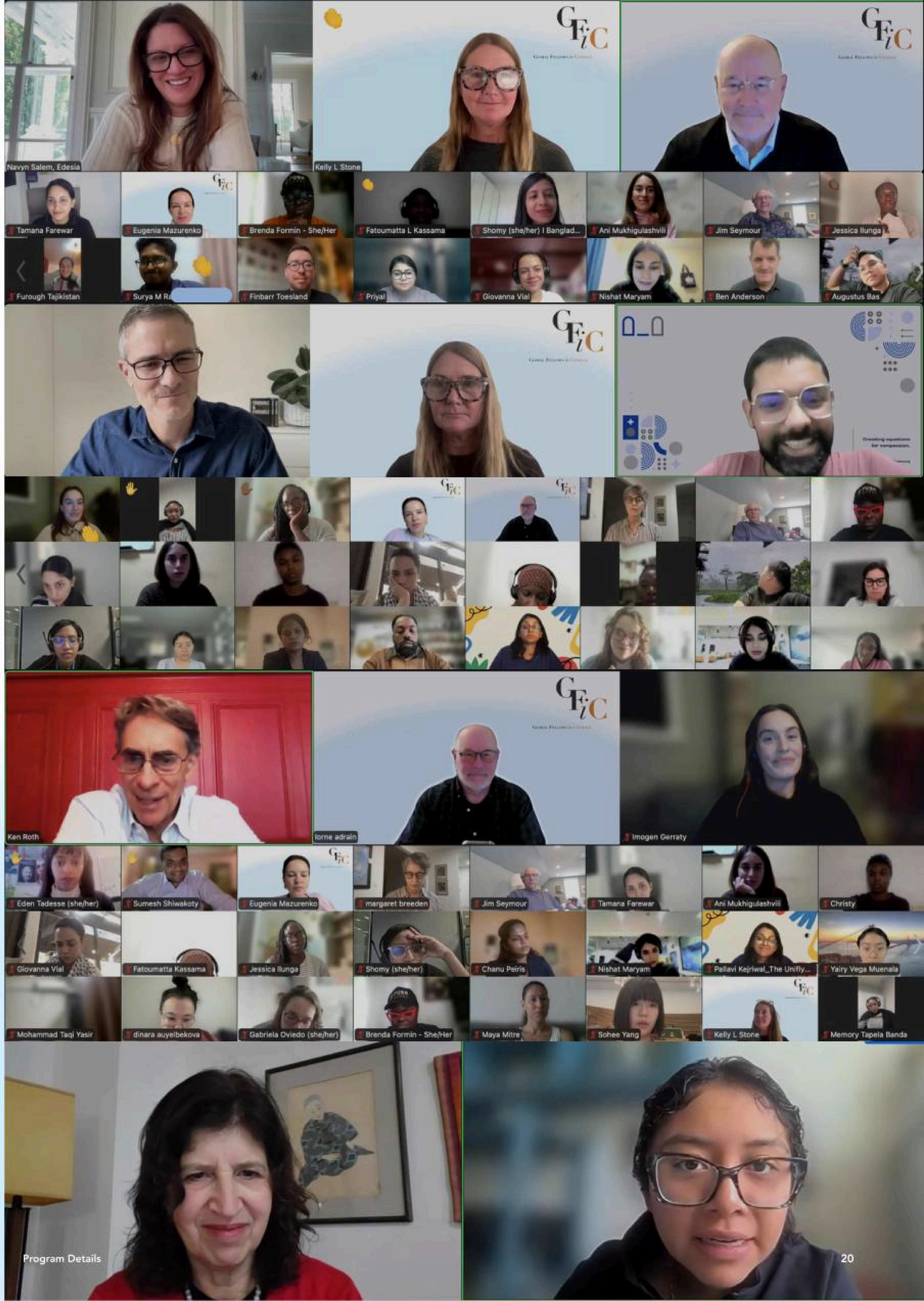
GFiC is built on a foundational insight: being a human rights leader is lonely, difficult, and chronically under-resourced. Our six-month program is designed to change that, by meeting Fellows where they are, providing practical tools, and building a community that lasts long after the program ends.

CONCEPTS & CURRICULUM

Fellows access a robust curriculum hosted on Canvas, a one-stop platform for all Fellowship tools, readings, and resources. Over six months, they participate in 36+ hours of live Zoom sessions covering topics from leadership and fundraising to AI strategy, systems change, and human rights' trends.

Each month features two types of sessions: a full-cohort session allowing discussion of world-class expert speakers, and a cohort breakout session organised around three thematic sub-cohorts, Economic Empowerment, Health & Wellness, and Civic Engagement & Advocacy. In these smaller sessions Fellows lead, share their own expertise and life experience, and connect deeply with each other.

Fellows have an average of six hours of homework each month. They read, listen, learn, work on their projects, and build their networks. For example, each month, Fellows meet one-on-one with a Fellow from another cohort and discuss how they are applying their learning to their mission.



Michael Zakaras
US Director, Ashoka

Len Schlesinger
Professor & Associate Dean,
Harvard Business School

Oleksandra Matviichuk
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Ken Roth
Former Executive Director, Human Rights Watch,
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Navyn Salem
Founder, Edesia

Thomas Tierney
Co-Founder, Bridgespan Group

OUR 2025 SPEAKER ROSTER INCLUDED SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST RESPECTED HUMAN RIGHTS AND LEADERSHIP VOICES, ALL CONTRIBUTING PRO BONO:

Oleksandra Matviichuk
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Ken Roth
Former Executive Director, Human Rights Watch, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Len Schlesinger
Professor & Associate Dean,
Harvard Business School

Thomas Tierney
Co-Founder, Bridgespan Group

Michael Zakaras
US Director, Ashoka

Navyn Salem
Founder, Edesia

"These sessions felt like a series of masterclasses. It was a huge privilege to hear from such high-level leaders and get a global perspective on human rights and strategy.

I would estimate that nearly half of the value I gained came from the interactive Q&A moments – which made the learning deeply collaborative."

— 2025 Fellow, Iraq

"There is a specific kind of loneliness in leadership. GFiC solved that by creating a room of true peers.

The most impactful moments weren't the presentations — they were the raw honesty during the breakouts and the deep dives into each other's life stories. That's where the real transformation happened."

— 2025 Fellow, United Kingdom

COMMUNITY & PEER CONNECTION

Fellows don't just learn together, they build lasting relationships. Through structured cohort sessions, peer one-on-ones, sharing of personal life stories, session check-ins, and an active WhatsApp community, Fellows create bonds that continue to generate real value long after the end of the program.

Every session opens with a check-in: a simple practice that creates space for honesty, vulnerability, and genuine human connection. And each Fellow has a dedicated 30-minute "spotlight" to share their life story, their context, and how they developed the commitment to their work. These activities create deep understanding, appreciation and care for each other.

COACHING & ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

Every Fellow is matched with a dedicated pro bono coach, an expert business or community leader who provides individualised support tailored to the Fellow's specific goals. In 2025, our network of 60+ coaches logged more than 2000 pro bono hours supporting Fellows on everything from strategic planning to fundraising to personal resilience.

Fellows rated the coaching experience 4.72 out of 5. Remarkably, 97.5% said they planned to remain in contact with their coach beyond the program, and the remaining 2.5% said they "may" stay in contact. Not a single Fellow planned to disconnect.

"Of all the elements of the Fellowship, the coaching was the most powerful. My coach didn't just advise, she helped us think clearly under uncertainty, make strategic choices at the right time, and build a foundation that could scale.

That's rare and invaluable for an early-stage founder."

— 2025 Fellow, India

CAPITAL: STIPENDS, GRANTS & FINANCIAL SUPPORT

GFiC knows that financial support is important as well. We offered Fellow stipends in 2024 and 2025 upon completion of the program. We also launched a competitive grant competition in 2025, based on Fellow engagement during the program and specific proposals they make to enhance their impact.

We received 30 applications, shortlisted 12 proposals for committee review, and will award grants in April 2026. These competitive grants will replace stipends going forward.

Beyond our direct grants, Fellows are using what they learn and the connections they have made in the program to secure significant new funding from external sources.

"The Fellowship gave me the confidence and the vocabulary to make bigger asks."

— 2025 Fellow, Ethiopia

SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM OUR 2025 COHORT ONLY TWO MONTHS AFTER GRADUATION INCLUDE:

- $33,000 grant from WACSI
- $25,000 in new organisational funding secured
- $20,000 to support 4 new schools in at-risk communities
- Support from the Segal Family Foundation
- $5,000 initial IPPF funding; pre-seed investment for a digital health venture
- Multiple corporate responsibility programme inclusions

07 — FELLOWS WHO ARE CHANGING THE WORLD

Numbers only tell part of the story. Real impact can also be seen through the stories of the Fellows themselves and the work they do. Often in very challenging environments. Here are the stories of seven Fellows from the 2025 cohort — each working in different countries, on different challenges, and with unique innovative approaches.

STORIES
OF COURAGE
IN ACTION

TAJIKISTAN

FUROUGH SHAKARMAMADOVA

Founder, Women Rockin' Pamirs — Opening The Mountains To Women

In the high-altitude landscapes of Tajikistan's Pamir mountains, where opportunities for women remain scarce and tourism is one of the few viable livelihoods, Furough Shakarmamadova chose a path few dared to follow. As a young woman passionate about nature, community, and equality, she stepped into the male-dominated world of mountain guiding, and brought a generation of women with her.

Furough founded Women Rockin' Pamirs, an organization dedicated to empowering girls and young women through mountaineering, leadership training, and eco-tourism. More than 50 women have graduated from her programs, many of whom now earn their own income as guides or through homestays and handicrafts. Her work with the Pamirs Eco-Cultural Tourism Association has helped women gain confidence, professional skills, and new economic independence.

Further, in 2025, Furough joined the Hamdeli Expedition in Nepal, a team of women from across the Himalayas who summited Yalung Ri at 5,630 meters. Together, they built trust, skill, and solidarity across borders, and vowed to continue to collaborate to open similar opportunities to other female leaders.

As a 2025 GFiC Fellow, she is advancing an ambitious national Community-Based Eco-Tourism model that strengthens local economies, protects the environment, and ensures women are at the decision-making table.

"Courage means daring to be different — sharing and living by your beliefs without fear, no matter what others say. When I established my organization, many thought I was unusual. But I didn't let their doubts stop me.

I followed my heart, stayed true to my vision, and ultimately succeeded."

— Furough Shakarmamadova, 2025 Fellow

THE GAMBIA

FATOUMATTA KASSAMA

Founder, Girls' Pride Group — Ending Period Poverty And Harmful Practices

In the Gambia, thousands of girls miss school every month because they cannot afford safe menstrual products. Fatoumatta Kassama decided to change that. Through Girls' Pride Group, she trains community members to produce reusable sanitary pads from locally available materials, using a "train the trainer" model that ensures the impact is community-driven and sustainable. To date, her work has positively impacted more than 100,000 people.

Fatoumatta chooses to confront stigma with empathy, turning personal pain into collective progress. As a 2025 GFiC Fellow, she is scaling her impact and leading a generation of African women transforming period poverty into possibility. One story she shares captures why: a young girl told her that receiving a reusable pad kit allowed her to stop missing class. She now has perfect attendance and dreams of becoming a nurse.

"The Fellowship has given me access to a global community of changemakers who share similar challenges and visions. Together, we are creating opportunities for collaboration beyond borders.

Courage means taking bold steps when others hesitate, and continuing to move forward even when the path is uncertain."

— Fatoumatta Kassama, 2025 Fellow

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

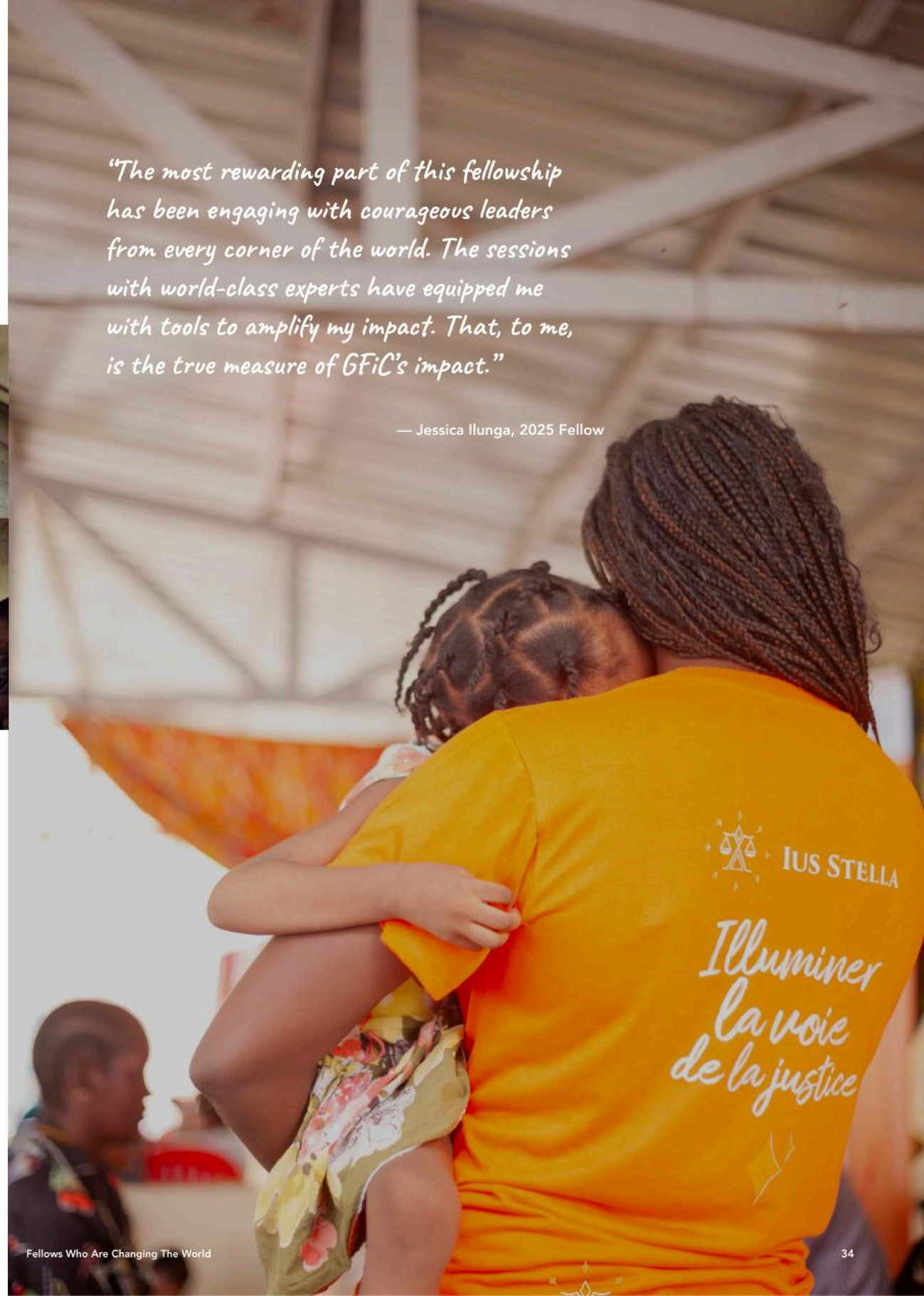
JESSICA ILUNGA

Founder, Ius Stella — Reimagining Justice From The Ground Up

In the DRC, arbitrary arrests and wrongful convictions are not isolated mistakes, they are systemic failures that erode trust, fuel poverty, and fracture communities. Jessica Ilunga founded Ius Stella to address this directly: providing legal aid, social and psychological support, and safe spaces where justice-impacted families can organise for change.

Since 2020, her team has assisted more than 3,000 incarcerated individuals and secured 400+ releases, restoring not only freedom but dignity and hope.

Her courage lies in daring to answer her calling even when the path feels uncertain. She envisions a justice system in the DRC that is truly people-centred. One where every person's dignity is respected, where stories become data, and data becomes systemic reform.



"The most rewarding part of this fellowship has been engaging with courageous leaders from every corner of the world. The sessions with world-class experts have equipped me with tools to amplify my impact. That, to me, is the true measure of GFiC's impact."

— Jessica Ilunga, 2025 Fellow

UNITED KINGDOM

FINBARR TOESLAND

Investigative Journalist — Defending LGBTQ+ Rights And Exposing Hidden Injustices

Finbarr Toesland investigates hidden injustices against marginalized communities, particularly LGBTQ+ people facing abuse, persecution, and erasure from humanitarian systems. His work is built on persistence: meticulous reporting in the face of resistance, and in honouring the courage of those who risk everything to speak out. The networks he investigates are designed to stay hidden. The survivors are often fearful but the work continues.

Through GFiC, Finbarr found something rare in investigative journalism: a community of peers who understand the weight of pursuing justice, and the resilience it takes to keep going. The Fellowship gave him structured time to pause and reflect, something journalism rarely permits, and helped him see his reporting as part of a wider movement for change.

"Journalism can be isolating, but knowing there is a group of peers who share the same drive for justice has been grounding. The fellowship has reminded me I am not working alone. Courage, to me, is the choice to speak or act when there is every reason to stay silent."

— Finbarr Toesland, 2025 Fellow

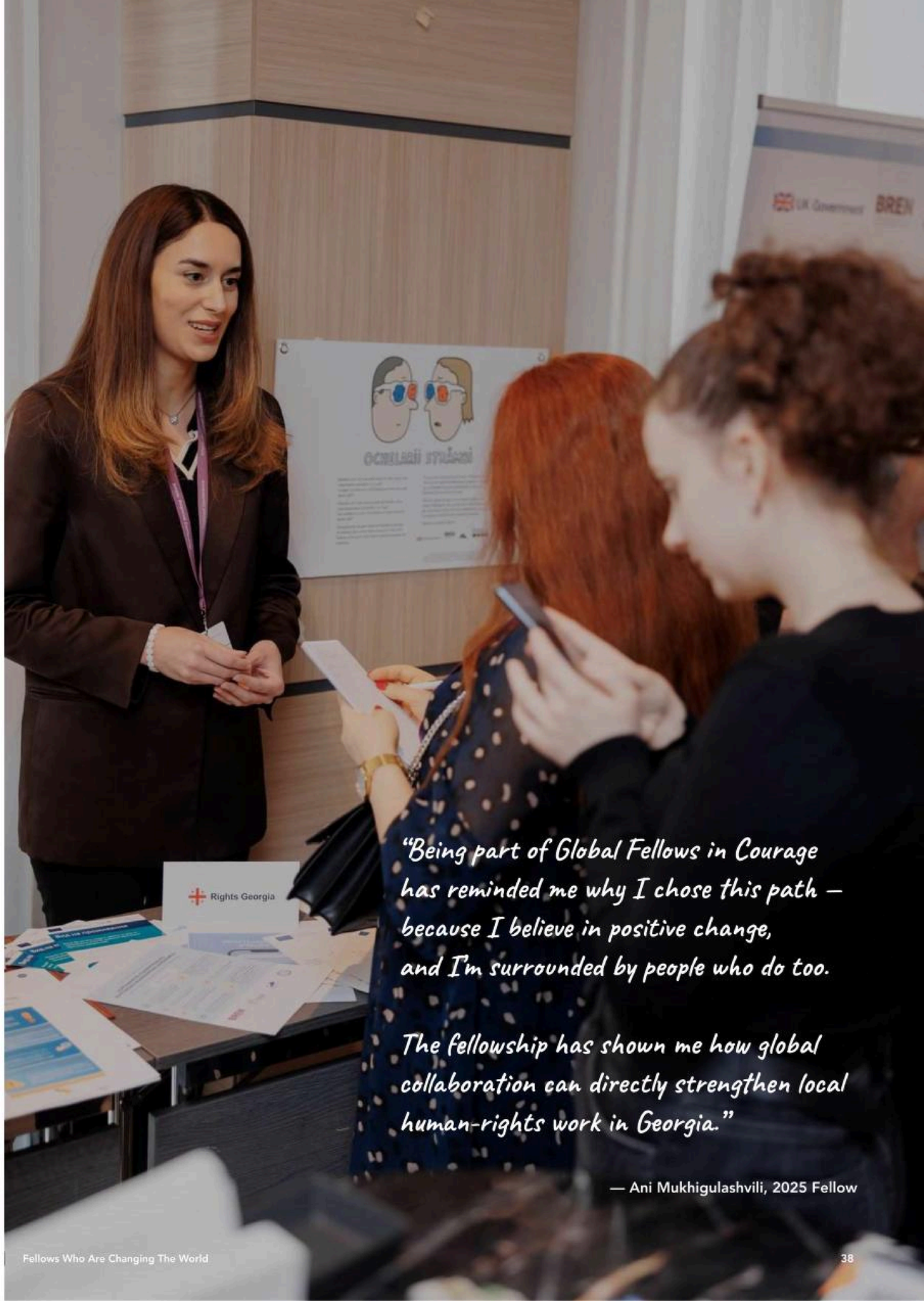
GEORGIA

ANI MUKHIGULASHVILI

Human Rights Lawyer, Rights Georgia — Empowering Youth To Shape Democracy

For Ani Mukhigulashvili, courage began in the courtroom — and in the classroom. As a young human rights lawyer from Georgia, she saw how the voices of rural youth were consistently missing from decisions that shaped their lives. She decided to change that. Today, Ani coordinates national coalitions advancing equality, youth participation, and judicial reform through Rights Georgia. She has helped empower hundreds of young people to become active citizens in communities too often overlooked.

Her work is especially significant in a country experiencing democratic backsliding and rising civic repression. As a 2025 GFiC Fellow, she is expanding her impact by connecting civic education, community leadership, and human rights protection to build a more inclusive democracy.



"Being part of Global Fellows in Courage has reminded me why I chose this path — because I believe in positive change, and I'm surrounded by people who do too.

The fellowship has shown me how global collaboration can directly strengthen local human-rights work in Georgia."

— Ani Mukhigulashvili, 2025 Fellow

NEPAL

SUMESH SHIWAKOTY

Human Rights Advocate — Building A Protection Shield For Women

I strive to live by my values, embrace uncertainty, and trust that perseverance is a virtue."

When Sumesh Shiwakoty returned to Nepal after studying abroad, one reality struck him harder than anything he had learned in the classroom: gender-based domestic violence had become so normalized that many no longer recognized it as violence at all.

Through Rakshya Kawach which means "protection shield" in Nepali, Sumesh equips vulnerable women with self-defense skills and community support. In 2025 alone, his team trained 371 women. His work was recognized by the Clinton Global Initiative, where he presented to President Bill Clinton and Dr. Chelsea Clinton. In addition, he is working to provide clean water in schools in his home and neighboring communities.

PHILIPPINES

AUGUSTUS NICKO BAS

Co-Founder & CEO, O1nnovations — Bringing Clean Water To Floating Communities

"Courage means choosing to get better by even just 1% every day. Losing money but gaining change, to me, is an act of courage."

In the marshlands of Mindanao, entire villages float on water yet they struggle to drink it. For Augustus Nicko Bas, a civil engineer turned social entrepreneur, this paradox became his life's mission.

As co-founder of 01nnovations Rainwater Solutions Corp., he designs rainwater harvesting and sanitation systems with and for climate-vulnerable communities, addressing not only the water crisis, but questions of dignity, equity, and survival.

His most memorable moment captures everything: the first time he taught families to build simple water filters and they saw clear water for the first time. Their joy, he says, was unforgettable.

He believes that true success is measured not in money, but in lives changed.

08 — FELLOWS IMPACT AND REACH

Although our Fellows are early in their careers (aged 25 to 35) the scale of their collective impact is remarkable. The 2025 cohort self-reported reaching more than 1.6 million beneficiaries through their work.

A BROAD RANGE OF INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Some Fellows are reaching hundreds of thousands through large-scale advocacy and policy campaigns. Others are working intensively with smaller groups through direct legal, health, or educational services. Together they represent every scale of human rights work, from individual casework to systemic change.

57 FELLOWS 40+ COUNTRIES 10 UNSDGS

1.6 MILLION PEOPLE EMPOWERED

10 UNSDGs

ADVANCING THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (UNSDGS)

Our Fellows are making meaningful contributions to 10 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Nearly all our Fellows reported making progress on:

SDG 5
Gender Equality

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls reproductive health education.

FELLOWS ALSO REPORTED PROGRESS ON THE FOLLOWING GOALS AS WELL:

SDG 1
No Poverty

SDG 3
Good Health & Well-Being

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls reproductive health education.

SDG 4
Quality Education

Skills training, school retention, and accessible learning for marginalised communities.

SDG 7
Affordable and Clean Energy

Deploying clean energy solutions like solar power and rainwater harvesting to improve community resilience and reduce resource scarcity.

SDG 8
Decent work and Economic Growth

Promoting entrepreneurship, providing vocational training, and securing fair employment for vulnerable populations.

SDG 10
Reduced Inequalities

Access to opportunity for marginalised, displaced, and underrepresented groups.

SDG 13
Climate Action

Work focused on climate resilience, environmental protection, sustainable resource management, and climate justice advocacy.

SDG 16
Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

Access to justice, accountability, policy dialogue, and social cohesion.

SDG 17
Partnerships for the Goals

Building multi-stakeholder coalitions and cross-sector partnerships to amplify impact and achieve shared development objectives.

09 — WHAT WE LEARNED

FIVE THINGS WE LEARNED IN OUR FIRST YEAR AT SCALE

2025 was an ambitious year of scale and continuous improvement. Here is what we discovered about building courageous leaders in a complex and rapidly changing world.

1. PEER CONNECTION IS THE HEART OF THE PROGRAM

Fellows consistently named relationships with each other as among the most valuable aspects of the Fellowship — often above the expert speakers, the coaching, or the curriculum. The loneliness of leadership is real, and GFiC addresses it directly. The check-ins, the Fellow Spotlights, the one-on-one peer connections were core to the program.

2. COACHING WORKS BEST WHEN IT IS LONG-TERM AND FLEXIBLE

The most impactful coaching relationships were those that evolved over time from strategic advisor to trusted thought partner. 97.5% of Fellows plan to stay in contact with their coach after the program. Our model, which pairs Fellows with coaches for the full six months, reflects this insight. We will continue to deepen and formalise this in 2026.

3. FELLOWS LEADING GROUP DISCUSSIONS HONORS WHAT THEY KNOW

Our Fellows enter the program with extraordinary experiences. When we created space for them to lead sessions, share their stories, the context in which they do their work, and their curiosity, the program came alive. The insights and knowledge Fellows contributed during discussions were, as one Fellow noted, "equally informative" to what the expert speakers brought. In 2026, we will further expand this model.

"I was able to connect with 18 fellows, and this was definitely one of the most valuable parts of the fellowship. These connections have been deeply inspiring, both the fellows as individuals and their projects. I gained an incredible amount of inspiration, motivation, and new role models."

— 2025 Fellow, Mexico

4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS IMPORTANT

Funding goes further in many of the countries where our Fellows do their work. Our Global Impact Prize competition, now in its first round, will be an important opportunity for financial support. Finally, connections made throughout the Fellowship to foundations and philanthropists have opened up new capital access opportunities.

5. THE DEMAND TELLS US OUR WORK IS NEEDED

2,445 applications for 45 Fellow slots is a signal. The pipeline of extraordinary human rights leaders who need this kind of support is deep and global. We find them, support them, and connect them to each other and to the world. We do not expect the pipeline to diminish as human rights violations continue to persist throughout the globe.

10 — IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"GFiC came at a critical moment in my leadership journey, when my work was growing in complexity and scale. It helped me pause, reflect, and lead with greater intention.

GFiC strengthened my confidence as a leader working at the intersection of health, gender, and human rights. The peer support, mentorship, and shared learning created a community that continues to inspire, challenge, and support my work beyond the Fellowship."

— 2025 Fellow, Uganda

"The Fellowship provided a rare combination of practical tools, reflective space, coaching, and a supportive peer community that allowed me to pause, refine my vision, and lead with greater clarity and confidence.

Most importantly, the Fellowship affirmed the importance of purpose-driven leadership and reinforced my commitment to building sustainable, community-centred solutions."

— 2025 Fellow, Costa Rica

"The fellowship experience has been truly life-changing. What stood out most is the space GFiC created where fellows could share not only our successes, but also our failures and vulnerabilities. That atmosphere of trust and authenticity is incredibly powerful. Knowing that this work is hard, and it is not just me who is struggling, has validated my experiences in a way I did not expect."

— 2025 Fellow, Nepal

WHAT FELLOWS ARE SAYING

No metric captures the transformation of GFiC better than the words of our Fellows. Here is a small sample of what the 2025 cohort shared about their experience.

"I would like to highlight the importance of the Fellowship as a space of care for human rights defenders. Beyond the programme's intellectual and technical value, the financial support provided and the intentional spaces to step back from daily work were deeply meaningful.

For many defenders, time and capacity are almost entirely absorbed by urgent work, leaving little room for reflection or long-term visioning. GFiC created a rare opportunity to pause."

— 2025 Fellow, Tanzania

"GFiC had a profound impact on me. Even with the experience I brought into the programme, being part of this cohort challenged me to see my work through new lenses, consider alternative approaches, and appreciate the value of collaboration across different contexts."

— 2025 Fellow, Iraq

11 — BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY

OUR COACH COMMUNITY

Our 60+ volunteer coaches are one of GFiC's most valuable assets. In 2025, we improved our onboarding and matching process, increased networking opportunities among coaches, and began positioning coaches as critical long-term ambassadors and supporters of GFiC's mission. In 2026, we will deepen this further by organising more in-person gatherings, developing a dedicated coach engagement plan, and recognising coaches as a distinct and vital stakeholder community. We will also segment advisors into subject matter/market segment/mentor roles, and enhance the matching process to allow coaches to identify to whom they might be most helpful.

COACHING IS A VALUABLE AND LASTING ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM

Fellows rated the value of their coach relationship at a 4.72 out of 5.00. Further 97.5% of our Fellows said they planned to remain in contact with their coach beyond the duration of the Fellowship with the remaining 2.5% said they may remain in contact.

COACHES HELPED CONNECT FELLOWS TO NEW NETWORKS

63% of Fellows reported that their coaches connected them with people in their own networks that can help them advance their impact.

SAMPLE OF COACH REFLECTIONS:

"My Fellow has requested that I join the newly formed advisory board as Governance, Leadership, & Strategy role. She has been very open to the ways we pushed for clarity of mission and therefore, directed the strategy for her activities, which for many founders is difficult. She reported that her time was significantly beneficial in this program and in our coaching partnership."

"Bradford and I will continue to work together beyond the program. In what capacity, I'm not exactly sure, but I will continue to do my best to be a helpful source for him in the years to come."

WHAT OUR FELLOWS ARE SAYING ABOUT COACHES:

"Don connected me to so many people doing work in the water tech sector. This expanded network is key for my work."

— Augustus

"My coach Kate connected me to many organizations including Tourism Cares. These are key connections as I work to expand my impact."

— Furough

"My coach Julie connected me to the main person in Barbados who is head of the International Development Bank."

— Dawsher

GROWING THE MOVEMENT

GFiC's impact extends beyond our Fellows. In 2025, we continued building the community of coaches, strategic partners, supporters, followers and the organizational infrastructure to support this growing community and our scale aspirations.

4.72 / 5.00

Coach relationship value rating

97.5%

Continuing coach relationships post-Fellowship

WHAT OUR FELLOWS ARE SAYING ABOUT COACHES

"I plan to remain in contact with my coach beyond the duration of the Fellowship, as his insights, examples, and guidance have been valuable and will continue to support the growth and execution of our project.

The coaching was the most practical part of the fellowship. While the all-cohort sessions were inspiring, the coaching sessions were where the 'work' actually happened."

— 2025 Fellow

"Of all the elements of the Fellowship, probably the coaching was most powerful. Meg didn't just advise; she helped us think clearly under uncertainty, make strategic choices at the right time, and build a foundation that could scale. That's rare and invaluable guidance for an early-stage founder. What made the coaching especially effective was its continuity-from the first call to the last, it evolved with Kubeli's growth.

I would strongly encourage GFiC to preserve this coaching model, especially for founders at ideation and early-build, where a single little push can make all the difference in changing the complete trajectory of a venture at a perfect time."

— 2025 Fellow

"The coaching aspect of the GFiC Fellowship was highly valuable and impactful. Having dedicated one-on-one time created space for honest reflection, strategic thinking, and personal growth. The coaching sessions helped bring clarity to my vision, challenge assumptions, and refine how I approach leadership and decision-making.

What stood out most was the supportive and thoughtful nature of the coaching relationship. It provided not just technical guidance, but also encouragement and accountability, which were essential in navigating complex work and long-term goals.

Going forward, additional touchpoints or extended coaching time could further enhance the experience, especially during key moments of project execution and scaling.

Overall, the coaching component was a strong and meaningful part of the Fellowship that significantly contributed to my growth and direction."

— 2025 Fellow

OUR PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS

GFiC is strengthened by its partnerships. Brown University's Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies has been a valued partner in our program since its inception. Examples of other key collaborators include Harvard's Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights, Ashoka, Human Rights Watch, the Eisenhower Fellowships, Bridgespan and many others.

Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs
BROWN UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN STUDIES

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

HARVARD Kennedy School
CARR-RYAN CENTER for Human Rights

ASHOKA

EISENHOWER FELLOWSHIPS

The Bridgespan Group

SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Our online community continues to grow. LinkedIn has reached 3,115 followers and Instagram 1,880. Our monthly newsletter now reaches 6,000 readers with Fellow impact stories, programme updates, and reflections from our team.

In 2025, we also began receiving our first press coverage. Fellow stories from the Impact page at globalfic.org have been shared widely, and we are actively building the storytelling infrastructure to amplify our Fellows' work in 2026 and beyond.

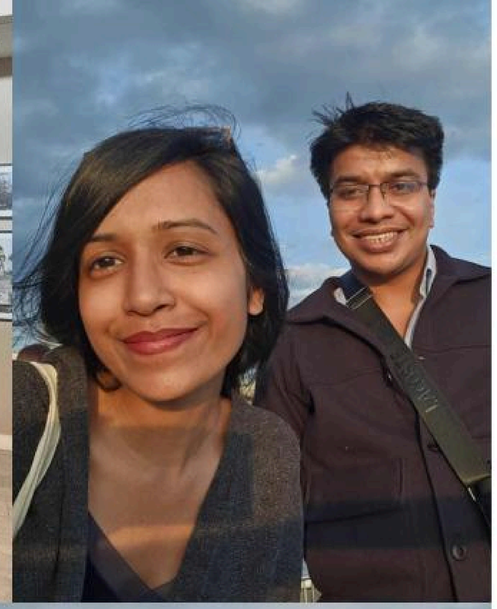
3,115
LinkedIn Followers

1,880
Instagram Followers

6,000
Newsletter Readers

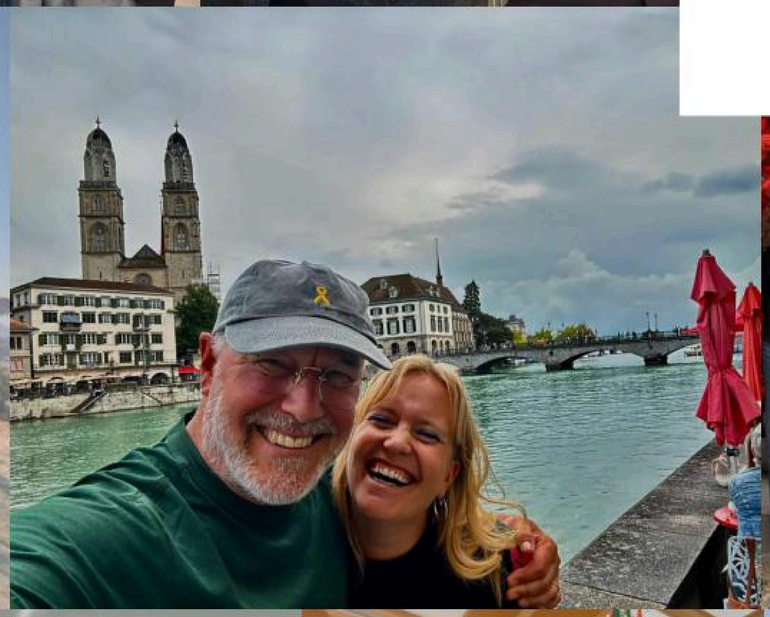
35k
Active Website Users

Discover Impact Page



COMMUNITY IN ACTION

GFiC is a virtual program — but the relationships fellows build extend far beyond Zoom. Across cities and continents, fellows are meeting on their own terms, proving that this community lives well beyond the curriculum.



12 — WHERE THE MONEY GOES

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

2023

GFiC was simply an idea in early 2023. In the first months of the year, we sketched out what a Zoom-based accelerator might look like. In the latter half of the year, we committed to testing the idea in 2024 and focused our attention on designing the Fellowship experience, developing a recruitment strategy and developing a curriculum. The costs of planning the Fellowship were funded by grants from Rhode Island Foundation DAF funds and administered through AS220, a well known local community organization, who was serving as our fiscal sponsor.

Rhode Island Foundation

AS220

2024

GFiC received its 501c3 status. We conducted our 12 Fellow pilot with funding from a small number of early supporters and several Donor Advised Funds. In addition to the $110,000 we allocated to stipends in 2024, program delivery $120K, we had staff and operating costs of $50K, marketing $20K.

TOTAL EXPENSES 2024 — $300,000

- Organization leadership & development — $50K (17%)
- Program delivery — $120K (40%)
- Fellow stipends — $110K (37%)
- Marketing & communications — $20K (6%)

2025

We nearly quadrupled the scale of the Fellowship, enrolling 45 Fellows, with a modest increase in budget to $370,000, funded through a mix of individual gifts, donor-advised funds, and loans. We reduced Fellow stipends to $2,500 each, with a total allocation of $120,000.

We also allocated $50,000 for Fellow financial support through the new Global Impact Prize, a competitive awards program to fund the most impactful Fellow project proposals. This opportunity was offered to the 2025 cohort and is being implemented in Q1 2026.

Other major budget categories remained broadly consistent with 2024. Notably, staff and overhead expenses in 2025 were nearly unchanged, yet supported almost four times as many Fellows, more than 60 new coaches, and a significantly strengthened curriculum.

TOTAL EXPENSES 2025 — $370,000

- Organization leadership & development — $80K (22%)
- Program delivery — $140K (38%)
- Fellow stipends — $120K (32%)
- Marketing & communications — $30K (8%)

A HIGHLY LEVERAGED BUDGET

Our network of 60+ coaches, plus volunteer expert speakers plus network of volunteers contribute 2000+ hours of expert workshops, coaching and leadership support pro bono.

This represents more than $200,000 in contributed value. This investment doesn't appear in our budget but makes a profound impact on the Fellows.

Pro bono coaches

60+

Expert coaches matched 1:1 with every Fellow

Hours contributed

2,000+

Workshops, coaching, and leadership support

Contributed value

$200K+

Not in our budget — but profound in impact

2026 AND BEYOND

Program Year 2026 and beyond, will see the same number of Fellows, 45, with a similar budget of $350,000 for the core staff and operating overhead, and $50,000 for the Global Impact Prize competition. With greater success in fundraising, we aim to make modest additions to staff, offer more focused alumni programming, and offer an in-person gathering of over 100 current and alumni Fellows.

Beginning in 2026, we will seek institutional funding from private foundations, and build the capacity for effective and consistent fundraising beyond our founders' networks.

13 — LOOKING AHEAD

2026 AND BEYOND: GROWING A MOVEMENT AND EXPANDING IMPACT

As we look to 2026, we know the work of our Fellows is more important than ever and we will continue to improve our efforts to accelerate their impact.

We are building more partnerships with other aligned organizations around the world. We are further strengthening our curriculum, deepening our coach network, and investing in the operational infrastructure that will allow GFiC to grow sustainably over the next decade.

We will continue offering the Global Impact Prize competition and will be developing and implementing Alumni programming that provides opportunities for continuous learning and extending connections with thousands of like-minded GFiC applicants who we were not able to include in the Fellowship itself.

Finally, we are laying the groundwork for long-term financial sustainability including refining our board and governance, building a development committee, and expanding our fundraising capacity beyond the founder's personal network. In 2026, we will begin to apply for support from foundations and work to raise an endowment to enhance sustainability.

THE PATH TO 300+ FELLOWS BY 2030

By 2030, we aim to have supported 300+ Fellows in 100+ countries, building a network of human rights leaders who know and trust each other. Our network will have secured, protected, and expanded human rights for over 2 billion people.

In closing, the world needs courageous leaders. We are here to find them, encourage them, and equip them to make a bigger and better difference in the world.

Join us

GLOBALFIC.ORG

With gratitude and courage!

COACHES

Antoine van Agtmael
Bill Allen
Sam Azar
Babylonia Aziz
Roy Ballentine
Margaret Breeden
Don Carlson
Sach Chandaria
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Maida Soghikian, MD
Simra Sohail
Joe Steele
Jonathan Stone
Meg Stowe
Jessica Walker
Gordon Weiss
Laura Winningham
Julie Wolinsky
Karina Wood

SPEAKERS

Ben Anderson
Sam Azar
Kevin L. Brown
Chesley Chen
Deborah Denenberg
Jessi Hempel
Oleksandra Matviichuk
Arnell Milhouse
Alexandra Morehouse
Anne Pratt
Mathias Risse
Mike Ritz
Kenneth Roth
Navyn Salem
Leonard Schlesinger
Thomas Tierney
Michael Zakaras
Conley Zani

BOARD

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Mickey Ackerman
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Einat Keinan
Geoffrey Kirkman
Adam Levine
Candace Lightner
Sarah Morgenthau
Pablo Rodriguez
Gordon Weiss
Laura Winningham

IMPACT PRIZE COMMITTEE

Jim Seymour
Selena Cuffe
Malabika Sarker

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Lorne Adrain
Eugenia Mazurenko
Kelly Ramirez Stone

EXPERTS

We have built an expert team of social impact leaders from around the world who support the work we do.

Ariane Anusbigian
Michael Allio
Susannah Bales
Michelle Akapnitis
Robert L. Carothers
Stefanie Engelhardt
Antonieta Falconi
Delecia Forbes
Betty Galligan
Olha Norenko
Michelle Novello
Ray Nunez
Madison Paulk
Meredith Pearson
Yuliia Rainchuk
Zoya Zherelnikova

THANK YOU

None of this would be possible without the extraordinary community that has come together around GFiC. We all know the phrase "It takes a village" and this has proven true for GFiC. So many business and community leaders, institutions, donors, and incredible leaders have made our mission possible.

Our deepest thanks to the Brown University Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies for helping us develop and launch this program.

OUR DONORS

We are grateful to our 100+ generous donors who believe in our mission and have supported the development of the organization. Without YOU, none of this would have been possible.

OUR COACHES

Thanks to the extraordinary leaders who gave their time, wisdom, networks, and encouragement all pro bono. You have changed lives.

DONATE

GLOBAL FELLOWS *in* COURAGE

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