MPA in Development Practice

Student Biographies
Class of 2025
Nurshat Babakirov
University Attended: American University of Central Asia
Degree Awarded: B.A. International and Comparative Politics
Country of Origin: Kyrgyzstan

Prior to joining SIPA, Nurshat served for six years as Communications and Advocacy Officer at the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office in the Kyrgyz Republic, providing strategic advice to the UN Country Team on joint communication and advocacy activities in support of the SDGs, national development agenda, including by coordinating crisis communication responses. He also has an experience in media development and journalistic capacity-building programs. With a B.A. in International and Comparative Politics, he wrote extensively for Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst. In the past years he skillfully used sports activism to raise funds for the vulnerable groups, especially the blind.

Silvi Absarina Fahrizah
University Attended: Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB)
Degree Awarded: BSc Management
Countries of Origin: Indonesia

Silvi has 6+ years of experiences in various projects that worked extensively in improving human quality in the organization/community. She is the initiator of Rockstar Mentors, a design thinking discourse held in Surabaya and Bali. Prior to that, she has worked as Head of Economy for community empowerment program in Sorong, Papua. After receiving her BSc in Management, she worked as a Planning Executive at Philip Morris International’s affiliate in Indonesia, HM Sampoerna. Within this role, she led 2000+ contracted SMEs in East Java and designed educational modules to accelerate retail development and technology acceptance.

In 2021-2022, she decided to take sabbatical leave to spend more time with her family. At SIPA, Silvi seeks to broaden her understanding in everything related to society, politics, energy, education, and its policies and development domain.
**Asmaa AbuMezied**

**University Attended:** London School of Economics and Political Science  
**Degree Awarded:** MSc Management and Human Resource  
**Country of Origin:** Palestine

Asmaa AbuMezied is a gender and economic justice expert with 12 years of experience addressing issues of gender, economic development, and climate change. Working with organizations such as Oxfam, International Finance Corporation, Internet2, and Al Shabaka, she provided solutions and programs for women's economic justice. Her work is published in different spaces such as Oxfam policy and practice, Development and Gender Journal, Al Shabaka, and the World Economic Forum.

AbuMezied is a co-founder of Socio-Economic Institute (SEIN), a Palestine-based Think-tank working to address issues of inequalities in fragile and conflict area through centering indigenous knowledge and voices. Her focus is on gendered economic policies, women's rights in economic sectors, unpaid care and domestic work campaigning, inclusive markets, and feminist economics in fragile and conflict areas. She is a global shaper alumnus of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Initiative, a 2015 Atlas Corps Fellow, a Fulbright Grantee, and a 2023 Millennium Fellow.

**Tracey Albert**

**University Attended:** Anna University  
**Degree Awarded:** B.E. in Electronics and Communication  
**Country of Origin:** India

Tracey is a purpose driven leader with a decade of experience working towards educational equity, child protection and gender equality. She has furthered these causes in various capacities across India, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia and Rwanda. She started her professional journey with the Teach For India fellowship. Tracey has experience in teaching, training, strategy consulting, product development and large-scale program management. Most recently, Tracey worked as the Head of Programmes with Rising Academy Network where she led a team of academic and program managers collectively impacting over 600 schools across Sierra Leone through public private partnership programs. Outside of work, Tracey enjoys backpacking, motorcycling, scuba diving and reading!

**Ghaida Aldukhayel**

**Universities Attended:** Qassim University (Saudi Arabia)  
**Degrees Awarded:** Bachelor in Economics  
**Country of Origin:** Saudi Arabia

Born and raised in Saudi Arabia, Ghaida is an aspiring economist with an interest in energy and economic development. She is a young professional with 3 years of experience in the banking sector. Most recently, she worked with the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) as a financial stability economist, focusing on climate and sustainability-related financial risks. She has gained a wide experience at SAMA working with international stakeholders such as the G20 to support sustainable development and address the challenges of climate change. Ghaida is passionate about unraveling the dual challenge of sustaining economic progress while ensuring energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.
**Thaíssa Antunes**

**University Attended:** Universidade de Brasília (Brazil)

**Degrees Awarded:** Bachelor of International Relations

**Country of Origin:** Brazil

Thaíssa comes to SIPA motivated by her personal experience with socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil. At SIPA, she is excited to learn how to foster public policies that align the promotion of equality with racial and sustainable perspectives.

She has an extensive experience in international cooperation and was working, until recently, at the International Advisory of the Brazilian Ministry of Mines and Energy, striving to promote clean, affordable, and secure energy through international cooperation. Previously, she acted as an intern at the British Embassy's Science and Innovation Network and the Energy Program of GIZ Brazil.

**Anjaly Ariyanayagan**

**University Attended:** University of Madras, Takshashila Institution

**Degree Awarded:** BSc Visual Communication, Graduate Certificate: Public Policy

**Country of Origin:** Sri Lanka, India

Anjaly is a design and communications professional, with 10 years' experience across projects in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. She has led interdisciplinary teams, collaborating with brands like Bacardi and Unilever, not-for-profits like the United Nations and Indian Olympic Association, and has helped launch a sanitation campaign in low-income communities with the government of Tamil Nadu.

Over the past three years, Anjaly has worked at the intersection of skill development and employment with marginalized youth. At SIPA, she is looking to study how opportunities can be created and sustained through evidence-based policy advocacy, and human-centered services. In 2023, she will also begin her fellowship with the Mercatus Centre at George Mason University, studying Markets and Political Order.

**Sukriti Arora**

**University Attended:** University of Delhi

**Degrees Awarded:** Bachelor of Commerce

**Country of Origin:** India

Sukriti is a driven professional with experience working in the government advisory space. She has worked at the intersection of public institutions and social impact at the scale and diversity of national, state and regional governments. She worked across a host of policy issues in areas including groundwater management, food security and, arts and culture. She played a key role in building a robust field implementation model to improve transparency, deploy technological interventions and enhance user experience in the national food security system on an ongoing basis. At SIPA, Sukriti intends to build a strong understanding of social inclusion and public-private partnerships to foster sustainable development practices.
HANNAH BARRY

University Attended: Memorial University of Newfoundland
Degree Awarded: International Bachelor of Arts (iBA), Honors
Country of Origin: Canada

Hannah Barry graduated from Memorial University in 2019 with an International Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Communications, having completed her honors thesis on the politicization of humanitarian food assistance during cases of protracted conflict. For the past four years she has worked with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Zimbabwe and Afghanistan, specializing in external relations and urban cash-based transfer programming. Most recently, Hannah led the Information Management and Reporting portfolio for WFP’s largest operation during its unprecedented scale-up of humanitarian assistance across Afghanistan in 2022. She is thrilled to be joining Columbia’s MPA-DP cohort.

INDAH PERMATA SARI BARUS

University Attended: University of Jember
Degree Awarded: B.S. in Economics
Country of Origin: Indonesia

Indah is passionate about women's empowerment and social entrepreneurship. She has worked for a Grameen bank model called Bina Artha which assists low-income women-owned SMEs to nurture their business. Indah is responsible for designing and evaluating women’s development programs, including financial, education, and sanitation programs. Indah also initiated Niagadaya, a business incubator for women farmers. Aside from giving them business and digital skills, she also advocates them to take a leadership role in the community. At SIPA, Indah wishes to gain knowledge to solve development issues by creating a more comprehensive program and a holistic institutional analysis regarding business revenue, social impacts, and sustainability.

HAYUNINGTYAS (TYA) ANNISA BUDIYANTI

University Attended: Bandung Institute of Technology
Degree Awarded: B.S. in Mathematics
Country of Origin: Indonesia

Tya earned her bachelor's degree in Mathematics with a concentration in actuarial science. For the past 7 years, she has worked as an actuary in a multinational insurance company, leading the pricing functions. Having worked in the industry and partnered with a wide range of companies to provide protection for millions of beneficiaries, including delivering a micro-insurance product for ride-hailing drivers, Tya aspires to be a development practitioner at the intersection of economic, health policy, and sustainable financing. At SIPA, she envisions gaining a better understanding of how to develop comprehensive and sustainable social protection policies and programs.
**GANITA**

**University Attended:** Lady Shri Ram College for Women, Delhi University  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor in Journalism  
**Country of Origin:** India

Ganita has over seven years of experience in development and social impact. Her focus lies in public education, youth leadership, financial inclusion, and women economic advancement. Over the years she has formulated strategies for creating products, services, and knowledge material to further financial inclusion in India, particularly for women. She has also managed education programs in India, overseeing the impact on over 30 lakh children across 31 geographies. Her expertise extends to project visibility, thought leadership strategies, budget management, and program designs. She aims to empower communities and foster financial health through sustainable social impact initiatives.

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**BRINDA DASH**

**University Attended:** Shiv Nadar University  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor of Technology with a minor in Economics  
**Country of Origin:** India

Brinda began her professional journey in the development sector as a Teach For India Fellow where she taught students from a low-income community for two years and later continued as a Program Manager coaching and mentoring 21 Fellows, thus positively impacting 1500 children. She co-conceptualized Svatah, an initiative to improve financial decision-making and independence in impoverished households of the community, by imparting training on financial literacy. Post that, she joined Haqdarshak, a social enterprise which aims to bridge the information and access gap by providing last-mile service delivery of social entitlements, using technology as an enabler.

Brinda has been an active advocate for bridging the digital gender gap and use of technology for public good on various internet governance forums at the national and Asia-Pacific level. At SIPA, Brinda wants to focus on the role of data and technology to accelerate socio-economic inclusion.

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**JON DIAZ**

**University Attended:** University of Deusto  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor in Business Administration, Bachelor in Law  
**Country of Origin:** Spain

In 2016, Jon graduated from a Double Degree in Law and Business Administration and Management from the University of Deusto. That same year, he also obtained the Associate's Degree in Innovation and Entrepreneurship from the Deusto Business School as the best student of his class. He did an International Exchange at Santa Clara University, California, where he became interested in social innovation, access to education and career guidance. That summer, he embarked as a volunteer to Tanzania where he co-founded a nursery and helped implement the 'Design For Change' methodology.

In 2017 he joined the leading Consumer Goods company, Procter & Gamble, where he developed a 6-year career in Sales, Marketing and Strategy positions, and obtained the CEO Award in 2022. In order to pursue his passion for education he applied for and obtained the “la Caixa” Foundation scholarship to join SIPA and study an MPA-DP at Columbia University.
JAAGRUTI DIDWANIA
University Attended: St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai
Degree Awarded: B.A. Economics
Country of Origin: India

Jaagruti is from India and has been working in the social impact space since she was in high school. For most part of her career, she has worked on economic growth and financial inclusion. Jaagruti is particularly passionate about improving access to finance and income opportunities for women in informal economies. Through her diverse experiences, Jaagruti has worked across research, strategy, product management and business development roles.

SARU DUCKWORTH
University Attended: George Washington University
Degree Awarded: B.A. in International Affairs
Country of Origin: United States, Nepal

Saru is a Nepalese American researcher and practitioner, passionate about accelerating economic inclusion for the most marginalized women and girls. She is currently the UN Foundation Next Generation Fellow for Jobs & Economic Opportunities, supporting young people in over 30 countries to launch grassroots economic empowerment programs for the 2030 Agenda. Saru has spoken at the UN High Level Political Forum, World Bank Spring Meetings, ECOSOC Youth Forum, and elsewhere on evidence-based methods for eradicating poverty and promoting decent work for future generations. She is also a Research Assistant to Professors Joseph Stiglitz and Karla Hoff, supporting work on behavioral economics and culture.

Previously, Saru spent five years working at the intersection of evidence and practice for women’s empowerment programs, including in Myanmar and Nepal. At BRAC, the largest Southern-led INGO, she worked with the Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative and governments across Africa and Asia to scale up sustainable livelihood programs for women living in extreme poverty. She has received multiple awards for her research on child vulnerability and gender norms in Asia, and was a US Department of State Fulbright Scholar.

SHIVANI EKKANATH
University Attended: University of California, Berkeley; Sciences Po Paris
Degree Awarded: Bachelor of Political Science; Bachelor of Social Sciences (Political Humanities)
Country of Origin: Singapore, India

Shivani Ekkanath is an aspiring development practitioner hoping to work in the intersections of human rights and nature climate solutions policy. She spent a year working in Washington DC, at a public policy lobbying firm and then a think tank, followed by a year-long stint at the Centre for Nature-based Climate Solutions, National University of Singapore where she worked on sustainability education, green talent capacity building initiatives, and research projects, working closely with agencies within the Singapore government. She is passionate about indigenous consultation in development initiatives. Shivani is also a trained facilitator with Climate Fresk, a French nonprofit organisation hoping to impart crucial knowledge in climate change science and developments.
**Diana Estrada**

**University Attended:** Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor in Communication for Development  
**Country of Origin:** Perú

Diana is a Peruvian feminist activist, who graduated as summa cum laude from Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru with the major Communication for Development in 2013. During college, she was the communication specialist for a sexual education program in Andean provinces with high rates of teenage pregnancy, and was the leader of an educational project in the capital public high schools to prevent domestic violence. She has worked in the corporate responsibility world, leading diverse initiatives, such as sustainable sourcing programs to improve the life quality of Peruvian families dedicated to agriculture, with a focus on the empowerment and development of female farmers. Currently, she is part of "Manuela Ramos", one of the most important and oldest feminist organizations in Peru, which advocates for gender equity and women’s sexual rights.

**Vaughn Gardner**

**University Attended:** University of York  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. Applied Social Science  
**Country of Origin:** South Africa

Originally from South Africa but with an international upbringing as well as a graduate of the University of York and LSE, Vaughn has held an interest in development since a young age. Having grown up in developing countries, Vaughn wants to work with the protection of vulnerable people such as refugees and displaced persons in order to make the world a better place. Vaughn’s career experience draws from a large spectrum. Vaughn has interned with various UK members of Parliament, worked with the integration of individuals from vulnerable groups as well working for various private corporations. Vaughn’s interests outside of this include volunteering, history and language learning. Whilst at SIPA, Vaughn looks forward to learning more about security, conflict, and sustainable development.

**Taylor Garner**

**University Attended:** Elon University  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. in International and Global Studies  
**Country of Origin:** United States

Taylor Garner graduated from Elon University in 2020 where she conducted undergraduate research on women’s memories of political violence in Argentina and Palestine and the effects on social mobilization. Since graduating she worked in refugee resettlement for one year, assisting newcomers in securing employment. Currently, Taylor works for the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) where she coordinates initiatives in Latin America—specifically working with local governments and youth organizations to integrate sustainable and inclusive practices grounded in local data. At SIPA, Taylor intends to dive deeper into the intersection of conflict, security, and sustainable cities.
**Melale Hailu**

*University Attended:* University of Richmond  
*Degree Awarded:* B.A. in Global Studies  
*Country of Origin:* United States, Ethiopia

Melale Hailu is a recent graduate and Presidential Scholar from the University of Richmond where she earned a B.A in Global Studies and Economics. As a young professional, Melale has worked as a researcher at an international ThinkTank based in Rome, Italy and most recently as international trade intern with the United States Department of Commerce. Melale has been dedication to social impact & development since high school, co-conceptualizing and carrying out a comprehensive health/sexual education program for 30 young girls in rural Ethiopia. Born in Ethiopia and immigrating to the U.S at the age of 5, Melale's work & future endeavors centers around fostering a thriving space for equitable development in the "Global South", with particular attention to the African continent by starting away from the often misinformed “best practices” & “universal remedies” model of development and the endorsement of sustainable, enduring country-specific practices that are seen as solutions to real problems by domestic actors. She has an unwavering dedication to fulfilling the critical needs of the worlds most neglected populations through poverty reduction, capacity enhancement, bridging gender gaps in education & leadership, etc. Melale is also a source of impactful contributions in her area of study, publishing her work on good governance and economic sustainability in several peer-reviewed multidisciplinary academic journals. Aside from her academic and professional pursuits, she values her family, her tight knit community, and experiencing different cultures through travel, food, & integration.

**Maria Andoryati Hutapea**

*University Attended:* Universitas Indonesia  
*Degree Awarded:* B.E. in Industrial Engineering  
*Country of Origin:* Indonesia

Maria has worked in the humanitarian and development fields for eight years with World Vision Indonesia. Her areas of competence include programme design, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability. Her experience working on emergency responses to numerous disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, cyclones, and COVID-19, has driven her to study more about disaster-resilient development and climate change adaptation. Her latest position at USAID Kolaborasi, a project designed to enhance good governance and indigenous Papuan engagement, has also motivated her to advance her understanding of public participation and evidence-based policy.
**Sekar Sanding Kinanthi Joewono**  
**University Attended:** Universitas Indonesia  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor in Economics  
**Country of Origin:** Indonesia

Since her undergraduate studies, Sekar has always been passionate about economic development, especially involving marginalized communities. Sekar worked at the Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning’s macroeconomic team, where she produced various socioeconomic analyses such as Indonesia’s growth diagnostics, and green economic transformation. Until recently, Sekar was a consultant for gender equality and social inclusion at PRISMA, a partnership between Australia and Indonesia to increase farmers’ incomes. At SIPA, she is excited to hone her quantitative analytical skills and gain an intersectional understanding of development issues.

**Se Lin (Sharon) Joh**  
**University Attended:** University of Michigan - Ann Arbor  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. in International Studies  
**Countries of Origin:** South Korea, United States

Sharon is originally from Seoul, South Korea but moved to the Midwest (USA) at a young age. Since her undergrad at the University of Michigan (Go Blue!), she worked for refugee and asylum seekers rights as an individual case worker at immigration clinics and the UN Refugee Agency. She spent the past two and a half years at the Defense Attaché Office of the Korean Embassy in Uganda. After SIPA, she hopes to continue to work for marginalized communities utilizing finance, governance, and public policy.

**Neema Kihwelo**  
**University Attended:** University of Cape Town  
**Degrees Awarded:** BSocSci in International Relations and Social Development, BSocSci Honours in Social Policy and Management  
**Country of Origin:** Tanzania

Neema is a development practitioner with over 8 years of progressive expertise in spearheading economic empowerment initiatives. Her extensive experience spans diverse areas, including program and impact management, social enterprise development, capacity enhancement, and financial inclusion. With an unwavering commitment to empowering women in economic processes, Neema’s recent accomplishments include co-designing an innovative equipment microcredit scheme specifically tailored for women seaweed farmers in Tanzania. At SIPA, Neema is excited to explore new horizons in SME development, innovation and impact management, leveraging her knowledge and skills to create transformative solutions that bridge the gap for communities, ensuring access to improved services and fostering enhanced economic livelihoods.
**SAIRA KITAGAWA**  
**University Attended:** Tsuda University  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A International Cooperation and Multicultural Studies Course  
**Country of Origin:** Japan

Saira was born in Japan and spent her early childhood in Pakistan and England. During her undergraduate years, she participated in a community library project in Thai-Myanmar refugee camp. After graduating, she spent seven years at the Japanese daily newspaper "The Asahi Shimbun" as a staff writer. She has always been drawn to investigate and report on social and humanitarian issues related to migration, education and child-rearing. At SIPA, she intends to gain knowledge on sustainable educational development to improve refugee education and combat gender inequality.

**AGNES LAYLICHA**  
**University Attended:** Gadjah Mada University  
**Degree Awarded:** B.Psych  
**Country of Origin:** Indonesia

Agnes is a professional with experience working with global private companies and bilateral governmental programs focusing on fostering sustainable business entities and impact investing in Indonesia. She earned her degree from Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, specializing in social and indigenous psychology. As a former business consultant at Palladium International, she was involved in the joint effort, the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Promoting Rural Incomes through Support for Markets in Agriculture (PRISMA). At SIPA, her experience in market system development and catalyst organization has driven her to delve deeper into finance, business, and sociopreneurship. She is interested in utilizing the development sector's perspective and applying it to balance the positive social and environmental benefits with the financial gains from the value chain system in her homeland.

**JIAQI LI**  
**University Attended:** Stony Brook University  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor in Engineering  
**Country of Origin:** China

Jiaqi, an urban planning expert from China, has 5 years of experience in city development and 3 years in engineering project management and entrepreneurship. Deeply committed to community service, she played an active role in social welfare and volunteered during the 2020 Wuhan pandemic relief efforts. Witnessing the complexities of today's urban challenges, Jiaqi is driven to improve urban livability, protect the environment, and celebrate local history. This passion fuels her application to Columbia University's MPA-DP program, underscoring her dedication to championing sustainable city growth.
**FELIPE LOPES**

**University Attended:** Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG)

**Degree Awarded:** B.S. Industrial Engineering

**Country of Origin:** Brazil

Felipe was born and raised in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. He worked as a consultant at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) for three years, primarily focusing on Energy and Infrastructure industries, as well as at IFC, part of the World Bank group, covering early-stage decarbonization and healthcare projects in Latin America. Throughout his studies and professional experience, Felipe became intrigued by how our society explores natural resources and its economic and social implications. At SIPA, he is interested in studying the intersection of global inequality and the energy transition, while also exploring economic and political development opportunities in Latin America.

**ANESU MASAKURA**

**University Attended:** Carleton College

**Degree Awarded:** B.A. Economics

**Country of Origin:** Zimbabwe

Anesu is a young professional with a passion for complex issues at the intersection of governance, public policy, and economic development. He has a BA in Economics from Carleton College and is currently pursuing an MPA in Development Practice at Columbia SIPA.

Prior to SIPA, Anesu worked at a non-profit in Minneapolis, where he co-designed equity-focused initiatives and raised millions of dollars to support underserved individuals and families. He also consulted with the International Organization for Migration to help the Government of Zimbabwe strengthen its migration governance systems.

Anesu is skilled in problem-solving, consulting, project development and management, analytics, and fundraising. He is also highly versatile in international and intercultural work environments.

**SHAILESH MISRA**

**University Attended:** Tribhuvan University, Institute of Engineering

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi)

**Degree Awarded:** M.S. Energy Studies

**Country of Origin:** Nepal

Before enrolling at Columbia University, Shailesh served as CEO at IPPAN, driving Nepal’s energy sector with over 550 independent power producers. His academic foundation includes a Master’s degree (M. Tech.) in Energy Studies from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi as an ADB-JSP Scholar and a Bachelor’s in Electrical Engineering from Tribhuvan University—anchoring his expertise. Notably, he’s an alumnus of the IVLP program of the U.S. Department of State (2014) and SARIC of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Government (2023), demonstrating global leadership. Now, pursuing an MPA DP at SIPA, Shailesh is poised to deftly navigate the intricate nexus of Climate Change and Energy with a blend of practicality and foresight.
**GILBERTO MOSCOSO RODRIGUEZ**  
**University Attended:** Universidad Externado de Colombia  
**Degree Awarded:** B.S. Government and International Relations, M.S. Development Management  
**Country of Origin:** Colombia

Gilberto believes in the power of complementarity. For the last two years, he held a regional position at the International Rescue Committee, building strategic partnerships with civil society organizations and governments in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, to jointly implement development and humanitarian programs. Before that, he spent more than five years strengthening local NGOs by structuring advocacy, fundraising, business development, and program management strategies to increase the scale of peacebuilding and community-based programs. At SIPA, Gilberto will boost his managerial skillset to engage multiple stakeholders in the sustainable development of underserved communities.

**LILIAN NASSIF**  
**University Attended:** Wake Forest University  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. English Literature, B.A. Communications  
**Country of Origin:** Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, United States

Lilian Nassif is a passionate development enthusiast. Growing up between Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, she saw the interconnectedness of different countries’ development challenges and became determined to find holistic, collaborative ways to tackle them.

Prior to SIPA, Lilian undertook a Fulbright Scholarship in Argentina where she hosted workshops across the country – drawing from her experience teaching underrepresented communities in Cambodia – she worked to spark a lifelong commitment to learning in Argentine youth despite times of economic uncertainty. Motivated to make an impact in her community upon returning from Argentina, Lilian worked at an all-women’s environmental sustainability consulting group in Saudi Arabia, conducting research to support companies transition to sustainable and socially inclusive practices.

Through SIPA, Lilian hopes to take the reins and make change happen. Lilian is passionate about women’s development, education, and environmental sustainability. She hopes to acquire the skills to integrate these elements and drive global development from the ground-up, creating opportunities for women and girls, while practically advocating for a thriving, healthy planet.
JERONIMO PAREJA CARDONA

**University Attended:** Universidad de La Sabana
Barcelona Institute of International Studies

**Degree Awarded:** B.S. in Social Communication and Journalism
M.A. in International Relations

**Country of Origin:** Colombia

Jeronimo spent the last four years working for the protection of migrants and refugees in Colombia, first at the Danish Refugee Council, and later at UNHCR. Prior to that, he did internships with UNAIDS and the Spanish Consulate in Mexico City. Before starting a career in the humanitarian sector, he worked as a journalist and in public relations. He earned his bachelor’s degree in journalism in Colombia and his master’s degree in international relations in Spain. At SIPA, he seeks to expand his knowledge and develop new competencies to formulate regional projects that would provide durable solutions for different social minorities.

SWATHI POTTABATHINI

**University Attended:** College of Engineering, Pune
Ashoka University

**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor in Technology
Post Graduate Diploma in Liberal Studies

**Country of Origin:** India

Swathi is a development practitioner and public policy enthusiast with 5+ years of experience. As a Young India Fellow, she began her career at a grassroots nonprofit in India’s Central Tribal Belt, before becoming a founding team member of GramHeet (agri-business start-up) to increase income of small and marginal farmers. Later, at CEGIS she worked with Telangana state government on data-driven governance. Recently at The/Nudge Institute, she oversaw the strategy and operations of End Ultra-Poverty and Asha Kiran programs in six Indian states. As a Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholar at SIPA, Swathi aims to broaden her horizons and explore interests regarding ESG, impact investing and strategy/product development to better drive sustainable and equitable development for the marginalized communities. Beyond work, she is a certified yoga instructor, an artist, and an avid traveller.

RUCHIRA RAMKRISHNA

**University Attended:** Mount Carmel College, Bangalore (Autonomous)

**Degree Awarded:** B.A. Economics

**Country of Origin:** India

Ruchira graduated from Mount Carmel College, Bangalore (Autonomous) with Bachelor’s in Economics. Since then, she has worked with both non-profits and consulting firms across thematic areas of livelihoods, gender, healthcare, and education. Her first role as an Assessment Associate at ASER (a think tank division of India’s largest Non-Profit Organisation 'Pratham') involved design and implementation of large-scale educational assessments, including ‘Beyond Basics.’ Thereafter she led multi-functional teams working on issues such as reproductive rights, sexual violence, and nutrition. Her more recent roles at KPMG India and Sattva Consulting enabled her to achieve transformative impact at a larger scale by managing multi-million dollar programmes with long-term engagements. At SIPA, she wants to learn more about ways of strengthening and evaluating private aid in achieving gender equality.
**Thais Rehder**  
**University Attended:** New York University  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. in Global Liberal Studies, M.A. in International Relations  
**Country of Origin:** Peru

Thais was born and raised in Lima, Peru. She completed her undergraduate and graduate studies at NYU, where she interned at different NGOs and the Permanent Mission of Peru to the UN. After graduating, she worked as a fellow at Bloomberg Associates (BA), a pro bono consulting firm that works with municipal governments around the world. Thais was part of the social services team, she later returned to Peru, where she continued to work for BA as a project manager for all their projects in Lima. Having worked in both the public and private sectors, Thais wishes to bridge them.

**Ronaldo Rodrigues Alves Braga**  
**University Attended:** University of Sao Paulo  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. Social Sciences  
**Country of Origin:** Brazil

Ronaldo has dedicated over five years to working on educational policies. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Social Sciences from the University of Sao Paulo with an exchange program at Sciences Po Paris. From 2018 to 2023, Ronaldo worked at the Lemann Foundation and was involved in strategic projects within the Lemann Education Policy Ecosystem, such as Instituto Gesto and Vetor Brasil. His work included pioneering implementation of Teaching at the Right Level in remote regions of Brazil and leading other remedial learning and racial equity projects in more than 25 territories throughout Brazil.

**Ines Saldivar-Arias**  
**University Attended:** Universidad Iberoamericana  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. in International Relations  
**Country of Origin:** Mexico

From Mexico City, Ines received her bachelor’s in International Relations. Ines has worked in different sectors, from the Consulate of Mexico in Los Angeles, to Think Tanks, social start-ups, and UN partner organizations, to promote development in Mexico in ambits that range from migration, to anti-corruption, public health, and financial inclusion.

For the past three years she worked for the Ministry of the Interior as Head of Department of Applied Research on Causes and Manifestations of Violence, aiding the design and implementation of the national policy on violence prevention. As a Fulbright-García Robles Scholar she will pursue an MPA-DP at SIPA.
**MARIA GABRIELA SANDINO DE LUCA**

**University Attended:** Universidad de los Andes  
**Degree Awarded:** Law  
**Country of Origin:** Colombia

Gabriela is an Italian and Colombian citizen. She was born in Colombia but has lived in the US, Singapore, Italy, France and the UK. She is a qualified Colombian lawyer specialized in public international law and international arbitration with professional experience in top-tier international arbitration law firms in Italy, London and Paris. She has also worked in the legal office for the Food and Agricultural Organization which triggered her passion for sustainable development and development projects. At SIPA, Gabriela wishes to learn the underlying issues of development and wishes to explore topics related to emergency preparedness and response.

**RASHA SHAHUL**

**University Attended:** Manipal School of Architecture and Planning  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor of Architecture  
**Country of Origin:** India

Rasha graduated from Manipal University with a Bachelors in Architecture. After graduation, she undertook a 2 year Fellowship with Teach For India where she developed a keen interest in the Ed sector. She has since then, worked across content, curriculum and program management for both Edtech companies and NGOs. She is passionate about using design theory to solve for challenges in the development sector, especially at the intersection of education, poverty alleviation and gender.

**SHARVANI SHAKAMBARI**

**University Attended:** ESADE Business School, Barcelona  
**Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore**  
**Degree Awarded:** BBA  
**MBA**  
**Country of Origin:** India

Sharvani Shakambari is an incoming MPA-DP student who has previously worked as a Consultant in EY Parthenon, Singapore for a duration of 2 years. She has completed her MBA program at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore and her undergrad (BBA) from ESADE Business School, Barcelona. She aims to pivot her career into the development space through her time at SIPA. In the past, she has lived in the UAE, Ireland, India, Spain and Singapore and enjoys travelling globally. In her free time, she loves to read, play badminton and swim.
**BRITTANY SHORE**

**University Attended:** University of Pennsylvania  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A.  
**Country of Origin:** United States

Brittany is a 2021 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies from Fort Lauderdale, FL. Over the past few years, she has been working as a development consultant for a variety of organizations including DFC, MCC, and USAID. Brittany is passionate about human development and financial empowerment.

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**ARUJA SINGH**

**University Attended:** Northeastern University  
**Degree Awarded:** Post Graduate Program in Business Administration  
**Degree in:** B.A in International Affairs and Economics  
**Country of Origin:** India

Aruja has worked in diverse roles in the private and development sectors in her career. She worked in finance at Mercedes Benz India after completing her post-graduation in Business Administration and then joined the fundraising team at Teach For India for two years. She’s also interned at nonprofits like Oxfam America and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement during her undergraduate degree at Northeastern University. She hopes to be part of a better world by co-creating sustainable and inclusive solutions for the economic advancement of women in developing countries. Raised in Muscat and Abu Dhabi, Aruja loves traveling and exploring different countries.

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**NEHA SINGH BAIS**

**University Attended:** Mody University  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor of Commerce  
**Country of Origin:** India

In her 11-year career, Neha has extensive experience in leadership and has established healthcare research teams in India and Chile for Evalueserve that supports organizations with evidence-generation and technology-driven products to optimize decision-making. She has cultivated a profound understanding of public health issues like poor access to quality healthcare, malnutrition, and the need for preventive strategies.

Neha now wants to employ her learnings for measurable social impact. She wants to enter the development sector to design system-based solutions for human development issues in health, nutrition, and food security. Beyond work, Neha likes cooking and crafting dishes that celebrate local and seasonal ingredients.
**FADELIA DEBY SUBANDI**

**University Attended:** Universitas Indonesia  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor of Psychology  
**Country of Origin:** Indonesia

Deby is a former Social Development consultant for the SDGs Secretariat in Regional Development Planning Agency, Jakarta City. She began her career handling research and capacity-building programs in SDGs Hub Universitas Indonesia, as a network manager of SDSN Indonesia, and also worked as a teaching assistant for SDG Academy Indonesia. She was involved in consultancies with numerous stakeholders from national and international development partners, think tanks, philanthropies, and local & national-level Government of Indonesia.

She is passionate to advance the achievement of SDGs from the local level, especially on the intersecting issues of poverty, hunger, health, education, and gender equality.

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**HASYA SYAHIDA SYARIFUDDIN**

**University Attended:** University of Gadjah Mada, Erasmus University Rotterdam  
**Degree Awarded:** BSc in Economics, BSc in International Business and Business Economics  
**Country of Origin:** Indonesia

Hasya has more than 9 years of working experience in the consulting industry, financial services, and banking industry. Prior to joining Columbia SIPA MPA in Development Practice, she demonstrated history of leading in private sector as well as the public sector. Her expertise includes feasibility studies in infrastructure, project transactions, project financing & investment, and asset strategy. She also has strong interest in public policy, business strategy, and entrepreneurship.

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**MRIGNAINA TIKHU**

**University Attended:** Delhi University  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. Economics Honours  
**Country of Origin:** India

Mrignaina Tikku graduated from Delhi University, India, with an Honors degree in Economics. She worked in Ernst & Young’s Corporate Finance Strategy department for 3 years. Later, she served as a Senior Research Associate at J-PAL South Asia for 4 years, focusing on research design, data collection, and data analysis for various randomized control trial projects in Education, Gender, Crime, and Sanitation sectors.
**Sumanth Uppuluru**  
**University Attended:** Osmania University  
**Degree Awarded:** Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical)  
**Country of Origin:** India

Sumanth has 9 years of work experience in the development sector. He worked as a Technology and Policy consultant for Inquilab and Indus Action and for the government of Telangana to improve access to schemes related to social security. His passion for working in the social sector came from limited access to quality services of social welfare schemes for him and his mother in his time. In his free time, Sumanth is passionate about storytelling and travelling. He expresses his thoughts through jokes and stories. At SIPA he wants to learn more about sustainability and ESG.

**Dmitry Vasiliev**  
**University Attended:** RANEPA  
**Degree Awarded:** B.A. Marketing  
**Country of Origin:** Russia

Dmitry is a strong professional enjoying 8+ years in Product Marketing with IT and Consumer Goods industries in the cross-cultural environment of the US and Russia. He holds a global award-winning portfolio of marketing projects. In 2020, following 7 years at Google, Dmitry underwent a significant career transition into Urban Development. Since then, he has spearheaded numerous spatial and socioeconomic strategies for cities and regions in Russia. Furthermore, contributing to the community is critical to him. He has volunteered at a refugee camp in Greece and delivered lectures at Russian universities. At MPA-DP, he is driven to acquire the knowledge necessary to establish cross-sectoral partnerships, ultimately striving to make the world a better place to live. He derives energy from boxing, yoga and dancing.

**Kim Louise Vidal**  
**University Attended:** Ateneo de Manila University (Philippines)  
**Degree Awarded:** B.Sc. Management/Industrial Engineering  
**Country of Origin:** Philippines

Kim is a development practitioner with 6 years of experience across the project life cycle—from needs assessment, program design, partnership development, financing to M&E. She recently came from IDinsight where she carried out research and M&E advisory for Philippine national government agencies and social enterprises in Southeast Asia. Prior to IDinsight, Kim worked as a consultant for multinational companies, designing sustainability strategies, facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships, and securing co-funding for development projects in Asia Pacific. She has sectoral experience in agriculture, nutrition, public health, education, and transportation, as well as livelihoods and women empowerment. Growing up in a rural town in the Philippines, Kim is passionate about issues related to agriculture, nutrition, and rural development. At SIPA, she hopes to hone her skills in using data and evidence to inform decisions, policies, and programs for more equitable, sustainable, and healthier food systems.