

From Scholars to *Changemakers:*

Stories of Growth,
Leadership and Impact



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A Message from Andreas Klein

"The decisive moral and political values and character traits of a person are formed during youth. They largely determine how individuals later feel, the sacrifices they are willing to make, and the way they conduct themselves and act throughout their lives."

— Konrad Adenauer (1962)

As a former scholar of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung during my university studies, I experienced firsthand the value of this unique scholarship programme. I refer not only to its financial support, which can help ease the burden of pursuing higher education, but also to its immeasurable intrinsic value. Inspired by the principles of

Konrad Adenauer, the scholarship—and the exchange with fellow scholars through the Foundation's wide-reaching network—plays a formative role in shaping character, strengthening a sense of responsibility, and broadening perspectives beyond one's individual academic discipline.

When I first became involved in supporting young people through our scholarship programme, I believed that education was one of the most powerful investments we could make in the future of South Asia. Today, after years of working with extraordinary scholars from across the region, I know this to be true beyond any doubt. This publication is, above all, a celebration of their journeys.

Behind every scholarship is a story of perseverance. Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting young women and men from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar, and beyond who overcame financial hardship, social barriers, displacement, and uncertainty to pursue their education. What unites them is not only academic excellence, but also a deep commitment to their communities and a belief that education carries responsibilities as well as opportunities.

At a time when the world often seems defined by division and uncertainty, these scholars offer a different story—one of resilience, hope, and leadership. They remind us that the future of South Asia will not be shaped solely by governments, institutions, or economic trends. It will also be shaped by young people who are willing to serve others, bridge differences, and work towards a more inclusive and sustainable future.

This belief lies at the heart of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's commitment to education and youth empowerment. Through our scholarships at the Asian University for Women in Chattogram, Bangladesh, and our partnership with National College in Kathmandu, Nepal, we have sought not only to support individual students but also



to invest in a generation of leaders who can contribute to stronger communities, more resilient democracies, and greater regional cooperation.

What has been especially inspiring is how these programmes have grown beyond their original purpose. Scholars who first met through KAS initiatives have built lasting friendships, professional networks, and collaborative projects across borders. The emergence of the South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS) network is a powerful example of this spirit. What began as support for individual educational journeys has evolved into a community of young changemakers working together on issues such as climate action, sustainable development, social inclusion, and democratic participation.

The stories in these pages demonstrate that leadership is not defined by titles or positions. It is defined by courage, integrity, empathy, and a willingness to take responsibility for others. They also remind us of an important truth: talent alone is rarely enough. Behind every success story stands a family member, teacher, mentor, institution, or supporter who believed in a young person's potential and helped create an opportunity when it mattered most.

As I conclude my time as the Director of KAS' regional programme Political Dialogue Asia in Singapore, I find great comfort and optimism in the stories contained in this publication. They remind me that our most valuable investment has never been in programmes or projects alone, but in people. If there is one achievement that I am particularly proud to have witnessed, it is seeing these scholars grow into leaders, mentors, and role models in their own right.

To all our scholars—past, present, and future—thank you for inspiring us. Your journeys affirm the values that KAS has sought to promote across the region: responsibility, service, dialogue, and leadership. Most importantly, they remind us that meaningful change begins with individuals who are willing to step forward and make a difference. I hope you enjoy reading their stories as much as I have enjoyed witnessing them unfold.



Reflections by Dr Razwana Begum

"Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own."

— Michelle Obama

What I have learned over the years is that there is rarely a single factor that determines a person's future. Talent and determination matter, but so too do opportunity, encouragement, and the people who choose to invest in us along the way.

I know this not only through my work, but through my own experience. I grew up stateless, studying largely on my own and without many of the networks or support systems that others might take for granted. There were few shortcuts and few safety nets. What I did have, however, was my mother's unwavering belief in my education and potential. That encouragement did not remove the obstacles I faced, but it gave me the confidence and determination to persevere. It is also one of the reasons I have devoted my own career to education, public service, and community work.

Later, as a Probation Officer, an educator and a Member of Parliament, I met many young people navigating their own challenges. Some were searching for direction. Others were waiting for someone to recognise their potential or create opportunities that would allow it to flourish. Time and again, I saw how access to support, encouragement, and meaningful opportunity could help people imagine and pursue futures that had previously seemed beyond reach.

That, to me, is what this publication celebrates – and what KAS Singapore has been doing with purpose and consistency for many years. As a Nominated Member of Parliament, I was given a platform to advocate for those whose voices were not always heard – women, families, and young people on the margins.

That experience also brought me into the Asian Women Parliamentarians Caucus, where I had the privilege of learning from and working alongside women leaders from across the region. What stood out was not their positions or titles, but a shared understanding that women's perspectives are essential to good governance. Too many decisions affecting women and families are still made without sufficient representation. The Caucus exists to strengthen those voices, and I remain grateful for the opportunity to contribute to that effort.

It was through this work that I came to know the Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia, led by Director Andreas Michael Klein, and the dedicated KAS teams in Singapore and Germany. Together, they have created something valuable: a programme that invests in young people not simply as future leaders, but as active contributors to the societies they live in today.



That is important because the young people supported through KAS scholarships and programmes are not waiting for the future to arrive. Many are already working on issues that will shape all our futures – climate change, sustainability, social cohesion, and the complex challenges that cross national borders. They bring energy, fresh perspectives, and a willingness to engage with problems that require cooperation beyond any one country or institution.

Democracy is strengthened when people believe they have a stake in it and feel that they can make a meaningful contribution. That belief grows when someone takes the time to invest in them, challenge them, and create opportunities for them to participate. This is one of the important contributions of the KAS scholarship programme. It does more than support education; it signals to young people that their ideas, perspectives, and leadership matter.

To the young people reading this: you do not need to have everything figured out. Bring curiosity, integrity, and the willingness to persevere when things are difficult. Seek out people who will challenge and support you to grow. Listen carefully, remain open to learning, and make the most of the opportunities that come your way. And when the time comes, invest in others as others have invested in you. That is how knowledge, opportunity, and leadership are passed from one generation to the next.

To Mr Klein, and to the KAS teams in Singapore and Germany, thank you. Beyond the scholarships and programmes themselves, you have created spaces where dialogue, learning, and meaningful relationships can flourish. The impact of that investment extends well beyond any single cohort or initiative.

As you read the stories in this publication, I hope you will see not only the achievements of the individuals featured, but also the value of sustained investment in people,



relationships, and opportunity. Leadership rarely develops in isolation. It grows through encouragement, challenge, collaboration, and the willingness of others to create opportunities for those who follow.

For that reason, I commend KAS and all those involved in this initiative. By supporting young people, and emerging women leaders across the region, they are helping to strengthen not only individual careers, but also the institutions, communities, and democratic processes that depend on diverse voices and shared responsibility.

Education, Opportunity and the Future

"The purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows."

— Sydney J. Harris



Education is one of the most powerful forces for change. It allows individuals to look beyond the boundaries of their own experiences, discover new possibilities, and imagine futures that may once have seemed unattainable. More than the acquisition of knowledge, education nurtures curiosity, builds confidence, and inspires young people to believe that their aspirations matter. It equips them not only with skills, but with the courage to shape their own lives and contribute meaningfully to the world around them.

For women and girls, the transformative power of education is particularly profound. Across the world, education has opened doors that previous generations could only dream of entering. It has enabled women to challenge long-standing barriers, pursue leadership roles, and become agents of change within their communities. Every educated girl represents not only an individual success story, but also the promise of stronger families, more resilient communities, and more inclusive societies. When women are empowered through education, the impact reaches far beyond the classroom and across generations.

Throughout South Asia, countless young women possess the talent, determination, and ambition to create meaningful change. What they often need is opportunity. Institutions such as the Asian University for Women and Kathmandu University play a vital role in providing that opportunity. They train not only academic excellence, but also critical thinking, leadership, and a deep sense of social responsibility. In doing so, they help transform potential into purpose and dreams into achievements.



Yet some of life's most important lessons take place beyond the classroom. Encounters with different cultures, ideas, and perspectives challenge assumptions, broaden horizons, and deepen understanding. Complementing academic journeys, initiatives supported by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung create opportunities for leadership development, internships, regional exchanges, and engagement with pressing social and political issues. These experiences increase confidence, encourage collaboration, and help young people develop the resilience needed to build a life in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

The future will be shaped by the ideas, actions, and leadership of today's youth. Investing in education is therefore an investment in hope, opportunity, and lasting progress. By creating pathways for young people—especially young women—to learn, grow, and realise their full potential, we contribute to building societies that are more inclusive, resilient, and compassionate. Education does more than prepare individuals for the future; it empowers them to imagine a better future and gives them the skills to make it a reality.

More than a Scholarship

The KAS Scholarship Journey

Every scholarship tells a story. Behind each application, each graduation, and each professional achievement is a young person who dared to dream beyond their circumstances and who chose to invest their talents in creating a better future for others. Trust in democracy, freedom of choice, and the empowerment of young people—particularly young women—lie at the heart of the scholarship and alumni work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia (PDA). Through its scholarship programmes and alumni networks, KAS seeks not only to support education, but to accompany and empower a new generation of leaders, changemakers, and community builders across Asia.

Since 2019, PDA has supported outstanding female students at the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Chittagong, Bangladesh, including young women from some of the most underserved and marginalised communities in the region. Many arrived at university having overcome significant social, economic, or personal barriers. Through determination, resilience, and hard work, they have gone on to excel academically, pursue postgraduate studies, build successful careers, and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Building on the success of this initiative, the programme later expanded to Nepal through a partnership with National College at Kathmandu University, creating further opportunities for talented young people committed to serving society.

Yet the KAS scholarship programme has always been about more than financial support. Inspired by the long-standing scholarship tradition of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Germany, it is built on the belief that education and personal development go hand in hand. Scholars are encouraged to challenge themselves, broaden their horizons, and discover their own leadership potential. Through workshops, training programmes, internships, mentoring opportunities, and exchanges with political leaders and experts, they gain the confidence and skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex world.

Along the way, scholars become part of a community. They meet fellow students from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds, united by a shared commitment to learning, service, and positive change. Through annual gatherings, regional events, and alumni activities, lasting friendships and professional networks are formed. These connections often become one of the most valuable and enduring aspects of the scholarship experience.



This sense of community does not end with graduation. PDA places great importance on maintaining strong relationships with its alumni, whether they are former KAS Scholars or graduates of the Konrad Adenauer School for Young Politicians (KASYP). Through alumni networks such as the Asian Democratic Leaders Alliance (ADLA), mentoring activities, conferences, and continued engagement in KAS programmes, former participants remain connected to one another and to the values that first brought them together.

Perhaps the most inspiring measure of success is what scholars and alumni choose to do next. Across Asia, they are taking initiative, creating opportunities, and helping others. A powerful example is South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS), an organisation founded by KAS Scholars and alumni to promote climate action, sustainable development, and civic engagement. Such initiatives demonstrate that leadership is not simply a position or title—it is the willingness to take responsibility and contribute to the common good.

The stories featured in this book reflect the remarkable diversity of the KAS community. They come from different countries, cultures, and walks of life. Some have overcome extraordinary challenges, while others have followed unconventional paths in pursuit of their goals. Yet they share a common belief that education can transform lives, that leadership begins with service, and that positive change is possible when individuals are willing to step forward and make a difference.

We are immensely proud of what our scholars and alumni have achieved so far. More importantly, we are excited about what lies ahead. Their journeys remind us that investing in young people is ultimately an investment in stronger communities, more resilient societies, and a more hopeful future. We hope that the stories in these pages will inspire others to pursue their ambitions with courage, support those around them, and contribute to building a more democratic, inclusive, and sustainable Asia.



From Aspiration to Impact

Asian University for Women





About the Asian University for Women (AUW)



Founded in 2008 and located in Chittagong, Bangladesh, AUW is the first of its kind: a regional institution dedicated to women's education and leadership development through liberal arts and sciences education. It is international in outlook but rooted in the contexts and aspirations of the people of Asia. Chartered by the Parliament of Bangladesh, AUW exists solely to support a rising network of women leaders, entrepreneurs, and changemakers from across the region. It seeks out women who show significant academic achievement and potential, demonstrate courage and a sense of outrage at injustice, and are empathic to the woes of other people.

Students are recruited from countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Timor Leste, Vietnam, and Yemen. More than 85% of AUW students are on full or near-full scholarships funded by supporters from around the world. The University has graduated 1800 students to date.

A majority of AUW graduates secure employment in the private and public sectors in their home countries while about 25% go on to pursue graduate studies at other institutions of higher learning including Oxford, Cambridge, Johns Hopkins, Stanford, Columbia, Duke, Brandeis and Tufts, among others.



A Perspective From Dr Kamal Ahmed

Universities, as gateways to higher education and knowledge, are synonymous with opportunity. But left to their traditional modes, the opportunity offered by universities does not necessarily present itself to all who deserve it. Having the same barriers to all leaves out promising students who have suffered inadequate schools because they grew up in poor neighborhoods or in conflict zones or have been relegated to a more informal system of education because of social stigma. Girls and women carry a disproportionate burden because of a bias against girls that still persists in many communities. The mantra that AUW conveys to its prospective students is that “It doesn’t matter whether you have shoes or no shoes, so long as you have the courage and the intellectual wherewithal to pursue an education”. Students who did not get a chance to attend a good school or even attend school regularly because of dislocations resulting from conflict or war or environmental disasters cannot be

expected to perform at the same level as others on the admissions test. Based on an assessment of potential, these students are still admitted to the university but are required to complete up to two years of pre-undergraduate education that elevates their academic capabilities to the same level as others who are directly enrolled. AUW follows an admissions policy that is necessarily flexible at entrance but then insists on equal proven merit at graduation. It is this approach that has enabled hundreds of Rohingya women from the refugee camps in Bangladesh to enrol at AUW and build promising futures. It is the same approach that has allowed women toiling in textile factories to join the ranks of AUW students and transform their lives. In fact, this approach liberates the institution from being a captive of status quo; we are able to create opportunities for recognition of talent and advancement even where situations might seem hopeless.

Actively creating opportunities for underserved women is only a part of the educational imperative. It is not enough to create opportunities that do not lead to an excellent education. Women who have overcome extraordinary barriers deserve an education that challenges them intellectually, nurtures their leadership and equips them to realise their full potential. Anything less would fail both them and the communities that have invested their hopes in them.

When opportunity and excellence (and the capabilities that spring from them) come together, they create something even more powerful: freedom. Not simply freedom from hardship, but the freedom to imagine a different future and to shape it with confidence, purpose and conviction. That is exactly what the Asian University for Women strives to achieve through its students drawn from myriad backgrounds.

Humaira (not her own name) is one such example. Arriving at AUW from the Rohingya refugee camps, she began her journey in our Pre-Undergraduate Program before earning both her undergraduate and graduate degrees. Today, she serves as a lead trainer in a UNICEF-supported programme preparing more than 1,100 trainers working in the refugee camps, while aspiring to pursue a PhD in the years ahead. Her story is a powerful reminder that education does more than transform an individual. It creates new possibilities for entire communities.

For many years, partners such as the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung have shared this belief by supporting exceptional young women and investing in their development as future leaders through scholarships, dialogue and leadership programmes. The stories collected in these pages are a testament to what such partnerships can make possible.

Humaira’s journey is also a reminder that we must think beyond individual success stories. At AUW, we are now working to scale this model through Realizing 10,000 Hopes, an ambitious initiative to educate at the university level 10,000 refugee, displaced or stateless women from around the world over the coming decade. We are delighted that the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) has become one of the initiative’s strategic partners, helping us transform proven success into lasting global impact.

Ultimately, our mission extends far beyond higher education. It is to help build a world in which talent is no longer determined by geography, citizenship or circumstance, but by the opportunities we choose to create for one another.

Kamal Ahmad
Founder, Asian University for Women



Falak Shabir

Growing up in Kashmir, I became familiar with uncertainty at a young age. Some of my earliest memories are tied to moments when daily life was interrupted by events beyond anyone's control.

During those times, I often sat by the window of my family home, wondering what existed beyond the mountains that framed my world.

I was curious about people in other places, but I never imagined that one day I would become part of an international community myself.

That changed when I joined the Asian University for Women as a KAS Scholar. One of the most unexpected lessons I learned there was how quickly strangers can become a source of strength. Living alongside women from across Asia, I encountered stories shaped by displacement, inequality, and resilience. In dorm rooms and shared spaces, late-night conversations often became moments of honesty and quiet support, where listening itself felt like an act of care.

In those exchanges, I began to understand leadership differently. It was not about authority or visibility, but about presence - about holding space for others and allowing their experiences to matter.

Later, continuing my academic journey at the University of Cambridge, I realised how much of that understanding I carried with me. The uncertainty of my early years in Kashmir had taught me to question; the KAS experience had taught me to listen.

Together, they shaped a sense of responsibility grounded not in achievement alone, but in connection, empathy, and the bridges we build between very different worlds.



Sabina Yeasmin

As a member of the first cohort of KAS Scholars at the Asian University for Women (AUW), I never imagined how profoundly the scholarship would shape my life. What began as financial support for my education became a gateway to opportunities, experiences, and networks that continue to influence my personal and professional journey.

Even before receiving the scholarship, I was actively involved in student leadership and community engagement. Through student government and work with organisations in Chittagong, I supported women's menstrual health and advocated for girls' education. Having previously worked in Bangladesh's ready-made garment sector, I witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by women from underprivileged communities.

These experiences deepened my commitment to social impact and women's empowerment.

After graduating from AUW, I joined my alma mater to contribute to its mission of creating opportunities for women from marginalised backgrounds. It was my way of giving back to a community that had transformed my life.

My KAS journey began during the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond supporting my education, KAS invested in my growth through leadership programmes, professional development workshops, networking opportunities, and study visits to countries such as Singapore and Nepal. These experiences broadened my perspective and connected me with an inspiring community of scholars.

What stood out most was KAS's continued support after graduation. During the political uncertainty in Bangladesh in 2024, Andreas Klein encouraged me to consider pursuing a master's degree in Germany. His guidance and KAS's encouragement gave me the confidence to take that leap.

Today, I am pursuing a Master's degree in Development Studies at the University of Passau. KAS taught me to believe in possibilities, embrace lifelong learning, and lead with purpose. For that, I remain deeply grateful.





Untari Setiawati

Becoming a KAS Scholar in 2021, during my second year at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, became one of the most meaningful parts of my academic journey. As a Politics, Philosophy, and Economics major with a minor in Finance, I initially thought the scholarship would primarily provide financial support. However, KAS offered me much more than that through workshops, events, internships, and opportunities to connect with scholars from diverse backgrounds across Asia.

One of the most memorable experiences was attending the Asian Women Parliamentary Caucus (AWPC), where I met inspiring women from different countries and professions.

The experience showed me how meaningful cross-cultural dialogue can be in shaping perspectives on leadership, responsibility, and social impact.



Despite our diverse cultures and backgrounds, the KAS community always felt supportive, open-minded, and united by shared values and aspirations.

Through these experiences, my understanding of leadership also evolved. I learned that leadership is not about authority or speaking the loudest, but rather about empathy, accountability, collaboration, and the willingness to continue learning from others.

As an Indonesian student studying abroad in Bangladesh, KAS helped me grow both personally and professionally. It gave me the confidence to engage in broader conversations, appreciate diverse perspectives, and believe that young people can create meaningful impact through connection, education, and a shared sense of purpose.



Omar Salma

I am Omar Salma, a humanitarian born in Maungdaw, northern Rakhine State, Myanmar, where growing up as a Rohingya meant living with restrictions, uncertainty, and limited access to education. In 2017, violence forced my family and me to flee to Bangladesh. We arrived in Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee camp with almost nothing, carrying only memories of the home we had lost and uncertainty about the future.



Life in the camp became a struggle for survival, but I refused to let displacement define the end of my education. In 2018, I received a full scholarship to the Asian University for Women (AUW), a turning point that transformed my future. Later, I was selected as a KAS Scholar. For someone who once believed higher education would never be possible, becoming part of the KAS community was something I never imagined.

Alongside my studies, I volunteered and worked with organizations including UNHCR, WFP, and other humanitarian agencies, supporting Rohingya communities through education and community-based initiatives.

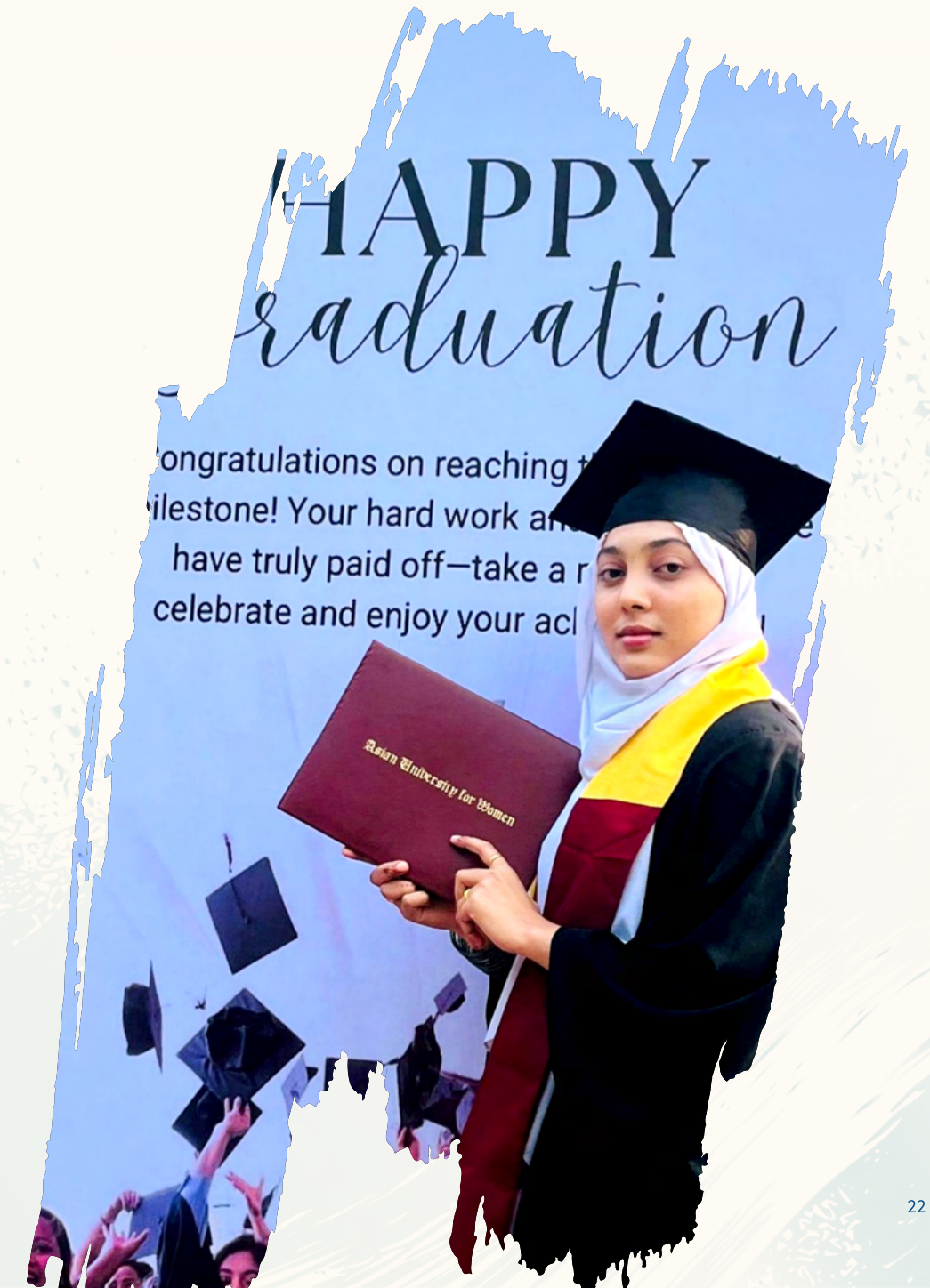
These experiences strengthened my commitment to service and humanitarian work.

Being a KAS Scholar changed the way I think about leadership.

Through my interactions with the KAS team and the wider scholar community, I learned that leadership is not about holding a position, but about resilience, service, and creating opportunities for others.

I felt seen, respected, and encouraged not only as a student, but as someone whose experiences and voice mattered.

Today, while completing my MA in Education at AUW, I serve as a Wellness Coordinator supporting Rohingya students in the Pathway Program. My journey reflects the hopes of many young Rohingya people who continue to dream despite displacement and uncertainty. KAS reminded me that education can open doors that once seemed impossible, and it strengthened my belief in hope, peace, and the power of education to transform lives.





Zainab Musavi

I come from a minority community in a country where women's education is often viewed as a privilege rather than a right, and where women's participation in leadership remains limited. Before joining the KAS Scholarship Programme, my understanding of leadership was shaped largely by academic learning, where leadership was associated with speaking confidently, guiding others, and achieving goals.

Through KAS, I gained a more practical and human-centred understanding of leadership. The programme taught me that leadership is not defined by titles or visibility, but by empathy, responsibility, and the ability to support and empower others through shared experiences.

During KAS events, I met scholars from diverse backgrounds who, despite our differences, shared common experiences of struggle, resilience, and hope. These interactions deepened my understanding of the importance of amplifying unheard voices, fostering meaningful dialogue, and learning from one another.



The KAS community has played an important role in shaping my growth, both academically and personally, and has strengthened my commitment to public health research and community-based work.

My journey has shown me the transformative power of education and opportunity. Through KAS, I have learned that meaningful leadership begins with service, and I remain committed to using my knowledge and experiences to create positive change for those whose voices are too often overlooked.



Priyata Talukdar

Before becoming a KAS Scholar at the Asian University for Women, my idea of leadership was mostly about achievement and visibility. That changed when I attended a KAS Women's Caucus event in Singapore with female political leaders from across Asia. Listening to their experiences and the values they chose to stand by in polarized environments was deeply personal. It built my confidence and made me realize that taking a stance on important issues requires emotional intelligence, accountability, and the ability to engage across differences.

Looking back, KAS gradually deepened my curiosity about global governance and policy, and that curiosity is what pushed me to pursue a master's degree in Germany.

Through KAS seminars and education workshops, I learned about the challenges and impacts of world affairs through firsthand accounts, from people who had lived through political transitions and professionals who had worked within them.



Those conversations pushed me to think beyond borders and deepened my interest in EU policy and governance.

The KAS experience from AUW to Germany shaped my individual perceptions, how I critically engage with global issues, and what questions I want to spend my career asking.

Nant Soe Nandar Thein

As a KAS Scholar, my journey reflects the opportunities that education can create despite challenging circumstances. Growing up in Mae La Refugee Camp on the Thai-Myanmar border, access to higher education often seemed uncertain. Determined to continue my studies, I enrolled in the GED program in Mae Sot, which became an important stepping stone toward my academic goals. That path eventually led me to Asian University for Women, where I earned a degree in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics.

Coming from a refugee background, earning a university degree was something I once thought might be beyond my reach. The KAS scholarship helped turn that dream into reality. It opened doors to new experiences, broadened my perspective, and strengthened my belief in the power of education. More importantly, it showed me that where we come from does not have to determine where we can go.

Attending KAS conferences gave me the opportunity to meet people from different countries and backgrounds, learn from their experiences, and exchange ideas on important issues. These experiences helped me become more confident in communicating with others, working in diverse teams, and understanding different perspectives.

Today, as a teacher, I use these skills every day by encouraging my students to express their ideas, respect one another's viewpoints, and develop the confidence to learn and grow.

The knowledge, skills, and values I gained throughout my educational journey continue to guide both my professional and personal growth. I remain deeply grateful for the lasting impact of the scholarship, which has shaped my career, strengthened my commitment to education, and inspired me to create meaningful opportunities for others.



Jannatul Fardush

I was born and raised in a remote village in Bangladesh, where opportunities for quality education and personal growth, especially for girls, were limited. Growing up in such an environment taught me resilience, perseverance, and the importance of dreaming beyond one's circumstances. Although pursuing higher education often seemed challenging, I always believed that education could become a pathway not only to transform my own life, but also to contribute meaningfully to society.

My journey changed significantly when I was admitted to the Asian University for Women (AUW), Bangladesh. In December 2024, I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Economics with a minor in Mathematics and graduated with Summa Cum Laude distinction. However, one of the most transformative moments in my life was being selected as a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Scholar at AUW from 2022 to 2024.

During my time as a KAS scholar, I grew both personally and professionally. Through conferences, workshops, and regional programs in Nepal and Singapore, I interacted with scholars, policymakers, and young leaders from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.

These experiences expanded my perspective beyond the classroom and deepened my understanding of leadership, dialogue, and civic responsibility.



I learned that meaningful leadership is rooted not only in achievement but also in empathy, collaboration, and the ability to listen to different perspectives.

Personally, my time as a KAS scholar strengthened my confidence and encouraged me to think more critically about the role I want to play in society. Academically, it enriched my intellectual curiosity and reinforced my commitment to addressing issues of inequality and development. Professionally, the values and experiences gained through KAS continue to shape my work today.

Looking back, my journey from a remote village to becoming a KAS scholar and now working in humanitarian education has been shaped by persistence, opportunity, and a commitment to creating positive social impact. The KAS scholarship was not only financial support; it became a platform for growth, learning, and leadership that continues to influence the person I am becoming.



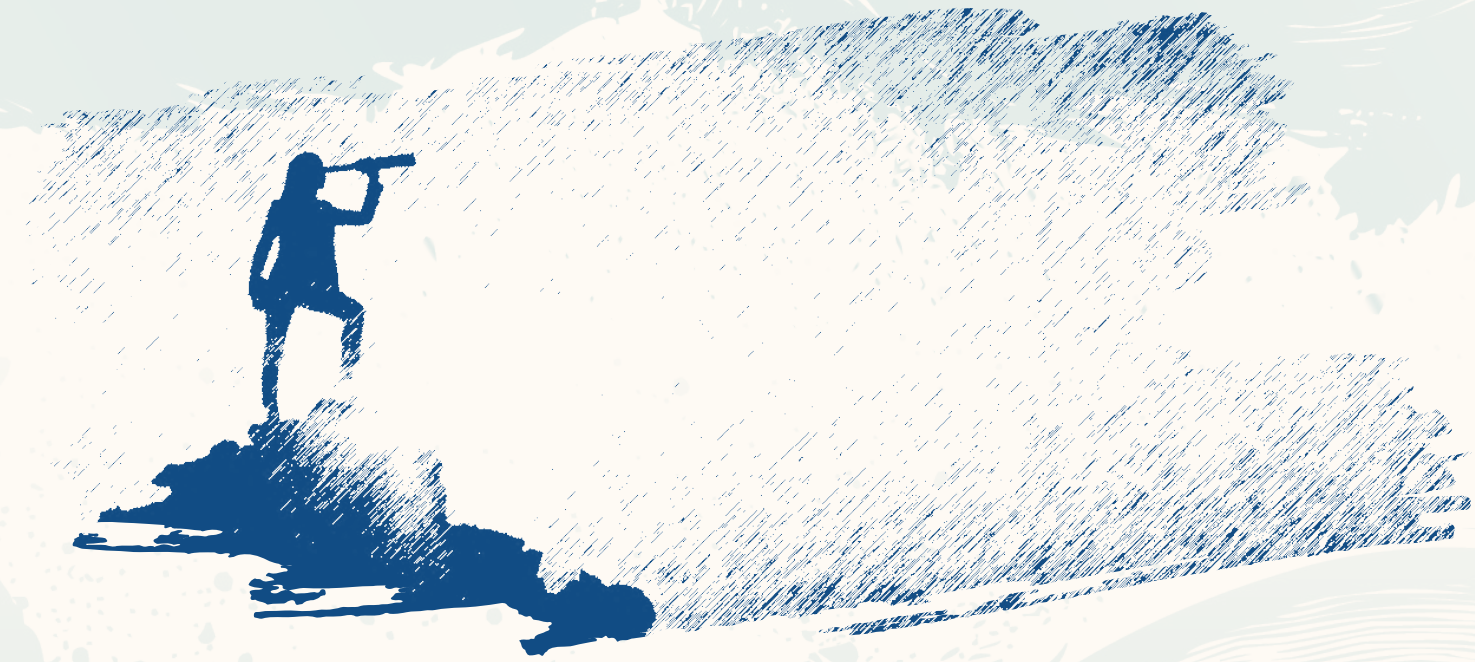


Tonima Kairi

I grew up in a tea worker community in Sylhet, Bangladesh, where opportunities are limited and many families face daily economic hardship. A tea farm worker earns only about 178 Taka a day, making it difficult to provide for a family and invest in a child's future. For many girls in the community, dreams often extend only as far as their circumstances allow. Yet my parents always believed that education could create opportunities beyond the life they knew.

Their faith in me was especially remarkable because my journey began with significant challenges. I was born weighing only 700 grams, and my chances of survival were uncertain. Despite this difficult start, my parents never lost hope. Through their love, sacrifice, and unwavering support, they encouraged me to dream beyond the boundaries of my surroundings and to believe in my own potential.

That belief changed the course of my life. Receiving a full scholarship to the Asian University for Women opened a new chapter in my journey, providing opportunities that once seemed beyond my reach. Later, becoming a KAS Scholar further expanded my horizons.



For someone from a small tea worker community, these experiences reinforced my belief that our backgrounds do not define our limits and that meaningful change can begin with a single opportunity.

Through KAS, I gained exposure to new ideas, met inspiring individuals from across Asia, and learned the value of leadership, service, and cross-cultural understanding.



Mirnalini Arulrohan

My journey to Asian University for Women began with a simple dream, to pursue higher education in an environment that would challenge me, support me, and help me grow beyond my comfort zone. Leaving my home in Sri Lanka and moving to Bangladesh was not easy at first. Everything felt new, from the people to the culture and academic environment. But over time, AUW became a place where I discovered my strengths, built meaningful friendships, and gained confidence in myself.

As an Applied Mathematics and Data Science student and a girl deeply interested in technology and innovation, I became especially interested in research, artificial intelligence, and solving real-world problems through data and mathematics. Alongside academics, being involved in student activities and leadership roles also helped me grow personally and professionally.



Becoming a KAS Scholar is very meaningful to me because it feels like recognition of both my hard work and my potential.

Through KAS, I hope to explore more opportunities related to AI, technology, and policy-making.

I look forward to participating in conferences, workshops, internships, and discussions that connect technology with leadership and social impact. I also hope this experience will support my future academic goals and higher studies.

Most importantly, I look forward to learning from diverse perspectives, connecting with inspiring scholars, and growing into a responsible global citizen who can contribute positively to society through research, leadership, and service.



Aanchal Munda

Every journey toward higher education begins with a dream, determination, and the courage to embrace new opportunities. Growing up, I studied in local schools and an under-resourced college where access to educational resources and opportunities was limited. Despite these challenges, I always aspired to pursue higher education and gain broader academic exposure.

I still remember how determined I was to study at a reputable university. When I received my offer letter from the Asian University for Women, I accepted it without hesitation, even though I was already in my second year of college and my parents initially had reservations. Looking back, that decision changed the course of my life. At AUW, I found opportunities to learn beyond textbooks, engage with people from diverse backgrounds, and grow both academically and personally.

Becoming a KAS Scholar has further enriched this journey. Beyond financial support, I look forward to opportunities to learn from inspiring leaders, engage in meaningful discussions, and connect with fellow KAS scholars from across the region. Through various events, workshops, and exchanges, I hope to gain new perspectives on leadership, social responsibility, and the importance of contributing to the common good.



Growing up, I was surrounded by women who were resilient, capable, and hardworking, yet whose potential often went unrecognised.



Their strength continues to inspire me, and I hope to use the opportunities I have received to support and empower others in the future.

I am grateful to be part of the KAS Scholar community. I believe the journey will not only broaden my horizons but also reinforced my belief that education can transform lives and create opportunities for meaningful change.



About National College Kathmandu

Established in 1996, National College in Dhumbarahi, Kathmandu, is a pioneering institution affiliated with Kathmandu University (KU). It specializes in interdisciplinary undergraduate education in the social sciences, development, and psychology, aiming to produce visionary professionals who can drive economic and social transformation.

Academic Programs

National College is highly regarded for its tailor-made, niche undergraduate degrees designed to address contemporary national and global challenges:

- Bachelor in Development Studies (BDevS since 1999): The College's flagship program, blending economics, sociology, and environmental studies.
- Bachelor in Development Finance (BDFin since 2006): A unique course bridging financial management with socioeconomic development.
- Bachelor of Social Sciences (BoSS since 2013): Focuses on political dynamics, globalization, and social justice.
- Bachelor in Psychology (BPsych since 2023): Meeting the growing need for mental health and behavioral professionals.
- Bachelor in International Relations and Diplomacy (BIRD since 2026): Shaping next generation of global leaders.
- Master in Psychology (MPsych from 2027): Transforming knowledge into advanced psychological expertise

Applied Learning and Fieldwork

A core philosophy of the institution is experiential learning. The curriculum seamlessly integrates classroom theoretical knowledge with rigorous field studies, rural immersion, and community-based research. Students participate in workshops on climate change, social impact assessments, disaster management, project management, and practical training such as Psychological First Aid (PFA).

Global Reach, Exchange and Joint Studies

Despite its focus on grassroots development in Nepal, the college boasts a strong international footprint. It hosts students from across the SAARC region facilitated by the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Center for Development Studies and Regional Cooperation. Additionally, it maintains robust student exchange programs with prestigious Japanese institutions like Waseda University and the University of Sacred Heart, and provides international internship opportunities across South and Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, the college has been conducting the Nepal-China exchange program in collaboration with the Confucius Institute of Kathmandu University since 2015. The college also has an active Erasmus+ exchange program with Palacky University, Czech Republic since 2022 in addition to another short exchange program with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India since 2024.

The institute has two active joint studies program with two Japanese universities viz. Jiyu Gakuen University (since 2025) and Hokkaido University of Education (since 2024) with themes on rural development and international development respectively.

Career Outcomes and Alumni

The institution has produced close to fifteen hundred graduates who are actively employed in NGOs, INGOs, government agencies, research institutions, and the private sector, politics, or pursuing higher education globally.

Achievements

National College has so far given seven University toppers despite being a small institution in terms of students. Also, the college has near hundred percent course completion rates of students enrolled.

Conferences and Seminars

The college regularly holds national and international conferences and seminars with the view to inform and shape its students and faculties. An international seminar on interdisciplinary studies for sustainable development was organized in September 2025 and very recently in May 2026 a youth workshop on climate change and disaster management was organized with collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS).

A Note from National College Kathmandu



National College, an affiliate institute of Kathmandu University, has had the privilege of offering some of its deserving students a full scholarship package for undergraduate studies through Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). This prestigious scholarship program has been awarded to thirteen of our students so far. From my perspective as a program coordinator, I have observed that the scholarship has not only provided financial assistance but also been a driver of the holistic growth of our students. It has empowered them to overcome financial barriers, pursue academic excellence, and develop a stronger sense of social responsibility and leadership.

Through continuous interactions with and observations of the scholarship holders, the most visible impact has been on their academic performance and engagement. By reducing financial stress, the scholarship has allowed recipients to devote greater attention to their studies and participate more actively in academic activities. Many scholarship holders have demonstrated stronger academic commitment, increased classroom participation, and improved performance. They have also shown greater enthusiasm for research, project-based learning, and extracurricular activities that enrich their educational experience. Furthermore, the scholarship has encouraged students to set higher academic goals and cultivate critical thinking, independent learning, and problem-solving skills essential for their future careers.

Beyond academics, the scholarship has played a crucial role in fostering personal development. Recipients have displayed increased self-confidence, and a heightened sense of responsibility towards their education and personal growth. Exposure to diverse learning opportunities, networking platforms, and interactions with peers from different backgrounds and nationalities has broadened their perspectives and strengthened their intercultural understanding. As a result, many students have become more self-aware and empathetic with enhanced capacity to be able to adapt to unfamiliar or changing environment. KAS has provided them with market opportunities with global collaboration, which many of them have already capitalized on securing national and international projects related to sustainable development.

The scholarship has also contributed significantly to the development of students' leadership qualities. Through active participation in student organizations, academic forums, community outreach programs,



and collaborative projects, many have emerged as influential leaders within the college community. Importantly, the scholarship has fostered a strong sense of civic engagement and social responsibility, encouraging students to contribute meaningfully to their communities and society at large. Several recipients of the scholarship have also become role models for their fellow students.

Furthermore, the scholarship has positively shaped their future aspirations and career trajectories. Through various capacity-building programs, including mentorship opportunities, exposure to discussions on social, economic, and political issues, workshops, and other opportunities created by and through KAS, recipients have gained greater clarity regarding their professional goals and long-term visions. Many now aspire to contribute to national development, social justice, community empowerment, and sustainable development initiatives.

In conclusion, the KAS scholarship has proven to be a consequential investment in young people. It has strengthened academic achievement, supported personal growth, and inspired socially conscious future aspirations. In the days to come, it will be important to make this scholarship even more inclusive so that more youths can have the opportunity to benefit from this scheme. The continued support of such scholarship programs will undoubtedly contribute to the development of capable, visionary, and ethical leaders who can make meaningful contributions to societal development.

Reetu Bhandari Sharma

Assistant Professor/ Senior Program Coordinator

June 28, 2026



Aman Kumar

The moment I was selected as a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) scholar, something ignited within me—a quiet yet fierce conviction that my purpose had grown far beyond what I had ever imagined.

My first surprise came during a study visit to Singapore. At the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), Dr. Paul Cheak's session on public safety and security felt less like a lecture and more like a revelation. His insights into smart governance and public leadership opened my eyes to how visionary policies can shape societies and improve people's lives. The programme, Empowering Tomorrow: Learning SDGs Through Singapore's Green Initiatives, showed me what effective governance and sustainable development look like in practice.

One evening, while sharing dinner with leaders and professionals from different parts of the world, I listened to conversations about transparency, accountability, and corruption-free governance. Their stories resonated deeply with me. During Nepal's Gen Z Revolution, I had raised my own voice in support of democratic values, citizen participation, and effective public service delivery.

Those discussions reinforced my belief that good governance is not a privilege but a fundamental right.



Another defining experience came through field research in Sarangkot, Pokhara, where KAS Scholars from the Asian University for Women and National College worked together to study the impacts of climate change. Moving beyond classroom theories, we engaged directly with communities and witnessed the realities of environmental challenges firsthand. The experience taught us to learn, unlearn, and relearn while working as a team, strengthening both our understanding of sustainability and our commitment to creating meaningful change.

Since my KAS scholarship interview, I have always remembered the encouragement I received from Andreas Klein and Megha Sarmah to push beyond my limits and strive to become an emerging youth leader. Their commitment to empowering KAS scholars has always been evident, and I remain deeply grateful for their guidance, encouragement, and belief in our potential.

From Singapore's skyline to the Himalayan foothills, KAS has done more than educate me. It has transformed how I view the world, how I understand responsibility, and how boldly I dare to lead. The scholarship has not only expanded my knowledge but also strengthened my confidence to contribute meaningfully to my community and to the future I hope to help shape.

Sapana Bastola



The corners of my hostel room seemed friendlier than the people around me when I first came to Kathmandu. Being a scholarship student from a rural part of Nepal, it took me a lot of time to adjust and that adjustment has shaped me to who I am today.

When I look back from the future some years from now, I wish to let this teenager feel proud, all grown with the dreams and adjustments she had while applying for the KAS scholarship. I want to be the change I have seen in the previous KAS scholars. I admire how they have developed their networks, strengthened their skills, and grown in confidence through the programme.

The way the smallest voices matter to them and the way the smallest litters go to their pocket instead of the path, I want to become a leader who lives by the values and standards they expect from others.

As a KAS scholar, I believe that me being a good scholar also means me being responsible for who I teach and who directly or indirectly learn from me.



Fu Lhamu Sherpa

From the majestic Himalayas of Nepal to the global stage, my journey as a KAS scholar has been nothing short of transformative. It allowed me to surround myself with individuals genuinely dedicated to protecting nature and society. Through this experience, I learned to see past the superficiality of systemic diplomacy, discovering instead what real, impactful diplomacy truly means. KAS has thoroughly nurtured and shaped the leader within me.

Having traveled to several countries, I now see myself as a global citizen with profound respect and admiration for the natural present and cultural beauty of every nation. Ultimately, we are all deeply interconnected. We need one another, and this world urgently requires more love, care, and empathy.

I hold a deep hope for a peaceful world, and I believe we are all actors capable of playing transformative roles on this grand stage.

A single opportunity, like the KAS scholarship, possesses the power to give birth to a completely renewed being—someone capable of bringing profound peace to a suffering world. Thank you very much.



Prabhesh Nepali

A Dream Made Come True: My KAS Scholarship Experience

Receiving the KAS scholarship was one of the turning points in my life. Coming from a middle-class family, my dream was to pursue higher education and create meaningful opportunities for myself and my community. My interests in community development, governance, and research made me study Bachelors in Development Studies at National college, Kathmandu University.

While applying for the KAS scholarship I had high hopes and nervousness at the same time. The interview session with Mr. Andreas, Mrs. Megha, Mr. Jonas and Mr. Madhav was fun, interactive and a great experience.



What motivates me most is not just the financial relief but the belief KAS placed in me. With my first experience working with KAS in the climate change workshop to now getting the opportunity to visit Singapore for the KAS scholars gathering. The learning and networking opportunities provided by KAS are what I look forward to most as I continue my journey.

Seeing my dreams come true I am truly grateful to be a KAS scholar.



To every young individual who doubts their potential, never limit yourself and seek for opportunities. Every hard work and dedication will lead you to success in life.



South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS)

Dreams, Dedication and Impact





The SAYS Story

From Scholars to Changemakers

Born from an idea during the 2024 Singapore study tour, “Empowering Tomorrow: Learning SDGs Through Singapore’s Green Initiatives”, South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS) has grown from a shared vision into a regional youth-led movement. Officially launched on January 16, 2026, SAYS was founded by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Scholars from the Asian University for Women and National College (Kathmandu University), bringing together young leaders from Nepal, India, and Afghanistan.

Today, SAYS is present across three South Asian countries - Bangladesh, India and Nepal and is led by a five-member founding team. The initiative operates through three national chapters, with three members based in Nepal and one member each leading activities in India and Bangladesh. This cross-border structure enables SAYS to foster regional collaboration while addressing local sustainability and climate challenges within each country.

SAYS aims to strengthen climate-health literacy and civic agency among students, youth, and women across South Asia. Their initiative addresses critical gaps, including limited climate awareness in schools, the lack of structured platforms for civic engagement, and the unique challenges women face in responding to climate-related impacts. Through curriculum-based learning, community engagement, and cross-border collaboration, SAYS seeks to transform awareness into meaningful action.

Currently, under SAYS’s first project, Climate Smart School , they are working with three schools in Nepal to promote climate education, environmental stewardship, and youth leadership.



Building on this initiative, all three SAYS chapters marked World Environment Day through activities tailored to their local contexts.

SAYS Nepal Chapter conducted a series of student-led activities under the Climate Smart Club initiative. Students conducted an interactive climate change awareness session for Grades 8 and 9 students . It also included poster-making and environmental model-building activities, followed by an awareness rally around the city to promote environmental responsibility within the community. SAYS Nepal also participated in the National Trust for Nature Conservation(NTNC) Expo.

Meanwhile, the India and Bangladesh Chapters conducted climate change sessions for students in two schools in each country . The sessions included an introduction to Climate Change , discussions on climate change in the local contexts of Nagaland and Chattogram delivered by resource persons, followed by group-based poster-making activities that encouraged students to reflect on environmental issues and identify practical solutions within their communities.

Through these activities, SAYS continues to empower students, youth, women, and communities across South Asia to become informed, engaged, and proactive leaders in advancing climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals, turning awareness into collective action for a more resilient future.

Kubra Khaliqi

Before joining the KAS scholarship, my understanding of leadership came from the people around me in Kabul, Afghanistan. Growing up as a Hazara girl, I saw ordinary people show courage, kindness, and solidarity despite facing many challenges. They taught me that leadership is rooted in compassion, resilience, and responsibility toward others. For me, leadership was never about being in the spotlight; it was about serving the community.

Education became my way of contributing to my community. After so much hard work, I earned admission to Kabul University's Bachelor of Business Administration program. I chose business and finance because I believed economic independence is a way for women to gain stability, make their own decisions, and challenge barriers. However, soon after I began my studies, Afghanistan changed dramatically. The collapse of the government brought many dreams to a halt, especially for women, including mine.

Joining the KAS scholarship and studying at AUW expanded my understanding of leadership.

Coming from a place where opportunities for women have been taken away, being welcomed into a community of inspiring young people was transformative. KAS gave me more than financial support; it gave me a platform to grow, connect, and believe in my potential.

Through KAS programs and South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS), I met people from different countries who shared the same desire to create change. For me, SAYS is more than a group; it is a space where young people come together with a shared responsibility toward their communities and the Sustainable Development Goals. It shaped how I see leadership in practice through collaboration and action beyond borders. Leading the Bangladesh Chapter, while not being a local, showed me that commitment matters more than nationality.

At AUW, I worked and tried to create opportunities for others. I founded the Hypatia Women in STEM Club, worked as a Teaching Assistant, and served as Student Government Treasurer. In every role, I tried to create space for others and ensure opportunities reach those who need them most. These experiences showed me that leadership is strongest when it brings people together.

Looking back, my understanding of leadership has been shaped by every community that has welcomed me, from the resilient neighborhoods of Kabul to the diverse halls of AUW and the inspiring network of KAS scholars.

If I had to describe leadership in one word, it would be "bridge." A leader builds bridges between people, opportunities, and ideas.

Leadership is about bringing others along, creating space for them to grow, and working together toward a future that is better than the one we inherited.

Kasturi Mijar

I come from Bajura, one of Nepal's most underdeveloped districts, where access to quality education and healthcare remains limited. Fortunately, I spent my formative years in Kathmandu, where I completed my schooling and gained valuable exposure through community service, research, extracurricular activities, and practical learning experiences that shaped my aspirations.

After completing the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), I was admitted to the Asian University for Women (AUW). Financial challenges threatened my higher education journey, but with support from my school community and alumni network, I was able to enroll. During my second year, I was nominated for the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) scholarship and successfully earned the award. Despite health challenges, I remained committed to my studies and graduated with degrees in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) and Development Studies (DevS).

KAS has supported my growth beyond financial assistance through workshops, conferences, and study tours. A particularly transformative experience was the 2024 study tour, "Empowering Tomorrow: Learning SDGs Through Singapore's Green Initiatives." The tour expanded my understanding of sustainability and connected me with fellow scholars from AUW and National College.

This experience inspired the creation of SAYS, a sustainability-focused initiative founded by KAS scholars.

With continuous mentorship from KAS, we developed and launched our first project, "Climate Smart Schooling: Empowering School Students to Learn and Care for Their Environment," in January 2026. The program promotes climate awareness, waste management, leadership, and sustainability education among students. It has since expanded to schools in Bhaktapur and Chitwan.

SAYS also participated in the Ministry of Forest and Environment Expo on June 5, 2026, and marked its soft launch in India and Bangladesh. I remain deeply grateful to KAS for its support, mentorship, and role in connecting me with passionate individuals committed to sustainable development.



Aaditya Gautam

Before becoming a KAS Scholar, I was a young person with a strong interest in leadership, climate action, engagement and community service, but I was still exploring how to turn my ideas into meaningful impact.

I wanted to contribute to youth empowerment and sustainable development, yet I needed the right exposure, network, and guidance to understand how change can be created beyond individual effort.

The KAS Scholarship became an important turning point in my journey. It gave me more than academic support; it gave me confidence, regional exposure, and the opportunity to connect with inspiring young leaders from across South Asia. Through KAS, I learned the importance of democratic values, policy engagement, regional cooperation, and responsible leadership. It helped me understand that youth leadership is not only about having passion, but also about building partnerships, thinking critically, and taking practical action.

Today, I carry those lessons forward through my work with South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS). As Vice President of the SAYS Nepal Chapter, I have been involved in promoting climate awareness, youth engagement, and school-based action through initiatives such as the Climate Smart School Project. SAYS brings together young people from Nepal and across South Asia to take action on climate change, sustainability, and community development.



KAS helped shape my vision, and SAYS has become the platform where I put that vision into practice.

My journey is still unfolding, but KAS has provided me with the foundation to lead with purpose, collaborate with others, and contribute meaningfully to a more sustainable future.





Moxada Tuladhar

My journey began in 2022 with a Women LEAD Nepal fellowship. Stepping out of the classroom and into the field, my heart broke seeing the raw, daily struggles women face. It was a painful but beautiful turning point; I realized I couldn't just be a bystander—I had to act. Joining Leo and Rotaract Clubs fuelled this fire, proving that youth leadership is about pure heart, empathy, and collective action.

Seeking a way to turn this passion into a career, I chose Development Studies at National College. Soon after, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) foundation blessed me with a life-changing scholarship. Through KAS, my eyes were truly opened. I realized that the wounds of our society and our planet are deeply connected, and we cannot heal one without the other.

This deep realization sparked the birth of South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS). Born from an inspiring KAS workshop in Singapore, our team poured our souls into the Climate Smart Schools project. From teaching young kids about climate change in Nepal to training at the Europass Academy in Italy, our dream has grown into a regional movement expanding to India and Bangladesh.

Today, I am finally living my true purpose. I am profoundly grateful to KAS for believing in me when I was just starting out.



This journey hasn't just built my career; it healed my doubts, transformed me into a confident leader, and gave me a family of peers I can truly trust.

Meneno Terhuja

I come from Nagaland, a state in Northeast India. Growing up, I never imagined how much exposure and opportunities could shape a person's perspective. While pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics, with a minor in Development Studies, at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, I received the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) scholarship, which became one of the biggest turning points in my life.



Through conferences, study tours, and workshops organized by KAS, I was exposed to ideas, perspectives, and conversations far beyond the classroom.

This exposure helped me grow not only academically but also personally. I became more socially aware and motivated to create a positive impact within my community.

Most importantly, KAS inspired me and other scholars to believe that young people can be active change-makers and supported us in taking action within our communities. This realization eventually led to the creation of South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS), a youth-led initiative founded by five KAS scholars from India, Nepal, and Afghanistan.

During World Environment Day 2026, I conducted climate awareness sessions in schools in Nagaland as the Team Lead of the India Chapter of SAYS.

Speaking with students revealed significant gaps in climate education, some knew the term climate change but not its local impacts, while others were unfamiliar with environmental and sustainability concepts. At the same time, their curiosity and eagerness to learn were inspiring. Having gained a deeper understanding of climate issues only later in life, being able to introduce these concepts to students at an earlier stage and encourage them to think critically about the world around them was incredibly rewarding. This is exactly what SAYS aims to do, empower young people with knowledge and inspire them to create positive change in their communities. I hope to continue this work and reach more students in the years ahead. And I'm incredibly grateful to KAS for its continued support for SAYS.



The Journey Continues

Looking Ahead



Looking Ahead



The world our scholars are entering is marked by rapid change, uncertainty, and complex global challenges. Yet it is also a world full of possibilities. We believe that the qualities reflected in these stories, integrity, compassion, perseverance, and a commitment to the common good, will be more important than ever. The future will require leaders who can bridge differences, build trust, and work across borders and cultures. We are confident that many of those leaders are already part of this growing network.

As coordinators and advisors of this programme, we have had the privilege of accompanying many of the remarkable individuals whose stories fill these pages. We have celebrated their successes, learned from their experiences, and witnessed firsthand the determination, courage, and resilience that define this community.

Looking back, what stands out most is not only the academic achievements or professional milestones of our scholars and alumni. It is their willingness to support one another, to remain curious, and to use their talents in service of their communities. Time and again, we have seen young people transform challenges into opportunities and turn their aspirations into meaningful action. Today, some of our scholars and alumni are pursuing advanced studies at leading institutions such as Cambridge University and universities in Germany, while others are working directly with communities and organisations to create positive change on the ground. Seeing their journeys unfold has reinforced our belief in the transformative power of opportunity and the far reaching impact that access to education and support can have on an individual's life.

At the same time, we hope this book serves as a reminder that no journey is completed alone. Behind every story is a family member who offered encouragement, a teacher who inspired confidence, a friend who provided support, or a community that created opportunities. The KAS scholarship programme has sought to become part of that support system, not only during a scholar's years of study, but throughout their personal and professional journey.



As our alumni network continues to grow across Asia and beyond, we look forward to seeing new connections emerge, new initiatives take shape, and new generations of scholars build upon the achievements of those who came before them. Seeing initiatives such as South Asian Youth for SDGs (SAYS), conceived and led by our scholars, gives us confidence that the best is yet to come. It reminds us that while this book celebrates many achievements, we have only begun to see what this remarkable community can accomplish. We hope that today's scholars will become tomorrow's mentors, role models, and community leaders, inspiring others to pursue their own ambitions and contribute to positive change.

To all the scholars and alumni featured in this book: thank you for allowing us to be part of your journey.

Your stories remind us why investing in young people matters. They demonstrate how a single opportunity can create a ripple effect that extends far beyond the individual, benefiting families, communities, and society as a whole. They give us confidence that the values of democracy, freedom and responsibility will continue to find strong advocates in the years ahead.

While this book celebrates how far you have come, we believe it also marks a beginning. The most exciting chapters of your stories are still waiting to be written.



About Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung



For over 20 years, KAS Political Dialogue Asia facilitates exchange among Asian countries and between Asia and Europe in the areas of political cooperation, regional integration, security, the sustainable development goals and digitalisation. Through our international conferences, training programmes, workshops and publications we aim to connect various stakeholders from political parties and parliaments, civil society groups, non-governmental organisations as well as policy makers and think tank representatives.

With its international activities and projects, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung contributes to international cooperation and cultural understanding. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is one of the political foundations of the Federal Republic of Germany, associated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU). Freedom, justice and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, which is named after the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Konrad Adenauer.



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Investing in young people is ultimately
an investment in *stronger communities,
more resilient societies,
and a more hopeful future.*

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