

2018

ANNUAL REPORT



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LETTER FROM THE CEO



Mario Ferro
Wedu Co-founder and CEO

I am so grateful to be part of such a great community making the impossible happen in 2018 - reaching, training, and mentoring more women across Asia and helping them rise to the best leaders they can be.

The Wedu team worked very hard in 2018 to lay the foundation for a great future, and I know it wasn't easy. Many sacrificed time with their loved ones in relentless pursuit of their passions for and a shared belief that a more equitable world for women is possible.

I want to thank all of our partners, supporters, funders, Mentors, and believers in any form that contributed in any way they could to make 2018 the best year we had to date.

Leadership development continues to experience very strong development, and we look forward to building on those successes in 2019.

Our Future Income Sharing Agreement (FISA) is nearing an inflection point, and we really hope to see it skyrocket through new and deeper

partnerships so that we're able to fund the education of hundreds of more talented women in the years to come. It is still early to make major announcements, as there is still a lot of work to do, but stay tuned.

As a fast run-through of what will come in 2019, we will launch the first office outside of Thailand, officially becoming a multinational. We will also launch our Leadership Development Platform, expect to grow our Leadership Community to 1,500 women strong, launch the FISA Pioneer Fund, complete the first programmes with the UK government and USAID, and finalise some amazing partnerships in Cambodia and Myanmar.

At Wedu, we're trying to achieve what many thought impossible - to create a world-class leadership development organisation that is capable of unlocking the potential of thousands of women across Asia. Every year, we are getting one step closer towards making this a reality, and we see it in the long arc of Wedu's development and our Rising Stars. Our

first two Rising Stars, Ly Chhay and Phearong, are stepping up to lead the expansion in Cambodia together with Rising Star Sreymao, and Alinery, a Rising Star from India, among many others, are starting their own organisations. We witness sparks of leadership across the entire Wedu Community each year, and one day, we hope to see more Rising Stars leading their countries and communities, thanks to your support.

In 2019, I look forward to making one more step together towards a world where half of all leaders in every single area of society are women.

IMPACT NUMBERS



717 women leaders in our Leadership Community

573 Rising Stars

144 Programme Participants



Global Mentorship Programme

16.053 Mentorship Hours

426 Mentors across **62** different nationalities

82% Mentor satisfaction

84% Rising Star satisfaction with mentorship



5 strategic Leadership Development partnerships



Average **80%** satisfaction

across our customised leadership trainings and programmes

RISING STARS AROUND THE WORLD

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Bhutan
Brunei
Cambodia
China
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Japan
South Korea
Laos
Lebanon
Malaysia
Nepal
Pakistan
Philippines
Singapore
Sri Lanka
Syria
Thailand
Vietnam
Myanmar
Kyrgyzstan
Mongolia

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Measuring Action-Based Leadership

As Wedu grows and emphasises leadership through action, we continue to improve the ways we collect the many accomplishments that Rising Stars achieve in their own leadership journeys. We have evolved and integrated our leadership model with action-based measurement so that our Leadership Community has the tools to turn goals and vision into action, as well as measure real tangible progress. With more and more data, this also means that we will be able to better customise the programmes and opportunities that we offer, building upon our idea of adaptive leadership and ensuring each journey can be customised and unique to each and every woman leader in our growing Leadership Community.

Mentor Discussion Groups

Mentors are an important part of our Community and play a significant role in helping women leaders reach their goals and achieve their dreams. We aim to better support and understand the needs of our Mentors and introduced Mentor Discussion Groups as a pilot service in 2018. Our inaugural sessions offered an online space for Mentors from around the world to share with one another best practices and tools for mentoring, troubleshoot real challenges, and improve in goal-setting and methods for engaging with their mentees.

RISING STAR LEADERSHIP

As we continue to improve the way in which we collect achievements across our Leadership Community, we are proud and grateful to see Rising Stars stepping up in ways that directly support the growth and improvement of Wedu's operations.



Rising Star Ambassador Pilot

The Rising Star Ambassador pilot project was a 6-month opportunity for Rising Stars to strengthen their leadership traits and make a meaningful impact on their community by leading outreach events and utilising social media to share their journeys and insights. The initiative successfully engaged 26 Rising Star Ambassadors, 89% of whom reported being satisfied with the experience, which included skills training and ongoing support as they worked to reach their objectives. Together, they increased Wedu's exposure in communities we would never be able to reach ourselves, and motivated 17 women to apply, out of which 11 successfully became Rising Stars.

Leadership Development Rising Star Interns

A new initiative for 2018, the Leadership Development team created a professional development opportunity by offering Rising Star Internship job openings. The initiative endeavoured to support Rising Stars in their professional development with hands-on work experience. Throughout the year, eight Rising Star Interns were selected to work with our team and supported our Mentorship Programme and YSEALI Women's Leadership Academy. Rising Star Interns also shared their internship experiences in featured articles online that reflected on their learnings and growth.





“Being a Rising Star is a great privilege, and I believe in making the best use of the opportunities that Wedu provides would be one of the wisest ways to contribute [to my community].”

— Junu

Rising Star Junu, from Kathmandu, Nepal, is currently a high school student with a full scholarship at Shawnigan Lake School on Vancouver Island, BC, Canada. Junu became involved with Wedu after attending an inspiring presentation from two Rising Stars at her boarding school. “I admired their confidence and leadership skills as they represented Wedu, and I wanted to be able to be like them someday - women inspiring women to fight for our rights and believe in our potential to be an inspiring leader” she says.

Moving from Kathmandu to Canada was not an easy move, she says that “during the transition of moving to Canada for studies, [my Mentor] was always there to support me emotionally and academically. She inspired me to become resourceful and a strong leader”.

With this newfound confidence, Junu was able to deliver a keynote speech in front of 450 people during the 2018 Model UN Global Goals conference at Shawnigan Lake School. She introduced Nepal to her Canadian community “by emphasising the importance of education and also by making the audience aware of how everyone can be a changemaker”. She went on to add, “I learned to reflect on my actions every so often and find the areas where I can work harder to be better each time”.

Currently, Junu is applying for funding so she can study science and attend medical school one day. When asked about her experience as a Rising Star, Junu says that the “leadership lessons and mentoring sessions ignite drastic self-development, and that is when one becomes capable of being a changemaker in our communities. Unitedly, let’s get inspired and let’s inspire others as well.”

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT



3rd YSEALI Women's Leadership Academy

In partnership with the U.S. Mission to ASEAN, Wedu organised the 2018 Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) for YSEALI members from 2-6 April 2018 in Jakarta, Indonesia. A total of 38 women from all ten ASEAN countries were nominated by their countries' respective U.S. Embassies.

The week was filled with inspiring leadership and capacity-building sessions, group discussions and networking, a Women Who Lead panel event, and one-on-one coaching combined with group mentoring to help these women develop their leadership skills and identify ways to collaborate on issues across the region. Special thanks go to AirAsia, McKinsey & Company, General Electric, and Citibank for their contributions as mentors and speakers throughout the WLA.



Mentorship Programme Launch for the IRC Thailand

Our inaugural mentorship programme with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) concluded successfully in June and impacted 30 refugee women from across three refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. Our partnership is part of the Global IRC Livelihoods Project, benefiting refugees worldwide. In 2019, we aim to kick off the second cohort of refugees and continue our collaboration with IRC Thailand.

100% successfully set SMART goals for their leadership development

86% achieved one or more of their short-term professional goals



"I was unsure if I should return to Myanmar for a few months to learn salon skills or stay with my family. My mentor walked me through the costs and benefits, and I chose to go for the training which has given me the skills to be able to open my own salon. I am most fortunate to have a mentor like her."

— Yudah, Programme Participant from Nupo Camp

"I can see my own personal and professional skills rapidly improving after having a mentor. I've reached my short-term goals and I'm now focused on implementing my long-term strategy with my mentor's advice!"

— Programme Participant from Mae Sot Camp

YSEALI WLA ALUMNI NETWORK ACTIVITIES



JUNE | 2018

For the first time since our inaugural Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) in 2016, we were able to convene the board of the WLA Alumni Network for a strategic team retreat in Bangkok, Thailand. Headed by two Co-Chairs, Ee Lynn Tee and Rahmiana Rahman, and Wedu's Leadership Development Manager, Elizabeth Andrews, they and nine Country Leads came together to discuss how the network could better fulfil its vision of creating an inclusive ASEAN Women's Network.

The board was able to successfully define the Alumni Network's long and short term goals - to educate, empower and, through collaboration, create sustainable positive changes - while also engaging with the challenges and opportunities of collaborating across a fragmented region.

The Alumni Network also hosted its first ever community event to share and discuss insights on how women leaders #PressForProgress across different ASEAN countries. Special guest speaker, Busayapa Srisompong, founder of SHero and YSEALI Seeds for the Future grantee, also shared her own journey of how she works to empower survivors of domestic violence in Thailand.

SEPTEMBER | 2018

The YSEALI WLA Alumni Network organised a weekend workshop in Bangkok to continue to strengthen alumni ties across the region. Ten alumni, representing eight countries, were selected to participate in this workshop, along with their Co-Chairs, to discuss and brainstorm on ideas to initiate local community projects and cross-country collaboration. After engaging in small group discussions, mentoring sessions, and design thinking for social impact workshops, each alumna pledged how she would bring her learning back to support her local country lead and the Alumni Network moving forward.

An open event was also hosted at The Hive on 29 September with the theme of 'The Power of Women Networks and Community', where the Founder of Lean In Thailand, Aim Kusuwan, conducted small group discussions on unconscious gender bias and actionable steps that can be taken to address these biases.





“I support Wedu’s vision and am proud to be a part of their journey to achieve this.”
— Olivia Hough

Olivia Hough is a Wedu Mentor to Rising Star, Neha. Originally from the UK, Olivia now lives in Cambodia and works at Impact Hub in Phnom Penh, one of Cambodia’s largest incubator for community entrepreneurs. As well as being a Mentor and changemaker herself, Olivia runs workshops on gratitude and happiness and owns a small embroidery business.

Olivia finds strength and companionship in her mentorship with Neha, sharing that “our relationship is incredibly honest, communicative, and loving. We care about each other a lot, and take great enjoyment in each other’s achievements”.

Olivia really recognises the similarities between her journey and Neha’s journey. “Every conversation we have is inspiring and humbling. From our first conversation, Neha and I have been great companions, creating a safe space for her to share her frustrations, decisions, and direction as she goes through university.” Because of Neha’s determined personality, Olivia thinks about her own aspirations and how she can reach her full potential while supporting Neha in her ambitions.

When asked what advice she would give to potential Rising Stars, Olivia stresses the importance of focusing on yourself rather than comparing yourself to others. “Creating a community of individuals who support you will encourage growth and allow you to focus on your mission.”

PROGRAMME PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT IN CAMBODIA



Advancing Women's Leadership in Cambodia in STEM

Our partnership with the British Embassy launched the 'Advancing Women's Leadership in Cambodia' series of events and trainings with a focus on encouraging more women to pursue STEM studies and careers. This initiative aims to reach women across every province via online and in-person trainings, mentoring for personal development, and career coaching sessions. The programme concludes in mid-March 2019 and aims to reach a total of at least 400 Cambodian women who are committed to their leadership development.



British Embassy
Phnom Penh



Training and Mentoring Women in Tech in Cambodia

As a part of our collaboration with USAID and Development Innovations in Cambodia, we created a programme that focuses on training and mentoring women in technology between the ages of 18 to 25. The mentee and mentor selection processes began in December 2018, and the programme will run from February to July 2019 and will conclude with a Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) for Women in Tech, the first for Wedu in Cambodia. Additionally and thanks to this partnership, we will be able to pilot our first-ever online leadership development platform so that Programme Participants can more proactively manage their leadership development and access leadership opportunities in a way that suits them.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

DEVELOPMENT
INNOVATIONS

JEBA AND SUSAN



“Susan has inspired me to always push forward in spite of the limitations and disadvantages. Because of her, I’ve developed my courage to go out of my comfort zone.”

— Olivia Hough

Jeba, a Rising Star from Bangladesh, is majoring in Public Health with a minor in Development Studies. Her Wedu Mentor, Susan, currently resides in Bangkok and works on a part-time basis supporting executives and organisations through group facilitation. As Susan was approaching retirement, she decided to devote time to mentoring and joined Wedu as a volunteer Mentor.

“Susan shares her experiences from her own life, and I believe it gives me an advantage before starting my own work.”

Jeba and Susan connected easily, as they share an interest in community health, and they say that they look forward to their engaging and dynamic mentoring conversations. Susan has inspired Jeba to step out of her comfort zone and become the strong-willed woman she is today; and Jeba’s willingness to identify her goals and build momentum towards achieving them has impressed Susan. Wedu’s Leadership Development resources have been integral to Jeba and Susan’s mentorship, as Jeba is able to track her short-term goals with the SMART goal tracker and with Susan’s help.

Their mentorship has allowed Jeba to become more confident in her leadership skills by developing qualities such as patience and empathy. Susan has learned what matters to the globally-conscious youth and how driven they are to make a difference.



Susan Ward

INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION UPDATES

Future Income Sharing Agreements (FISA) in the Community

Our team had some great occasions in 2018 to share the development, early success, and importance of FISA as an innovative and impactful way to support women's leadership development. As a pioneer in bringing FISA to the Asia region, we were proud to be able to engage with different audiences across the world. From impact investors to social entrepreneurs to development practitioners, we aim to increase awareness around the potential of income sharing to break the financial barriers preventing millions of talented students from completing their education.



Grace Maa, our newest board member, presented the power of FISA at the **Impact Investing Summit** in London, UK.



Mario, our Co-Founder and CEO, introduced FISA at the **Financial Times' Investing for Good Asia** event in Hong Kong. The event brought together leading foundations, investors, social entrepreneurs, advisers, and other senior stakeholders to focus on the opportunities and challenges that exist in philanthropy and for-profit investment.

During the **USAID Asia Regional Education Workshop** held in Bangkok, Thailand, Mario joined an expert panel to discuss innovations in education financing in Asia as a way to support more women's abilities to access and afford a university education.

Future Income Sharing Agreement (FISA) Partners

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



After establishing a partnership with Synergy Social Ventures (Synergy), who invested towards FISA contracts and operations, Synergy invited Rising Star, Phearong, to give a presentation on FISA at their fundraiser event in Hong Kong. Phearong delivered an inspiring presentation covering her journey as a Rising Star, which started with receiving mentorship from several Wedu Mentors to detailing how FISA supported her university studies and what she has gone on to achieve since her graduation.

In our partnership with The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, we carried out an in-depth study to analyse how FISA could be used to support more women who choose a STEM career in Myanmar. The study used both primary research and looked at market factors to confirm the feasibility of FISAs in funding STEM degrees, as well as explored ways to reduce other financial barriers for women wanting to pursue a STEM career in Myanmar.





Rising Star Pooja has always wanted to make change in the world around her. She knows she wants to contribute to society, but she wasn't always quite sure how. After joining Wedu, her relationship with her Wedu Mentor Louise has supported her in achieving her goals and finding the good in the bad in certain scenarios.

Pooja is majoring in Sociology, Journalism, and Communications. In 2018, Pooja secured a Media and Communication internship, which was a new experience for her and has helped her take risks and look at things from a different perspective. Pooja hopes to continue her journey in self-development by focusing on her professional and personal goals, learning new skills along the way.

“Don't limit yourself or underestimate your own potential because you haven't yet explored within yourself. Take a risk and make yourself proud. Wedu will be always there supporting you.”

”

— *Pooja*

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Wedu's Brand New Look

With a capacity-building grant from the Woodcock Foundation, we were able to successfully carry out a full rebrand that aligns our vision, mission, and culture across everything we say and do. In August of 2018, we officially launched the rebrand with a new website, refined visual identity, and more consistent branding and communication across the organisation. Our team commits to our four brand pillars in everything we do; our hope is that it serves as a solid foundation for building a better experience for all of you, keeps us focused on the mission and vision as our north star, and continues to strengthen and bring our inspiring Community together.



DYNAMIC COMMUNITY

More than just a collection of individuals, we are an enthusiastic, interdependent, action-oriented team where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



GROUNDLED EXPLORATION

Pragmatic but never content with the status quo, we are always searching, experimenting, and refining in pursuit of the vision, but always with the larger strategy in mind.



UNIQUE JOURNEYS

It's not about the easy 'A', but rather the lifelong journey; effort is essential, each path is personal, and each individual is encouraged to develop her best qualities, to express herself, and to take action.



BOLDLY INSPIRED

A force that sees and champions infinite possibilities, we share a vision for the future that motivates and inspires others.



International Women's Day 2018

We celebrated International Women's Day 2018 and #PressforProgress with a week-long photography exhibit at the House of Lucie in Bangkok, Thailand. The exhibition featured members of our global Community of Rising Stars, Mentors, and donors, sharing their images alongside stories of inspiration, vision, and ambition. The opening event was well-attended and hosted a guest panel that discussed innovative communities of women leaders, as well as flash mentoring sessions that focused on the power of blogging, finding and maintaining motivation, and taking initiative with confidence.

MANAGEMENT AND SYSTEMS



Grace Maa

Board Expansion in the UK

Our Board of Directors in the UK added a fifth member in 2018 - Grace Maa, a serial entrepreneur and award-winning innovator who has launched several ventures across tech, art, and finance since 2001. Grace joins Audrey Mandela, Long Zhao, Mari Sawai, and our CEO, Mario Ferro, to help guide the strategic direction of Wedu's social business model.



Phearong Sdeung

Incorporation in Cambodia

In preparation for our expansion into Cambodia, we also established a Board of Directors for our Cambodia entity in 2018. It was important to us to include Rising Star representation on the Board, especially being the country where we selected some of our first Rising Stars back in 2012. We received a lot of interest and in the end selected Phearong Sdeung, Ly Chhay Loem, and Sreymao Mean - with their leadership, we successfully submitted our documents for incorporation in December of last year. We could not be more proud of this milestone in Wedu's journey and look forward to working with them in 2019 to build our team and operations in Cambodia.

Ly Chhay Loem



Sreymao Mean



Systems & Technology Innovation

2018 saw the beginnings of some technology enhancements that we hope will stimulate growth and innovation across the organisation in the years to come, enabling us to serve many of you and our impact objectives better:

1) Salesforce for Adaptive Leadership

- while mentorship will always remain at the core of what we do, we recognise that Rising Stars and Programme Participants can benefit from trainings, conferences, jobs and internships, scholarships and awards, and a variety of other opportunities. With such a diverse and growing Leadership Community, we strive to provide more and more Leadership Development Opportunities so that together, we can learn what programmes and services are most beneficial towards the achievement of their leadership goals.

2) Leadership Development Platform

- to enhance the leadership development experience for Rising Stars and Programme Participants, we began work to pilot an online platform. We hope that early learnings in 2019 will allow us to bring to our Leadership Community a meaningful online space where individuals can self-manage their leadership development goals, opportunities, and progress in a more dynamic and engaging way.





“Believe in yourself, believe in your decisions, for you will be the one who will stand for yourself in every step of life.”

— Hilari

Rising Star Hilari is currently working at a school and French language institution in Bangladesh after receiving her degree in English Language and Literature. She hopes to establish equal opportunity for women and children in Bangladesh by motivating her own village through education.

Hilari joined Wedu in hopes of receiving a Mentor that could guide her through her journey in becoming a leader. She believes that “Wedu is a platform where one can learn with the guidance of a mentor, where everyone thinks positively and has the desire to bring changes”. Her Mentor, Hue, encourages and helps Hilari, and the pair have established a close bond. Hue inspires her by showing her how one can maintain balance between her personal and professional life, and Hilari says that she is “very fortunate to have [an] opportunity where women learn to think widely and see the world independently”.

Engage yourself in changing the world for the good, for it is never too late to bring changes.

Recently, Hilari conducted a workshop at her university, overcoming her fear of public speaking. She enjoyed interviewing the workshop attendees, as this allowed her to gain perspective and experience from their point of view. She has gained confidence through her experiences with Wedu and has done this by believing in herself.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCIALS

In 2018, we continued to discover and grow our capacity to attract and manage significant programmatic grant funding that contributed to our ability to grow across the region, as well as expand into key countries like Cambodia and Myanmar. 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.

Our gratitude goes to the following key donors and partners:



British Embassy
Phnom Penh



DEVELOPMENT
INNOVATIONS



[Wedu Reports](#)

**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

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