

# 2019

# ANNUAL

# REPORT



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**A simple vision:**

**A world where 50% of  
leaders are women.**

# Letter from the Founder



**Mario Ferro**  
Wedu co-founder and CEO

Writing this letter in 2020 knowing what COVID-19 and the global recessions are doing to the world makes me look at 2019 in a completely different light. In December 2019, we decided to go fully virtual and started a timely experiment of virtual organisation with the team geographically spread across Asia. Little did we know how useful this would be during the COVID-19-imposed lockdown! I realise that what we built in the last few years will allow Wedu to survive the pandemic and even dream to rebuild a stronger and more ambitious global community. Looking back, we are particularly proud of the depth of our impact we are achieving. Many women report that the Wedu experience has been transformational for their personal development journeys. You will read some of their stories in the coming pages.

Women are and will be at the center of some of the most important developments in science and international relations; and women have the power to reshape business practices in the more sustainable direction our planet and society need for humanity to live long and prosper. The time for more women in leadership is now. In 2019 we grew more. I am grateful for all the partners and funders that choose to work with us this year. Without you we would not be here. This year I want to especially thank the Young Southeast Asian Leadership Initiative (YSEALI), the British Mission to Cambodia, Development Innovation (DI/USAID) and Circle of Angels (COA) Singapore. What's next? I am particularly excited for the partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs of Cambodia (MoWA), our first government partnership.

Together we will reach thousands of women across Cambodia. I am inspired by the leadership Cambodian Rising Stars Phearong, Ly Chhay and Sreymao who became the first board members of a local Wedu entity. I look forward to seeing many other Rising Stars choosing to give shape to their aspirations and ambitions, by stepping up, as part of Wedu and beyond. I feel privileged to watch them rise. If you are a woman aspiring to become a leader in your community, join us. If you want to fund or partner with Wedu in any other way, reach out to us. Together we will build a world where half of leaders are women.

Keep Rising,  
Mario

# Impact Numbers - 2019



**1,741** women leaders in our Leadership Community

**719** Rising Stars

**1,022** Participants in other Leadership Programmes



**Global** Mentorship Programme

**38,251** Mentorship Hours

Mentors across **72** different nationalities

**76.2%** Mentor satisfaction

**85.9%** Rising Star satisfaction with mentorship



**5** Strategic Leadership Development Partnerships



Average **85%** satisfaction

across our customised leadership training activities and programmes

## Our Story

Founded in 2012, Wedu is a social enterprise whose mission is to nurture the leadership development of women around the world by supporting their unique, lifelong journeys with leadership development trainings, opportunities, and funding for education.

These women leaders are inspiring individuals who are committed to changing the status quo in their communities. Today, we are proud to support over 2,000 women leaders across more than 27 countries who form the pillar of a growing community that we believe has the power to achieve large-scale social impact.

# What We Do

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## Mission

To nurture the leadership development of women changemakers around the world by supporting their unique, lifelong journeys with leadership development trainings, opportunities and funding for education.



**Leadership training  
online and in-person**



**Mentorship  
online and in-person**



**Financing for higher and  
professional education via Income  
Sharing Agreements.**

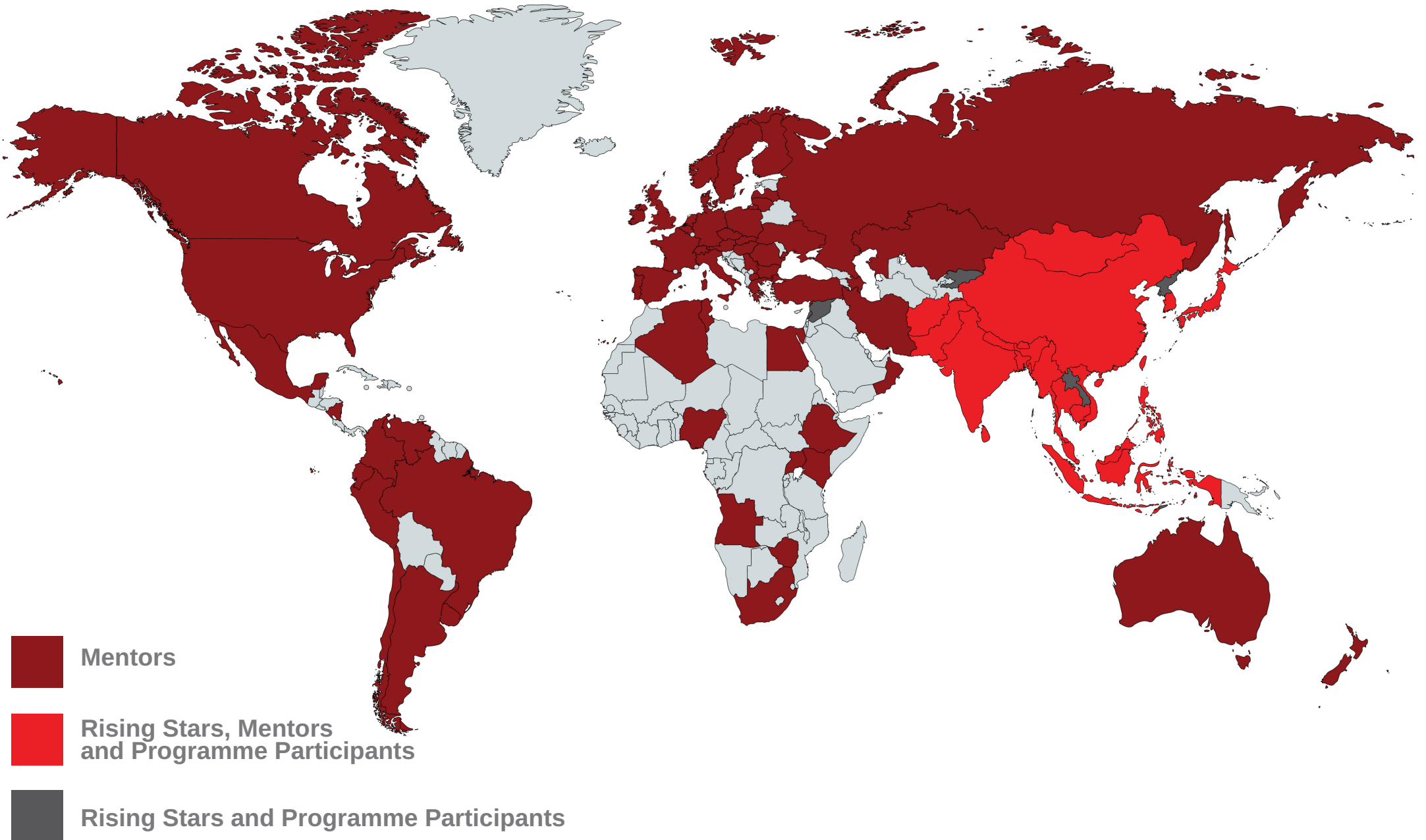
Visit our website, [www.weduglobal.org](http://www.weduglobal.org), to learn more.  
Email [community@weduglobal.org](mailto:community@weduglobal.org) to join the community.

# Rising Stars Around the World Map



- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Brunei Darussalam
- Cambodia
- China
- Hong Kong
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Democratic People's Republic Of Korea
- Republic Of Korea
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Lebanon
- Malaysia
- Mongolia
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Sri Lanka
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Viet Nam

# Wedu Community Around the World Map





# Leadership Development Updates

## Leadership Development Partnerships

A new record! In 2019, Wedu supported over 850 women through tailored programmes, in partnership with: the British Embassy Cambodia, Development Innovations, International Rescue Committee and the US Mission to ASEAN. These in-person programmes delivered training and mentorship to empower and support women's leadership development. Furthermore, after 2 years of collaboration, Wedu signed an MoU for a 5-year partnership with the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) in Cambodia to implement leadership development programmes and initiatives for Cambodian women. This facilitated the set up of the Wedu Cambodia Organization to deliver on these goals.



## Measurement of Action-Based Leadership for Programme Participants

In 2019, our Leadership Community more than doubled in size and we took the next step in our endeavour of action. Last year we had started tracking the personal development and leadership actions of our Rising Stars and in October 2019 we started tracking it for our Programme Participants as well. In total, this year 1,205 actions were reported by our leadership community that included speaking in public, planning and implementing projects, taking courses, raising funds, correcting own prejudices and initiating programmes in their community. We will use this important data to provide even more inspiring and impactful learning opportunities for Rising Stars.

# Our Rising Stars

## Rising Star Leadership

Rising Stars are stepping up more and more as leaders in the Wedu community. They now are:



## Rising Star Board Members

For the first time a group of Rising Stars created the local branch of Wedu in their country. Pherong, Ly Chhay and Sreymao are setting the example for what we hope to become the future of expansion of Wedu in more and more countries. If you want to learn more on how you can start Wedu in your community, reach out to us.

## Rising Star Interview Leaders

In 2019, a total of 50 Interview Leaders supported the selection of new Rising Stars. Eight experienced Rising Star Interview Leaders are set to go to the next level and build their leadership by becoming Senior Interview Leaders. They are taking ownership over the growth of the global Wedu community and we look forward to more Rising Stars to join.



## Rising Star Ambassadors

Six Rising Stars were selected as Ambassadors to strengthen their leadership traits and make meaningful contributions to their community. In Cambodia, the Ambassadors implemented in-person programmes with partner organizations. All Ambassadors have been leading outreach events and utilising social media to share their journeys and inspire more young women to join the Wedu movement.

## Rising Star Focus: **Yoana**

Yoana, a Rising Star from Indonesia, applied to be a Rising Star in 2019 with hopes to develop sustainability for her inclusive dance collective, Nalitari. Besides working professionally as an educational travel coordinator in the ASEAN region, Yoana is actively involved in Nalitari, along with three other co-founder women, to promote inclusive dance at regional, national, and even international levels. In 2019, Nalitari was supported by the British Council in a year-long funded program to develop as a social enterprise to empower participants, including people with disabilities, financially.

**“Becoming a Rising Star and having a mentor has helped me a lot. The things I discussed, shared, and looked into with my mentor not only encouraged me, but helped me change my life.”**

Yoana and her mentor, Stefanie, explored topics such as how to accept themselves, how to understand their potential, be resilient and move forward no matter what the circumstances. Currently, Yoana is concentrating on her job while also focusing on building a wider network for her community work. The inclusive dance collective, for example, has been able to participate in many activities, such as online collaboration with dance organisations from the US and UK under her leadership.

Yoana expressed her gratitude to her incredible mentor and the Wedu Rising Star Network for constantly demonstrating positive support. This community not only changed her life but also helped her to keep her life together. She says, “Together, we can all go through even the impossible!”



# Leadership Programme Partnerships for Impact



## YSEALI Women's Leadership Academy

In partnership with the U.S. Mission to ASEAN, Wedu implemented the 2019 Women's Leadership Academy(WLA) for YSEALI. A total of 33 women attended the academy from 11 countries, including Timor-Leste for the first time, expanding the reach of this inspiring partnership. Supported by corporate partnership like Unilever and L'Oreal, the participants of the WLA are taking the early steps to shape themselves as the leader ASEAN needs and joining the forces in a network that will keep having impact for decades to come.

**33%** of participants said that since their participation in the Leadership Academy, they have assumed a new leadership role in their organisation and/or business.

**100%** of participants stated that they have started pursuing at least one of their professional goals.

## YSEALI WLA Alumni Network

All 160 past YSEALI WLA participants join an inspiring network chaired by local leaders. We are proud and grateful to be working with the US Mission to ASEAN on this important mission.

Country Lead - Vietnam: Bao Anh Diep  
 Co-Chair: Ee Lynn Tee, Malaysia  
 Co-Chair: Rose Ann Orehuela-Adaba, Philippines  
 Country Lead - Brunei: Quratul-Ain Bandial  
 Country Lead - Thailand: Nuttaya Tinpun  
 Country Lead - Cambodia: Sok En Huang  
 Country Lead - Singapore: Jiezheng Wu  
 Country Lead - Indonesia: Mira Zakaria  
 Country Lead - Philippines: Czarinnah Araneta  
 Country Lead - Myanmar: Cho Chan Mye Oo  
 Country Lead - Malaysia: Nadzatul Shima Jaafar  
 Country Lead - Laos: Maliya Phommason  
 Head of Tech: Ami Ramlee, Brunei  
 Head of PPR & Comms: Naindra Annalia Pelekai, Indonesia

#YSEALIWomen

US Mission to ASEAN

wedu  
Investing in women leading the change

Additionally, two of our 2018 Country Leads launched [www.southeastasiawomen.org](http://www.southeastasiawomen.org) as part of a YSEALI WLA alumni collaboration that showcases accomplished women from a range of industries. The platform aims to provide much deserved visibility to promote the exceptional pool of female talent in the region and to cultivate a culture of cross-border collaboration between women in Southeast Asia.

# YSEALI WLA Seed Funding Project



## Girls in Tech

2019 WLA Alumna Cheryl Siy organised an event to teach girls basic coding skills in Metro Manila. The aim of this project is to increase the number of girls pursuing an educational track in Computer Science and Engineering, plus introduce programming to girls and use robotics as a tool to get girls interested in programming. The program took place on Saturday, 26 October at the Asia Pacific College in Manila with 26 participants from public schools around the city.

## Reusable Menstrual Pads

This project was conducted by a WLA alumna from Indonesia, Rahmiana Rahman. Each woman disposes of 16,800 pads or tampons in her lifetime on average. By training women to produce their own reusable menstrual pads, not only did the activity contribute to a more sustainable lifestyle among women, it also encouraged women and girls to be business owners by manufacturing and selling low-cost, biodegradable sanitary pads from their homes.

The workshops were held in villages and self-organised by an enthusiastic group of women led by Rahmiana. The success of the workshops was a testament to improved awareness of and willingness to conserve the environment by producing cost-effective reusable menstrual pads.



# Helping Refugees to Lead



The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Wedu initiated their partnership in October 2017 to offer 50 women refugees from Myanmar a structured Mentorship Program as a pilot program. In May 2019, the IRC Learn to Earn program and Wedu started working in the three main camps: Maela, Nupo, Umpiem to develop refugees' leadership capability, while encouraging the cohort to be more enterprising, support their livelihood goal settings, and foster independence inside or outside the camp.

## Testimonials from Refugees

"I am interested in starting a business. My mentor and I started to discuss how to become a business owner, find a market, innovation in business. Now I feel more confident in opening a business than ever and already planning to do so."

**Tu Tu**

"This mentorship experience has helped me understand how to own a business, find the right market, and also help me prepare for the challenges. I would like to continue mentorship to skill up my business knowledge."

**Zhing Ta**

"I am working at Humanity Inclusion in Community Rehabilitation. I studied in the camp till Grade 12 and have been working for two years already. When I joined this program, I had one goal - to apply for a scholarship. During my mentorship, my mentor and I practiced English skills and my mentor also helped me write scholarship applications. I have already applied for more than five scholarships. I also noticed how I improved my self-confidence, speaking in-front of others, as well as my English language skills."

**Saw Thaw Thar**



## Programme Participant Focus:

# Dayang



“The YSEALI Women’s Leadership Academy with Wedu was a life-changing experience for me. I was impressed by the enriching and diverse content that improved my leadership and management skills. By the end of the programme, I realised I came out as a better person.”

Dayang was a participant of the YSEALI Women’s Leadership Academy, hosted by the US Mission to ASEAN and implemented by Wedu. She has been working in the banking sector in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, while simultaneously running her non-profit organisation, MYConsent, a new online initiative that aims to educate girls and women on consent.

A key tangible benefit from the programme was the network. Dayang had the opportunity to meet women founders and leaders who inspired her to start MYConsent. Initially, even though it was a daunting prospect, she found comfort in the camaraderie of fellow women changemakers who shared their experiences, challenges and opportunities. Meeting young women leaders from the region opened her eyes to the world of diverse cultures and ideas. She learned that they may address women’s issues differently but ultimately, they share the same purpose of improving the lives of girls and women in Southeast Asia.

Dayang loved connecting with inspiring women changemakers from across Southeast Asia, who still keep in touch and are supporting each other long after the programme. She learned so much from the mentors who provided constructive and honest feedback. When asked about what was the one takeaway point from the program, she mentioned a saying by one of the mentors: ‘to go forward, it is important to make peace with your past’.

## Mentor Focus:

# Jessica

After finishing her MBA degree, Jessica, from the Philippines, reflected on what to do next and what to do with the things she learned from business school. She was also starting out her journey as a first-time manager and had that deep calling to share the things she learned from business school and her experiences at work.

“After seeing the impact the organisation is creating in the lives of many young women, I wanted to ‘pay it forward’ and be part of a community where women believe in the power to support one another.”

When Jess was just starting out her career as a professional, she did not have many people in the workplace that she could call a mentor. Having had to navigate the corporate world without much guidance, she always wished things had been different. As she journeyed in her career, she was later surrounded with people whom she could call mentors, who have, time and again, really proven the value of what it means to have someone take an interest in your personal and professional growth. Hence, when she came across Wedu, she took a chance on applying as a mentor.

Her mentee, Thinley, is a promising young woman who is doing a great job in her undergraduate studies. Thinley has a wonderful vision for herself and through their interactions, Jess is learning from her mentee just as she hopes that her mentee is learning from her.





# Programme Partnerships for Impact in Cambodia

## MoU with Ministry of Women's Affairs in Cambodia



Wedu and the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Cambodia initiated its collaboration in 2017 with the launch event **"Unlocking Women's Leadership"** on Monday the 18th December. During the launch event, H.E. Dr. ING Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women's Affairs, joined the panel discussion on building private, public and social partnerships to advance women's economic empowerment in Cambodia.

In the last two years Wedu and MoWA have worked with the Department of Economic Development to clearly define the objectives and outputs of multi-level leadership development programmes and initiatives. As a result of our collaboration, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in June 2019 with MoWa, and the Ministry has supported and encouraged Wedu in establishing Wedu Cambodia Organisation as a local non-profit to meet the partnership goals.

The five-year partnership aims to pave the way for emerging women leaders and decision-makers in the public and private sector, by way of empowering and supporting young women in Cambodia to unlock their potential through the tools of leadership training, mentorship and innovative financing options for the completion of higher education.

The objective, intent and scope of the MoU is for MoWA and Wedu to cooperate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies and activities related to a Public-Social-Private-Partnership programme of unlocking women's leadership in the Kingdom of Cambodia in accordance with the Kingdom's defined policy guidelines.

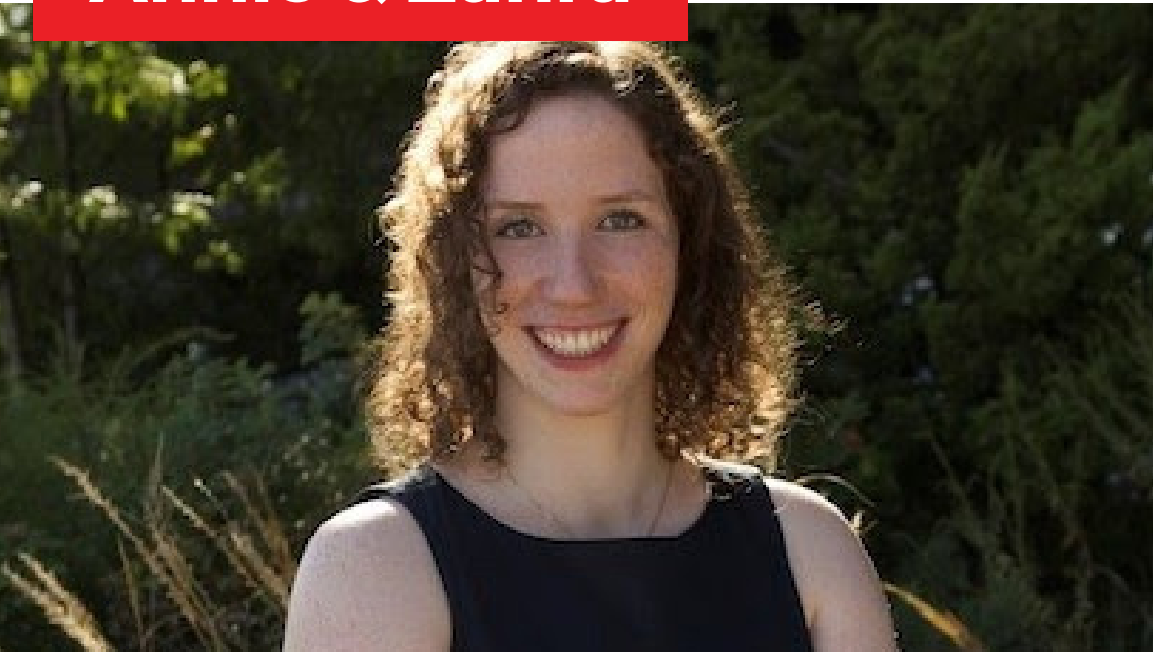
The development outcomes are:

- Reach thousands of women in Cambodia and provide them with access to personal and professional growth opportunities.
- Encourage more women to become leaders of their own development and participants in decision-making on all levels of the public and private sectors in Cambodia.



# Rising Star and Mentor Focus:

## Annie & Zahra



**Zahra, Mentee: “Annie has been a tremendous mentor and has helped me grow not only professionally, but also personally. She has supported me by being available and has a knack for helping me make my thoughts coherent. She has helped me in breaking down my goals to be more realistic and has guided me in the process of developing my growth mindset.”**

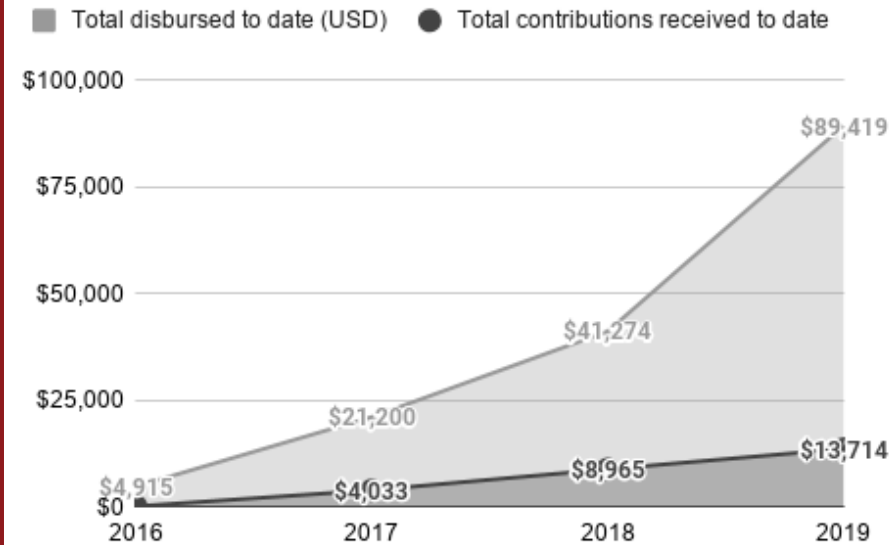
Annie came to know about Wedu when a fellow mentor talked to her about this unique experience with a mentee from our Global Mentorship Programme and it quickly transpired that she also wanted to be part of the mission.

**Annie, Mentor: “It's been an extremely enriching experience to work with Zahra! She's smart, compassionate, driven, kind and is always in a curious learning mindset. It wasn't a hard decision to decide to continue the journey with an inspiring human that has a very bright future ahead of her.”**

Zahra says that she is always learning something new from Annie, from using tools such as the immunity map to self awareness, to learning about new books to read. In their discussions pertaining to the core curriculum and electives of the Wedu Leadership Curriculum, Annie ensures that Zahra's take-aways are always practical and follows up on her goals every time they meet.

To Zahra, having Annie as a mentor means having an accountability partner and a confidante who she knows she can always turn to. She expresses gratitude to Wedu for the opportunity that allowed me to meet such a wonderful mentor.

# Investments in Education Updates



## Future Income Sharing Agreement (FISA) Partners

We would like to thank our partners and supporters as we work to bring affordable education financing to hundreds and thousands of women leaders and changemakers.

## Circle of Angels

After establishing our partnership with the Circle of Angels in 2019, who invested towards FISA contracts and operations - we were able to help community members in unlocking the financial obstacles in their education. The Angels invited our Regional Executive Director, Irum Musharraf to share with them our successful pioneering journey of FISA contracts in Asia.



Average Disbursal per contract: \$2,502  
 Average Contract Duration: 7 years  
 Average Percentage per contract: 9%

Pay it Forward Contributions to Dec 2019: \$13,714  
 Of the total \$89,419 disbursed over the last five years, 15% has already been returned

### 2019 University Portfolio:

- Asian University for Women, Bangladesh
- University of Malaya, Malaysia
- Royal University of Law and Economics, Cambodia
- Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
- Asia Pacific International University, Thailand
- Sookmyung Women's University, South Korea

# FISA Recipient Focus:

## Afruza

Afruza, from Bangladesh, has been a Rising Star since January, 2018. Afruza is currently in her final year of BSc in Biotechnology at BRAC University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She mentions that her mentor, Biliyana, has always been a great listener and sessions with her were like therapy; they made Afruza feel more relaxed after sharing her concerns. Biliyana's mentorship helped her to be a stronger woman in terms of taking her own decisions in life.

"Every time I needed support in my academic or professional life, I could always look up to Wedu, my mentor and fellow Rising Stars. Wedu has become a constant support system and a boost to my confidence. The journey so far has been amazing and I look forward to being a part of Wedu for a long time."



Wedu's Mentorship Programme motivated Afruza to take steps towards contributing to her own community. She has started a social business in Bangladesh named 'Protibha'. Protibha aims to empower women residing in marginalised locations of the country through developing their crafting skills. By offering the women a channel to the urban market for their handicrafts, Protibha has created a sustainable earning opportunity for 40 women.

When a family situation was forcing Afruza to apply for an academic loan to continue her undergraduate studies, she chose to opt for the Future Income Sharing Agreement (FISA) instead, as she genuinely loves the concept of "paying it forward". She found the funding concept fascinating and truly helpful, and through FISA, one day she hopes to be able to support a young woman's education too! When Afruza graduates, she would like to pursue a

job in one of Bangladesh's National Laboratories. With her experience of studying Biotechnology while being involved in several volunteering opportunities in local NGOs, she has realized her inner urge to serve the development sector of her country by supporting the healthcare system. Afruza looks forward to pursuing a career in a position where she will be able to serve the community by supporting the fight against disease and enhancing nutritional value of conventional foods.

# Impact Gatherings

## International Women's Day 2019



The theme for International Women's Day in 2019 was #BalanceforBetter, a concept that revolved around creating equality for women and men for a better world. On March 8th, along with so many of our community and others, we celebrated the day in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to promote discussions on how to build a more balanced world. Mentors and Rising Stars spoke out about their journeys and conducted group mentoring sessions.

# Financials

In 2019, we continued to discover and grow our capacity to attract and manage significant programmatic grant funding. This has contributed to our ability to grow across the region and expand into key countries like Cambodia. Key funding partners have enabled us to build upon existing programmatic and systems innovations so that we can continue to support more women in their leadership journeys.

| USD/Consolidated | 2019 (*) |
|------------------|----------|
| Income           | 513k     |
| Expenditures     | 483k     |

(\*) The low income for 2018 is the result of our cash based accounting and we received significant downpayment in December 2017 for programmes executed in 2019. The income of 2017 as a result was 694k USD

**Our gratitude goes to the following key donors and partners:**

- U.S. Mission to ASEAN- Women’s Leadership Academy**
- International Rescue Committee- Mentorship for Women Refugees**
- Circle of Angels- FISA Expansion**
- Kiva**



[Link to Audited Financials](#)

**We are incredibly grateful to our global Community and continue to draw inspiration from the people and partners who support our vision of a world where half of all leaders are women. If you see an opportunity to collaborate or to get involved with us, we want to hear from you!**



Visit our website at [www.weduglobal.org](http://www.weduglobal.org)

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