



WorldYWCA

*Inspiring*  
**Leaders**  
*Aspiring*  
**Action**







# About the World YWCA

We are a global women’s rights organisation engaging millions of women, young women and girls around the world each year, across cultures and beliefs, to transform lives and the world for the better. With a presence in over a hundred countries, our work is grassroots-driven, grounded in local communities and rooted in the transformational power of women. We provide support and opportunities for women, young women and girls to become leaders and change-makers who not only protect their rights and impact their communities but inspire their peers to do the same. We are focused on building a strong, intergenerational network of women and young women leaders, with programmes led by and for women and young women in response to the unique needs they see in their communities.

The World YWCA approaches leadership from a feminist, community-based and intergenerational perspective that prioritizes the grassroots process to support the most marginalized communities. Designing programs made for and led by young women challenges traditional conceptions of leadership and allows women to rise up in leadership, challenge gender-based stereotypes, and create the change they want to see in the world. Through building safe spaces with peer leaders, young women are empowered to speak up and engage their communities to challenge preconceived notions about leadership. The World YWCA focuses on collective, collaborative, and transformative young women’s leadership to give women the power to rise up and reach their goals.

This is a compilation of seven (7) stories of young women from Asia and the Pacific region who have gone through a RiseUp! Leadership in their respective countries and have now progressed to further challenge their leadership in different capacities. They remain the RiseUp! Alumna and YWCA Leaders, contributing to young women leadership in their unique ways.

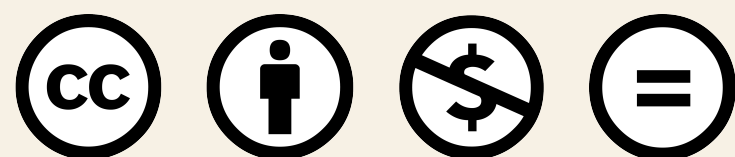
### World YWCA thanks the #YWCALeaders :

Anu Gurung (Nepal) , Durga K.C (Nepal), Fusi Masina Tietie (Samoa), Jeanette Ila (Papua New Guinea), Nisha Sharma (India), Samiksha R.C (Nepal) and Yadanar (Myanmar).

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# Action driven leadership of young women:

## An introduction

When you invest in developing the leadership of young women and women, you can transform entire communities—and the world—for the better. When women rise to become leaders and change-makers in their lives and their communities, they can become an influential force coming up with solutions and championing social change far beyond their immediate surroundings.

An inclusive and intergenerational approach that centers young women's leadership is vital to sustaining a bold, progressive women's movement and world. Fostering connections, shared learning, and mutual exchange between leaders of all ages and backgrounds creates better, more impactful leadership models and strengthens our movement. In our work **amplifying young women's voices and centering their leadership and advocacy**, we are intentionally collaborative and intergenerational in our approach.

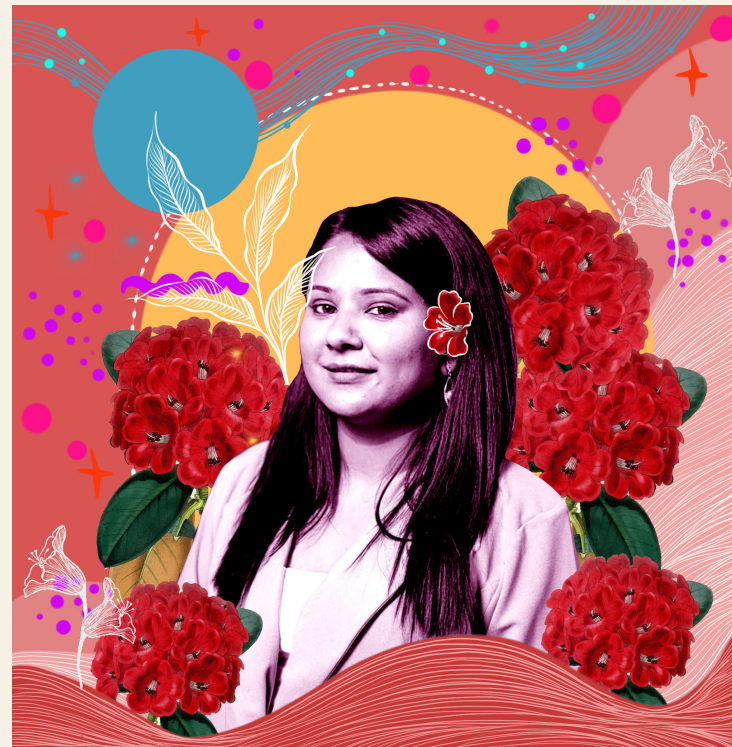
We know that when young women and girls lead, they have the power to change their lives and the world around them for the better. Critically, we support and provide tools so that they can connect with young women and girls in other communities and inspire them to become leaders. And, in

order to make meaningful, lasting change towards gender equality and women's rights, we must focus on **centering the most marginalised and advocate around issues that impact the most vulnerable and under-represented communities**. This looks different in every community or country—but young women, especially young women of color or who hold intersecting identities, are among those discriminated against. That is the only way to achieve our vision of a better world, where all women, young women, and girls are empowered, safe, and free from discrimination and violence.

Through the RiseUp! Program in Asia-Pacific in its Phase III reached **2,200+ young women in Asia and the Pacific** engaging them in activism and advocacy through strengthening their leadership skills. These are stories of a few of these RiseUp! Leaders as they progressed as Alumna of the program. In Phase IV, the program aims to engage more than **6000 young women in nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region** to build their skills, knowledge, and networks to be confident leaders, claim their rights and advocate together to create positive social change.



# Stories



07

**Durga K.C**

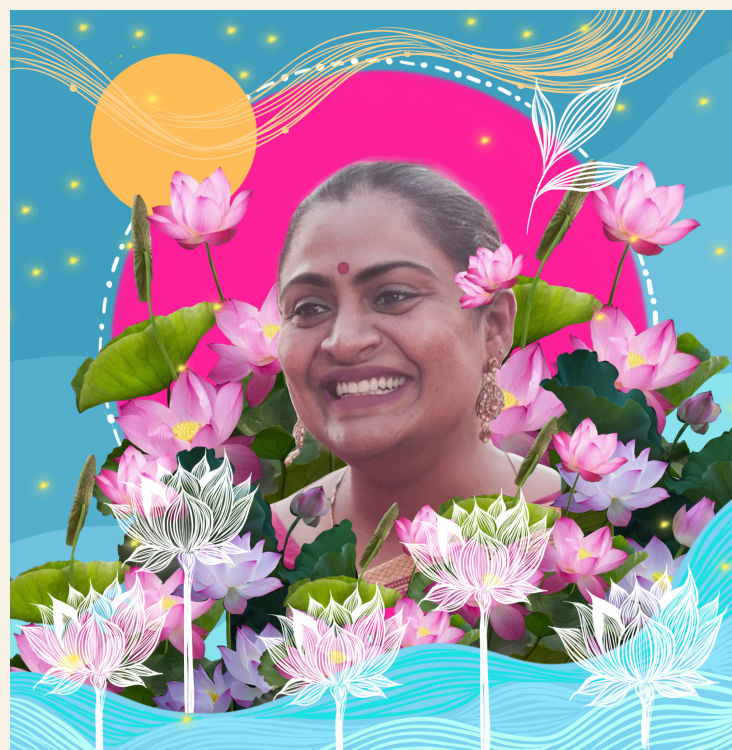
Nepal



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**Jeanette Ila**

Papua New Guinea



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**Nisha Sharma**

India





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**Fusi Masina Tietie**

Samoa



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**Anu Gurung**

Nepal



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**Yadanar**

Myanmar

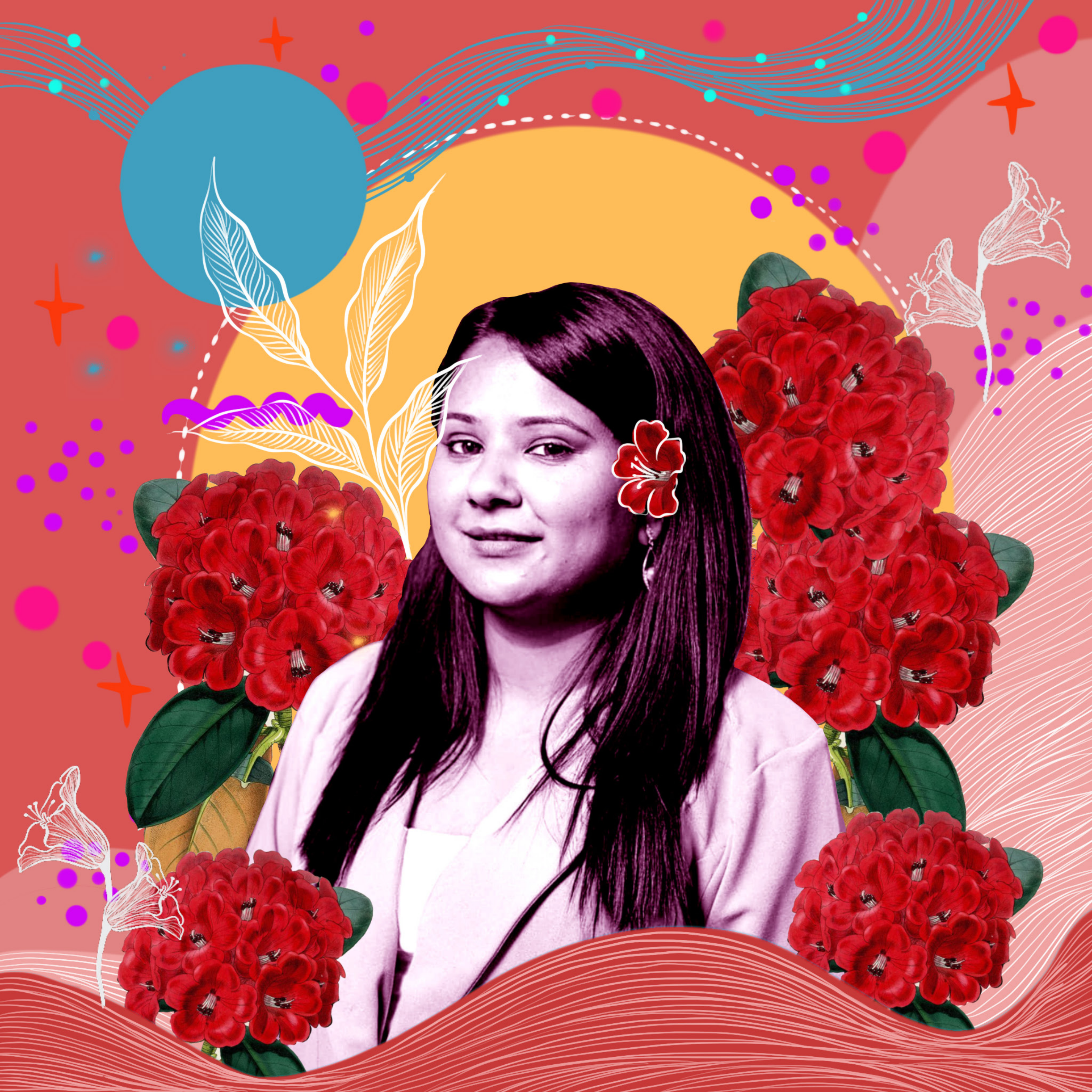


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**Samiksha R.C**

Nepal









# Durga K.C, 31

## Nepal

**Durga KC** began her activism as an educator for family planning and contraception for colleges and communities in 2016. Her teachings were labeled as “dirty” and she was teased by male students who asked sensitive questions to make her uncomfortable. She was invited to participate in the Rise Up! Training in Kathmandu, where she realized the different levels of discrimination that young women and girls face. The training not only provided her with the confidence to become a young woman leader, but also expanded her knowledge of the reality of the oppression of women and girls in various communities. She came to understand that the information she had been sharing was not “dirty”, but incredibly important, and the same students who used to tease her now come to ask for further information and available services

Now Durga is confident in her work and keeps advocating for SRHR, especially family planning and contraceptives.

*“Rise Up! helped me to realize I have my voice and helped me to get back my confidence. Now, I do the similar work but with more confidence and I tackle the issues like teasing and false accusation with more understanding”*

*-Durga*



This confidence has helped her to do her work more effectively and comfortably.

Durga believes that advocacy is crucial; not just for others; but for ourselves as well. She has learnt to advocate for her work through the Rise Up! Program. She thanks Rise Up! and YWCA Nepal for the empowering program that changed her life and her way of working. Getting to know other young women like herself from diverse communities helped Durga to realize the importance of using the voice and platform she has. Many young women and girls do not have the opportunity to share and learn in a comfortable environment like Rise Up! and Durga believes Rise Up! should be available everywhere so no young women and girls are left behind. Durga is still active within her community and has continued her work in the area of family planning and contraceptives.









# Jeanette Ila, 31

## Papua New Guinea



**Jeanette** grew up in a community where sexual harassment is seen as a norm.

*Women are put in systematic danger and young people, especially women, are discouraged from speaking up and realizing their full potential.*

Although she has always cared about social issues, Jeanette never expected to become an activist because she felt she lacked the information and confidence to make a difference.

*The Rise Up! program set Jeanette up for success in the world of activism and showed her the change she can make in her community by positively influencing her young women peers.*

Jeanette learned to lead with confidence and grace, beginning to take on every YWCA opportunity. She was soon a peer educator, advocate, and promoter of young women's leadership and gender equality in Papua New Guinea communities through the Rise Up! program.

Jeanette integrates various components and practices of the Rise Up! Program in her work leading the Sanap Wantaim (Stand Together) Campaign at the UN Women's Country Office. She is working to eliminate all forms of violence, especially working to make public spaces safe for women,

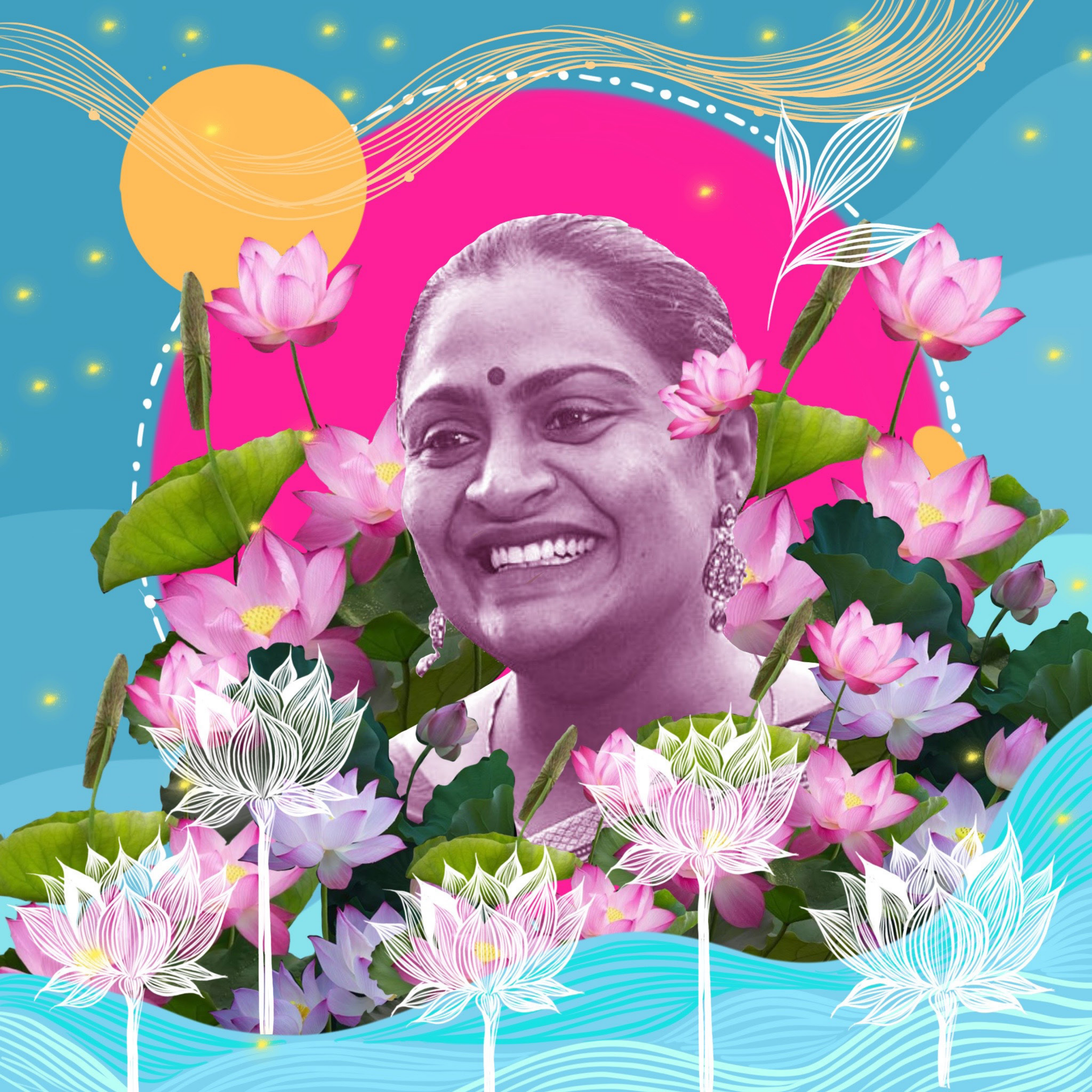
young women and girls. The knowledge she gained in the Rise Up! Program helped her train other young people and share key messages about promoting safer public space.

At the national level, Jeanette is a strong advocate against sexual harassment and all forms of violence that threatens the safety of women and girls in public spaces and public transport. Her advocacy has been strengthened by peer-to-peer mentoring and working with other women who provided consistent advice and encouragement. She has played a significant role in allowing young women to feel safe to open up and share opinions, ideas, challenges and stories to uplift and help each other grow.

Jeanette is proud to be the product of the Rise Up! program that built her knowledge and skills, as well as giving her opportunities to advocate beyond her community. She continues to share and inspire other young people because she believes that sharing one's leadership inspires other young people to follow suit and create their own leadership story.











# Nisha Sharma, 34

## India

Before joining the YWCA of India and becoming the Young Women's Coordinator, Nisha had little experience in the social and developmental sectors. The Rise Up! Program ignited a passion to work with young women in Sexual Reproductive Health and Menstrual Health education. Rise Up! showed Nisha that she was incredibly capable as a young woman to drive the change needed in the community. The program provided her with the skills and confidence she needed to address the issues of young women both within and outside the YWCA movement at the community, national, regional, and global level. Rise Up! paved the way for Nisha's newfound confidence that was prevalent throughout her well-articulated and empowering advocacy work.

Today, Nisha is the Program Manager at the Piramal Foundation, where she still benefits from her time in the Rise Up! Program. She works directly with students to provide career opportunities where they are able to contribute to society and facilitate self-development. The Rise Up! Program gave Nisha a strong foundational knowledge on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and has provided her with the ability to contextualize and help these young women issues within India, such as the current labor laws and the Domestic Violence Act.

Nisha uses her empathy, listening skills, and understanding to connect with the young women she works with and she brings her own experiences into her teachings. She remembers an instance in a remote village where she met a young woman who did not speak the same language as she did. She sat with her and allowed her to express herself and Nisha could feel the pain and struggle of her story about growing up in an abusive household. This young woman was grateful that someone was there to listen to her story and increase her knowledge on the subject, despite a language barrier. This moment solidified for Nisha that she could handle these situations and make a difference in the lives of these young women.



*"I recall seeing other young women in the region that I have worked with through the program grow and evolve and this has really inspired and motivated me to give and do my best as well in the work I do with these women and young women with the hope that they can come out of their fear, speak up, claim their right and become leaders of change in their homes and communities."*

**-Nisha**

Nisha holds close to her heart her experiences working in the remote communities in India. She believes her work empowering young women and being part of their individual growth has helped a lot of women escape abusive relationships and other forms of violence. Nisha has not only watched the young women she teaches grow and develop, but she has experienced her own development through the Rise Up! Program that has given her the ability to lead in a myriad of settings and situations.











# Fusi Masina Tietie, 31

## Samoa

**Fusi Masina Tietie** began her activism journey as a young woman who was too shy and uncomfortable to speak in front of a crowd, even a crowd of her peers. She vividly remembers a time when she was asked to facilitate a session in her own village in Samoa. Although she knew most of the young women, she was extremely nervous. Joining the Rise Up! Program trained her to speak with confidence and take ownership of her knowledge. She remembered the women at Rise Up! who effortlessly shared their knowledge and experiences in a group setting and this assured and motivated her that she too could accomplish this goal.

*"[Rise Up!] has also empowered me to realize and advocate for my rights and that of young women in private and public spaces"*  
-Masina

Rise Up! gave Masina the boost of confidence and public speaking skills that shine throughout her work today. She has represented the YWCA on various regional and international platforms and has amplified the voices of young women through her work in the government ministry representing the people of Samoa.

Masina has innovated through art and social media to better advocate for the young women who have suffered abuse and have been silenced by their perpetrators and community norms. She fights for the message that no form of violence should ever be normalized. Masina has also innovated by co-founding the HerVoice project which was inspired by her experience with RiseUp! and the YWCA. This project highlights the story of a different woman each month, amplifying the voices of young women in Samoa, and gives young women in the arts a platform to collaborate.



With newfound confidence, Masina delivered a speech about the Rise Up! Program and the progress in Samoa at the 61st Commission on the Status of Women in New York. She embraced her capabilities and her transition into a confident young woman.

The highlight of her journey has been meeting other young women and sharing stories and knowledge. She continues to volunteer for YWCA of Samoa and through the HerVoice project. She aims to empower any young woman to overcome their challenges and move forward in life. She believes that work is not difficult if you are passionate about it and she has found her passion in helping young women achieve their own passions.

*"I am a product of the Rise Up Program."*  
-Masina









# Anu Gurung, 29

## Nepal

**Anu** is an optimistic and passionate young woman living in Kathmandu, Nepal. She is passionate about activism for women's rights and recently completed her degree in social work, which contributes to her love of sharing her learnings with others.

As a shy girl who struggled to talk to others, she faced her fear and joined Rise Up! to gain more confidence, help improve her interactions with the people around her, and grow knowledge on different topics. The Rise Up! Program helped Anu to realize the value of sharing what is in her heart and mind rather than suppressing her thoughts and feelings. She was introduced to new topics including Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, young women's leadership and human rights. The Rise Up! Program facilitated building her confidence and helped her to use her newfound understanding of her rights to share her thoughts and learnings with others. She uses these skills in volunteering in different communities to raise awareness on Menstruation Hygiene Management, Family Planning and Adolescent changes. She has made a difference within her community as an active peer educator of YWCA Nepal and Nimble Creation Concern Nepal (NCCN), as well as working as a youth implementer for Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC), Nepal.

Anu has reached beyond her YWCA network to share her knowledge on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights with the larger Nepal community traveling to churches, schools, colleges, carpet factories, and working with young women and visually impaired people.

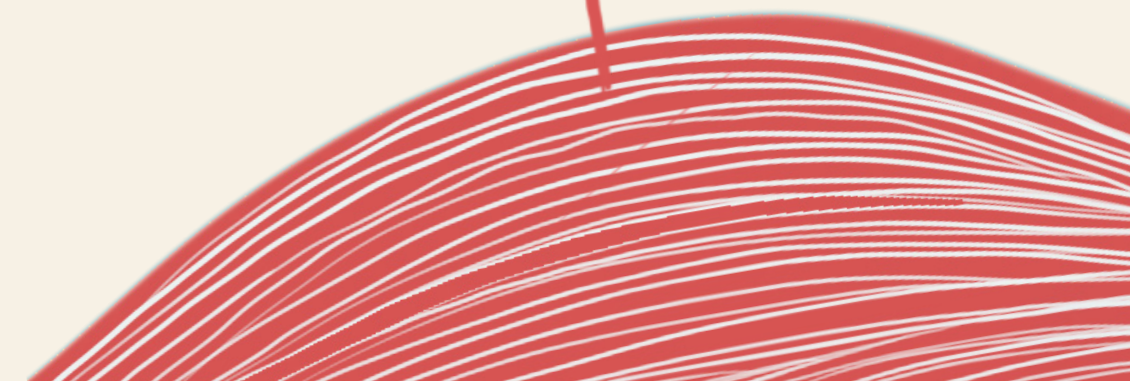


Through her work as a Rise Up! Peer Educator, Anu is able to watch young women find their own voices just as she found hers.

*She works with these young women to gain new perspectives and see the bigger picture on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights.*

Through the program, these young women are able to open up and share more about their personal experiences and life goals.

*Anu understands the importance of this process and takes the same advice she gives to others: to not give up any challenge and to speak out against any kind of injustice happening around her.*









# Yadanar, 31

## Myanmar

**Dr. Yadanar** works in the Adolescent and Youth Team of the UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Region. In this role, she works passionately to promote adolescent and youth Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), promotion of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and advocate for the meaningful engagement of young people in Asia and the Pacific Region.

Rise Up! allowed her to realize her true potential to become a powerful SRHR advocate. Working in capacity building and leadership training in Bangkok, Thailand, Yadanar's mentor boosted her confidence and encouraged her to speak up. The training gave her a deeper understanding of leadership, management and her rights as a young woman, as well as showing her the power of young women's leadership. She also learned innovative and contextualized approaches to SRHR advocacy and promoting women's leadership.

*Yadanar has been inspired by stories shared by young women in Lusaka, Zambia during a capacity-building workshop. She saw first-hand the value of the girls' safe space and created the Young Women's Training Institute back home to design a safe space tailored to the needs of young women and girls throughout Myanmar.*

Using her skills as a medical doctor and her technical knowledge of SRHR, she created a training program tailored to the needs of young women living in conflict-affected and post-conflict areas in Myanmar. This program was able to reach hundreds of young women beyond the YWCA movement, equipping them with the skills and knowledge

of SRHR, human trafficking and the prevention of violence against women, and an understanding of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Rise Up! Program inspired Yadanar to join the UN to reach more women on a larger scale through advocacy and policy making. She works at UNFPA, supporting both governmental and non-governmental partners to deliver quality Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) youth-friendly health services. Additionally, she works with the Myanmar government to ensure the inclusion of CSE within the school curriculum and has assisted in the development of a new National Youth Policy Strategic Plan.

Yadanar continues to mentor young women via the YWCA movement and beyond.

She shares with others, listens, believes in their potential, encourages and supports them to pursue their dreams, celebrates with them, and is there for them during tough times, lending a helping hand, and most importantly, sharing her love and kindness to all.











# Samiksha R.C, 31

## Nepal

**Samiksha** grew up in a remote district in Nepal where domestic abuse is common. Wives are being physically and mentally abused for not being able to deliver or provide the things demanded by their husbands. These women are scared to speak up in fear of being resented by their own families for not handling their relationships well. They suffer in silence.

*"I did not know much about Human Rights then but do know that here in Nepal the women are considered as dirt and unwanted, as such I never loved myself"*  
-Samiksha

Living in this community where women are not automatically taught about their rights, Samiksha learned what it meant to be a woman and have rights as an equal when she joined the Rise Up! Program. Rise Up! increased her awareness of Human Rights abuse and the importance of education, which inspired her to enroll in university to study law. Her classes taught her how young women suffer greatly as a result of not knowing their rights. She now knows the constitution of Nepal, the inequalities within her community and the law. She is now able to stand up and speak up against the injustices women face.

Samiksha encouraged women to speak up against the violence they were facing. The women were scared at first, but Samiksha educated them on their legal rights as women and they began to share their stories of domestic violence. Samiksha says "through this, husbands are now aware and cautious not to beat or abuse their wives". She has used her education to give legal advice to women whose husbands have participated in polygamy, which is restricted in Nepal.



Samiksha also works to educate young women on menstrual health and hygiene and economic empowerment. As a peer educator of the YWCA Nepal, she currently runs workshops and trainings to change behavior on menstrual hygiene management as well as other areas for women's rights she learned in Rise Up!

Rise Up! sparked Samiksha's passion for women's empowerment and informed her on women's rights issues that she could connect back to her community. Her legal education has built upon this awareness and strengthened her knowledge. She enjoys being around other young women and girls in the program and the YWCA. She learns from the other young women and shares her own story to inspire others too.

