# BEVISIONEERS

THE MERCEDES-BENZ FELLOWSHIP

2023-2024 cohort

MEET THE FELLOWS

# LELLOW BIOS



THE MERCEDES-BENZ FELLOWSHIP

**beVisioneers is a global Fellowship** that equips innovators aged 16 to 28 with the training, expert support and resources to bring their planetpositive projects to life.

At the core of the beVisioneers Fellowship is a 12-month hybrid-learning program that focuses on the implementation of each Fellow's project. Funded by a donation from Mercedes-Benz, beVisioneers aims to train 1,000 fellows annually by 2025.

Now in its pilot year, 102 beVisioneers Fellows are participating in the program from June 2023 to May 2024.

# Meet the Fellows and discover their planet-postive projects.

# Deep dive on Fellow numbers









THE MERCEDES-BENZ FELLOWSHIP



**PROJECTS IN** 

India

AROSITIVE. BE PLANET.

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

# HERE PLANET-POSITIVE OJECTS COME TO LIFE

# WHERE **PLANET-POSITIVE** PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

# **Akhilesh Anil Kumar**





### Bio

Devastating floods, rising temperatures, coastal erosion, and cyclones have forced many people to become refugees – Akhilesh's home state of Kerala in India is experiencing some of the worst effects of climate change. In 2019, the young campaigner founded an NGO for youth-led policy advocacy. He has reached more than 10,000 young people; developed critical studies, reports, documentaries, and books; and hosted international and national conferences. His latest idea is the International Alliance for Climate Refugees. Akhilesh wants to combine community-led on-the-ground monitoring with capacity building for civil society organizations and human rights tracking with high-level policy negotiations. His alliance aims to be a global platform for dialogue and advocacy, raising crucial awareness about the impacts of climate change on human displacement - an issue still woefully neglected on the international stage.

### Bio

SuryaGanga translates roughly as "a riverine network of the sun". It's the name of a project that aims to mainstream the adoption of solar energy in communities across India. The country has a high potential for the use of solar - but much of it remains untapped. Ansh, the young change-maker behind SuryaGanga, wants to install solar panels in local schools, creating a ground-level network of new solar across the country. The funds saved can be reallocated to improving teaching or buying new equipment. Once the first schools show successful results, Ansh is convinced others will follow. To drive the project, he wants to onboard government and private stakeholders, and Geostrata, an Indian youth-led think tank Ansh is a member of, has already committed to supporting the project by allocating human resources.

# Ansh Tyagi





# **Aparupa Patnaik**



### Bio

In India, Aparupa is concerned about the future of dance. As a classical dancer herself, she knows how important the performance of Odissi is for the Jagannath cult and society more widely. What concerns her is the ornate headgear Odissi dancers wear. It is made from shola pith, the milky-white, spongy core of the shola plant. It grows in marshy, waterlogged areas, which are increasingly affected by climate change. Already, many artisans have switched to plastic, which is cheaper - adding to the problem of plastic pollution. Slowly, a heritage is being lost. That's why Aparupa is working on alternatives. Can the marshy land be created artificially? How can healthy shola growth be assured for generations to come? With her project, this driven young artist wants to make sure the dancing continues.



### Bio

For Apurvanidhi, it began with a thrift store. Having declared textile waste her enemy, the young designer set out to sell pre-loved clothes online. She organized pop-ups and collaborations with green spaces but soon realized: simply reselling clothes isn't enough; what's needed are long-term systemic solutions. Apurvanidhi identified that some of the biggest issues in textile waste management were about connectivity, and that's why, with A.gain, she wants to connect the dots: using existing systems and community engagement to create beautiful upcycled products with mass appeal. Having started at zero, creating small items with local tailors, Apurvanidhi is ready to scale up. Her ambitious, inclusive project looks set to create employment for homeless people and those struggling to find work, support fair conditions in the textile industry, and work towards a circular economy in India.

# Apurvanidhi Mukim





# **Ashish Pahwa**





About 95% of electronic waste in India is still being processed in the unorganized sector: untrained workers carry out practices unsafe for both human health and the environment; large amounts go to landfill after primary use. Ashish's solution is called *ReUpyog* – a venture that aims to bring together technicians, local sellers, refurbishers, and companies in a new digital marketplace for renewed electronic products. Robust quality checks assure the highest quality; a bidding system allows refurbishers to buy back used products from customers; and there's a platform for trade between suppliers. The data engineer – who serves as President of the Indian Youth Climate Network and has been plugged into collective climate action for years – has developed his system to benefit the entire ecosystem, routing harmful waste away from landfill, boosting official channels, and helping to create vital jobs in the repair industry.



### Bio

Plastic isn't just plastic these days, and with many different types making it into our households inducing fully biodegradable ones - it's easy for the consumer to get confused. What goes where? Which type should be recycled, and which composted? What needs to be discarded as regular waste? This is where Avhijit comes in with his solution: a new app that helps identify and separate through sophisticated in-app plastic vision technology. The young Indian change-maker hopes to raise public awareness and make households better recyclers. That, he is convinced, will not just improve efficiency at recycling plants - saving enormous amounts of time currently being spent before the actual recycling process begins - but reduce the accumulation of plastics in the environment overall.

# **Avhijit Nair**





# Ayadi Mishra



### Bio

Ayadi is on a mission to convince city dwellers to re-think their relationship with nature. The young architect from India argues that living in urban environments, we often don't realize how the richest biodiversity lies within our cities while monocultures exist outside of them. Her project, BiodiverCITIES, is a platform that will help mobilize those living in cities with easy-to-understand, easyto-implement actions, provide a safe space for discussion, and build a community that grows together. Her approach is informed by her belief that the local knowledge to look after nature in our cities has been there for a long time; what's missing implementation on a mass scale. Once is established in her city, Ayadi wants her "community of shared values" to keep building across the region of central India – and beyond.



### Bio

Fresh produce is perishable, and this simple, unavoidable fact restricts many Indian farmers to a very tight timeframe: either they sell all their produce within it, or they risk losing it. The result of the latter is wastage and food decomposition, releasing tonnes of climate-damaging methane into the atmosphere. Ayush's solution to this widespread environmental problem combines solar technology with a clever evaporative cooling system and a community approach. He calls it Agricold: a community storage facility that extends the shelf life of perishable items and gives farmers a much wider window to sell. Less food wastage means a more efficient farming industry, and this, he argues, could reduce water waste, chemical use, and deforestation to clear land. Farmers, meanwhile, would be able to earn more from the same amount of produce - simply because less of it is wasted.

# **Ayush Bhaskar Kale**





# Chaitanya Sakre



### Bio

In Mumbai, Chaitanya wants to tackle an issue that has been a fact of life ever since his school days, when he and his fellow students watched their area getting flooded – again and again. There is no doubt it's getting worse. Climate change is stretching Mumbai closer and closer to its limits; intenserainfall events, and the flooding they bring, occur almost every year. But the engineering student has a solution up his sleeve: water-absorbing porous asphalt. His material allows water to drain away properly - through the very surface that usually helps floods to form. What's more, Chaitanya's system includes a harvesting mechanism, which means locals can use the rainwater for their daily chores. Reduced flooding also means less construction and maintenance work in affected regions. Plus, new roads will have fewer potholes, another persistent problem in Mumbai.



### Bio

The more she thought about water usage, the clearer it became to Divyasree that, at the root of change, there's a simple process, something everyone can perform at home. With her project – working title: *Water Audit* – the young woman from India wants to provide locals with a blueprint for action. First, take a good look at your water consumption. Pay close attention, and consider each water-consuming action. What is this per week, per month? Next up, ask yourself: how can I

# **Divyasree Gorantla**



reduce? How can I reuse? Change leaking pipes, repair taps, and install a rainwater system. From homes she wants to take *Water Audit* to schools, and from there right through the community. At the core of her project lies the belief that as a planet to fight climate change, we need to start from an individual level, and slowly "become one".



# **Dwishojoyee Banerjee**



### Bio

Last year, India banned single-use plastics - a milestone in a country that generates around four million tons of plastic every year. Yet, many small vendors, such as flower sellers and vegetable stalls, can't afford to switch to sustainable alternatives; their profit margins are simply too small. Here's where Dwishojoyee comes in with The Paper Bag Project. In community workshops across the country, people are taught the skills to upcycle carrier bags from old newspapers, which are then collected and distributed free of charge. In 2022, more than 30 workshops across 21 cities involved 5,000+ people. 47,000 plastic bags were replaced. The passionate young campaigner behind the initiative is convinced that grassroots collaboration can build a bridge between the ban and the reality on the ground, creating a pathway of agency and action for people.

### Bio

Geetha, a creative young educator from India, is combining art and education to help shape a new generation of climate campaigners. Her project, Evolve through Art, aims to deliver workshops for middle and high school students: through art-based activities and discussions, students will develop critical thinking skills, connect with the world around them, and analyze the current state of climate change. Afterward, Geetha hopes they will use their deeper understanding to initiate the first campaigns within their communities: sharing their research, encouraging people to make more sustainable choices, collaborating with local organizations, and working with community leaders. As an educator, Geetha sees two interlinked challenges in the climate: a persistent lack of awareness about the severity of the situation and a lack of resources and support for actions and initiatives. With her project, she hopes to break the deadlock.

# Geetha Rukmini Thatikonda





# Harisharnam





### Bio

In many rural areas of India, cooking continues to be fired by traditional biomass - firewood, charcoal, and crop residues. Harisharnam is on a mission to change this and cut the climate-damaging CO2 and methane emissions that are the unavoidable consequence of the status quo. With his project he calls it EcoRural – the young change-maker wants to bring clean, sustainable energy solutions such as biogas and solar power to the villages around him. Reducing communities' dependence on biomass fuels, Harisharnam believes, is good for people who are suffering adverse health effects from traditional biomass. His project will also create new job opportunities: a skilled workforce will operate and maintain anaerobic digesters, biogas digesters, microturbines, and fuel cells. Ultimately, this ambitious campaigner is dreaming of villages blossom healthy, carbon-neutral that as ecosystems.

### Bio

Circular economies - models of production and consumption that put an emphasis on sharing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling - are a beautiful idea, but where to begin? In India, an aspiring young policy analyst is working on a platform that will connect researchers and experts in circular economies to designers, manufacturers, vendors, and consumers. Circular Alternatives aims to act as a databank for everyone who wants to launch into redesigning products: it's a peer network for collaborations and discussions, a onestop shop to learn, develop and scale up your ideas through lab and financial support, better market access, and opportunities to connect. The result, she hopes, will be a considerable uptake in circular products, with all the benefits they bring: affordability for households, less waste going to landfill, better resource efficiency, and reduced extraction and carbon emissions.

# **Jasmine Kaur**





# Joshua Ryan Almeida





### Bio

Joshua's work is based on a simple observation: right now, all things that are good - good food, good education, good lifestyles, in fact, good "anything" - are labeled an "alternative". They are inaccessible and often unaffordable. Joshua wants "good" for everyone. His project aims to create region-specific product lines of personal care products - made with the natural, renewable resources available in each region and by local people. No water pollution, no plastic packaging, no price tag that puts the products out of the majority's reach. Local supply chains will incentivise farmers to grow diverse crops as raw material, enhancing biodiversity, and often-ignored sections of the population given new employment are opportunities. Ultimately, Joshua wants to design a rural economic system that aims to create happy communities and healthy ecological systems something that's "good" through and through.

### Bio

From the backwaters of Kerala to the white sands of Gujarat - India has swathes of outstanding natural beauty. With Evoke, Mokshya wants to connect travelers with some of the country's finest nature in the most harmonized, localized, and sustainable way possible. His ecotourism venture is set up to preserve the local culture, create jobs and provide economic benefits for local communities. If you travel with Evoke, you might find yourself using banana leaves and jute fibers for composting or be taught other traditional Indian habits to live more sustainably. At lakes and rivers, you might learn about water management; elsewhere, local weaving techniques present an alternative to synthetic clothing. With his venture, Mokshya wants to promote sustainability and decarbonization while connecting ever more communities with the wonders of nature.

# Mokshya Wadhwa





# Muskan Gupta



### Bio

Muskan might still be a second-year student; she is also already an aspiring founder and entrepreneur with an ambitious project up her sleeve. With Araksa, she aims to counter two problems - food waste and plastic pollution – with a twin solution: a biodegradable film made from banana biomass. After harvest, almost 60% of banana biomass peels, stalks, leaves and other leftovers - remains as waste. Why not make better use of it? Muskan's clever solution means reduced plastic pollution, less waste after harvest, and - because fresh produce wrapped in her film will have a longer shelf life less waste from consumption. The ambitious young change-maker from India is already working on a B2B business model. Now she hopes to collaborate with other innovators and entrepreneurs to develop her ideas further.



### Bio

For Neha, paper waste isn't waste but precious material. The young architect from India is one of the three co-founders of *Cella*, a new venture that wants to provide the construction industry with a sustainable, upcycled, bio-based product for interior solutions. The secret is a unique material mix that turns paper waste into a high-value-added product. It can be fabricated in a variety of ways, providing an alternative to existing products such as MDF or plywood boards. In recent years, Neha has noticed

# Neha Jayanth Pattanshetti



a rapid growth in the demand for high-quality, costeffective, durable, and long-lasting products for interiors. But while some green product solutions are emerging in the market, there are challenges in acceptance on a larger scale. The three women behind *Cella* are out to change this.



# **Prashant Jibhakate**





### Bio

For Prashant, energy means empowerment. The young Indian change-maker has developed plans for a community-led renewable energy cooperative in the tribal districts of Maharashtra. Fully owned and managed by the local community, his collective will provide affordable and sustainable energy solutions to households, businesses, and institutions. And while the focus will be on promoting renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind power, Prashant also plans to integrate indigenous knowledge and practices, such as honey bee keeping and medicinal plant cultivation. The aim of Energy4Empowerment is the creation of a sustainable development model that empowers local communities and promotes environmental sustainability through training and support. Prashant believes it will help to improve the quality of life for local residents and - by reducing their dependence on expensive, polluting energy sources - reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change.

### Bio

In Bangalore, a fashion designer has built her own small business around two core beliefs: that clothes are made to fit bodies and not the other way around; and that sustainability should be at the core of every fashion venture. That's why Priya is handcrafting the perfect fit, no matter what shape or size, in an operation that couldn't be further removed from the mass production she feels is harming communities and the environment: Ellira promotes fair wages, local workers, and good working conditions; hand-woven cotton trumps polyester; and there's minimal waste, with no plastics to be seen in packaging or anywhere in the process. With a mission to make sustainable, ethical clothing more affordable to an ever wider range of people, the young entrepreneur is ready to take Ellira to the next level.

# **Priya Srinivas**





# **Risav Ganguly**



### Bio

Risav was only a child when his grandfather caught the respiratory infection that would take his life. From that moment on, air pollution is "like a demon" - something Risav will dedicate himself to fighting. For his latest project, this ambitious young changemaker from India is turning wastewater into energy. The key is "microbial fuel cells": microorganisms take the synthetic energy of natural mixtures in the water and, acting as small "bioreactors," turn them into electricity. As India's energy demand is expected to grow faster than any other country in the world over the next two decades, much of it will be met with the dirtiest of all fossil fuels: coal. At the same time, the country generates approximately 61,754 million liters of wastewater every day, the majority of which goes untreated. With his "bioreactors," Risav is connecting the dots.

### Bio

Rohan believes that conscious living has deep roots in Indian culture, and this is the philosophy behind his project, WIBHOO. It's an online ecosystem that connects products, services, artists, businesses, and everyone who wants to work on building a more sustainable and peaceful future. Through its online marketplace, people can buy and sell sustainable products and services, from home items to food, from fashion to baby care. Behavioral change matters, but Rohan argues that we are not serious enough about changing our lifestyles. A lack of structures and systems means people aren't yet able to effortlessly incorporate sustainability into their lives. With WIBHOO, he wants to go some way to filling this gap - and create a kind of backing architecture, an emerging infrastructure for the sustainable Indian society he is dreaming of.

# **Rohan Jadhav**





# Rohit Gavali



### Bio

Rohit has been spending a lot of time thinking about cars. The mechanical engineering graduate does not only believe that electric cars are the future; he is developing a model with another unique feature: its size adapts to the number of passengers. You're out with the entire family? Sure, you may need four or more seats. What, though, if only one person is using the car? In Rohit's prototype, it can simply be pneumatically retracted. Apart from the immediate result – more space on the road – the concept also aims to lead to fewer emissions, with families needing just one vehicle for multiple purposes and environments. And less energy is needed to move the contracted vehicle, compared with one that stays the same size. But the young visionary is one step ahead already: a future model should be powered by air alone.



### Bio

One day, you're playing with some unsuccessful growing in your garden. Next, you're being awarded a prize at a major US science fair. That's what happened to Sarvesh, and the in-between bears all the hallmarks of a visionary. What the student from India came up with, and then spent the next two years developing, is a novel bio-pesticide. At the time, the only tree around him that didn't seem to be damaged by pests was a Ramphal, a common fruit tree. Let's use that, he thought. Sarvesh taught himself the basics of chemistry, biochemistry, and entomology, and before he knew it, he had a smallscale, affordable product that might reduce water pollution, preserve soil fertility, and reduce the demise of critical biodiversity. Sarvesh can't wait to launch it beyond his lab, and help farmers transform their operations.

# Sarvesh Prabhu





# Sethu Parvathi Kurup



### Bio

Environmental action is building across India, but there's a disconnect between the many different groups, forums, and places where it's taking place. How can we bring together these driving forces and enable a more informed and connected approach to tackling climate change and other issues? Sethu's answer is an open, web-based social platform – she calls it GreenAgain – where people can share and gain knowledge on movements, events, and issues in their town or city. Users connect with like-minded people or groups. Existing connections in the environmental space are strengthened; new ones are being built. When she was a Youth Climate Champion, lack of awareness was one of the main challenges she observed. With GreenAgain she wants to invite everyone to join in, learn more, connect – and keep building this crucial movement.



### Bio

Most organizations, Shivam reckons, are keen to address the waste they generate. But many fail because they lack the knowledge, have no experience, or struggle to find partners and the necessary support. Sometimes, all three apply blocking the way to successful waste management. With his initiative, the young Indian change-maker wants to combine consultancy, education, and training into a grassroots, youth-led community force that breaks the deadlock. By reaching employees and students, Shivam believes he can carry his project right through the community, creating "waste champions" who will inspire others as they keep advancing their knowledge and skills. For Shivam, it's not just about mitigating the effects of bad waste management, which is directly fuelling the climate crisis, but about creating real social change, putting agency where, right now, often only helplessness resides.

# **Shivam Gupta**





# Shreya Umesh



### Bio

Shreya is dreaming of a new kind of space travel. Both fuel types currently being used to get rockets off the earth - solid and liquid - release vast amounts of residue as undesirable fumes during launch. Even liquid hydrogen, arguably the cleanest, most effective rocket fuel we have, requires extra energy to be refined. Shreya wants humanity to leapfrog to the next level. The young aerospace engineering graduate from India wants to create long-term space travel missions that are entirely devoid of carbon emissions - from launch to landing. Electric propulsion may hold the answer, and Shreya wants to play her part in developing these emerging technologies and contribute to cleaner, more advanced space travel. She is convinced that what this generation achieves in space exploration will create the foundation for future generations' prosperity as a species.



### Bio

Growing up, Simran learned the Sikh concept of "Vand Chhakho," which translates to: "Let's share what we have, and consume it together." The young woman from India has been trying to create her life around this ethos, living as sustainably as possible, but she knows that the real challenge is to catalyze behavioral change and consumer awareness more widely. With her latest project, KAAYI, Simran aims to be a one-stop shop for individuals, businesses, and organizations to put on more sustainable events. From choosing your venue (How do they rate on energy consumption?) to working with your food supplier (Can biodegradable cutlery be provided and is food waste management a consideration?), from sourcing gifts that are locally handcrafted to making sure your decor doesn't cost the earth; KAAYI has you covered, putting sustainability first on every level.

# **Simran Kaur**





# Suraj Yadav



### Bio

When he was young, Suraj would sometimes witness how an entire field of rice went to waste. The local wet-rice cultivation requires water at the right level. If the growers use a nearby canal to flood their fields and shortly after, heavy rainfall occurs, all could be lost. Suraj wants to develop what was missing back then: clever forecasting and machine-based learning that helps us understand what's to come. Most recently, he has turned his attention to the number of cars on our streets. His project, Clean Harbors, aims to predict how many cars should be sold in each district per year to keep air pollution levels and carbon emissions at manageable levels. From there, he wants to model factors such as water pollution and fine particle pollution - important data that can be used by the agricultural sector in each district.



### Bio

However frustrated Swathi may be with our lack of collective action to address climate change, her own motivation to create change is undiminished. The young woman from India is convinced that with ingenuity, science, technology, management, and care, we can create a renewable resource-based economy capable of providing for all of us without destroying the planet. Her most recent contribution is Strung, a new start-up she is co-founder and CEO of. With a small team, Swathi is working on developing an innovative technology for creating bio-based materials from organic waste. She is excited about the benefits: less water, less energy, no toxic chemicals. Worker health is improved, waste limited. Earlier this year, Strung worked in collaboration with a premier engineering college and completed the first trial of its latest product: it was an immediate success.

# Swathi Lakshmi Narayanan





# Triman Kaur



### Bio

Triman knows what it means to start out as a young environmentalist: no matter how good your ideas are, it's often an uphill struggle to be heard, for no other reason than your age. But instead of getting discouraged, this young woman from India chose to use those initial hurdles as an opportunity to become even more strategic, even more innovative. She refined her ideas and developed compelling new ways to communicate her message. Now, she stands ready to take renewable energy into India's rural communities. Her project envisions the hiring and training of local people to operate and maintain solar and wind energy systems, adding job creation and economic growth to the obvious environmental benefits. Thinking ahead, Triman plans to assess the full life cycle of her equipment, from the extraction of raw materials to the disposal at its life's end.



### Bio

When humans negatively affect the needs of wildlife, or when the needs of wildlife negatively affect humans, we speak of human-wildlife conflict. In India, where the majority of the population lives close to and shares spaces with animals, this is a major challenge. Take tigers. Every year, both humans and animals die because of human-tiger conflict. Here, Trisa aims to provide a solution with a "conflict zone map". The young change-maker who has gained experience with conservation NGOs and worked across the western Himalayas, the Gangetic plains, tropical rainforests and elsewhere - wants to study the perceptions of all stakeholders, look into invasive populations, research biodiversity and prey-predator ratios. Education material and tools will supplement the map. Her initiative, Trisa hopes, will create mitigation models that will reduce negative interactions, and restore India's tiger populations.

# **Trisa Bhattacharjee**





# Urvi Lahoti





### Bio

Growing up, Urvi experienced a zero-waste household at home, where her mother transformed scrap cloth into fillers for quilts. But the cities she ended up living in were use-and-throw surroundings. Urvi was mocked for upcycling old dresses or using DIY notebooks. Giving up her highpaying corporate job to pursue fellowships in rural India, she spent years in villages trying to understand different traditions, living with indigenous communities and tribes. She saw the products they made - decor, jewelry - using ecofriendly, locally-sourced materials. The quality and craft were phenomenal; however, they struggled to commercialize their work. With her online marketplace, Haati, Urvi wants to make their products available - globally and affordably. Each one, she believes, is a champion for slow fashion, for a culture of conscious consumption, and for the economic power of women in rural areas.

### Bio

As things stand, Vamsi reckons, information on climate change, and the inspiration to change course is accessible to only about 20% of India's population. The remaining 80% are engaged in more immediate existential concerns. Livelihoods trump environmental considerations; often, there is no choice. Vamsi thinks we need to keep up the momentum with the 20%, but it's even more important to empower the 80% to think in new ways. This is where his project, LeafSpace, aims to become a catalyst. He wants to co-create smallscale open-source technologies that help local people set up their own sustainable enterprises using easily replicable solutions to make profits by nourishing their natural ecosystems. LeafSpace aims to decentralize essential technologies and make them accessible to those who need them most. This way, Vamsi is convinced, we can develop circular economies and drive change right across society.

# Vamsi Tadisetti





# Vivek Yadav





### Bio

Crush, grind, and sift glass waste, and what you'll get is sand. It sounds straightforward, but it's a process that isn't yet widely implemented. In India, Vivek has been refining the project idea - SandPrint, inspired by the words Sand , Footprint & BluePrint. As a marketable product, his recycled sand could be used for water filtration purposes and as an alternative in construction materials. Digging up natural sand - for the concrete that goes into buildings - is one of humankind's biggest mining activities, with serious costs, damaging rivers and coastal ecosystems, and even wiping away entire islands. Soil Regeneration and conscious usage of mineral-rich sand is essential for our planet's Ecosystem . Vivek is putting gender equity at the core of his project. Almost half of India's informal waste collectors are women; they are often marginalized and unrewarded. As part of Vivek's sand-from-glass project, they will generate additional income for themselves and their families, and develop skills in high-value recycling streams, while making an impactful contribution to sustainability.

### Bio

She's written papers for Germany's Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the UN, was a Youth Delegate at the COP27 climate conference, worked with Greenpeace International – the list goes on. And Zainab is still only a student. Now this powerhouse of inspired climate activism wants to give all youth in emerging economies a platform to help solve the climate crisis. Zainab calls it *GESA* – Growing Economies and Sustainability Association. By empowering young people to take

# Zainab Bie



leadership roles in addressing climate change, she believes her project will foster a sense of hope among the young. Research, analysis, and advocacy will help shape the discourse. More engagement, more participation, more agency; fewer negative impacts on vulnerable populations and low-income communities; better policies, stronger collective action – that's Zainab's vision, and she's asking young people everywhere to join her.





THE MERCEDES-BENZ FELLOWSHIP

**PROJECTS IN** 



A POSTIVE. BE PLANET.

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE **PLANET-POSITIVE** PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

# HERE PLANET-POSITIVE OJECTS COME TO LIFE

# WHERE **PLANET-POSITIVE** PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

# **Babalwa Mni**





Working as a waiter, Babalwa was shocked to see how much food went to waste in restaurants on a daily basis. So shocked, in fact, that she started looking for solutions – in a field that was completely new to her. Waste, she reckoned, should be able to create value. The project that came out of her quest, TNDO, takes a holistic look at the problem. Babalwa wants to use waste from households, businesses and restaurants to create organic compost, which will then be used together with regenerative farming techniques. The result: healthier organic soils – with better water retention, higher drought resistance, more nutrients - that will also act as a carbon sink, mitigating climate change. At the same time, organic seed banks will help to ensure food security, while waste is also used to create biofuels, aiding energy security in rural communities.



Bio

South Africa

# **Bonisiwe Kumalo**





to the cleaner, healthier environment she is dreaming of. Bonisiwe is aware of how much of a challenge it can be to launch into a new industry, but the clean energy champion is using every opportunity to expand her knowledge and skills. As a result, Buhlebelanga Solar Solutions is already positioning itself to become a leading player in the field.



# Buyiswa Twala





When Buyiswa worked in farming - trying, and often struggling, to produce her own food - she experienced two root causes of Africa's food security crisis firsthand: up to 65 percent of productive land across the continent is degraded, according to analysts; desertification affects 45 percent. With her business, Agrigreat Soiltech & Envirocare, this driven young CEO from South Africa makes affordable, environmentally-friendly compost - as a counter-force. To develop her product, she became an expert in organic chemistry and taught herself chemical formulation. A part-time job helped her buy what she needed to create a lab at home. There, she got to work on her prototype. Buyiswa's vision is of a South Africa where people from all classes have access to healthy organic food that's grown widely and successfully in rich, replenished soil.



South Africa

### Bio

Four layers of bamboo fabric, two layers of super absorbent microfibre, one layer of waterproof outer protection - that's the recipe behind Debbie's transformative approach to sanitary pads. It's a core offering of The Debbie De Foundation. Her wastebeating, eco-friendly pads can be washed and reused, and are still every bit as absorbent as their disposable equivalents. But for Debbie, this isn't just about a product: the change-maker is on a mission to educate girls and women, and fight menstrual poverty - the lack of access to sanitary products due to financial constraints - especially within disadvantaged communities. That's why she made sure her method of making reusable pads can easily be learnt: girls and women can teach each other, spreading knowledge and skills through their communities.

# **Debbie Mogale**





# **Gift Dialwe**



### Bio

In South Africa's rural areas, seven out of ten households purchase more than one sack of maize meal each month. The packaging for the staple is typically made of high-density polypropylene or polyethylene, both of which decompose slowly and have negative environmental and animal health effects. Gift, a young change-maker with a sewing machine and heaps of ideas, wants people to stop throwing these sacks away, and send them his way instead. With his project, Veish, the stylish backpacks he transforms the packaging into aren't just practical for carrying your study materials or shopping. The upcycled product also includes nifty technical features, such as solar-powered LED lights, for reading at night or during a power outage, and an outlet for charging other electronic items. Implementing his solution, Gift hopes will educate, employ, and empower his fellow locals.



🔀 South Africa

# **Darryl Nyamayaro**



### Bio

In South Africa, this mechanical engineering graduate is developing a portable box that heats or cools your room or office, uses minimal energy, and even works off-grid. Goodbye, air-con? Darryl's scalable, modular unit stores ambient temperature during the day or night, which is then used for heating or cooling - with minimum emissions or health impact. The unit would also connect to the existing air handling unit and ducting systems making it highly adaptable. The young innovator, who loves using his technical skills to solve complex problems, hopes that his project will help reduce emissions and reduce the demand on South Africa's struggling national grid. It should also score highly in terms of waste: the storage medium intended to be used will be biodegradable, and the recyclability of its materials is a top priority for Darryl.



# **Josephine Nseya Katumba**



### Bio

In the South African township of Alexandra, many low-income families are suffering from an unfair "poverty tax": because their money often only allows them to buy small quantities, they tend to pay more for their staples. Recycling and reusing aren't at the forefront of people's minds. Here, you'll find the first outlet of a venture that aims to tackle both issues at the same time. The entrepreneur Josephine has branded it Gcwalisa. From her bright yellow container-based outlet, her team sells foods at the exact quantity customers have the money for. It is decanted from bulk into reusable containers. Already, more than 100 customers are using Gcwalisa every day. Josephine is convinced that, if you integrate recycling and reusing into your everyday life, it will become a part of your culture.



🔀 South Africa

### Bio

Julian wants to help families to become more financially stable, healthier, and more environmentally conscious - all at the same time. His proposal: a Green Tax Rebate, a mechanism designed to encourage South African families to purchase and consume food that is not processed and contains less sugar, that is organically grown, or has a lighter environmental footprint. With the right choices, families will pay less tax - and get a healthier, greener lifestyle in return. Also, part of Julian's plan is a scheme to encourage people to get involved in environmental sustainability projects. Long-term, he's envisioning reduced health risks, such as diabetes and heart attacks; less reliance on the mass farming industries; and more focus on sustainable, localized permaculture. And the new disposable income could be used to continue the cycle of better lifestyles for all.

# **Julian Rael Gordon**





# Karla van Rensburg





### Bio

Karla wants to put the message on what you're wearing. For her project, Walla Wear, local women will be embroidering second-hand tops with catchy quotes on our oceans, highlighting their plight and the urgent need for conservation. To learn the skills needed, older and younger women will engage in an intergenerational skills exchange. The young South African change-maker wants to create an environment for learning and sharing skills, stories, and knowledge. Unity across generations, she believes, will be fertile ground for a positive impact on the community as a whole, uplifting the hopelessness and helping feed families with a reliable source of income. Karla mapped out her entire project during an exam she was sitting while a big oil company was causing damage to South Africa's Wild Coast. Now, she's on a mission to make Walla Wear a way of living.

### Bio

With The Red Bin Initiative, the South African entrepreneur Keletso is out to transform what recycling can do in her country. Her app-based platform brings digitalization, collaboration, and participation to waste management. Users recycle as teams and communities, while organizations and municipalities facilitate participation with jobs, events, and activities. Incentives motivate you to recycle more, helped by an easy-to-use sorting guide. Afterward, you can schedule your own ondemand bin collection. Keletso's concept will also help the country's informal waste pickers - who form the backbone of the country's waste industry but are often marginalized and not economically rewarded - by integrating them into the mainstream management chain. Keletso is convinced that her disruption will lead to mass consciousness and, ultimately, help create a circular waste economy.

# **Keletso Lehoko**





# Kudzaishe Marian Magwizi





### Bio

combination of outdated plants, Α political interference, and corporate in-fighting results in a situation where some homes and businesses in South Africa are suffering blackouts for up to twelve hours a day. And while the country has huge geographical and climatic advantages to harness solar power, the potential remains underused. Kudzaishe wants to change this situation - by bringing solar power to communities like her own. People should be able to continue their daily activities, like running their small businesses, without having to worry about electricity, she feels. The change-maker has done it before; living in a very polluted neighborhood, Kudzaishe got together with her friends, and they started a recycling community. Shortly later, the government provided recycling bins around the area, and more and more people started recycling. Now, she hopes to do something similar with her solar project.

### Bio

Ever since he was little, Likhona enjoyed working with his hands. Whether it was building little houses with old bricks or attempting to create a wagon from bits of discarded wood. So it was no surprise when he went on to study Building & Civil Construction in college. During his travels through various townships in South Africa, he noticed the prevalence of rubble and debris scattered throughout the neighborhoods. This inspired him to explore the idea of using waste materials to craft home furnishings. He wants to establish a reliable and sustainable home furnishing brand in South Africa, providing durable and well-designed furniture at an affordable price. Likhona aims to collaborate with and uplift his community by addressing issues of waste, unemployment, and poverty in South Africa and the world at large. He aims to equip them with the necessary resources to build a better world for all, because he believes deeply in the saying " "Each One, Teach One", for a better and more sustainable future.

# Likhona Mkonto





# Linda Kaumphawi





🔀 South Africa

### Bio

Waste, for Linda, is a precious commodity we ought to use carefully. How to do so - that's what the environmental management graduate wants to teach South African communities with her project, Evergreen Solutions. It's a circular approach: to help households separate more actively, she has developed her own Evergreen Waste Bag, made from recycled plastic bottles. Next, she wants to create a digital marketplace, where individuals and communities can trade waste and waste products. She also aims to train waste pickers, the informal reclaimers who recycle most of the country's plastic, but remain marginalized and unrewarded. The final part of Linda's circle is the manufacturing of innovative products from what's being reclaimed. Poor waste management contributes to climate change and air pollution and directly affects many ecosystems and species. Linda hopes to address all of this - while creating meaningful community employment.

### Bio

She's still a young student herself, but Marlene has already developed a fully-fledged plan - including the blueprint for an app, a website, in-depth research, and a four-stage plan - for how students in South Africa can help cut plastic waste while supporting other schools with vital equipment. She calls it the Metanoia Project. Participating schools actively collect plastic that would otherwise harm the environment. By doing so, they become part of the project's journey to transform the collected material into desks, chairs, and other resources for other schools, that may be lacking it. It's all based on a credit system and friendly competition. From 30 nearby schools, the ambitious change-maker wants to expand to the Cape Town region, ultimately covering all national coastal regions. Along the way, she hopes to inspire students and schools about environmental matters way beyond their textbooks.

# **Marlene Mostert**





# Maya Zaken





Bio

change in agriculture, she was a city dweller from Johannesburg who loved nature but had only ever grown some carrots in her back garden. Two years, a beekeeping and a permaculture course later, she came across the black soldier fly, and there was, in her words, "no turning back". Maya and her friends at Philafeed are bioengineering the fly's natural life cycle to create a nutrient-dense, protein-rich food source that's perfect for animal feed and aquaculture. It's also a great fertilizer. What's more: the larvae are produced from organic waste, cutting methane emissions and waste going to landfill. Unlike many protein alternatives, theirs does not rely on harmful farming practices such as chemical use or deforestation. What's happening at Philafeed's self-built greenhouse is a prototype for the perfect sustainable circular economy.

When Maya decided that she wanted to create real

### Bio

Billions of tonnes of CO2 are emitted each year to transport fresh produce to our supermarkets. How to help reduce this and, at the same time, forgo the energy and water-intensive farming methods used to produce it in the first place? Simple, says Ngangelizwe. By growing the food, in a sustainable way, right behind the supermarket. His project, Aero Greens, has designed the ultimate short supply chain: a container that can be placed adjacent to shopping malls, supermarkets and even smaller stores, where vegetables are grown to supply some of the shop's demand. The container uses aeroponics, a method of growing plants without soil, where the roots are suspended in the air and irrigated with a nutrient-dense mist. This vertical farming makes the most of the space available, while LED lighting supports fast, sustainable growth.

# Ngangelizwe Mathunjwa





# Nompumelelo Nomthandazo Mbenenge





### Bio

In South Africa, Nompumelelo is working to help fashion brands "close the loop". Her project, Dejo, is centered on building circularity within the textile industry - from production to consumption. Right now, Nompumelelo argues, sustainable fashion solutions that are scalable to individuals or communities are not easily accessible. The fashion industry is guilty of exploiting disadvantaged communities and of encouraging wasteful "fast fashion". With Dejo, she wants to transform the industry's relationship with the natural world. She envisions innovative agro-textile plants, where biotextiles are produced, based on regenerative farming principles, providing a living wage and honoring labor laws. At the same time, recycling centers invite people to return what they no longer wear - for upcycling or recycling. Nompumelelo is convinced that by providing solutions like this, we can model circularity and, over time, make it achievable on a large scale.

### Bio

The infrastructure? Aging. Solar panel installation? Restricted. Power outages? Frequent. Renting an apartment building in Johannesburg, Nthabiseng knows firsthand what it means to live with the realities of South Africa's energy crisis. She is an example of what can happen when computer meets science climate activism when a mathematical mind finds the passion of a real change-maker. How can we offer the benefits of power - cost-effective electricity, solar uninterrupted supply during power outages, and a lower carbon footprint – to those who cannot install their own panels? For Nthabiseng, the answer is a peer-to-peer energy trading platform that connects homeowners who have solar panels installed to tenants who don't. The Aorta Project is an inspired plan to decarbonize and decentralize South Africa's electricity grid with a bottom-up approach fostering community resilience and ensuring energy security in the face of climate change.

# **Nthabiseng Mabetlela**





# **Ntobeko Thokozisile** Mafu



### Bio

In isiZulu, her language, there is a saying, "indlala ibanga ulaka," which means "hunger causes anger". Ntobeko has observed this firsthand, over and over again, and she is convinced that hunger is behind many of the problems that are prevalent in her area, such as crime and gender-based violence. With her project, Madame Leafy Green, Ntobeko wants to give people the knowledge and skills they need to grow their own food. But not just that: she herself wants to expand her poultry farm to start growing and offer up seedlings, crops, and vegetables to locals. By targeting high schools and young people, Ntobeko wants to instill a passion for farming from an early age. The young changemaker is convinced that by spreading the love for farming, she can reduce the stress, and address more than just hunger.



🔀 South Africa

# Ntokozo Mothwa



### Bio

Ntokozo is envisioning a South Africa where the majority of food is grown locally; where small-scale farmers are selling seasonal produce to their communities; and where everyone has access to fresh, healthy food. In his vision, the carbon footprint of imported goods is cut drastically, regenerative farming practices rule the day, and the food system is becoming ever more equitable. Starting out in his own province of Gauteng, Ntokozo wants to build a platform that works towards this vision by

connecting small-scale farmers with local consumers. Working with his team, the young change-maker has sought out mentors, pivoted a strategy, and built a network. He knows: If they continue to pursue their model for sustainable agriculture, they can make a lasting difference for both people and the planet.



# **Paul Junior Malinda**





### Bio

As a 2 time fire burn survivor, Paul Junior Malinda was driven to devise a sustainable way to fight fire. Project Phoenix was created to address the pressing issue of fire safety, while also promoting sustainability and environmental consciousness. The objective of this project is to not only to potentially develop and produce sustainable fire blankets but also create Eco bricks from waste materials. The bricks will be created using recycled waste materials such as plastic and glass. Traditional fire blankets often contain materials that are harmful to both human health and the environment. However, by employing innovative and eco-friendly materials and manufacturing processes, Project Phoenix aims to revolutionize the fire safety industry and provide a sustainable solution for fire emergencies. Paul's project also recognizes the importance of public awareness and education and an extensive awareness campaign will be launched to raise awareness on both climate change and fire safety.

### Bio

When Pheta watched with dismay how people littered the places where they ate, slept, and lived in his local neighborhood, he decided to do something about it. He started his own business: PikiTup. With a small team, the young South African comes to your house and picks up your waste. The crew sort through it, and recycle everything they can: bottles, cans, paper. Then, they clean the bin and return it to you. The company motto runs: Our customers hate handling dirt; we see it as gold. With five employees, Pheta is not just creating local employment but helps to spread a message about the value of recycling. Now, he feels, is the time to learn more about the influence he may have on the root cause of environmental problems, boost his sustainability knowledge, and take *PikiTup* to the next level.

# **Pheta Lamola**





# Phumla Makhoba



### Bio

When Phumla set out to create her own furniture business, she knew she wanted to add a positive environmental impact to her offering. But the young South African struggled to find materials that were both sustainable and affordable. So she created her own minimum viable product, making upcycled furniture from pre-owned home goods: glass jars became table lamps. Now, she wants to take it to the next level; an online store is already in development. Her project, Build Well by Studio Phumla, aims to provide recycled semi-finished materials, using agriculture and landfill waste, that can be used to make furniture and cabinetry and serve in construction more widely. In her vision, people will be able to create durable, safe homes and beautiful, functional art – without increasing the need for deforestation.



Bio

South Africa

# Sandile Mathebula





providing high school students with new ways of understanding the crises we're living through. Sandile aims to take learners into nature, show them conservation sites, and run workshops and seminars. He wants to demonstrate the damage done - but also give practical advice on how things can be improved. The next generation, he hopes, will live in a better place.



# Sifundo Machi





### Bio

When Sifundo was in high school, he and his fellow students would often be sent home early. The school was right next to a refinery, and hazardous chemicals would be released at intervals during the day. The principal had no choice: the air was too bad to breathe. Sifundo developed a skin disease on his hands and feet, and many around him suffered from respiratory problems and other disorders. All this made the young South African a clean-air campaigner from an early age. With Air 101 Wentworth, Sifundo is taking a 360° approach. From local education - at awareness workshops, people will learn just how much fumes are polluting their lives – he wants to move to collective action, installing filter systems at refineries and factories. Local clinic staff and doctors will inform people about diseases caused by pollution, as Sifundo closely monitors improvements.

### Bio

Siyamthanda Dastile has been busy collecting waste from restaurants and residences in his local area. The young South African then turned leftovers into food for local animals. At the same time, he collected seeds and began growing his own produce. It has given him the idea for a new company: TS Recycling and Projects. Siyamthanda wants to create job opportunities for unemployed youth. His project will go beyond reusing food waste: cans, cartoons, plastic, glass, and even electronics - Siyamthanda wants to find ways to recycle anything that has the potential to be recycled. His project will minimize the waste that is ending up in landfills and alleviate the pressures on the local sewage system, which is overflowing with food waste that has been dumped in toilets and drains.

# **Siyamthanda Dastile**





# Tafadzwa Tandy





🔀 South Africa

### Bio

Tafadzwa is dreaming of schools, right across South Africa, where children practice environmental consciousness every day, where recycling and repurposing are second nature. The student at Johannesburg's Nelson Mandela University calls her initiative Preservation. Through lessons, sessions, and workshops, she aims to teach children how to repurpose clothes, why better waste management is key, and what upcycling might do. Not only do children gain useful life skills through Preservation, but they also begin to understand basic environmental concepts and issues. The result, Tafadzwa hopes, will be real behavioral change. She is convinced that it's at a young age that we have the best chance of instilling these crucial values. It's no wonder she quotes Mandela in the concept note she has produced: "Our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation."

### Bio

If you need your car washed in Cape Town, soon a crew might come to where you are and bring everything they need, except for one thing: water. Thabiso, a young change-maker from South Africa, is developing an on-demand car cleaning service that uses eco-friendly, biodegradable products and no water. To book, all you need to do is log in to an online platform or app and choose your preferred time and place. AVA Clean will conserve water in a city where severe shortages due to droughts are ever more common and reduce the use of harmful chemicals as well. What's more: Thabiso's convenient service will sustainable, create employment opportunities for students, empowering the young and boosting economic growth. He can't wait to launch his pilot at the University of Cape Town.

# **Thabiso Letlala**





# Thabo Blessing Mngomezulu



🔀 South Africa

### Bio

In rural South Africa, people are not only struggling with the rising costs of electricity but with notorious power outages - disrupting the everyday lives of people, schools, and businesses. Thabo wants to provide these communities with affordable energy for cooking, heating, and lighting - by turning waste into energy. His biogas plants would become a franchised network, covering large parts of the countryside and areas where the countryside borders cities. Organic waste would be diverted from local landfills directly to Thabo's plants. The has young change-maker done research, conducted surveys, and produced a pitch deck. Early conservations are underway with a supplier of equipment. He is convinced that - once he gets to the pilot stage and can start scaling his idea - he will not only cut emissions but help communities across the country to become cleaner and healthier.

### Bio

Inspired by sustainability that integrates real time big data and IoT, Tshepo is currently working on building a fintech-as-a-software to provide better financial options for renewable energy projects while encouraging investment in the energy sector in South Africa. Since there are already many existing Renewable Energy projects why is the problem of load shedding or power cuts still so prevalent? Perhaps those that need the solution find it expensive, inaccessible and not economically viable. He wants to use technology to influence policymakers, regulators and governments to better coordinate their endeavors while not putting the end user at risk of high electricity prices and unreliable electricity tariffs.

# **Tshepo Mathebula**





# Wendy Ngcobo



### Bio

Wendy is making art out of plastic waste. By doing so, the South African artist and activist isn't just saving waste from going to landfill; her pieces are bold, playful statements that aim to put the issue of plastic pollution and the harmful effects of microplastics at the forefront of people's minds. She hopes that her work will encourage those who see them to become more conscious, trying to reduce how much plastic they use, recycle more, and push companies to rethink their packaging. Her project brings together a team of like-minded artists, working collaboratively on the issue to raise awareness and inspire their local communities to take action. For Wendy, who is a Women Empowering Nations 2022 Cohort member, collaborations like this are key to creating lasting change in the world.



Bio

🔀 South Africa

# Yumna Ramsingh





built and powered by solar panels. Any excess power is fed back into the regional grid for profit, and locals are upskilled to maintain the panels and support other sustainability projects, such as growing local produce or making eco-bricks. By turning solar accessible, Yumna hopes to create stability and improve living standards, while mitigating climate change.



# Zibuyisile Nombuso Khumalo





### Bio

Behind #LittleHerbs, there's big ambition. With levels of hunger in South Africa classified as "serious" by the Global Hunger Index, this young change-maker wants to go where she can make a real and immediate difference. Zibuyisile wants to bring sustainable gardens to schools and communities across the country. Her project uses hydroponic farming, a method of growing plants without using soil, which produces higher yields in smaller spaces. This means less land is needed for agriculture; less water is used, as well as fewer pesticides and herbicides; and emissions are cut. Most importantly, #LittleHerbs will help upskill women and young people interested in modern agricultural practices. With her project, Zibuyisile wants to feed people; she also wants to educate, employ, and inspire them.



THE MERCEDES-BENZ FELLOWSHIP

**PROJECTS IN** 

Europe

AROSITIVE. BE PLANET.

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE PLANET-POSITIVE PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

# HERE PLANET-POSITIVE OJECTS COME TO LIFE

# WHERE **PLANET-POSITIVE** PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

# Abhay Joshi



## Germany \_\_\_\_ India

### Bio

Ever think about how much food is wasted just because it doesn't look shiny and new? Abhay has thought about it... a lot. In fact, his planet-positive idea centers around addressing the critical issue of product waste. He is currently developing a groundbreaking low-cost, non-invasive, handheld spectral sensing (SWIR) platform with edge A.I. capabilities. This innovative tech can identify unique molecular signatures, enabling the detection of food freshness and the presence of microplastics. By providing consumers with timely information about product freshness, from "this is the optimum time to eat this fruit" to "it hasn't gone bad yet," and contamination status, Abhay's idea encourages healthy consumption habits and significantly reduces waste. Working with his own NGO (R)Evolution Let's Change Now! and volunteering for WWF, IYCN, CoP11, has taught him that awareness creation and stakeholder engagement are crucial to achieving our goals.

### Bio

Working as a surf teacher in Tel Aviv, where he grew up, two issues stood out for Abie: aging infrastructure and water pollution. Now he's working on tackling both. His project, Wavesoaker, re-imagines the traditional "breakwater," an offshore structure that intercepts the currents to protect the coast. Abie's version is a nifty combination of carbon-negative modules that creates a sustainable defensive system for both people and the planet. The secret ingredient is a novel sponge-like structure, which operates as a removable filtration system. When Abie moved to Berlin to study Fine Art, he noticed the enormous amounts of waste produced on campus every day. He co-founded Re-Lab, a space for experimentation, and embarked on his journey. Thanks to its filtration system, the young change-maker is sure his Wavesoaker will reduce plastic pollution measurably.

# **Abie Franklin**





# **Adrian Peter Bösl**



### Bio

Adrian is planning on creating the largest carbon sink in the world. Together with a team of ambitious co-founders, the industrial engineer from Germany is working on a project that utilizes waste biomass to safely store CO2 – thereby mitigating climate change. They call it Chuuk - a word from the indigenous Maya people that means "char". Organic matter, which would otherwise rot and release methane, is being heated at very high temperatures but in the absence of oxygen, which avoids combustion. This carbon-negative process, called pyrolysis, traps the CO2 and keeps it away from the atmosphere. The result is biochar, a vegetable charcoal that promises numerous benefits as a fertilizer or additive for cement, as well as surplus energy, which would go to nearby communities. Locals will also be offered shares in Adrian's plants, so they can benefit economically from the project.



### Bio

In his quest to contribute to a greener future, Akshitkumar's current focus lies on micro-vertical axis wind turbines. Designed to be portable, efficient, and user-friendly, these turbines have their rotor shaft set transverse to the wind, making them activate even in low wind conditions. Akshitkumar is determined to revolutionize the renewable energy landscape, envisioning a world where micro-vertical axis wind turbines offer simple, efficient, and accessible energy solutions. His ultimate goal is to empower and uplift communities worldwide by providing self-sustaining ecosystems that cater to the energy needs of every individual, regardless of location or circumstance. Driven by his passion and dedication, he and his team are committed to utilizing innovative methods to achieve their vision. As they continue to refine and optimize the design, these turbines will help not only in rural areas but also in urban settings, including integration into the outer walls of big companies and solar plants.

# **Akshitkumar Thakkar**





# Aleyna Gültekin



Spain C\* Turkey

### Bio

Aleyna's sector cares deeply about aesthetics and costs; sustainability is often still a side note. Convincing architecture firms to convert to sustainable material solutions is a challenge: unexplored, eco-friendly materials are often deemed inadequate. The young architect, who is from Turkey and now lives in Spain, is on a mission to change this with an unusual combination: sawdust and a 3D printer. Tiles, building facades, wall panels - all are possible. Mixing sawdust waste with eco-friendly binders creates a sustainable composite material. The 3D printing process means you can customize each design; the flexibility is phenomenal. Aleyna calls her material Nera (a combination of Spanish words "Nueva" (new) + "Madera" (wood)). Waste to landfill, energy used, waste during production - all are reduced. Her ultimate goal is to provide a solution that inspires others to embrace sustainable practices in their and manufacturing processes, design and "revolutionize" what we use to build.

### Bio

The world's coral reefs are in crisis, and in Copenhagen, the Dutch bio-social industrial designer Amaya is working on a "rescue operation." Her conceptual artificial reef – she calls it Oasis with Alliance – is a feat of industrial design and inspired thinking: a combination of underwater modules, clever heat regulation, and renewable energy create a sophisticated system that protects the reef from coral bleaching. 25% of marine life depends on tropical reefs surviving in the wild, but bleaching has become so widespread and detrimental that

# **Amaya Carina** Steensma Tedder



many marine biologists have started to talk about a point of no return. Local people are at the forefront of Amaya's thinking: everyone, old or young, can be involved in creating the reef (each of her modules can be carried under one's arm), and communities will benefit from excess energy as well as carefully managed ecotourism.



# **Amy Bray**



### Bio

If one person were to spread a message to ten people in one day and the next day those ten each told ten more, it would only take ten days for the whole world to have been inspired. This is what Amy calls the Power of Ten. It's the philosophy behind her social media app for young changemakers: a community-driven, interactive "meeting place" providing resources, guidance, help, and inspiration. As a climate campaigner at school in the UK, Amy often felt isolated and overwhelmed. She received little support from peers or teachers. When she started to scale up her campaigns, she realized that in every school, there was someone who cared as much as she did. Giving talks helped her overcome her eco-grief: she started feeling agency and empowerment. And the work on the Power of Ten began.



### Bio

Ana Sofia is on a mission to eradicate waste. The app she has developed – she calls it *WasteZero* – looks at food consumption from all angles. Users can log what they usually eat in a month, and the app creates a list to encourage them to only buy what gets consumed. Scan a product, and you'll get a list of recipes to make the most of your purchase; the minimum goes to waste. Afterward, the app will tell you where to recycle or dispose of the packaging. The passionate climate campaigner,

# Ana Sofia Bastos Mendes Vidal



who is from Spain, has created an early model and tested her product through a series of surveys. The result: many people realize that they often buy more than they consume, and most want to reduce their waste. They just need a little help.



# Angelika Ślęzak



### Bio

Once Angelika launches iNeed, anyone who finds themselves in need of a household appliance, say, or a pair of trousers, can post a request – and find a donor nearby. Her app is designed to help those who may not have enough money to purchase something they need new while encouraging a culture of reusing across society. The young change-maker wants to establish iNeed in her native Poland first before allowing other European citizens to join the community. In addition to personal use, the app could function as a first port of call for homeless shelters and social welfare centers. Angelika knows that every item that finds a new owner is one that doesn't end up in a landfill, and every act of sharing takes us one step further toward a more equitable, more sustainable society.



### Bio

You need a drill to put up a picture, but don't own your own? A camera to capture a surprise birthday party you have organized? A cool box for a one-off camping trip? Sure, you could go out and buy any of these items. But, as far as Maximilian is concerned, there is a much better way: you can securely rent it on fainin.com - from someone you don't even know. His innovative platform, fainin, supports responsible consumption by creating secure rental transactions. Borrowers are 100% IDverified, and all transactions up to €15,000 are insured. In fainin's inclusive community, strangers are lending and renting like friends. The platform is growing steadily, with 7.000+ users to date & 3 exclusive university groups. So far, 2.900+ rental items are generating daily rental transactions that, Maximilian reckons, have already saved 19.500+ unnecessarily produced items. #SharingIstTheNewOwning

# **Maximilian Lehmann**





# **Brandon Reynolds**



### Bio

Brandon is a young, passionate, and driven activist. When getting into environmental activism, he struggled to find local groups and activities, and after facing multiple barriers to participation, he decided to create a solution. His project Activ8, is an all-in-one app designed to break down the barriers to participation in environmental activism, and reward/incentivize the general public to get involved as well! He's developed multiple business and charity partnerships already and has been working with them hand in hand to increase environmental activism across the board! Users of Activ8 can get involved with political, economic, educational, legislative, and local activism, giving everyone a plethora of options tailored to their own availability.



### Bio

Ceri, a passionate advocate for ecosystem regeneration based in Germany, is exploring the potent intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and soil biology. Her project seeks to harness computer vision technology to identify and quantify soil microorganisms, offering farmers and agricultural professionals an innovative way to understand and nurture their soils. Replacing the traditionally time-consuming manual sampling done by microbiologists, Ceri hopes to leverage technological advances to ease and expedite the process. The goal is to scale this method using Al, providing faster, more efficient analysis of bacteria, fungi, protozoa, and nematodes and other microorganisms. Coming from a place of concern for our climate, Ceri sought an avenue to turn anxiety into action. With her soil-meets-Al project, she is doing just that, stepping boldly into a field where technology meets ecology to create tangible, positive change.

# **Ceri Flook**





# **Ekow Tachie-Mensah**





### Bio

When it comes to proper composting, many people might struggle to know where to begin. With his initiative – Greening the UK: A Community Composting Initiative – Ekow wants to change this. The young Ghanaian aims to provide UK residents with compost bins; he also plans to run education sessions on the right techniques and make life easy with regular collection of organic waste materials. Add close partnerships with local farmers and community gardens, who would use the compost as a natural fertilizer, and a fully-rounded program is taking shape. Ekow – who was a Global Youth Compact Champion and sat on UNICEF's Global Youth Advisory Board – is passionate about what could be achieved: reduced organic waste sent to landfills and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, for sure. But his program is also a major promotion for sustainable agriculture that's coming right out of the community.

### Bio

In the UK, an ocean scientist and marine biologist wants to turn people into everyday energy experts. Eleanor's project, Energy Forecast, takes complex sets of data and turns them into easy-tounderstand guidance, viewable through both an app and a website. Using the app, people will understand how the electricity we consume is different at different times. A special forecasting element will assist with the scheduling of powerhungry activities for times when energy is greener. There are educational eco-challenges for children and a rewards scheme for adults. In the next step, Eleanor plans to link her system to local microgrid systems. She hopes her project will help the planet by contributing to the decarbonization of our energy system and accelerating the switch to renewable energy.

# **Eleanor Megan Stanton**





# **Ellen Blacker**



### Bio

Imagine walking into a shop, picking up any product, scanning its barcode, and what pops up on your screen is a one-stop guide to its sustainability. Green? Excellent, it's the sustainable choice. Amber? Think again. Red? Stay away if you can. Ellen's app takes into account aspects including water usage, carbon offsetting, food miles, recyclability of packaging, and the carbon footprint of the product. The young change-maker from the UK knows that many people would like to make more conscious, informed choices on a daily basis – and how hard it is to actually do so. She hopes that her app will help reduce confusion and turn us all into better consumers, thereby driving positive change through the system.

😹 United Kingdom

### Bio

To alleviate drought - which affects 55 million people each year – water management is key. However, what is required to perform such management adequately is often missing: strong hydrological data. Collecting it is expensive and time-consuming; sometimes, it is simply not feasible. In Sweden, Filip is introducing AI to the equation. His model - he calls it Adfluo - will be trained with existing hydrological data sets from areas where data is rich, and will then be able to recognize certain attributes in similar cases. Deep learning methods are applied to model for areas where data is missing. As a result, hydrologists in developing countries will gain better insights into droughts and flooding. Predictions are made easier, and water management improves. His solution, Filip hopes, will contribute to creating drought-resilient agriculture in the light of climate change and aid food security.

# **Filip Forsberg**





# **Frederik Hornung**



### Bio

In Zambia, football plays an important role in young people's lives. It's a counterforce to school and work and can be a safe haven from some of the hardships of everyday life. Often, young footballers lack basic equipment, however. Shin guards, for instance. In Germany, Frederik and his team have founded a project - ZamBam Sports - that works to address this situation. The idea? Shin guards are made out of bamboo (for the hardcover) and biodegradable foam (for the cushioning). They can be easily produced; all you need are some common carpentry tools, and the resource demand is limited. Frederik aims to sell in Zambia and Germany at first, then expand to offer his guards as a viable alternative more widely. Along the way, he wants to inspire others to design and develop their own sustainable products.



### Bio

Kaleb, a young German change-maker, knows how valuable satellite images can be in tackling critical environmental challenges; he also knows it's hard for anyone but a small minority to work with them. His solution is an open-source deep learning tool that can analyze and process remote sensing data - at scale. Access is thrown wide open, and usability is greatly improved. Researchers, companies, and members of the public can start using satellite imagery for different purposes: from mapping forest fires to evaluating infrastructure damage after natural disasters, from monitoring endangered species to assessing climate patterns. Kaleb hopes his technology will be particularly valuable in developing countries, where it is often difficult to access information about terrain and the environment. With access to satellite imagery, communities can make informed decisions about agriculture and forestry practices to prevent land degradation and ensure sustainable development.

# Kaleb Johannes Bär





# **Katrin Kreidel**





### Bio

Water scarcity is a worldwide problem, but in countries such as Germany, it is often not recognized as a local problem: people take clean drinking water for granted; droughts aren't yet as severe as elsewhere in the world. The German start-up CEO, Katrin, wants to tackle the problem before it's too late. Her project, hydrop systems, is developing a smart reader that uses artificial intelligence to tell you exactly where your water use is coming from - the shower, say, cooking, or watering the garden. Next up, you'll get personalized tips on how to use less. Studies have shown that merely the knowledge of how much water you are using may reduce your consumption by up to 23%. With her meter and app, Katrin wants to enable everyone to understand and appreciate their water use proactively. Giving people clear and practical insights, she is convinced, is the first step towards consuming this scarce resource more consciously.

### Bio

Most of what we wear has been woven or knit. For this, fibers, either natural or synthetic, are spun into yarns, which then become the fabric used to make the final garment. Each stage requires considerable amounts of energy and equipment. What if we enhanced the process, asks one courageous change-maker from the UK, and produced the final material directly from the initial input? With her project, Louisa is pursuing the enormous potential of non-woven textiles. No fibers and no varns – that

# **Louisa Bilton**



could mean reduced resource use. And because non-woven processing is adaptable and fast to scale, Louisa hopes it will help bolster "fiber innovation" and transform how we make clothes.



# Luis Borja Garcia Gimeno





Luis wants to turn chocolate green. Our taste for the sweet stuff has a significant impact on the environment, from deforestation caused by largescale cocoa farming to the carbon emissions caused by a trade that's estimated to be worth more than a trillion dollars. Luis is working on creating a sustainable, local model that uses the fruit of the carob tree, which is native to the Spanish Levantine coast, instead of cocoa. It's the perfect substitute, showing all the characteristics of chocolate, with a sweet natural flavor and no need for additives. The young innovator, who is the founder of the Global Shapers hub in Valencia, is excited about the many benefits: reduced carbon emissions (because his project is local); less water used in the production; no fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides; and an increase in biodiversity in the area.



### Bio

In the UK, a young entrepreneur is combining two elements to create a sustainable furniture brand: a generous buy-back scheme allows people to pass on used items for repurposing, and digital technology provides with full consumers transparency over the sourcing and production process. Making furniture parts in components means easier maintenance and extended lifespans, and the innovative use of repurposed waste materials reduces the reliance on raw materials. Add a mission to change the way people think about furniture and a real drive to create a community that values quality, sustainability, and expression, and you've got Snazzybird. Its founder, Maanav Patel, hopes that by promoting responsible consumption and reducing waste, his project will help conserve natural resources while providing an incentivized route for individuals to keep furniture out of landfills.

# **Maanav Patel**





# Maria Czarnecka



![](_page_52_Picture_2.jpeg)

It is estimated that out of the 400 billion square meters of fabric produced each year, 60 billion square meters end up on the cutting room floor as waste. When disposed of in landfill, the dyes and chemicals in these offcuts can leach into the soil, contaminating both surface and groundwater. Maria wants to use them instead. Every piece of material, this young change-maker from Poland believes, should be treated with care, even the smallest offcut. With her project, she plans to turn leftover materials collected from local designers and manufacturers into products: clothes, rugs, slippers, and toys. DIY kits with selected offcuts and instructions on how to use them will get nonexperts involved. Offcuts are an overlooked problem in the fashion industry, Maria thinks; it's time to help both producers and buyers make a more sustainable choice.

![](_page_52_Picture_4.jpeg)

### Bio

In Poland, Marta is turning fashion circular. Her venture, Reco Fibre, takes textile waste and turns it into raw material from which new clothes can be made. A marketing graduate, the young start-up founder was initially into chemistry and planned to tie her life to the laboratory. With Reco Fibre, she is combining all her passions: science, business, fashion, and ecology. Her project doesn't just reclaim waste, saving tonnes from going to landfill; the carbon footprint of her production process is 30% lower compared to other denim textiles, and the water consumption is 50% less. Marta is currently gathering ambassadors around her venture, creating networks that will help her find financial investors and partners. A successful enterprise, she knows, needs to be guided by what's good for the environment as much as what's good for business.

# Marta Sokołowska-Słuszniak

![](_page_52_Picture_8.jpeg)

![](_page_52_Picture_9.jpeg)

## Marta Agueda Carlero

![](_page_53_Picture_1.jpeg)

### Bio

Have you ever imagined eating your own waste? That's the provocative question at the heart of Marta's project. For Delicious Plastic, the architect from Spain is planning to design a temporary pavilion made out of local plastic waste and invite quests to take their seats inside - for a dinner inspired by the very plastic that surrounds them. Her storytelling combines cuisine and architecture to represent the shocking extent of the world's plastic pollution. When, a few years ago, Marta was given the task of choosing what to do with a closeddown cement factory, she decided to turn it into a "living creature" - a recycling plant that produced the materials to build itself into a complex made out of waste. Shortly later, she met the chef Kike Gallardo, and the idea for Delicious Plastic was born.

![](_page_53_Picture_4.jpeg)

### Bio

Maya invites you to become "Chef of the Month" with meals that only use ingredients you have at hand. Her app – working title: ScrapSavvy – aims to help cooks solve the problem of food waste by providing sustainable cooking inspiration. Maya, who is from Lebanon, hopes that gamification will go a long way in reducing what people would throw away. Her "recipe creator" will not only help reduce CO2 emissions, but the app also promotes healthier eating habits by providing nutritional advice and tips on growing your own herbs and vegetables. In the fight against climate change, Maya often feels a sense of hopelessness. She knows it requires a collective effort, and that's why ScrapSavvy places an emphasis on community: users come together over their cooking experiences and create a community of change-makers as chefs.

# Maya Kamel

![](_page_53_Picture_8.jpeg)

![](_page_53_Picture_9.jpeg)

# **Praneetha Monipi**

![](_page_54_Picture_1.jpeg)

### Bio

Growing up, it was with animals that Praneetha really felt herself. She couldn't stand cruelty towards them and tried to rescue those in need of help. When a neighbor shot foraging monkeys she was only 8 – Praneetha wanted to complain to the police. At a nature camp, aged 11, where an abandoned Sambar fawn was no more than a photo-op for tourists, she decided to dedicate her life to wildlife conservation. Her latest project, Animal Ark, uses activism, education, collaboration, and prevention policies to build conservationlivelihood networks. She plans to rehabilitate wildlife rescued from the wildlife trade, run educationinvolvement workshops in communities, and create self-sustaining, grassroots wildlife conservation teams. Ultimately, this driven change-maker wants to build a collaborative network that spans the country, reaches the highest policy levels from the bottom up, and protects India's biodiversity once and for all.

### Bio

Imagine popping to the supermarket to buy, say, your washing-up liquid, but instead of taking a plastic bottle off the shelf, you bring your own container. A vending machine fills it with your desired quantity and bills you accordingly. There's no plastic waste to be seen. That's the vision of a young change-maker from the UK. Rose has observed that our current shopping model causes extensive environmental destruction; she is also aware that most zero-waste shops, where they exist, are too inefficient to effectively support a large population. With her vending machines in supermarkets - she calls the project Positively Zero - Rose is working around this. She wants to start small - with a few machines offering selected items across UK-based shops - but is thinking big: successfully developed, her concept could revolutionize how we shop across the world.

# **Rose Olding**

![](_page_54_Picture_7.jpeg)

![](_page_54_Picture_8.jpeg)

# **Ruth Chigbo**

![](_page_55_Picture_1.jpeg)

### Bio

Ruth is taking us offline. As a student and climate advocate, internet access has been one of the major issues for the young woman from Nigeria. During her education, she has often been frustrated about having to study without the Internet. When abroad, sometimes her data bundle runs out, and any materials not downloaded are of no use. That's why the young change-maker is developing a learning that works offline. app CLIMALEARNACTION will be designed to help educate young people on climate issues, from the latest research to new ideas on how to combat emissions. It's a creative, collaborative space that everyone can access, without the need to be continuously online. Ruth hopes she can drastically widen participation in her project. She knows: to fight climate change; we need everyone.

![](_page_55_Picture_4.jpeg)

### Bio

Construction has a significant footprint. Vital for human existence, it creates an estimated third of the world's overall waste and at least 40% of its carbon dioxide emissions. There's no slowdown: more than half of the infrastructure we will have in 2050 is yet to be built. Saskia is on a mission to make sure it happens as sustainably as possible. The key term for her project is BAMB – "buildings as material banks". Developers with sites set for demolition can identify and sell components to be reused. With ReNew, the British sustainability consultant wants to go one step further and create a fully-fledged online marketplace for second-hand components: sourcing, extraction, reconditioning, and delivery will all be easily possible, creating a new logistical supply chain with the potential to transform how we think about what we're building with.

# Saskia May Manson

![](_page_55_Picture_8.jpeg)

![](_page_55_Picture_9.jpeg)

# Shubham Sethi

![](_page_56_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_56_Picture_2.jpeg)

### Bio

Across India, an estimated 800 million people are living without access to electricity, mostly in remote areas. Many families rely on harmful kerosene lamps and candles for light. Shubham, an enthusiastic electrical engineer, wants to bring clean, renewable energy to these communities by combining two concepts that begin with the word "micro". Small-scale local wiring systems that aren't connected to the main electrical grid – microgrids – provide neighborhoods with their own communitydriven solar power. And because capital to cover the initial investment for such systems can be hard to obtain, microfinancing comes in, providing access to capital that wouldn't be available through traditional banking, with longer payback times. Ultimately, Shubam - who was a COP27 youth delegate and has experience from NGOs to the corporate sector - is dreaming of renewable energy-powered microgrids providing electricity for all of rural India.

### Bio

As a company - whatever your size or sector sustainability needs to be high up your agenda, but where to begin? With ever-new regulations and a lack of transparency, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a complex field. A young German changemaker is coming to your support with a new scoring and benchmarking tool that allows easy comparisons with your competitors. Vinzent wants to make sustainability tangible. Looking at more than 20 indicators, his tool provides a holistic view: companies can identify their greatest potential for action and make improvements to their key figures. In contrast to existing products, the results can be tracked transparently, and social factors, for instance, women in management positions and donations to social projects, are taken into account. Vinzent started his business the moment he left university, and it's easy to imagine how quickly he might scale it.

# **Vinzent Sorger**

![](_page_56_Picture_8.jpeg)

![](_page_56_Picture_9.jpeg)

# Vlad Borovskii

![](_page_57_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_57_Picture_2.jpeg)

### Bio

Delivery routes? Optimized. Distances traveled? Reduced. Delivery times? Cut. Electric vehicles, cargo bikes, and drones efficiently share the streets, making journeys that are continuously tracked. Every trip is helping to make the system more efficient. Congestion, carbon emissions, and costs all are brought down significantly. This is Vlad's vision for Warsaw. The young logistics engineer wants to bring "smart city logistics" to Poland's capital. His project – he calls it EcoLogiCity – aims to improve air quality, create a more sustainable transport system, and make urban areas more liveable for residents. Vlad believes EcoLogiCity has the potential to serve as a model for others around the world, inspiring cities and communities to adopt more sustainable and efficient logistics systems. Ultimately, he believes his success will be measured not only by its impact in Warsaw but by driving positive change on a global scale.

# BEVISIONEERS

THE MERCEDES-BENZ FELLOWSHIP

# Interested in speaking to one of our Fellows? Contact comms@bevisioneers.world

WHERE **PLANET-POSITIVE** PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE **PLANET-POSITIVE** PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

WHERE **PLANET-POSITIVE** PROJECTS COME TO LIFE

ors.bel.sione

HERE PLANET-POSITIVE DJECTS COME TO LIFE

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

 $(\square$ 

comms@bevisioneers.world

![](_page_58_Picture_10.jpeg)

bevisioneers.world

![](_page_58_Picture_12.jpeg)

@bevisioneers